SONOMA VALLEY COMPUTER GROUP

The Newsletter for Sonoma County's Mac and Windows Users   January 2005   Vol.1 No 1

Greetings to our Sonoma Valley Computer Group family and we wish you a Happier New Year.
Your Board has some very interesting up and coming events planned for you. **Plus, your annual membership is now due!**

JANUARY 8, 2005: Willy Smith will be talking about wireless networking between two laptops, talk about sharing a printer over a network, Google's shopping site, Froogle and have a one or two page handout. Don't miss it.

FEBRUARY 12: Club member to demo mural art work using Photoshop Elements and printer settings to enlarge work.

MARCH 12 OR MAY 14: Guest speaker to demo saving and backup of computer work. It is said "not if" your hard drive dies but "when" ... so daily and weekly saving of your data is important for everything done on your computer.

APRIL 9: Annual In-House Digital Art Show. All members of SVCG are encouraged to bring art work, photographs, any creative work done with computers to this meeting and type up: what you did, how did you do it so club can learn new techniques and helps available on computer. No work will be judged, simply admired. And any small effort as well as unfinished projects we can all learn from. This will encourage questions and discussion. Bring up any inquiries at next meeting in January 2005.

Remember, the club is here for you to learn and share.

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Apple and Windows Users Group

Sonoma Valley Computer Group

BOARD MEETINGS

Usually following General Meeting. Open to all members. Call 935-6690 for further information.

MEMBERSHIPS

S.V.C.G. Annual Membership: $20.
S.V.C.G. Family/Couple membership: $30 (residing at same address). Membership renewals are due and payable at the beginning of each year.

GENERAL MEETINGS

S.V.C.G. meets second Saturday of each month at Sonoma Public Library, 755 West Napa Street; hours: 9:30AM to 11AM unless otherwise notified. Meetings free; guests welcome.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

ONLINE NEWSLETTER:

http://www.vom.com/svcg/index.html

MAILING ADDRESS:

Sonoma Valley Computer Group
PO Box 649
El Verano, CA 95433

RECYCLE: Donate Used Inkjet and Laser Cartridges

Kathy Aanestad is collecting used inkjet and laser cartridges to recycle. Don't throw yours away. Bring your used cartridges to any meeting. They will be gladly accepted. Thank you.

SVCG UG Benefits

Benefits to being a member of the Sonoma Valley Computer Group are a summer Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 workshop, O'Reilly Press and PeachPit Press/NewRiders Press giving you a 20% or more discount on all their books and software! For more information, please contact Kathy Aanestad at 935-6690 or email at 'aanestad@vom.com'.

Additionally, SVCG belongs to the Apple User Group program whereby members can purchase Apple products at a savings. Contact Kathy Aanestad for user ID and password in order to access their online site. We need members help with finding contacts for PC user group offers so that they can be included in the newsletter postings.

SVCG Members Aid Library

Fearless leaders from the Sonoma Valley Computer Group are volunteering their time at the Sonoma Regional Library. The Library has six new flat-screen, high-speed, Gateway public-access computers gifted by Friends of the Sonoma Valley Library.

These machines offer access to the Library Catalog, Internet Resources, Microsoft Works, and Super Search Interlibrary Loan. Although the "front-end" screen format looks a little unfamiliar when recalling the old terminals, the advanced search-limiting and sorting capabilities far surpass what was previously available.

Those with questions, as well as those reluctant to try new online command protocols, are invited to ask SVCG volunteers for assistance. Our volunteers hours are 11am Friday morning.

SVCG affiliation has been a significant factor in our ability to continue as a computer club. We are pleased to participate in community affairs such as this.

Kudos go to Jeanette Woods, Jeanette Barekman, George Pick, Joan Fabian, and Wes Ford, Beth Pickering, and Elizabeth Palmer. Thank you for your help.

Happier New Year

WHAT'S NEWS

from Edupage

RICE RESEARCHERS DISCOVER GOOGLE SEARCH FLAW

Researchers at Rice University in November uncovered a security flaw in Google's recently released desktop search tool. Google Desktop is a downloadable program that creates an index of material on a user's computer, including e-mail and individual documents. When that user does a Google search of the Web, the application incorporates local resources from the index in the results. In what began as a student project to investigate how Google Desktop works, two students and a computer science professor found that the application could be fooled into sending results from a local index to Web sites, allowing a hacker to see them. The problem would only reveal small portions of information, and no attacks using the flaw have been reported. After being notified by the researchers of the vulnerability in late November, Google patched the flaw and began offering a new version of the search tool in December. In addition, the application includes a feature that allows Google to update the software without user input or even knowledge about the upgrade.
New York Times, 20 December 2004 (registration req'd)
http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/20/technology/20flaw.html

JUDGE HITS SPAMMERS WITH $1 BILLION FINE

A federal judge in Iowa has issued fines totaling $1 billion against three spammers, marking what some observers believe is the largest judgment handed down to spammers. The ruling came from a case filed by Robert Kramer, operator of a small Internet service provider in eastern Iowa. Kramer, whose company serves about 5,000 customers, filed suit against 300 spammers, alleging that they send his subscribers upwards of 10 million spam e-mails per day. The judge ordered three of the defendants to pay damages under a state law that allows for fines of $10 per spam message, and those amounts were then tripled under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. Cases against other defendants are still pending. In his ruling Judge Charles R. Wolle ordered Arizona-based AMP Dollar Savings to pay $720 million, Florida-based Cash Link Systems to pay $360 million, and TEI Marketing Group, also based in Florida, to pay $140,000. No attorneys for any of the defendants were present during the trial, and the plaintiff's attorney con-

ceded it is unlikely his client will ever collect any of the damages. Wall Street Journal, 20 December 2004 (sub. req'd)
http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB110349923676804327,00.html

GOOGLE PARTNERS WITH LIBRARIES TO DIGITIZE CONTENT

Google has announced agreements with major libraries to digitize books in their collections and make them available online. Google is funding the project, which is said to have strong support from founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who said that such dissemination of information has always been one of their goals. Under the arrangements, Google reportedly will scan all of the eight million books at Stanford University's library and all of the University of Michigan's seven million texts. For the others involved in the project--Harvard University, Oxford University, and the New York Public Library--only portions of the collections will be scanned. For books whose copyright remains in effect, Google will scan the entire text but make available only selected portions online. Books whose copyright has run out will be available in their entirety. The announcement follows similar programs from the Library of Congress as well as Amazon to digitize content of books.
New York Times, 14 December 2004 (registration req'd)
http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/14/technology/14cnd-goog.html

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT WILL ADDRESS UBIQUITOUS COMPUTING

Electronics maker Fujitsu and the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) have announced a partnership to study ubiquitous computing. The notion of ubiquitous, or pervasive, computing is that computers can be built into all manner of objects, such as clothing, appliances, and cars, allowing those devices to be networked through wired and wireless connections. Researchers from both organizations will initially focus efforts on developing a protocol that would permit various devices to work properly with one another. Researchers will also work to develop simpler and more secure wireless technologies, among other areas of study. Mark Bernstein, president and center director of PARC, said the project will allow researchers at PARC to make "cutting-edge technology concepts and visions a reality." Bernstein also noted that the joint project "will fuel new ideas about the potential for PARC research."
Internet News, 15 December 2004
http://www.internetnews.com/ent-news/article.php/3448171

SVCG
Plugged into Technology

DECEMBER MEETING REPORT-

By Veda Lewis

If you stayed home and nested instead of coming to the December club meeting/pot luck, you missed a good one. As usual, finger foods were in abundance and free-form Q&A was the norm.

We had a great impromptu mini-presentation from club member Carol Nelson. It was worth the price of admission. Carol gave us a Reader's Digest version of her creative use of Photoshop Elements for doing murals. Yes, I said murals. She has agreed to provide a step-by-step presentation, including handouts at the February club meeting.

Carol's creative bug has pushed her to take a leap of faith and devote herself full-time to creative endeavors. Recently, she determined that a friend could use a nice view of the countryside on a small wall in her home. Carol took a photograph of a beautiful scene and brought it into Photoshop Elements 2.0. She modified the scene to fit her whimsy by moving elements around in the software. When she was done moving things, she then printed it out and showed it to her friend to see if she liked it.

After approval from the 'client', Carol then implemented her mural strategy, as learned in a recent class she took on using Photoshop Elements. She took her image and used plain old tracing paper to highlight the features she wanted to capture. After scanning that tracing, she then printed it out in a 'tile' format the size of her final mural outline. Some Epson and HP printers have this feature so you can print a large image in a number of pieces and tape them together. At the February meeting, she'll explain why she didn't use the 'find edges' feature in Elements for this.

With your image printed in 'tiles', the next step is to tape them together. Armed with your template and graphite paper, you are ready to transfer your outline to the wall, or large canvas. From there, you leave the computer behind and indulge your artistic talents.

Carol showed us a beautiful painting she did for her daughter using this technique. She 'improved' the entry to the property with a little Photoshop Elements editing.

I have toyed with doing a mural for years and expected to have to use an opaque or overhead projector. I can't wait to learn more at the February meeting!

Here's to happier computing in 2005!

THE EVOLUTION OF SCROLLING: REINVENTING THE WHEEL

by Joe Kissell <jk@alt.cc>

All modern computer operating systems are based on some form of graphical user interface (GUI) that assumes the presence of a mouse (or comparable pointing device) to move a pointer around on the screen. Most of us have become so accustomed to using a mouse that we don't even think about it anymore. Although it's possible to use most GUI programs with a keyboard alone, it's much more cumbersome - and the whole point of modern interfaces was to be less cumbersome than their keyboard-only predecessors.

When it comes to scrolling, however, most GUIs don't make it easy for ordinary mice. The usual way to move the contents of a window up and down (or left and right) is to position your mouse pointer over the tiny arrows at the corners of the window and click a button. The problem with this approach is one of target acquisition: if your pointer doesn't happen to be near those arrows (and it usually isn't) you have to move it into position, and it can be difficult to reach a relatively small clickable area on the screen both quickly and accurately. You must either move the pointer slowly or back up after overshooting. Although you may have become so used to doing this that you don't notice it, this method of scrolling is error-prone and time-consuming; it also results in your pointer being far away from the controls you're likely to need next (menus or toolbars, say).

One solution, certainly, is to use the Page Up/Page Down keys on your keyboard to scroll. But that requires moving your hand back and forth between your pointing device and your keyboard, which can also be tedious. Another approach, which has been an option in Kensington's MouseWorks software for years, is called "Scroll With Mouse" (formerly known by the unwieldy term "Scroll When You Move The Mouse"). The feature gave users the option of holding down a key or mouse button to turn the entire mouse (or trackball) into a virtual scroll control.

Wheel of Fortune -- The first widely successful attempt to address this problem in hardware was the scroll wheel. The idea was to combine a special wheel on a mouse with software that turned the wheel's movement into window-scrolling instructions. Although the scroll wheel was invented by Mouse Systems (now owned by KYE) in the early 1990s, its popularity skyrocketed in 1996 when Microsoft made it part of their IntelliMouse. Unlike other mouse manufacturers, Microsoft was in the unique position to adapt both their operating systems and applications to include "hooks" that tightly integrated the hardware with scrolling behav-

ior in the software. All of a sudden, scrolling was no longer cumbersome; without moving your hand from the mouse or even having any idea where your pointer was, you could scroll up or down with a flick of the finger. This mechanism was almost immediately embraced by consumers, so that within about two years scroll wheels were the norm on almost all mice - except, incomprehensibly, for those made by Apple, on the grounds that anything more than a single button makes mice seem too complicated.

<http://www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/default.mspx>

The near-universal acceptance of the scroll wheel could have been the happy ending of the story, were it not for two niggling issues. First was the problem of horizontal scrolling. When documents are wider than a window - often the case with spreadsheets and graphics, for example - a single-axis scrolling mechanism only solves half of the problem. Numerous solutions emerged, with varying levels of acceptance. In some cases, holding down the Shift key or another modifier while moving a scroll wheel changes scrolling from vertical to horizontal. A few manufacturers chose to put two wheels on their mice, one for each axis. IBM's TrackPoint device, that miniature joystick that looks like an eraser head, found its way onto some mice in place of a wheel. And more recently, Microsoft began selling mice with "tilt wheel technology," in which the wheel assembly is mounted on a gimbal so that it can tilt to either side, thus scrolling left or right.

<http://www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/features/tiltwheel.mspx>

One Ring to Rule Them All -- The other issue was that given the design of some input devices - notably trackballs - there simply isn't a good place to put a wheel so that it is as easily reachable as it would be on a mouse. During my time at Kensington, we spent long hours puzzling over this issue. The solution we arrived at was to replace the vertically oriented scroll wheel with a horizontal ring encircling the trackball. The shape of the ring enables it to be moved easily by the fingertips; users can choose to have clockwise turns scroll down and counterclockwise turns scroll up, or vice-versa. (You wouldn't believe how long and earnestly we argued over which of those two directions should be the default.) The Scroll Ring first appeared on Kensington's TurboRing trackball in 2000, which for a variety of reasons didn't sell especially well. But the company still felt the basic idea was a good one, and in 2003, they released version 7 of their flagship trackball, Expert Mouse - this time with both an optical sensor and a new, improved scroll ring. I have one on my desk right now, and all I can say is that having used Kensington trackballs for over 10 years, my fingers have never been happier.
<http://www.kensington.com/html/2200.html>

No discussion of innovative scrolling mechanisms would be complete without mentioning a design that's near to my heart: the no-

moving-parts, touch-sensitive, flat scroll sensor. My first encounter with touch-sensitive scrolling came during the development of Kensington's ill-fated WebRacer input device in the late 1990s. Pointer movement was controlled by a touch-pad, and the right and bottom edges of the pad behaved just like the scroll bars in windows: slide your finger up or down on the right edge, for example, and the window scrolls at the same speed. Although WebRacer was not a commercial success, flat scrolling reappeared a few years later when the company was trying to design a sleek mouse with no aesthetically jarring protrusions. After many months of effort, they came up with the touch-sensitive pad on StudioMouse. It works just like a scroll wheel, with the added benefit that you can scroll up or down continuously by holding your finger at either end of the sensor.

<http://www.kensington.com/html/4769.html>

Then there's a design that combines the touch-sensitivity of a flat scroll sensor with the shape of the scroll ring: the Apple Click Wheel used on all current models of the iPod. The first iPods had scroll wheels that physically moved, and were thus sensitive to dirt, moisture, and other contaminants. Besides providing touch-sensitive scrolling, the cardinal points of the click wheel can be depressed slightly to activate buttons beneath, making for an elegant all-purpose input control.

<http://www.apple.com/ipod/>

More Flatter-y -- Notwithstanding Apple's outstanding click wheel design, input devices on Macintosh computers remain behind the times. My current laptop, an Apple PowerBook G4, has a trackpad with no built-in scrolling capabilities (and, frustratingly, just one button). Fortunately I was able to find a wonderful $15 piece of software called SideTrack, which turns the edges of the trackpad into a highly configurable scrolling device much like the WebRacer touchpad - and many Windows-based laptops. This is a great enhancement, because target acquisition is even more difficult with a trackpad than with a mouse.

<http://www.ragingmenace.com/software/sidetrack/>

Having a scrolling mechanism (of whatever kind) on my input device has become a necessity for me. Like cell phones, it seems like a luxury until you get used to it; then you can't do without. So when I see someone laboriously scrolling the old-fashioned way by clicking on arrows, I just cringe. They might as well be using a rotary phone. Hmmm... a ring-shaped input device. Interesting. I guess it's true: what goes around, comes around.

[If you found Joe's discussion of scrolling devices useful, consider subscribing to Interesting Thing of the Day. You can opt

to receive a daily email with a link to that day's article (free), the full text of each daily article by email ($5 for one year), or a high-quality audio recording of each article ($20 for one year).]

<http://itotd.com/subscribe.alt>

THEFT ALERT

Keep a watch out for people standing near you in the checkout line at retail stores, restaurants, grocery stores, etc who have a camera cell phone in hand. With the camera cell phones, they can take a picture of your credit card, which gives them your name, number, and expiration date. CBS reported this type of identification theft is one of the fastest growing scams today. Be aware of your surroundings.

DO NOT CALL NUMBER

Starting Jan 1, 2005, all cell phone numbers will be made public to telemarketing firms. So this means as of Jan 1, your cell phone may start ringing off the hook with telemarketers, but unlike your home phone, most of you pay for your incoming calls. These telemarketers will eat up your free minutes and end up costing you money in the long run. According to the National Do Not Call List, you have until Dec. 15, 2004 to get on the national "Do not call list" for cell phones. They said that you need to call 1-888-382-1222 from the phone that you wish to have put on the "do not call list" to be put on the list. They also said you can do it online at https://www.donotcall.gov Registering only takes a minutes, is in effect for! 5 years, and will possibly save you money (and definitely frustration). Make sure you register now.

Reminder to please visit:
www.thebreastcancersite.com

☞ It's Time to Renew Your Membership This Month!

STATE OF THE ART: WITH MINI'S RIVALS, MORE IS SOMETIMES LESS

December 16, 2004
By DAVID POGUE

In February, Apple followed up its wildly popular iPod music player with the iPod Mini. This smaller, sleeker $250 player could hold 1,000 songs and came in five brushed-aluminum colors. But for only $50 more, you could buy a regular iPod that could hold four times as much music. Logical observers could draw only one possible conclusion: that Apple was out of its number-crunching mind.

The San Jose Mercury News called the iPod Mini "cool, colorful and too expensive." PC Magazine wrote that "you are paying dearly for the miniaturization." And Business Week Online declared it doomed, another of the occasional "fits of delusion" by Steve Jobs, Apple's chief executive.

But the Mini was an enormous hit, and back-ordered for months. Its appeal was never about logic; it's about emotion, style and status. It's so small, cool and comforting in the hand that to hold one is to want one. (The reviewer for Business Week Online had the guts to write a second column, apologizing for the first.)

Inevitably, the Mini inspired other companies to send in the clones. This month you'll be able to choose from four impressive iPod Mini competitors, courtesy of Dell, Rio, Creative and Virgin Electronics.

Some of the similarities are broad, like the charging cable that also auto-loads a copy of your music collection from your PC. Some are tiny: the iPod-like "Don't steal music" sticker (on the Dell's screen), the choice of colors (Creative's Zen Micro comes in 10) or the fingerprint- and scratch-prone mirror-chrome back panel (on the Rio Carbon).

There are also some very important differences. For example, the iPod Mini works with the Macintosh and Windows. But if you want to buy pop music legally online, you must use Apple's iTunes Music Store. That's not such a horrible fate; Apple's store is widely admired. Still, iPods can't play songs bought from other online music stores.

The rival players present the opposite situation: they accept songs bought from almost any online store except Apple's (Napster, Wal-Mart and so on), because all of these stores and players use Microsoft's copy-protection format. Of course, both the iPod and its rivals also play unprotected files like WAV and MP3 and songs you've ripped from your own CD collection.

All of the rival players can synchronize your music collection with Windows Media Player 10. (Thanks to a software plug-in, the Rio Carbon can also sync with the iTunes jukebox program on the Mac or Windows - except for songs you've bought from the iTunes Music Store, of course.)

If all this compatibility talk turns your brain to mush, here's a difference that's easier to understand: The upstart players hold more music than the Mini (about 250 songs more). Each contains a five-gigabyte hard drive instead of a four-gigabyte one. And each rival either costs less or offers more features.

For example, if you buy a Dell Pocket DJ instead of the iPod Mini, you'll save $50. This $200 player is almost the same size as the Mini (both are half an inch thick; the Dell is 3.5 by 2.1 inches, the Mini is 3.6 by 2), and its rounded silver metal case feels equally solid in your hand.

Or how about the Creative Zen Micro? For about $250 online, you get a player that's shorter but thicker than the Mini (3.3 by 2 by 0.7 inches) with a voice recorder, an FM radio and even an FM radio recorder. The sound quality of your recordings is pretty poor - clearly, Creative doesn't want you to make recordings at live concerts instead of buying them - but these are handy features.

As a bonus, this player has a pop-out battery. (After several hundred charges, the other players' batteries must be replaced at the factory.)

The $250 Virgin Electronics player, whose real name is the Virgin Electronics Player, is bigger than the Mini (3.8 by 2.2 by 0.6 inches). But its all-plastic case is as light as a feather (some may say it feels cheap). An FM radio is built in, although you can't record from it. In a masterstroke, Virgin incorporated two headphone jacks, so you can listen (or dance) with a friend. And you can crank the volume way past 11, as the saying goes; in fact, it can go dangerously loud.

You've got to love the creators' hilariously blunt writing. The hourglass cursor says, "busy busy." You're directed to press the Home button "if you're feeling lost, or maybe just a little homesick." And Virgin is frank enough to say in its manual, "Nope, you can't play songs you purchased from iTunes."

Only one company learned from the iPod's secret identity as a piece of jewelry. The domed, tapered Rio Carbon looks like a shining puddle of molten silver. At 3.3 by 2.5 by 0.6 inches (at its thickest), it's actually more mini than the Mini. An alien stumbling upon the smooth, shiny Carbon in the rubble of our civilization might mistake it for one of those worry stones that you're supposed to rub for stress relief.

The company pegs the battery life at a jaw-dropping 20 hours between charges, double what the Mini gives you. And even though it has a built-in voice recorder, the Rio Carbon can be found online for $40 less than the Mini.

Four great players, each with some superpower that the iPod Mini lacks. It's curtains for Apple, right?

Not so fast. On something that's as personal and frequently used as a music player, little things make a big difference, and it's in the Little Things department that the iPod Mini really shines.

For example, when your player contains a thousand songs, you need a way to scroll through them quickly. You can run your finger around the iPod's famous click wheel fast to jet down to the W's and then slowly to pinpoint "What a Wonderful World."

But the Rio's thumb wheel has no such variable speed; it's four songs per turn, period. Working through any list longer than about 12 songs is an excruciating exercise. The Dell's "rolling log" control does zip farther through a list the faster you spin it, but it's awfully hard to speed up or slow down when you're basically twirling a section of a drinking straw. The Virgin's up-down buttons scroll at two different speeds, but that's still more frustrating than the Mini's "any speed you like."

Each player comes with its own disappointments. The backlighting of the Dell, for example, is dark blue, offering precious little contrast with the tiny black type. The volume controls (separate + and - buttons) sit on the top of the unit, looking and feeling identical to the Off button right next to them. And often, pushing inward on the rolling-log thing - which ought to mean "execute this command" - opens yet another menu instead.

The Virgin's buttons are recessed too far, its backlighting is even dimmer than the Dell's, and making the thing work with your PC can involve an ugly ritual of firmware downloads and

restarts. (The company admits to muffing this process, and promises to improve it.) More important, the lesson of the iPod's looks seems to have sailed straight over Virgin's heads; this is one aesthetically challenged player.

On the Creative Zen Micro, the iPod's wheel has been replaced by a touch-sensitive vertical strip. In theory it ought to offer variable speed scrolling, but in practice it's a sticky, balky nightmare. You'll find a similar lack of polish when you want to use the Zen Micro's hard drive to transport computer files (a terrific feature of the iPod and all of its rivals) and discover that you must tell the software in advance how much space you'll need for them. How could you know that ahead of time?

The sculptured Rio Carbon looks cool on a tabletop, but it's all wrong for your palm. You wind up with the hard, flat chrome surface against the curve of your fingers, and the domed front pointing up at your face. Truth is, this player's case has been designed upside down.

Furthermore, the Carbon's too-tight carrying case blocks all access to the controls. There's no physical Hold switch to prevent button presses in your pocket or purse. Finally, note that if you opt to use your own headphones (those with a metal ring around the miniplug), you get loud crackling in your ears with any movement of the cord. The company cheerily suggests that you solve the problem with Scotch tape. (Rio also says that it will fix this problem on the next batch of Carbons.)

Remember, too, that for once in its life, Apple is the sole superpower; the iPod makes up 92 percent of the hard-drive player market. If you're an iPod Mini owner, you're part of a whole ecosystem of Web sites, shareware programs, armbands, portable speakers, carrying cases, FM car transmitters and so on. If you buy one of its upstart rivals, you're pretty much stuck with what comes in the box.

All right, so the iPod Mini's rivals aren't as elegant or as polished, they're not as thoughtfully conceived, and they may not fill you with as much pure, overwhelming technolust. Apple's message seems to be, "Perfection has a price."
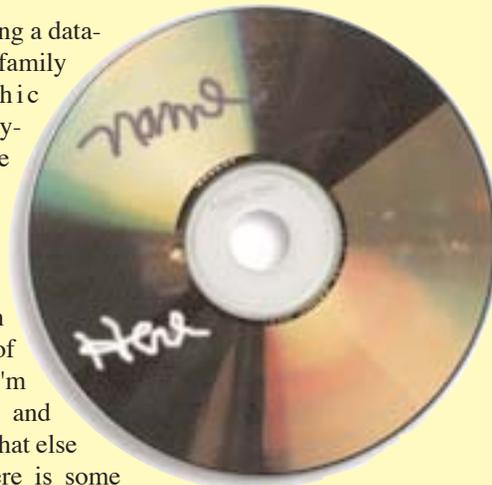
Thousands of people, however, don't require perfection; they'd much rather save the 50 bucks. Thousands more would really like a built-in radio or microphone. On the Web, you'll even encounter a small army of militant iPod haters, people who despise the whole phenomenon: white earbuds, good reviews, status-symbol status and all.

For these demographic groups, the arrival of rivals to the Mini is a welcome development. Choose the Dell if you want an almost-Mini for $50 less; the Creative Zen Micro if the radio and microphone appeal to you; or the Rio Carbon for long battery life and stylishness that rivals the Mini's. They may not play your emotions quite the way the original does, but every now and then there's something to be said for logic.

ARCHIVAL PHOTO LABELING

Q: Howdy-
We are creating a database of old family photographic prints and trying to decide how to label them. My mom wants to write a number on the margin of the photo; I'm freaking out and wondering what else there is. There is some protest about sleeves that photos could fall out of or slips of paper with numbers, potentially as degrading as writing on the photo. What do museums do? Any suggestions?

A: I just did research (gaylordmart.com) and found a special light blue pencil for print marking on the back that doesn't reproduce. I just read an article about using a Sharpie to label cds and dvds. It said never do it as the fumes/chemicals eat into the film layers on the dvd and wreck them!!!

A: Scrapattack in Coddingtown has this pencil. I have used it on all of my photos and it works. You might also find more acid free alternatives for storing your photos. Are you also scanning the photos? I am in the process of scanning and cataloging my old photos on my computer.

A: I've just completed a short course in Digital Photo Archiving led by our own NCMUG member Barbara Heiman. We as a class developed a prototype methodology for the Junior College photo archives using scans in Photoshop CS and FileMaker pro 7. The first labor was to set up a retrieval system. We finally came to using a alpha-numeric identifying number, such as jc-100001, jc-10002, etc. This number is used on the "save as" title in Photoshop; scanning was at 300 dpi, 24 bit RGB color; saving was in TIFF mode, IBM PC which can also be opened by Macs. Each photo was put in an acid-free, non out-gassing sleeve, and the identifying number affixed to the outside of the sleeve by an Avery archival label (33 per page). Source (raw scan, after straightening and minimal cropping of white borders, etc.) photos were locked, and a Derivative 1 copy was used to correct, enhance, sharpen, etc. Hope this helps.

A: For the few precious photos that I have, I use the sleeves.

For the hundreds of others I am using acid free photo boxes. I have a box for each family. This cuts down on the cost.

Q: Why did you save as tiff and not jpg?

A: TIFF (non-compressed) is not loss-y as jpeg is, and it can be opened by either Windows or Macs. It can be opened in Photoshop, and you can then save a copy in jpeg if you wish, or reduce the image size for web, etc.

DIGITAL CAMERA INFO

TidBITS has released "Take Control of Buying a Digital Camera"

Overwhelmed by choices when purchasing a digital camera? Turn to professional photographer Larry Chen for the practical advice you need to sort through the hundreds of digital cameras for sale.

Rather than bury you with arcane technical details or a myriad camera models, Larry first steps you through a process designed to help you determine how much you want to spend, what sort of pictures you're likely to take, and what aspects of using a camera are important to you. With that grounding, you're ready to learn about the different camera features, separated by those that are actually important and those that merely fill up feature checklists. The ebook even contains a camera comparison worksheet you can fill in while shopping. Additional sections give you pointers on how to read camera reviews (plus a list of the best review sites!), advice about evaluating picture quality, suggestions of where to buy your camera, the lowdown on accessories you might want, and tips on working with photos on your computer.

Includes a coupon worth $5 off any order at Small Dog Electronics, making this ebook free if you buy your camera from Small Dog!

Remember that user group members can get a 10-percent discount off any Take Control order with the user group coupon code CPN31208MUG. If you use the link below to order, the MUG coupon code will be applied automatically for you:

<http://store.esellerate.net/store/s.aspx?s=STR5625274989&Cmd=BUY&SKURefnum=SKU71452704199&COUPON=CPN31208MUG&Options=PREVALIDATECOUPON&PT=TRK-0015-TCMUG>

Book Details

"Take Control of Buying a Digital Camera" by Laurence Chen
http://www.tidbits.com/takecontrol/buying-digicam.html

PDF format, 73 pages,
(free 27-page sample available)
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Price: $5.00

HOW DOES FROOGLE WORK?

Google has launched a test version of a new shopping search tool which it calls "Froogle". (Google claims it is the most comprehensive product search engine available on the web.) Froogle is really an extension of the Google search engine that millions of people around the world use on a daily basis to research all kinds of information, including products before they buy. If you are in business, listing a product in Froogle is a free way to extend the reach of your marketing and potentially get to millions of new customers.

Froogle is organised more as a directory than a Web page. It has 15 different product categories. These include groupings like Apparel and Accessories, Arts and Entertainment, Cars and Vehicles, Baby, Books, Music and Video, Computers, Electronics, Flowers, Food and Gourmet, Health and Personal Care, Home and Garden, Office, Sports and Outdoors and Toys and Games.

Just like using the normal Google Directory, you can choose to look for products by using a keyword search or by drilling down through a particular category and its relevant sub-categories. It is also possible to limit your search to a specific category.

What kind of Search "Results" do you get using Froogle?
The returned search results are limited to one product per suppliers store. Each result displays a thumbnail image of the product to the left. It also shows the product's name - price and description displayed just to the right of the thumbnail. The store where the product is available is also listed, complete with a link so you can navigate to all results related to your keyword that are available at that particular vendor.

Is Froogle really just a marketing tool like others on the Internet? No, it seems not, Froogle's main emphasis appears to be on helping Internet users find the products they are searching for, rather than providing product information, reviews, or the usual other associated information found on other shopping search services.

Froogle seems to do particularly well when it comes to some of the more unusual or esoteric searches. This is probably because Google has attempted to build a one of the most extensive product search tools available on the web, going for both breadth and depth of coverage rather than be an extension of a

marketing tool.

Search Engines have Suffered from Information Overload and Relevance Underload – is this the same with Froogle?
Google uses an algorithm (formula) to determine the results of a search that is highly similar to Google's Page Rank method used for determining ordinary web search results. It also appears that there is no paid inclusion or other methods that merchants can use to influence the way or position their products are presented in results.

Google states that the "Data in Froogle comes from two sources. Firstly the information is supplied by "Merchant feeds", and the rest is a crawl of web pages that identifies product offers."

How do suppliers and Merchants get their Products Listed in Froogle? Merchants provide product information to Froogle via FTP (File Transfer Protocol), which is a specialised method of moving information in the form of data files across the Internet from one Web site to another. Google encourages merchants wishing to sell their wares on the Web to send updates frequently, so as to keep the information as fresh and up-to-date as possible.

Google says that unlike other shopping search services, it does not plan to charge merchants for including their products in the Froogle system. Merchants can sign up to be included in Froogle by visiting the Froogle site:
http://froogle.google.com/froogle/merchants.html. It is really only necessary to Email Google with details of your site, and they then send back specific instructions for submitting a data feed in the required format.

Is Froogle the same as Google Catalogues Search? While it is similar to Google Catalogues search, Froogle is a completely different project that merges different technologies. Google says the company has no plans to integrate the two services at this time.

How do I find the Froogle search site on the Web? The Froogle beta site is available both as a stand-alone site http://froogle.google.com, or it can be accessed from a link the advanced search page on Google's standard site http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en

What Else is New on the Google Front?
As a matter of interest Google has also added two new services to its Google Labs area, they are Google Webquotes and the Google Viewer.

Webquotes
This system offers multiple viewpoints and descriptions of a single web site. These viewpoints however come from third party sources. These descriptions can often be very different from the descriptions that are displayed in ordinary search results. By extracting text or words from a Web page Webquotes then generates the search results. In this way a description is given that's essentially using the page author's own words.

Web Quotes describe what others think of a particular page. Web Quotes are generated from yet other Web pages that "point" or link to a particular page. The text is then extracted from originating or anchor (link) text and the surrounding nearby words.

Google Viewer
The Google Viewer allows you to view results of a search as a slide show. The Google Viewer shows the pages found as a result of any Google search as a continuous scrolling slide show. The search results can then be viewed without using a keyboard or mouse. The speed with which the images move across the screen can be adjusted to each users preference.

As each image of a page's contents rolls by it is accompanied by a small piece describing that page. In reality it's a quick way to scan all of the underlying pages in a search result without leaving Google.

A new season is upon us. Your membership dues can be paid now either at this Saturday's meeting or you can mail your check to:

SVCG
POB 649
El Verano, CA 95493

Dues are $20 per person or $30 per family (residing at the same address).

Happier New Year!

MEMBERSHIP DUES

January is traditionally the month your annual membership fees are due.

You can either pay your dues at January's meeting or mail the completed membership application form below and a check for $20 (individual) or $30 (family) to:

SVCG
POB 649
El Verano, CA 95493

As you have read on the front page of this newsletter, your club is scheduling some very exciting topics you won't want to miss. We look forward to seeing you again this year. Your participation is what keeps this club alive.

As always, your suggestions and/or comments for future meeting topics is greatly appreciated. Let us know by emailing any of the Board members. You will find their email addresses on Pg. 2.

Sonoma Valley Computer Group Membership Application/Renewal Form

New Applicant

☐ Use information below

Name: _____
Address:_____
_____
Home Phone:_____
Work Phone: _____
E-mail Address:_____

◼ Send ☐ $20 (individual) ☐ $30 (family) check to:
Sonoma Valley Computer Group
POB 649
El Verano, CA 95433

☐ I give permission to use this info in the club roster which is for members only

Renewal (expiration date on label)

☐ Use the name and address label

Platform:	☐ Mac	☐ PC	☐ WinNT
Operating System:	☐ OS 8x	☐ Win3	☐ Unix
	☐ OS 9x	☐ Win95	☐ Linux
	☐ OS X	☐ Win98	☐ WinME

Computer Make/Model: _____

How did you hear about SVCG?

☐ class ☐ club member ☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter

User Level: ☐ Novice ☐ Intermediate
☐ Advanced ☐ Expert

Take newsletter online vs. by mail? YES_____ NO_____

Topics:

- Wireless Networking
  Google s Froogle Shopping

Date: Saturday, 1/8/2005
Place: Sonoma Public Library
  755 West Napa Street
Time: 9:30am to 11:00am

Place Label
Here

Sonoma Valley Computer Group
Newsletter

Apple User Group   for Mac and Windows Users