

April 2005



NIBBLES & BITS

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 p.m. at Placentia Library, Placentia — Bring a friend!

APRIL PROGRAM

How to Prevent ID Theft

“Someone stole your identity, and there's an increasing chance he did so with the help of the Internet,” Tracy Baker wrote in Smart Computing in May 2003.

Terry Currier of WINdows usERS, Garden Grove, will be giving tips on how to avoid ID theft at our regular April 12 meeting, and he will tell us what to do if the unfortunate theft happens.

Identity theft is a subject of increasing interest since the magazine's “Avoid Identity Theft” article appeared. In that time, more people have become aware that, “All a person needs is your name, address, SSN (Social Security number), and sometimes your date of birth and mother's maiden name, and he can open an account in your name or even access existing accounts. In some cases, when a thief opens accounts using bogus addresses, the major credit reporting bureaus switch your contact information over to the new address, so you may not even know what's happening until it is too late.”

Furthermore, the magazine continued, “According to the Consumer Sentinel (<http://www.consumer.gov/sentinel>), an online fraud database the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) maintains, of the 380,103 fraud complaints made to the FTC in 2002, 161,819 were identity theft complaints. When the complaints are broken down by category, identity theft accounted for 43% of all complaints; Internet auction fraud complaints came in second with 13% of total complaints. It's clear that identity theft is a growing crime, with the total number of victims varying depending on whom you ask.”

Terry Currier has been with computer user groups since 1984. He's the Past President of North Orange County Computer Club, and the founding President and current Vice-President of WINNERS (WINdows usERS) user group in Costa Mesa. He gave a presentation before our group last year and has written several review articles that have appeared in many APCUG user group newsletters.



Take Cover

If you want to be proactive about protecting your good name, consider identity theft insurance. Several providers offer policies for relatively low premiums that provide thousands of dollars of coverage, so you can more easily get your life back if you've been victimized by identity theft. It may seem like a scam because in nearly all cases of identity theft and account takeovers, banks and other creditors refund the victims' money. Identity theft insurance is designed, however, to cover the expenses you incur in restoring your credit, including long-distance phone charges and lost wages.

This protection is important because in many cases, it can take weeks or months to sort out an identity theft crime. Ask your insurance provider if it offers the coverage and how much it costs. Look at the list of providers that offer standalone coverage at the Insurance Information Institute site <http://www.iii.org/individuals/other/insurance/identitytheft/> or <http://tinyurl.com/7xouq>

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Notepad



Carl Westberg mentioned it in a recent letter. And, I can relate completely. I have so many defensive programs and hardware on my computer that it is running slower. In fact, this past week, I've been getting a "Virtual memory is low" message.

After the message popped up twice, I began turning off or deleting programs that ran in the background, and those that I seldom used.

While I was at it, I deleted my fairly recent Microsoft Windows Antispyware. That left me with... three! Ad-Aware, SpySweeper, and SpyBot Search and Destroy. Then, I have Sygate Personal Firewall, a Linksys WRT54G Wireless Router, Norton Antivirus 2005, SpamCatcher, and an APC UPS device with PowerChute software (to help my computer make a gentle landing when the power goes off).

It's gotten so I feel unprotected with any less armament on my system.

My computer, a Pentium 4, 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM, running Windows XP Pro, has begun to stumble. Between the programs for defense and rescue, and the new Adobe CS programs that love to eat huge hunks of memory, I find myself having to click and wait. And wait some more, before a program opens or a folder can be created, or before anything else I regularly need to do.

Gosh. I remember doing this with my 486 DX2, with 8MB of RAM!

So now, I'm beginning to look around at the new computers. But, I dread the "move in" time, and searching for my CDs and the serial numbers. (One benefit, though, will be that Win XP Service Pack 2 will be preinstalled. I still have SP 1 on this machine.)

Without the protective programs to thwart the hackers, crackers, spammers, and other bad guys out to get us, I bet this computer would have lasted a couple more years.

Linda Gonse, editor@orcopug.org

Letters

Clever UG program planned

Hi everybody —

Our august member, Ed Miller, made his living as an expert witness in criminal trials, often producing and analyzing photos to make his case. Sorry, Ed, but at our next meeting I want to debunk the quaint but archaic concept of "photographic proof" that has served the justice system well for over 100 years.

On April 16, we will have a most unusual presentation and photo contest conducted by Ed Schwartz. The main rule is all photos have to be FAKE. If you submit a picture of yourself in front of the Eiffel Tower, that's fine, as long as you've never been there! The whole idea is to develop your skill in creating fake photos that look real. Here are the categories.

- Photos comprised entirely of images you take with your own camera
- A mix of your own PLUS images copied off the Internet
- Images you got entirely off the Internet
- Photos that include drawn (that is, not photographed) features
- Family photos in need of repair
- "Improvements" on great works of art
- The strangest, most bizarre, shocking, or outrageous fake photo

Prizes will be awarded generally by these categories, but the judge is free to exercise discretion as he sees fit. If he wishes to limit one prize per person, even if they submit in different categories, he will have that latitude. However, if he feels someone dominates more than one category and should be rewarded, we will leave that up to him.

Submissions should be made as an electronic file emailed to me by midnight Thursday April 14. (This will leave you ample time to start and finish your taxes.) It would be helpful to include all original images (or before

and after) so when you explain how you did it, it would be more instructional for our group. Also if you are able, please print a copy preferably on glossy photo paper, preferably 8x10. However, the judging will be based solely on the completed electronic version. If you have a slow connection or cannot email the image, you need to bring it on a CD, floppy disk, or thumb drive. But let me know ahead of time.

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The opinions expressed herein are the writers. They are not reflective of the Orange County IBM PC Users' Group position, and are not endorsed by inclusion in this newsletter.

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Members' renewal dates

- MARCH** — Art Bullis, Bill Pampaniya
- APRIL** — Lothar Loehr, David Musser
- MAY** — Lloyd Boutwell, Terry Schiele, Harold Wann
- JUNE** — Richard Metzger, Bob Welburn, Chuck Wheeler
- JULY** — Herman Beverburg, Joe Francis, Walter Jackson, Tony Lake, Ralph Seymour

Submitted by Charlie Moore

March raffle winners

- Acronis Privacy Expert Suite 7, \$39***
David Musser, Winner
- ULead DVD PictureShow 2, \$49***
Glenn Emigh, Not Present
Joe Duffner, Not Present
Bill Pampaniya, Expired
Chuck Wheeler, Not Present
Tony Lake, Winner
- Logitech Bag, \$10***
Donald Bickel, Not Present
Dick Tooley, Not Present
Stan Leese, Not Present
Glenn Emigh, Not Present
Chuck Wheeler, Not Present
Lloyd Boutwell, Not Present
Leroy Kaump, Winner
- CIBooks Bag, \$10***
Siles Bazerman, Not Present
Charles Burgwin, Winner
- ZDTV T-shirt, \$5***
Art Bullis, Expired
Don Ogden, Not Present
Lloyd Boutwell, Not Present
Linda Gonse, Not Present
Joe Duffner, Not Present
Lothar Loehr, Winner
- ULead V3 Disk Creator, \$39***
Charlie Moore, Winner

- ULead VideoStudio 7, \$39***
Donald Bickel, Not Present
Frank Bollinger, Winner
- FMS Total Access T-shirt, \$5***
Chuck Wheeler, Not Present
Donald Bickel, Not Present
Don Ogden, Not Present
Joe Francis, Winner

**Estimated value*

Submitted by Charlie Moore

Special Prize Drawing!



Spot a keyword or phrase that will be hidden somewhere on the ORCOPUG website or in Nibbles & Bits each month. If your name is drawn at the next meeting and you can give the correct answer, you will take home a prize! If no one knows the secret keyword(s), or the person whose name is drawn is not at the meeting, the prize will be carried over to the next month's special prize drawing. Each month that there is no prize winner, another prize will be added to the drawing!



Membership Application

New Member Renewal*

* Please fill out all the blanks below to help us keep your information updated in our database.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Work Phone (____) _____

E-mail Address _____

Areas of Interest/Comments _____

ORCOPUG meets the second Tuesday of every month starting at 6:30 p.m. Dues are \$25 per year. Please see our website at www.orcopug.org for meeting location and map, program announcements and contact information.

Make your check payable to **ORCOPUG** and mail to:
ORCOPUG, P.O. BOX 716, Brea, California 92822-0716

(Please fill out this application and mail it today!)



User group deals

NEW Members' Only! web page shows discounts!

The Members' Only! page has just been updated, making discounts worth hundreds of dollars easier than ever to find and use. Among the many programs offered to user group members are those from: Iolo, Allume, nik Multimedia, O'Reilly books, StompSoft, E-Book Systems, and Ulead.

Membership in ORCOPUG entitles you to access the Members' Only area so you can take advantage of the user group offers.

To access the Members' Only! page, go to <http://www.orcopug.org>, and click on the "members' only" link on the left side of the page. When the password dialog box opens, type your user name (your first initial and last name in lower case, no spaces), and your password. The password is a capital letter "R" followed by your member number. (If you are not sure of your member number, send an email to Charlie Moore, charlie@orcopug.org.)


Magazine discounts only for user group members

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Computer Games	\$10.95	\$20.95	\$29.95
Computer Gaming World	\$14.95	\$28.95	\$41.95
Computer Shopper	\$16.97	\$32.95	\$47.95
Dr. Dobbs Journal	\$15.95	\$30.95	—
Mac Home Journal	\$15.97	\$29.97	—
Mac World	\$12.95	—	—
Maximum PC	\$ 9.95	\$18.95	\$27.95
Microsoft System Journal	\$21.95	\$39.95	—
PC Gamer	\$12.95	—	—
PC Magazine (22/44/66 issues)	\$25.97	\$48.95	\$68.95
PC World	\$16.95	—	—
Videomaker	\$11.95	\$21.95	—
Wired	\$ 6.00	\$12.00	\$17.00

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Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for your magazines to start. For renewals you must supply an address label from your present subscription to insure the correct start of your renewal. I will mail a renewal notice to every subscriber about 3 months prior to their expiration date. In the last few years, many computer magazine subscribers have used my services for over 300 titles I carry, also at excellent prices. Just email me for other prices.



May 29*
8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
1310 E. Edinger, Santa Ana, CA
714-558-8813 • www.acpswapmeet.com

GIANT Computer Swap Meet

Free Admission • Free Parking • 100's of Sellers



*Please double-check the date with the store!

Submitted by Carl Westberg

Thanks to these vendors

Companies who donated prizes to our 2004 fundraising raffle are: Acronis, Belkin, O'Reilly & Associates, Stardock, Ulead, 2nd Story Software, CableOrganizer.com, Dantz, Iolo Technologies, Logitech, No Starch Press, Photodex Corp., SmartDraw.com, StompSoft, TechSmith, Time Value Software, and WhiteCanyon. Thanks to these generous vendors!

Letters...

(Continued from page 2)

Judging will be generally based on the following guidelines:

- A fanciful subject that shows creativity, imagination, and humor OR ...
- Practical things like altered family groups, fixing damaged photos, etc.
- Realistic execution from a purely technical standpoint.
- Degree of technical difficulty
- The quality of your detailed explanation will be a factor

It's OK to get help from family members in this contest as long as you LEARN and can EXPLAIN what was done, and you share the prize with the person who did the work. Ed Schwartz will have the authority to award prizes as he sees fit.

Ed Schwartz has been teaching digital photography and photo editing (among other things) for several years aboard cruise ships but the April meeting will be designed for us landlubbers. Ed will be showing a Powerpoint presentation on image editing and techniques in Adobe Photoshop Elements, along with some examples of fake photos.

The meeting is in BGS Room 115 at 9 a.m. So dust off that digital camera, put on your thinking cap, and get going!

The Saddleback Valley IBM PC User Group extends an invitation to anyone reading this newsletter. Please visit our website at <http://tinyURL.com/2bdgo> for meeting information.

RichBlumenthal
BigBlue@cox.net

PerfectIcon creates icons from photos

People like to show off their personal style at every opportunity. They customize their clothes, their hair, their cars and their computer work environments are no exception. Digital photography has led the way to making personal photos available for all kinds of uses and turning them into Windows icons with PerfectIcon is as simple as a few clicks with the mouse.

PerfectIcon is a handy little instrument for turning png, jpeg, bmp, tif, gif and other graphics files into custom icons. PerfectIcon requires just a few steps within a very nimble interface to replace mundane Windows icons with personal favorites.

PerfectIcon offers users stylish semi-transparent icons created from selected digital graphics, and a variety of effects can be applied to achieve precise

has called Reg Organizer “the only (registry utility) you’re likely to need” (June 22, 2004), and Tucows has awarded it a rating of 5 Cows, elevating its popularity among shareware choices for 2005.

For thorough registry management, Reg Organizer performs intensive search functions to remove all keys related to a specific application that may need manual uninstall, and to check dynamic link libraries to find obsolete file extensions which are in need of correction or deletion. The program provides quick access to startup items, allowing users to edit and configure startup functions and view their file properties. Detailed descriptions of Reg Organizer at <http://www.chemtable.com/organizer.htm>. Version 2.4 promises increased speed and bug-free performance.

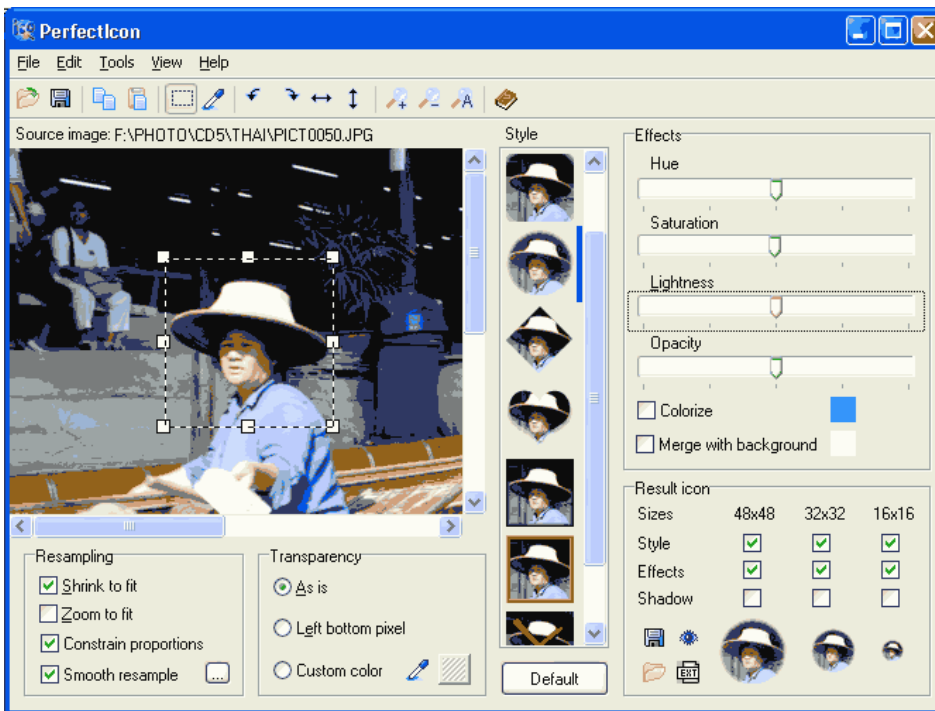
Download 30-day trial from <http://www.chemtable.com/downloads.htm>. Full version is \$29.95. For Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003

FlashSlider 4.0 makes easy slideshows

FlashSlider 4.0 for Windows lets you make a slide show or presentation using 114 different transition effects. And, you can create a Flash movie in just a few steps, without spending lots of time and money. Makes showy presentations, or slideshows of photos with a sound background.

With a simple, intuitive interface, the program lets you create swf files (Macromedia Shockwave Flash format) from JPEG-images for publishing to HTML or Flash player. Add titles to frames and different URLs to each slide. Also, with the advanced timeline tool you can play the movie from any position (or step frame-by-frame).

\$29.00 from FeatherySoft <http://www.featherysoft.com>



positioning and control opacity, hue/saturation, shadowing and more. Add interest and color to files and folders and to achieve total creative control of desktop icons. Enables shaping and framing in a variety of styles, sizing and transparency control, all within the main application window.

30 day trial download. Full version, \$19.95. For Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003. <http://www.perfecticon.com/index.htm>.

Reg Organizer 2.4 receives standing ovations

It is easy to understand why shareware critics have been impressed with Reg Organizer 2.4 registry management utility. With a powerful registry editor and an automatic registry cleaner, Reg Organizer performs fast search and replace tasks, documenting the system registry before and after programs are installed and reporting on what changes have been made. Registry editing is performed in familiar tree format with options for the addition of comments to individual keys to chronicle when and why a value was changed. PC Magazine



ProShow Gold

by Neil Longmuir, Winnipeg PC Users Group

When I was asked to do this review, I thought to myself, “Why in the world would anyone want to use another presentation program when we all know everyone uses Microsoft’s PowerPoint?” Don’t they? I found the answer to this question in the first five minutes of using PhoShow Gold. This is one awesome program. I was able to create a very nice slide show *without* using the manual in about 20 minutes. The slide show contained 68 individual jpg files with some MP3 music clips. I have never used a presentation program that allowed me to include music so easily. To put it bluntly, this is one fantastic package.

The advertising on the box says “Complete Presentation Creation!” Do you always believe the advertising? I’m a pessimist at best when it comes to advertising. Not only does ProShow Gold live up to what it says it does, it makes difficult tasks look easy. My assessment of this program is that this is just not another run of the mill presentation package. It’s far more.

What can it do?

- Create slide shows on DVD
- Publish these slide shows to the web
- Pan, zoom and rotate slides
- Vertical slides show the entire slide – **this is important** there are very few programs that show the entire slide. PowerPoint crops the slide vertically so the entire image is not seen.
- Build auto play slide shows on CDs
- Use photos or **video clips** in the slides
- Make executable files and screen savers
- Create CDs in a variety of formats
- Add captions with text effects and motion
- There are more than 280 transition effects
- Apply custom sound tracks
- Generate video files
- There’s an integrated photo browser
- One click sound sync
- Precise timing control
- Fastest video rendering speed

This is a very comprehensive list of features for a product costing \$69.95 US. These are the kind of features you would expect to find in the TV broadcast industry software, not on the software running on your home computer. The sample slide show I created had a professional look. The show contained timing for individual slides, transition effects from one slide to another, some text captions and sound. I did insert a video clip which imported with out a hitch. Note: video clips **cannot** be edited directly.

Hardware Requirement:

After examining the above features, comes the question “What kind of computing power do I need to do all of those things?” The software requires a computer running one of the following operating systems’ Windows XP,

Windows 2000, Windows Me, Windows 98 and surprisingly Windows 95. The minimum processor speed is 600 mHz or higher speed, 64 megabytes of RAM, CD-R/RW or DVD-R/RW, 800 x 600 hi color or 24 bit display. The software will take 30 Mb on the hard drive.

My test machine is an AMD 3200 processor with 1 gig of PC3200 RAM. Needless to say, the software ran very nicely on this computer configuration.

Working with ProShow Gold

Figure 1 is a screen capture of the ProShow Gold showing the familiar

Windows Explorer window in upper left window. Below the Windows Explorer window are thumbnails of the folder

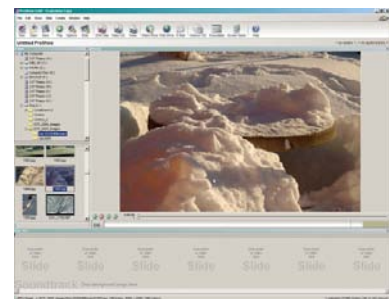


Figure 1

that was selected. The window to the right shows an enlarged version of the image selected in the folder on the left. Notice that VCR type buttons and the play time line at the bottom of this window. To create a new slide show in Figure 2, I simply clicked on an image,

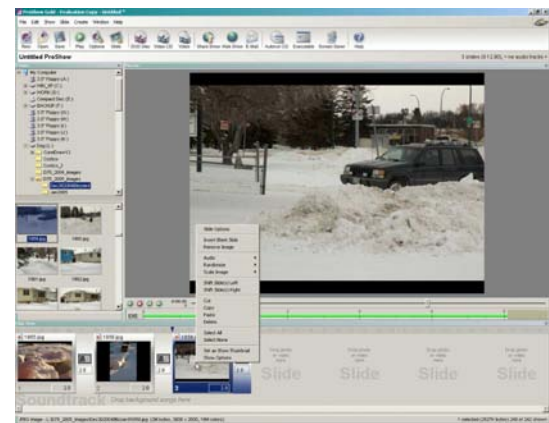


Figure 2

for example 1955.jpg, 1956.jpg and 1859.jpg and dragged them on the slide show. To add sound to this slide show, browse your selection of MP3 files and drop them on the bottom where it

(Continued to page 7)

ProShow Gold...

(Continued from page 6)

says **Soundtrack** Drop background songs here. An alternate way is to select slide options and add sound. Figure 3 shows the soundtrack dialog box.

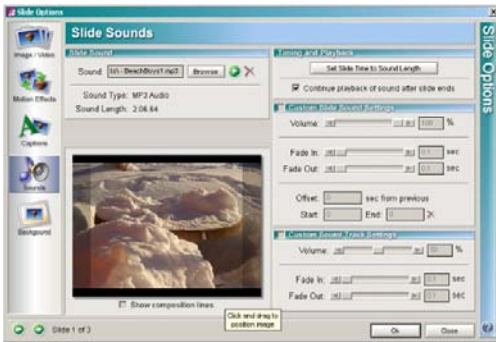


Figure 3

One of the first things that really scared me about working with this software was I generally did not know what the terminology meant. The excellent manual removed those fears. I'm like most users, install the software, then try and use it **without** reading the manual. Advice: read the manual – it is very well written with excellent explanations of what the features are and **how** to use them.

Occasionally, we want to add text to either a particular slide or to the whole slide show. To add text to an individual slide select **slide options** on the toolbar. To add text to the whole show select **options** from the toolbar.

Alternatively, right clicking on a image or video clip will let you choose either slide options or show options from a drop down menu. When the dialog box pops up, click on captions (left hand side) and add. Select your font and size and type in the text. Then drag and drop the text exactly where you want it.

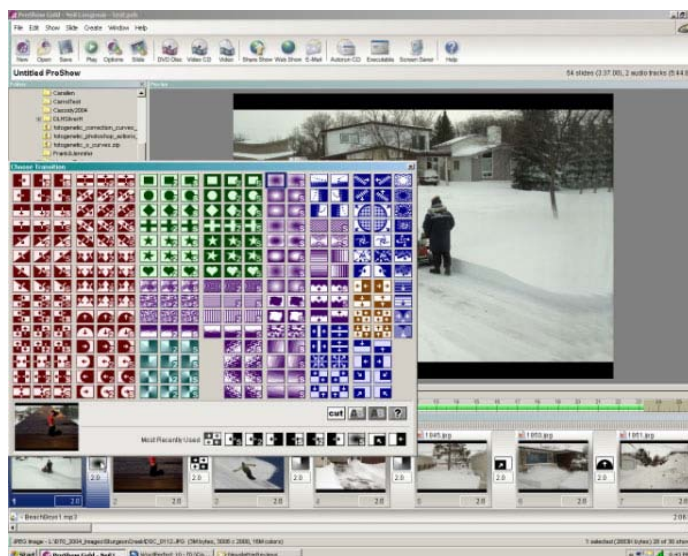


Figure 4

Transition Effects

All the transition effects are very smooth and pleasing to watch. Figure 4 shows all the transition effects available. To add a transition effect is simple. Click on the AB between the slides or video clips and select the transition effect from the ones shown in Figure 4. The length of time slides and transition effects can be controlled by inserting the time in the appropriate box on the slide or the transition effect. Timing is important. You don't want slides or images on the screen to long. ProShow Gold puts this control in your hands.

Text can also be added to slide shows. Once again control is given to the user on how the text appears on the slide and where it is placed on the screen. There are a number of choices. Select the one you want from the programs drop down list, see Figure 5. There are a lot of options, so experiment and see which ones you like. Remember, the show can be run **before** creating an executable file. This gives you the option of testing and trying different things. Experiment.

Presenting the finished slide show

The final slide show is presented in HDTV high definition wide screen format 16 by 9 aspect ratio. One example using the ProShow Gold

software: You've just arrived home late in the evening from a friends wedding. Your digital camera memory card has some 500 plus pictures of the wedding. One option is to run down to your local digital mini lab in the morning and print all or some of those photos. That is an expensive option.

How about creating a slide show of the wedding for friends and family complete with captions, text, sound clips either music or ones from another video that was taken at the wedding with transition effects between slides? Take a few minutes to insert some blank slides and add some text. Now test the show. Changes can be made easily before the master executable file is made and put on a CD or DVD. Changing the order of slides is done by simply

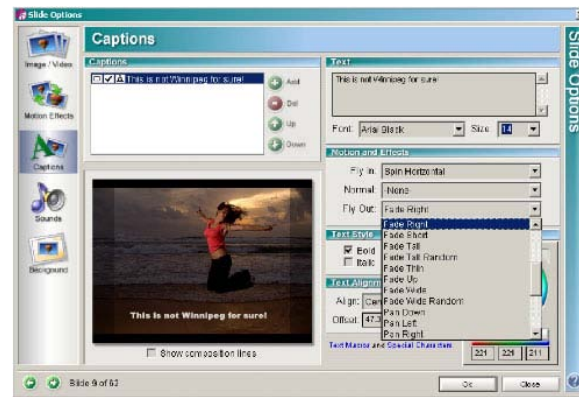


Figure 5

drag and drop them where you want them. Forgot to include a picture of the wedding invitation in the slide show? Use your digital camera take a picture of it. Then place the wedding invitation photo at the beginning of the slide show. It's that easy. If you want to add sound to the slide show, simply drag and drop the sound clip on the sound track located and labeled on the bottom of the screen..

Once the slide show has been created, it can be presented in several ways. If it's a wedding, be sure the bride and groom see the presentation first. Then get their permission to

(Continued to page 8)

A "perfect" hard drive backup lesson

by Frank Bolliger

Charlie Moore's fine presentation about hard drive backups at the March ORCOPUG meeting inspired me to share a recent experience.

My practice is to install two "mobile bays" where I can slide hard drives in and out on removable trays. I normally operate with just one hard drive, until it's time for a backup.



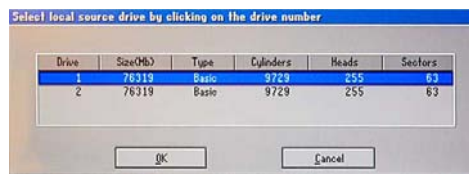
Then, I'll insert a second drive and start the computer with a program called "Ghost" (It's now a Symantec product). Once Ghost is running, I simply "clone" the original drive to the one I just inserted. Although I haven't kept track, it seems to take about one minute per gigabyte of used space on the drive. When finished, I remove the original and restart with the clone. That way, I know the clone works and the original drive is a fully functional backup.

This practice has worked well with my last two PCs on a number of occasions where a computer wouldn't boot. Once I decide to restart with a backup drive, the machine is up and running in less than five minutes. How quickly I resort to this approach is really a matter of how much troubleshooting I want to do. If it's a weeknight and I brought work home, there isn't much time to fuss with it. If time isn't as critical, I may make the effort to figure out what the real problem is.

So, I have the perfect solution, right? Well, here's what happened with my newest computer. I got it home and, of course, the first thing I did was clone the hard drive. After following my routine, I started the PC and was faced with a message asking me to insert a system disk.

What happened? I had copied a blank drive onto the configured drive. So I had an original and clone of a bare

drive. Why did it happen? The whole story is too long to include in an article, but it amounts to not recognizing which drive Ghost viewed as primary. This was my first experience with Serial ATA drives, where each one connects separately to the motherboard. No master, no slave, no CD or DVD drives on the same cable. I made an assumption that the drive on top (It's a tower) was the primary. It turns out, in this computer, Ghost calls that one Drive 2, and the one below it Drive 1.



The lesson? While this is a very reliable process, don't take things for granted the first time you do it on any given PC.

ProShow Gold...

(Continued from page 8)

publish it to the web for all the guests to see. Then backup the presentation by creating an autorun CD or DVD that plays automatically. Also, the slide show can be shown full screen. Even better, the slide show can be paused simply by right mouse clicking on the display image and select pause. This is a great feature that allows you to explain or answer questions about the show. To resume the slide show right click on the screen image and this time select play. It's that simple.

Business's can use this product to produce a stunning presentation to a client. The presentation can be customized for every individual client. The business can showcase it's products and show how their product is different from competitors. Let your imagination take your presentations to the next level.

Conclusion

Phoshow Gold is well worth the

money. The final presentation files are very small. It's very easy to use. The end product presentation is very professional. The software works! The distribution options are fantastic, auto run CD's or DVD's, publish to the web, screen savers etc. I could go on and on about this product.

Test it for yourself. Download the trial version of the software and try it. For example, create family photo albums, organize some of your vacation pictures, the kids birthday parties etc. The product sells for \$69.95 US. The software is very easy to use. It's also a lot of fun to play with different options, special effects, such as panning and zooming in on a subject; overlaying captions over slides; adding text to make the presentation more informative; making personalized screensavers etc.

Recommendation:

The packaging of this product really needs to be changed. It does not stand out on computer store shelves. It's easy to miss it completely. I actually walked right past this software at a local computer store and did not see the product. I'm the one doing a review and I missed it completely. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who walked passed ProShow Gold



without taking the package off the shelf to at least examine. I also know several members of our user group who have also walked past ProShow Gold in the same computer store. The packaging does not do this software justice. ProShow Gold is much better than the current packaging suggests.

I would also like to see the software be able to extract a portion of a video clip for showing rather than having to show the entire video clip. Also if a image has not been rotated, I would like to be able to rotate it once I've dropped it into the slide show.

Photodex Corporation, 4201 W Parmer Lane Ste B150, Austin, Texas 78727, www.photodex.com

URL shortening

Converting a long URL name into a short one. Also called “URL redirecting,” there are many free URL shortening services on the Web that take a long URL, convert it to a short name and perform the redirection for the user when the short URL is clicked. URL shortening can be used when sending extremely long URLs in e-mail messages or chat rooms, because the URL is often broken up by the time it reaches its destination. The single string of characters is turned into multiple lines and no longer serves as a clickable link.

Although the recipient can patch the URL back together by copying and pasting the lines into the browser's address field, a short URL eliminates the problem in the first place.

Following is a list of URL shortening sites on the Web:

Baby URL

www.babyurl.com

Make A Shorter Link

www.makeashorterlink.com

Metamark Shorten

www.metamark.net

Not Long

www.notlong.com

Quick URL

www.qurl.com

Shorlify

www.shorl.com

Snip URL

www.snipurl.com

Tiny Link

www.tinylink.com

Tiny URL

www.tinyurl.com

URL Cut

www.urlcut.com

Source: *TechWeb Encyclopedia*, <http://www.techweb.com/encyclopedia/>

Many, if not all, of these sites offer to put a button on your browser's toolbar for quick access for changing a long URL. Firefox has an extension for Tiny URL containing more options for creating a small URL. —LG



by Ed Van Meter, APCUG Region 11 Advisor, evanmeter@apcug.net

Have a look at APCUG's newly designed “lean and mean” Website..far more accessible now than ever before: www.apcug.net There is a lot of new stuff happening with the newly elected executive of APCUG and they have laid out a fantastic “Strategic Planning 2004-2005” process that outlines all areas that need to be improved on, not only within APCUG, but this is a great guideline for User Groups in whole. — Greg West, editor Sarnia Computer Users Group, <http://www.scug.ca>

A new benefit for APCUG-member Groups is a listing of online Newsletters. The list was compiled in mid-February 2005 and consists of those Groups that had renewed their 2005 membership in APCUG as of that date. There are 80+ links for you to click on and peruse other Group's newsletters. Please check the list out at <http://www.apcug.net> — click on the Editorial PUSH link. If your Group isn't listed, please send an e-mail to Judy Taylour at jtaylour@apcug.net.

The Florida Association of Computer User Groups just completed a very successful Spring conference. <http://www.facug.org> Coming up on August 5-7 2005 is the Southwest User Group Conference being held in San Diego, <http://www.swugconf.org> The venue has changed this year to the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center. In October 2005, it's on to Raincoast <http://www.raincoast.info>, held this year in Tacoma, WA on October 7-9 2005. And, it's not too early to put the APCUG Annual conference on your Calendar — January 3-6, 2006 at the Stardust Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

Ed is a member of the San Diego Computer Society. He has served on the APCUG Board of Advisors since January, 2000.

Why do we belong to APCUG?

ORCOPUG is a member of APCUG for several reasons. APCUG provides information on forming user groups, annually sponsors one or more national events, emails monthly news and announcements, distributes quarterly APCUG Reports magazine to officers, sponsors a newsletter/web contest, lists user group web newsletters, pro-vides free web space and web board, provides its APCUG logo for web and print, publishes “How To” guides on running user group activities, provides international

recognition and a voice and forum for all APCUG user groups.

Upcoming APCUG Conferences

SW User Group Conference
San Diego, California
August 5-6, 2005

Raincoast
Tacoma, Washington
October 7-8-9, 2005

Answers to computer questions

Jim Jeup, Greater Tampa Bay PC UserGroup

Q: “I have advertisements that pop up every few minutes. They have different messages every time, but the window is titled ‘Messenger Service.’ I never asked for this service, how can I get rid of it?”

A: “Shoot” the Messenger (Service) Windows Messenger Service’s original design usage is for system administrators to notify users about their networks. Unfortunately, it is automatically “on by default” in Windows XP Home Edition. This creates a MAJOR security breach for your home computer.

Some advertisers are using this breach to send information via the Internet, and these messages allow malicious virus distribution to your computer (most notable; Sasser and Bagel viruses)

NOTE: Before Disabling Windows Messenger Service

- * Windows Messenger Service in Windows XP has no relation to instant messaging programs such as Windows Messenger and MSN Messenger. Disabling instant messaging programs is not necessary. Disabling instant messaging programs will not prevent Messenger Service spam on your computer.
- * If your computer is part of a corporate network, ask the network administrator before disabling Messenger Service.
- * If you have Windows XP at home or in a small office that you manage yourself, you should disable the Messenger Service. Disabling Messenger Service in Windows XP (NOTE: If your computer is part of a corporate network, talk to your system administrator before taking this action.)
- * Click Start and then click Control Panel
- * Click Performance and Maintenance (If you do not see the Performance and Maintenance icon, you may be using Classic View. If this is the case, skip this step and the next step, but you must double-click Administrative Tools).
- * Click Administrative Tools
- * Locate, and double-click Services
- * Locate, and double-click Messenger
- * In the Startup type list, choose Disabled
- * Click the Stop button, and then click the OK button Disabling Messenger Service in Windows XP
- * A FREE program is available on the Internet to complete the task of disabling Messenger Service.

Find it at: <http://www.grc.com/files/shootthemessenger.exe>

- * Download and run the program to disable Messenger Service If you want more information on the origins of Messenger Service spam and how to handle it, find it on the Internet at: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;330904>.



Q: “How do I change my Internet Home Page with Internet Explorer?”

A: Change the Home Page of your Internet Explorer browser.

NOTE: To follow these steps, you must be connected to the Internet via your Internet Service Provider (ISP), and your Internet Explorer browser needs to be open (or, up and running).

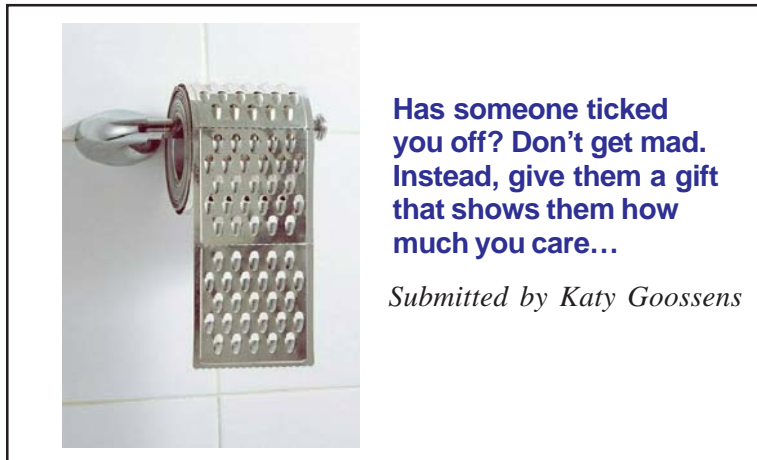
- * Go to the Internet web page you want to make your home page.
- * On the Internet Explorer Tools menu, click Internet Options.
- * In the Internet Options box, on the General tab, click the Use Current button.
- * Click the OK button. That’s it!

Extra Tip: Some Web sites display an option to make their page your default home page. If you select this option, your current home page will be replaced without warning you. To restore your home page, follow the steps above.

Used with permission from Dick Evans, Bay Bytes editor.

Jim Jeup is a Certified Master Technician for Advanced Mobile Tech Computer Service. Reach him at (813) 508-4378. “Computer Users Helping Others (free)” at <http://forum.pctechshop.com>. Email your computer questions to: cornerquestions@pctechshop.com, or on the web at www.advancedmobiletech.com

Internet Humor



File your federal income tax online for FREE!

by Linda Gonse

April 15 is the deadline for filing your federal income tax. If you haven't already filed, you may want to consider doing it online. You can get free help preparing your return through the IRS's Free File online program, now in its third year.

In 2004, more than 61 million people filed online. This was an increase over the 51 million people who filed in 2003. This year, there were 45.9 million returns filed electronically through March 18 — up almost 3 million over last year's numbers.

How the program works is that there are 15 tax preparing companies that partner with the IRS. You will be matched with one of those companies based on your eligibility: age, state where you live, etc. Eligibility is determined through questions you answer online.

The IRS lists several benefits for filing your taxes online. Among them are: faster refunds, accuracy, return receipts, and a variety of free tax preparation services.

You should be aware that this is a federal program. Federal income tax returns are prepared free, but if you want the tax service to prepare your state income tax return, you should expect to be charged for it. Moreover, using the IRS service does not guarantee you will be paying less or getting the most deductions.

The IRS has also taken steps to protect your privacy. The tax companies are restricted from using your information for anything other than tax preparation. If there is any other reason to use the information, the company must get your authorization first.

And, the IRS says it monitors tax preparation providers for compliance.

If the Free File program sounds like a good idea to you, just go to <http://www.irs.gov> and click on the Free File link to get started.

Oh! There's another benefit to filing online: It will eliminate that midnight dash to the post office on April 15!

What you should know about EULAs...

by Linda Gonse

Risky programs (adware/spyware) can be downloaded to your computer when you click OK to accept a EULA (end-users licensing agreement). Read the EULA and determine what you are agreeing to *before* you click okay.

On the other hand, some EULAs are just too difficult to understand. That's when you should stop the download or installation, especially from a site you don't know.

Due to a recent California lawsuit, EULAs for products from Symantec, Adobe, and Microsoft now are available on their websites. CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples, also provide EULAs for these products on request.

The basis for the lawsuit was a Catch 22. Stores do not allow returns of computer programs that have been opened, and customers could not read the EULA until the product was opened. If a customer disagreed with the EULA and did not install the program, the customer typically was unable to return the product to the store.

See <http://www.techfirm.com/bakeragreement.pdf> for the Settlement Agreement behind the change.

The settlement agreement is expected to have far-reaching effects on other products and in other states.

Find Word answers

Over 900 articles in 112 topic areas may provide answers regarding Microsoft Word in versions 6 through 2003.

<http://www.word-answers.com/>

Submitted by Tony Lake

Newsletter Contributors

Carl Westberg, Charlie Moore, Donald Gonse, Ed Van Meter, Frank Bollinger, Gene Barlow, Herb Goodman, Jim Jeup, Judy Taylour, Katy Goossens, Linda Gonse, Marsee Henon, Mike Lyons, Neil Longmuir, Rich Blumenthal, Siles Bazerman, Ted Wirtz, Terry Currier, Tim O'Reilly, Tony Lake

**Newsletter Deadline
April 23**

The Public Is Welcome! Meetings Are FREE!

The Orange County IBM PC Users' Group regular meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the **Placentia Library, 411 East Chapman Avenue, Placentia, California 92870, (714) 528-1906**. The library is 0.4 miles east of Kraemer Blvd. Call (714) 990-0580, for more information, or go to www.orcopug.org.

Planning meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Downey Savings & Loan, one block east of Harbor at Bastanchury in Fullerton. All members are invited to attend the planning meetings!



Benefits for User Group Members

- Product & "How To" demos
- Free raffles and magazines
- Help from other members
- Newsletter and web site
- Special offers & discounts
- Monthly meetings
- Affiliation with worldwide group

User groups represent the spirit of the frontier, a community getting together to do things that no individual ought to have to do alone. The pioneers of the American west got together for barn raisings, cattle roundups, and the occasional party. The pioneers of new technology get together for installfests, new user training and support, and just plain fun. Being part of a user group is the best way to get more out of your computer, and lets you make friends while you're at it. — *Tim O'Reilly, President, O'Reilly & Associates*

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www.orcopug.org

Send a printed copy of this newsletter to a friend. Use this mailing sheet for the address. Staple newsletter together at top left corner with this last page facing out. Fold in half, so this page is visible. Tape ends together, stamp and mail.

6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12

Computer Fraud &
Identity Theft

Orange County
IBM PC Users' Group
P.O. Box 716, Brea, CA 92822-0716

Computer users helping computer users

