



Bits of Blue



Class of 1996

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 9 No.5 May 1996

Meeting

**May 8, 1996
6:00 PM
Hillsborough Community
College, Ybor Campus
Ybor Room**

Personal Paper Management for Home & Office

by
Frank Kinsinger

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Computer News & Comments

by William LaMartin, Editor Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

This is the usual location of the President's Column. However, this month Connie said she really didn't have anything to contribute. I too may not have anything to contribute, but since I have all this empty space to fill I must come up with something.

The first thing that comes to mind is that I now have been doing the newsletter for six months. It's interesting, more work than I thought it would be, and I have learned a little. The first thing I learned is that each issue must consist of a multiple of four pages. That is, you can't have a 10 page newsletter; it must be four pages, eight pages, twelve pages, etc. This is mandated by the size of paper used in the process, 11 x 17 printed on both sides with each piece of paper containing four pages. So to fill up this 12 page issue, I need to write this column.

By the way, I always welcome guest columns, in case some of you have an itch to get into print. It can concern anything computer-related and not too biased. Most of our articles have been software reviews; however, I think the readers would also like to hear a little more about hardware. And Larry Anders has such an article in this issue. Larry, I need not point out, has been very helpful in providing articles for the newsletter, writing about software he has bought with his own money (we don't have that much non-game Vendor donated software available for review) or writing about his most recent shareware discovery. Another topic in need of more coverage is OS/2. I do what I can by searching the Internet for articles that we can

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However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@ix.netcom.com.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT & MINUTES OF MEETING April 10, 1996

Minutes and Comments by Bruce Register, Secretary

President Connie Kincaid called the meeting to order. Connie introduced each of the TPCUG Officers and Appointees. She asked that if anyone with a meeting place suggestion to let her know.

The first 25 minutes of the meeting was dedicated to informal networking, etc. During this time, a popular activity was William LaMartin's "close up huddle around and hands on" demonstration of and about the Internet's World Wide Web. There from 10 to 15 persons gathered close all during that 25 minute planned activity. William answered questions and assisted with problem queries. This activity appeared to be a hit. It was set up across the room away from the networking conversations. Margaret Petro supplied the 17" monitor for this demonstration. The networking was also planned for people to talk to each other about problems, questions, information exchange, etc. This planned activity appeared to be well received also. Some people just cannot get to meetings at 6PM. These two activities served a good purpose while accommodating those late comers who were interested in the planned presentation of Microsoft Office.

Connie reported on the survey Most people seemed to be interested in hardware, people tracking, communications and "something to do with money". Perhaps making money with your computer....

Reminders were given for SIGs Communications, Genealogy and Microsoft Access. Connie asked for requests for SIGs of interest. Mike Hodges reminded that those who do not sign up for SIGs at Reflectone must call Mike before 4 PM of the day to get their names on the security list which is posted at the entrance for use by security personnel. Call Mike at 887-1675 to get on list if you have not already signed up. Each meeting list does not carry over to the next. So, sign up each time.

Discovery Day at Eckerd College is a really exciting for people such as TPCUG members and visitors. It is free! All Day Saturday, April 27. Mike Hodges and Margaret Petro have further information.

Comments were provided regarding different Internet providers. Good suggestions and information came from this discussion.

RAM chip prices have been dropping-one source advertised 4

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MB chips for \$89 or 8 MB chips for \$139. (What a steal, Secy).

TPCUG has adopted charities to help with computerequipment that was donated to TPCUG. The three charities are: Police Athletic League; Veterans Hospital; and Tampa Hillsborough Public Library--One computer has already been donated to the library for genealogists in particular.

Connie presented "Managing your personal affairs with Microsoft Office". Most of the presentation involved the database part of Office, Microsoft Access. There are many features in this application. She explained "combo box" for selecting items from a menu. She explained "auto dialer" feature; she inserted certain parties and organizations for dialing. She explained many features, functions, etc., by walking through. She created "household inventory" as a simple example that most of us want and all of us need. She and others shared stories of losses in which inventories with pertinent information would have been helpful. The "table" and "report" forms, etc. for the program were demonstrated, even with type and term of warranties on each item.

Using "Snap To Guides" makes designing of the form easier. She stated that one may store a photo of the household item right on the information table. One may then have an electronic file. Seattle Filmworks, (see previous review in BITS OF BLUE) will provide you film, prints and 3.5 floppy of you photos. Cost is cheap, less than \$16 for 20 exposures. Eckerd will put you photos on a 3.5 floppy. They advertise it for "screen savers". (Your secretary gets many rolls of film developed at Eckerd for commercial purposes and inquired after the herein reported meeting as to cost. ...was quoted \$30 for 24 exposures....I did not ask if that included film developing and prints)

All created fields are retrievable, changeable, "findable", etc., as long as they are not in the "note section". The note sections provide a place to put all kinds of miscellaneous information about "whatever". Connie demonstrated a search of a number string, e.g., "3213". Every phone number in the file that contained the search number in total or in part was found. The "3213" search produced an auto tag number that contained the string "3213" somewhere in the license number. Every field was searched for that string, except the Note Section" field.

Connie demonstration a creation that she did for the TPCUG presentation. Several questions came from the group as to "how to", "can you", "what if". Connie simply inserted, deleted, changed or whatever to demonstrate answers to all of the questions. She created a table and then imported from EXCEL. One can import from many other applications. She showed "how you can get simple results from a sophisticated template".

The demonstration was well received. Since that meeting, the Secretary has "bumped" into members, at some other location, who expressed delight in Connie's presentation. It must have been effective because Connie's ACCESS SIG was full a week later.

Congratulation to Door Prize winners:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| WordPerfect Infobase | Margaret Petro |
| Mouse Pad | Genda Anderson |
| WordPerfect in Job Search | Bruce Register |
| SuperTax | Gary Peterson |
| GTE T-shirt | Emily Jurado ♦ |

(Comments.....Continued from page 1)

legally reprint but would prefer some home grown articles.

Those of you who come to the meetings probably gather that I do a fair amount of Internet browsing based on my demonstration of how to build a home page and the Internet browsing session we did before the beginning of the last meeting (which we will probably continue as long as there is an interest and Margaret Petro is able to lug that 17" monitor to the meetings). And those who crowded around the monitor at that meeting also noted what a difficult time I had connecting to the Internet that last meeting. My provider was simply overloaded and wouldn't let me own.

Only the day before I had heard some industry expert saying that the Internet would have to crash and burn before it got better. And I have seen more than one article titled something like "Gridlock on the Internet". If you go online at the usual busy time between 4:00 PM and 9:00PM you might agree with these pessimists. I personally have seen more than enough of the slow response of Web sites and retrieval of files. I remember, in particular, trying to download a file from Microsoft's WWW software location. It was supposed to take less than twenty minutes. After almost two hours it was only 90% retrieved when I lost my Internet connection. Then realizing that I could also get the file from the Wang Web site, since they developed the program for Microsoft, I tried there and --surprise--got the file in 20 minutes. Moral of the story: Some Web locations are much more crowded than others. In the past few weeks I have gotten much better service from my

(Comments.....Continued on page 9)

Software Review

WebCompass by Quarterdeck

*Review by William LaMartin,
Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.*

If you use the Internet you need a search engine like Lycos, Yahoo, Webcrawler, Infoseek, etc. And if you use the Internet a lot you need WebCompass, a meta-search engine that allows you to combine all these individual search engines along with any other search engines into one combined search. However, WebCompass is much more than a meta search engine, it also creates an index of the topics on which to search and supplies summaries of the individual articles under each topic whenever possible. Once you have configured the program to use whatever search engines you prefer and selected the topics you desire information on, WebCompass will work in the background finding, cataloguing, and describing the World Wide Web (WWW) HTML pages and Usenet Newsgroups messages which contain information pertaining to your topics.

To use WebCompass you, of course, need an Internet connection and a WWW browser. Quarterdeck supplies their version of Mosaic if you don't already have a browser. They also supply a pre-configured version of their Internet WebServer, a program that coordinates all this background activity between the Internet and your computer. WebCompass will run under Win 3.1, Windows 95, or Windows NT.

My installation under Windows 95 went smoothly from the CD-ROM drive. And since I use Microsoft's Internet Explorer as my WWW browser, I didn't install the Quarterdeck Mosaic component of the setup. To run the program, you connect to the Internet via your Internet service provider (NetCom in my case), start the Quarterdeck Internet Server program, start your WWW browser, then go to the WebCompass home page which has been installed on your hard drive.

What I did first was to do several simple searches to see how WebCompass compared with the individual search engines I was familiar with. Without a doubt if you want to know about Oxford University, e.g., it would be faster to simply use a single search engine, say, Lycos, to do the search; however, it is faster than doing each search engine independently (they don't by any means find the same articles so it is best to use more than one) and in the long run more efficient to let WebCompass do this search using Lycos plus all the other search engines that WebCompass contains. Then once you have your results, which are just links to documents on the WWW or



Usenet Newsgroups messages, you can designate Oxford University as a topic and add whichever of the articles you want to the topic.

You can set up as many different topics as you wish, additionally WebCompass comes with 40,000 or so topics pre-installed with their descriptions and variations on spelling. However, I haven't found this topic database of any use in my work. But it perhaps has a value in providing related topics to the one you are searching. Once you have some topics on which you want information, you start WebCompass' Search Agent, and it will search in the background while you do anything else you want with your computer, including Internet browsing on your own. When the Agent is finished, you will be provided with a list of WWW locations of documents for each topic, and within each topic the documents have been further broken down into categories (not too accurate of an assignment in some cases) and a summary of the content of each document when that can be retrieved in the time allotted (you can configure the Agent as to how much time to spend on each attempt at retrieving information) This allows you to decide which if any of these documents you wish to add to the topic.

If you have a search engine you wish to add to those in use by WebCompass it is an easy process; although I had a little trouble adding some extra search engines for Usenet Newsgroups until I noted that the check box saying "don't link to documents at this site" needed to be deselected when adding this type of search engine but not when adding WWW search engines. The Help let me down here. Help, in fact, is a weak point with this program. The manual provided is quite thin and mostly deals with installation of the program. There is "online help"; however, this is a large HTML file that takes an inordinate time to load. So it is probably best to print out this file to have it readily available. The program is not really that complicated, and after a few false starts I figured out the best sequence of steps to define my topics of interest, search for documents, and then edit this information as to what was worth saving. Again after a false start or two I was able to add new search engines to the collection already in WebCompass, disable some of the search engines WebCompass provided but which I didn't find useful, configure the program as to what search engines I wanted to use, and finally tell the program how long it should try to contact a location before moving on to the next one (anyone who has browsed the WWW much knows that you can't always get a location to answer). Finally you can tell the Search Agent how often you want it to refresh the data in each topic, say, for example, once a week.

(WebCompass.....Continued on page 10)

SOFTWARE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

1. **Outside IN**/for Windows - Instant Access to any file-- View, copy print search, launch & manage files.
2. **Harvard ChartXL** for Windows - Compelling charts from critical data. Software Publishing Co.
3. **On File** -for Windows, Arranges your files into fun to-use "notebooks "
4. **Family Fun Pack** for OS/2 Warp CD
5. **How Would You Survive?** - Grolier - Multimedia Adventure (ages 7-12) - Windows CD
6. **Jump Start Preschool** - Knowledge Adventure - getting a head start on education (ages 2-5) Windows CD
7. **Jump Start Kindergarten** - Knowledge Adventure getting a head start on education. (ages 4-6) Win. CD
8. **Jump Start First Grade** - Knowledge Adventure getting a head start on education. (ages 5-7) Windows CD
9. **Space Adventure**- Knowledge Adventure up to the moment exploration of outer space. (8-adult)
10. **Aviation Adventure** - Knowledge Adventure complete world of Flying (8-adult)
11. **TuneLand** starring Howie Mandel - 7th Level. Interactive Cartoon (ages 3 and up) Windows MPC CD
12. **Managing your Money Plus** - Finance package, check book and more. Windows CD
13. **Managing your Money Windows** - Finance Package
14. **ECHO Lake** - Delrina Capture and share family memories - The Multimedia Family Album
15. **Life Form** - fitnessoft - Personal Health Management - Windows.
16. **Terror T.R.A.X** -Grolier - Full -Screen/Full-Motion Interactive Horror Film (ages 13+) - Windows CD
17. **Science Fiction** - Grolier - Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction - Windows CD.
18. **SFPD Homicide: The Body in the Bay** - Grolier - Murder Mystery Game (ages 13+)- Windows CD
19. **Info Accelerator** - Baseline -Manage contacts, phone, to-do's, calendar and mail merge inside Word, WordPerfect & Ami Pro - Win 3.1 or Win 95

(Call 251-3817 for information on review software)

People with software reviews due--we need them!

May's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| http://funnelweb.utcc.utk.edu/~hoemann/cwarhp.html | American Civil War Home Page |  |
| http://www.moneypage.com/ | The Money Page | |
| http://www.theadvocate.com/ | The Baton Rouge, LA Advocate | |
| http://www.boardwatch.com/ | Board Watch Magazine | |
| http://www.bugnet.com/~bugnet/ | BugNet (software bugs) | |
| http://policy.net/capweb/congress.html | CapWeb - A guide to the U.S. Congress | |
| http://www.cartalk.com/ | Car Talk | |
| http://www.zdnet.com/cshopper/ | Computer Shopper Magazine | |
| http://legal.firn.edu/agweb.html | Florida Attorney General | |
| http://sln.fi.edu/ | Franklin Institute of Science Museum | |
| http://www.polaris.net/%7Elegend/bookmark.htm | Genealogy Bookmard File | |
| http://www.iguide.com/insites/1/2/6/index.htm | iGuide - Magazines on the WWW | |
| http://www.inquiry.com/ | Software Developers Information | |
| http://www.movielink.com/ | Movie Link | |
| http://arts.endow.gov/ | National Endowment for the Arts | |
| http://www.newslink.org/menu.html | NewsLink | |
| http://www.oneworld.org/ | One World Online (British Charity) | |
| http://www.petersons.com/ | Peterson's Education Center | |
| http://www.edoc.com/jrl-bin/wilma/pri | Print Magazines that maintain Web sites | |
| http://www.deltanet.com/reason/ | Reason Magazine | |
| http://www.gateway-va.com/pages/tdmain.htm | Richmond Times-Dispatch | |
| http://www.wp.com/genealogy/ | Virginia Genealogy Home Page | |
| http://www.zdnet.com/zdi/software/index.html | ZD Net Software Library - Top Rated Shareware | |

Software Review

Jump Start First Grade by Knowledge Adventure

*Reviewed by Mary and Katherine Powell
Tampa PC Users Group*

I thought we had seen some wonderful software for kids...until now. This program has held my daughter's attention longer than any other. It is so versatile and creative that it's hard to imagine that she will ever get tired of it. Oh, by the way... it's also educational!

The program comes with a CD ROM and users guide.

System requirements include a 486SX 25mhz PC or higher, double-speed CD ROM, 7.5 MB hard disk space, 4 MB RAM, 640 x 480 x 256 color SVGA graphics, Windows 3.1 or greater, MPC-compatible sound card and, finally, a mouse or other pointing device.

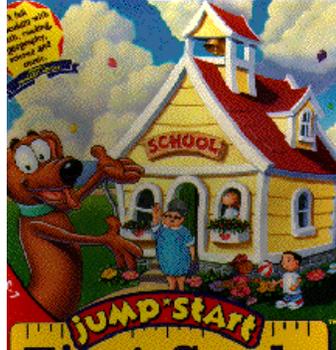
Installation was so easy that Mary, age 6, did it herself. It was your typical windows installation window that prompted you for the directory and program group and then handled the rest.

The program begins in an interactive classroom. Anything the child clicks on reacts by performing or taking them somewhere else. I have seen a few children's packages use this approach and it holds their attention very well. Children naturally want to explore, so a window like this will occupy them for quite some time!

There is a guide, a 'wiener dog', named Frankie. He is with them everywhere they go, describing the game or prompting them for what they need to do next. He acts as more than on-line Help. He actually talks to the child, encourages them, and gives them hints to help decide what they are supposed to do.

Each activity teaches a basic skill, like math or reading. Math games include working a cash register in the lunch room, adding or subtracting marbles on the playground, or following a recipe in the kitchen. There is a good letter recognition game, like in the sandbox where they have to help Frankie find buried letters with the metal detector.

The level of difficulty is guided by the child. There are rooms with progressively harder games and Frankie is always there to assist them. It is designed to help children in kindergarten begin to understand the types of basics they will have in first grade. Now, I know school curriculum is different everywhere, but this software is flexible enough to cover a broad range of abilities. I noticed that there were some games Mary



didn't do well in at first, but she tried them again and again until she mastered the skills. Now, she tries harder games building on what she has learned.

We were so impressed with this program that we plan to get her the "Jump Start Second Grade" when she starts first grade next year. Now, all we have to do is decide which college she will attend.

Knowledge Adventure, Inc.
1311 Grand Central Ave.
Glendale, CA 91201
Retail: \$34.99 ♦

Software Review

Managing Your Money's Personal Attorney

*Review by Robert Davis
Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.*

Managing Your Money's Personal Attorney Version 1.0 (MYMPA) is a Windows program. It creates legal forms you can use and update as often as necessary. MYMPA gives rudimentary legal advice. It also warns you to seek legal counsel when needed. Although MYMPA is a Windows program, the forms print out in regular ASCII text format. Basically, the printing goes fast but there are no great graphics.

This program helps you prepare some basic and necessary forms such as a Living Will, Last Will & Testament, General Power of Attorney, Medical or Special Power of Attorney, and Revocation of Power of Attorney. You can create a Promissory Note, Bill of Sale for Motor Vehicle, or a General Bill of Sale. For business, it will create an Employment Agreement, Independent Contractor Agreement, Offer of Employment Letter, Demand Letter for Money Owed, and a Bad Check Notice. Lastly, you can make a Defective Product Complaint Letter and a Request for Credit Report. These forms with their legal advice can help you use and/or print what you need. The legal advice may also aid you in avoiding basic legal problems.

I Installed this on 3 machines. Two are running with Dashboard for Windows, and one is not. All three are 486 processors running Windows version 3.1. One Dashboard machine went OK, but the other lost the MYMPA icon in the MYM

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group it created. It was a simple fix to just add the item into a group. However, this may be a problem for a novice PC'er. The machine without Dashboard installed without a hitch. It does create a MYM Group if you don't have one, but you can just drag & drop the single icon into another group if you prefer. Then you can just delete the newly created MYM group.

There is a wealth of information in this program. It starts out with a questionnaire that suggests various chapters you should read through in the Advise section. The Advise Section has 12 Chapters on everything from Wills & Trusts to Going to Court, and when you need a Lawyer. And filling out a form is easy since it always tells you what it is looking for in an answer. For example, when filling out the Independent Contractors Agreement, the first Input is the Corporation Name with comments. The comments tell you if it is a fictitious name, enter the real name followed by DBA and the fictitious name. In fact, every input request has a comment that guides you on what to enter.

MYMPA does have some limitations, though. It will not print any blank forms. It does say you can fill out a form, save it, and then edit it with a word processor. This seems a long way to go to get a blank form. Blank forms may be needed if you are not at the computer. I would also like to create different forms to fill out other than what is provided. This may be beyond the scope of the program, though.

MYMPA requires a minimum hardware of a 80386SX or better, a 3.5" Floppy disk, a hard drive with about 2 MB of free space, 4 MB of RAM, and any common printer to print the documents. You must be running Windows 3.1 or higher. The price of MYMPA at CompUSA is \$24.95. The value is there if you have a need for these forms and want to do them on your own. ♦



Software Review

Microsoft BOB: A Triumph and a Failure

by Tim Condon, Tampa PC Users Group

Microsoft's BOB, a suite of programs aimed at "home users," is both a triumph and a failure. To be sure, it evoked almost uniform scorn among established computer users when it came out, and today continues to draw these really irascible comments, out of all proportion to its supposed sins.

First of all, what is the thing. It's a "home productivity" program that Microsoft came out with in early 1995. It consists of eight integrated programs that come in a highly stylized front-end, including colorful "rooms" containing various usable objects that can be moved about. You also get your choice of more than ten little cartoon-like "helpers" which range from a small dog, to an animated earth, to a lightning bug, to an obnoxious rat with a basketball, and others, all ranging from "most helpful" to "least helpful," depending on what level of assistance you might want).



The programs in the BOB suite include a calendar, with a to-do list and reminder provisions; an address book; a letter-writer, which is a simple but colorful word processing program optimized for personal correspondence; a checkbook, with provisions for arranging to pay your bills electronically, a la Checkfree; a "household manager" database for keeping track of personal possessions, insurance policies, important papers, medical records, favorite restaurants, travel plans, etc.; an e-mail communications program; a trivia game, GeoSafari; and a front-end to access other Windows-based programs. It requires Windows 3.1 or higher, at least 32 megs of storage, and at least 8 MB of memory, and doesn't really move very fast even with a Pentium 100, since it's a graphics-heavy program. Suggested retail price is \$55, which means street prices are probably on the order of \$40 or \$45.

BOB is the result of a huge research program Microsoft

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Software Review

Review of Snappy...Video Snapshot

by Larry Anders, Librarian
Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Anyone who has read any of my reviews in the past knows that I am always looking for something that makes computing *FUN*. Well, I've done it again! *Snappy... Video Snapshot*, fits the bill. I had been tempted to purchase *Snappy* for quite some time because of the relatively low price for what it said it did, (\$199) but it just seemed too good to be true. Well, I had an opportunity to purchase it *almost new* at a very attractive price from one of our members, so I did. I should have purchased it long ago and been enjoying it all along.

What is *Snappy*? *Snappy* is a 2½" x 5" video digitizer that plugs into your parallel port and becomes a bridge between you and most of your consumer electronics. *Snappy* grabs from any video source, such as: VCR, camcorder, TV Tuner, cable Box, laserdisc player, satellite tuner, Nintendo, Sega, Atari, PlayStation, 3DO, CDI, Mavica or Xapshot still video camera, security system, video-out from another computer.

No matter what kind of source you feed into *Snappy*, it will squeeze every last bit of resolution out of the original video signal and bring it into your PC as a perfect still. People who are using *Snappy* are either traditional imaging professionals, businesses that want to use video images, and the fastest growing segment of the computer market, home PC users. With *Snappy's* low cost, you now have a way to bring your own faces, photos and families into your PC. And with the low-cost color printers of today, what you do with these photos is only left up to your imagination.

Snappy works with almost any PC program because it saves industry standard image files such as: BMP, PCX, TIFF, and even the compressed JPEG format. *Snappy's* TWAIN interface lets you bring images into most PC graphics programs directly, without saving and reloading. Including: Fauve Matisse (included with *Snappy*), Adobe PhotoShop, Aldus Freehand, Corel Draw, Microsoft Imager, FractalDesign's Painter, Microsoft Publisher, Aldus Pagemaker, Aldus PhotoStyler, Softkey's PhotoFinish, Deneba Canvas, and many more.

What can you use it for you say?: School reports, Real estate databases, Store your photo albums onto your PC, put your face on the Internet, Christmas and birthday cards, instant digital photography with no chemicals, interactive multimedia presentations, business reports, desktop publishing,

sports imaging, insurance verification, graphical employee databases, morph your family, friends and coworkers (Gryphon Morph is also included with *Snappy*), photo retouching, ID cards, instant personalized T-shirts and posters, time-lapse digitizing, home security, interior design/set design/landscape design, newsletters, brochures, catalogs, bulletins, medical visualization (plastic surgery), on-screen instant make-overs, scientific and legal imaging, remote visual monitoring via modem, grab texture maps for 3D programs, label VCR tapes with actual video frames, capture backgrounds for paint software, personalized baseball cards, and many more.

It all sounds complicated, but *Snappy* is incredibly easy to use and setup. All users need to know is that they can grab images from video sources that look as good as photographs. At less than \$200, *Snappy* provides an inexpensive source of digital images and offers an entry into digital photography for many people who would never have tried it before. And it really isn't difficult to be up and running in 10 minutes. Just plug the battery (included) powered hardware module into your parallel port, connect the video cable (included) to your video source, install the Window's based software and you are ready to be pleasantly surprised. System requirements are minimal such as: 386 or better, Windows 3.1 or better, pointing device, minimum VGA 640 x 480 x 16col-

ors (16- or 24-bit display card recommended, but not required), 4-Mbytes of RAM, 4-Mbytes of hard disk space, and an unused parallel port. (My parallel port wasn't unused. I just unplug my printer while I'm using *Snappy*). And of course, because *Snappy* takes pictures from video sources and brings them into your PC you must have some kind of video source available - such as a camcorder, VCR, laserdisc

player, or TV tuner.

Along with the *Snappy* hardware comes Fauve Matisse SE, a graphics program that will allow you to retouch, add titles, change backgrounds, or otherwise improve your captures. Also included is Gryphon Morph 2.5 that will allow you to Morph, Warp and add all kinds of special effects. Everything you need to get started immediately is right in the box. Even the box is kinda neat.

Snappy appears to me to be the lowest cost color video digitizer that offers high quality video stills while being the easiest hardware add-on for a PC that I have ever seen. This one is a keeper!

Play Incorporated, 2890 Kilgore Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6133. Phone 916-851-800, FAX 916-851-0801, <http://www.play.com>. Retail Cost \$199 ♦



(BOB.....Continued from page 7)

mounted into computer-human interfacing. It is intended as a "home productivity" application, and is targeted at the 70 percent or so homes that still didn't contain computers as of early last year (that percentage is doubtless dropping), a huge untapped market. In BOB, Microsoft tries to both serve and entice that market. Looked at that way, the program has somewhat noble intentions: It is intended to make computer use "fun" and "easy" for all those people out there who haven't joined the revolution yet.

On the other hand, BOB immediately earned the scorn and enmity of many established computer users. Many, such as PC Magazine columnist Robin Raskin, thought BOB "too cute" in its cartoonish rooms and animated helpers. Others, such as computer columnist John Dvorak, thought BOB was "the most unique user interface ever introduced to the computing public," but found the interface to be "uninteresting and beside the point"...yet fascinating and useful to his 9-year-old son. Dvorak predicted BOB would be a hit with kids, but "not destined to become a commercial success."

And then there were those many who just plain didn't like BOB, period. Locally, in the Feb. 1996 issue of Computer Connections, one columnist wrote: "Dog product of the year, Microsoft Bob, is approaching his one-year birthday. Fortunately, sales have been poor. Excluding OEM sales, estimates of units sold range less than 300,000...Look for a new version in the fourth quarter of this year with anticipated new junk including telephony features and less cartoon-like personal guides as well as integration of modules from other Microsoft packages. Enough is enough."

Actually, my 10-year-old daughter found it pretty interesting, and my 84-year-old mother is regularly fiddling with it on the Pentium 100 machine I got for her, slowly exploring the program, and liking it. There is definitely a market out there for BOB, albeit perhaps not a giant one. But few of us in the TBCUG would find it compelling. ♦



Two members excited by our monthly meeting

(Comments.....Continued from page 3)

Internet provider, so they have either added capacity or lost customers. And, I think, in general, the suppliers of information will upgrade service to meet demand--if there is a profit in it for them.

Don't let the above comments keep you from trying the WWW if you already haven't. For it is a wonderful resource. For the \$20 per month that most providers charge now for unlimited access you get a window on the world from your computer screen. In addition to corresponding with people all over the world with e-mail, I have access to newspapers, magazines and virtual art galleries far removed from Tampa, Florida. Being a rancher, among other things, when I wanted to find in depth information about the recently hot topic of "Mad Cow Disease" in England, I went to the source: English newspapers. And with the help of the Internet search tool WebCompass, described elsewhere in the newsletter, I located a virtual clearing house of information on this bovine disease--in the most unexpected of places--Japan. Want to find out about your ancestors? Just use one of the search engines to locate a site listing both the word genealogy and your family name. With a lot of luck you will make a useful connection. I did.

Then there are those strange requests you get from friends. One of our members studying to be a nurse called me looking for a cow's heart. I kid you not. The one she was using for dissection had deteriorated so much that it wasn't useable. In fact I actually had access to such an item since a cow had just died on the ranch, and all I would have had to do was go to the ranch and remove the desired item for said cow. But that was a little more than I was up to. So what to do? Why, of course, go on the Internet and search for "cow" and "heart". However, I am sad to say, the world wide intellectual community let me down. I could only find a sequence of photos of the dissection of a pig's heart. But they should look the same, shouldn't they?

The only way to learn about the Internet is to sign on and begin looking. Start with some of the sites that I have been putting in the newsletter for the past six months. Probably some of those sites no longer exist, since like ordinary mailing address, they are only good as long as the people you want to contact still live there.

I am amazed by the growth in home pages on the WWW since I started looking about two years ago. I have seen estimates of 13 million web sites with one million new ones each month. Looks like there are a lot of sites I will never visit.

Is there anything happening in computer news not concerned with the Internet? Well, Compaq is now the leading PC vendor, followed by Packard Bell, then either Apple or Hewlett Packard depending on who does the reporting. Next are IBM, then Gateway. Both HP and Gateway showed very strong

(Comments.....Continued on page 10)

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG Meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month (May 16) at 6:00 PM at the Reflectone Building. Directions: Proceed west on Waters from N. Dale Mabry across the railroad tracks (which is about 1 and 1/2 miles), take second left on Savarese (United Technologies bldg. is just beyond it). Proceed on Savarese until you reach the Reflectone bldg. Take the North door. If you need to ask directions, there is a security guard at the location. PLEASE SIGN IN WITH A SIG LEADER
For more information call Connie Kincaid - 661-8185 - Leave a Message.

Communications SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month (May 2) at 6 PM at the Reflectone Building. You must sign up to get on list and to get by security. See Microsoft Access SIG for directions to Reflectone. *Contact Tom Cone at 949-9698 or Charles Howe: at 968-1207 or HOWE@INTNET NET*

Genealogy SIG

This SIG normally meets the third Wednesday of the month. (May 15) at 7:00 PM at a member's home.
Contact SIG Leader Jenny Lind Olin. at 960-5723 for directions and RSVP.

(WebCompass.....Continued from page 4)

You can try out a stripped down version of this program by downloading the Personal Edition of WebCompass from the Quartedeck Web site at no charge. If I am not mistaken, this version only allows you to use the multiple search engines in real time--not in the background as the Search Agent does in the full fledged program, where it additionally organizes the data found in each topic and summarizes it. In other words, in searching for information on Oxford University, this program would save you from having to select each search engine, Lycos, WebCrawler, Yahoo, etc. individually and then do the Oxford University query for that individual search engine. But you don't get the ability to automatically in the background build up a file of information on Oxford University.

While testing the program I had it go out and search on seven topics: my hometown, a disease a friend has, the university my son will attend (not Oxford), "Mad Cow Disease", a college in England which solicits American students to study overseas but doesn't seem to have much of a track record (not Oxford), and two different family surnames I do genealogical research on. Now each time I connect to the Internet, start up WebCompass and activate the Search Agent feature it will in the background begin to search for information on these topics, adding new documents it comes across and if an appropriate amount of time has elapsed updating the existing documents. What more could you ask for: You have your own low-paid, never complaining research assistant. All you have to do is check on him from time to time and delete any documents he has found which are of no interest to you based on the summaries he has provide for you.

The program sells for \$89.99. ◆

(Comments.....Continued from page 9)

growth in the first quarter. Note, though, sales volume certainly doesn't equal profit.

CompUSA, which operates 98 superstores had earnings up 45%. I can personally understand this since six months ago at Comp USA I bought some toner for one of my printers for \$95; a couple of weeks ago at the same store I paid \$115 for the same toner. Chip makers, however, are not doing so well since bloated inventories of PC's are forcing PC manufactures to cut back on chip purchases.

Prodigy is cutting its work force by 20%. Prodigy's situation relative to AOL reminds me of Word Perfect's plight compared to Microsoft's Word for Windows. The operative word is Windows. Prodigy was first on the scene, but stuck with their cumbersome DOS style interface with adds taking up the bottom third of the screen. Even running under Windows, Prodigy looked like a DOS program with large text and very little content on each screen the viewer was presented. It is obvious why America on Line swept past them so rapidly. Same thing for Word Perfect. They were first, but waited too long in moving to Windows, and when they did their first attempt was hamstrung by kludging their DOS program into a Windows one instead of being able to start fresh with a Windows program. However, the Internet and all its rapid change threatens AOL and even has Microsoft scrambling to adapt.

◆

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

IBM
BCD (Brainchild Computer Distributions, Inc.)
Reflectone

And these national software vendors for their demonstrations and contributions of evaluation software to our group

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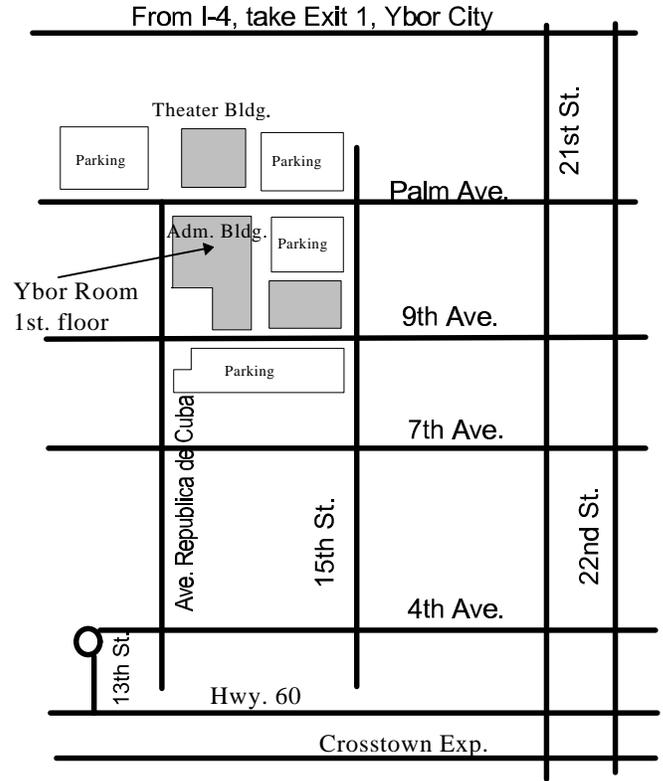
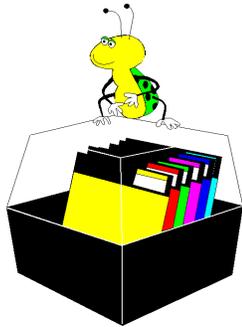
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MEMBERS HELP-LINE

The following phone list is provided for our Tampa PC Users Group members in an effort to establish local support for those frustrating times which we have all encountered while using our PC's. Please note that these are members that have volunteered to help you; treat them in a courteous manner. Be sure to ask if it is convenient for them to help you now, or if you should call another time. It would also be helpful to have your documentation and have it handy when you call. (Don't expect help if your software is an illegal copy or you do not have documentation!) TPCUG is not responsible for the information or advice provided by volunteers. Volunteers may or may not be experts in the subject matter. You are on your own with any advice received. Be aware also that some of these volunteers may be consultants in their area of expertise. If you are interested in volunteering to answer members questions, either leave a message on the BBS or fill in the forms provided for this purpose at the meetings.

| Name: | Phone No: | Day: | Time: | For help on: |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Ed Buzza | 685-5898 | Mon-Sun | 10am-9pm | WordPerfect 5.1 and 6 for DOS |
| Jim Clark | 986-3888 | Mon-Sun | 10am-9pm | Express Publisher for Windows, Word for Windows |
| Charles Howe | 968-1207 | Mon-Fri. | 9am-5pm | Modems, BBS & Internet |
| Tom Cone | 949-3716 | Mon-Sun. | 7pm-9pm | Alpha 4 & Compuserve |
| Larry Anders | 989-9119 | Mon-Sun. | 6pm-9pm | Lotus 123 for Winmdows |
| Connie Kincaid | 661-8185 | Eve.+ Weekends | Leave message | MS Professional Office Suite |
| Merle Nicholson | 879-3602 | Mon-Fri. | 6:00pm-10:00pm | Memory Management, DOS, Windows Norton Desktop Visual Basic 3 |
| John Meroth | 831-7878 | Mon-Sun | Anytime except 6-8pm | OS/2, Database (general) Clarion, DTP (limited) |



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