

Apple Bytes

The Newsletter of the **Lynchburg Apple Core**

Volume 2005.2 ----- Lynchburg, VA ----- February 10, 2004

February Meeting

Thursday February 17 - 7:00 PM - Lynchburg College

General meeting at Lynchburg College, Thursday, February 17, 7:00 PM.

The February general meeting at **Lynchburg College, room 17 Hopwood Hall** will begin with general discussion and Q&A session at 7:00 p.m. followed by the feature presentation by Tom Johnson on how to import video into your computer. **Note that this meeting is in Hopwood Hall where we have held most of our meetings at Lynchburg College.**

Westminster-Canterbury and Amherst meetings will not be held in February.

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Getting Video into your Macintosh

The program topic for the General Meeting in February will be getting video into your computer. Ronnie Driskill gave us an excellent presentation at the August Apple Core meeting on making custom video movies using iMovie and importing the video into your Mac from a digital video recorder. At the February meeting Tom Johnson will demonstrate how to get video from other sources into your computer; sources like video cassette recorders, TV, DVD's, etc. and how to burn DVD's with the imported video. We will discuss video digitizers, analog video, and DVD recorders and burners. Remember, 7:00 PM will be for general discussion, Q&A's, and "networking." The presentation & discussion will start at 7:30 PM.

To import video into your computer, you need to digitize it. Video from your VHS videocassette recorder, TV's video output, etc. is in analog form. To work with it using iMovie and to record it to DVD's, etc. requires you to digitize the video signal. If your video source is already digitized, just import it into your Firwire port. Otherwise, it has to be converted to digital.

As Ronnie showed us last August, if you have a digital video camera you just connect the camera to your MacIntosh using Firewire and the digital video goes right into iMovie where you can edit it. Some video cameras allow you to use the camera to import video from something else. For instance, you can connect a videocassette recorder to the camera and then connect the camera to the computer. The digital camera takes the analog video signal and digitizes it "on the fly."

Say you want to copy some videos (home movies) from your VHS collection to DVD. You are also interested in doing some editing in iMovie. In doing research on the Web, Tom found

that the Canopus ADVC 100 analog-to-digital video converter is considered one of the very best for the money. Several video forums recommended this converter over all others. He bought one from bhphotovideo.com for about \$249. If you have a desktop computer you can get it as a card (no enclosure) and save \$50 or more.

Tom was surprised at how small the converter is. "It really goes great with a laptop. I followed the simple directions in the manual, fed the video and audio output from a videocassette recorder into the ADVC 100, connected it to my Firewire port in my iBook, ran the video tape with iMovie running, and presto - the video was captured in iMovie. Great. iMovie allows you to do really neat editing, special effects, etc. very easily. Stuff like removing the commercials, titleing chapters, adding music."

Now he had several video clips digitized in iMovie and wanted to burn them on a DVD. Using Roxio Toast, he started recording the video to DVD using his LaCie DVD burner. Roxio gave him the message and a status bar indicating it was encoding the video for DVD. After some 18 hours later it was still encoding and he stopped it, finding out that it had encoded only about 18 minutes of video. At this rate, a 1-hour video would take over two days to encode using his 3-year old 600 MHz G3 iBook. Of course, the encoding uses up all your CPU capacity and the computer cannot be used for anything else during the encoding. So, he experimented with encoding to a lower video quality level (which was much faster), and found this really meant "poor" quality video.

If you have a 2.5 GHz Power Mac G5, you will not have this problem at all. "I don't know how fast the encoding would be, but I bet you could complete a 1 hour DVD in several hours at the most, maybe only one hour," he speculated. By the way, you may be interested to know that the DVD's you burn with your computer cannot hold as much video as the commercial movies you rent or buy. You only get an hour or two at the most unless you are willing to compress the video and accept poor quality.

His next step was to buy a DVD recorder. He got a Panasonic model. This is a DVD version of the old videocassette recorder. Plop in a DVD-R and record from 1 hour (high quality) to 2 hours (good quality) to 6 hours of video directly onto a blank DVD. This recorder has the DVD encoder software on a chip that encodes in real time. That is, there is no delay between the video and the encoding. Versions are available that have both VCR and DVD capability, so you can copy a DVD from a videocassette in the same machine.

Now Tom can record his satellite TV programs directly onto DVD as he watches the show, or set it up to record at a specific time. Back to the iBook - he can output the video from his iBook (after editing if he wants to) into the DVD recorder and "burn" the DVD in real time. If he wants to duplicate the completed DVD, make more copies (to share family videos, etc), it is faster to put the recorded DVD in his iBook and copy to a blank DVD-R disc using his LaCie burner. Using the LaCie burner and Roxio Toast, it takes about 15 minutes or so.

DVD recorders are now under \$200 and dropping. If he did not want to use iMovie, he just connects his VCR to the DVD recorder, copies the videocassette directly to DVD and makes subsequent copies quickly using his computer. If he wants to edit using iMovie, he uses the Canopus ADVC 100 to get the video into the computer, edits, and burns a DVD using the Panasonic DVD recorder.

By the way, you can capture TV into your computer using the Canopus converter if your TV has a video output. Don't try to put a TV signal into the computer. A TV signal (from your antenna or cable) is a radio signal, not a video signal. But, if your TV (or satellite receiver) has a video output, then the video can be fed into the Canopus and converted into digital and watched and captured on your computer.

March Meetings:

Westminster-Canterbury - Tuesday March 15, 7:15 PM

Amherst, 123 N. Main St. - Wednesday, March 16, 7:15 PM

Lynchburg College, Room 17, Hopwood Hall - Thursday March 17, - 7:00 PM

Digitizing Vinyl and Tapes

The program topic for the General Meeting in March will be getting audio into your computer from your vinyl records and audio tapes. The Griffin iMic, an audio analog to digital converter will be shown as well as the software to capture and edit the audio before it is burned to CD or just stored in your iTunes library. Remember, 7:00 PM will be the general discussion and the club business and program will start at 7:30 PM.

A Sad Note:

Our group lost another longtime member and friend on January 19 when Edwin St. Vincent died at Westminster Canterbury.

Dr. St. Vincent was educated in the public schools of Pittsburgh and went on to earn Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Pittsburgh. After serving in World War II as a Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army 8th Air Force in England and North Africa, he continued his education in England at Cambridge University, earning additional Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Upon returning to the United States, he attended Columbia University in New York, completing his Doctorate. His specialized field of study was 18th century English Literature.

He began his teaching career at Adelphi University on Long Island, New York and subsequently, he moved to Lynchburg in 1955 where he taught courses in Writing and English Literature in the English Department at Randolph-Macon Woman's College until his retirement in 1986.

After retirement. Edwin turned to art, taking classes in painting at R-MWC and the Lynchburg Art Club, of which he was a member. Together with other retirees from the state of Virginia, his paintings were included in an exhibition held at the state Capitol in Richmond. He also exhibited at the Lynchburg Art Club and at Westminster-Canterbury.

Since moving to Westminster-Canterbury, he had been involved in many activities, holding memberships on many committees and served as Chair of the Residents' Council in 2004.

He was one of the members instrumental in asking LAC to establish a meeting at Westminster Canterbury.

He is survived by his wife, Elaine Dahl St. Vincent of Lynchburg.

2005 Meeting Dates and Topics - Mark Your Calendar

Here is a listing of future meeting dates and the topics planned. Note that the General Meetings are always on the Third Thursday of every month. The Westminster-Canterbury and Amherst Meetings are on the Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively, before the General Meeting. Topics are subject to change depending upon timely developments. Check your latest AppleBytes.

March 17	Digitizing Vinyl and Tapes	August 18	Protecting your computer privacy
April 21	Managing photos with iPhoto	September 15	Build a Web Site
May 19	Spreadsheets (Excel, Appleworks)	October 20	Advanced Word Processing
June 16	First Hands-on OS X 10.4 "Tiger"	November 17	Annual Dinner
July 21	iMovie & iDVD	December 15	Managing e-Mail

Mac OS X Class at CVCC March 18, 19, and 25, 26

The Lynchburg Apple Core is again sponsoring a 1-credit college class on Mac OS X, covering both Version 10.2 Jaguar and Version 10.3 Panther. This class is intended both for Mac users who are new to OS X and those who have been using it for some time but who want to gain a better understanding and become more proficient in the use of their Macs. The class will be relatively small and will be geared for a lot of personal attention, questions and answers. It will include coverage of iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie, iDVD, GarageBand, Safari, Mail, and AppleWorks. Gordon Mattox is the instructor.

This is a weekend class, March 18, 19, and 25, 26. Two Friday nights from 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM, and the two Saturdays from 8:00 AM to Noon, to minimize disruption of your normal schedules.

It is listed as Business 195-01MD, "Macintosh Operations - Mac OS X". Sign up through the CVCC Admissions Office on campus, or if you have been registered before, call 832-7633. Or call Gordon at 401-0163 for info.

Note that the class size is limited and five people are already signed up. Don't wait!

A Miniature Photo Studio for Less than \$10.....*Tom Johnson*

Do you take photos of small items? We're talking about photos for selling stuff on eBay, documenting collections, things like that. Here is a technique to use that works well.

When you've surfed eBay you may have noticed some things that people do with their photos that are very bad. Especially if you want someone to see the item well. They place the item on a wild printed bedspread, sofa, blanket, curtain, towel, etc. The wild, crazy print makes it very difficult to see the item. Sometimes they put the item on a beautiful colored background. The color competes with the item and even gives the item a false color.

Take a simple chair (or sofa, or just the base of a wall) to place your subjects upon. Buy a length of light gray cloth such as you can find on sale at Jo-Ann's Fabric store in Fort Hill. A couple of yards of stuff on sale costs less than \$10. Be sure to buy a neutral color for most things, like gray or tan. Stay away from very dark or very light colors. Avoid all prints or patterns. You may just love that chair's upholstery, but if it is patterned it will detract from the subject. Avoid non-neutral colors unless you know what you are doing.

Get up a piece of cardboard that is hinged down the center. This is not necessary, you can just tape two pieces along the edge to hinge it. It gives a smooth back and base when the cloth is draped over it.

Placing the cardboard on a chair with the cloth covering it gives a mini seamless studio. Pros have colored paper that drops down the wall and flows out along the floor like a curtain. Their models stand on this paper and it gives a smooth, uncluttered background. This is what we have created here, in a chair or on a sofa.

Place the item to be photographed on the cloth, position it like you want it, and shoot the picture. Using a digital camera you have an instant feedback. If it is not what you want, shoot again, and again, and again. Move the object, shoot down, shoot from the front, rotate it, shoot the bottom.

Get up close, fill the frame with the object. But, don't get closer than you camera can handle. Fuzzy, out of focus images are very distracting and really useless. Make sure you are getting sharp, detailed images.

Take different exposures. Most cameras let you easily set for +.5, + 1, +1.5 or -.5, -1, -1.5 exposure settings, varying the brightness and darkness in increments. Shoot at each one unless you see that setting is too dark or too light. Sometimes when you look at the pictures on your computer screen you wish one was lighter or darker. Easier to shoot different exposures than to wish you had later.

Look for reflections, shadows (especially flash shadows) to make sure they do not detract from the image. I'm reminded of an e-mail photo that was circulated of a silverware piece put on eBay. Apparently the guy taking the photo did not notice that his reflection was shown in the piece like a wide angle mirror. In this case it did detract a lot - he was nude when he took the photo!

If your camera has a zoom lens, set it to zoom in. The lowest zoom setting will show distortion if you get in close on smaller objects. Remember what a wide-angle lens does to a

face up close? You get a huge nose and chin with the rest of the head shrinking away. Zoom to the 3X limit for the camera and step back to fit the subject in the frame. The perspective of the object is much better than with the lens set at a wide angle setting.

Don't rush out into the sunlight to photograph your vase! Sometimes this is good, but usually the sunlight exposure is very bright, washing out any shadows and details. This depends on the object of course, but beware that bright sun light also means pitch dark shadows too.

Remember:

- Use a neutral background
 - Get up close
 - Get good sharp images
 - Vary the angles, positions
 - Vary the exposure
 - Watch out for reflections and shadows
 - Take a lot of pictures but only use the best ones.
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Apple Bytes, the monthly newsletter of the Lynchburg Apple Core is delivered via e-mail and is available as a downloadable PDF at <http://www.lynchburgapplecore.org>. Please send your comments and questions to Program Chairman & Newsletter Editor Tom Johnson at graystranger@earthlink.net, or President Gordon Mattox at gcmattox@mac.com.