

March 6, 2005 web links from Alan's *General Windows SIG* by Alan Raul

Run Firefox from USB drive

http://www.mozilla.org/support/firefox/tips#oth_usb

Skype is for calling other people on their computers or phones.

<http://www.skype.com/>

Google Maps

<http://maps.google.com/>

View maps and aerial photos of various parts of the Earth.

<http://teraserver.microsoft.com/>

The Ultimate Interface to the Planet

<http://www.keyhole.com/>

Blocking Unwanted Parasites with a Hosts File

<http://www.mvps.org/winhelp2002/hosts.htm>

Using the HOSTS file to cripple spyware

http://www.komando.com/tips_show.asp?showID=8083

March 6, 2005 Main Meeting Review by Bill Avery

This month we featured Pete Gannon and Darren Dexter of Computer Stuff at 1335 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo,

[ph.: (805) 542-0180, web: http://d228.varnet.org/Skins/greyTech/greyTech_index.aspx].

First, we had our Coffee/Tea and Cookie Break, with home-made treats served by our volunteer hosts, Nancy Vrooman, and Peter Stonehewer. As a club, we have a chance to catch up on the past month, and share problems and solutions with each other, on a one-to-one basis.

Ray announced our club activities, which include the HTML and Linux Special Interest Group meetings. The SIGs are scheduled for the first Monday and Thursday evenings of every month, respectively, at Ralph Sutter's home in Arroyo and at the KCBX Training Center in SLO. Our club guests were also welcomed by Ray, and he suggested that they may want to join SLO Bytes at our sign-in table, by speaking to Bob Mires, our Treasurer and Membership Chairman.

If you have pictures to share on our website, please bring your files on a CD-ROM, thumb-drive or floppy, for download to a laptop at the Treasurer's Table, for transfer to our web host, thanks to Ralph Sutter. The sign-in table is also the place to checkout software which we can loan from our CD-ROM library. Also, recycle any old ink cartridges which you have saved from your printers - just drop them off at the table, for Ray Miklas and Dave Grant to pickup after the meeting.

Our main speakers, Pete and Darren, discussed the hardware and software requirements for creating a digital video presentation. Their PowerPoint slides and relaxed discussion, gave us many tips to make this computer application easier. The minimum CPU required to do this job should be an Intel P4 1.6 Ghz, or AMD Athlon XP 1600+ system, with no Celerons or Durons allowed. Their recommended systems are either Intel P4 3.0+ Ghz, or AMD Athlon 64 3000+. They also recommended Low Latency RAM, from at least 256KB up to 1 Gigabyte. The hard drive storage arrangements should be at least two separate drives, one 40 - 100 GB main system drive, with an auxiliary data storage drive in the range of 120 GB to 400 GB. These two units should have at least 8 MB cache memory, with a Serial ATA interface, such as the Western Digital Raptor series. The main drive should be a quick 10,000 RPM model, and the data store can be slightly slower at 7,200 RPM, they said.

To capture video from a digital source such as your video camera or TV, you need a link such as IEEE 1394/Firewire, or a USB2 type connection. The Firewire is preferred, as it is built-in to most high-end motherboards. Some add-on (PCI) cards such as Sound Blaster Audigy 2 (integrated), or newer models of ATI All-in-Wonder (integrated) will also work.

For analog video sources, our speakers recommend an ATI All-in-Wonder video capture card, or a Canopus AVDC 110 with S-Video, composite input, and Firewire DV. Some digital camcorders offer pass-through conversion to analog outputs, such as the Hauppauge Win-TV-PVR-250 with TV, s-video, and composite inputs.

To save your video presentation, a writable DVD player is a must for external viewing, while a burnable CD-ROM will be acceptable for computer-only viewing. A long movie requires a dual-layer DVD, which can hold 9.4 GB, playing for about 1.5 - 3.0 hours. A single layer DVD holds about 4.7 GB, or about 1.0 - 1.5 hours of information.

As you create your movie, your video card is the most important element affecting the final result. Pete and Darren definitely recommend not using your built-in mother-board video output. Rather, choose a middle-to-high end plug-in card which supports dual monitors, if possible.

As they say, in screen real estate, "The more the merrier!". They exchanged roles as we watched Pete demo some video editing software. Usually, the camcorder basic functions such as Play, Stop, FF, and Rewind, are controlled from the computer editing screen. The Start/Stop button can be used to separate individual video clips from the camera, which are then combined into the final product. It is important to judge the time used for each part, as the rate of data recording is about 3.5 MB per second, or about 12.6 GB per hour, and hard drive space is usually a scarce resource. The editor has a time line, which is used to adjust the sequence and flow of the program. The transitions available between segments are almost unlimited, as Pete was glad to demonstrate.

To create them, it is possible to Click-and Drag the parts of the film together, so no more splicing blocks, like old film movies. In general, less is more, when it comes to fancy editing that will be shown multiple times. Also, be sure to ride the audio gain control to keep sound levels consistent throughout the show.

Uncompressed video can fill a DVD in only 23 minutes, so CoDec (Compression - Decompression) software is used to squeeze the video and audio data. Your quality-versus-quantity tradeoff is controlled by variable settings called "bitrates". Custom codecs are available to fit your type of distribution media. On the video side, DIVX codecs are used for medium to high quality recordings, at about 500 kbps to 2000 kbps. Interestingly, the new Windows Media V9 standard is better than DIVX for lower quality video recording at rates below 500 kbps. If the MPEG2 standard format is used when making a DVD, it will save time during the burning process. For audio, WAV files can be used, but they take up a lot of space on the DVD. The MP3 codec is a better choice for playing back on a computer, with little loss in audio quality. Windows Media V9 audio codec works with WMV9 video, automatically.

Finally, it is very important to visualize your target audience, and what type of media will be used to provide the final playback of your presentation. The range of choices here includes: DVD, CD-R CD-ROM, VHS tape, email, and/or web pages. Playback or "rendering" time is proportional to CPU speed, so be prepared for some slow movies on older machines!

We had to save our questions until after the show, as Ray thanked our guests for an interesting and comprehensive presentation. Computer Stuff will be glad to help anyone with special needs, so just give them a call.

See you at the April 3rd meeting. WA

Don Jones' Featured Speaker Programming Schedule

As previously announced, on April 3 at 2:30 PM, we will break into small groups, for a help-each-other session in the usual featured speaker time slot. We urge each of you to come armed with laptops and your special questions and/or special current interest to share with other members

1. Members who bring laptops will be available throughout the Hall and the dining area for one-on-one sharing of the Windows O/S and various applications use and knowledge.

We plan to have two or three tables, grouped in the meeting hall separated into the rear corners, leave two groups of tables in the dining area, and have small groups in the lounge areas and kitchen. We ask members with laptops to spread them around the tables and be ready to share questions with one to three others, the number we expect to be able to see that screen display.

2. Alan will set up with a small monitor in the kitchen for super geek questions and discussions.

3. Bill will set up in a small semicircle, no sound system, at the front of the meeting hall with Internet connection so he can discuss things he has to skip normally due to no on-line access.

4. HTML SIG leader Ralph Sutter will talk shop with fellow web page authors. He will also demonstrate basic web creation operations and field questions for those who are interested in creating a web site but have yet to do so.

5. Don will set up in the men's lounge to show and discuss photography related topics.

Several members, including Board members, feel a Digital Photography SIG may be needed in our club. The camera manufacturers are currently pushing added editing features into cameras, and selling you the idea that you "don't even need a computer!" We feel many people will miss a great deal of the flexibility and enjoyment that comes with using a computer in photography. Things that were not possible or very difficult in film photography are becoming available to the average person. This small group will look at several relatively inexpensive programs useful in photography, e.g., Photoshop Elements 3, Roxio Easy CD Creator (Photosuite, Videowave), Pinnacle Studio Media Suite, and Nero 6 Ultra, perhaps Photoshop 7. We will look at how they can help us enjoy and share, plain or fancy, our new and old photos and easily fix some common problems when you don't have that perfect picture, etc. This will not be an expert's view!

Please be prepared to share your ideas on a Digital Photography SIG and what contribution you could make to get one going.

Our featured speaker on May 1 will be Ryan Dolphin from Pinnacle Systems on "Learn to Make a Movie Masterpiece as Easy as 1, 2, 3: Capture, Edit, Make Movie".

Ryan's presentation will consist of a detailed overview of the capabilities of Studio 9, the advanced features of Studio Plus, and he will also touch on Pinnacle Liquid Edition 6.

Webmaster's Notes by Ralph Sutter

I've placed some photos of my recent trip to Chile in the SLO Bytes Photo Gallery, <http://www.slobytes.org/gallery/>. I invite all members to submit their own photos for inclusion too. Bring them in digital form to any SLO Bytes meeting. I'll transfer them to my lap top and upload them to our photo gallery shortly thereafter.

Ralph Sutter
SLO Bytes Webmaster

President's Message

March Meeting Schedule

At our April 3, 2005 meeting

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

At 2:30 PM, we will break into small groups, for a "help-each-other" session

Dmitry Ussov of D Ussov & Co., sent me an invitation to examine and inform our members of his Allway Sync 2.0 software product. Allway Sync features an intuitive and instructive interface with two data selection fields for building a sync association between two folders. Once the association is set, the user can get the program to analyze what files have recently been modified and update their counterpart in the folder.

Allway Sync 2.0 runs under Windows 98/Me/XP/NT/2000/2003 and distributed as a freeware product (with limitations). Check out <http://www.AllwaySync.com> URL for a more details and download the program for your use.

Prentice Hall has developed a landing page for APCUG group members to purchase their GARAGE SERIES books. UG members will find a 30% discount when they click on <http://www.phptr.com/apcug>. The link will disappear on April 15.

I have received three of those GARAGE books and they will be available at Bob's table for your examination.

Have a look at APCUG's newly designed lean and mean website that is far more accessible now than ever before: www.apcug.net There is a lot of new stuff happening with the newly elected executive of APCUG and they have laid out a fantastic Strategic Planning 2004-2005 process that outlines all areas that need to be improved on, not only within APCUG, but this is a great guideline for user groups in whole.

Intel has a two part seminar package, "Intel Seminar-in-a-backpack", for User Group presentation. The first part is for a general meeting and presented by a member. The program is complete with PowerPoint slides and script. The second part is a separate meeting to assemble computers built from the parts described and usually led by the Part 1 presenter. Members participating would get a discounted price from a vendor for a nice system. Are any of you computer builders interested in presenting this program? Please contact Don Jones for details.

Take advantage of the four learning CD's "Learn Windows XP, Excel, Word & Power Point" available for our members to check out (at the Treasurer's table)

We also have Adobe Photoshop 7, learning CD's to check out (at the Treasurer's table). These 5 CD's cover, in depth, the various program features in lesson format.

Finally, we have a copy of Windows XP Service Pack 2 info. CD to check out which has a 20 min. video you can run giving you the overview of what SP 2 has to offer.

If you still are in need of Windows XP Service Pack 2 CD for upgrading you O/S, contact me and I will give you one.

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

--Ray Miklas

Treasurer's Report

Mar 24, 2005

Income

Renewal members	\$300.00
Refreshments	30.76

Expenses

Hall rent	75.00
Insurance premiums	188.00
Drawing prizes	45.05

Bank accounts @2/28/05

Saving Acct Balance	\$3,169.36
Checking Acct Balance	\$1,741.36

New members: none

Renewing members: 12 members renewed.

Robert Mires, Treasurer

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 Don Jones (773-5526, donej@sbcglobal.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 (rmiklas@bigfoot.com).

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.

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Alan Raul (General SIG/Linux SIG)

Nancy Vrooman (Refreshments)

Peter Stonehewer (Refreshments)

Nate Wallenstein (Contributing Columnist)

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 <http://www.slobytes.org>