

SLO Bytes HardCopy

A publication of the San Luis Obispo PC Users Group

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Bill Avery's February 2004 Main Meeting Review

After Ray Miklas and Guy Kuncir completed their announcements and introduction, our main meeting speaker, SloBytes member Dave McLaughlin demonstrated some of the techniques for using Photoshop Elements 2.0 by Adobe Systems, who also make Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Reader for PDF files.

Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 was designed for amateur photographers, digital imaging enthusiasts, and PC users. One can use Elements to import pictures from his or her camera, scanner, or from disk files and do everything from minor corrections, touch-ups and improvements to major changes. Built around core elements of the Adobe Photoshop interface and feature set, the program is designed for ease of use, and has hints, recipes for various tasks, and lots of help included.

"Elements provides all the Photoshop features that amateurs need, leaving out features required by professional photographers and graphic artists", according to Mike Langberg, Personal Technology Editor of the San Jose Mercury News. The program is an excellent choice for anyone who enjoys working with digital images non-professionally.

Dave has been with SLO Bytes for the past two years. He came to us from the Central Valley and the Bay Area. Originally a practicing CPA, he followed his interests in computers to a position at IBM where he was employed for 28 years, primarily in the systems and sales areas. Being an educator was often part of his job. He has taught system design and programming to technical people as well as information technology management to executives. Personal computers became a hobby in 1978 and, after leaving the workaday world, he has managed to mix in a bit of consulting with his active practice as a full time retiree.

The main source of information for Adobe Photoshop Elements is their web site:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopel/main.html>

They list the PE system requirements (for Windows) as:

Intel® Pentium® processor, Microsoft® Windows® 98, Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows Millennium Edition, Windows 2000, or Windows XP Home/Professional.

128MB of RAM, and 150MB of available hard-disk space, color monitor capable of displaying thousands of colors at a resolution of 800x600 or greater, Internet Explorer 5.0, 5.5, or 6.0 (updated with applicable Service Packs), and CD-ROM drive.

For Macintosh users, the requirements are:

PowerPC® processor, Mac OS 9.1, 9.2.x, or Mac OS X v.10.1.3-10.1.5, 128MB of RAM, with virtual memory on 350MB of available hard-disk space.

The Adobe Website provides a product overview, which begins with this statement: "Maybe you're the family shutterbug, recording every birthday and barbecue for posterity. Maybe you just bought a scanner and want to fix up some imperfect film photos you've converted to JPEG files. Or maybe you've got red-eye down pat and you'd like to try enhancing your photos with special effects or creating web animations. Then you're ready for Photoshop Elements 2.0 software!"

Other sections of that page include "Mastering the basics and beyond, Enhance your photos, Prepare

photos for the web, Understand the tools, and Get outstanding results." There is a "Quick Fix" dialog box that presents automatic tools to correct problems with your pictures. The examples shown there are really impressive.

You can also stitch together a panoramic image, using the "Photomerge™" command that combines several photographs into one continuous image for you. In their tutorial, you'll see how to assemble the photos you want included in a panoramic image, and refine the image that Photoshop Elements creates. This is very cool!

Also shown on the web site are two downloadable videos: "Guided Tour" and "Quick Overview" in both Windows Media Player and QuickTime formats.

PDF Slide Shows and personalized Greeting Cards are possible with this program.

The tryout download is 111.1 MB [not for the average dialup user], from a complete selection of other Adobe products. Most of these were also quite large files.

See <http://www.adobe.com/products/tryadobe/main.jsp#product=40>

The on-line store price was given as \$99.00 on the first Photoshop Elements web page.

Back to Dave's presentation, which was full of interesting tips, including a hint on how to send your pictures for your kids to Wal-Mart and have them ready to be picked up, in your name at their location, instead of having to send them yourself.

Dave also recommends IrfanView, by Irfan Skiljan, (see <http://www.irfanview.com/>), which is familiar to most of our group as "one of the most popular viewers worldwide". It is a free program for viewing JPEG and GIF images. We saw a series of example pictures of a house being modified, and Dave said Photoshop Elements would be smart enough to modify the sequence to be more logical, by moving elements of the scenes around to make better sense. The modifications available in IrfanView are more limited, and we were warned not to save any enlarged views, because it overwrites the original file. The red-eye block in IrfanView is square, not round, so that may pose some additional problems.

The Photoshop Elements program is built from the Adobe Photoshop "kernel" and it has recently sold at Costco for about \$70, bundled with Album 2.0. Prices seem to be rising, lately, however. The manual bundled with the program is 256 pages, and is acceptable for most users. There are after market books also available, and Dave had one to share with us, which was recommended by the folks on Tech TV. It is written by Mikkel Aaland, from San Francisco, and sells for \$21 at Costco. It comes with a CD ROM, and has a kid with two different colored eyes on the cover, titled "Photoshop Elements 2 Solutions", which represents it very well, according to an Amazon.com book review by Charles R. Snyder, from Houston, TX .

See http://topics.practical.org/browse/Mikkel_Aaland for a selection of Aaland's books.

Dave provided us with a tour of the program, beginning with the "Welcome Screen". It is loaded with help for beginners, with sections on cropping, pasting, and even adding text to an image. There is an image browser, for examining a collection of pictures, a palette well for selecting different parts of the program, several tutorials, and recipes for adjusting images to fix problems. The tool box applies special tools to work with assorted picture problems, and if something seems wrong, or you go "Oops!", there multiple Undo levels to get back where you started. The keystroke for Undo is Ctrl-Z, and is your best friend as you learn about the PE program.

We talked a bit about aspect ratios in photos, which is normally 4:3 or 1.33 :1. When cropping photos for

enlargement purposes that ratio changes which makes a problem.

There is data about every digital picture called XIF data, which does not take much room in the file, but may be handy when trying to organize and identify the images. PE lets you examine those details with one of its' tools.

Both the Mac version, and Windows version of this program will convert many common file formats to other formats, similar to the way IrfanView, or XinView do. Another tool Dave mentioned is PE Quick Fix, which is illustrated in a good discussion, "for web design" by Joyce L. Morris, Ed.D., See <http://www.uvm.edu/~jmorris/handouts/PhotoshopElements.doc>

We watched as the Quick Fix tool corrected color-cast problems, which are common in digital photography. The red eye problem was illustrated by a family picture from France, which Dave got from his wife on a vacation trip. All their eyes were cleared up, and we were smiling. When using Quick Fix, do not stack up edits, but try one, then Undo, and try another for best results, Dave noted. We watched a session which adjusted contrast, focus and color match as examples. Alan Raul noted that some old monitors and printers do not match the colors seen in a more modern program. PE comes with an Adobe Gamma Matching program to help fix this problem.

Saving files in PE defaults to ".psd" format, which is an uncompressed Photoshop format, but it is possible to retain the original format, if desired.

Dave showed us some special effects, such as frames, titles, and then explained layers, which are like transparent sheets laid over a picture. We saw a picture of a man on a horse, with an uninteresting sky. We created a layer for clouds, and then "clone-stamped" some clouds from another picture onto that layer. By combining that layer with the original picture, with about 65% opacity, the scene became much more attractive. As a further example, we removed a yellow workman's shack from a picture of the Golden Gate Bridge, with a slight assist from our audience! The picture package feature combines several sizes of images into one page for printing on the expensive photo paper. Acrobat Reader slide shows are also possible. Several lists of tips for PE users were shown on the screen, to end the talk. Dave also offered to send his entire Power Point Slide show to anyone who sends him an email, at davemcl@pacbell.net, or on the SloBytes Bulletin board, at <http://users.boardnation.com/~slobytes/index.php>

We finished the afternoon session with our traditional door prize Quick-Pick raffle, and a good time was had by all. I'll see you (after the February leap day), at our March 7th meeting. - W. Avery

Guy Kuncir's Featured Speaker Programing Schedule

The featured speaker at the March 7th SLO Bytes' meeting will be Pete Gannon, owner/operator of Computer Stuff, a multi-faceted computer business with stores in San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles and the Five Cities (Arroyo Grande). Pete will address two questions that are routinely confronted by all individuals and organizations that own or operate computers: shall I/we **"Upgrade or buy a new computer?"** and, if upgrade, **"Which upgrades are worth doing?"**.

Computer Stuff www.stuffguys.com prides itself that they use local talent to provide local Service and local support. Among the services offered are expert repairs, upgrades, building custom systems right in the store, having the "widest" selection of parts and accessories on the Central Coast, having a free in-store Internet station, doing on-site service calls 24/7, performing network design and installation, and offering service contracts and business leasing. Surely the head of an organization with capabilities such as these is well suited to discuss the issues involved in computer replacement or upgrading.

At the 4 April 2004 SLO Bytes meeting we will have a SIG Day. Three SLO Bytes' SIGs will meet simultaneously, giving members and visitors alike a real live example of our ongoing Special Interest Groups: Windows with **Bill Avery**; Linux with **Alan Raul** and HTML with **Ralph Sutter**. The meeting will follow the three-part structure introduced in December. Specific topics to be addressed by each group and will be selected by the SIG leader. You don't want to miss this meeting! If you've ever wondered what they do in these "special" groups, April will be your chance to find out. One or more of these SIGs may be just what you've been looking for.

President's Message

At our 7 March 2004 meeting:

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

At 2:30 PM, our featured speaker will be **Pete Gannon**, a SLO Bytes member.

At our February meeting we began selling \$3.00 raffle tickets (\$5.00 for non-members) for a chance to win **Microsoft Office Professional Edition 2003**, a \$399.94 value at Staples (this is not an upgrade version). This is another product donated to us by the Microsoft "Mindshare User Group Team". **The drawing for this prize will be at the end of our March meeting.** You don't have to be present to win, you can mail in your check to Marvin (543 Gularte Rd., Arroyo Grande, CA 93420), or buy from Marvin at his table during our February of March meeting.

As you all can see in Marvin's column, we have a healthy balance in our SLO Bytes Checking/Savings Account balance :-)

mrcyberdoc (alias Bob Ward) started a thread (Topic: Raffles) in the General Discussion Board of our SLO Bytes Bulletin Board <http://www.slobytes.org/bboard.html> suggesting that we should spend some of that money. Alan Raul made a suggestion that we should "...consider purchasing another LCD projector for the SIG held in the dining room." There are other suggestions in that thread but most agreed with Alan.

We will take-up this topic at our 12PM, 7 Mar 2004 Board Meeting. I invite any and all members to give us your suggestions (if you care to) as to how we could spend some of our excess funds to best improve our organization. You can send your suggestions to me <rmiklas@pacbell.net> or to any other Board member.

You may want to order the **FREE MS update CD** for W98, W98Se, WinME, Win2000 & XP with ****ALL**** security updates through Oct `03. It's an ideal CD to have on hand if you ever have to format your drive or reinstall Windows. And, it's really FREE. Go to http://snipurl.com/MS_order to order.

Check out the **money saving offer that KCBXnet** (aka Slonet) is extending to all current and future members of SLO Bytes: <http://www.slobytes.org>

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 and take advantage of the four **learning CDs**: "Learn Windows XP, Excel, Word & Power Point" available for our members to check out (at Marvin's table)

--Ray Miklas

"Cribbed" Articles

Do you "Google" by Beverly Rolenbaum, HAL-PC Magazine

This Internet search engine is so popular that its name has become a noun, a verb and an adjective in our common language.

Google derived its name from "googol," the mathematical term for 1 followed by 100 zeros, a number larger than anything in the universe. When American mathematician Edward Kasner (1875-1955) wanted a word to illustrate the difference between an unimaginably large number and infinity, he asked the advice of his 9-year-old nephew Milton Sirota, who suggested the word "googol." It was introduced in print in 1940 by Kasner and James R. Newman in their book, *Mathematics and the Imagination*. According to the free on-line encyclopedia Wikipedia, "Google's use of the term reflects the company's mission to organize the immense amount of information available on the Web."

The Internet's most popular search service was founded in September of 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin, two Stanford Ph.D. candidates who developed a technologically advanced method for finding information on the Internet. When Google was a Stanford research project, it was nicknamed "BackRub" because the technology checked backlinks to determine the importance of a site. The company has grown from 4 employees to more than a thousand, includes billions of pages in its index, and the site (www.google.com) handles more than 200 million queries a day (more than 80% of all Internet searches). The Google interface is available in 88 languages, and not only stores information about web pages, but also snapshots of the pages themselves by caching them. A farm of more than 10,000 GNU/Linux computers is used to answer search requests and index the web.

The indexing is performed by a program called a "googlebot" that periodically requests new copies of the web pages it already knows about. Links in these pages are examined to discover new pages to be added to its database, which is several terabytes in size. Google takes a snapshot of each page examined as it crawls the web and caches these as a back-up in case the original page is unavailable. Clicking on the "Cached" link shows the web page as it looked when it was indexed. When a cached page is displayed, it will have a header at the top, serving as a reminder that this is not necessarily the most recent version of the page. The "Cached" link is missing for sites that have not been indexed, or those sites whose owners have requested that their content not be cached.

Google Tools

To access Google's search technology, Google Browser Buttons (www.google.com/options/buttons.html) can be added to your IE browser's personal toolbar, or the new Google Toolbar can be downloaded from toolbar.google.com. Another browser trick is to make Google your default search engine.

The new Google Toolbar, available in 37 languages, allows you to search the web with Google from any site, restrict your search to pages located in a specific country, search just within the pages of a site, and customize the layout of your toolbar. But the very best feature is the ability to allow or eliminate pop-up

ads, something you can set for each individual site. It may be necessary to allow pop-ups on some sites that use them for forms. (So far, the pop-up blocker is available only in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.) The Toolbar requires Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or later (IE 5.5 or later for the pop-up blocker) and runs on Microsoft Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, or XP. Additional help is available at toolbar.google.com/help.html.

The Google Translate Tool www.google.com/language_tools can translate text or entire web pages. To use Google's built-in calculator function, simply enter any calculation into the search box and hit the "Enter" key or click on the Google Search button. The calculator can solve math problems involving basic arithmetic, more complicated math, units of measure and conversions, and physical constants. You can also enter a query into the search box to use Google to find dictionary definitions. Relevant definitions are linked from a quality dictionary provider. If it's not already included, send your favorite dictionary source to suggestions@google.com.

Google has expanded the number of non-HTML file types searched to 12 file formats. In addition to PDF documents, Google now searches Microsoft Office, PostScript, Corel WordPerfect, Lotus 1-2-3, and others. The new file types appear in Google search results whenever they are relevant to the user query. Google also offers the ability to "View as HTML" to allow users to examine the contents of file formats even if they don't have a corresponding application installed. This option can also avoid viruses that could sometimes be carried in certain file formats.

Google has also added US street address and phone number lookup. To find listings for a US business, type the business name into the Google search box, along with the city and state, or type the business name and zip code. Entering the phone number with area code will also return a complete business listing. To find listings for a US residence, type any combination of first name or initial, last name, city or state, area code or zip code, and phone number into the Google search box. To have your own residential or business phone and address information removed from the Google Phone Book, go to www.google.com/help/pbremoval.html.

You can restrict your search to a specific site by entering the word "site" followed by a colon. Google's spell checking software automatically looks at your query and checks to see if you are using the most common version of a word's spelling. If it calculates that you're likely to generate more relevant search results with an alternative spelling, it will ask "Did you mean: (more common spelling)?". Clicking on the suggested spelling will launch a Google search for that term. Because Google's spell check is based on occurrences of all words on the Internet, it's able to suggest common spellings for proper nouns (names and places) that might not appear in a standard spell check program or dictionary.

To use Google to get stock and mutual fund information, just enter one or more NYSE, NASDAQ, AMEX, or mutual fund ticker symbols, or the name of a corporation traded on one of the stock indices. If Google recognizes your query as a stock or mutual fund, it will return a link that leads directly to stock and mutual fund information from high quality financial information providers.

You can find street maps by entering a U.S. street address, including zip code or city/state, in the Google search box. Often, the street address and city name will be enough. When Google recognizes your query as a map request, it will return links from high quality map providers that will lead you directly to the relevant map. Using machine translation technology, Google gives English speakers access to a variety of non-English web pages. This feature is currently available for pages published in Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Portuguese. For more help and How-to-Search basics and advanced tips, go to www.google.com/help/index.html.

Visit labs.google.com to check out Google's technology playground, showcasing a few ideas that aren't quite ready for prime time. You're encouraged to play with these prototypes and send your comments

directly to the Googlers who developed them. There are items like Search by Location (to restrict your search to a particular geographic area); Google News Alerts (you can specify a topic and receive email updates when news breaks); Google Viewer (view search results as scrolling web page images); Google Webquotes; or Google Glossary (find definitions for words, phrases and acronyms).

Other Google Services

Froogle (froogle.google.com) is a new beta service that makes it easy to find information about products for sale on-line. Froogle applies the power of Google's search technology to a very specific task: locating stores that sell the item you want to find and pointing you directly to the place where you can make a purchase. To use Froogle, type in the name of the item you want to find and click on "Froogle Search." Almost instantly, you'll see photos of relevant products and links to the stores that sell them. Or you may choose to browse through the merchandise categories listed on Froogle's home page until you find exactly the item you want to buy.

Froogle provides a lightning quick way to search the largest collection of stores and products on the web, but does not sell products and there is no shopping cart. Froogle only finds the product you want and points you to the store that sells it. The name Froogle is a play on the word "frugal" (meaning thrifty) and the name "Google," which has come to stand for excellence in search technology. Suggestions for improvement at froogle-support@google.com.

Google Catalogs can search and browse mail-order catalogs on-line to find anything from industrial adhesives to clothing and home furnishings. To use it, select the "Catalog Search" link on the advanced search page or visit catalogs.google.com.

At groups.google.com you can post and read comments in Usenet discussion forums. Google has fully integrated the past 20 years of Usenet archives into Google Groups, which now offers access to more than 800 million messages dating back to 1981. Including the former Dejanews, this is the most complete collection of Usenet articles ever assembled and a fascinating first-hand historical account. Tips to learn how to use it are posted at groups.google.com/googlegroups/basics.html.

Google Image Search (images.google.com) is the most comprehensive image search on the web with 425 million images. Google News (news.google.com) allows you to search and browse 4,500 continuously updated news sources. Google University Search (www.google.com/options/universities.html) narrows your search to a specific school website to find admissions information, course schedules, or alumni news.

Google Wireless (www.google.com/options/wireless.html) tells you how to access Google's search technology when you're on the move from any number of hand-held devices, such as mobile phones, OmniSky, Palm VII, or Handspring handhelds. While the Google search engine may not yet have a "googol" of searchable pages in its index, it has grown very quickly from its small beginning in a Menlo Park, California garage to become a very valuable tool.

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

January 15, 2004 - February 15, 2004

Income

Membership Dues	\$300.00
Refreshments	\$35.36
Raffle	\$47.00

Expenses

Rent	\$75.00
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Checking Account Balance \$3,644.42

Savings Account Balance \$846.81

New Members

Patricia Wagner

Robert Mellema

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.

Disclaimer: Neither SLO Bytes PC Users' Group, its officers, editors, or contributors to this newsletter assume liability for damages arising out of this publication of any article, including but not limited to the listing of programming code, batch files and other helpful hints. Articles from this newsletter may be reprinted by other user groups if credit is given to both the author and newsletter from which it was taken. Reproduction of articles with a specific Copyright notice is prohibited without prior permission from the original author.

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:

Ray Miklas (President) rmiklas@pacbell.net

Guy Kuncir (V.P./Programs) gkuncir@charter.net

Marvin Baxendale (Treasurer/Membership/Publishing) mbaxendale@charter.net

Ralph Sutter (Secretary/Webmaster/HTML-Internet SIG) rsutter@cuesta.edu

Bill Avery (Contributing Columnist/Win95/98 SIG) wavery@slonet.org

Alan Raul (General SIG/Linux SIG)

Nancy Vrooman (Refreshments)

Peter Stonehewer (Refreshments)

Nate Wallenstein (HardCopy Editor) junate@charter.net

Ken Stilts (Set-up/Clean-up)

Cliff Buttschardt (Set-up/Clean-up)

John Enos (Set-up/Clean-up)

Bill Palmerston (Set-up/Clean-up)

SLO Bytes Website www.slobytes.org