PPCUG *NEWS*

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday, March 8, 2004
Pinnacle's Liquid Edition
Carlyle Gordon

Liquid Edition - Different By Design, Better By Far. Pinnacle will demonstrate non-linear editing for beginner or advanced users, real-time 2D and 3D effects, color-correction, and DVD Authoring using their Liquid Edition product.

Carlyle Gordon is a freelance demo artist based in New York. He has his own studio with a green-screen, cameras, light meter, real-time NLE and effects workstation, gels, umbrellas, a studio microphone and a professional synthesizer. He is currently studying advanced color correction and some traditional art forms as well as developing in Linux.

Carlyle will be joined by Jenna Battistini, the Regional Sales Manager for the Northeast, Midwest and Canada. She has been with Pinnacle for 3-1/2 years in the Business and Consumer Division as well as the Broadcast/Professional Division.

At:
Lawrence Library
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
US Alternate Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in no way imply endorsement of its programs.*

In this issue

WEB SITE NOTE: The club has an email address, ppcug@njcc.com. It is referenced at our web site and visitors are encouraged to use it to ask for more information about us. Currently it receives about 30 emails per day. Perhaps I should say it receives about 30 SPAM emails per day! Only rarely is there anything which is actually club business. The web site has been changed to note that only emails with a string of "[OK]" anywhere in the subject field will be opened. I have my mail program set to delete anything else.

Coming Events:
April 12, 2004 - eBay - Scott Marshall
May 1&2, 2004 -Trenton Computer Festival

February Meeting Minutes

Joel May walked us through the current version of Turbo Tax for filing our 2003
taxes. Joel has used this software for many years and teaches classes in its use at Ew-
ing SeniorNet. More info is available at http://www.turbotax.com/
Before the presentation, Clarke passed around a USB/FireWire external hard drive
enclosure. At the conclusion of the presentation, a drawing for two copies of FlipAl-
bum was won by Bella E. and Paul K.

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Free Security CD from Microsoft

If you've neglected to install the Critical Security Updates for Windows because
you're stuck on a slow dial-up line, you don't have a reason any more. Microsoft has
released a Windows Security Update CD which they will send you free of charge.
This CD includes Microsoft critical updates released through October 2003 and infor-
mation to help you protect your PC. It is available for Windows XP, Windows Me,
Windows 2000, Windows 98, and Windows 98 Second Edition (SE). In addition, you
will also receive a free antivirus and firewall trial software CD. See http://www.
microsoft.com/security/protect/cd/order.asp to place your order.

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Trenton Computer Festival

TCF is planned for May 1&2 and will again be held in Edison, NJ. The PPCUG will
be manning the package pickup area. This is a location where attendees can leave
items that they have purchased at the flea market or from the indoor vendors. PPCUG
members keep the items safely separated and issue claim stubs for the owners to re-
trieve their goods when they are ready to leave the show. We generally receive over
$500 in donations for our work. That income has amounted to over 22% of our total
income for the last two years and helps hold down a dues increase. It's a pleasant way
to spend part of your time at the show and gives you free admission—a $15 benefit.
No lifting is required and we will have a tent so that you can be out of the sun or bad
weather. Paul will be handling the scheduling so please sign up for a shift at the
March meeting or email Paul if you can't attend. More information on the show itself
is at http://www.tcf-nj.org/.

What is APCUG?
Charlotte Semple, President,
Los Angeles Computer Society, California

The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) is an international, platform-independent, volunteer-run nonprofit body devoted to helping user groups offer better services to their members. APCUG is an organization dedicated to helping member computer user groups succeed. It helps to foster communications by operating as an informal network between user group organizations and also with companies that provide computer-related and Internet-related goods and services. APCUG also assists member groups in the fulfillment of their educational missions and activities by sharing with officers of member user groups the knowledge of what it takes for user groups to better serve their members. APCUG operates as a 50l(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Is APCUG a user group?
Absolutely not. APCUG membership consists of user groups, not individual members. While APCUG facilitates information to the user groups and provides information about possible services, it is up to the individual user groups to offer the services to their memberships.

Is membership in APCUG limited to user groups of any particular operating system or platform?
No. APCUG membership is open to all microcomputer user groups. Some of the members of APCUG are computer societies that serve many different platforms.

How did APCUG get started?
The genesis of APCUG came from a series of meetings by representatives from various user groups around the country. Whenever user group officers and directors met, there were continual discussions about the need to improve communication between the groups and to share information such as newsletters, strategies, ideas, etc. As a first step, the presidents from three user groups - Boston Computer Society, Capital PC User Group, and Houston Area League of PC Users - organized the First Annual User Group Summit meeting at the 1986 Fall Comdex. As a result of the feedback from that first Summit meeting and subsequent meetings among user group representatives, the leaders of 15 user groups met in Seattle in October 1987, and proposed the formation of an association for the purpose of fostering communication among and between user groups. That proposal was presented before 130 representatives from 50 user groups at the Second Annual User Group Summit Meeting in November 1987, and was unanimously approved.

What is the organizational structure of APCUG?
The primary governing body of APCUG is a 9-person Board of Directors. Each Director is elected for a three-year term, with one-third of the Board elected each year. The Board of Directors is responsible for the implementation of

APCUC activities and daily management of the organization. A 15-person Board of User Group Advisors, each of whom is elected for a two-year, staggered term (one-half of the Advisory Board is elected each year), is the ombudsman for their assigned groups and is responsible for proposing new activities or directions for APCUG and for advising the Board of Directors on user group concerns. All of the members of the Board of User Group Advisors are active participants in APCUG-member user groups. In addition, each Member User Group designates a person to act as a representative to APCUG. The APCUG user group representatives are responsible for keeping their group's officers and members up-to-date with information sent to them by APCUG, as well as keeping their group's information in the APCUG database current. They also receive the yearly ballot.

What kinds of things does APCUG do?
APCUG has established and maintains a National Registry of PC User Groups and provides this information to participating groups, publications, and vendors. By making this information available, more groups will be able to take advantage of services provided by manufacturers, publishers, and publications. APCUG encourages hardware manufacturers and software publishers to establish formal user group support programs and provides them listings of APCUG member user groups to facilitate the implementation of such programs.

APCUG provides a number of Internet services, including web pages with information about APCUG, mailing lists for User Group officers to communicate with their peers, Web Space for User Groups, and a number of other services, all accessible through http://www.apcug.org.

APCUG also plans and coordinates user group activities at major computer shows and expositions. These activities include a series of professional development seminars for user group officers; computer product showcase and exposition; the APCUG Summit Meeting held during the Fall conference; computer industry sponsored technology briefings; and sponsored breakfasts, luncheons and receptions.

APCUG serves as a clearinghouse for user group resources and vendor programs. In this way, each user group will not have to re-invent the wheel when it comes to creating something like a new member brochure or novice user diskette. Similarly, APCUG has developed a vendor database that summarizes the various programs and identifies the contact person within each company. User groups can then contact the vendors directly to enroll their groups into the programs.

Does APCUG take stands on issues or lobby?
No. It is more appropriate for individual user groups and not an umbrella organization to take positions on issues. As an information clearinghouse, the APCUG can, however, facilitate the exchange of communication on issues and help put user groups in contact with one another. Since the policy in most user groups is that only the Board of Directors can

establish policy, it would be inappropriate and harmful for the APCUG to take positions on behalf of its member organizations. If it is to be successful, it is essential that APCUG not interfere or encroach upon the inherent responsibilities of its user group members.

How does APCUG pay for its directors, officers, staff, and offices?
Like many user groups, APCUG is a non-profit organization that depends primarily on volunteer effort. APCUG does not maintain its own physical offices but instead contracts for services on an as needed basis. APCUG employs an administrative assistant who handles updating the database, sends renewal invoices to groups, etc. All director and officer positions are unpaid volunteers. Thus far, many people have stepped forward from individual user groups and volunteered their services to APCUG. This spirit is expected to continue.

How much does it cost to join APCUG?
Each APCUG member user group is assessed an annual membership fee of $50 to help defray administrative and operational expenses.

Is my group a member of APCUG?
Yes. Most APCUG member groups display the APCUG logo on their web page and in their newsletter.

APCUG Member Services
To help new User Groups to form, APCUG offers a collection of information, including sample Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. APCUG puts on one or two national events each year. The many Round Table Programs offered are set up to help leaders in running their user groups. There are also Regional Conferences held during the year where user groups can also meet to exchange ideas, share the highs and lows of running a user group, meet vendors, etc. on a more local level.

APCUG provides web space and other web services for user groups that have trouble finding a local ISP to host their web page The WebBoard offers a ListServe for groups to contact their members, chat accessibility for on-line meetings, and conferences for a group's guru to answer technical questions.

APCUG publishes APCUG Reports four times a year, and copies are mailed to selected officers of all APCUG member user groups. It contains many articles to help officers do their jobs better. These reports are also published on the Net.

Newsletter editors can often use more content for their newsletters. The APCUG Editorial Committee emails four to six articles each month to all editors in APCUG member user groups. These articles can then be published in the group's newsletter. Articles are usually written by user group members from around the world.

The monthly NOOZ newsletter from your group's advisor contains information about APCUG and the group's region.

Tips & Tricks for Running your User Group are special articles written to provide assistance to a member user group on some aspect of running a User Group. Frequently they will be based on material presented at a Round Table session at an APCUG or regional conference.

APCUG maintains a Presentation-in-a-Box list that contains information about vendor-provided material that user group members can use themselves to make a presentation at their meeting.

Occasionally, member groups receive information about discounts being offered to their members. Many vendors have special programs set-up for user group members that offer continuous discounts.

APCUG maintains a user group locator on its website which anyone can use to find another user group to arrange joint projects, arrange a vendor tour for several groups, and enable officers to find other user group officers in their area to interact with to discuss topics of interest to the groups.

The APCUG logo is available for use by APCUC member groups. Different sizes of transparent GIF files (color) for the web, and BMP and TIP files (gray scale) for print use are included, as well as AI, EPS, and PSD formats for those who need different sizes or formats than those provided.

Help is just an e-mail away - groups can contact their regional advisor or a member of the Board of Directors. All officers are willing and available to assist APCUG-member groups.

Compiled from information gleaned from the APCUG Website, http://www.apcug.org.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

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PCI Express:
Say Goodbye to AGP and PCI Slots
Timothy Everingham, TUGNET

Those of you who have been around personal computers for a while might remember plug in cards slots referred to as ISA, EISA, Microchannel, and VESA Local Bus. ISA, EISA, and Microchannel were replaced by PCI. VESA Local bus was primarily for video cards, which was replaced by PCI, then AGP slots. It was a fun time during these card slot transitions because many times you could not use the plug in cards from your old machine in your new computer

or motherboard or if you did it could slow down the entire system. Well guess what, its time to do it all over again. Intel has come up with a new slot standard PCI Express, which will start to show up in computers/motherboards this spring.

PCI came out in 1992. Today these slots and its data bus technology are used for things not envisioned when it was under development over 12 years ago. PCI has its limitations and the PCI pro slots never became popular. The limitations are coming to the forefront in delivering multimedia content and Gigabit Ethernet. Of course getting higher frame rates at higher resolution and quality for video games also is an issue. PCI has been evolving over time increasing its speed to five times the original, but it has reached its limits of development. Many say that stretching out the AGP to 8x speed might be pushing at its limit too.

First let us look at the current PCI architecture you will find on most motherboards. The CPU/Microprocessor communicates with the first of two data bridges, normally referred to as the Memory Bridge or Northbridge. The Northbridge not only communicates with the CPU; but also communicates to the AGP port, which is where your main graphics card is (usually the only graphics card). It also communicates with your RAM. The fourth thing it communicates with is the second data bridge, known as the Input/Output (I/O) Bridge or Southbridge. The Southbridge also communicates to your plug in slots/cards, drive controllers, and USB, Fireware/1394, parallel. serial, game, keyboard and mouse ports. The theoretical speed limit of the Southbridge communication to I/O including the PCI slots is 133 MB/second. All of the communications in the system are parallel with none of the data having any priority over any other. Blocks of data have to be sent one at a time and cannot be done concurrently. Therefore the data is transferred from one section of the motherboard to the next section based on the order received, not the importance or whether a piece of data arriving by a certain time to its destination is critical.

PCI Express, instead of using a parallel bus architecture, uses serial networking typology with only two wires for each direction. At higher speeds, it allows concurrent transfer of data while having a similar look and the same type of Northbridge/Southbridge architecture as currently in desktops and laptops.

However, in servers the Southbridge is eliminated producing greater data throughput. The PCI slots initially have a 250 MB/second throughput, but the scalable width technology (increasing the number of wire pairs) enables slots and cards to communicate at 32 times that speed in later implementations using longer slots. But the typology can also use network switching type technology, giving data priority and quality of service functions. Hot plug/swap of components is a native part of the architecture.

The PCI Express Graphics Port, replacing the AGP Port, will have a 4GB/second transfer rate in its initial configura-

tion, double that of the current 8x AGP ports. For laptops units there will be a new plug-in card to replace PCMCIA called ExpressCard. It will come in two forms, one that more looks like a PCMCIA card refereed to at the 34 module form factor (34 x 75 x 5 mm) and a more oversized L looking card called the 54 module form factor (54 x 75 x 5 mm). This new architecture is compatible with existing operating systems. Also the new PCI Express slot is capable of being placed alongside current type PCI slots so a choice can be made which type of card can be used in a motherboard just like was done with ISA slots and current PCI slots. The standard PCI Express slots being put in motherboards this spring (1x) will be a lot shorter than the standard PCI slots.

All of this will mean that a lot of issues having to do with multimedia on desktop and laptop computers will have been solved. It also opens wider use of Gigabit Ethernet on local area networks. It also enables the prospects of new motherboard form factors and computer case designs. As the transition from ISA to PCI was an interesting transition with computer buyers having to do more research and planning on their purchases, the move from PCI to PCI Express will do the same. However, as was with the previous transition, the performance and capability increases of computers will be profound. Further information on PCI Express can be found at www.express-lane.org.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPHand is also on the Management Information Systems Program Advisory Board of California State University, Fullerton. In addition he is the Vice President of the Windows Media Users' Group of Los Angeles. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. Further information can be found at http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

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Ergonomic Gizmos
John R. Chait D.C.,
Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group

How do you use your laptop?

Are you an occasional user who works on your laptop for short periods of time, or are you a full-time user with the laptop as your main computer? Occasional users will have less ergonomic risk of problems developing than full-time

users.

Laptop Posture - laptops violate basic ergonomic design requirements, so using a laptop is a tradeoff between poor neck/head posture and poor hand/wrist posture.

Occasional Users- Find a chair that is comfortable and that you can sit back in. Position your laptop in your lap for the most neutral wrist posture that you can achieve. Angle the laptop screen so that you can see it with the least amount of neck deviation.

Full-time Users- Position this on your desk in front of you so that you can see the screen without bending your neck. This may require that you elevate the laptop off the desk surface using a stable support surface, such as a computer monitor pedestal. Use a separate keyboard and mouse. You should be able to connect a keyboard and mouse directly to the back of the laptop or to a docking station.

Use the keyboard on a negative-tilt keyboard tray to ensure a wrist neutral posture. Use the mouse on an adjustable position mouse platform. The design of laptops violates a basic ergonomic requirement for a computer, namely that the keyboard and screen are separated. In the early days of personal computing desktop devices integrated the screen and keyboard into a single unit, and this resulted in widespread

complaints of musculoskeletal discomfort. By the late 1970's a number of ergonomics design guidelines were written and all called for the separation of screen and keyboard. The reason is simple, if the keyboard is in an optimal position for the user, the screen isn't and if the screen is optimal the keyboard isn't. Consequently, laptops are excluded from current ergonomic design requirements because none of the designs satisfy this basic need. This means that you need to pay special attention to how you use your laptop because it can cause you problems.