

Next CUE Meeting:

The next General CUE meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 16, 2003, at Trinity Lutheran Church. Meeting begins at 7 pm.

The January demo at the General Meeting will be on using a Macintosh system, given by Lou Cioccio.

Don't forget, we have the special members Sale/Giveaway table set up at all meetings.

Installing STS\PageGenL *by Phil Rist, Computer Users of Erie*

The current release of STS\PageGenL comes as two .CAB files and two setup files. To install the program run the Setup.exe program. This will install the executable code and add a shortcut to your start menu. These cab files should contain all the code required to run STS\PageGenL including the VB6 runtime and activeX controls.

Three sets of templates are available but not on the CUE web site yet. These templates provide the basic text and HTML tags used to build the pages in the album. These files are not required by the program. Without templates STS\PageGenL will generate an album with a standard and dull set of pages. Templates are used to create more interesting albums. If you know HTML you can create your own templates either from scratch or by using the provided templates as starting points. Templates are described in chapter 5 of the user manual which should be available next month. If you do not know HTML the templates provided can be used as is. Without templates the only meaningful customization that you can perform is entering the caption text, reordering pages, inserting separators with or without images and inserting basic page lists of selected pages. Text pages and inserted pages may not function correctly. References to existing HTML pages should function correctly.

The program also will come with a default caption file. A caption file contains all the text entered by the user. The default caption file is like any other caption file except it contains only the default data, data entered for the contents page and selection list pages. This is text that once it is setup will probably be used for several albums. If the default caption file is not available or unsatisfactory one can be quickly created with STS\PageGenL.

There is nothing that needs to be registered. Just install the program. Create a directory of images. Run the program. Select New from the file menu. Select your album directory. Select Build Pages from the File Menu. If you can do that you will have a completed photo album ready to be copied to a CD-ROM. If you want to see the album use Windows Explorer to access the album directory. A file with the name 'STS_PageGen Lite Contents.html' has been created in the directory. Double click the name in Windows Explorer. This will activate the browser and display the albums contents page. From there you can display any of the other pages.

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CUE Classes Continue

Just a reminder that the CUE Class for January 2003 will deal with the use of scanners for importing text and images into your system.

Future CUE Class dates in 2003 are:

Jan 18 Feb 15 March 15
April 19 May 17 Sept 20
October 11 Nov 15 Dec 20

Note that all dates are on Saturdays. Times for the classes are from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, and will be held in the Admiralty Room.

Topics are needed for the remaining classes listed above. If you have any suggestions please let us know via the CUE List, or at the September meeting, so we may get them in planning.

OnCUE
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Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings are scheduled for the **THIRD THURSDAY** of each month except July. Check the CUEList or the website for any changes.

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| Bill Ellis | Lou Cioccio |

Advertising

To place an ad in *OnCUE*, please contact the editor at the above email address for current rates.

Announcements

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General Meeting Minutes

Computer Users of Erie Minutes of the Meeting, December 19, 2002 at Trinity Lutheran Church 38th and State Streets, Erie

1. Called to order by Sam Fletcher, president, at 7:20 p.m.

2. To permit the secretary to attend to other more pressing matters, Madelaine Burkett read the minutes of the November meeting.

3. At the next general meeting on January 16 Lou Cioccio will discuss the many features of the Mac OSX operating system.

4. Following a general discussion of possible Blasco Library class topics, it was announced that the class topic on January 18 would be scanners.

5. The Genealogy SIG will hold its next meeting at Dave Howell's home on January 7.

6. At its most recent meeting, Lou Cioccio's MAC SIG had a useful and interesting session on CD burning.

7. Terry Lukas agreed to head the Window's SIG which will resume meeting at 7:00 p.m. on January 15 at his home.

8. Don Grim was welcomed back on a break from his studies and agreed to answer any DOS questions that might be brought up.

9. Bill Rothstein had no µcontroller SIG news to report.

10. Partition Magic has made 1/2 price offer to user groups.

11. The chair requested approval for both the November minutes as read and for a motion to adjourn. Unanimous. Adjournment at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hillert Vitt, Secretary

In the drawing for the 50/50 raffle following the meeting, the winner of \$8.00 was Hillert Vitt.

Upcoming MarketPro Shows

Jan 25, 26 Pittsburgh Expo Mart, Monroeville, PA 9:30 am to 4 pm
Jan 11 Hamburg Fairgrounds, Buffalo, NY 9:30 am to 4 pm
Feb 22, 23 Pittsburgh Expo Mart, Monroeville, PA 9:30 am to 4 pm

See elsewhere in this issue for a coupon good for \$1 off the admission price to any Marketpro show.

Use Your CD Drive More Productively *by Ira Wilsker*

Almost all newer computers come with a CD-RW drive, a CD drive that can write and rewrite compatible CD discs. For older computers, with a standard CD reader (play only, not write), the addition of a CD "burner" is a very popular and fairly inexpensive upgrade. A simple review of the Sunday sale books for the major electronics and office supply stores shows an abundance of CD-RW drives for between \$30 and \$100, often after rebate. These drives are typically easy to install, and may possibly be installed in addition to the existing CD reader (good for copying CDs), or as a simple replacement. If internal installation is not desired, there are several external CD-RW drives, advertised weekly, that connect to an available USB or firewire port. The external drives, typically the USB models, are also often a good choice for older notebook computers where internal installation is difficult or impossible. The Sunday ads often show the external USB drives for under \$100, after rebates.

Almost all CD-RW drives, whether factory installed, or after-market add-on, come with some CD burning software. The most widely distributed CD software provided with the drives is from Adaptec, or Adaptec's successor (Adaptec sold their CD writing software division), Roxio. Another common software package included with some drives is from Nero, while other drives come with a variety of lesser-known software titles. As the price of blank CD discs plunges, often "free after rebate", burning (writing to) CDs has become very popular. Still, many PC (and Mac) users are not using their equipment to its potential; large number of users still only use their CD-RW drives in read mode to install other software, and not to burn discs.

As had been stated many times here in previous columns, the three most important words in computing are "Backup, Backup, and Backup". Remember that "Murphy's First law of Computing" states that "A properly backed-up hard drive will never fail; a hard drive that has not been recently backed up will always fail at the most inopportune time." All too many users who have ready access to CD-RW drives have lost all of their important files to viruses or hard drive failures, despite the ease and low expense of copying important files to CD discs. The common blank discs hold from 660 to 700 megabytes of data, and are very inexpensive. Other than some time, there is no great investment to back up critical files at a minimum, or even better, entire hard drives.

There are a variety of excellent utilities available to backup hard drives. Some CD-RW drives come with a "lite" or "limited" version of popular backup programs. While minimally functional, these "lite" versions often lack useful functions such as compression (getting more data on a CD disc than its native capacity), or incremental backup (only backing up new files or files modified since the previous backup). I have been using "BackUp MyPC" from Stomp Software (www.stompinc.com), which was formerly known as

Backup Exec, by Veritas (Seagate). This program is probably one of the most full featured backup programs, and easy to use. BackUp MyPC can backup to almost any type of device from CD-RW drives, tape drives, Jazz and Zip drives, and other devices. Some competing products are Roxio's Go Back, Norton's Ghost, and NTI's BackUp Now (which I have also used). Since almost all computers can utilize some form of CD writer, and blank discs are cheap, there is absolutely no reason NOT to have at least critical data files backed up. The cliché "ounce of prevention..." is most apropos here. With over one in five PCs currently infected with at least one variety of the Klez worm, several versions of which are capable of destroying critical files on a hard drive, backups are imperative. The appearance and rapid spread of other destructive worms and viruses, such as the new "Hunch" worm which explicitly destroys the files in the Windows, My Programs, and My Documents directories, emphasizes the need for backing up hard drives. Still, probably the most damage is done by the old-fashioned hard drive crash. Remember Murphy's law, and always have a reasonably current backup of critical files. For long-term archival purposes, better quality CD discs are advertised as having a 100-year archival life.

There are other popular uses of CD burners. One of the most popular and most controversial uses is burning music to blank CD discs. Often in the popular MP3 format, or in native commercial music CD format, studies show that this is the most popular use of CD burners. Provided that copyright laws are rigidly obeyed, and we all know that they always are (snicker), homemade music CDs are very widely created and used. Online music or swap services, ranging from the now defunct Napster, to the very much alive and controversial KazAa and Morpheus, as well as the legitimate commercial music sites such as Sony, are popular sources of such music.

Another popular use is copying entire CD discs. Generally, it is considered "ok" to make a single archival backup of commercial CDs, provided that the copy is only used as a backup, and properly disposed of (destroyed) when the original software is no longer needed. With some software CDs, and an increasing number of commercial music CDs, this archival backup is becoming

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Digital Photography: Purchasing a Digital Camera *by Larry Horn*

Digital cameras are the latest "Must Have" toys for gadget loving computer users and many others. The reason computer users love digital over regular film is the computer gives them the ability to make endless changes, corrections, and improvements to their pictures and use them in creative projects. (Be sure to attend this month's meeting where MGI will show you some of the digital editing techniques and tricks you can do using their line of products.) This article will be my very opinionated list of what you should consider before purchasing a digital camera, or getting your new one with more features. Remember, technology in this field is advancing so fast with more resolution and features for less money on a monthly basis. Therefore any recommendation for a specific camera is obsolete before the article can be printed.

An important point: No consumer level digital camera of today under \$3,000 will equal 35MM film for absolute image quality! The structure of film is way beyond 3 or 4 MegaPixels (MP), and film has grain which softens the edges presenting a more natural picture to your eyes. Additionally, film cameras can be purchased, at a very reasonable cost, with interchangeable lenses which greatly increase the flexibility of the camera use. Yes, you can fake a telephoto lens in the camera but that kills your resolution. (I will get into that below.) You can also scan a photo, but that will also reduce the resolution and ultimate image quality. When you get your film developed and placed on a CD by the camera store, they actually scan the film (with a very good film scanner) and save the file to a disk.

First, why do you want to purchase a digital camera? Because they are fun to use and can actually save you a lot of money over time. It takes the Polaroid (r) concept of a picture in a minute and speeds that up. You take the picture, preview it on the LCD screen and delete it if you don't like it or save it for future posterity - all at no additional cost for film or developing. Print out the pictures you like (paper quality does matter) or send them as e-mail attachments to friends and relatives.

Let's get down to the actual items to consider when buying a camera. These items are in my order of importance although many of the items are actually of equal ranking and personal preference has influenced it:

Resolution and Sensor Size:

The heart of all digital cameras is the light sensitive electronic chip called a sensor. It takes incoming light and converts it to a digital file. This chip determines the maximum resolution and, ultimately, image quality. This sensor is made up of a number of individual photo-receptors corresponding to pixels. When a digital camera says it has 1MP resolution, the sensor actually has that number of photo-receptors. The density of the sensor determines a camera's overall picture quality.

Using a loose analogy to relate it to your computer screen's resolution, the original default VGA resolution of Windows on a computer monitor was 640x480 which means it has 640 dots or pixels across by 480 down or .3 million pixels making

tion would have .3 million image sensors each representing a pixel or .3 MegaPixels (MP). Cameras in the mid-price range (\$150-300) now have 1MP, or 2MP. In the \$400-\$1,000 price range you will get 3MP or 4 MP. This directly impacts the size of a picture you can print as more pixels translate into a larger picture that still looks good. The camera has captured more detail and doesn't have to "guess" or interpolate at the missing dots or expand the existing ones causing a blotchy print.

I have seen two kind of sensors: a charge coupled device (CCD) which is usually found in high-quality cameras and a complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) which is more common in the low-cost "entry-level" cameras. Most of the reviews I have seen favor CCD chips.

What resolution do you need? That depends on how you will be using the final output. Yes, more is always better, but as a rule of thumb related to final use:

- .3MP (640x480) = On screen viewing, Web Sites, sending as e-mail attachments, prints up to 3"x5"
- .8MP (1024x768) above and prints of 3"x5" to 4"x6"
- 1MP (1152x864) = 3"x5" to 5"x7"
- 1.3MP (1280x1024) = 4"x6" to 5"x7"
- 2MP (1600x1200) = 5"x7" to 6"x9"
- 3 MP prints up 8"x10" to 11"x14"
- 4Mp 9"x12"

The above listing was the consensus of several sources but was plagiarized from the April 2001 issue of PC Photo, an excellent magazine for anyone starting out with digital photography. PC Photo generally used the more conservative - smaller sizes.

One last point on resolution: Many people will want to eventually crop their pictures for a better composition. When you crop it down, you effectively throw out the resolution in the area you delete. A 3MP image could quickly reduce to a 1MP with cropping, so if you like to work on your images and make relatively large prints, start with and shoot at the highest resolution you can afford.

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For the latest CUE news visit our website at
www.cuerie.com

OR

Join the CUE email list. To do so, send an email to cuelist@szy.com, and place SUBSCRIBE as the subject.

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The Lens:

There are two main points to consider here, lens material and zoom capability. Lenses can be made of glass or plastic. Glass is the hands down winner for quality.

The stated Zoom range is a bit more complex. You can have Optical Zoom and Digital Zoom. Optical Zoom uses the actual optics of the lens to magnify or zoom in on the image. There is no loss of resolution/quality, but it is more expensive to manufacture. Digital Zooms take the original image from only the center part (how much depends on the degree of magnification) of the sensor and use the camera's internal computer to interpolate or guess at the "missing" pixels between the real ones. It is like cropping the picture and then stretching the image back up and filling in the blank spaces. Image quality is degraded and the greater the magnification, the more you lose. A 3MP sensor might actually be using only 1MP at the center and "filling in" the other 2MP. Don't get me wrong, I have seen cameras guess very well and produce good quality images at high digital zoom magnifications but optical is always better than digital. The most common range I have seen in optical zooms is 3X or three times magnification.

Also, be aware that the sensor is not the same size as a piece of 35MM film, so when you see the focal length stated in mm like 38-115mm (3X) this is actually a more telephoto angle lens than you would get in a 35MM camera. PC Photo Magazine list the conversion at approximately 5X. My Olympus camera has a lens of 5.4mm - 16.2mm which they state is equivalent to 35mm-105mm on a 35MM camera which equals slightly wide angle to short (Portrait) telephoto for those not familiar with 35MM cameras.

Framing the Picture:

You can frame the picture in either an optical, ideally through the lens, viewfinder or with an LCD display panel on the back of the camera. I feel a digital camera should have both! Being a long-time photo enthusiast I am accustomed to an optical viewfinder. LCDs also have the bad tendency to "wash out" or become too light to be viewable. I also find it awkward to hold a camera away from my face while trying to frame the image. Another disadvantage is LCDs consume a lot of battery power. You can shoot all day on one set of batteries with an optical viewfinder, but you had better have extras if you use an LCD. I would not purchase a camera without an optical viewfinder. (Our VP, Elliot Glantz, feels just the opposite, and although his camera has both, he always uses the LCD over the optical viewfinder.) I will also admit an LCD is more accurate in framing the subject, especially close-ups, unless your optical viewfinder is "through the lens," something generally found only on top-of-the-line digital cameras.

If I am so partial to an optical viewfinder, why do I want a digital camera to have an LCD panel? Because it is invaluable for previewing your pictures to make sure you really got a good shot. If it didn't turn out, you know it instantly and can reshoot it. The bad picture is simply deleted, making room for another shot and with no waste of film. It is also great being able to show off your pictures while still at the party, etc. and see the reaction. One neat feature I saw on a Sony camera was an LCD panel which swivelled so you

could still see it if you put the camera over your head or were using the self-timer to take your own picture.

Focus:

Simple, inexpensive, digital and film cameras have a single fixed, or two zone, focus. It is a compromise or zone guess. This is OK as a quick point-and-shoot camera but will not give you the best shots. Most better (\$250+) digital cameras have autofocus lenses. This will give you far better, sharper images. An added feature is a focus lock. This feature allows you to lock the focus on the main subject and then re-frame the picture to a more pleasing composition. When you get up to the professional level (\$2,000+) cameras, you can even get optional full manual focus for real creative effects.

Memory - Storage Cards:

Digital cameras store their images in non-volatile memory cards; they save the memory even when the camera is off. Some very inexpensive have only internal memory which will hold 25-30 pictures before you have to get to a computer to download them. This is OK around the house but would require you to lug a laptop with you on a trip if you wanted to take any additional pictures. A better solution is removable memory cards so you can take several with you and when one is full, just change it like you would film, and keep shooting. There are several, unfortunately non-compatible, options available. These are Smart Media (SM), Compact Flash (CF), Sony's Memory Sticks, Multimedia Cards, Click Disk, the new IBM MicroDrive, and just released CD-R. The 2000 Fall Comdex in Las Vegas also saw the introduction of additional formats but these are not yet available. SM and CF are the most popular at this time. They are all small cards, about the size of a matchbook, which slide into the camera. You purchase them by memory size, in Megabytes, which range from 4Mb to 64Mb with the MicroDrive going up to 340Mb. These capacities are increasing as I write this. Some Sony cameras still use a standard 3 1/2" floppy disk. These are cheap but are limited to 1.4Mb so they can't hold many pictures as the resolution increases. The number of images you can save per Megabyte is directly related to the resolution and the amount of image compression you use.

Image Compression - File type:

A non-compressed high resolution picture would take up multiple megabytes of storage space so most cameras store the images in a compressed format. The most common formats are TIFF and JPEG. TIFF uses minimal compression and produces the largest file sizes but also the best pictures. JPEG is a "Lossy" compression algorithm. This means that some information is thrown away forever when the file is compressed-so if you compared the "uncompressed" image with the original, you would find some differences. You can, on some cameras, set the amount of compression so you can determine the amount of data you are willing to lose (and reduce file size) before the image becomes pixilated and looks unacceptable. Setting the camera to Fine, Normal or Basic determines the amount of compression. Some brands use different terms but the concept is the same. I discourage the use of the Basic - highest compression - setting as it gives the lowest quality. A good quality camera will give you a choice of file type as well as degree of compression.

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Special Interest Group News

Genealogy SIG

This just in from the Genealogy Network -

On January 14, 2003, a special session on Genealogy Vintage Photographs will be held down at the History Center, 419 State Street in Erie. The title of the presenter, Anna Bablak, is "The Role of Photographs in Genealogy Vintage Photographs - how to identify and pick up clues."

You are encouraged to bring old photos you'd care to have analyzed.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 PM in the 2nd floor assembly area of the Erie Society for Genealogical Research in the History Center. Doors open 6:40 PM and close promptly at 7:10 PM.

For further information, contact Dave Howell, 866-7308, dehowell@velocity.net.

Macintosh SIG

I just found this on www.macosxhints.com. It is not mine but it works.

Bonus icon set bundled inside of iCal

Fri, Oct 11 '02 at 09:00AM • from: quack

There is an interesting icon set in the iCal-Package. You can find it, after control-clicking on the iCal application and selecting "Show Package Contents," in the Contents -> Resources folder; the icon set is named icalwr.icns. Just double-click the file and you can watch it in Apple Preview.

[Editor's note: It's Friday, so I fig-

ured might as well post something somewhat offbeat. I've never seen this character show up in iCal, so I don't know what it's there for ... any thoughts?]

dock 'hack' w/ wr

-- Fri, Oct 11 '02 at 11:50AM

Authored by: edeloso

If you want you can easily make the white rabbit your iCal dock graphic...

If you copy icalwr.icns and then rename the copy of icalwr.icns to iCal-Empty.icns (I suggest FIRST renaming iCal-Empty to something else, like iCal-Empty-Real.icns), ten next time you launch iCal the white rabbit will take the standard iCal icons place!

This works with just about any cocoa app, it seems. You just have to find what .icns the app is looking for, then 'trick' the app into finding your .icns instead. Also, note that the month and date are still written across the white rabbit.

Ciao,
Lou Cioccio

SIG CHANGES

Be sure to check out the list of SIGs to the right, and also watch the CUE list and the calendar both here and on the website for revised SIG meeting dates for several of the SIGs.

As we now have a Windows SIG coordinator for Erie County, there will be meetings scheduled for this group in the near future. First meeting is **JANUARY 15, 2003**.

Also, please note that even though the Programming SIG has gone inactive, you may still direct

your questions to Phil Rist for any help you may need.

Again, be sure to check the schedule carefully, and remember to send an RSVP to the coordinator of the meeting to inform them if you can or can NOT make a scheduled meeting for any SIG you are active in.

SIGs (Special Interest Groups) provide a forum for members with a common interest to meet and explore this field.

Contact the SIG leader to verify the meeting schedule.

Beginner's

Tom Kuklinski
866-5396 kuklinsk@erie.net
3rd Tuesday of the month
3928 Sassafras St. 7 pm

Genealogy

Dave Howell
866-7308 dehowell@velocity.net
1st Tuesday of the month
3904 Myrtle 7 pm

Macintosh SIG

Lou Cioccio
868-1320 lcioccio@erie.net
2nd Saturday of the month
1012 E. 28th St. (park behind school) 9 am

LINUX

Phil Rist
838-8072 brytrist@earthlink.net
Date to be announced
Location and time to be announced

Windows

Brian Little (Crawford County)
814-337-6724 blittle@stargate.net
No regularly scheduled meeting

Terry Lukas (Erie County)
835-4270 Terry_Lukas@hotmail.com
3rd Wednesday of the month
1406 Sumner Dr. 7 pm

DOS

Don Grim goforit@velocity.net

Bryan Rist
838-8072 brytrist@earthlink.net
No regularly scheduled meeting

Internet/Telecommunications

Chip DeVoge
453-6394 chipd1@gte.net
No regularly scheduled meetings

TI SIG

Norb Sitter
838-6281 norbsit@juno.com
No regularly scheduled meetings

Microcontroller

William Schmuck
864-3192 redstone@velocity.net
No regularly scheduled meetings

Programming

Phil Rist
838-8072 brytrist@earthlink.net
No regularly scheduled meetings

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So how many pictures do I get on a memory card? A basic camera my neighbor has includes only 2Mb of memory and at 640x480 resolution with what it calls fine compression they can take 16 pictures or 32 pictures at the basic setting. The average camera with removable memory comes with a 8Mb card. Using that as a guide I will reproduce part of a table (with their terms) from the camera I own:

| Resolution | Compression | # of pictures |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1600x1200 | TIFF - Minimum | 1 |
| 1600x1200 | JPEG - Minimum | 5 |
| 1600x1200 | JPEG - Std | 16 * |
| 640x480 | JPEG - Fine | 32 |
| 640x480 | JPEG - Normal | 82 |

* This is the setting I use most often but I have to go back and Save-As with a higher level of compression if I am sending the files over e-mail to keep the size at a reasonable level for a dial-up download.

The Feel of the Camera

Even with the best specs in the world, if a camera does not "feel right" you will not use it. This is very subjective but also very important. Getting the size, weight, design, location and operation of the controls, and the general Ergonomic Fit comfortable to you are important. There are some necessary compromises in size and weight if you want every bell & whistle. You might be carrying the camera all day on vacation so don't overbuy on size just to get a feature you may never use. The box of my still camera says it will take video clips also. But when you look at the spec sheet you find out the video is low resolution and limited to only several seconds, even with a relatively large media card. My camera only gives you 96 seconds with a 32Mb memory card at 320X240 resolution. No very practical

Viewing and getting the pictures out of the camera. I consider it important, but not critical, to have a TV out on the camera. The small LCD screen on the back of the camera makes a poor screen you several people to view the pictures. Being able to plug the camera into the TV, especially if the camera has a slide show feature, is very nice.

There are several way you can get the pictures into your computer. The oldest and slowest is with a serial connection. All PCs have a serial port so you "guaranteed" a connection. The preferred way is with USB. It is many times faster, almost every computer now supports USB, and you can "hot-sinc" with USB, you don't have reboot to connect the camera as you probably do with a serial connection. Even if your camera only has a direct serial connection, you can still use USB by purchasing a media card reader. Plug the reader into a USB port, remove the memory card from the camera, place it in the reader and your computer now has an additional drive letter, making it fast and easy to copy your pictures. They even make adapters that look like 3 1/2" floppies that you can put the memory card into.

I will repeat here that you should first decide how you will use the camera before drawing up your spec sheet. It is very easy to be seduced by features that sound great but you may never use. Also, be aware that just like computers, technology advances daily (or is that hourly?) and the prices generally are headed downward. The maker of my brand

camera just last week came out with the new model number that has a 10X Optical zoom for less than I paid with a 3X Optical zoom. Don't overbuy! Start out with a starter camera, see how you like it and keep track of the features you love or wished you had. Then move up to a camera with those features, which will probably cost less at that time than you paid for the starter camera.

My starter camera for general use would be 1MegaPixel, removable media (not floppy), and flash. A 3X zoom, TV out, USB and a LCD and Optical viewfinder are next on the list. Eliminate the zoom and the Olympus Brio 100 or Hp 215 are good choices for \$200-250. If you are really unsure and just want to test the waters, try a JamCam or one of the \$50 to \$100 cameras as a starting point and then give it to the kids as you move up.

It is also important to remember that despite whether the camera uses film or digital media, you are still taking pictures, so a good photography book or magazine, I like PC Photo, will be helpful.

Now that we have the basics, what are the other features you will want to consider? The technical term for most of these are the bells and whistles.

Exposure Control:

This touches on several different features. The first one is White Balance. White balance is equivalent to adding a filter to make the whites look white, not blue or yellow as you get under fluorescent or incandescent lighting, respectively.

Another related feature is exposure compensation. When you take a picture in a high contrast situation, like a person in a dark room with a bright light or window behind them or outside with the sun behind the person, the camera's exposure automatic controls may be fooled resulting in a dark/under-exposed subject with a properly exposed background. When shooting in this type of situation, a look at the picture on your LCD will tell you if it is OK or needs to be deleted and retaken with fill-in flash or an adjustment to the exposure. An Exposure Lock feature is useful here.

Remember, if you are using an flash, an on camera flash has a very limited range, usually 8-10 feet. To increase the range you will probably need a "hot shoe" on the camera to add a second more powerful one or a sinc outlet. (These are found only on high end - expensive Prosumer cameras. If you've never used one with your film camera, you're unlikely to need one on a digital model.) Also, red eye reduction flash or slow sinc features are desirable as you get more experienced in creative photography.

Speed of taking pictures:

Many digital cameras take several seconds to one minute to get ready for the first shot. This seems like an eternity when you are trying to get that quick spontaneous shot. Next be aware that there is usually a delay between pressing the shutter release and actually capturing the picture. Waiting for that perfect moment in the action or expression will result in disappointing missed shots. Anticipation is critical.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 3)

more difficult to create as sophisticated copy protection is being utilized more commonly.

Many use their CD drive, often with rewriteable CD-RW discs, as an additional, but removable adjunct to their hard drive. This allows archival and portable storage of massive amounts of data, at minimal expense. CDs are often ideal for moving large files between computers.

There are several other uses for the CD-RW drives now so common in our machines. Many other CD drive utilities are readily available for download, such as from tcows.exp.net/system/cdrutil95.html or tcows.exp.net/mmedia.html. Use the drives as they can be used, but make absolutely sure that critical data is frequently backed up.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

Quick Tips *author unknown*

Here are some quick tips for everyday tasks:

Windows XP

Windows XP includes a new feature it calls Automatic Updates. This new feature automatically logs on, checks for updates, and begins downloading any available updates. If you're on a dial up connection, you might want more control over when you decide to download upgrades. Right-click My Computer and select Properties. In the System Properties window, click Automatic Update. Select the appropriate option. You can choose to automatically install updates, be alerted when updates are available, or turn off Automatic Update.

Windows 9x/ME/NT/2000/XP

It's inefficient to click a program on the Taskbar to open the window and click the Maximize button in the right-hand corner of the window to view it full screen. It's easier to open and maximize the window in one step. Right-click the program on the Taskbar and select Maximize, and Close. You can also close a program in one step by right-clicking it on the Taskbar and then selecting Close from the menu.

Misc. Tips

Here is how you can use your keyboard to quickly change the

case of text in Microsoft Word. Select the text you want to change and press SHIFT+F3. Each time you press the F3 key, the text case switches between Title Case, UPPERCASE and lower.

You can also insert the current date and time in a Word Document using Keyboard shortcuts:

Position the cursor where you want to insert the date or time.

Do one of the following

To insert the date, press ALT+ SHIFT+D

To insert the time, press ALT+SHIFT+T

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Lastly, the camera may need time to record the picture on the media so rapid fire sequence shots may be difficult. Some new cameras overcome this by having internal memory that captures the pictures quickly and then writes it to the slower removable media .

Power - Batteries:

First - digital cameras eat batteries. Most cameras use standard AA batteries. These are preferable to proprietary ones which may cost more, be harder to find, or not be removable so you have to tie up the camera to recharge them. . When it comes to AA batteries you have a choice of several kinds. Single-use alkaline batteries tend to die quickly, especially if you must use that LCD screen to shoot the picture. However, the upside of them is they can be found anywhere and are a good back-up. Rechargeable batteries can be nickel-cadmium (NiCad) or nickel metal hydride (NiMH). I recommend the NiMH as they last longer without the memory effect of NiCads and despite their higher initial cost, will save you money in the long run. To recharge them, just put them in a charger and plug it in. I recommend two sets if you plan a full day of shooting, like on vacation, as they do take time (hours) to recharge. Some cameras will also work off AC wall outlets which is good for showing the pictures on your TV without depleting the batteries

In-Camera Special Effects:

As competition gets going, many camera companies are starting to add in-camera features. These include Close-up/Macro capabilities, Slide Show display of the pictures on the camera's LCD or a connected TV, Multiple Images at once on the LCD- good for quickly finding a specific picture, and Magnification of the image on the LCD - the small size of a LCD screen makes this valuable to get a better look.

I have even seen in-camera effects like sepia toning and special borders for some cameras. I would not personally use them as I prefer a straight original that I can modify on the computer.

Software:

Almost every camera comes with software. While the TWAIN drivers are necessary to have the camera communicate with the computer, the photo editing software is generally underpowered. You will quickly want to upgrade to a full-featured program like Adobe Photo Elements, MGI Photo Suite, Microsoft Picture It! or Ulead PhotoImpact. These programs are generally easier to use and give you better control than the free software in the box. It is nice to get started with, but don't judge the camera by the software.

Other Features:

Some cameras are adding features that do not make much sense to me. These include MP3 playback, Video and Audio recording. MP3 steals memory so you can't take as many pictures and Video recording is very brief and of poor quality. Audio makes some sense to add short notes on the picture but also occupies memory so it cuts down on the number of pictures.

Education:

I mentioned it before, but it is worth repeating. No camera will make you a great photographer. Get some photography training. Even the major film companies like Kodak are into digital today. They even have the Kodak Digital Learning Center at <http://www.kodak.com/US/en/digital/dlc/index.jhtml>. You can also try www.cnet.com and www.techtv.com for their guides.

My Camera:

OK, I promised to tell you what I purchased. Remember, that was last year, and while I am still very satisfied with the camera, newer models might change my purchase decision. I have an Olympus D-490. It is a 2.1MP camera with both 3X Optical Zoom plus 2X Digital Zoom, an Optical view finder and a LCD, Removable media (Smart Media), Preview/review with Multiple & Magnify as well as a slide show feature, small (pocketable) size, exposure compensation, focus lock, macro (close-up) capability, self timer, tripod mount, uses AA batteries (std alkaline or NiMH rechargeable), and has a TV out. (Current street price about \$400.) This has been superseded with the model D-510 which added a longer digital zoom and USB as well as a burst mode to take 2 frames per second - all for less than I paid. They have also come out with a C-700UZ which added a 10X optical zoom that looks very attractive (around \$500). My son uses an Olympus D-460 which is almost identical to my D-490 but is only a 1.3MP camera and he is very satisfied with it. I purchased mine, in part, because I had used and liked his.

Don't be overly influenced by what I purchased. Go out and try them and see what you like within your budget.



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CUE Events

January 2003

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| | | | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 <i>Genealogy SIG</i> | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 <i>Macintosh SIG</i> |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 <i>Windows SIG</i> | 16 <i>CUE General Meeting</i> | 17 | 18 <i>CUE Class</i> |
| 19 | 20 | 21 <i>Beginner's SIG</i> | 22 | 23 <i>CUE Board Meeting</i> | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

February 2003

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 <i>Genealogy SIG</i> | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 <i>Macintosh SIG</i> |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14  | 15 <i>CUE Class</i> |
| 16 | 17 | 18 <i>Beginner's SIG</i> | 19 <i>Windows SIG</i> | 20 <i>CUE General Meeting</i> | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 <i>CUE Board Meeting</i> | 28 | |

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Items Wanted or for Sale:

Have an item you no longer use, or need,, and wish to find a good home for it? This is the place.

Send a brief description of the item to bookworm@erie.net, along with your contact information, and it will be listed here for you at no charge.

Please note that all transactions are between private individuals, and CUE is not responsible for any issues that may arise. Cue is just providing the ad listing space.

Newsletter Submissions

CUE members are welcome to submit articles, reviews, or any other item related to computers, computing, or CUE activities for inclusion in this newsletter. Please send all submissions to the Editor via email to bookworm@erie.net or via disk at any general CUE meeting.

Plain text format is preferred, although Microsoft Word can also be used to prepare your original item. Please include your name on all submissions.

Deadline for submissions is the day of the general CUE meeting for inclusion in the following month's issue (i.e., the 3rd Thursday in June for the July issue).

Author and submission guidelines may be requested by sending an email to bookworm@erie.net

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To join, fill out the form to the right, and either drop it off at our monthly meeting, or mail to:

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*Next meeting is Thursday, **January 16th**, 2003 at Trinity Lutheran Church. Doors open at 6 pm and the meeting starts at 7 pm.*

Please be sure to note that CUE now has a new meeting location and date. The General CUE meetings are now held on the **THIRD THURSDAY** of each month, and the location is now Trinity Lutheran Church, located on the northeast corner of 38th and State Streets in Erie.

