WINNERS Notepad

Internet Annoyances

By Sherry Zorzi,
Secretary, Cajun Clickers Computer
Club, Baton Rogue, Louisiana, and
Advisor for Region 8.

The Internet is full of creepy-crawly beasties. Spam, popups, hoaxes, cookies, spyware—what are these critters and how do I tame them???

Spam – unsolicited, usually commercial email, also known as UCE. You can't stop it; the best you can do is try to limit it.
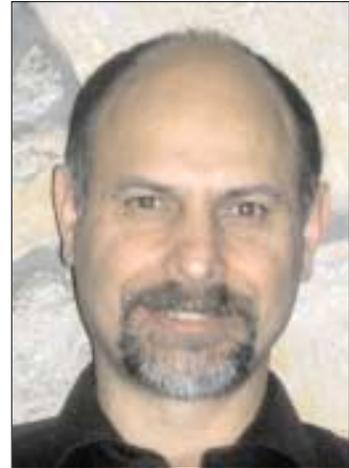
- Don't post your address on pub-licly-accessible websites (newsgroups, chat rooms, direc-tories). Web "crawlers" harvest these addresses for spammers' mailing lists. You can obtain

One of those days

By Terry Currier

Have you ever had one of those days when everything seems to be going wrong? Sure, most of us have. Well, I've been having a bad couple of weeks. Started out with my allergy kicking in and making me sick, so I did not feel like doing anything for three days, putting me behind. I had to rush to get things ready for the WINNERS meeting. I planned on taking my desktop computer to show a couple of programs there—the PowerDirector video editing program and Vox Proxy. I just finished reviewing both of them and wanted to show them there. I was also set up to do presentations at two other computer user groups so I wanted to practice. Turns out I got more than that, taking apart my computer at home, carting it to the car, setting it up at the meeting, only to discover it would not turn on. The power source was dead. I stopped at a computer store on the way home and brought a new 450 watt power supply. Not all bad, since I had been thinking of getting a more powerful unit than the 300 watt originally in it. Not that there ever is a good time for your system to go down; I just did not need it to happen at that particular time.

I had just brought a new video card for the computer also and was anxious to try it. I had an ATI Rage 128 in the computer, which had only 32Mb of memory (so where do they get the 128 from?) I found a PNY (nVidia) video card on sale for $99, and brought it. Don't get me wrong—I have had other glitches where my computer would lock up. Well it was happening more often, and I figured after replacing my power supply I was going to clean out the remains of the ATI from the computer that was probably causing the conflict. I found an ATI executable file that was still being started when Windows came up. I figured I would also go into the registry and where I found ATI I would delete it. I was too aggressive in doing so. I lopped off parts of Windows pointing to the nVidia also.

Now I was in trouble and weirdly so. If I had the nVidia card in, it would come up to a black screen, but yet the monitor light was green so I

Telephone Help Line

PROGRAM/SOFTWARE	NAME	PHONE	TIME
CompuServe	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
CorelDraw 5	George Margolin	949-645-5950	Most times
CorelDraw & Ventura & PhotoPaint	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends
Hardware	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Quicken & Quickbooks	Max Lockie	949-720-8170	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Windows 95,98,Me,Xp	Siles Bazerman	714-897-2868	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Word for Windows	Cathy Grammar-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
WordPerfect Windows	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends

General Meeting June 12
Orange Coast College
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
in Science Room #149

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PURPOSE

WINNERS, a computer association, is a volunteer organization providing a forum for sharing information and experiences related to Windows-based software, encouraging ethical use of computers and software, and offering service to our communities.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is $20.00 for individuals; $5.00 each additional family member.

MEETINGS

WINNERS generally meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Orange Coast College in the Science Building, Room #149, 2701 Fairview, Costa Mesa.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

★ June 12
★ July 10
★ August 14
★ September 11

President's Message

By Steven Dela

I'm using Dragon Naturally Speaking voice transcription software more in my everyday computing activities after recently undergoing shoulder surgery. This is made it very difficult to use a keyboard and mouse. Accuracy has improved to over 99% since first using it. I've entered special words that are unique to my activities during the training sessions. If you haven't used voice-recognition software in the last several years to try and I think you'll be surprised at the convenience and capability now being achieved.

Many of you use generic inkjet refill cartridges to save money over manufactures cartridges. My recent experience has left me disappointed. I purchased a black cartridge for my Epson printer at a recent computer swap meet. The vendor I purchased from was one several members in the group recommended. I was asked if I wanted the least expensive or the quality cartridges. I opted for the quality cartridges thinking that this was the safest route.

Following instructions in the package, the printer recognized the cartridge. Printing was acceptable and I thought everything was fine. The manufactures cartridge usually lasted five months or more with normal use. I noticed some problems only after three weeks. Banding appeared and I started to lose the black color in my documents. Finally, there was no black left. Checking the printer software, it indicated that I had almost two thirds of the up on left in the cartridge. Frustrated, I purchased a new Epson cartridge, installed it and everything was back to normal.

I noticed when I remove it the old generic cartridge it fell very light. On further examination, it appears that the cartridge was simply out of ink. It appears at the cartridge was not filled to the same capacity as a manufactures cartridge. I plan to take the cartridge back to the vendor ask for explanation and replacement. Consumer Reports recently evaluated inkjet cartridges from both printer manufacturers and generic brands. Their conclusion; you get what you pay for. That seems to be the case here.

A high-tech note. I recently signed up for Digital Video Recorder (DVR) unit with Time Warner cable. Some of you have used this technology to record shows with your TV tuner cards in your computers. This one records over 40 hours of video simultaneously recording one channel while viewing another channel. I'm quite impressed with the technology. It adds a whole new dimension to television viewing and not having to miss a program while watching another or while being away from home. It's a little pricey right now, but I'm sure prices will drop in the future.

Be sure to attend the next general meeting on June 12. See you there.

Steve

knew it was getting a signal. I also knew it was at the Windows logon since if I typed in my password I could it continue going on (still seeing nothing.) If I put the ATI card back in, I could see the screen and by checking the registry it showed the nVida to be an unknown device. Reinstalling the nVidia card did not help. I came to the conclusion there was only one way out. Reinstall Window XP.

Not really looking forward to it, but resigned to it, I started to do it. I put the CD in my drive. It started. Windows saw there was already an installation on the drive and asked if I wanted to do a recovery. I pressed enter to do a reinstall. You get a choice of a fresh install, or reinstall over the system you have. I picked reinstall since it reads what you have on the drive and you don't lose anything (I hoped.)

Well it began okay, reading what I had and taking the serial number. Then it got to the part for the nVidia video card and asked for the drivers for it. I browsed to the hard drive and it took it fine. Then things went wrong. It would not go back to the CD drive. It would just ask for the CD to be put back in. I tried many (many) times to get it to go there, but it just would not, for some reason, go back and finish reinstall. I gave up and chose to stop the process. Surprise! It was not going to let me. Rebooting or restarting it now locked in and said the reinstall needed to finish. I looked to see what file it needed when it you clicked on browse. I had another Windows XP CD disc so I put it in my old computer and copied the files needed onto a floppy disk. I later thought of using my USB thumb drive since I could put more files on it. Since I only had 32Mb, I used more than one, putting SYS and INF files on one, and EXE files on another. Slow?

- free, "throwaway" email addresses at sites like Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com) or Hotmail (http://www.hotmail.com) to use in these situations.
- When you register for a legitimate website (Microsoft, Amazon, Delta Airlines, etc.), opt-out of any newsletters or mailings they offer to send you. If opting out is not offered, don't register for the site unless you want advertising email!
- Use "filters" in your email program to automatically route suspected spam to a special folder, which you can check periodically and delete. Or use special (free!) software, like MailWasher (http://www.mailwasher.net) or K9 Spam Killer (http://www.keir.net/k9.html) to automatically check incoming mail and handle suspected spam for you.
- Don't ever follow directions to "unsubscribe" or stop receiving mail, unless you know you are dealing with a reputable source. Replying to the message or clicking a link to supposedly unsubscribe is often just a ruse by the spammer to verify that your email address is valid and that you are naïve enough to open spam. You will get more, not less, spam!
- Use SpamCop (http://www.spamcop.net) to report spam. The service is free. They will automatically report, in your name, the true source of the spam to the appropriate ISPs.
- Send a copy of the spam, with full headers, to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov. They keep a database of fraudulent spammers.
- Support strong legislation at the state and federal level to stop the scourge of spam!!! Write, call or email your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support strong legislation.

Popup – advertising that "pops up" in a small window of its own.

Some websites pop up an unsolicited ad in a window on top of the page you are trying to view. Others hide the popups beneath the site you're visiting, so that you see it when you finally close your main window. Some sites pop up several, or even dozens of popup ads—sometimes "freezing" the computer. The new popup scourge is controlled by one or more programs hiding on your computer, causing popups even when you are not online! They are all bad, bad, bad!

The best way to squash popups is with free software like Popup Stopper (http://www.panicware.com). Works perfectly and the price can't be beat!

Hoax – fictitious email forwarded around the Internet by your well-meaning friends. Flesh-eating bananas, large corporation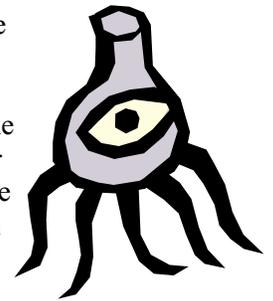s controlled by Satanists, viruses that cause your computer to catch fire—all are fabricated hoaxes. Most of us have at one time been taken in by one of these, forwarding it to everyone in our address book only to be embarrassed to find out it's a fake. Any email, even if it's from your mother, that says "Please forward this to everyone in your address book" is a hoax. Any email that promises you will get something for nothing is a fake.

- Never, ever forward anything to everyone in your address book, no matter how "true" it sounds. Even if it is supposedly from IBM, Microsoft, or the government.
- Type a few keywords from the email into a search engine like Google (http://www.google.com) and follow several of the links that come up. You should quickly discover that the mail is a hoax.

- Before you hit "forward," check out the "story" on one of the websites that specialize in de-bunking urban legends and hoaxes:
Snopes (http://www.snopes.com)
Urban Legends (http://www.urbanlegends.com)
HoaxBusters (http://www.hoaxbusters.com)

Spyware – technology that aids in gathering information about a person or organization without their knowledge. Spyware usually comes "hidden" within software you voluntarily install. Along with what you wanted, you also get a small piece of software than installs itself behind the scene and sends back information on your surfing habits to an advertiser or marketing company.

You can control spyware with some free tools available on the web. The tools will either prevent spyware from getting on your machine, or remove it once it is there.

- Ad-aware (http://www.lavasoftusa.com)
- SpyBot Search and Destroy (http://beam.to/spybotsd)

Cookie – a small text file placed on your computer by a website you visit. Cookies can be innocent, but some operate as spyware. Spyware-controlling software like Ad-aware will control spyware cookies, too. You can also exercise some control over cookies in Internet Explorer by clicking Tools, then Internet Options. Click the "Privacy" tab to allow or disallow various kinds of cookies on your system. Be aware that some features of some sites won't work properly unless you allow cookies.

Virus, worm - a piece of programming code that causes some unexpected and usually undesirable

event, such as spreading itself (in your name!) to everyone in your address book, locking up your computer, or deleting important files. They can be transmitted as attachments to an e-mail, as downloads, or be present on a diskette or CD.

- Install antivirus software and keep it up-to-date. Popular brands include McAfee Virus Scan, Norton Antivirus, and TrendMicro PC-cillin. Free antivirus software, which works well, is available at http://www.grisoft.com. HouseCall, a free online virus scanner, is available from TrendMicro at http://housecall.antivirus.com/housecall/start_corp.asp.

Don't allow "autopreview" features on your email programs.

When an email message is previewed, it is really "opened," which can trigger a virus.

- Don't open emails or attachments from unknown sources. Even when mail is from a trusted source (such as your mother), don't open any attachments unless you are expecting them without checking with the source first to be sure they intended to send the attachment and are sure it's virus-free.

Trojan horse – similar to viruses and worms, Trojan horses are particularly nasty as they can open up ports on your computer, making it possible for an

intruder to control your computer remotely.

Anti-virus software is not great at catching Trojan horses. You should install and periodically run a Trojan scanner, such as the free SwatIt (http://www.swatit.org).

If you use the available tools, your Internet experience will be more pleasant for you, your computer, and for all your email correspondents. Don't forget the most important tool of all— **YOUR BRAIN**! Use it.

———————

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.

Heck, yes. You know how Windows estimates how much time is left for the install? It took about one hour of this process to get down each minute. I got it down to 19 minutes and then had to go somewhere. When I came back home, I worked on it for a couple of more hours—still at 19 minutes left.

I decided I would just leave the computer on and finish in the morning. Boy, I thought of some new words to use in the morning. It had locked up on me, forcing me to start all over again. I patiently went through it all again (I figured there was no other choice). At 16 minutes left, it took off and started doing the actual install. My excitement lasted about 5 minutes. It got stuck looking for another DLL and it would not look elsewhere. I did not want to do a full install and lose everything.

Then I thought of the external USB hard drive I had. If the flash drive worked, then this should also. I copied the Windows installation folder from the CD (i386) to the drive AND the nVidia drivers. I started up the Windows XP install disc just like the other times, but this time I pointed it to the external drive. It saved me. I finished it up and booted into Windows XP. Everything was okay, all the links and shortcuts. For those saying why didn't I think of that first? Hind sight is always perfect. You don't always think of everything right away.

I still am having some problems, though, with my system locking up. Sometimes the screen will just go black. I can see the light on the monitor showing it is still getting a signal, but the screen is black. I figure part of the problem is with all the reviewing I do. I have a lot of extra drivers and programs that can cause

conflict. I have six video editing programs and four DVD viewing programs alone. I figure I will have to format over the drive and just put on the programs I need now. The thing I really need to do is get another computer for doing my reviews so it won't lock up the one I need to keep track of email and other things. That will have to wait until after my reviews are done and I'm done with the presentations, or my editor will kill me. So far, I have presented products I have reviewed to three other computer clubs. Products such as the Altec Lansing speakers, Executive Software Diskeeper, CyperLink PowerDirector, the Kyocera Finecam SL300R, and Planon Scanner. Well, truthfully, just two other groups. As soon I finish this and email it to our editor I will be on my way to present on the third—with my laptop.

AVerMedia TVBox 9

By Terry Currier

The ease of being able to work on the PC and also be able to watch your favorite TV show makes the AVerMedia so handy. You don't have to turn your head or look up to see what is happening. AVerMedia makes some of the best products to make this work. The TVBox9 is an external TV device capable of letting you watch TV on your monitor in full screen, or a small box (picture-in-picture) so you can get that budget report done. There is an interesting picture-in-picture transparency mode so you can watch the show and still be able to see everything on the screen.

It is an external unit; you don't have to open up your computer. In fact, you don't even need to use the computer at all, the monitor just serves as the screen. You hook up the device to the cable or antenna for the TV signal. There are VGA ports for getting it to the monitor, and sound output jacks. It does not have to be just for TV. If you want, at the same time you can also hook it up to a VCR, DVD player, and
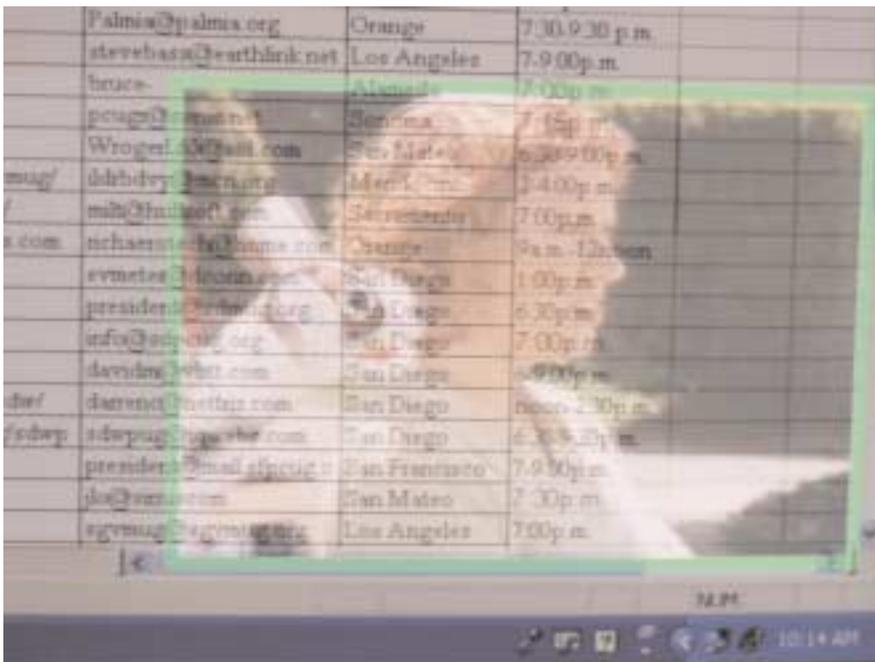
game console. There are RCA jacks, and a S-Video plug in the front for simultaneous use. It will work with CRT and LCD monitors.
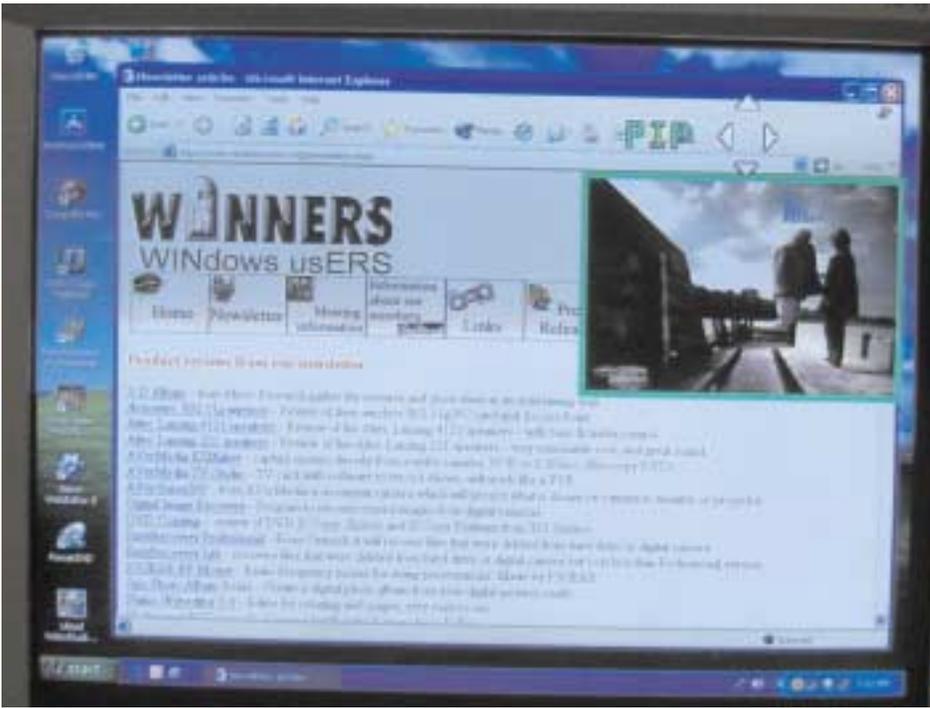
It supports up to 1280x1024 SXGA resolution. To eliminate flicker, it has 3:2 full-down by

transferring 24 frames per second movie signal into 30 frames per second, and convert standard interlaced video into progressive scan video. My favorite feature is the 13-channel preview. It presents the channel you are looking at in the center and shows you what in on the other channels in 12 smaller screens surrounding. It scans the other channels and when you find something else more interesting just select it.

Features include:

- Stereo Sound/SAP (for NTSC System only)
- Closed Caption/Parental Control (For USA Only)
- All Frequency/All Channel Scan with Channel Memorizing Function
- Plug-n-Play, No Software or Drivers Required, Applicable to all O/S
- User Friendly OSD (On Screen Display) to Control Functions

- Fully Functional Infrared Remote Control
- Sleep Timer
- Favorite Channel Programming
- Brightness/Contrast/Tint/Color/Sharpness Adjustment
- Supports NTSC, PAL-N and Pal-M

I've listed below some of their other products for comparison.

	Resolution (maximum)	Channel preview Record	Personal Video Mode	Time Shift	MPEG Compression	Price (from AVerMedia website)
UltraTV PCI 300	1600x1200	16	Yes	No	Software	$70
UltraTV PCI 350	1600x1200	16	Yes	No	Software	$100
UltraTV Media Center PCI 500	1600x1200	16	Yes	Yes	Hardware	$170
UltraTV USB 300	1600x1200	16	Yes	No	Software	$130
TV Stereo	1600x1200	16	Yes	Yes	Software	$33
TV Box 9	1280x1024	13	No	No	N/A	$180
TV Box 5	1024x768	No	No	No	N/A	$130

If your situation is that you can not put a PCI card in your computer or you want a setup where you don't need to use the computer for watching TV, then this is great for you. Otherwise, I would recommend getting one of their units that will enable you to actually record the shows using the PVR software. I reviewed one a couple of years ago and really was impressed with the software, and now they even include DVD authoring software with those units.

Kyocera Finecam SL300R

By Terry Currier

Personally, I really like a camera that I can grip—one that when I put my hand on it, it is comfortable to hold steady. So I do still like my Polaroid digital camera even though it is only 2 megapixel and four years old. Yet, I found at the CES (Consumer Electronic Show) there were times I thought about taking a picture of a product, but did not. I just did not feel like putting my notepad down, taking the camera out of the

case, wait for it to come on, take the picture, and put it back. Then I saw the Kyocera Finecam SL300R. It is compact at 3.9" wide x 2.5" high x .6" thin, and weighs only about 5.1 ounces with battery and memory card. Simply put, it is small and light enough to carry in my shirt pocket, and I don't have to put anything down to pull it out and take the picture.

When I turn it on, it uses what they call RTUNE (Rapid Tuning

Technology) so that the camera is ready to take the picture in less than one second. The maximum resolution it takes is 2048x1536 or 3.17 megapixel, great for the 8x10 shots. The lens/flash part of the camera can swivel forward or backward from the body part up to 120 degrees. You can actually turn and take a self-portrait, or in a crowd hold it over head for shots and still use the LCD display to see what you are shooting. It uses a high speed SD memory card. It comes with a 16Mb SD card, for the review I used a 256Mb SD card.

The camera uses a flat, slim proprietary BP-780S rechargeable 3.7V 780mAh lithium battery pack. Charging it in the camera takes about three hours when fully depleted. I have to say I was really impressed with the battery life. After first charging it up, I went around snapping pictures one right after the other, inside and outside my home. I took 278 pictures, 190 of them with a flash, before it flashed a low battery signal to me. On a second test, I just did the same in my computer room and it took 356 pictures (with flash) before it stopped.

It has a 5.8 - 17.4mm lens with a maximum aperture of F2.8-4.8 and a focal coverage of approximately 38mm to 115mm for 35mm format cameras. On top is the power on/off button and the shutter release. There is no view finder—you use the 1.5 inch TFT LCD display to sight with. The LCD display is

backlit for viewing even in bright sunlight. I could still see it clearly even with the sun directly overhead. Controls across the top are for the display (turns off the backlight on the LCD), scene, and zoom. One cool thing about the LCD display is when you look at it and have to turn the camera for a shoot with extra height, it will turn the image for you so you don't have to turn you head. The zoom is 3x optical, 2x digital zoom (which can be turned off.) The Scene button gives you quick access to the pre-programmed scene modes:
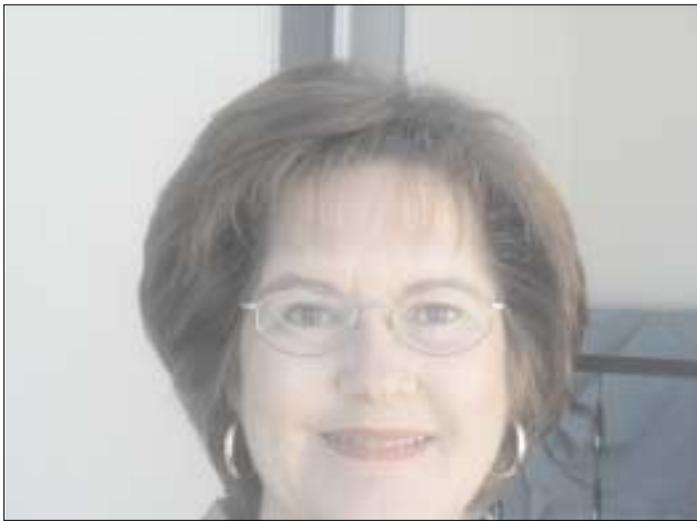
- Standard - normal photography
- Sports - used for when there is a lot of movement such as sporting events
- Portrait - for when taking photographs of people the ISO is set to

100 and white balance is optimized for skin tones

- Night View - shooting scenery at night the focus is set to infinity and no flash
- Night Portrait - taking portrait shots of people at night
- Landscape - subjects of the picture are in the distance, focus is set to infinity and no flash
- Macro - for the really close up pictures you can get up to 7.9 inches

The thing to remember, of course, is to use the scenes. Most of the time you will probably just take the picture. I did experiment and found the portrait mode did take a better picture with the flesh tones coming out truer.

Standard Mode

Portrait Mode

Just below that is a bar with 5 icons for Setup, Play, Record, Burst Record, Movie). The 4-way selector is used to navigate menus and select images for playback. The center button accepts selections. The MENU button calls up the menu screens. You can also quickly change the Flash modes by pressing the 4-way selector. Flash modes are: Auto flash, Red-eye reduction auto flash, Fill flash, Flash off, and Night scene mode. By using the Play

selection, you can see the pictures you took in single, multiple, or have it shown to you in slide-show mode. With the Burst mode, you can take pictures at the rate of 3.5 per second. I had my wife throw a ball up in the air to test it. It is like watching time lapse photography. You can also take movies with the camera. It will take them at 30fps so there are no drops. It will also record sound with the movie. The microphone is on the display side so you have to make sure to point it to get the sound. By using the microphone, you can also attach an audio note to a picture. In the movie playback you can control the volume, play, rewind, pause and fast forward.

Both the burst and movie will keep recording limited only by the size of your disk. With the 256Mb size I was able to record up to 7 minutes and 55 seconds at full 30fps and sound. The recorded file is in AVI format and can be played back easily on the LCD display or a personal computer. On the side are the USB and DC in ports. The battery charger / AC power supply plugs into the DC in port. Kyocera also includes the Adobe Photoshop Album software.

Conclusion

The only real negative thing about the camera is that it has no lens cap. You will have to carry a cloth to clean it since you will invariably put finger marks on it. Because of the size, I found it difficult at first to hold steady, but with a little practice I got the hang of it. The LCD's easy viewing of what to shoot regardless of the angle, or which way the camera is turned, is a plus. It is great that the battery lasts so long. Given that I can take stills, burst mode and movie pictures all with this camera is great. Lastly, if I want, I can control many different aspects such as ISO, exposure, and white balance. I am very pleased with the quality of the pictures, and the value of the camera.

http://www.PriceGabber.com

prices it from $270-$350.

A spare 256 High Speed SD card or battery will average about $80 each

SETUP Menu options:

- AF MODE - Auto focus, Single or Continuous
- AF METHOD - Speed or Frames
- BRIGHT CNTRL - Controls LCD brightness
- BACKLIGHT - Low Power or Bright
- DATE - Set the camera's internal clock/calendar
- INSERT DATE - No date or with date (includes date on image or not)
- FORMAT - Formats the SD or MMC memory card
- POWER SAVE - Turns camera off after selected time
- MODE LOCK - When enabled settings are saved from power Off to On
- BEEP - Enable or disable camera sounds
- SHUTTER VOLUME - Controls the shutter sound

- COLOR SELECT - Select the color desired for the menu bar
- START SCREEN - Select default, blue or off
- REC REVIEW - Select image review time or turn off
- LANGUAGE - Menu language (English, Japanese, German, French, Spanish)
- FILE NO. - Reset file numbers and create new folder or sequentially number
- MODE RESET - Restore default settings of the record mode
- **Play mode MENU options**:
- MULTI (or SINGLE) - Display index page or return to full screen mode
- POST RECORDING - records audio notes for each image up to 30 seconds
- PROTECT - Protect images against accidental erasure
- ERASE - Delete current image
- ALL ERASE - Delete all images.
- RESIZE - Create smaller images
- ROTATE - Rotate images 90° left or right
- AUTO PLAY - Begins the slideshow function.
- PRINT - Set DPOF printing information

Record and Burst Menu options:

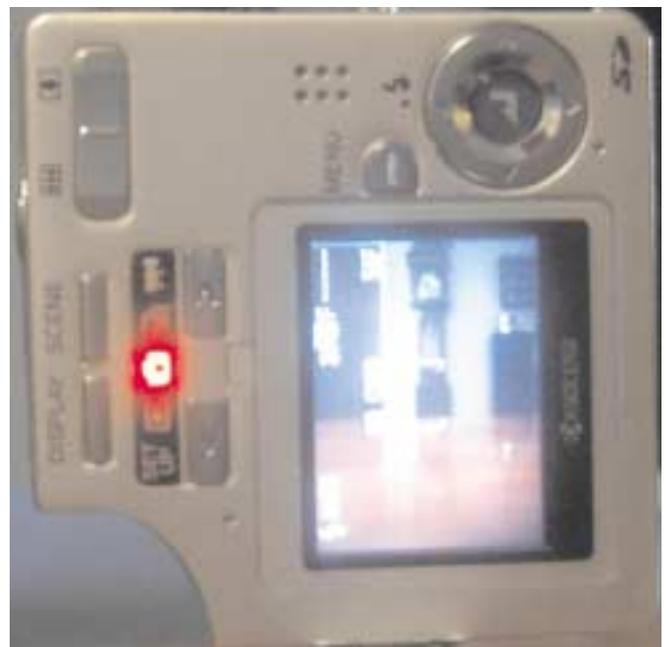- SELF TIMER - 2, or 10 seconds
- PIXELS - Still image size 2048x1536, 1600 x1200, 1280x960, 640x480
- QUALITY - Normal or Fine
- EXPOSURE COMPENSATION - Plus or minus 2.0 EV in 1/3 increments, for adjusting the brightness of your images
- WHITE BALANCE - Depending on the light source used you can specify it for Automatic, Daylight, Incandescent, Cloudy, Fluorescent,
- PRE SET- In here you can control the COLOR (Color, Black and White, Sepia), CHROMA (Color intensity), SHARPNESS, WHITE BALANCE, AE MODE (selecting Exposure setting method F2.8 or

F7.5), FOCUSING (Wide or Spot), LONG EXPOSURE (Slow shutter speed 2, 4, or 8 seconds), ISO, (Auto, 100, 200, 400, 800), METERING (Evaluation {whole screen}, Center, Spot), DIGITAL ZOOM (on, off)

Movie Menu options:

- SELF TIMER - 2, or 10 seconds
- PIXELS - Recording size 640x480, 320x240, 160x120
- FPS - Frames Per Second 15 or 30
- EXPOSURE COMPENSATION - Plus or minus 2.0 EV in 1/3 increments, for adjusting the brightness of your images
- SET DETAILS - Control Sound (on, off), Color Mode (Color, Black and White, Sepia), White Balance Preset, Digital Zoom (on, off)

Planon DocuPen Scanner

By Terry Currier

*T*here are times that you wish you had a scanner but, of course, you didn't. The times you're away from home such as at school, the library or someone's office. Even if you happen to have your notebook with you, and by chance a scanner, where would you plug it in?

It is for these times that Planon developed the DocuPen Scanner. Small, and mobile? It is 8 inches long to fit standard paper and less than an inch wide. It only weighs 2.2 ounces, batteries and carrying case included. It is powered by four 1.55v silver oxide coin cell batteries. Planon includes ScanSoft's PaperPort 8.0 SE with Textbridge OCR software. It's Twain-compliant, it attaches easily to your computer via USB. It will store up to 100 pages at 200 dpi before you have to download it.

Don't think you will be able to go out right away and start scanning everything you need. You can, but I guarantee you the first 20 won't be very good. It takes a bit of practice to get it right. I have done now about 30 scans and I don't get them all perfect. I notice I always get the top third perfect and then my hand will slide or go too slow. That was (and is) something I had to overcome. I thought going slow would make a better scan, but with practice, I found I did better with a quick slide.

To begin the scanning, you push down on the button in the center. You also must hold it down during the scan. You want to hold it upright—not an angle—and slide it down what you want to scan. The sliding activates the green scanning light. You know you are doing it correctly when the green light stays on. If you go too fast or slow, there are some LED lights on the left tip that will blink.

There really was much frustration at first since I did not get the right scan speed. It is not just the speed that can caused trouble. To scan, you press the center button once to scan at 100dpi (Dots Per Inch) or press it twice to scan at 200dpi. There were a few times that I thought I did a good job, and even looking at the scan in PaperPort it did not look bad. Yet, putting it through the Textbridge OCR so I could use it in a document was like throwing it away. I don't want to be unkind to Textbridge, since I know they have a good reputation, but here it just did terrible. I then realized it is not just Textbridge. It is the scan that is hard for it to read.

I then did a scan at 200 DPI which it could read and come much closer to the original. Still, it was not good enough. I could tell it was not good enough since I still had the original in front of me. So I tried something different which admittedly not everyone will be able to do. After downloading it from the pen, I exported it to a file (tif format). I then took it into my Caere OmniPage Pro 10 OCR software. Here is the difference: With Textbridge it just runs it through the OCR and presents it to you with "this is the best I could do." With OnmiPage it reads the scan and presents a window to you asking if you can it read where it is having a problem. That way I could see the scanned document (again at 200 DPI) and was able to figure out what to put in.

Scanning is only black and white for now. I think what is needed is for Planon to put on an on/off switch. Forcing the user to keep the button pressed makes it awkward to hold down and scan evenly. Actually I also think they should make it about one inch wider so that the scanner would be easier to hold steady. Put the scanning light between two sets of rollers to maker sure it is steady and level. It would be a little bigger but still smaller than anything else. It is the difference in the ease of riding a bicycle as opposed to a unicycle.

Who I thought would really love this would be a genealogist wanting to scan in some document he just came across and had to have.

Cost: 199.95. You can get it at CompUSA or on line at
http://www.planon.com

The DocuPen system requirements:

Windows 98/2000/ME/XP
CD ROM
32 MB RAM
Minimum 60 MB Hard Drive space
USB port

June 12 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Orange Coast College
Science Building Room #149

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