



SAN FRANCISCO PERSONAL COMPUTER *eBLUE*
USERS GROUP *NOTES*

Volume 20 Nos. 9-10

September - October 2001



Who We Are, What We Do and How You Can Join the Fun!

The San Francisco PC Users Group, founded in 1982, serves as a regional volunteer forum for the exchange of ideas, industry insights and solutions to problems, etc. related to using personal computers having the Intel x86 or compatible processor.

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Annual membership in The San Francisco PC Users Group includes, among other benefits, monthly meetings, a one year subscription to **Blue Notes**, and Internet access. Cost: \$25 for individuals, \$30 for families and \$50 for businesses. E-mail our Membership Registrar, membership@mail.sfpcug.org, or attend a monthly meeting (see details inside and calendar). An application form can be found on the last page of this issue. Once completed, mail it with your payment to the SFPCUG Membership Director, 3145 Geary Blvd., Box 284, San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

Internet Services for All Members

Internet access is a major incentive for SFPCUG membership. Visit our web site: <http://www.sfpcug.org> where you will find, information about **Blue Notes**, the club's dial-up Internet services, activities of our various Special Interest Groups. etc. PPP accounts are available - e-mail: help@mail.sfpcug.org or contact our WebMaster at webmaster@mail.sfpcug.org or 415-665-3599.

The Internet SIG offers access to a shared account for experimenting with Web technology, including CGI scripting. Contact the WebMaster for details.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Users gather in SIGs to explore and solve specific problems related to software and/or hardware. The Calendar will list dates and venues. If a SIG addressing your interest(s) does not exist, call 415-665-3599 or 415-346-2644 to organize one.

Write a Review on New Software and it's Yours, Free!!

Vendors frequently offer new software or books to the SFPCUG so that an interested member can give it a test run and keep the product in exchange for a published review in **Blue Notes**. Our Product Review Coordinator can arrange to obtain software you want to review. Guidelines for reviews appear regularly in **Blue Notes**, or ask the Product Review Coordinator for a copy.

Steering Committee Meetings

The SFPCUG Steering Committee Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at the upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza on Geary Blvd. and 16th Ave.

The SFPCUG Steering Committee discusses issues of immediate importance to the Group and makes plans for future activities. Steering Committee meetings are open to all SFPCUG members. Any Group member having attended two of four preceding Steering Committee meetings is eligible to vote.

General meetings

General meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Doors open at 6:15 PM for SIGs and the general meeting begins at 7PM and end by 9PM

First time guests are admitted free, repeat guests are asked for a donation of \$4.

Location: Meetings now take place in the auditorium of the Community College District Office, 33 Gough Street, (a half-block south of Market Street) San Francisco, CA There is ample free parking in front of the building. Civic Center BART and MUNI is ½ a block away.

The latest information on programs and location for upcoming general and steering committee meetings is available on our web site <http://www.sfpcug.org>. Always check for late breaking news.

Publication in Blue Notes

Follow the structure of a previous article in *Blue Notes*.

- * **Name/version of the subject program/book.** What does the program do and on what operating platform (s)? Does it satisfactorily fill a genuine need, e.g. task, entertainment, utility, etc.?
- * **Reviewer:** name and email address.
Name and reputation of the company distributing the product. Available mail address and phone number(s)
- * **At A Glance:** A 1-to 4 rating (worst to best)
- * **Price:** MSRP, retail or street
- * **System Requirements:** (self-explanatory)
- * **Pros:** Ease of use, learning, etc? Documentation: comprehensive, intelligible? Support? Does it deliver as advertised? If a book, is the author's style smooth or challenging? Is the Index useful?
- * **Cons:** Shortfalls, if any
- * The body of your review
- * Graphics welcome and requested if possible

When addressing technical, complex issues, endeavor to be as comprehensive and street-level clear as possible.

- * Use one space between sentences, two carriage returns at the end of each paragraph
- * Re-read your work carefully, objectively, checking word, sentence and logic flow to ensure you say precisely what you mean to say, clearly
- * Do not use indents or tabs
- * Spell-check your work

Procedure for submitting articles for publication.

Save your article as a pure ASCII file with line breaks, and a **.TXT** extension. You may alternately save your files in Rich Text Format (**.RTF** extension) then send them to bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org. Should special formatting be necessary, forward a hard copy to the Editor. Contact *Blue Notes* staff by e-mail, bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's message	4
Editor's note	7
From The DealsGuy	7, 10
Digital Photography	14, 19
Give your Portal some Pizzazz	21
The New Professional Criminals	24
Can Spam	26
Blaze Media Pro 2002	30
WinFM 1.1	31
RESUMEMaker Deluxe 9.0	32
Telephone Scam	34
Celebrating Operating Systems	35
Calendar	38
Minutes	39 - 40
Contact Us	41
Application	42

Observations, Windows XP, and The Ultimate Tech Support Threat

by

Butler Crittenden

Observations

On October 20th Microsoft held an eXtreme event at some 40 theaters across the country, expecting to simulcast to some 30,000 attendees. If the low turnout in San Francisco is indicative of that elsewhere, the total attendance was about 6,000. The event was a preview of Windows XP and announcement of several new products. It was very informative and excellent at least in terms of how the material was presented. The Microsoft rep at the event said they'd never fallen below 50 percent of those who RSVP'd, that 20-25 percent is normal, but that sometimes these events are oversubscribed and close to 100 percent of the seats are filled.

What is going on here? I certainly do not know with any certainty, but my guess is that the combination of a failing economy, public fear of large gatherings, and a changed sense of values are all playing a part in such misfortunes as Microsoft suffered on October 20th. The tragedy of

9/11 is reaching deep into all our lives. For example there is a risk that the Robert Austin Computer Show will fail. They've had to lay off the Tech Bench, retire a key employee, shorten others' hours, fire the guards, and go to free admission to try to remain in business. No doubt many local clone shops and parts stores will also be in trouble. By the way, I've seen many copies of Windows XP Personal and Professional for sale at the show for under \$150.

Writing as president of our computer club, any personal thoughts about 9/11 and the aftermath would be inappropriate, but I do hope that we, as a club, continue in our mission to educate and support each other. This, of course, will require a little extra effort. For example, our September meeting was poorly attended, which is understandable, coming only a week after the WTC and Pentagon bombings, but the October meeting was much better attended. I want to thank all who attended these meetings and encourage all members to come as often as possible. *It makes a difference.* I'm sure that other clubs, churches, and organizations are in a similar situation. I recall a study a few years ago that concluded that all voluntary organizations have been steadily losing membership and struggling since the early 1980s. Many computer clubs have folded. While **SFpcUG** is financially solvent, without participation we could simply fade away.

Windows XP

One thought I had about Windows XP is that it's very ornate, very elaborate. At the eXtreme event we were treated to an almost bewildering array of new products and features. For example, the "network" protocol NetBEUI is gone; TCP/IP, the protocol for the

Internet, will now be the LAN protocol as well. The multimedia focus is so broad that it'll scare the living daylight out of those of us who still find our array of TV, VCR, DVD, and stereo clickers threatening. I can see clearly that we'll need a meeting or two dedicated to Windows XP to begin to get comfortable with it.

Some have already said to me, "Wait a year, until the bugs are out of XP, until there's a service pack or two available." Others say, "No way, not with all that 'tracking' and 'activation' stuff in XP." I, for one, can't wait to put XP on a machine and begin trying to figure it out. And I say this pretty much despite many of the rococo features that strike me as pandering to the youth market, as underlying XP is NT, which Microsoft has been working on for over 10 years. There is no such thing as a bug-free version of any huge, modern program, and I cannot see any reason to remain ignorant about this one until some mythical future date when it's all worked out. This said, I understand why many businesses and other users will stick to Windows 98SE, which is relatively stable and is serving their needs. They are saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," which makes sense. On the other hand, I continue to experience a fair number of crashes on both my computers, and find many clients and friends also have relatively frequent blue screens of death, lock-ups, etc. Which tells me that the old Operating System is not quite as stable as they claim it is. Besides, seldom mentioned about NT/XP, it handles memory utilization much better than the 9X OSes, and that alone is reason enough to be excited about XP. With memory prices down to \$64 for 512MB of DDR and less for DIMMs, it'll be nice to be able to really take full advantage of the memory, maybe even a gig or two or Random Access Memory at these prices.

I may be totally wrong about the next idea, but in Windows XP Professional (slightly higher cost) there is a feature where a tech support person can, with your permission, take over your computer and do some on-line trouble-shooting. After a recent experience with Dell, my favorite vendor despite the anecdote below, I can see that the major computer companies simply must develop a way to handle problems more efficiently than talking with Joe or Jane User on the telephone. The old joke about using the CD tray for a drink holder is a bit exaggerated, but only a bit in many cases. Millions of users simply cannot call tech support and make sense of the instructions they're given, as they are too new to computers, too intimidated, or too hapless. They would benefit enormously from a sort of universal *pcANYWHERE* that allows experts to try to help them on-line.

The Ultimate Tech Support Threat

At a Golden Gate Computer Society meeting last spring *S.F. Chronicle* computer columnist Henry Norr gave a glowing testimonial to wireless LANs. Thus when a client said he wanted to install Dell's *TrueMobile Wireless* system I read the material from Dell and gave my OK. After all, he had two Dell notebooks, a DSL connection, and two other computers and a printer on a working network, and the literature said that installation would be "simple, flexible and fast -- out of the box ready . . . Plus it eliminates the need to pull cables through walls and ceilings and allows a network to go where wires can't." And all this for only \$599, including the base station and three notebook wireless cards. Oh, yes, and 7x24 phone support.

Perhaps I need say no more, for you can guess the outcome. After an hour of struggling with the installation I called Dell, and got through pretty quickly. Phone trees are obnoxious, but if well done they at least get you to the right person, and Dell does a good job of this. I had already tried most of the suggestions made by the Dell technician, who was professional, thoughtful, and thorough. We went through many gyrations for close to an hour, to no avail. At the end of the process he fell back on *The Ultimate Tech Support Threat*: take that CD that came with the system and restore it to factory specifications. I felt like telling him where they could put that disk, but I've learned to maintain calm and civility when dealing with tech support, even when they drop the big bomb on me. I said, "No, we won't do that, but perhaps you can come up with another technician or idea, and I'll be here another hour or so." He agreed and took the call-back number. Somehow by repeating a step he'd taken me through I got the product installed, but then couldn't make it work on the LAN. This took only a few minutes, and by the time I'd finished Dell called back with another technician. After informing him of the now-installed wireless PC card, I asked for help on getting it to work on the LAN. He said that Dell cannot help with that. I said "That's too bad, as I'm not sure how the customer will feel about this." He said he wished he could help further but could not. A few days later Dell got the whole mess back in the original packing material and box. That \$20 CAT5 cable is looking pretty good now. Besides, I've read that there are huge security issues with wireless LANs. In the case of this client, security is an issue, as they have their clients records on the computers, and snooping could prove to be disastrous to their business.

I would like to stress that this example could have as easily been any of dozens of manufacturers. Indeed, I thought Dell did a good job, although the last policy decision was not good business. I see this as a good example of why XP's remote takeover feature could be very useful. Between the telephone, the technician being in control of the problematic computer, and the user willing to do as instructed with devices, there is a better chance of getting the desired result. There would be less need for the big boys to threaten users with wiping out their hard drives and starting over with "factory specs." XP also has a roll-back feature, which would help both technicians and users. This problem will require a very a long time to eliminate, and there are hardware failures where there is nothing for the technician to take over.

Everyone is saying that we are now living in a new era. No doubt this is at least partially true. The law of entropy still holds, however. Our massive public and private institutions are still in place, along with basic values and trends. Technology, with all its positive and negative consequences, remains as a cornerstone of life in the West, and much of the rest of the world. As individuals we need to be aware of how our actions impact others. A Chinese curse is said to be: "May you live in interesting times." Well, we do, like it or not. Let us celebrate our good fortune to be alive in these interesting times and extend our charitable and tolerant selves to others, at home and abroad. The folks at the tech support desks are doing their best. New products are coming, and computers in yet another year or two are going to amaze us in ways that today we can barely imagine. We'll all have to be open and flexible to appreciate the gifts raining upon us.

Editor's Note

Welcome to the September/October issue of Blue Notes. The world has taken quite a turn since we have last offered an edition of our newsletter to you. Yet again, I would like to express my regret to all those that may have suffered a loss. It has been stated again and again, but it bears reiterating once more.

At the September general meeting David Hyman asked the pointed question, Would you be willing to sacrifice some of your freedoms to allow authorities to regulate the Internet with enough efficiency to catch terrorists in the act of planning or whatever? This isn't David's exact quote, but I believe the meaning is there. It is an interesting point of view. No stone can be left unturned.

In this issue, we have an interesting and seemingly thorough article on digital cameras. I am in the market for such a camera and will use this article as a resource.

I hope you enjoy this issue. If you have need to contact me feel free to do so at bluenotes@sfpcug.org.

**From The DealsGuy, for October 2001,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group.
by Bob Click**

***Distribution Update**

Willem Borman, editor for SW Indiana PC Users Group, asked to start using the column. He will publish it monthly on their group's Web site. Brenda Oakley, editor for Alaska Computer Society, asked to resume using the column after a short period without it. Both groups are listed on my Web site's distribution page.

***What a Loss To User Groups**

I was distressed to hear that Adobe may dismiss Louise Miller from the user group program. Louise has worked very hard for both Adobe and we user group people. The decision was not final at this writing, but in the user group community, Louise has made Adobe a household name, and dismissal certainly doesn't seem like a just reward for her hard work. Not only will Adobe be the loser, but user groups will also lose. I hope they find a spot for her without dismissal. I understand it's a consolidation of Adobe's user group activities, but I hope it doesn't mean closing us out completely as Ambassadors for Adobe's fine products.

A few other hard-working friends have also gotten the ax for all their hard work during these slow economic times. Ever wonder why anybody should worry about doing a good job when they could be history at any given time, in spite of their best efforts? I guess conscientious employees will always give their best automatically.

***A Moment of Carelessness**

I thought I had become pretty good at recognizing e-mail with a virus attachment, and I had, but I still found a way to get careless. At the time of my carelessness, I didn't realize I had triggered a virus, but in the middle of the night I woke up realizing what I had done, and that was to click on a file that I actually should have remembered was virus infected. I'll handle them in a different way and will try not to get in a hurry from now on. I'm sure it didn't use my Eudora address book, but the SirCam virus finds other places to get addresses to send a familiar-looking, but infected, file out to friends.

I sent a message of warning to my address book people, but almost nobody in it had received an infected file. There were a few and I'm not sure where it found those addresses, but I thought perhaps in my trash bin, because I had about 40 returned messages with infected attachments that had addresses looking like the spam type I always delete. That would have been a perfect place to send those infected files, but alas, they all bounced back. The few friends who received an infected file were people I had communicated with recently so that may be a clue.

I receive several newsletters in PDF format and a couple in ZIP format. I decided simply to catch up printing the files by clicking on them right

from my "Attachments" folder. In the process, I accidentally clicked the wrong zip file (left there for further AV checking) and had failed to notice the double extensions this time. After this, I'll move suspected files to a safe place and not depend on my 'superior' intelligence.

An interesting sidelight to this disaster is that some of the bounced e-mail containing contaminated attachments were bounced by network administrators who detected the infected file and returned it telling me that. I hope that network administrators trend continues to grow for everybody's sake. My computer is now a mess and I'm ready to reformat and start over.

***Still Good**

The LapDog is still good so visit [<http://www.laptopoffice.com>].

inKline's Stay Connected is also still good.
[<http://www.inklineglobal.com/register>].

Don't forget the Mouse Bungee Pro deal is still good.
[<http://www.mousebungee.com>].

***inkline Global is Back With Another Special Offer**

If you are still using a dialup connection to surf the Net, how about something to improve the performance of your modem. "Modem Booster" from inKline Global is designed for getting the downloading done, but faster and more dependably. Here is their offer: "We are pleased to offer your column readers 15% off 'Modem Booster' (normally \$19.95) in your October column. For the Modem Booster promotion in October, 2001, simply mention "MB-DEALSGUY-1001"

in the COMMENTS field of the order form [<http://www.inklineglobal.com/register>] when purchasing Modem Booster. The offer is valid till 30th Nov. 2001."

Again, ordering must be done on their Web site URL above.

***Get Better Organized, Not Unionized, But Yourself**

I am not a fan of PIMs (Personal Information Managers), but I must admit that they are popular. It so happens that inKline Global has a very good Personal Information Manager called RedBox Organizer 4.1 and they have offered you a deal on it. I have not had the time to review this product, although they offered it to me. Below is their description:

"Now you can manage your daily activities more efficiently, and have the flexibility and ease to plan, organize and schedule virtually whatever you want. Use the Calendar, Planner, Reminder, To-do, Sticky Notes and Globe to manage daily occurrences like Expenses, Reports, Appointments, Contacts, Addresses and Travel information all within an enjoyable 3D interface. Save loads of time, send e-mails, quick-dial your contacts, keep conversation logs and even publish your activities on the Web. Extraordinary features like Multi-User capabilities, password protected program sharing, Time Converter and Global Distance Calculation abilities. All these features in one compact program make it an ideal planner for all home and small businesses. Free CD with online purchase!"

My readers get the program for just \$29.95, regular \$39.95. Use the special code "RBODEALSGUY" (enter in the "comments" field) when ordering. Below are more URLs and info for the product.

Company URL: [<http://www.inklineglobal.com>]

Program URL: [<http://www.inklineglobal.com/products/mb/>]

Download Site 1: [<ftp://inklineglobal.net/win32/mb25.zip>]

Download Site 2: [<http://inklineglobal.net/win32/mb25.zip>]

Filesize: 1.75 MB / 1803 KB / 1,845,295 Bytes

Filename: mb25.zip Version 2.5 Install/Uninstall Included

***Security Just For Your Pocket??**

Yes, but I meant for your "Pocket PC." I received an announcement recently for Cresotech PocketSafe 1.16 for Windows CE, a Pocket PC security tool for protection of personal data. It's a convenient PDA-based tool for safe storage of confidential information. PocketSafe provides easy management and secure storage of passwords, contact names, credit card numbers, bank account and document data, as well as other confidential information. The records in the database are encrypted and password-protected. All popular models of PocketPC are supported: Compaq IPaq, Casio Cassiopeia, HP Jornada, Symbol, etc.

System Requirements: Pocket PC running Windows CE 3.0 or higher. 400Kb free on Pocket PC and 1Mb free on desktop PC. Supported Processors include ARM, SH3, MIPS. I was unable to test this product because I do not own a Pocket PC, but it looks very interesting. The price is only \$19.00 and my readers are even offered a 10% discount by going to

[<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=36402&pc=M6M64>] and using the password "dealsguy." If you simply want a trial version, use [<http://www.cresotech.com/ftp/pocketsafe.exe>]. The company URL is [<http://www.cresotech.com>] should you just want information on the product.

***Classes For Office**

Keystone Learning Systems is offering all users group members a special. Their offer follows: "Purchase any, that's right any, OFFICE related course at Full Price and get a 2nd set within the OFFICE selections at 40% off! You may get as many additional sets as you want at 40% off. Call now to start enhancing your User Group Library, and help individuals learn skills they can use. Check these courses: Excel, Access, Word, Power Point, PhotoDraw, Publisher, Outlook, Project, or Windows 95, 98, and 2000. This Special Offer will expire Friday, October 26, 2001. Reference Code UGem2.

"If you haven't requested any yet and would like to receive a free demo of our training materials or information please contact Evan Jones at 888-299-3647, EXT. 7002, e-mail: [evanj@keystonelearning.com]. Or fill out the application at:

[http://www.keystonelearning.com/about_keystone/user_group/index.html] and indicate in the field provided what products you are interested in."

Also listed are 32 other courses newly introduced or coming soon, and 1000 other topics and titles to choose from. Be aware that these courses are not classes, but come to you on CD, or VHS video format. The offer

was signed by Evan Jones, Sales Representative KeyStone Learning Systems, a GlobalLearningSystems Company

(888) 299-3647 ext. 7002

(801) 418-7002

Fax: (801) 373-6872

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

**From The DealsGuy for November 2001
by Bob Click,
Greater Orlando Computer User Group**

***Hats Off To The Editors**

I get about 30 users group newsletters and I'm always impressed at work performed by editors. Some I receive as printed newsletters, others are sent as PDF. Two are ZIP files. A few are newsletters in PDF format that editors notify me as being ready to download by clicking on a URL. Electronic newsletters are rapidly becoming more popular as printing and mailing costs go up. Poor delivery by the Post Office is also a major factor and complaints to them about delayed delivery mostly fall on deaf ears. I take my hat off to those unsung heroes, the editors, and some do it year after year with rare thanks from the members they do it for.

For what its worth, an editor's life is usually one of continuous frustration because of deadlines, and articles that rarely arrive on time. Many user group writers are notorious for their procrastination, which helps burn out editors. Please remember to thank your editors for all their hard work. Many of these newsletters are real works of art, which takes time, research and considerable effort. Many are a variety of informational articles while others lean more toward news and information about the group, but a users group's newsletter is always a major part of the "glue" holding the organization together.

***Fast Connections Can Bring Fast Problems Also**

Willem ("Pim") Borman [swipcug@lycos.com], Web Site Editor for SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. made me aware of this very unusual experience, and I thought my readers should also be aware of it since many of you are cable-connected. Here is what he told me:

"I recently found SirCam on my computer - not sure where I got it, but consider the following: Norton Antivirus suddenly, one evening, alerted

me, while I was NOT reading e-mail or such. I had it remove the worm. But it kept coming back every evening, sometimes twice. I was beginning to wonder if Norton was seeing ghosts. Instead of removing the worm again, I decided to shut down and restart the computer. That generated a warning that I was about to shut down "Terri" on my network. I don't know of anyone like that, but it gave me a clue.

"I have a cable connection and had "disabled file and print sharing" right after I got it. Somehow, I got reconnected to a network with at least a dozen other users of the local cable. I suspect that one of them has/had the virus and that it transmitted itself to others on the cable network (that were accessible) every time "Terri" turned on his computer! After I disconnected myself, again, from the cable network, I have not heard from SirCam again. I have never heard of this way of getting a virus, but it certainly is worth watching out for if you have cable access to the Internet! SirCam is known to propagate itself across networks."

***New To The Column**

JB Hillard, president of Chautauqua Cyber Club, Inc. asked about occasionally using the column. In an exchange of e-mail, he mentioned many projects that group is involved in, and I was amazed. This is one of the busiest groups I know of for its size. -- Charles Hajdu of Philadelphia Hub PC Users Group also e-mailed me about getting the column. This group is also interesting since they consist of Air Traffic Controllers of a hub area. Check their unique Web site on my distribution page. Welcome to the Deals column.

***Still Good**

Modem Booster [<http://www.inklineglobal.com/register>] (code "MB-DEALSGUY-1001") and Redbook Organizer 4.1 [<http://www.inklineglobal.com>] (code RBODEALSGUY) are still good. Cresotech PocketSafe 1.16 for Windows CE (for Pocket PC) is also still good. Use [<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=36402&pc=M6M64>] using the password "dealsguy." The Keystone Learning products have expired, but if you are still interested, who knows what they will say if you call (888-299-3647, EXT. 7002)! Unbelievably, I had two requests to feature products in my deals column, but after multiple requests for more information on the deals, they have not yet responded.

***Forgot Your Password?**

ElcomSoft Company is offering a product to help you with lost or forgotten passwords for ZIP/PKZip/WinZip, ARJ/WinArj, RAR/WinRAR and ACE/WinACE archives. It supports the customizable brute-force attack and is effectively optimized for speed (up to fifteen million passwords per second for ZIP). It has a very fast and effective known-plain-text attack (ZIP and ARJ only), and dictionary-based attack. Multilanguage interface is provided. Application Category: Utilities - Security & Encryption - Password Utilities - File Tools.

The normal price for Advanced Archive Password Recovery is \$60.00, but my readers can buy it for \$40.00 at the discount URL below. Company Email: [dharchenko@elcomsoft.com] Company URL: [<http://www.elcomsoft.com>] Discount download: [<http://www.elcomsoft.com/ARCHPR/archpr.zip>] Or

[<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=1170-74>] Not sure which. Filesize: 735369 Bytes / 719 Kb / 0.7 Mb. Check this product's capabilities at their site thoroughly before you decide.

***Clean It Up Please**

Here is multifaceted software that will do a lot to clean up your Windows and browser. Cleaning up the history of your activities can be a tedious chore of manually removing each history file or entry. If privacy and disk space are to be maintained, this process should be performed every time you use your computer.

Window Washer can automatically clean up your browser's cache, cookies, history, recent document list, and much more, and it can run in the background cleaning up your tracks when you are done surfing the Internet, or any other time you choose. Window Washer cleans the tracks left behind on your computer by today's latest browsers, including...

Cache, cookies, history, mail trash, drop down address bar, auto complete data forms, downloaded program files. Also cleans ... recycle bin, registry streams, Windows run history, Windows find history, CHK scan disk files, recently viewed pictures, recently opened documents, MS Office 97 and 2000 tracks, Windows temp files folder.

To purchase Window Washer or "Mac Washer," go to [<http://www.webroot.com/ugrebate.htm>] where you can get a \$5.00 discount from the \$29.95 regular price. Check [<http://www.webroot.com>] for much more information on Webroot products.

***Time For a New Suite**

This was an APCUG announcement and I am making sure everybody knows about it. Gobe Software's developer team is introducing "GobeProductive" which will be introduced at Fall Comdex. This is the same team that developed ClarisWorks. GobeProductive was first developed for the BeOS. Now it has been adapted to Windows or Linux and if you are ready for a new office suite try this one.

Here is an excerpt from their message: "What sets GobeProductive apart from other productivity suites is a single key insight. Why have an integrated office package that uses different document formats for word processing, spreadsheets, vector illustration, image editing, and presentations? In Productive, you just do what you need to do. If you're in the middle of writing a report and want to insert some spreadsheet data, you don't have to open a separate app. Just insert a spreadsheet 'part' and keep working. Flow your text around it, insert graphics, share data between parts, and keep it all together in one document."

To find out more, go to [<http://www.gobe.com>]. The normal price will be \$124.95, but a pre-introduction order price of \$39.95 is available at [<http://www.gobe.com/preorder>] until the product is officially shipped. They say introduction should be about November 15, 2001. If you miss that one, they will have another users group offer after that, but this is their best offer. They will be sponsors at the APCUG fall Comdex events.

***Still Procrastinating on AV Because Of The Price?**

A friend suggested that I include F-Prot, absolutely free antivirus software, in a column. Actually, only their DOS version is free to home users. This one will take some experience because you must download, and then unzip, to use it. The same for updating signatures. It can be run from a floppy, although I have not done that as yet. The DOS version is kind of clunky (can't use mouse), but it works. I wish they had updates more often though. They do have a Windows or Linux version, but they are not free. Point your browser to [<http://www.frisk.is/f-prot/download>] to download F-Prot antivirus. Of course, you will also need WinZip or another decompression product to unpack the file. Just don't forget to keep updating signatures periodically at the same URL.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

Digital Photography (Part I)

Purchasing a Digital Camera

by Larry Horn

Digital cameras are the latest “Must Have” toys for gadget loving computer users and many others. The reason computer users love digital over regular film is the computer gives them the ability to make endless changes, corrections, and improvements to their pictures and use them in creative projects. (Be sure to attend this month's meeting where MGI will show you some of the digital editing techniques and tricks you can do using their line of products.) This article will be my very opinionated list of what you should consider before purchasing a digital camera, or getting your new one with more features. Remember, technology in this field is advancing so fast with more resolution and features for less money on a monthly basis. Therefore any recommendation for a specific camera is obsolete before the article can be printed.

An Important point: No consumer level digital camera of today under \$3,000 will equal 35MM film for absolute image quality! The structure of film is way beyond 3 or 4 MegaPixels (MP), and film has grain which

softens the edges presenting a more natural picture to your eyes. Additionally, film cameras can be purchased, at a very reasonable cost, with interchangeable lenses which greatly increase the flexibility of the camera use. Yes, you can fake a telephoto lens in the camera but that kills your resolution. (I will get into that below.) You can also scan a photo, but that will also reduce the resolution and ultimate image quality. When you get your film developed and placed on a CD by the camera store, they actually scan the film (with a very good film scanner) and save the file to a disk.

First, why do you want to purchase a digital camera? Because they are fun to use and can actually save you a lot of money over time. It takes the Polaroid® concept of a picture in a minute and speeds that up. You take the picture, preview it on the LCD screen and delete it if you don't like it or save it for future posterity - all at no additional cost for film or developing. Print out the pictures you like (paper quality does matter) or send them as e-mail attachments to friends and relatives.

Let's get down to the actual items to consider when buying a camera. These items are in my order of importance although many of the items are actually of equal ranking and personal preference has influenced it.:

Resolution and Sensor Size:

The heart of all digital cameras is the light sensitive electronic chip called a sensor. It takes incoming light and converts it to a digital file. This chip determines the maximum resolution and, ultimately, image quality. This sensor is made up of a number of individual photo-receptors corresponding to pixels. When a digital camera says it has

1MP resolution, the sensor actually has that number of photo-receptors. The density of the sensor determines a camera's overall picture quality.

Using a loose analogy to relate it to your computer screen's resolution, the original default VGA resolution of Windows on a computer monitor was 640x480 which means it has 640 dots or pixels across by 480 down or .3 million pixels making up the screen image. A digital camera with this same resolution would have .3 million image sensors each representing a pixel or .3 MegaPixels (MP). Cameras in the mid-price range (\$150-300) now have 1MP, or 2MP. In the \$400-\$1,000 price range you will get 3MP or 4MP. This directly impacts the size of a picture you can print as more pixels translate into a larger picture that still looks good. The camera has captured more detail and doesn't have to "guess" or interpolate at the missing dots or expand the existing ones causing a blotchy print.

I have seen two kind of sensors: a charge coupled device (CCD) which is usually found in high-quality cameras and a complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) which is more common in the low-cost "entry-level" cameras. Most of the reviews I have seen favor CCD chips.

What resolution do you need? That depends on how you will be using the final output. Yes, more is always better, but as a rule of thumb related to final use:

- .3MP (640x480) = On screen viewing, Web Sites, sending as e-mail attachments, prints up to 3"x5"
- .8MP (1024x768) above and prints of 3"x5" to 4"x6"
- 1MP (1152x864) = 3"x5" to 5"x7"

- 1.3MP (1280x1024) = 4"x6" to 5"x7"
- 2MP (1600x1200) = 5"x7" to 6"x9"
- 3 MP prints up 8"x10" to 11"x14"
- 4MP 9"x12"

The above listing was the consensus of several sources but was plagiarized from the April 2001 issue of PC Photo, an excellent magazine for anyone starting out with digital photography. PC Photo generally used the more conservative - smaller sizes.

One last point on resolution: Many people will want to eventually crop their pictures for a better composition. When you crop it down, you effectively throw out the resolution in the area you delete. A 3MP image could quickly reduce to a 1MP with cropping, so if you like to work on your images and make relatively large prints, start with and shoot at the highest resolution you can afford.

The Lens:

There are two main points to consider here, lens material and zoom capability. Lenses can be made of glass or plastic. Glass is the hands down winner for quality.

The stated Zoom range is a bit more complex. You can have Optical Zoom and Digital Zoom. Optical Zoom uses the actual optics of the lens to magnify or zoom in on the image. There is no loss of resolution/quality, but it is more expensive to manufacture. Digital

Zooms take the original image from only the center part (how much depends on the degree of magnification) of the sensor and use the camera's internal computer to interpolate or guess at the "missing" pixels between the real ones. It is like cropping the picture and then stretching the image back up and filling in the blank spaces. Image quality is degraded and the greater the magnification, the more you lose. A 3MP sensor might actually be using only 1MP at the center and "filling in" the other 2MP. Don't get me wrong, I have seen cameras guess very well and produce good quality images at high digital zoom magnifications but optical is always better than digital. The most common range I have seen in optical zooms is 3X or three times magnification.

Also, be aware that the sensor is not the same size as a piece of 35Mm film, so when you see the focal length stated in mm like 38-115mm (3X) this is actually a more telephoto angle lens than you would get in a 35Mm camera. PC Photo Magazine list the conversion at approximately 5X. My Olympus camera has a lens of 5.4mm - 16.2mm which they state is equivalent to 35mm-105mm on a 35Mm camera which equals slightly wide angle to short (Portrait) telephoto for those not familiar with 35Mm cameras.

Framing the Picture:

You can frame the picture in either an optical, ideally through the lens, viewfinder or with an LCD display panel on the back of the camera. I feel a digital camera should have both! Being a long-time photo enthusiast I am accustomed to an optical viewfinder. LCDs also have the bad tendency to "wash out" or become too light to be viewable. I also

find it awkward to hold a camera away from my face while trying to frame the image. Another disadvantage is LCDs consume a lot of battery power. You can shoot all day on one set of batteries with an optical viewfinder, but you had better have extras if you use an LCD. I would not purchase a camera without an optical viewfinder. (Our VP, Elliot Glantz, feels just the opposite, and although his camera has both, he always uses the LCD over the optical viewfinder.) I will also admit an LCD is more accurate in framing the subject, especially close-ups, unless your optical viewfinder is "through the lens," something generally found only on top-of-the-line digital cameras.

If I am so partial to an optical viewfinder, why do I want a digital camera to have an LCD panel? Because it is invaluable for previewing your pictures to make sure you really got a good shot. If it didn't turn out, you know it instantly and can reshoot it. The bad picture is simply deleted, making room for another shot and with no waste of film. It is also great being able to show off your pictures while still at the party, etc. and see the reaction. One neat feature I saw on a Sony camera was an LCD panel which swivelled so you could still see it if you put the camera over your head or were using the self-timer to take your own picture.

Focus:

Simple, inexpensive, digital and film cameras have a single fixed, or two zone, focus. It is a compromise or zone guess. This is OK as a quick point-and-shoot camera but will not give you the best shots. Most better (\$250+) digital cameras have autofocus lenses. This will give you far better, sharper images. An added feature is a focus lock. This feature

allows you to lock the focus on the main subject and then re-frame the picture to a more pleasing composition. When you get up to the professional level (\$2,000+) cameras, you can even get optional full manual focus for real creative effects.

Memory - Storage Cards:

Digital cameras store their images in non-volatile memory cards; they save the memory even when the camera is off. Some very inexpensive cameras have only internal memory which will hold 25-30 pictures before you have to get to a computer to download them. This is OK around the house but would require you to lug a laptop with you on a trip if you wanted to take any additional pictures. A better solution is removable memory cards so you can take several with you and when one is full, just change it like you would film, and keep shooting. There are several, unfortunately non-compatible, options available. These are Smart Media (SM), Compact Flash (CF), Sony's Memory Sticks, Multimedia Cards, Click Disk, the new IBM MicroDrive, and just released CD-R. The 2000 Fall Comdex in Las Vegas also saw the introduction of additional formats but these are not yet available. SM and CF are the most popular at this time. They are all small cards, about the size of a matchbook, which slide into the camera. You purchase them by memory size, in Megabytes, which range from 4Mb to 64Mb with the MicroDrive going up to 340Mb. These capacities are increasing as I write this. Some Sony cameras still use a standard 3 1/2" floppy disk. These are cheap but are limited to 1.4Mb so they can't hold many pictures as the resolution increases. The number of images you can save per Megabyte is directly related to the resolution and the amount of

image compression you use.

Image Compression - File type:

A non-compressed high resolution picture would take up multiple megabytes of storage space so most cameras store the images in a compressed format. The most common formats are TIFF and JPEG. TIFF uses minimal compression and produces the largest file sizes but also the best pictures. JPEG is a "Lossy" compression algorithm. This means that some information is thrown away forever when the file is compressed—so if you compared the "uncompressed" image with the original, you would find some differences. You can, on some cameras, set the amount of compression so you can determine the amount of data you are willing to lose (and reduce file size) before the image becomes pixilated and looks unacceptable. Setting the camera to Fine, Normal or Basic determines the amount of compression. Some brands use different terms but the concept is the same. I discourage the use of the Basic - highest compression - setting as it gives the lowest quality. A good quality camera will give you a choice of file type as well as degree of compression.

So how many pictures do I get on a memory card? A basic camera my neighbor has includes only 2Mb of memory and at 640x480 resolution with what it calls fine compression they can take 16 pictures or 32 pictures at the basic setting. The average camera with removable memory comes with a 8Mb card. Using that as a guide I will reproduce part of a table (with their terms) from the camera I own:

Resolution	Compression	# of pictures
1600x1200	TIFF - Minimum	1
1600x1200	JPEG - Minimum	5
1600x1200	JPEG - Std	16 *
640x480	JPEG - Fine	32
640x480	JPEG - Normal	82

* This is the setting I use most often but I have to go back and Save-As with a higher level of compression if I am sending the files over e-mail to keep the size at a reasonable level for a dial-up download.

The Feel of the Camera

Even with the best specs in the world, if a camera does not “feel right” you will not use it. This is very subjective but also very important. Getting the size, weight, design, location and operation of the controls, and the general Ergonomic Fit comfortable to you are important. There are some necessary compromises in size and weight if you want every bell & whistle. You might be carrying the camera all day on vacation so don’t overbuy on size just to get a feature you may never use. The box of my still camera says it will take video clips also. But when you look at the spec sheet you find out the video is low resolution and limited to only several seconds, even with a relatively large media card. My camera only gives you 96 seconds with a 32Mb memory card at 320X240 resolution. Not very practical.

Viewing and getting the pictures out of the camera.

I consider it important, but not critical, to have a TV out on the camera. The small LCD screen on the back of the camera makes a poor screen

for several people to view the pictures. Being able to plug the camera into the TV, especially if the camera has a slide show feature, is very nice.

There are several way you can get the pictures into your computer. The oldest and slowest is with a serial connection. All PCs have a serial port so you are “guaranteed” a connection. The preferred way is with USB. It is many times faster, almost every computer now supports USB, and you can “hot-sinc” with USB, you don’t have reboot to connect the camera as you probably do with a serial connection. Even if your camera only has a direct serial connection, you can still use USB by purchasing a media card reader. Plug the reader into a USB port, remove the memory card from the camera, place it in the reader and your computer now has an additional drive letter, making it fast and easy to copy your pictures. They even make adapters that look like 3 ½” floppies that you can put the memory card into.

That is just about all I have room for this month. Next month we will get into more of the special features that make the camera easier to use. I will also tell you which camera I purchased and why. I welcome your input and questions.

Digital Photography (Part 2)

by Larry Horn

In the previous article, I tried to cover the more important considerations in purchasing and using a digital camera. I will repeat here that you should first decide how you will use the camera before drawing up your spec sheet. It is very easy to be seduced by features that sound great but you may never use. Also, be aware that just like computers, technology advances daily (or is that hourly?) and the prices generally are headed downward. The maker of my brand camera just last week came out with the new model that has a 10X Optical zoom for less than I paid for a 3X Optical zoom. Don't overbuy! Start out with a starter camera, see how you like it and keep track of the features you love or wished you had. Then move up to a camera with those features, which will probably cost less at that time than you paid for the starter camera.

My starter camera for general use would be 1MegaPixel, removable media (not floppy), and flash. A 3X zoom, TV out, USB and a LCD and Optical viewfinder are next on the list. Eliminate the zoom and the Olympus Brio 100 or Hp 215 are good choices for \$200-250. If you are really unsure and just want to test the waters, try a JamCam or one of the \$50 to \$100 cameras as a starting point and then give it to the kids as you move up.

It is also important to remember that despite whether the camera uses film or digital media, you are still taking pictures, so a good photography book or magazine (I like PC Photo) will be helpful.

Now that we have the basics, what are the other features you will want to consider? The technical term for most of these are the bells and whistles.

Exposure Control:

This touches on several different features. The first one is White Balance. White balance is equivalent to adding a filter to make the whites look white, not blue or yellow as you get under fluorescent or incandescent lighting, respectively.

Another related feature is exposure compensation. When you take a picture in a high contrast situation, like a person in a dark room with a bright light or window behind them or outside with the sun behind the person, the camera's exposure automatic controls may be fooled resulting in a dark/under-exposed subject with a properly exposed background. When shooting in this type of situation, a look at the picture on your LCD will tell you if it is OK or needs to be deleted and retaken with fill-in flash or an adjustment to the exposure. An Exposure Lock feature is useful here.

Remember, if you are using a flash, an on-camera flash has a very limited range, usually 8-10 feet. To increase the range you will probably need a "hot shoe" on the camera to add a second more powerful one or a sync outlet. (These are found only on high end - expensive Prosumer cameras. If you've never used one with your film camera, you're

unlikely to need one on a digital model.) Also, red eye reduction flash or slow sync features are desirable as you get more experienced in creative photography.

Speed of taking pictures:

Many digital cameras take several seconds to one minute to get ready for the first shot. This seems like an eternity when you are trying to get that quick spontaneous shot. Next be aware that there is usually a delay between pressing the shutter release and actually capturing the picture. Waiting for that perfect moment in the action or expression will result in disappointing missed shots. Anticipation is critical. Lastly, the camera may need time to record the picture on the media so rapid fire sequence shots may be difficult. Some new cameras overcome this by having internal memory that captures the pictures quickly and then writes it to the slower removable media .

Power - Batteries:

First - digital cameras eat batteries. Most cameras use standard AA batteries. These are preferable to proprietary ones which may cost more, be harder to find, or not be removable so you have to tie up the camera to recharge them. . When it comes to AA batteries you have a choice of several kinds. Single-use alkaline batteries tend to die quickly, especially if you must use that LCD screen to shoot the picture. However, the upside of this is that they can be found anyplace and are a good back-up. Rechargeable batteries can be nickel-cadmium (NiCad) or nickel metal hydride (NiMH). I recommend the NiMH as they last longer without the memory effect of NiCads and despite their higher

initial cost, will save you money in the long run. To recharge them, just put them in a charger and plug it in. I recommend two sets if you plan a full day of shooting, like on vacation, as they do take time (hours) to recharge. Some cameras will also work off AC wall outlets which is good for showing the pictures on your TV without depleting the batteries (Editor's Note: I use a battery pack which allows me a whole day's shooting without worrying about replacing batteries)

In-Camera Special Effects:

As competition gets going, many camera companies are starting to add in-camera features. These include Close-up/Macro capabilities, Slide Show display of the pictures on the camera's LCD or a connected TV, Multiple Images at once on the LCD- good for quickly finding a specific picture, and Magnification of the image on the LCD - the small size of a LCD screen makes this valuable to get a better look.

I have even seen in-camera effects like sepia toning and special borders for some cameras. I would not personally use them as I prefer a straight original that I can modify on the computer.

Software:

Almost every camera comes with software. While the TWAIN drivers are necessary to have the camera communicate with the computer, the photo editing software is generally underpowered. You will quickly want to upgrade to a full-featured program like Adobe Photo Elements, MGI Photo Suite, Microsoft Picture It! or Ulead PhotoImpact. These programs are generally easier to use and give you better control than the free software in the box. It is nice to get started with, but don't judge the

camera by the software.

Other Features:

Some cameras are adding features that do not make much sense to me. These include MP3 playback, Video and Audio recording. MP3 steals memory so you can't take as many pictures and Video recording is very brief and of poor quality. Audio makes some sense to add short notes on the picture but also occupies memory so it cuts down on the number of pictures.

Education:

I mentioned it before, but it is worth repeating. No camera will make you a great photographer. Get some photography training. Even the major film companies like Kodak are into digital today. They even have the Kodak Digital Learning Center at

<http://www.kodak.com/US/en/digital/dlc/index.jhtml>.

You can also try www.cnet.com and www.techtv.com for their guides.

My Camera:

OK, I promised to tell you what I purchased. Remember, that was last year, and while I am still very satisfied with the camera, newer models might change my purchase decision. I have an Olympus D-490. It is a 2.1MP camera with both 3X Optical Zoom plus 2X Digital Zoom, an Optical view finder and a LCD, Removable media (Smart Media), Preview/review with Multiple & Magnify as well as a slide show feature, small (pocketable) size, exposure compensation, focus lock, macro (close-up) capability, self timer, tripod mount, uses AA batteries

(std alkaline or NiMH rechargeable), and has a TV out. (Current street price about \$400.) This has been superseded with the model D-510 which added a longer digital zoom and USB as well as a burst mode to take 2 frames per second - all for less than I paid. They have also come out with a C-700UZ which added a 10X optical zoom that looks very attractive (around \$500). My son uses an Olympus D-460 which is almost identical to my D-490 but is only a 1.3MP camera and he is very satisfied with it. I purchased mine, in part, because I had used and liked his.

Don't be overly influenced by what I purchased. Go out and try them and see what you like within your budget.

Give Your Portal Some Pizzazz

By Steve Bass

Pasadena IBM Users Group

Customize your browser's home page and increase your productivity

I was at a buddy's house recently and spotted something alarming. His home page--the screen his browser automatically opens with--was MSN.

Yeah, you heard me. Not only hadn't he switched to another home page, he wasn't even aware that he could modify the page and get rid of much of the useless junk. With an ad-blocking program, he could also avoid all of Microsoft's blaring, shameless self-aggrandizements.

My hand started twitching. I was about to lunge towards his mouse and try to single-handedly change his home page, when his wife shouted “barbecue's ready.”

I was on my third beer when two things struck me. I'd had enough to drink and I had to help this guy out.

Dumping the Ads

You can decide for yourself whether blocking ads is ethical. As far as I'm concerned, ads that are deceptive (the one that looks like a download gauge and says “click here”), pop up boxes (or worse, those damn X-10 camera pop-*under* boxes), and blinking Flash animations are all fair game.

My favorite ad jamming utility is WebWasher (www.webwasher.com). It's free for personal use and if you accept the defaults, easy to use. Of course you can tweak WebWasher in dozens of ways, fine-tuning it to, say, allow some cookies to be released while withholding others.

Point Me Home

Changing your Home page is a five minute operation. It's straightforward in Internet Explorer (IE). Go to the Web site you want to use as your Home page. Then from the Tools menu, choose Internet Options and click Use Current.

In Netscape, go to the Web site you want to use as your Home page. From the Edit menu, choose Preferences. (I'm using version 6.01; your Netscape version may have slightly different menu settings.) You'll need to find the *Navigator* category or a dialog area that shows the Home Page option. Click the *Use Current Page* button and you're done. But while you're there, examine the Toolbars section of the Options area. Uncheck the buttons Netscape automatically adds, things you might not need or want.

Presto Chango

You may encounter a sleazy web site that changes your Home page without permission. It's happened to me and it threw me for a loop. Not only couldn't I figure out how they did it, I couldn't change it back to my original Home page. First try the previous instructions. If that doesn't fix it, you'll need to change a setting in your Registry. Fred Langa has a way to do it and he explains the process here

<http://www.langa.com/newsletters/2000/2000-07-10.htm#2>

Playing Around with Portals

I think of my browser—and Home page—as the center of my online activity, sort of a control panel that gets me to other places quickly and efficiently. I've never counted the hours but I'm guessing my browser's on screen about 40 percent of the time. (Probably another 40 percent is with Eudora and the balance in Word and PowerDesk.)

By the way, a portal isn't something mysterious or esoteric. It's simply a single integrated point for access to information, people, and other Web

sites; a personalized and customized user interface.

While I'm not happy with Yahoo's emulation of Microsoft (they bought eGroups only to make it a complicated chamber of horrors), their portal is terrific. My bias towards using Yahoo is twofold: Yahoo provides a variety of information, more than most portals, and it's blessedly easy to customize a page. Better, I have five separate Yahoo pages, each serving a different need. For instance, my main page includes the following:

- * News: Technology, local, science, world, and others.
- * Calendar: A quick view of my upcoming events with access to my calendar.
- *E-mail and messaging: I get to see my Yahoo mail account and who's online for an instant message.
- *Local area events.
- *Bookmarks: I use this handy category to jump to sites that I want access to but aren't important enough to add to IE's Links bar.
- *Weather.
- *Financial portfolio: A small, password-protected box that lets me see my daily losses.
- *Mapping: Similar to MapBlast.com but with a pull-down history.
- *News clipper: Yahoo automatically searches its news database to find articles that I'm tracking.

I have other Yahoo pages, each accessible from my Home page.

*Entertainment: with a listing of movie show times for theaters in Pasadena and an evening's worth of TV listings.

*Yahoo Search Tools: I have all my lookups here--Yellow Pages, E-mail and phone searches, as well as bookmarks that link me to people and reverse phone directory pages.

Yahoo's a Flex Champ

Page layouts are simple to design. Most Yahoo modules—Calendar, Maps, E-mail, Weather, for instance—can be placed on either side of the Home page. Bookmarks Portfolio, News, and other modules can be removed from the page to become a separate, temporary floating boxes. And the content can be set into either two medium sized columns or two narrow and one wide column.

Creating a Home page Portal is a fun project, has the potential to let you navigate the Web faster, and unlike installing a new operating system, is guaranteed not to hose your PC. §

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Write to him at steve_bass@pcworld.com. Check PCW's current edition at www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

The New Professional Criminals

By Matthew Skala

I recently finished writing my Master's thesis in theoretical computer science, describing the research I've been doing for the past year and a half. In the Spring I travelled to the U.S.A. to present a talk about my research. Mathematical research may sound like a quiet, unassuming way to spend my time; my work on graph embeddings might even seem boring to someone outside the field. But I'd like to tell you about one of my colleagues, who found a whole lot of excitement in much the same activity.

Dmitry Sklyarov is a 26-year-old PhD student at Moscow State Technical University. Like me, he's doing academic research in computer science. He's interested in computer security systems, as am I. I'm sure we'd find plenty of things to talk about if we ever met. Not long ago he travelled from Russia, where he lives with his wife and two young children, to the U.S.A., to present a talk about his research at a technical conference; just like my talk earlier this year.

As I write this on July 21, 2001, Dmitry Sklyarov is being held without bail in a U.S. Federal detention center, facing if convicted a US\$500,000 fine and five years in prison. What did he do, kill someone? No. He was arrested in connection with the talk he gave about his thesis research.

Welcome to the Digital Millennium, where computer scientists like

Dmitry and I find our profession classified as a form of criminal activity. I hope you've all buckled your seatbelts, because the next thousand years are going to be one heck of a ride.

We'll leave Dmitry in his jail cell while I tell you about another of my colleagues, Dr. Edward Felten of Princeton. You may remember Dr. Felten; he was an expert witness in the Microsoft antitrust case. His research team analysed some security technologies used by the music business, in response to a contest called the "SDMI Challenge", where a group of companies invited researchers to test the security of their schemes for controlling distribution of digital recordings.

Dr. Felten and his team, which included graduate students very much like myself, were successful in finding and manipulating the secret data hidden in the contest files. But when they proposed to give a talk at an academic conference, describing the results of their research, they were threatened with legal action. They were forced to withdraw from the conference.

If you're not part of the academic community yourself, you may not realise just what a big deal that event represents. If some professor can't give a talk, why should you care? The reason you should care is that you're a member of an industrialized society that depends on the work done by scientists like Sklyarov, Felten, and myself. If we can't do our jobs, everybody suffers. The most powerful things in our world are not physical objects, not even such apparently-powerful objects as hydrogen bombs; the most powerful things in our world are ideas. A hydrogen bomb can level one city; but an idea can destroy the entire world, or save it.

We have a system for handling ideas safely, to make sure that ideas serve us instead of destroy us. Scientists and scientific publication are important parts of that system. Strange as it may sound, we know from hundreds of years of trial and error that the only way to make sure ideas won't become destructive is to give them all away to everyone who wants them, as freely as possible.

Science doesn't work without open publication. The bottom line is that researchers have to be able to talk about whatever they want to talk about. That's why we have things like academic tenure - so that researchers can be free to do their work without worrying about whether people will like it.

As professional scientists, the job of my colleagues and I is to tell you the truth; not to tell you what you want to hear. That's important work.

They jailed Dmitry Sklyarov for doing research. They threatened Dr. Edward Felten for doing research. Is Matthew Skala's research next? Could I be sued for publishing my own work? I know that the answer is "Yes," because it has already happened. In March 2000 I was one of the defendants in a lawsuit triggered by a document I co-wrote. Just like Felten and Sklyarov, we didn't kill anyone, steal anyone's physical property, nor even distribute slander or hate literature: Eddy Jansson and I got in trouble just for doing mathematics and telling the truth, which is our job.

American copyright law is the common thread through all of these cases. Dmitry Sklyarov's talk was about vulnerabilities in the encryption used by Adobe eBook files. Dr. Edward Felten and his team wrote a paper about the insecurity of schemes for controlling the use of digital

audio files. Eddy Jansson and I publicized some of the design goofs in an Internet content filtering program. All were prosecuted or threatened under copyright law.

When you think of copyright law, you probably break "copyright" into its component words - the "right" to "copy". I would characterize it as the privilege to restrict copying. Either way, we imagine copyright as being all about copying things. If I write a book, and you print and sell copies of it without my permission, that's a violation of copyright. But under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), passed in 1998 in the U.S.A., copyright covers much more. With digital content (such as ebooks, audio recordings, or computer software), copyright holders are allowed to boobytrap the data to restrict it in ways that ordinary copyright would not allow.

For instance, when I buy a paper book I am allowed to read it until it wears out; but with an electronic book, the publisher could say, "No, you're only allowed to read it three times, and then you have to buy a new one." The DMCA and related laws not only allow publishers to make those restrictions, but give such limits the force of law. If I read the book more than three times then I am actually breaking the law; and not only that, if I talk too much about how a person could read the book more than three times, that's "trafficking in a circumvention device" and it's a crime. That's the crime for which a graduate student of computer science a lot like me is at this moment held without bail in a U.S. Federal detention center thousands of miles from home.

The Canadian government is soliciting public comments on whether it would be a good idea for us to introduce a DMCA-style law here. I am

preparing a submission for them explaining my views; if you would like to express your own opinion, there is a government information site at <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/rp01100e.html>. Space and politeness don't allow me to write all my thoughts about copyright law here, but I hope I've whetted your appetite. Whether you are in Canada, the U.S.A., or somewhere else, I'd encourage you to write to your elected representatives and let them know what you think about copyright in the Digital Millennium.

This article is available at www.bbc.org/newsletter/aug01nl/skala.html the on-line edition of the Big Blue and Cousins, Victoria BC newsletter. For the past year and a half, Matthew Skala has been a graduate student in Computer Science at the University of Victoria. He will be leaving Victoria in September to pursue his studies as a PhD student in computer science at the University of Waterloo in Ontario. He intends to retain his BB&C membership. He is the winner of a prestigious Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada scholarship. He was also the Systems Director of Big Blue and Cousins. Please see his article on CyberPatrol in <http://www.bbc.org/newsletter/jun00nl/skala.htm> and <http://www.bbc.org/newsletter/apr00nl/pcvn.htm> for other articles published in the BB&C newsletter.

September - October 2001

Can Spam

by **Brian Backman**

Anyone who has had an e-mail account for more than twenty three and a quarter milliseconds has received Spam, so there's no need for a lengthy description of it.

Basically, Spam is unsolicited advertising e-mail messages. It is also a really tasty meat product that goes great with pineapples and sliced jalapenos, but that's not the kind we're dealing with here.

My goal for this article is to give you a few pointers on how to reduce the amount of Spam you receive or possibly eliminate it, and some ways to deal with it when you do get it.

Before we get started, you should understand that there are two kinds of e-mail advertising.

Opt-in and Opt-out

Opt-out is Spam. Opt-in is any sort of commercial mail, such as newsletters, catalogs and sales flyers that you have agreed to accept. Usually, you agree to accept these as a condition, reward or benefit of registering with an online service (remember PriceLine?). Be careful about the difference. If you get a message that you believe is Spam, think first about any agreements you may have made recently. It would

BLUE NOTES

be really poor form to report a legitimate, sweet, loving, angelic emailer as a putrid tool of the Devil, Spammer.

With that in mind, to the ramparts!

Attempt to Eliminate

I don't believe that you can totally eliminate Spam, but this is as close as you can get:

Filter out mail from any sender whose address is not in your address book. This is the anti-social method, but absolutely the most effective. Set up your mail system so that it will compare the sender's address to those in your address book. If the sender's address does not match anything in your address book, the mail will be rejected or redirected away from your inbox. This is fairly simple to set up, though not all mail systems offer this feature. Using Hotmail as an example, go to Options, then Inbox Protector under Mail Handling. For Level of Protection select Custom, and then check only--The senders address is in your Hotmail address book. If you really don't want to be bothered, you can also select the trash can as your discard folder.

While this method seems foolproof, I have heard anecdotal evidence that some Spam has slipped through, so I can't guarantee it. Also, remember that this will not protect you from any virus that an "approved" sender might mail you.

You should also keep in mind that this will prevent you from receiving any mail you have requested, such as newsletters you sign up for, unless you can get their address into your address book first.

This can be very annoying as when your Uncle Finster's lawyer sends you a message that the old boy is about to croak and you'll not get a dime of the inheritance unless you show up at his bedside pronto.

Anti-Spam Mail Accounts

This one usually incurs a fee, so move on if you're a cheapskate.

There are mail systems out there whose main claim to fame is the near total elimination of Spam, as well as aggressively reporting Spammers. These services use a combination of methods to prevent Spam. I'll give a quick description of the most famous one, SpamCop (URL listed at end). When you sign up with SpamCop, give them a list of approved sender addresses. Mail from these senders will pass through unimpeded, exactly as in the Hotmail example previously mentioned.

Now things get complicated. Any mail from a service provider that is on SpamCop's approved list, or that SpamCop has never heard of, will be passed through as well. Any mail from a service provider whose name is on the Evil Children of Satan list will be placed into a "holding area." The sender will receive an automated reply explaining that they've been blocked because their service provider is in league with the minions of Hades. The sender can then fire back a reply that he or she is not a spammer and this was a legitimate message. The mail will then be sent on to you.

If you do receive Spam, you report it to the mail service and they'll take care of reporting it. If a provider causes a lot of complaints from members, then that provider will be considered scum of the earth and placed on the bad list.

You don't totally eliminate the Spam, but you do cut it way down and get the satisfaction that providers who generate a lot of Spam will be inconvenienced.

Try to Fight Back

Ah, you valiant fool. Do not go quietly. . . Rage, Rage!

Fighting back is OK as long as you understand that you will ultimately lose. At best, you may close down a few Spammer's accounts, but they will just open new ones. At worst, your mail account may become unusable.

But if you want to try...

When you open a message that turns out to be Spam, there will almost certainly be a link at the bottom that you can click on to cancel further messages. This seems pretty easy, just click and end the torment.

Right?

Don't you believe it!

What you're really doing is proving to the Spammer that your e-mail account is valid and that you read Spam. The vicious little insect will then sell your address to others of its species and you will be inundated.

You could try reporting the Spammer. This may give you some personal satisfaction, but don't think for a minute that it'll accomplish much.

First off, you'll need to set your e-mail system to "display full header information." What you're doing here is inserting all of the available routing history into the message when it's displayed, rather than just

who sent it to you and the date of transmission.

This will, hopefully, give enough information to the Spammer's provider that they can track down the weasel.

The downside is that the full display option takes up more space. It'll also insert a mountain of text into your mail when you forward messages. You can delete it, but it's extra work to do so.

Sooo, the question is, are you willing to put up with all the extra gobbeldygook just to report a Spammer?

Your email service provider's Help should tell you where to report Spammers, but usually it will be "abuse@" followed by the provider's name. For example, abuse@yahoo.com.

You need to forward the Spam message to the "abuse@" address, making sure that you have the full header showing. Now the problem with that is that you had to open the Spam to forward it. Guess what? The Spammer may now know that you read the message and you will again be inundated.

Maybe it's worth it to you just to report. However, I have reported Spammers numerous times and all it got me was some very nice automatic responses and an increase in Spam mail.

Now, you can use certain tools to try and trace the Spammers yourself and report them.

For example, Whois (<http://www.cix.co.uk/~net-services/spam/whois.htm>) from Net Services is supposed to show information on the originator of the mail. You can then send a

complaint to their provider.

Another program from Net Services is Spam Hater (http://www.cix.co.uk/~net-services/spam/spam_hater.htm). This program is supposed to help you trace and report Spammers as well.

I haven't tried either (Whois is freeware by the way), but they may be worth a look.

Accept Fate, But Reduce the Pain

As you may have noticed by now, I'm a bit of a fatalist. Then too, I don't have time to go chasing Spammers and I'll bet you don't either. Of course, if you're truly committed to going after the vermin, I applaud you. If I were retired or even just single, I would certainly take a shot at them now and then.

All I do is delete any and all messages that I do not recognize.

That's it. The whole Tamale.

Spammers have a way to get notices that you opened their mail. I'll say it again, whenever you open a Spam message, the Spammer knows it. Now you have just verified that your address is valid. Your address will be sold. You will get more Spam. End of story.

Whenever I forwarded Spam from Hotmail accounts to abuse@hotmail.com to report them, I got replies that there was nothing that could be done because the addresses in the message were fake. Within days, I was flooded with Spam from hotmail addresses. The same results from Yahoo and Netscape. On and on.

When I started simply deleting the Spam, the volume slowly decreased.

Well, on my Hotmail account there is one other thing I do; perhaps your account has a similar feature. In Options go to Inbox Protector under Mail Handling. In the Level of Protection, select Custom and then check only--Your address appears on the "To:" or "Cc" line and The sender's address is in your Hotmail Address Book. This seems to have cut down on my Spam somewhat, but it's not certain.

Well, that's it. The sites listed next can give you much more information. If you really want to fight, check them out.

More Info and Help

Here are links to some sites that will give you more information and help on fighting Spam

- JMHO on Spam (<http://home.att.net/~marjie1/index.htm>): Great information site.
- Spam Cop (<http://spamcop.net/>): Spam free e-mail and reporting assistance along with more info.
- Fight Spam on the Internet (<http://spam.abuse.net/>): More info and some tools!
- Spam FAQ (www.mall-net.com/spamfaq.html): Some good resources, redundant info, a stirring call to arms!

Brian has worked in Tech Writing, Training, Quality Testing and Help Desk, as well as some Web Development. He is a regular at the Internet SIG.

Blaze Media Pro 2002

Reviewed by M.K. Carol Lee

Mystik Media
296 Captain Beam Blvd
Hampstead, NC 28443
(775) 924-4436



<http://www.mystikmedia.com/blazemediapro.html>

At A Glance Rating: **

Price: \$50

System Requirements: Pentium class 200 MHz processor or better, Windows® 95/98/NT/2000/ME/XP, 64 MB RAM, 30 MB HD, SVGA or higher resolution display, 4x or better CD-ROM drive (for CD conversions and CD-ROM playback), Mouse (recommended),

Keyboard, Sound Card, Speakers/headphones, and Optional CD Writer (for creating CDs).

Pro: An entire toolkit of multimedia features from simple media playback to media constructing and editing.

Con: Unimpressive video editing features.

Blaze Media Pro is an all-in-one multimedia program for playing popular media formats, organizing audio and video play lists, and performing audio and video recordings, conversions, and other minor editing. I downloaded the program from the Mystic Media web site where a free 15-day trial version of it was available. I ran into a problem installing this program on my desktop computer. I had previously downloaded and installed the 2001 version of it a few months back. I had uninstalled it when the 15-day trial version ran out.

After downloading and installing the 2002 version on my desktop, I found that the program would not run. The program installed but when I tried to run the program nothing would happen. I don't know whether it was conflicting with something else on my desktop or whether installing the prior version somehow caused this version not to work. However, because I was able to install it on my laptop, I did not try to figure out why it wouldn't work on my desktop. I entered the unlock key obtained specifically for my review so that I could still run the program after 15 days.

The program plays back audio files and builds custom play list like other existing audio programs. However, it includes added editing features such as the addition of silences, noises, and other effects. Although the

list of audio editing options is limited, it is a good start for the beginner. The program can also convert audio and video formats too. The included CD Recorder burns MP3 and Wav files onto CD-R's. However, it does not burn video files onto CD-Rs.

Although I didn't have a camcorder to test out the video recording feature, I used it to edit a video file that I already had on my laptop. I was able to brighten the lighting of the video file. However, after the brightening process the soundtrack and video were in misstep with each other. On my 256 MB Celeron 500 laptop, it took more than two hours to brighten my chosen 182MB video. Consequently, it was disappointing to discover after the long wait that the brightening process caused the sound and video to run in misstep to each other. In addition, the video editing processor lacked the option of deleting unwanted scenes. Overall, I was unimpressed by the video editing features.

This program is handy for doing the simple jobs of playing audio and video files, performing some minor audio file editing, and file format conversions. However, it falls short when trying to perform more advanced functions involving video files.

WinFM 1.1

Reviewed by M.K. Carol Lee



inKline Global, inc.
P.O. Box 5479,
Reno, NV 89513

<http://www.inklineglobal.com/products/winfm/>

At A Glance Rating: **

Price: \$19.95

System Requirements: Pentium processor, Windows 95/ 98 / NT 4.0 / 2000, 16 MB RAM, 10 MB HDD, Speakers, Soundcard.

Pro: Nifty little program for listening to radio stations from around the world over the internet.

Con: Not all stations in database worked.

WinFM is a shareware Internet Radio Player. I downloaded and installed the 4MB zipped installation file from inKline Global's website. The installed program already had 10 stations on the play list by default. After updating the station database, I added more

stations to the play list. There are two ways of searching for radio stations: either by country or by genre.

When the stations that I selected actually worked, I thought the program was great. However, I was disappointed to find that a many of the stations in the database did not work for reasons unknown to me. All the program would indicate was that it failed to connect to the selected station.

I compared WinFM with Windows Media Player 7.0's radio tuner. Windows Media Player has a more comprehensive advanced search features. Windows Media Player has more genres than WinFM and the resulting radio stations for the same search yielded more stations in Windows Media Player than in WinFM. Some of the stations found by Windows Media Player required that the user visit the radio stations web site to play the station, which may explain why WinFM could not play those same stations. However, WinFM did not allow the option to go to the website to play the station.

Windows Media Player worked better for me in finding radio stations and playing them. I was disappointed by WinFM's inability to play a lot of the stations that I had chosen from its database. Either those stations should not be listed in the database, or there should be an explanation why those stations don't work or an explanation of how to make them work.

I do like the small size of WinFM compared to that of Windows Media Player. Windows Media Player has a lot more overhead and unwanted advertisement. WinFM is a simple and easy-to-use program. When it

works, it works great. However, when it doesn't connect to a selected station, it is disappointing.

RESUMEMaker Deluxe 9.0

Reviewed by M.K. Carol Lee

Individual Software Incorporated
4255 Hopyard Road, #2
Pleasanton, CA 94588-9900
(925) 734-6767

www.individualsoftware.com

At a Glance Rating: ****

Price: \$39.95 (download)/\$49.95 (CD-ROM)

System Requirements: Microsoft Windows XP/2000/Me/NT/98/95, Pentium PC or higher, 16 MB RAM available, 55 MB of hard disk space (12 MB additional for Career Planner), 256 Color VGA or higher display, CD-ROM Drive, Sound Card with Speakers or Headphones, Microsoft Compatible Mouse, Internet connection to use Job Finder and Resume Caster.



Pros: Great program for any job seeker.

Cons: None.

I reviewed version 2.0 of ResumeMaker Deluxe a few years back. The program was extremely useful for anyone looking for a job. It provided all the features necessary in job hunting. The program could create a resume in a variety of styles, write a variety of letters, and keep track of appointments and interviews. In addition, the program provides tips and suggestions in interviewing, finding job leads, and preparation.

Version 9.0 of the program enhances the existing features and adds three more: Salary Finder (provides salary ranges based on job titles adjusted by geographic region), Job Finder (searches current job openings at 20 career web sites), and Resume Caster (posts resume at the same 20 career web sites). The layout of the program has changed slightly to reflect all the various sections of the program so that the user can easily find what they are looking for. The program is segregated into the following sections: resumes, cover letters, contact manager, virtual interview, salary finder, expert advice, career planner, resume caster, and job finder.

The first thing I did after I installed the program was to look for my salary range. It thoroughly segregates every imaginable job title. This feature is definitely useful in determining the salary range for any prospective job seeker. Note that the salary data is dated April 2001 and there seems to be no option available for updating this data.

Job Finder automates the searching of jobs on 20 different career web sites. A useful added feature is that the resulting search contact information can be easily added to the program's Contact Manager by just clicking the Add to Contact Manager button. The Job Caster feature automates as much as possible the process of submitting a resume to those same 20 career web sites. ResumeMaker automatically fills in the fields at each web site with the user's name, address, resume and other information. However, because each web site accepts resumes differently, the user will still need to review each career web site. Some of the career web sites allow the user to submit the resumes by clicking the submit button within Job Caster, while some have questionnaires that require further information, and others connect the user to their web sites to complete their own procedures.

The Resume and Cover Letters sections use a fill in the blanks approach to forming a resume in a style of the user's choosing and developing a template for the user to use as a cover, broadcast, thank you, or follow-up letter. Contact information may be merged in using the word processor included with the program or selected from the data stored in the Contact Manager. Once the template is developed, it is transferred to the built-in word processor for final editing by the user.

Included with the program is a bonus program called Career Planning, which takes up an additional 12 MB on the hard drive. The Career Planner is included to help the user discover which careers is best suited for the user, based on their skills, needs, and future desires. The user is asked a series of questions, which help to identify their strengths and weaknesses and their likes and dislikes. The Career Planner may help

guide the user in the right direction, if they are hunting for a new career or profession or may suggest that the user seek to renew or improve their educational studies. Its usefulness to the user is based on their need and willingness to follow the guidance given by the program. However, it is an interesting feature to run just to see if the users' existing career matches their suggested career.

Another interesting feature is the Virtual Interview section, which is useful for interview preparation. There are approximately 500 questions provided with the suggested rational for answering the questions successfully. Also included is a video of the top 25 interview questions and answers.

The manual that comes with it is relatively good, but unnecessary since the software is very easy and intuitive to use. I developed a resume and cover letter without even referencing the manual. As with the prior version, I loved this version of ResumeMaker Deluxe. It is a career placement center on a CD-ROM. I recommend it to any potential job seeker.

Telephone scam

I received a telephone call last evening from an individual identifying himself as an AT&T Service technician who was conducting a test on telephone lines. He stated that to complete the test I should touch nine (9), zero (0), the pound sign (#), and then hang up.

Luckily, I was suspicious and refused. Upon contacting the telephone company, I was informed that by pushing 90#, you give the requesting individual full access to your telephone line, which enables them to place long distance calls billed to your home phone number. I was further informed that this scam has been originating from many local jails/prisons. I have also verified the above information with UCB Telecom, Pacific Bell, MCI, Bell Atlantic and GTE. Please beware: DO NOT press 90# for ANYONE. The GTE Security Department requested that I share this information with EVERYONE I KNOW. Please pass this on to everyone you know. If you have mailing lists and/or newsletters from organizations you are connected with, I encourage you to pass on this information to them also. After checking with Verizon they said it was true, so do not dial (9), or zero (0), or the (#) pound sign. Just hang-up. PLEASE PASS ON TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW

Celebrating Operating Systems

by Ron Feiertag

A computer show focused on a single operating system can be a celebration. An operating system is the program that manages all of the other programs in a computer, according to whatis.com (an excellent web site that explains computer terms). How can a computer show about that be exciting? Because people who learned an operating system, and the other application programs that we really want to continue to be able to use, want to see that operating system survive. Many of us know that our enthusiasm and support can help its survival, so when we go to a computer show organized around an operating system, we are ready to celebrate. Our enthusiasm increases when we find charismatic keynote speakers, stunning new products, useful promotional giveaways, and even entertainment at these events. Let's see how two recent computer shows measured up.

Four major operating systems, Linux, Mac, O/S2 and Windows, all have their enthusiasts but O/S2 and Windows have not had their own computer shows lately. Linux and Mac have shows named LinuxWorld and Macworld. Microsoft promotes its new version of Windows, Windows XP, at events like its live satellite broadcast to cities across

the United States last week which was discussed in this issue's President's column.

I previously used DOS and then moved on to versions of Windows after they were introduced by Microsoft. It seems like Microsoft cranks out versions of Windows much too quickly, but parts of the computer press criticized Microsoft for not cranking them out fast enough. An article titled "Top-Secret Windows" in the August 1997 issue of PC Computing magazine said: "Microsoft's inability to meet its deadlines doesn't mean you're stuck with a two-year old operating system. Dozens of Windows 95 bug fixes ... are ready for you to download now". I disagree with that writer's impatience. I don't mind being "stuck" for awhile with an operating system that does what I want it to do.

Because the Association of Personal Computer User Groups expanded its scope to include other operating systems in addition to Windows, I thought it would be a good idea to check out computer shows featuring some of those operating systems. I attended Macworld last January and LinuxWorld last August.

Steve Jobs, the co-founder and visionary leading Apple Computers, is one of the world's most dynamic speakers. The keynote he gave at Macworld was especially worthwhile because we watched a great speaker demonstrate a great product. The Mac OS X has the cleverest interface I ever saw, making it fun to use. He said that almost all Mac OS 9 applications work in Mac OS X without adaptation. (One of the best things about the various versions of Windows was that you could run all of your favorite DOS and Windows applications on every new version of Windows. Unfortunately this comes to an end with Windows XP which does not support DOS applications that some of us still enjoy.)

When people entered the exhibit hall after the keynote speech, we saw a welcoming sign saying "Ask the Experts: Free Tech Support", and people were there to answer our questions. I was also surprised to see three different credit card companies with their own booths - at each one you could get a free wristwatch if you signed up for one of that company's credit cards. Maybe they should have had a "product shoot out" to see which company was giving away the best watch. There was also the shocking sight of t-shirts being sold at five different booths. Companies at other computer shows had the more user-friendly practice of giving away t-shirts for free. Because iMacs are some of the best looking computers around, a company named Redlightrunner.com was selling iMacAquariums. They look like computer monitors but live fish swim in them. A company named Pioneer Sales had a combination of an alarm clock, an FM radio, and a calculator, all in the shape of an iMac computer. Their web site is <http://www.Pioneer-Sales.com>. Connectix sold Virtual PC, a program that enabled people to run Windows software on their Mac. Texas Software Solutions had "Linux for your Mac".

Macworld also had a museum-quality digital art gallery where each of the artists used a Mac to create a picture. For example, Ciro Marchetti's picture "Evening Commute" was on display there. You can see it and other art that he created at <http://www.graform.com/ciro/index.html>.

Besides showing its outstanding printers, Epson's booth included many fine large photographs. This was part of its "America in Detail" exhibit. Epson commissioned Stephen Wilkes to travel for 52 days to photograph images of American life. His work, ranging from "Times Square Reflection" to "Tree in Napa Valley", was then printed on Epson printers. You can see his photographs at

<http://photocollection.epson.com/> but you will not have quite the same viewing experience that I had. My experience was enhanced by the presence of Graham Nash (of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) who sang "Our House" at a special event for their unveiling. His wonderful singing turned Our House, with these photographs and the people who enjoyed them, into a community.

Later I attended a session for people in the user group community. Apple's representative said that when someone registers a computer from Apple, they get a letter back and one of the first paragraphs promotes user groups. One person said that his group contacts vendors to try to get deals that can be passed on to user group members. To do this, he establishes a relationship with the vendor, explaining what his user group has to offer. For example, your group can bring customers to the store and new computer purchasers can get their questions answered at your meetings, saving the store owner time that it would have taken him to answer questions. If your user groups performs community service, let the vendor know because it could help persuade him to say yes to your request for discounts. Some groups reported leaving fliers about their groups at computer stores. Another trend they reported is having their newsletter sent electronically instead of being printed in order to save money. Another idea was that just as there are sister cities, an American user group and a foreign user group can benefit by establishing a "sister club" relationship with each other.

The LinuxWorld Show Guide boasted "feeding your addictions since 1999: caffeine, t-shirts, Linux goodies, gadgets, hats, books, electronics, stickers, posters, mp3, geek toys, mugs, gamer stuff". That list was accurate except that they had mp3 music players, not mp3 music files. There was also free cake for everyone.

A lively panel discussion on "The State of Open Source" put things into perspective. When asked what was the biggest event affecting Linux in the past year, Linus Torvalds (who created Linux) said better desktop user interface. An example of this called HancomOffice 2.0 was in the exhibit hall. It's a desktop office suite that includes word processing, spreadsheets, video presentations, graphics, HTML creation and editing, database management, etc. Its competition includes Corel's WordPerfect Office 2000 for Linux and Sun's StarOffice 5.2. Information about these products can be found at <http://www.hancom.com/en/> <http://linux.corel.com/> and <http://www.sun.com/staroffice/index.html>

Also on the panel was Brian Behlendorf from Apache, a group of users who agreed to maintain the software that their companies depend on. Panelists said that people in the open source community help to further develop Linux because it feels good to help other people and for the recognition it brings. Concern was expressed that Microsoft's Passport and Hailstorm could result in excessive centralization and that in the future, whenever there is any transaction on the Internet, it could result in a payment to one company. Another panelist guessed that if a company tried to gain this type of taxing power for itself, either the US government or the Europeans would step in to stop it. After this discussion ended, they presented the Open Source Excellence Awards. Best of Show was awarded to IBM for the eServer iSeries. Best Productivity Application was won by Red Hat Inc. for Red Hat DB.

I learned more about IBM's commitment to Linux at its Customer Day event. They said that Linux is increasing in popularity and it was the operating system on 27% of the servers that were shipped in 2000. IBM established a Linux Technical Center to help make Linux better, and it

is only after the Linux community accepts IBM innovations that they distribute these improvements. They are having great success with Linux both in the small business environment and with distributed enterprises (such as a chain of retail stores or bank branches or insurance company offices). At its small business breakout session, Benoy Tamang from Caldera answered the question "How can your company make money from selling Linux if Linux is free?" He said that Linux is free if your time is free, but Caldera simplifies Linux for business users and makes it work for them. In the exhibit hall IBM had the TechMobile, a Ford car with a lot of Linux technology from IBM including Web access via cellular modem. The car analyzes a driver's speech for clarity and correctness so it can intervene if a driver is about to fall asleep at the wheel. Voice commands would automatically play music, close the car's windows, turn on the ignition, etc.

O'Reilly and Associates was one of the most impressive companies in the exhibit hall. In addition to having lots of different books about Linux, it also had many of its authors there to meet readers and answer questions.

In 2002 you can be a part of future celebrations at Macworld in San Francisco on January 8th, at LinuxWorld in New York City on January 29th, and at LinuxWorld in San Francisco on August 12th.

OCTOBER 2001

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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NOVEMBER 2001

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DECEMBER 2001

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30						

First Tuesday: Steering Committee meeting
Upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza, Geary Blvd and 16th Ave 7PM

Second Tuesday: General questions about Windows and hardware, and minor hardware installations.
2040 Ellis, 3 houses west of Divisadero, 7-9PM (confirm 415-346-9321 or 415-346-2644)

Third Tuesday: General Meeting, The auditorium of the Community College District Office,
 33 Gough Street, (a half-block south of Market Street) San Francisco, CA
 doors open at 6; SIGs at 6:15; Snacks & beverages 6:15 - 7; 7 p.m. meeting;
 CHECK OUR WEB SITE FOR LATEST INFORMATION: www.sfpcug.org

MINUTES STEERING COMMITTEE - AUGUST

The San Francisco PC Users Group Steering Committee meeting of August 7, 2001, was held at Round Table Pizza, 16th and Geary.

Present were Butler Crittenden, Judy Gaer, Harold Charns, Pierre Hahn, C. David Ross, Don Oclassen, David Caldwell, Ron Feiertag, and Joseph Puig III.

The meeting was called to order at 19:03, chaired by club president Butler Crittenden. The minutes of the July 2001 meeting were distributed. A motion was then made and seconded that they be approved as amended by club president Butler Crittenden. The minutes were approved as amended.

The Treasurer's report – The Treasurer noted that income last month balanced our expenses. A motion was made and seconded that the report be accepted as balanced, and all were in favor.

The Vice-President's report was that he has been humbled and enlightened by helping at the computer shows.

The President's report – Some kind of LAN connection exists in the meeting room. It may be a DSL or other high-speed connection to the Internet. There was no 4th Tuesday web discussion last month.

The Webmaster's report – There has been no redesign work done yet. It was suggested there be program reposts on the web site. Butler will send Joseph the information.

The Membership Committee – One membership renewal this month. (See Treasurer's report)

The Blue Notes Editors' report was that it is out. The editor set it up so that it couldn't be printed as an experiment, and he received several complaints regarding this. He will make the next issue printable. Butler suggested that we possibly also have an HTML version. Pierre also suggested an article on how to use PDF or possibly a 10-minute

demonstration at the meeting. He also mentioned we need articles for the next Blue Notes.

The Product Review report was that there is nothing new. Ron contributed some programs for review or door-prize drawing at a meeting.

The Program Chair's report is that summer meetings are lighter. Joseph suggested some sort of club panel instead of vendors for summer meetings. The topic of the August meeting is subject to change. Butler will tell vendors they can invite people for free. September meeting is not currently filled. Two possible vendors are Adobe and Zone Alarm. October is Aladdin Systems (StuffIt). November is Bob Schneider on web sites. December is the holiday auction and party.

Old Business – BC still needs more support. David Ross questioned whether we have insurance to cover our projector. Pierre suggested checking if the projector has a slot for a metal cable to secure it during meetings. It was suggested that the treasurer look into insurance for the projector. We also need to have David Caldwell look into room renewal for next year.

New Business – None

After a motion that the meeting be adjourned was made, seconded, and passed, with no abstentions, Butler adjourned the meeting at 19:48 hours.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Gaer, **Secretary**

MINUTES STEERING COMMITTEE - SEPTEMBER

The San Francisco PC Users Group Steering Committee meeting of September 4, 2001 was held at Round Table Pizza, 16th and Geary.

Present - Butler Crittenden, Judy Gaer, Harold Charns, Pierre Hahn, C. David Ross, David Caldwell, Ron Feiertag, and Dave Hart.

The meeting was called to order at 19:09, chaired by club president Butler Crittenden. The minutes of the August 2001 meeting were distributed. Then a motion was made and seconded that they be approved as presented.

The Treasurer's report – The Treasurer said we have sufficient funds. We had one new membership and six renewals.

The Vice-President was not present, but Butler stated the Don is doing a great job at the Robert Austin Computer Show Tech Bench.

The President's report – Butler mentioned that we had received a request from a brother and sister of a mentally handicapped person for a computer donation for their brother. Butler thought this might be a good use for a desktop computer that Pierre donated to the club. We also have a donated modem. Butler will put a request out to the membership for a donated monitor. The brother and sister said they would arrange an ISP.

The Webmaster's report – The Webmaster was not present at the meeting. Butler said there is nothing new for the web site. There was a discussion re whether the vendor that presented at the last meeting (4D) had tools that we could use or need for our website, since they have a discounted price for nonprofits. It was decided to wait until we have a site redesign team in place. There was some discussion of how to poll members re: what they want on the website. Butler also mentioned that redesigning the website should be a learning experience for those who are interested.

The Membership Committee – (See Treasurer's report)

The Blue Notes Editors' report was that they are ready to start a new issue. The deadline for things not yet turned in is two weeks.

The Product Review report was that Yves Barbero will review Photoshop 6. Pierre will give a demo of Flip Album at a meeting. Ron wanted to know if we were promoting product review to members. Butler stated that there was not much unclaimed product coming in.

The Program Chair report is that the September meeting is CyberLink. October is Aladdin Systems (StuffIt 7.0). November is Bob Schneider on web sites. December is the holiday auction and party.

Old Business – BC still needs more support. Microsoft promised product for volunteers at Office XP event. We have not received it yet.

New Business – Pierre has a laser printer donated by the same people who donated the server. We are not sure if it works (it needs to be checked). Ron asked when we will start asking for donations for the auction. Butler said, end of September, early October.

After a motion that the meeting be adjourned was made, seconded, and passed, with no abstentions, Butler adjourned the meeting at 19:58 hours.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Gaer, **Secretary**

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24 hour recording for meeting information 415-346-2644

**San Francisco PC Users Group
Application/Renewal/Address Change**

Name: _____
(Please type or print legibly.)

Date: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: (____) _____

Work phone: (____) _____

City, State, Zip: _____

FAX phone: (____) _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Please check: Renewal member # _____ New Member

Check type of membership:

please send your check to:

- Individual \$25
- Family \$30
- Business \$50
- Outside US \$25

SF PC Users Group
Attn: Membership Director
3145 Geary Blvd, Box 284
San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

Please be patient it may take up to 3 weeks to enable the account

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Please do not mail cash.)