

Bits & Bytes

A Publication of the Kern PC Users Group



**Knoppix meeting for August 14 at
7:pm
Come and sample a bit of Linux**



Board Members

President:

Rhonda Pierce 661-363-0771
Pierce27@earthlink.net

Past President:

Bill Peacock 661-328-0180
bpeacock@pacbell.net

Vice President:

Rick Daney
rdaney@bak.rr.com

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Tony Rizos 661-872-5622
trizos@ncinternet.net

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William Lowell 661-664-1244
wlowell@bc.cc.ca.us

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Steve Garcia
sgarcia@bak.rr.com

Director:

Caroline Corser 661-871-9201
Cmcorser@pacbell.net

Director:

Stuart Ree 661-589-6172
rsrcomp@pacbell.net

Director:

Dr. Leonard Liss 661-663-8834
lissmd@earthlink.net

Newsletter Editor:

David Chalmers
dcchal@pacbell.net

Education/SIG Coord

Rick Daney

Kipug Webmaster

Sarah Perelli-Minetti
sarahpm@sbcglobal.net

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Camera-ready copy should be submitted to Bits & Bytes, c/o Dave Chalmers, P.O. Box 2780, Bakersfield, CA 93303

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The Prez Says:

I hope everyone is handling this terrible heat wave we are having! I'll be happy to get rid of the 100+ degree weather. This month of August, we will have Steve Garcia speak on KNOPPIX a stand alone operating system. So stay cool and I'll see you at the meeting August 14th, 2003. Rhonda [:-)

Is bigger better?

Dave Chalmers

I've been watching printer technology change from year to year very carefully. I invested a number of years ago in the "new" HP Paintjet. I was told that the technology would probably die out as laser printers evolved. Still I enjoyed the bright colors that came from it. I couldn't output photo quality out of it though. Epson came out with their new photo printer a few years later. If you could tune the colors properly you could get pretty good photos out of it. A few years later HP came out with their Photosmart series and things got a lot better. Now I could get photos without a lot of tuning. One limitation of all of these printers was that they could only use standard (8.5x11) paper. There were some wider printers, but they didn't seem as advanced as the smaller carriage printers. The really big printers were only available to professional printing shops.

Things have changed. Both Epson and Canon have come out with printers able to make 11x14 prints and larger.

contd. pg. 10

SPAM Filters That Work

Everyone hates SPAM, also known as UCE (Unsolicited Commercial Email.) What was a problem six months ago has surged to an almost overwhelming tide.

I have Roadrunner service, and for most of 2002 I received possibly one SPAM message per month. In just a few months, that number has climbed dramatically.

About 20% of my mail is SPAM now, and if that seems like a low percentage, keep in mind that I receive 20 to 50 legitimate messages a day. In less than a month I have received over 100 messages I classify as SPAM.

But you know something? I don't see them unless I go looking. This is one of the miracles of something known as "Bayesian Filter".

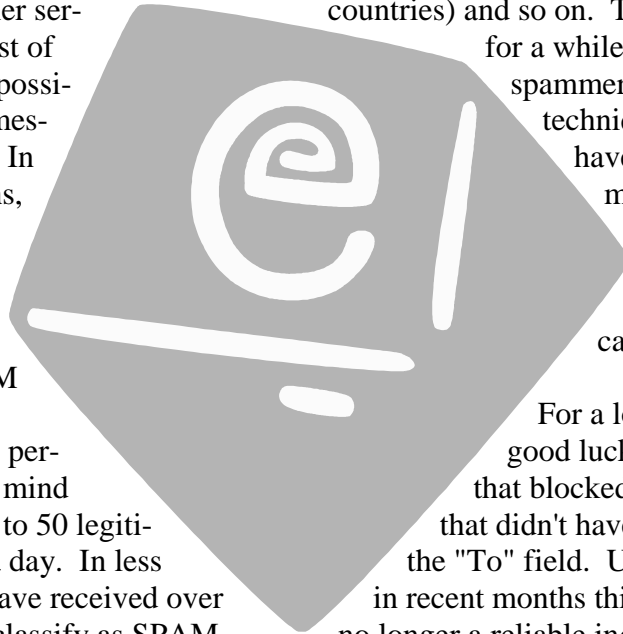
There are a lot of "anti-spam" software techniques, most of which are

fairly high maintenance. If you want to expend a lot of effort, the standard filters included in most email programs will allow you to decide what characterizes messages you don't want to see and let you write filters to block them. Messages with certain words in them, mail from certain people (or countries) and so on. This will work

for a while, until the spammers change their techniques, then you have to look at more spam and decide what new words to filter on. This can wear you out.

For a long time I had good luck with a filter that blocked every message that didn't have my address in the "To" field. Unfortunately, in recent months this seems to be no longer a reliable indication.

But now I've found a technique that promises to be very effective. It is described in some detail by Paul Graham at www.paulgraham.com/spam.html ("A Plan for Spam"). If you want to know what Bayesian SPAM filtering is all about, go ahead



and read it, just skip the technical parts if you're not interested in them.

What it comes down to is that humans are very good at recognizing SPAM, even if it's not so easy for us to pick out **why** we know it's SPAM. That makes it hard for us to write a filter to block a particular type of SPAM. Bayesian filters are statistical, not rule based, so it's not necessary that you analyze the message to figure out what's "spammy" about it. You just mark it as SPAM and the filter figures out why.

Since Paul wrote that article, there have been a number of software programs that have implemented Bayesian SPAM filtering, all based on his article. One of these that is dead easy to use is the email module of the open source *Mozilla* web browser. Even if you don't want to use Mozilla as a browser (and you should try it, it is probably the best web browser currently available) you can still use Mozilla as your email program. Just click on the envelope icon at the bottom of the browser window and the email program will come up. Mozilla is available for Windows, Macintosh and Linux (as well as numerous other platforms – go to www.mozilla.org).

Once you set Mozilla as your mail program, you go to the "Tool" menu and select "Junk Mail Controls". Enable junk mail controls, and now you simply look at each message and decide for yourself if you think it's SPAM. Mark it as "Junk" with an icon on the tool bar. After you've marked about 20 messages as junk, the program will take over and start marking messages for you – what it thinks is junk based on what you have told it.

It will get a lot of these wrong. Some "good" messages will be marked as junk, some junk messages will not be marked. Correct these – if the program gets a message wrong, click on the junk icon and it will switch the other way. As you keep correcting it, its decisions will get better and better. In a week or two it will miss very seldom. I had a junk message come in today that was mismarked. That was the first one in two weeks that was wrong.

After you're sure that the program is doing a good job of detecting SPAM, you can go back to the Tools->Junk Mail Control menu and set it to move all the junk messages to a junk folder.

I recommend that you do NOT automatically delete these, or you may find that the Valentine message your spouse sent you from a kiosk in a greeting card store gets tossed along with the spam (true story, or so I'm told.) Periodically you need to look in the junk folder to see if there are any good messages that got accidentally misclassified.

This type of filter is very personal. It marks messages based on what **you** think is junk, and the type of mail **you** receive. If you mark all your brother in law's messages as junk, those will start to get filtered out.

OK, does this mean you need to use Mozilla for your mail if you want to use Bayesian filters?

No, it doesn't. There may be other email programs that do the same thing, although I'm not aware of any for Windows. (Mozilla works fine in Windows, by the way.) However, there are some programs, such as POPFile (popfile.sourceforge.net/) that will do the filtering for you outside your email program and with POPFile you can use pretty much any email program you like, including Eudora or even Outlook. These involve

a little more setup work than using an integrated program like Mozilla, but it does just as good a job once you get it going. The time may well come when all email programs include a Bayesian filter feature (maybe even soon) but that time is not now.

One of the real strengths of this type of filtering is that it's adaptable. Spammers are constantly changing their messages to bypass rule-based filters, but as the messages change, all you have to do is mark the ones that get through and you've caught up to them.

Steve Garcia

Some advice on eBay selling from Sarah

Are you confident that the stamp you are listing is authentic? Are you aware that it is against eBay policy to sell fraudulent items?

eBay reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to remove any stamp or stamp related item listed on its site if eBay believes that the listing of the item is inconsistent with the selling guidelines set out by the American Philatelic Society, or inconsistent with eBay's goals of promoting the hobby and maintaining a safe trading environment.

eBay strongly recommends that all stamp sellers include in their listings all relevant information known about the stamp, including a clear scanned image of the actual stamp and ALL information concerning any alterations that the seller believes may have been made to the stamp.

This message came up as I was

ready to relist a first day cover I am trying to sell on EBay for a good friend of mine. What is behind this message?

I will try to explain. There was a very interesting article entitled "Joining Hands with EBay" which I found particularly interesting as an EBay stamp and first day cover seller and buyer in the American Philatelic Society's monthly magazine recently.

As with other hobbies the use of the Internet has had a great impact on the hobby. The little stamp shops are disappearing while new websites offering stamps and other philatelic materials seem to appear to every day on the web. Roger's Philatelic Links lists just short of 3,000 stamp-related links! If I cannot personally look at that item how do I know it is authentic?

Of course, people are using EBay as a means to buy and sell stamps, as well. However, a lot of faith is involved in shopping on the web. One must ask themselves is that stamp the real thing? Is it a forgery? Has it been altered? How about someone who

inherits a collection and has no idea as to what it contains, its worth, etc. Where do they go for guidance?

A couple of months ago the president of the A.P.S., Peter McCann, got an e-mail from a senior executive at EBay asking him to telephone him back. It turned out the senior management at EBay were concerned about ongoing problems with stamp sales on EBay which were beyond their control. Prospective stamp buyers were e-mailing EBay questions regarding specific stamps and first day covers listed for sale. It turned out EBay wanted the help of the largest stamp collecting organization in the country.

At the present time there is really no formal area where generalized questions for new stamp collectors or potential sellers can go on EBay to gain information about listing stamps for sale except for two places on EBay, a stamps discussion area which I visit every so often. There is also a stamp chat area. However, most of the same questions come up and over again. How do I find out the value of the stamp? Where do I buy stamp catalogues? Another

member will remind others about the list of stamp forgeries from a host of countries, questions about scanning a stamp, etc.

In exchange for promoting the A.P.S. on EBay the A.P.S. in the future could open a "philatelic office" where to which EBay could forward some questions for philatelic input.

Hopefully, this partnership will benefit both EBay and the A.P.S.

Sarah

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Elton Kelly, Webmaster

If you want proof that you don't have to be a computer techie to make a living as a web master, read on. Elton Kelly's background was in business. He had spent 40 years in banking, finance, and real estate development when, after a merger, his bank paid him to retire. He did have experience as a computer user, though. He was one of only a few bank employees who had a PC on his desk back as early as 1985.

Elton was also proficient in Lotus 1, 2, and 3 and taught it at Bakersfield College in 1990 and '91. His approach was to use the analogy of driving a car, looking through the screen, and seeing the language from the user's perspective. Then, after he retired, Elton watched his son create a website for their family. That got him interested in exploring the Internet, and his reaction was, "That's magic!" He wanted to learn to use the "magic" of the Internet, and he became interested in putting something on the Internet that everyone can use.

Elton's first major site was created for

the Kern County Fair. He had been doing some auditing work for the Chamber of Commerce, and when they were looking for someone to do the Fair's website, Elton got the job. That job launched his new career, which he's been building for the past five years.

Coming from the business world, Elton designs sites that focus on a client's products and purposes. He keeps them simple, based on the client's logo and makes it a point never to use gimmicks that would draw attention away from the client's purpose. He also insists on sites that load in less than ten seconds at 28.8. His new domain name reflects that -- www.10max.com, although many still find him through his old name, www.anetek.com.

Elton is always experimenting with new ways to attract people to his clients' sites. Using digital photography, he and his wife, Anne, started taking pictures of fair attendees and putting their photos up on the web page the very next day. The number of visits to the site increased immediately, as people wanted to see themselves on the screen. He's also begun to work with studio photography to display prod-

ucts, using Henley's studio for the actual photo shoots.

All of Elton's production work is done on a Compac 750, and he uses a Sony notebook for presentations. Ease of production is the key to Elton's choice of software. He uses Front Page for all of his website design, and he has his clients sell products through Pay Pal. The bottom line is that Elton Kelly's clients are happy with him because he's consistent in his work, and his websites work for them. I guess the proof is in the number of functioning sites he has working right now. I counted 27 on his website. He may not be a techie, but he sure is an astute business man with great ability to make the "magic" work.

cont. from pg .3

These printers were priced in the range to make it practical for hobbyists to buy.

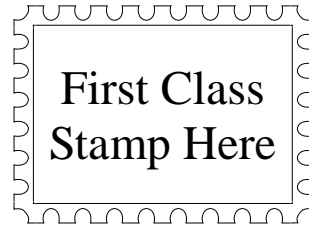
I recently purchased the Epson 2200 printer. This printer had a long series of largely positive reviews. It is huge for an inkjet printer. It will take paper up to 13 inches wide. After setting it up, I tried a print. Wow! The first print was great, and better yet it had the same appearance as the picture on my screen.

Normally I have to tinker with the printer driver settings, in order to get a good quality print. Epson has developed some new technology in their ink formulation. Instead of an organic dye it has actual ink pigment. They have been working on this technology for a number of years now. Some of the early printers based on this technology have muted colors. They didn't make prints with the pop of dye-based printers. This problem has been solved by my observation.

The printer itself has seven ink cartridges, one for each color, including two shades of black. The multicolor cartridges usually ran out of one color and you had to replace the whole thing. I replace the colors I use now. It has three interfaces, parallel, firewire and usb2. Some people have hooked this printer up to two computers at one time without problems. The printer comes with a paper cutter that allows it to accommodate paper sold by the roll.

The main downside of the printer is the price (\$699). I do feel that if you like photo quality prints, it is worth the money. A similar printer from Canon is a six ink unit and uses dye-based inks. The Canon 9100 printer has a street price of \$500.

Is bigger better? Yup! Finally.



P.O. Box 2780
Bakersfield, CA

We are on the web at
WWW.KIPUG.ORG

Your Address Here

Sarah Perelli-Minetti Webmaster

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month
at the Kern Superintendent of Schools Building.
17th and L streets Downtown
Meeting Time is 7 pm