

SLO Bytes HardCopy

A publication of the San Luis Obispo PC Users Group
Vol. 19 No. 12 December 2003

For (.pdf) version, see: <http://www.slobytes.org/newsletter/nl1203.pdf>

November 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, MS Office 2003, which includes the Outlook email program, the MS Word document processor, Excel spreadsheet program, and Access database program. Alan commented that Word and Office are like the human brain, with only a small percent of the capabilities being used at any one time.

The Office 2003 update is \$99 retail for previous users, and about \$330 retail for new buyers.

Alan noted that desktop management is supposed to be easier, using note-taking features. This was demonstrated with some prepared video clips from Microsoft. The rest of the Early Meeting was a question and answer session, on various topics from the audience.

Here are some of Alan's web links from the general SIG:

Microsoft Office 2003

<http://office.microsoft.com/home/default.aspx>

Microsoft Office 2003 Editions

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/howtobuy/compare.msp>

Microsoft Office OneNote 2003

<http://office.microsoft.com/onenote/>

AIDA32 is a professional system information, diagnostics and bench-marking program running on Win32 platforms.

<http://www.aida32.hu/aida-features.php?bit=32>

National Fire News

<http://www.nifc.gov/fireinfo/nfn.html>

ATnotes is a FREE program which creates Post-it like notes on the Windows desktop. It lives in the system tray and takes very few resources.

<http://largo.nerim.net/atnotes/>

The Main Meeting presentation from Power Quest, with Gene Barlow began at 2:30 p. m. The most interesting parts of his presentation are available on CD-ROM.

Gene announced that Symantec will be purchasing Power Quest, and their support for user groups will probably diminish. The competing product, Ghost, might be replacing Drive Image, but no certain news is available at this time. We hope this is not his farewell visit, but he is not sure of anything right now. If the User Group discount prices are important to you, it is a good idea to order sooner rather than later. See

<http://www.symantec.com/press/2003/n030923.html>

The main topics covered were backup software (such as Partition Magic, Drive Image, Drive Copy, and V2i Protector), and hard drive security, including programs offered by White Canyon Software, <http://www.whitecanyon.com/index.php>, called "permanent deletion software". Their products, WipeDrive and SecureClean will prevent identity theft from your used drives, if they should fall into the wrong hands. "Your sold, donated or discarded computer could cost you thousands! (they claim). What information is lurking on your computer that could be stolen and used against you?". If this is a problem for you, please see their web site.

The Power Quest products are available through their website: <http://www.powerquest.com/>. Partition Magic will move and adjust your hard drive partitions without destroying the data stored on them. Drive Image and Drive Copy will make backup copies of the data on other media, and make sure you are safe in the event of a hard drive crash. The life of a hard drive is about 3 to 4 years, under normal use. Since you never know when it may fail, Gene recommends a regular practice of backup to be safe. The plan he calls the "grandfather approach" to backing up your hard drive. Every month the backup image is protected by the previous month's image, for at least 3 months. After the 4th month, the backup image can overwrite the image from 3 months ago. This prevents a dormant virus from coming alive after you restore that virus in a previous month's backup image! If this is not clear, please ask me for our tape of the talk, so you can hear this important procedure described carefully! Gene also covered the latest in backup media, which are the USB/Firewire external hard drives now available on the market today. He went to Best Buy and Staples in San Luis Obispo, and priced these units on the day of his talk. A wider selection was available at Best Buy, but the prices were higher than the two units he found at Staples. The discussion covered the technique for desktop computers, called "cross-backup" approach, where you make image files on pairs of internal drives. This keeps each hard disk protected from the failure of the other. It is also recommended that you copy those image files about once a month to an external media, such as an external hard drive or CD-ROM.

The latest feature of their product, V2i Protector, is incremental backup. It makes a full image the drive as a base image, on the first use. The next time, only the changes are backed up, which is very fast and quite small, allowing a rollback to any backup, quickly and easily.

These products are for Windows 2000 or XP only. The earlier version of Drive Image, Ver. 7, will run under Windows 98, but the V2i Protector will not. Gene did a demo of the laptop backup procedure, as described in his "Training CD", "Backing UP Your Hard Drive", which is also available from the User Group Relations Department of Power Quest, for \$19.95. We thanked Gene for his efforts, and wished him and his wife well as we closed the meeting with our usual Pick'n Win raffle. Next time is the big Christmas Party, so be sure to come and win your prize!

President's Message

Our December meeting will sport a different venue:

1:00 - 1:15 PM Main Hall - **Announcements and Voting**

1:15 -2:00 PM Main Hall - **Alan Raul - will moderate a computer question/answer session**

1:15 -2:00 PM Men's Lounge - **Bill Avery - the usual Windows SIG**

2:00 - 2:30 PM Dining Room - **Swap Meet and Munchies**

2:30 - 3:00 PM Main Hall - **Dave McLaughlin - Adobe Photoshop Album 2**

2:30 - 3:00 PM Men's Lounge - **Bill Avery - Qualcomm Eudora**

2:30 - 3:00 PM Women's Lounge - **Alan Raul - Linux**

3:00 - 4:00 PM Main Hall - **Xmas Give-A-Way!**

For a graphical representation of the December meeting you can go to:

<http://pages.sbcglobal.net/araul/temp2/december.jpg>

Some interesting web links from Alan:

Wayne's Windows XP Resources for Administrators and Users - A lot of good Windows XP information can be found at this web site ranging from XP administrator tips to XP resource links.

<http://is-it-true.org/nt/xp/index.shtml>

Mylastemail.com is a unique on-line service, which allows you to leave messages for those you care about – to be emailed after your death. The cost is \$9.99 for three years of service. This service just started in November. This is one of many links I found from Kim Komando.

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

As you see (above) we will not have a featured speaker at our December meeting. From 1-3PM we will meet in various rooms where specific SIGs will be presented/discussed. At 3PM, once again, Santa Claus will pass out the various gifts at our gala give-away raffle. This year, we will have gifts of higher value to pass out to our members and each member present at the meeting will receive a gift. I believe that we will be happy with the gifts we receive from the "Santa Claus" this year.

At the **January 4th SLO Bytes' Meeting**, our featured speaker will be **Rich Blumenthal** of **Voice Factor**, a Florida-based value added re-seller representing Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred Version 7 speech-recognition software.

The Dragon Naturally Speaking 7 family of products provides a fast, easy and accurate way to turn speech into text. Dragon is compatible with virtually all Windows programs. Users can dictate into virtually any windows-based application at speeds up to 160 words per minute while maintaining high levels of accuracy. Version 7, introduced in March of this year, requires five minutes of training, and offers accuracies in the high 90% range. In addition to creating text through dictation, the software supports macros that can be used to quickly pull up boilerplate text and graphics. Dragon can be used to prepare e-mail, spreadsheets and graphs on Excel, navigating the Internet hands free, and much more. Naturally Speaking is further described at <http://www.voicefactor.com/features.html> and <http://www.scansoft.com/naturallyspeaking/>.

Rich has been the president of the Saddleback Valley IBM PC User Group in Mission Viejo for five years. In his capacity as the local Voice Factor representative in Southern California, Rich will be offering the product for sale at a substantial user group discount. He will also provide upgrade discounts to qualifying owners of earlier versions who bring in the CD of their product.

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

BTW, KCBX.net 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

Guest Columnist

The Mozilla Web Browser, by Robert Spotswood
Houston Area League of PC Users

An Alternative to Internet Explorer

When you think of surfing the web, does Internet Explorer (IE) spring to mind? If so, you are not alone. It is certainly the most popular web browser, but it isn't the only one. Nor is it necessarily the best one. Today I hope to introduce you to one of the alternatives, Mozilla.

A Brief History of Mozilla

After the Netscape 4.x series, Netscape (later acquired by AOL) decided to release its browser source code on March 31, 1998 and create the next generation, standards-compliant, web browser (and email client). That project would eventually become Mozilla (www.mozilla.org). Because the project is now open source, anyone can take the Mozilla source code and create their own browser (and email client).

The modern Netscape (6+ series) are in fact, the same basic code as Mozilla. All Netscape did was take Mozilla, add in some proprietary stuff, including some plug-ins, and rename it as Netscape. Therefore, anything you see that works with Netscape 6 or better will also work with Mozilla. In fact, Netscape 7.1 is essentially Mozilla 1.4.

This article will only discuss the browser portion of the Mozilla suite. The Mozilla suite also includes a mail client, and a few other programs. The latest version of Mozilla is 1.4. For those wanting just a browser, a browser-only version of Mozilla is available called Firebird.

As a further note, all of those who want new features (and maybe security enhancements??) for IE, according to Brian Countryman, Program Manager in Internet Explorer, "...there will be no future standalone installations. IE6 SP1 is the final standalone installation..." (See www.microsoft.com/technet/treeview/default.asp?url=/technet/itcommunity/chats/trans/ie/ie0507.asp). If true, you must upgrade your operating system to get a newer version of IE. Also, IE has been dropped on the Mac. For those not ready to upgrade, Mozilla is a sensible choice. Also, while IE will run only on Windows, Mozilla runs on Linux, Windows, Mac, and others.

What makes Mozilla so Great?

Mozilla has many great features and improvements missing from IE that can make your web surfing easier and more enjoyable. In fact, one webpage, www.xulplanet.com/ndeakin/arts/ reasons .html, lists 101 things Mozilla can do that IE can't. I won't cover them all, only the more popular and useful items.

Tabbed browsing

Do you find it annoying to have to switch windows when you're looking at multiple web pages at the same time? I do and so do many others. This why tabbed browsing is perhaps the favorite thing in Mozilla not found in IE. Once you do get used to it, working with IE becomes much more cumbersome. Tabbed browsing allows you browse multiple windows within the same window. Anyone familiar with spreadsheets and how you can have multiple sheets within one window will understand.

I use tabbed browsing when I'm reading one page and see an interesting link, but don't want to lose my place. Simply open the new link in a tab. This is especially useful when filling out forms. The back button doesn't work "properly" in many cases.

But looking something up in new tab allows you to come right back to the form without having to retype everything.

Tabbed browsing is also very useful for dial-up users. While reading one page, you can get the next page loading. While it's true using multiple windows, you can do this in IE, navigation this way is much easier, especially since Mozilla tells you when it's done loading.

Pop-Up Blocking

We all know them and hate them. There are add-on products for IE that will block these annoyances, but why bother? Mozilla includes this as part of the browser. This blocks only un-requested windows, so sites that use pop-ups constructively still work fine. You can also exempt some sites from the blocking and even have Mozilla play a sound when a window is blocked. That sound can be very satisfying. :)

In addition to pop-up blocking, Mozilla can also disable websites from using JavaScript to play with window sizes. You can block sites from raising or lowering windows, resizing windows, hiding the status bar, changing the status bar text, and more.

Mozilla gives you control over your browser, not some website.

Easy Zoom

Are you tired of websites with very tiny print? The kind where you need a magnifying glass to read? Well, Mozilla gives you a way around that. You set the minimum font size and all text on all web pages will be at least that size regardless of what the website says. Further, you can zoom in or out by any amount you want. IE only has 5 levels of zoom.

Security

As of August 5, 2003 there are currently 21 un-patched vulnerabilities in IE, assuming you are current on your patches. Mozilla has none. Some of the IE vulnerabilities have been known for months and exploits are out there (www.pivx.com/larholm/unpatched). One of those vulnerabilities involves SSL, so if you're trusting IE to keep your bank account/credit card safe, you could be in for a rude surprise.

Most Mozilla security bugs are fixed the same day they are reported. For instance, Michael Jennings reports: "...At 9:01 AM on Sunday, the author of this article used Bugzilla bugzilla.mozilla.org [mozilla.org], Mozilla's defect reporting web site, to report the defect. At 9:10 AM, 9 minutes later (9 minutes on a Sunday!), the author received an email saying that the defect had already been fixed..."

Mozilla does not suffer from drive-by-downloading as IE does. This is a term for where you only have to visit a web page for the webpage to download and install software all without any prompts. I'll give you one guess how desirable such software is. That's right. Using IE, your computer can be compromised just by looking at the wrong webpage, or email. Not so with Mozilla.

Disadvantages

Mozilla isn't perfect. There are drawbacks. First, it is a separate download (www.mozilla.org) of about 12MB. If you want Java support, that's another download. Flash and shockwave are still more additional downloads. Still, if you have broadband, it's not a big deal. Dial-up users can always have a friend burn a CD.

The biggest drawback, however, is there are sites out there that are programmed to work only with IE. A few sites even will refuse you entry unless you are using IE even though they work with Mozilla at least partially. The prefbar add-on for Mozilla allows you to easily impersonate IE and can help with such sites. This isn't a failing of Mozilla, but a failure of the webmasters to follow the web standards. However, you, as a Mozilla user, still have to deal with it.

Sites that use ActiveX, which is a security disaster (ActiveX is what makes the drive-by-downloading and a host of other problems possible), won't work properly with Mozilla, although there is an obscure plug-in to support ActiveX in Mozilla. Considering the security aspect, this really is more of a benefit.

Conclusion

As Mike Healan, author of The Spyware Weekly, puts it: "For those of you that have never used Mozilla and are still using that Microsoft browser that comes bundled with every copy of Windows, you really are missing out. The tabbed interface by itself makes it worth switching." www.spywareinfo.net/july1,2003

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

October 15, 2003 - November 15, 2003

Income	
Membership Dues	\$225.00
Refreshments	\$41.00
KCBX Affinity Payments	\$54.00
Expenses	
Rent	\$75.00
Refreshments	\$17.43
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.

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