HUNTERDON COMPUTER CLUB

Newsletter

Volume 15 Issue 8

August 2002

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Last meeting presenters were Jim Russ and Steve Steinberg. They talked about Personal Digital Assistants.

Steve is a long time member and runs the ABC Computer Services Company on Main Street in Flemington. See his ad elsewhere in this newsletter.

The club moves forward where no club goes before with this month's topic, Intel Play's QX3+ Computer Microscope. Jim Russ, our dedicated Program Chairperson, is putting on this unique demonstration for us.

The club's Secretary, Don Columbo, has arranged for the third advertisement in the club's newsletter. Again following a policy of relevancy, we have the supplier of our bagels placing a coupon ad into the newsletter.

For this we get three dozen bagels at no charge. I strongly encourage club members to take advantage of the coupon to maintain the relationship. We thank Don for his significant efforts to keep our club viable.

I heard that the spammer war moved to a new level. There are folks who are finding out the spammers' personal and business email addresses. Actually they are finding out who these spammers are in general.

The new retaliation is to flame their email accounts. Not the fleeting or forged accounts they use to spam us, but their actual accounts.

I fear this as if someone adds your or my email account to one of these black lists, we could have total spam annihilation of our account.

I was able to blast two more spammers this month. Again they were businesses with a physical presence and had scavenged the email addresses from privacy protected web services. Notifying both the service and the business stopped them and probably embarrassed them for poor marketing practices.

We need writers for this newsletter. This is particularly important to keep the newsletter vibrant and relevant to members.

Suggestions include a one or two line tidbit; forwarding something you read and that you think would be relevant; a complete article; a good club related joke; a photo of club activity, technology, members in compromising positions :-) are helpful.

Be sure you show up at the August 17th meeting, its air conditioned!

Lon

If you are interested in learning more about Linux, Ken Jones suggests you check out Forbes.com then click on The Cult of Linux.

AUGUST MEETING

This month's meeting demo will be Intel Play's QX3+ Computer Microscope. Jim Russ spoke briefly about this device at our last meeting. Since he lost his computer in last week's electrical storm, he will have to install this in a backup computer which has a USB port. He hopes to check it out this weekend.

WHAT CAUSES A BLANK SPOT WITH A RED X WHERE PHOTO SHOULD BE?
(New York Times, 7/25/02)

The red X usually indicates that a photo file is extremely slow to load or is unable to load from the server that stores the Web site you are viewing.

Because photo files are larger in size than text files, they usually take much longer to download to your screen. If the Web server on which the pictures are stored (which is sometimes different from the server storing the Web page itself) is temporarily down or getting a lot of traffic, it may affect the photo on the page.

Picture files that have not been streamlined and optimized to download quickly from the Web will also take a long time to arrive on the page, especially if you have a slow modem. Picture files that have not been saved in the proper formats by the page's creator or pictures that have been uploaded to the Web server incorrectly will also not display properly. And in some cases, the images do not show up on the page because of mistakes in the page's coding or because the files are missing from the server itself.

FLAT PANEL MONITORS
(Computer Shopper, 8/02)

Before you start comparison shopping, get to know which specifications you should be evaluating.

Analog versus digital: All LCD monitors are inherently digital, but not all have a DVI port, which provides a direct digital-to-digital connection between your computer and your display. The result is a sharper, more consistent image. Unfortunately, most low-end LCDs don't have a DVI port.

Brightness: LCDs tend to be less bright than CRTs. Measured in candelas per square meter (cd/m^2), the brightness of most flat panels varies from $200cd/m^2$ to $350cd/m^2$; higher is better. Even if the display seems bright enough for your current environment, you may decide to move it to an area with more ambient light. Over the years, the screen's backlight will grow dimmer, so having a brighter LCD will allow you to bump up the brightness over time and extend the life you your display.

Color depth: Higher-quality LCDs have 24-bit color palettes, meaning they can produce 16.7 million colors—often called "true color." Some lesser-quality models offer only 8-bit color, or 262,144 colors. They must rely on dithering (varying the pattern of dots) to create the illusion of additional colors and shades.

Contrast: The range between the lightest and darkest tones is referred to as contrast, and is expressed as a ratio. The higher the ratio, the more readable the information on the display.

Pixel-response rate: It takes an LCD screen much longert than a CRT to refresh each pizel, so much so that you might see ghosting (shadows and streaking) with fast-moving animation or video. If you play action games or watch DVDs on your desktop, choose an LDC with a pixel-response rate of 30ms or less.

Size: Small is good—but not too small. With the tread toward thin-frame (narrow-bezel) monitors, the latest LCDs

SIX CHIX   BY RINA PICCOLO

OUR COMPUTERS ARE DOWN, SO WE HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING MANUALLY...

are remarkably compact   But avoid small displays that don't provide a sturdy base—you wouldn't want to topple the panel each time you reach for your coffee.

Viewing angle: A monitor's viewing angle, expressed in degrees, refers to how far above, below, or to either side you can accurately view its image. Higher numbers are better, and are particularly important if you'll be using the display for presentations.

AVIATION: NETWORKED COCKPIT
(Technology Review 8/02)

The industrial world may be electronically networked, but the pilot in a typical passenger jet still communicates through tinny radio voice links, pores over paper manuals to troubleshoot warning lights, and looks out the window to find the right taxiway. But this year, Chicago-based Boeing is attempting to boost safety and efficiency by bringing more computation to the skies.

Boeing calls its innovation an "electronic flight bag" - a package of advanced software and hardware in a deceptively simple-looking box built into the cockpit. The box, which has a 26-centimeter (diagonal) display, is meant to replace the pilot's briefcase full of maps and manuals, and also to provide wireless data links to ground crews and airline offices. It's largely geared toward improving safety: for example, by summoning a virtual map of an air-

port's taxiways, with the plane's satellite-derived location highlighted, pilots can avoid straying onto active runways. But thanks to real-time Internet connectivity via satellite, pilots will also be able to view digital weather maps of their destinations, or send requests for maintenance, speeding operation. Craig Larson, chief engineer of flight services for Boeing, says the device "Makes an individual airplane a node in a larger airline and maintenance network."

Boeing expects to announce its first customer for the technology this year. Rival Airbus says it's working on a similar package of hardware and services. While initially helping pilots "get rid of a big bag of paper," says MIT aeronautics engineer Jim Kuchar, the system could ultimately become "a major step" toward a data exchange system that improves safety and reduces delays.

IS THERE A DOCTOR ONLINE?
(Computer Shopper, 8/02)

Recent research from Harris Interactive indicates more Internet users are making appointments with online health information sources. According to the study, 80 percent of adults who access the Internet look for healthcare information "sometimes" or "often." Harris dubs these users "cyberchondriacs," estimating their numbers at 110 million in the United States, more than double the number estimated in 1998. Cyberchondriacs, according to Harris, check health information on the Internet an average of three times per month.

FIVE ESSENTIAL DIGITAL CAMERA ACCESSORIES
by Charlotte K. Lowrie
(submitted by Don Colombo)

Memory, memory, memory

You probably already know that a memory card stores digital images as they are taken. While most digital cameras come with at least a small memory card, chances are good the card isn't big enough to store the photos taken during a day, much less a weekend, of routine family photos. The amount of memory needed depends on the resolution the images are set to—the higher the resolution, the more memory required—and the resolution of the camera. With a 4-megapixel camera, an 8-megabyte (MB) memory card will hold between 7 and 26 medium-high-resolution (1600 × 1200 pixels) images depending on the compression ratio chosen, or fewer images at the highest resolution. And usually the point is to shoot at a high resolution so that you can print or get prints made of the images. In short, you or the photographer needs additional memory cards. At a minimum, 64 MB of memory should be in the camera or gadget bag. I am personally more comfortable with 128 MB cards, but I also shoot at the camera's highest resolution to ensure good prints and higher enlargement options. You can get CompactFlash, SmartMedia, MultiMediaCard/SecureDigital memory, depending on what the camera accepts or what the photographer prefers.

If you were fortunate enough to get a 4-megapixel or 5-megapixel digital camera with a CompactFlash Type II slot, and if you prefer shooting high-resolution images, consider investing in a microdrive. A microdrive boosts storage capacity to between 340 MB and 1 gigabyte (GB). Unlike the virtually indestructable memory cards, though, microdrives are delicate creatures and they do not survive rugged handling.

Card reader, PC card adapter

The one "panic" question I get most often from readers is how to get the images off the "camera" (memory card) and onto the computer. In every case, I suggest simplifying the process by buying a memory card reader. This device plugs into your computer (usually by a USB cable) and has a slot for you to insert the memory card, memory stick, or microdrive into. On your computer, the card reader is displayed as another drive. You can double-click the drive and copy the images to a folder on your computer's hard disk. The reader quickly transfers the images to your computer without tying up your camera or running down the camera batteries. Best of all, it's simple, portable, and hassle-free.

If you're using a laptop, get a PC card adapter. You insert the memory card into one end of the adapter, and then insert the other end of the adapter into a free slot on your laptop. Just as with the card reader, the adapter appears on the computer as a drive from which you can transfer the pictures to your laptop hard disk. Trust me, you need one.

Rechargeable batteries and charger

Battery life in newer digital cameras is tremendously improved over older models, but digital cameras have a well-deserved bad reputation for eating batteries, and worse, for fading to darkness at the worst possible time. If your camera uses AA batteries, invest now in nickel-metal hydride rechargeable batteries and a charger.

For cameras that use lithium-ion batteries, backup batteries are pricey. I recommend shooting through a cycle of the battery's charge to see how long it lasts. For example, the Canon G2's battery covered a routine two days' worth of snapshots without a complaint. Canon's claim of approximately 400 images per charge while using the LCD monitor is reasonably accurate, provided you resist the impulse to shoot and replay movies. Do your own test. If you can't comfortably get through a typical shooting day or weekend, consider paying the manufacturer a sobering price for a backup battery.

Image-editing software

On this topic, I am definitely not objective. I recommend Microsoft® Picture It!® Photo software, even if the digital camera came with trial software or another complete software package. Simply stated, Picture It! Photo is easy to use. Ease of use lowers the hurdle of getting the digital images online to share with friends and family, or sized for printing at a commercial printing service, such as MSN Photos, or on your home printer. Another upside of Picture It! Photo is that it provides a logical way to catalog digital photos. This is important because almost everyone takes more digital images than they ever took using film. For quick editing, use the image-editing tools on MSN Photos.

Along with Picture It! Photo, I also heartily recommend Microsoft® Windows® XP. The new version of Windows was obviously designed with digital-image enthusiasts in mind, and working with images is a lot easier than with previous versions of Windows. For a more complete review, read Windows XP Streamlines Working With Digital Photos at MSN.com.

Photo-quality printer

Part of the fun of digital imaging is being able to quickly print pictures on a home printer. For under $200, you can get a great-quality photo printer. A wide assortment of inkjet photo-quality printers are available with features such as the ability to print an index sheet or an image directly from the memory card. (Note, however, it's a rare image that needs no editing or adjustment before printing.) Before you buy, list your priorities, such as whether you want the ability to print borderless prints, larger formats such as 8" × 10" or 11" × 14", and printing speed.

When you shop for a printer, be sure to ask about how long the prints will last before fading. Some printer manufacturers only certify print life when the images are printed on specific paper and with the manufacturer's inks.

In addition to inkjet printers, you should check out dye-sublimation printers, which print more continuous-tone prints. While dye-sublimation printers cost more, some photographers swear by them and use them to produce on-site proofs. The consumer dye-sublimation printers, such as the Olympus P330, print image sizes up to 8" × 10".

Q & A Questions & Answers

Don Franklin mentioned his Sprint DSL is now working more regularly.

Bill Woodall mentioned that a DSL company called SpeakEasy in Bedminister was offering 784K two way system for $325.00 per month. They claim if down for 5 minues you get 1 day free and if down for 2 hours you get one month free.

John Warniski asked how DLS effects your current email service. The general consensus was that you get a new email account with the service and should still be able to use your old account if you want.

John Gbur mentioned Sprint is offering DSL at $30.00 per month with 256K speed.

Rick Williams asked for referrals or RFPs to refit 150 close circuit TVs in the hospital with DVD based video servers.

Rick Williams asked if anyone could help him use MovieMaker with Windows and PowerPoint. MovieMaker is a non-linear video editor that comes with Windows XP. Rick is using a Sony TRV900 3 chip digital video camera. Bill Woodall mentioned MovieMaker was originally VidEd from Windows 3.1

Interest was expressed in starting a Linux SIG. Lon Hosford mentioned it might be best combined with the Web Master's SIG. Bill Woodall mentioned that the Google search engine uses Linux. Ken Jones stated that Linux accounts for 27% of server market in 1997.

Someone had installed JAC Paintshop Pro after attending the June meeting and now finds the computer locks when shutting down Windows 98. Bill Woodall mentioned this is a problem that has answers in Microsoft support. Lookup both the software and the problem. John Warniski said he tried the Microsoft solution to this problem and it does not work and will just live with it.

Paul Glattstein asked about stopping spam. Lon Hosford mentioned he would contact Paul about a new product that helps. The product is Choice-Mail made by Digital Portal Software of Parsippany NJ. Their web site is www.digiportal.com. There is a review in the July 11, 2002 Wall Street Journal on the front page. Basically the software works under the principal you have a client email software you use that downloads the email to your computer. You can set up filters to what email you want to receive and what you do not want to receive. The rest are rejected and the sender receives a return email stating they need to request approval to send you email. If they do, you get an email stating someone wants to be approved. You can ignore the request or look at it and decide. This allows folks you know and are not in your approval filter to contact you.

Rick Williams said that the System 10 Jaguar of the MAC world does email filtering by looking into the body of the message. Its built in.

Don Columbo claims the HotMail email filters are good.

President
Lon Hosford
908-996-7941
lon@hosfordusa.com

Vice-President
Joe Burger
908-996-7221

Treasurer
Jac Carroll
908-782-4325
jcarroll@eclipse.net

Secretary
Membership
Don Colombo
609-397-1265
dc1944@Hotmail.com

Program
Jim Russ
908-685-1079
jfruss@juno.com

Ex Officio
Richard Williams
Immediate Past President

HCC Web Page
www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org
Paul Glattstein, WebMaster
pglatt@ptd.net

Computer Volunteers
ALL MEMBERS

DON'T LEAVE YOUR COMPUTER UNATTENDED
Part 1 - But I Was Only Gone A Short Time
by Lon Hosford

Generally my Windows NT Workstation 128 K Pentium does what it does best: email using Agent 99, Office 97, and development work for a Paradox 4.5 DOS database system that like COBOL will not go away.

It is a happy world until one day Norton Antivirus 2002 was introduced for checking incoming email for viruses. I can't complain that Norton Antivirus 2002 does not catch incoming email viruses. It does. Or at least I think it does. I do know the meaning of the word placebo.

Actually I have been lucky. The Klez virus is about all it picks up and that is infrequent. It also cleaned off the initial infection of the Word 97 macro virus I got.

The Norton Antivirus 2002 has many features and switches to play around to tweak how it works. None meet my requirements. For example when a virus comes in an email, I could care less about it. I rather it just be quarantined and at my leisure I want to look at the virus infected email listing and usually delete the entries.

Rather Norton Antivirus 2002 stops the incoming email and waits for a human response. I tried different combinations of choices to overcome this and after several tries gave up.

So if I am downloading 75 emails of which 70 are junk, I cannot go for a fresh cup or creature break and just have my email downloaded when I return. Rather I need to stand guard for the 3 or 4 virus infected emails per month.

I have the Windows screen blanker on. So if I leave for a long while the screen is dark. One day I completed my work and left the computer with no applications running.

When I returned the screen was blank and I wiggled the mouse as I usually do.

To my horror there was a threatening error message floating over the Windows desktop with only one choice - Ok.

Cryptic as messages go, this one needed a new theory of relativity to decipher. Since I had no choice in the response, I hit Ok after scribbling the message down. From that point on my computer ran slow as a snail. So I responded with the logical response of Ctrl + Alt + Del and shut down the beast.

On restarting the computer, Norton Anti-Virus 2002 popped up and complained about a corrupted virus definition file yet it still ran. I could see it down in the task bar tray with its usual icon. Was it working?

Fortunately the computer continued to run at a snails pace. If not I would think all was OK and that Norton Antivirus 2002 just had a hiccup and fixed the problem itself.

Norton Antivirus 2002 user interface is the slowest program on my computer when all is well. I accept this fate because it is new software on a old computer. But now with the computer running at a super slow speed, did I dare open the program?

I did and like watching a 2 quart pot of cold water for spaghetti waiting to boil, I worked into Norton AntiVirus 2002 to get it to stop. Once done, and after serving the spaghetti and a good burp, the computer ran at a normal speed again.

Now I was without virus protection. Actually the Klez virus is the only one I get and they are not a problem because I do not use Outlook products for email and do not open attachments unless they are expected or verified.

Next I visited the planet Symantec, makers of this Norton Antivirus 2002 to find an answer to the problem. On entering the planet's atmosphere I sensed a need for toll and bribery money to get good solid information. Boy was I right.

See Part 2 -- I'd Rather Remove Old Baked On Paint

QUICK TIPS
(Smart Computing 8/02)

PALM OS—Filtering your Palm applications by category makes it easier to find what you need. Tap the current category in the upper right and tap Edit Categories. Tap the New button and name the new category. To put applications in different categories, return to the home screen and tap the Menu Icon in the lower left. Select Category from the menu. To change an application's category, tap the currently assigned category to the right of the application name and select a new category.

INKJET PRINTERS—How could you possibly need a new color inkjet cartridge already? You print only black text because color ink cartridges are too pricey to squander on too many digital photos and Web pages. Unfortunately, many inkjets, such as HP's 800 and 900 series, print color ink underneath black ink to make text look better. This unintentionally wastes color ink unless you print in grayscale. When you're about to print with a DeskJet, click Properties and the Advanced tab. Put a checkmark by Print in Grayscale and click Apply.

HOW TO FIX IT

Three engineers were traveling together on a business trip; an electrical engineer, a chemical engineer and a computer engineer. Suddenly the car sputters a couple of times, coughs and stalls, coasting to a stop by the side of the highway. The three engineers looked at each other, wondering what could be wrong. The electrical engineer suggests stripping down the entire electronics system of the car and trying to trace where a fault might have occurred. The chemical engineer, not knowing much about cars, suggested that maybe the fuel had become emulsified and got blocked somewhere, and if they were to dismantle the fuel line, maybe they could fix it. The, the computer engineer, in typical computer engineer fashion, suggested, "Why don't we close all the windows, get out of the car, wait a few seconds, get back in, open the windows again, and maybe it'll work."

FREE YOUR BOOKS
(New York Times, 7/18/02)

If you love your books, let them go. This is the unofficial motto of Book-Crossing.com, a site where readers are encouraged to "release" their books by leaving them in public places, ideally to be found and enjoyed by other book lovers. The process goes like this: register a book at the site, print out a label explaining the idea and affix it. Then leave the book on a park bench, in the seat-back pocket on a plane or in any other serendipitous spot that presents itself. Sit back and see if anyone reports finding the book—and if they read it, what their opinion of it is—at BookCrossing.com.

So far 16,000 people have become members, registering 28,000 books. Although the percentage of reported findings is not high, the number is slowly growing. The most successful places to release books have proved to be those where "people slow down," like public restrooms. To date, only one movie theater manager has complained about a book's being left on a seat (the manager was subsequently deluged with indignant e-mail from BookCrossing members).

The site has attracted many readers interested in more traditional book swapping. But the allure of passing a book on to strangers is what appeals to one member who has released nearly 300 books. Although only a handful were logged into the site this member says she always hopes that "a release will get entered, even if it's years from now."

"Your x-ray showed a broken rib, but we fixed it with Photoshop."

Contributed by John Warnsinki

LITTLE WONDERS
by Ilene Shope

Kartoo.com
A new search engine which will no doubt transform linear search into a dynamic brain linkage search, Kartoo attempts to visually display information for 'random' searches. Kartoo maps the bulk of pulled records into subsets, which mouses over with synopses of websites gathered from the search. http://www.kartoo.com

Myst III: Exile
An adventure game which follows "Riven" and the original "Myst". (The original "Myst" was a phenomena - leading developers down that sci-fi path to the surrealistic digital graphics—best selling game of all time'). The Authors (Rand and Robyn Miller) also made "Riven," which many people rave as being the best in this trilogy for its puzzles. However, the Miller Brothers did not write "MYST III: Exile," yet the production of EXILE excels in that fantastic environment of mysterious beauty that MYST ever envisioned. The Island game (ancient civilizations) features five new 'ages' for players. The animated visual design and soundtrack are superb. [Myst III:Exile] $9.95 http://www.msbcd.com (a bargain price).

GLOSSARY
(Computer Shopper, 8/02)

Worm is a destructive program containing code that replicates itself until it fills the target drive or network, thereby causing it to malfunction. Worms are sent out either as practical jokes or for purely malicious reasons; for the recipient whose computer or network has crashed, however, worms are not fun.

Macro is a series of keyboard and mouse actions recorded to a single key, symbol, or name. Macros are useful for shortening tasks you perform often. Also, a setting that many digital cameras have to let a user focus on an object much closer than normally possible. Some cameras have a macro setting that can focus on an object as nearby as 1cm (centimeter).

ARE THE HOT SUMMER TEMPERATURES DANGEROUS FOR YOUR COMPUTER?
(New York Times, 8/02)

Although desktop computers today are not as heat-sensitive as those old room-size machines that once needed to be kept in highly air-conditioned rooms, your computer's internal components are sensitive to extreme heat both inside and outside the case. An overheated PC can behave erratically, shutting down without warning or crashing unexpectedly, and its internal hardware may have a shorter life span.

When up and running, computers themselves can generate a lot of warmth inside their cases, but internal fans and heat sinks can help keep the machine cooled inside. (A heat sink is a grill-like element on the motherboard that is usually made of aluminum and designed to help dissipate the heat that builds up around it from the computer's processor and other components.)

Temperatures as high as 80 degrees in the room where you computer is should not be cause for worry, and in most air-conditioned offices and homes, temperatures are well below that. If you do not have air-conditioning in the room where the PC is kept, an external fan or an extra one installed inside the PC can help cool things down. The computer should also be kept out of direct sunlight. Any vents on the case or the back of the monitor should be kept unobstructed by dust or clutter, which can block air flow.

Laptop computers do not tend to run as hot as desktop PC's but should also be kept away from dust and dirt and out of hot parked cars in the summer.

SET YOU COMPUTER'S CLOCK

The following sites give the most accurate time: tick.usno.navy.mil
tock.usno.navy.mil
www.math.ua.edu/settime2.htm
www.boulder.nist.gov/timefreq/service/its.htm
www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/ats.htm

H.C.C.   HUNTERDON COMPUTER CLUB

Attn: Donald Colombo –Membership HCC, 18 Lambert Lane, Lambertville, NJ. 08530 – (609) 397-1265 dc1944@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP FORM   ❏ RENEW   ❏ NEW   ❏ LAPS
ANNUAL DUES $25 Single $30 Family $190 Life

PLEASE PRINT THE FOLLOWNG INFORMATION:

First Name _____ **Last Name** _____

Address _____

City_____**State**_____ **Zip Code**_____
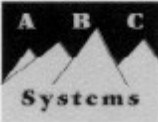
Home Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____@_____

Fax (_____) _____

Information that will help us help you:

1. **WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO HELP THE CLUB ? (circle one or more)**
    Club officer   Technical advisor   Setting up for the meeting   Taking club minutes   Newsletter   Programs
    Other_____

2. **DO YOU HAVE AN AREA OF COMPUTER EXPERTISE?____   IF SO, WHAT IS IT?**
    _____

3. **PLEASE LIST ANY COMMENT AND/OR LIST WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN OUR COMPUTER CLUB**
    _____

CITYSEARCH

(Smart Computing, June 2002)

http://www.citysearch.com
Intimidated by the big city? You won't be with Citysearch on your side, the site that makes it easy to navigate 40 of the nation's cities with an easy-to-use interface and even simpler categories. Find Seattle's best seafood, New Orleans' spiciest gumbo, and Chicago's best pizza, all from 500 miles away. But it's not all about restaurants. Book your hotel room, buy event tickets, and reserve a table. Get the full scoop about sports happenings, music, nightlife, shopping, and tons more. Don't miss the Best Of section to find editor favorites for nearly 100 categories, such as Best Martini, and Best Offbeat Finds. With this much info at your disposal, you may just be mistaken for a local.