

SLO Bytes HardCopy

A publication of the San Luis Obispo PC Users Group
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October SLO Bytes Meeting Review by William Avery

Our Early Meeting at 1 PM was hosted by Alan Raul, and featured his choice of main topic, ACDSee imaging software, as well as Q&A discussions with the membership on topics of their choice.

Alan had a very complete tour of the fun features of the ACDSee program, from ACD Systems, Ltd. Their download is available at: <http://www.acdsystems.com/English/Products/ACDSee/ACDSee-Download.htm>.

The minimum system requirements are listed as:

Hardware:

Pentium-class processor or equivalent (PIII 500 MHz or higher recommended)
64 MB RAM (128 MB recommended)
60 MB free hard disk drive space

Software

Windows® 98 (Second Edition for non-English operating systems), ME, 2000, XP
Microsoft® Internet Explorer 5.0.0 or later
16-bit High Color or higher display adapter (True Color display recommended)
Recommended: Microsoft® DirectX 8.0* -- for Microsoft DirectX file format support
Recommended: QuickTime(tm) 6.0* -- for QuickTime file format support

Alan started with the image browser, and worked through the features he likes, and showed the editing and format translation functions which are offered. It is known as the low cost "Photoshop", with most of that program's abilities. The product description on Download.com offers these comments:

"ACDSee digital-photo software makes it easy to import, view, organize, print, enhance, share, and archive your digital photos. ACDSee is easy to use for everyone, from beginners to professionals, and powerful and flexible enough to meet your needs as your image collection grows. "Indispensable," says American Photo magazine. Version 6.0 burns photos to CD and DVD for archiving or sharing, creates HTML slide shows, and improves the quality of images you print with new resampling filters."

The Download.com summary is a quick guide to getting started with ACDSee version 6.0. An additional Download.com Review states:

"With so many digital-photo managers available today, it's nice to see that an old application can still learn some new tricks. The latest version of ACDSee can burn photos to CD and DVD, create slide shows and screen savers, and sort images based on file attributes or user ratings.

The user interface is attractive and functional, providing several ways to view your images. However, performance can be sluggish, especially when you're loading thumbnail previews. Editing an image takes you to a separate screen with basic functions for controlling the size, exposure, color, and other aspects of the image.

As with most digital-photo managers, you can use ACDSee to share your images via e-mail or the Web. Beyond the standard fare, the database feature lets you catalog your images to reduce loading time. You can also export image data to text or database files, a useful function for businesses and design houses."

See <http://download.com.com/3000-2204-10228878.html> .

We explored the ACDSee organizational features, and the editing features of the additional FotoCanvas, and the FotoSlate Calendar programs. I was not able to see them in action, but the program seems to be quite well reviewed, in general.

After the mid-meeting "social SIG" with Nancy Vrooman's, and Peter Stonehewer's coffee, tea and cookies, we resumed our update in the world of digital photography. Ray was absent, so Guy and Alan took over, to do announcements. We discussed the bulletin board, and name tags at the meeting.

One member expressed appreciation for the spelling checker program posted there. We reminded everyone of the monthly SIG meetings for HTML at Ralph Sutter's home in Arroyo Grande, and Linux at KCBX in San Luis Obispo.

At 2:30 PM, our Main Meeting speaker was Dennis Johansen. He is the owner of Jim's Campus Camera in downtown San Luis Obispo. Jim's is now beginning its 32nd year of operation, and is the largest and best-equipped camera store on the central coast of California. Jim's has been selling digital cameras for six years. Olympus, Nikon, Canon, and Minolta brands make up the selection of about 25 models on hand at any one time.

Dennis opened his presentation with a note that he uses Photoshop almost every day. There are specialty companies that can retouch images, such as adding missing members into a family photo! Digital photography has arrived, and even Kodak has recognized the fact. There are about 105 brands available, with quality increasing as prices drop. He had an 8 megapixel camera on display, as well as several other amazing models of these tiny marvels. The Canon EOS Rebel Digital retails for \$999, which is just the SLR style body, without a lens. As a side note, he reported that Konica and Minolta camera companies have merged, which seems to be happening with several of the older brands. The competition will improve the best models, and reduce the number of major names on the market.

Dennis showed several types of memory cards, with more styles coming out every month.

We are replacing point-and-shoot cameras with the new miniature digital ones. Less than 31 percent of all pictures taken are actually printed, and only 8 percent of the people are using slides any more, according to Dennis. Few users ever enlarge their work to 8 x 10, so even lower quality pictures look good. Since the processing companies actually digitize the film images, such as in the Fuji Frontier machine, most of us have been seeing digital images in our film prints for several years, with out even knowing it! That machine prints 4,300, 4 x 6 images per hour, believe it or not.

Our group asked several interesting questions about digital cameras. One member wanted to know why Leica is charging \$900 for a camera that other manufacturers sell for \$300. Dennis said the name brand recognition has a lot to do with this. Apparently Leica has closed their lens plant in Germany and Canada, in favor of a new plant in Korea. Another person asked what triple CCD means. This is an older technology, used only in the very expensive, high end cameras, to obtain extremely good resolution.

Dennis noted that most digital cameras suffer from the trigger delay (lag) problem, which makes shooting a moving target very difficult. His example was the Christmas Carousel at the Mission Plaza in San Luis Obispo. When he shot his pictures with his new digital system, the kids on the carousel ponies were all a half turn around the ride, past the point when he pushed the camera trigger!

Keeping up with developing models in digital cameras is a real challenge for a store like Jim's Campus Camera. They hope to stock up to meet demand at important times like Christmas, but they do not want to be offering obsolete models at that future date. Two years ago he ran out of stock by Dec. 20, and he now has 340 cameras in stock to correct the situation.

We saw a new Minolta DiMage Z-1 Camera which came out only a few weeks before our Slobytes meeting. It has these features: 10x optical zoom and 4x digital zoom; shortest lag time on the market; multiple automatic shooting of 1 Megabyte shots when you hold down the button, in a 10 shot sequence, for quick action photography; 4 AA batteries, and a retail sticker of about \$399.

Memory storage is on an XD card, the body size is quite small. The use of a tripod to eliminate blurred images is not necessary, because of the high shutter speed commonly used. The resolution of the 4 megapixel devices is sufficient for most users now, but this will continue to improve as time goes on. The ASA rating of 400 is common, but newer models are pushing that number to 3200 or 6400, under software control. Depth of field was a concern of one member, but Dennis said it is not a problem, beyond changing the f-stop number.

Every digital camera comes with driver software and image editing program, usually on a CD-ROM. A typical program is Photoshop "Element". Olympus has a driver contained in the camera, which pops up when it is plugged into your computer. On-line photo archiving is not recommended, because current hard drive technology has made giant drives so affordable, so you can do-it-yourself, at home, on your own machine, if your computer is fairly new.

Flash pictures tend toward making larger files in the digital realm, and the dark museum exposures are usually reduced sizes because of the lack of detail. Our member asked about flash pictures which were worse than the same shot without flash. Dennis commented that you should stand off to one side of your subject, to avoid "flashback", or

bounce-off, which fools the camera.

We had a quick review of the two other cameras on display: a Minolta DiMAGE A-1, a small 5 megapixel camera for \$999, with a stabilized zoom of 28 to 200, using miniature motors to move the CCD around. The other camera was a 3 megapixel model with mirror-based optical zoom. I did not hear the model name, unfortunately, or price.

The last topic was digital zoom, which allows manipulation of the image size in the camera viewer. The more you change the zoomed image, the worse the quality becomes. Some manufacturers are only offering digital zoom, but optical zoom is definitely preferred. File sizes of 100Kb to 150Kb are common in the 8-10 digital zoom cameras, which would be a very low quality image, Dennis said.

The meeting closed with a Pick'n'Win raffle for our door prizes, such as Windows Security for XP and 2000.
Bill

President's Message

At 1 PM Alan will moderate a computer question/answer session.

Some interesting web links from Alan:

----- Windows XP Keyboard Shortcuts - When speed counts, the keyboard is still king. Almost all the actions and commands you can perform with a mouse you can perform faster using combinations of keys on your keyboard. These simple keyboard shortcuts can get you where you want to go faster than several clicks of a mouse. You'll work faster on spreadsheets and similar documents, too, because you won't lose your place switching back and forth between mouse and keys.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/using/tips/personalize/keyboardsc.asp>

----- FREE "Up From Zero" DVD - Up From Zero is a documentary film that pays tribute to the brave men and women of the New York City building trades who put themselves on the line on September 11, 2001 and for nine months afterward to reclaim Ground Zero.

<http://www.dol.gov/opa/dvd/>

At 2:30 PM, our featured speaker will be Gene Barlow, President of User Group Relations, Orem, UT, whose presentation (a tutorial) will address "Approaches to Backing-up Your Hard Drive". Gene will be keying his presentation to capabilities available in the latest PowerQuest products, particularly those in V2i Protector, Drive Image v7 and Partition Magic v8.

Your hard drive is the heart of your computer and contains all of the operating system modules and application programs that make your computer function. It is also where you store your priceless data files that you create using your computer. To lose any or all of the files stored on your hard drive is a major disaster and one that would take you weeks or months to recover from. You may never recover from the loss of your most important files. To protect yourself from the loss of your hard drive with a well thought out backup plan is essential for every one of us to implement. This session will explore the many backup options available to you and help you pick which one is best for your needs. This is an important topic that every PC user should understand and implement on their computer.

Special SLO Bytes member, reduced prices will be offered for the products Gene discusses. Don't miss this session!

Our most important item this month concerns the **annual Board of Directors Election**, which will be the first order of business at our December meeting. All the Officer and appointed positions are open to all members so please volunteer or nominate someone for any position and we will vote for the candidates of our choice in our December meeting.

We will not have a featured speaker at our December meeting. Alan will have a short General SIG, starting at 1PM and then we'll break up in various rooms where specific SIGs will be presented/discussed. At 2:30PM, once again, I'll be the "Santa Clause", passing out the various gifts at our gala give-away raffle. I believe that we will be happy with the gifts we receive from the "Santa Clause" this year.

You are invited to take advantage of the **money saving offer that KCBXnet (aka Slonet)** is extending to all current and future members of SLO Bytes. If you chose to subscribe to KCBXnet as your dial-up ISP, you and SLO Bytes will benefit. You will be billed only \$17/month and SLO Bytes will receive \$2/month from KCBXnet. Check out our web site's Announcements <<http://www.slobytes.org>> for further details.

BTW, KCBXnet has added an accelerated dial-up access for their subscribers. Basically, it permits faster page loading while surfing on the Web. Check it out at: <http://kcbx.net/index.php>

Continue to bring any **used ink-jet printer or toner cartridges** to our meeting. We collect them (at Marvin's table) and turn them over to "Make A-Wish Foundation" who generate much needed funds for their organization by refurbishing and selling them.

--Ray Miklas

Webmaster's Comments

The SLO Bytes Bulletin Board, <http://users.boardnation.com/~slobytes/>, continues to evolve. Recently, by popular request, I added the SLO Bytes FOR SALE Bulletin Board. I invite fellow SLO Bytes members to use this bulletin board to announce items that they wish to sell and to ask sellers about items that have been offered for sale here by fellow members. You'll find it at <http://users.boardnation.com/~slobytes/index.php#3>

The SLO Bytes Other Topics Bulletin Board, <http://users.boardnation.com/~slobytes/index.php?board=2>, has been the site of a lively discussion regarding the topics presented during the second session of our monthly meetings. Dave McLaughlin asked members if our Main Tent speakers were talking about things that were of interest to all of us. Numerous members responded proposing topics for future presentations. Others suggested polling our membership. Dave drafted a questionnaire and others suggested refinements. Many posters offered suggestions to improve the monthly meeting.

I invite you to read the Main Tent thread on the SLO Bytes Other Topics Bulletin Board and to post your own view. This is exactly the purpose for which the bulletin board was created.

Ralph Sutter
SLO Bytes HTML SIG Leader

Editor's Recommended Readings

By sheer coincidence, as you will note, our speaker at the next meeting will discuss options for backing up our hard drives. I found that the back page article in the October issue of PC World featured the very same dilemma. A squib at the bottom of the article provided a URL to find the article on the web. I'm copying this article below.

Stephen Manes
From the October 2003 issue of PC World magazine

Everybody needs a backup strategy. Here's mine.

Backing up your computer has always been a maddening process--which is why so few people do it. Not that many years ago, I stored precious data on "state of the art" tape cartridges even though the lousy hardware, media, and software assured absolutely nothing. Colleagues would scream in desperation on discovering that their backup tapes were unreadable.

Things are only slightly better now. The culprits are much the same: slow hardware, media that don't hold enough data, and baffling, untrustworthy software. One program I recently sampled reported that a backup to CD-R would require eight discs--even after I reduced the backup set to a single file. That didn't make me feel warm and fuzzy--or secure.

Microsoft still gives backup the back of its hand. Backup software is supposedly buried on the Windows XP Home CD, but you may not find it if your hardware vendor gives you the usual "recovery" disc instead of a full-blown copy of the OS. The Windows Registry's very existence complicates backing up, and Microsoft's applications don't help: Outlook Express opens every one of its files whether you use it or not, and Outlook creates an endlessly growing

data file. You end up wasting time and media by backing up data that isn't really new.

But as important as backing up is, there's no one right strategy. Various utilities let you create an image of your entire drive, but that takes so long you won't do it often. Quicker incremental backups involve only files that have changed, but they generally won't restore a dead drive. With backups that are bigger than the capacity of removable media, you have to hang around to feed extra discs into the drive. Hard-drive mirroring seems smart until a disk controller fails and writes bogus data to two places at once.

Nontechnical issues are just as crucial. How carefully will you label your ever-growing backup of precious digital photos? What happens in a catastrophe (your home or office going up in flames)?

My strategy: Focus on making sure that truly important stuff--documents and e-mail--gets backed up daily. Every time I shut down my machine, an incremental backup automatically travels the Net to Connected.com's system at the other end of the country. True, home connections are generally far slower at uploading than downloading, but after the first upload, Connected is smart about transferring only what's new or different. And it lets my notebook retrieve files that I forgot to take with me on the road.

Connected doesn't want you to store giant audio or video files on its system. And if you use its password, encryption and forget your code, you won't get your data back. Still, over the past couple of years, Connected has saved me far more than the \$15 a month it charges.

But when it comes to system and application software, I work without a net. If the disk dies, I'll probably spend a day or two downloading patches and resetting preferences, and I might even have to shell out a few bucks for lost software upgrade codes. Nevertheless, by the time the Big Crash occurs, I might just decide to go out and buy a new machine. My gamble insures that I don't waste time and money up front.

Your gamble may be different. I repeat: When it comes to backup, there are no right answers. But not doing anything about it is definitely the wrong one.

The URL for articles by Mr. Manes is <http://www.pcworld.com/news/locations/0,loc,45,00.asp>. The magazine offers URLs for most of their columnists. Surf's up!!!!

Trevor Gosbell writes an interesting article in PC Update the magazine of the Melbourne (Australia) PCUG on the various meanings of "Free" software. If this is too long, please let me know.

Everyone loves getting something for free. And with software licenses being the way they are these days, "free software" sounds pretty attractive.

The trouble is that the word "free" is somewhat problematic - Merriam-Webster <http://www.m-w.com> has 15 primary definitions for the adjective "free" and you need to read down to the tenth before you get to "not costing or charging anything". What's more the term "free software" actually has a specific definition that has nothing to do with money.

So maybe we should start there.

Free Speech:Free software

The Free Software Foundation (FSF) defines free software saying that it "is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of free as in free speech, not as in free beer" <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>. It's all about freedom. Specifically the FSF definition says that the user has the freedom to run the software for any purpose, modify the software, and redistribute copies of the software (both the original and modified versions). For a program to meet these criteria, and be called "free software", the source code must be made available to the public.

Open Source Software

The Open Source Initiative (OSI) also has an official definition for the related but not identical concept of "open source software" (OSS). As the name suggests, OSS also requires that the source code must be publicly available. The OSS definition <http://opensource.org/docs/definition.php> also requires that open source software may be freely redistributed with no restriction on who may use it or for what purpose. Users may make modifications, but authors may also maintain the integrity and identity of their original work. The definition also prevents specific technologies

and various license "traps" from closing up access to the software and source code.

Not Quite the Same Thing

By these definitions, free software and OSS sound almost identical - in fact at the practical level they often are. People from both camps do collaborate on projects, and any software that is licensed under the Free Software Foundation's General Public License (GPL) is automatically both free software and open source software. Despite this, the FSF prefers the term "free software" to "open source software". The differences underlying the two groups (and their definitions) are philosophical. The OSI is the pragmatic school, for whom non-free software is a suboptimal solution. The Free Software Foundation is the home of ethicists who say that "non-free software is a social problem and free software is the solution" <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-software-for-freedom.html>. The FSF is fundamentally opposed to proprietary software.

Philosophical argument aside, both FSF and OSI are not against charging people for software; indeed the FSF was established on funds from the sale of tapes of the Emacs editor. So "giving away" software for no monetary charge is not a part of free software. The trouble is that people confuse freedom with getting something for free - the confusion of free speech with free beer.

Free Beer:Public Domain

Software that is released to the public domain has no copyright restriction and therefore is free to be used by anyone without any type of licensing burden. That sounds very close to free software, but it's not. In the first place, public domain software may be released without the source code (although there's nothing to stop a reverse engineering effort, the source isn't freely available). And even if the source code is released it may be modified and included into non-free software, which goes against the continuity of freedom that the FSF definition requires.

Freeware

Despite being a fairly common term there appears to be no clear definition of "freeware". It generally seems to cover a range of software types for which no (direct) charge is made, including downloadable demonstration programs, proprietary utilities and plug-ins (e.g. Adobe Acrobat Reader and Macromedia Flash plug-in, respectively), and "lite" versions that come packaged with hardware. Sometimes freeware is only free of charge for non-commercial use.

Of course, the true cost of freeware is often hidden as software companies subsidize free give-always by consolidating their position in other more lucrative markets; this is exactly what Adobe and Macromedia do with their free downloads. And why else would Microsoft give away a complex application like Internet Explorer?

So freeware is not the same as free software.

Shareware and Crippleware

Of course shareware is not free software either - the shareware owners exert their proprietary rights in asking for payment. There is no restriction on obtaining and trying shareware but the user is limited to the trial period (maybe by date or number of trials) before being required to pay a licensing fee for ongoing use of the software. Instead of being time-limited, shareware is sometimes limited by function - crippled - to encourage users to pay their license fees. So-called crippleware lets the user try all of the features offered by the program, except for one critical feature such as saving or printing.

Abandonware

When proprietary software is no longer being distributed or supported by the copyright owner, it may become known as abandonware. If we ignore that Windows is an ongoing product, we could say that Windows 95 has been abandonware for well over a year, Windows NT4 has just been abandoned, and Windows 98 will join them early next year <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycleconsumer.mspx>. However, superseded versions of a currently available product are not usually considered abandonware.

Often it is old games that are the most sought after abandonware. Let's face it, who wants to go back to VisiCalc? (Well, if you must: <http://www.bricklin.com/history/vcexecutable.htm>). People who want to recapture the lost delights of Pac-Man, Prince of Persia, or Pong look for them as abandonware.

Although some copyright owners have released their old software to the public domain or as free software (see

<http://legalaw.cjb.net/>), most abandonware is still subject to copyright and isn't legal for unlicensed redistribution. This seems a bit sad. There is no monetary market for such software now, merely a bunch of ageing nerds looking for a nostalgia kick.

Free-for-All

So there are several ways to think about the "free-ness" of software, and some aren't immediately obvious. The subtle distinction between free software and open source software doesn't help the situation, and the confusion between freeware and free software is practically inevitable. It all depends on what you mean by free.

Now, did someone mention free beer?

Editor's note:

If you have any comments, suggestions, wants, don't wants, beefs and/or ?????, please e-mail me at junate@charter.net.

Treasurer's Report September 15, 2003 - October 15, 2003

Income	
Membership Dues	\$100.00
Refreshments	\$30.15
Dividends	\$7.77
Expenses	
Rent	\$75.00
Refreshments	\$30.20
Checking Account Balance	\$3,209.47
Savings Account Balance	\$797.79

Club Information and Meeting Times

SLO Bytes, a PC Users Group dedicated to educate its members in the use of personal computers, digital devices and software, meets on the first Sunday of each month at the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Hall at 520 Dana Street, San Luis Obispo. All meetings are open to the public at no cost. Special interest groups meet from 1 to 2:00 PM and guest speaker presentations begin at 2:30 PM. Contact Guy Kuncir (489-1395, gkuncir@charter.net) or visit www.slobytes.org for additional information about SLO Bytes and the scheduled presentation.

HardCopy is a monthly publication of SLO Bytes PC Users' Group located in San Luis Obispo, California. Information in this Newsletter is derived from both our own membership and other PC User Group Newsletters. The purpose of this publication is to inform our members of meetings and provide information related to the use of PCs and various Operating Systems.

Membership: Dues are \$25 per year. Full membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter via e-mail, technical assistance, raffle gift drawing at the end of the meetings, a voice in the affairs of the club, and comradeships.

Article Submission: Deadline for submission of articles is the 20th of each month. Articles should be E-mailed to the editor at junate@charter.net.

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Outside Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

HTML/Internet SIG normally meets at 6:30 PM on the Monday following our Sunday General Meeting at Ralph Sutter's home in Arroyo Grande. Call Ralph at (805) 489-8678 for directions

Linux SIG normally meets on Thursday at 6:30 PM (following our Sunday's General Meeting) at KCBX.net [a.k.a. SLONET] Training Center, 4100 Vachell Lane, SLO.

SLO Bytes Officers/Volunteers:

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SLO Bytes Website www.slobytes.org