

SLO Bytes Hard Copy

A publication of the San Luis Obispo PC Users Group

Vol. 19 No. 6

June 2003

This rich text format (.rtf) was selected for the newsletter to make it acceptable to most of the email programs used by SLOBYTES members. For text only (.txt) version, see attached file.

SLO Bytes Meeting Review, by Bill Avery

Our May Meeting featured a "ghost" speaker, with our members' support FAQ, for both the early and late sessions. We anticipated an appearance from a North County ISP, but unfortunately, they could not make the meeting. I will note that the topics covered were as diverse as our interests, and the answers varied from member to member.

Opening announcements were made by Ray and Guy, as usual, and the external SIGS met as planned at Ralph Sutter's home in Arroyo Grande, and at KCBX in SLO. Alan fielded Outlook Express questions, and some inquiries about backup methods with two hard drives. XP installations also caught our attention, regards to the clean installation vs. an upgrade installation. You can use an older operating system CD ROM to verify your previous installation, even if you have wiped the hard drive. XP will complain about not finding any earlier operating system, and give you a chance point to it, so just swap the XP Upgrade CD with the older system CD, and proceed. The XP CD will be reinserted as soon as it verifies the older CD, and you can complete your install. Memory problems can also affect upgrade installations, so a bad chip may prevent a correct installation. Be certain that your RAM is working correctly before upgrading. Always backup important data before doing any major changes to your computer. Also, be careful if you decide to upgrade a "Flash BIOS" program. Alan warned us that one mistake may mean the end of the upgrade game! Recovery from such a problem involves opening your machine, and doing a jumper-hardware reset, which may not be easy without proper documentation. Alan and Ray have some experience with dealing in this area.

Some motherboards are now using speech [synthesized voice-sound!] to warn users about error conditions, according to Alan.

One important news item was discussed: Microsoft XP Critical Updates, # 8134890, & #330994, both dated April, 2003. As was explained, these were the latest changes in XP, and caused extreme slow downs and other problems. Microsoft's suggested solution is to disable your real-time virus protection programs, permanently! Well, needless to say, that is not a great idea. Alan suggested reconsidering the use of these updates, and possibly roll back the operating system to its' previous state before the upgrades were installed. It may not affect home users as much as commercial/professional users, since it was intended to fix LAN problems in an office environment. Use Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs and look for the Windows update "Q-811493" number, highlight and click "add/remove". Use Google "Groups" to view Microsoft newsgroups, and search for the most recent security/Windows fix problems.

A new development in hard drives is the "serial-attached SCSI" from Adaptec, to connect serial ATA or IDE hard drives through a PCI card, as well as SCSI drives.

Another resource on the web for computer news and developments is <http://www.mvps.org>, who notes:

"This is your jumping off point to a number of interesting offerings being provided for you by a few folks associated with the Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) program."

The site includes a Google search bar, both for their site and support.microsoft.com as well as "Search Entire Web". There are Individual MVP Subwebs, and Group MVP Subwebs, to guide your searches, also. Links to MVPs' Websites are at: <http://www.mvps.org/links.html>, to keep on digging, too. One interesting site that Alan shared is: <http://www.dougknox.com/>, for "Tweaks, Tips and Fixes for Windows 95/98/Me/XP".

We heard about a "Smart Display", a way to remotely access your desktop, using your screen as a touch pad. Unfortunately they are not cheap, so we will pass on them for now.

Ray reminded us to buy raffle tickets for the XP Office Professional version, for next month's meeting. After the break and due to the lack of a guest speaker, we continued our group FAQ discussion, led by Alan Raul. Questions from the floor related to flat screen monitors and LCD displays, which are still coming down in price.

Alan and Ray went to the mat discussing video monitors, each with his own point of view, no pun intended. The sexy Apple 23" monitors with a crystal, dual 15" monitor pairs, and LCD flat panels were a bit much for Ray, who

noted that a practical choice still seems to be a good flat screen monitor. There were pros and cons for LCD monitors, which may fade after a fairly long period of use. Cliff had read some information on this, and his views are reflected (below) in Letters to the Editor. Alan showed the group how he could use dual access video on his laptop to produce multiple desk tops on the viewing screens. Pricing on a Gateway 18.1" flat panel LCD is now \$400 plus shipping and taxes. Check http://www.overstock.com/cgi-bin/d2.cgi?PAGE=CATLIST&PRO_SUB_CAT=410&PRO_SSUB_CAT=999 for good monitor deals.

Spam is a topic that keeps on giving us a lot to talk about. Typical capture rates are 50% or worse, so we are always looking for something better. One member recommended "Pop file", which learns your preferences, and blocks all unwanted messages. It seems quite useful, so here is the web link (from SourceForge via Google): http://popfile.sourceforge.net/old_index.html .. Their most recent comments are from January - February , 2003, so it is a fairly recent program. [I think it is still in beta, by virtue of the version numbers, which are still less than 1.0]. Alan showed his Yahoo! account which he uses to absorb much of his spam, and how he keeps it full (intentionally) to cause spam to bounce back to its source. He sends large mail files to the Yahoo! account, which then overflows intentionally, so the spam never gets into the Inbox! Clever guy, that Alan

Another question from the floor considered external USB CD ROM burners. Try TDK, Webster and Phillips, with MusicMatch Jukebox Plus software. [<http://www.musicmatch.com/home.htm>]. This version is very fast, according to Alan. There is a free version, a \$19.95 version, and a lifetime update version for \$39.95. A free CD containing the basic program is available at: http://www.musicmatch.com/r.htm?REDIRECT=/cart/powerpack_info.htm&source=promo which has "everything you need to make the most of your music". There is a slide show feature to make musical demos or home presentations, similar to programs we have seen at SLO Bytes meetings in the past. MP3 tracks are used to place up to 10 hours of music on one CD.

The last item of discussion was the USB Flash RAM "Pen Drives" which have come down in price, with some 64MB and 128MB versions available at bestbuy.com, tigerdirect.com, and PNY.com, who had \$49.95 for a 256MB USB2 Pen drive. Deals, with rebates, are usually available but only one to a customer address, with a \$20.00 rebate. Data rates are: 12.5 MB/sec write, and 6 MB/ sec. on read.

President's Message

Sunday, June 1st, happenings:

At 1 PM Alan will be speaking on a variety of current computer topics.

Just some of these topics:

- How to find those "cheap computer deals" on the Internet and locally
- What's new in "digital camera technology"

Some interesting web links:

- The History of The Internet <http://www.thelemon.net/issues/timeline.php>
- Windows XP - Tips, Tweaks, Registry Edits <http://www.theelderageek.com/>

At 2:30 PM, our featured speaker will be Ralph Dallons, a Computer Technician/Sales Associate at Staples, Broad Street, San Luis Obispo, who will outline what to look for when buying a new computer monitor.

Ralph will focus on the characteristics of CRT and LCD monitors currently available for personal computers, providing the advantages and disadvantages of these devices. He will outline the technologies and components used in their construction, explaining the acronyms and terminology commonly used by monitor manufacturers. The object of his talk will be to provide the audience with the information necessary to select the right monitor for their computer needs.

Mr. Dallons began his career in computer system sales in 1981. In addition to his current position at Staples, he is also an owner/partner of Tsunami Systems, an organization specializing in network consulting, including the use of Wireless Networks and Virtual Private Networks, and in system integration.

Our featured speaker at the 6 July SLO Bytes meeting will be Dave Streb, CEO & CIO, Exiis.Net of Exiis Communications, PO Box 2323, Paso Robles, CA 805-237-2324, dave@exiis.net. His topic will be: "Microsoft's .Net"

At our June meeting we will continue to sell the \$2.00 raffle tickets (\$3.00 for non-members) for **Windows XP Professional**, a \$199.99 value (this is not an upgrade version). This is another product donated to us by the Microsoft "Mindshare User Group Team". Same rules apply as they did in our last drawing. The drawing for this prize will be at the end of our June meeting. You don't have to be present to win, so mail in your check to Marvin (543 Gularte Rd., Arroyo Grande, CA 93420), or buy it at Marvin's table at our May or June meeting.

If you have any **used ink-jet printer or toner cartridges** bring them 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

Neal Snyder, one of our long-time members, volunteered to **review a new CD computer book by Kim Komando** and reports:

Kim Komando, hostess of a nationally syndicated program on computers has a new book on CD-ROM titled: "The 50 Biggest Computer Mistakes - & How You Can Avoid Them". Its primary target market is the novice computer user, or newbie, looking to jump past some of those hurdles, which once beset us all (and continue for some of us).

Installation was quick & easy and took just a minute or two. The reminder to exit all other programs and disable any anti-virus utilities made it effortless, with only a desk top shortcut as the link to access the Book on CD, thus saving hard disk space. On my system however, every first attempt to access it, the program would lock up. After closing & reopening it ran as intended, but this was an annoyance having to open, close, and reopen each time.

The work is laid out in 4 parts. Part 1 is "Getting Started" and deals with mistakes one can make when buying a PC. Mistake #9 hit home with me being an early adopter. I was so sure the LS-120 Super Drive was going to be the standard and now I can't find super floppies in any stores. Part 2 is "Keeping It Running Smoothly" and deals with the maintenance issues of backups, file deleting, and utilizing system resources effectively. Part 3 concerns the Internet & On-line Security with reminders that there is little that remains personal when stored on a personal computer. Part 4 is Tricky Troubles and was the section where I found myself making note.

Throughout, there are hyperlinks to related on-line resources and to Kim's Web Sites, all of which are family friendly and lots of practical tips. My favorites were changing the printer default to the draft setting and tips on deleting temp files.

As a reference tool, the reader is quickly linked to Kim's web site and continually updated information that will help with future problems. The book's "50 points" are geared to those about to buy a new PC & peripherals. Referring to it, the new user is given sound advice on how to optimize its performance.

The CD Book is best used on-line so one can quickly jump from one subject to a related website and yet another etc., allowing the reading to become more of an adventurer. It is worth the \$19.95 price. It can be purchased at Kim's store:

http://www.komando.com/kk_estore_40/default.asp

Editor's Recommended Readings

Browsing the APCUG directory of computer clubs I found the newsletter of the Orange Coast IBM Computer Club <http://www.ocipug.org/files/newsletter/2003/march.pdf>. This URL is for the March 2003 issue. Other issues are available by changing the date in the URL beginning with April 2001. This issue is 14 pages with a little news and boiler plate with the rest informative articles, cartoons, hardware news and reviews and cute jokes. It was a fun read. Others were informative but not as much fun.

The Long Beach IBM Users Group <http://www.lbibmug.org/> publishes a monthly newsletter, the "Interface" and posts it on their website to be relegated to "electronic storage" when replaced by the subsequent issue. There were no "guest" authors on any of the reports or articles so one must assume that the entire newsletter was written by members. Judging from their events calendar the current issue should be posted long enough to be read by our readers. The articles are interesting and well written but difficult to read because they are printed in three column format requiring much fiddling with the vertical scroll bars.

I would like to refer you to the Houston Area League of PC Users HAL-PC Magazine <http://www.hal-pc.org/journal.html>. This is a "magazine" of an indeterminate number of pages and boasting of a circulation of 20,000. The above URL takes you to the magazine home page where you can select from monthly issues from December 1995 to date. Selecting an issue takes you to an index of articles on various topics. They have a large "stable" of authors who specialize in one or more fields and some who are generalists. For instance, Todd Rosen currently writes a column entitled "Are You XPerienced?", a question and answer format on Windows XP. There are also articles on hardware, software, peripherals, trends among other topics.

New SLO Bytes member, **Bob Styerwalt** wrote in recommending that we refer you to the newsletter of his former club the Santa Clarita Valley Computer Group. He states that it is "well written and often quite interesting". I read a couple of issues and agreed. Its URL is <http://www.scvpcg.org/newsletter.htm>.

Letters to the Editor

E-mail from **Cliff Buttschardt**:

You all will remember the discussion in the "second half" of SLO Bytes meeting yesterday. In today's paper, there are a few clues as to what was mentioned by Alan and a few of us. There DOES appear to be a finite life on the monitor. It might be that the contrast ratio is reduced after a few years operation. Present day figures run 400:1. Average brightness runs in the 200 to 250 Cd/M----that stands for candles per meter! That also is reduced with time. Again, prices are dropping but the economy seems to be recovering at the same rate.

Editor's note:

You may have noticed that this is only my second issue of *HARDCOPY*. If you have any comments, suggestions, wants, don't wants, beefs and/or ????, please e-mail me at junate@charter.net.

Treasurers Report

April 15, 2003 - May 15, 2003

Income

Membership Dues	\$350.00
Refreshments	\$55.55
Raffle (Windows XP Pro)	\$92.00

Expenses

Rent	\$75.00
------	---------

Checking Account Balance	\$2,775.81
Savings Account Balance	\$693.34

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.

Hard Copy 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 15th 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 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/Web Master/HTML-Internet SIG) rsutter@pw-x.com

Bill Avery (Contributing Columnist/Win95/98 SIG)

Alan Raul (General SIG/Linux SIG)

Nancy Vrooman (Refreshments)

Peter Stonehewer (Refreshments)

Nate Wallenstein (Editor and 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 www.slobytes.org

PDF version of this mailing available at:

<http://www.slobytes.org/news.htm>