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PPCUG NEWS

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Enhancing Digital Photos with Adobe Photoshop Elements

Douglas Dixon, Manifest Technology

Digital cameras are great for grabbing images, and consumer photo tools can make it fun to make them look better with simple fixes. But what if you want more control and higher quality results for enhancing your photos? As we'll demonstrate in this talk, while professionals do the heavy lifting with Adobe Photoshop, you can get much of its power packaged in an accessible interface with Photoshop Elements, for under \$100.

Photoshop Elements provides helpful hints and recipes to guide you through performing common photo fixing and enhancements, and then sharing your image in print, in slideshows, or over the Web. Plus it also provides access to powerful capabilities from Photoshop, including filters, effects, text, graphics shapes, and even layers. You can start with the auto enhancement options, move on to visually refining your photos, have fun with artistic filters, or drill down to perform photographic manipulations.

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.*

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What would you like to see at a PPCUG meeting? Your feedback about past meetings and your suggestions for future meetings will make sure that we continue to present interesting programs that will make you glad that you're a member. This club exists by volunteer efforts. If you don't volunteer for anything else, know that offering your comments regarding meeting topics is a very important contribution to our success. Contact any officer.

Coming Events

July 12, 2004 - Video editing with free (or nearly free) software
August 9, 2004 - Computer Security - Joel May
September 13, 2004 - PC Magazine columnist - Bill Machrone

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library, Alternate Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:30 PM: Meeting comes to Order

7:45 PM: Featured presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see:

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

or email us at:

ppcug@njcc.com (Please include "OK" in the subject line.)

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all members. Notice of an upcoming meeting will be posted on the web site.

Board Members

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Vice-President:

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

Secretary:

Don Arrowsmith 609-883-9874

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Annual Dues

Dues are \$30 per calendar year with a mailed newsletter or \$20 per year with online access to the newsletter. New members pay \$2.50 or \$1.75 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.

May Meeting Minutes

It must have been a good computer month for everyone because there were no questions for the Q&A! Paul announced that the TCF package pickup area generated \$498 for the PPCUG (\$406 donations and \$92 profit from beverage sales). Appreciation goes to Paul Kurivchack, Bud Lewis, Ed Weiss, Don Arrowsmith, Marsha Duggins, Tom Carman, Clarke Walker, Kim Goldenberg, Kris Maharaj, Bruce Zaborowski, Al Axelrod, and Huston Landis for volunteering to work at this fundraiser.

David Soll presented the evening's program on Troubleshooting Windows Problems. He divided his talk into several sections: Windows versions, File systems, Hardware, Registry, Programs that start automatically, Task Manager, Restore Points, Software updates, DLL Hell, and TweakUI. David can be reached at dsoll@omicron.com. The complete set of Power Point slides is available at: http://home.comcast.net/~soll/Troubleshooting_Windows.ppt.



Biography for Doug Dixon, our June Presenter

Douglas Dixon is a technologist and author specializing in digital media. His Manifest Technology website provides free articles and technical references to help make sense of multimedia technology (www.manifest-tech.com).

As a technology writer, Doug has published over 110 feature articles, and is the author of three books, including "Desktop DVD Authoring" and "How to Use Adobe Premiere." Among other positions, he is currently editor-at-large for Mediaware magazine, contributing editor for Camcorder and Computer Video magazine, and a contributor to CNET Reviews and the U.S.1 Newspaper.

Doug has presented over 45 seminars and talks in the past few years on digital media topics, for professional groups and conferences including Sony Training, NAB, Show-Biz Expo, DVD International Conference, TECHXNY /PC Expo, and Government Video Expo.



How to Read E-mail with Greater Safety

Vic Laurie

Of all the things that can be done with a personal computer, e-mail is probably the biggest application for the average PC user. Unfortunately, it is a sad but undeniable fact that e-mail is no longer as simple to use as it once was. Between the spammers and the malware writers, the life of the e-mail user has been greatly complicated. There is even talk that e-mail as we know it is doomed. The writers of malware such as viruses and worms have made e-mail the primary choice for spreading their malicious work. Be that as it may, there are steps that all users of e-mail can and should take to defend their computers against this onslaught.

For the most part, the greatest danger in e-mail in the past has been from opening executable attachments containing viruses, worms, Trojans, etc. and I have discussed this subject previously (<http://www.vlaurie.com/computers2/Articles/defend.htm>).



Using common sense about clicking on attachments, keeping anti-virus programs and the operating system patches up-to-date, and some system configuration should prevent infectious attachments from harming your system. With increasing frequency, however, the e-mail body itself has become a source of infection. By means of HTML code or scripts hidden in the text, malware may get downloaded simply from the act of opening an e-mail for viewing. It is also possible for spammers to track you this way (Web bugs, see http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Marketing/web_bug.html). In this article, I will discuss some ways to avoid getting malware from the main e-mail body.

Turn off the Preview Pane

For convenience, many e-mail programs provide automatic views of e-mail called the "Preview Pane." Unfortunately, this means that any malicious code in the e-mail body may get executed also. Or a signal may be sent to a spammer showing that you are reading the message. Steps can be taken to help allow safe use of the Preview pane but some may prefer to be sure and will want to turn off this feature. That way only mail that you deliberately choose to open will be displayed. Different e-mail programs will have somewhat different procedures for disabling the Preview pane but I will give the method for the commonly used Windows e-mail client Outlook Express (OE).

Go to the "View" menu, click "Layout" and uncheck "Show Preview Pane". To see this procedure in detail go to a tutorial showing how to configure OE for safety (<http://www.vlaurie.com/computers2/slides/oeconfigureslide1.htm>.) Configuring the Preview pane is demonstrated on slides 7 and 8 of this tutorial. Also see slide 4 to turn off automatic downloads in the Preview Pane.

Another way of turning the Preview Pane on and off in OE uses a sequence of keyboard shortcuts. First hold down "Alt" and "v". This will open the "View" menu. Then in succession, press "l" "p" and "Enter." Note that this is "l" for "Layout" and "p" for "Preview Pane".

I do not use the more complicated application Outlook that is part of Microsoft Office but the Outlook feature "AutoPreview" (but not "Preview Pane) is safe to use (<http://www.woodyswatch.com/email/>).

Configure system

The latest versions of OE and Outlook have several security measures in place by default but it doesn't hurt to check. Make sure that OE is in the so-called "Restricted sites zone". Go to the "Tools" menu and open "Options". Click the "security" tab.

Make sure the radio button is selected next to "Restricted site zone..." This procedure is detailed in the tutorial previously mentioned (see slide 5).

Read text only

In order to avoid any hidden HTML or scripts, e-mail can be checked out by first reading it in text only. OE has a setting to provide for this. Go to Tools-Options-Read and place a check by "Read all messages in plain text". This will disable all graphics and formatting so it may look a little funny but no viruses or spammer's trackers will be able to run. If

a message seems legitimate, the graphics can be turned back on. This procedure is illustrated in slide 4 of the tutorial.

Another way to read an e-mail in text in OE is to right-click on the entry in the message list and then select "Properties". Click the "Details" tab (Fig. 1) and then click the button "Message Source" (Fig. 2). This method allows for selectively reading messages in text without changing the configuration. If you are interested, this is also the way to view the message's headers. Sometimes the header can help decide whether a message is legitimate.



Figure 1 "Details" of properties sheet for an email

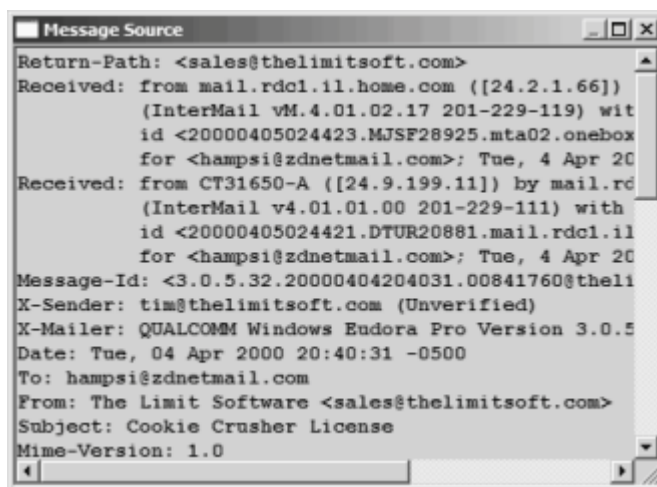


Figure 2 "Message source" from Details

Other e-mail programs may have their own ways to read in text only and users of those programs can check the application's help files.

Reading on the server

Rather than bringing e-mail to your computer and reading it locally with your own e-mail client, you can also read the mail in text while it is still on the e-mail server. If your mail account is of the usual POP3 variety, the free program Mail-Washer (<http://www.mailwasher.net/>) is a handy way to check out mail before downloading it. IMAP accounts or those with AOL or Hotmail can use the commercial cousin (\$37) MailWasher Pro (<http://www.firetrust.com/products/pro/>)



Web Links of the Month

Vic Laurie

In preparing to teach my April SeniorNet class on Computer Safety, I came across the reference below. In light of the rash of computer worms, Trojan horses, and viruses that we are experiencing, I think the Security Checklist given in the reference could be very useful to us all. Some of the items (for home networks, for example) may not apply to everyone, but I think it is a worthwhile list to look at.

<http://www.securityfocus.com/columnists/220>

Sol Libes

Sol recommends this article on using System Restore to correct certain serious Windows problems:

http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/issues/technology/business_software/how_to_undo_a_big_mistake_in_windows.mspx



Are you a Visual Basic Programmer?

You can get a free copy of Visual Basic .NET 2003 for watching five short instructional films from Microsoft. See the below announcement from <http://msdn.microsoft.com/vbasic/atthemovies/>.

"Welcome to VB at the Movies! The 101 short films below will provide everybody from the beginner through the advanced developer with an opportunity to amp up their VB skills. In true studio fashion, we're releasing two categories each week, so check back often to catch the latest releases. Let us know what you think! View and rate five movies, then sign up to receive your redemption code email entitling you to a complimentary Not-For-Resale copy of Visual Basic .NET 2003 Standard Edition. Grab your popcorn and soda, sit back and enjoy! This offer is valid in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, all U.S. military bases that contain valid APO/FPO addresses, and Canada."



Getting to Know Google **

**Billy Mabray,
Oklahoma City PC Users Group**

These days, whether you consciously choose it or not, your

Web search engine is probably Google (<http://www.google.com>). That's because most search sites, whether they admit it or not, are powered by Google. And, why not? Google rose to the top of the search engines because its formula provided more relevant search results than any other. Also, its deceptively simple page makes it fast and easy to use.

I say deceptively simple because, underneath that friendly, colorful logo is a powerful search system that can accept queries as complex as you want to make them. Many people don't realize that if they do not find what they want on the first try, there are techniques they can use to improve their results. There are also ways to search Google that are more appropriate for certain specialty queries. And, Google is hiding a few extras that take it beyond a search engine into an amazing reference tool.

Let's start with an example. We're cooking dinner tonight, and we need a recipe for spaghetti sauce that does not use sugar. We might go to Google and type in this:

no sugar spaghetti sauce recipe

Google tells us we have about 56,000 results to wade through. A daunting task, considering the first page doesn't seem to contain anything relevant. The first thing we will try is grouping our search terms into phrases, using double-quotes. This tells Google that certain words should be searched for together. So, we try this:

"no sugar" "spaghetti sauce" recipe

That certainly narrowed things down, didn't it? This is a good technique to use when your search contains a lot of common words that could appear together in different contexts than what you are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, our first page of results is still not as relevant as we would like. The next thing we will try is searching for pages that do not contain a certain term:

-sugar "spaghetti sauce" recipe

This tells Google that we want pages that are about "spaghetti sauce" recipe, but specifically do not contain the term sugar. That seems to have done it-our first page of results is chock full of spaghetti sauce recipes that don't use sugar. "Subtracting" a term can also be useful when what you are searching for has multiple meanings. For example, if you are researching the "Holy Grail," you might want to add "-Python" to your search to eliminate all the references to the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

Now, maybe spaghetti sauce is too specific-we might want to also consider marinara sauce. In that case, we use Google's or syntax:

-sugar "(spaghetti | marinara) sauce" recipe

When there are multiple words that will satisfy our search, we can group them with parentheses and separate them with the "pipe" character-a vertical line that is most likely on the right-hand side of your keyboard. Google will then search for references to "spaghetti sauce" or "marinara sauce."

At this point, we've become so intrigued by what we can

find with Google, we've completely forgotten about dinner. Now we are interested in just how many different chicken casserole recipes we can find. Here's one way:

"chicken * casserole" recipe

Notice the asterisk. This is called a wildcard. It tells Google that we don't care what word comes between chicken and casserole, but there should be something there. This can be particularly useful when you know most of a title of something, but are unsure of all the words. This particular search brings back all kinds of chicken casserole recipes. Something tells me we better just eat out tonight.

Besides its standard Web search, Google has many specialty searches that are triggered either by a keyword or simply by what you are searching for. For example:

site:microsoft.com "Internet Explorer" patches

This searches for references to "Internet Explorer" patches on microsoft.com only. If your favorite Web site does not offer a search function, this is a pretty good substitute.

Maybe we want to know which sites on the Web link to the OKC PC User's Group Web site:

link:okcpcug.org

We can also tell Google that what we are looking for is in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file:

filetype:pdf refrigerator manual

Google pays attention to what you are searching for, and offers helpful services based on what it thinks you want. For example, have you ever noticed Google shows your search words in the blue bar above your results? The search terms that are underlined link to a definition of that word at dictionary.com. If you spell a word wrong, Google will prompt you with the correct spelling and ask if you would like to search for that instead.

Google has many tricks like this up its sleeves. Search for a phone number, and Google will do a reverse lookup on the number. Search for a name with a city and state and/or zip code, and Google will look up their phone number. Search for an address and you will get links to maps of that location. Include a zip code with your search terms, and Google will offer you local results-Web sites for locations near the zip code, ordered by distance. You can even type in a shipment tracking number, and Google will figure out who the shipping company is and give you a link to the tracking information.

Google offers some services that have nothing to do with searching. Try this:

$68.12 + (68.12 * .2)$

The Google calculator will return the result of this computation. Fun, although, admittedly, not particularly useful. The Google calculator can be useful though, for things like conversions:

68mm = ? inches

You can do all kinds of conversions using Google-a handy tool whenever you get around to making that spaghetti

sauce.

Google is much more useful than most people realize-we've only scratched the surface of what Google can do. If you are interested in more, check out Hacking Google by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest. It includes many more search tips, and information for programmers who want to include Google search results in their applications. As you explore what Google can do, you will probably discover that Google feels like more than just a Web site.

In fact, Google is your friend.

Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.



Whither the Yellow Box? **

Moe Norris, Topeka PC Users Club, Kansas

Eastman Kodak Company, an icon in the photographic industry for more than 100 years, dropped a bombshell last September when it announced that the company would shift its focus from film and film-based products to digital equipment and processes! And it has resolutely continued down that path. In January 2004 the company announced that by the end of this year it would no longer be selling reloadable film based 35mm cameras, including APS models, in the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe. The "throw away" (i.e., one-time use) cameras will be the only Kodak film camera available in the west. The number of different films provided to retailers will be reduced, concentrating on just the most popular lines. Production of its Carousel film projectors was scheduled to cease the end of 2003.

Kodak said that it plans to continue providing 35mm cameras in emerging markets, such as China, India, Eastern Europe and Latin America, and will introduce six new film cameras in those markets this year. It predicts rapidly growing markets for cameras and film in those countries, in contrast to what is being seen in the west where the demand for film-related products is shrinking much more rapidly than anticipated, while purchases of digital cameras continue to grow dramatically. Kodak's array of digital cameras now extends from point and shoot consumer models to high-end professional (read very expensive) digital cameras and camera backs. It will increase its production of inkjet printing papers, and plans to introduce a new line of consumer ink jet printer models to go head-to-head with the well-established offerings from HP, Epson, Lexmark, etc.

Kodak's landmark shift in focus represents a profound change for the world's largest filmmaker, and a huge gamble. The success of the move remains uncertain. Just when Kodak needs increasing film revenues to underwrite the costs (in the billions) of this transition, film sales are dropping substantially. Since 1997 Kodak has reduced its workforce by more than 30,000 jobs. Another 15,000 jobs will be eliminated in the next two years in a further effort to

reduce costs. Success is not a given. If fortune does not smile on Kodak, then not only may the Yellow Box disappear, but the company itself may go down the same path-and it won't be a Yellow Brick Road!



Charlie's Tidbits **
Charlie Paschal, PPCC

Don't forget system restore ?

Viruses are always a threat, but did you know that one can "return" without warning if you don't turn off one Windows XP feature when cleaning up from a virus? One of XP's great features is System Restore that can take your system back to a time when it was running better. I've used it countless times to return an ill-acting system back to a healthy time.

What if, though, you get a virus? Because System Restore can contain system settings that will restore the virus itself, it should always be turned off before you remove a virus. To do that:

Right Click on My Computer and select Properties and left click. Click on the System Restore tab and check the box labeled "Turn Off System Restore on all Drives." Then, clean up the virus and reboot. Don't forget to turn System Restore back on after cleaning up the virus.

Hex, binary, Decimal numbers

Ever wonder what people are talking about when they mention binary and "hex" numbers? It's the way computers "talk" and the language they understand. Our system, of course, is the decimal number system, which is 10 base. Binary is 2-based, while hex is 16-based. The binary is where you get the "1s and 0s" from because that's the only numbers used in that system.

For example, the number 11 in decimal is 1011 in binary and B in hex. Since 1s and 0s can easily show numbers from 0-9, hex is used to represent numbers from 10 through 16, meaning that A is 10, B is 11, etc. Because binary numbers can get complex, hex is used because it makes it shorter to write and it's easier for humans to remember. If you ever want to do some conversions yourself without having to learn the mathematical way of doing it, use Windows calculator. Go to View and select scientific. Plug in a number in decimal and then click on Hex or Bin to see the number in that system. For example, 999 is 3E7 in hex. In binary it's 1111100111. See? You can remember 3E7 but it's not as easy to remember the binary version.

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