The PULP

UGC™

Apple
User Group

H.U.G.E.

http://www.huge.org

Member of
Association of Personal Computer User Groups
APCUG

April 2005

Volume 24 Issue 2

Spring is here!!

April 19th General Meeting Topics:
Audio and Video Editing
MacOS X 10.4 "Tiger" coming April 29th

East Hartford Public Library
Main St. & Central Ave., East Hartford, CT.

General chit-chat   6PM–7:15PM
Main Meeting starts at;   7:15PM

Huge This Month:

April 19 :   **General Meeting** See above 7:00 P.M.

April 30:   Deadline for **ALL** Articles. Please upload articles to editors@huge.org, or give them to the Pulp Editor   **Midnight**

May 17:   **Chit Chat SIG Meeting** Starts at 6:00 P.M.

May 17:   **General Meeting** Starts at 7:15 P.M.

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MEETING LOCATIONS

East Hartford Public Library
Main & Central Avenue
in the Lion's Community Room
Downstairs

Wethersfield Public Library
500 Silas Deane Hwy.,
Wethersfield, CT

From the Editor
by Pat Teevan

Unfortunately, by the time you read this we will probably have already had this month's general meeting. I apologize for the Pulp being late, but circumstances did not allow me to finish sooner. I will try to be more diligent in the future.

My goal is to get the Pulp out the week before the meeting so that it can be your reminder that the meeting is coming up. I'm now setting a reminder to myself to get started on the layout work two-and-a-half weeks before next month's meeting.

This month's issue features a software review by our own Ted Bade [Thanks Ted] and, once again, two quizzes from Stu Rabinowitz, along with an article from the AARP forwarded by APCUG. If there are specific topics that you'd like to see covered in the Pulp, send your suggestions to Editors@huge.org and will see what we can do.

Of course, we're always looking for original material from within our own ranks, so I encourage you to write down that story of how you saved the day by building a computer from spare parts or salvaged your kid's homework from the flaky computer and send it to us to share with the rest of the group.

I'm also looking for short pieces to fill in the whitespace after an article. I think a good way handle this is to publish "quick tips" – little one-paragraph descriptions of shortcuts you've found that make your life easier or tricks that make a program or operating system work better or faster. You'll see an example of one on page 3 below Stu's quiz. If you've got any, send 'em in. I'll put them in a folder and use them as space permits. If you send something that you found in a magazine or on a website, please credit them though and provide a link, if possible. I'll handle checking if we can reproduce tips from those sources.

I don't have a "From the Leader" message this month. Please check behind the sofa and see if George is there. We'd hate to lose him.

Finally, a correction: Last month's Pulp listed the volume as number 26 which would be more years than the club has been around. The correct volume for this year is 24 and this issue reflects that. For future reference the correct formula is:

 Last year's volume + one = this year's volume.

Happy Computing!

A Little Computer Quiz

by Stuart Rabinowitz

January Answers

Editor's Note: *Because there were no newsletters in January and February, we're a little behind on Stu's column. We'll be publishing two quizzes each month until we catch up.*

March Quiz:

The trivia and minutiae of the computer related world. The answers will appear next month or you can submit an answer sheet at the General Meeting. Good Luck.

1 The programming language 'C' was used to write the original UNIX operating system, but it evolved from two (20) earlier languages. What were they?

2 Konrad Zuse was a construction engineer for the Henschel Aircraft Company in Berlin, Germany, and has been called the father of the modern computer. Why?

3 What is "Plankalkül"?

4 What is the 'Williams Tube'?

5 At the first West Coast Computer Faire, someone, as a joke, introduced the Zaltair computer. Who was it?

6 What computer had the code name 'Sarah' during its development?

Quick Tip: Tired of scrolling through long list of files or endless menus? Most modern operating systems and applications will let you type a letter and 'jump' to that part of the list. Try it next tyime you're trying to select Times from the font menu or scrolling down to zebra in your file list. Experiment - it works in more places than you think.

1 You may have heard of the site WWW.CRAIGSLIST.ORG which allows free post and read classified ads sorted by city. There are currently 57 around the world. What is Craig's last name?
A Craig Newmark started CRAIGSLIST 9 years ago.

2 The Mac G3 Blue & White was the last model to have the Apple Desktop Bus (ADB) included. What was the first model to have an ADB?
A The Apple II GS

3 What was the first product that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak (cofounders of Apple) made and sold together?
A They made blue boxes for making free telephone calls before they made the Apple I.

4 Who did Apple pay for the right to use the name 'MacIntosh'?
A McIntosh Laboratory who makes audio equipment

5 There is a patent for an Apple tree variety called, "Burchinal Red Delicious". In fact, it is a patented variety. Who (Hint: it is a computer industry related company) holds the patent?
A It is patent # PP14,757 and it is owned by Microsoft. The inventor is Robert Burchinal
.
6 In the Wintel side of the PC world there is an annoying (that's at least one categorization) software problem called 'spyware'. One of the products used to thwart it is a program called 'Spybot Search & Destroy', who wrote (& supports) it?
A Patrick Kolla

Booxter

a review by Ted Bade

Quick Summary:

Company: Deep Prose Software, LLC
email: info@deepprose.com
Web Site: http://www.deepprose.com/
Software URL: http://www.deepprose.com/
Cost: $15 (shareware)
Download site: http://www.deepprose.com/

System requirements: MacOS X 10.2. Internet connection for ISBN information search. Hand scanner or iSight for scanning bar codes. You also need a collection of books.

Experience needed: minimal.

Rating: 4.5

Strengths: Easy to use, terrific interface, easily organize and search through your book collection.

Weaknesses: Using a hand scanner is clumsy (not a problem with Booxter however).

Booxter is one of those nifty little programs that anyone who is interested in organizing a collection of books should look at. All you need to do is enter or scan the ISBNs of the books in your collection and Booxter utilizes a variety of internet information sources to gather information about the book. This is loads easier then entering information manually. Since the book you entered is in your personal library, Booxter also allows you to enter information specific to your collection, like where the book is located and who you have loaned it out to! This is a terrific application and is quite easy to use.

Booxter lets you organize your book collection using an interface (and the ease of use) like that of iTunes. You can import and enter data into a number of fields, just like the tag fields of an MP3 audio file. These fields include a wide variety of information about a book. While you might not be interested in all of them, any person organizing a book collection will be interested in some. Take a look at the screen shot to see what is included.

Entering all or even part of this information for a number of books would truly be a daunting task. This is where Booxter really helps out. After you enter the book's ISBN, you can tell Booxter to search a variety of Internet sites to download the information. These sites include Amazon (in a variety of languages and locations), the US library of Congress, The British Library, and even the National Library of Poland.

Booxter then culls the information from these sites, and inserts it into a record page for that book. You even get an image of the front cover! Once you get the general information about the book into the database, it is time to personalize the entry. The Booxter database provides many fields in this regard as well.
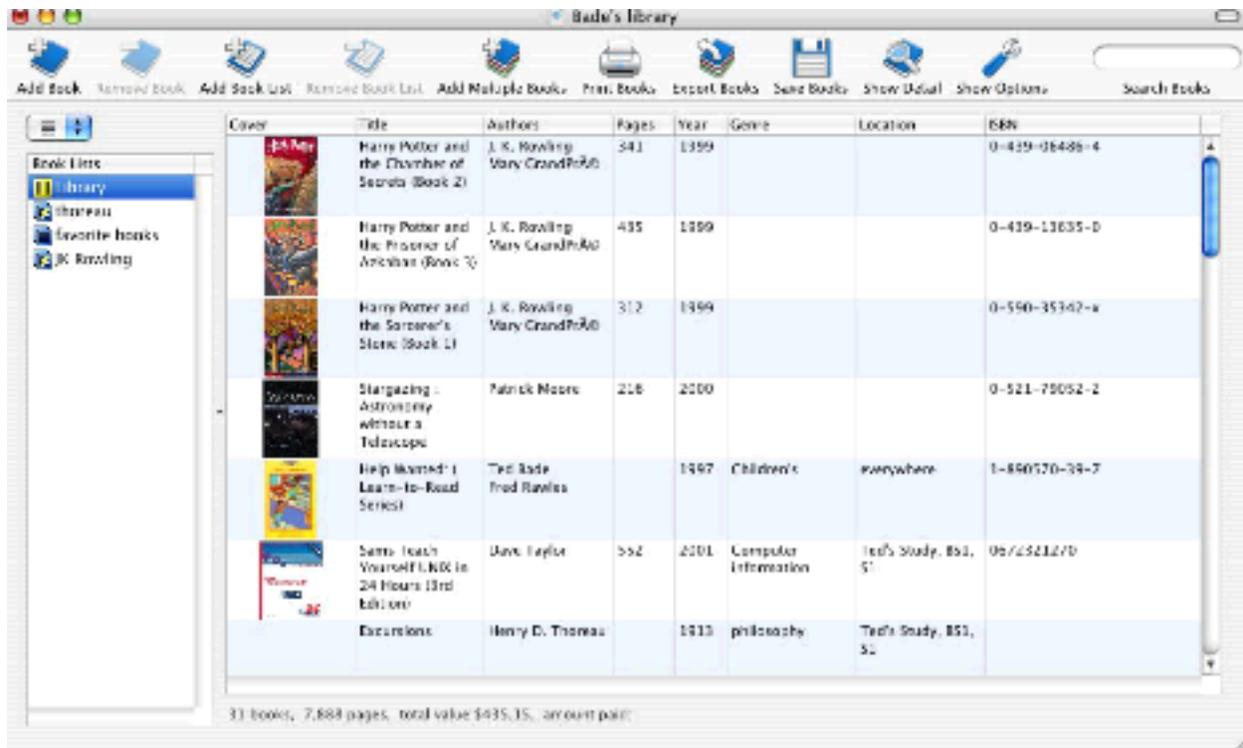
Booxter   continued from Page **4**...

In the custom area of the entry field you can enter important information such as where it is located (I have 7 book cases, my wife has 4, and we share 3. Then there are the ones we keep in the bathroom for easy reference!), how much you paid for it, your personal rating (using a five star rating similar to iTunes), how you obtained it, how much you paid, any notes about the book important to you, and more.

For the truly lazy (or perhaps, the keyboard impaired), Booxter will also take input from a hand scanner. That is to say you can scan in the ISBN, saving you the step of entering this "lengthy" string of numbers. There are many different hand scanner out there ranging from very cheap to very expensive. A friend who first told me about Booxter owns one of those called the CueCat. (one modified so that it doesn't transmit data to "home base" as was originally intended!!). This hand scanner was a "freebie" for a short while.

One thing that attracted me to Booxter was that it works with Apple's iSight, which works pretty well. The biggest problem I had working with the iSight was getting it to focus where it needed to. I would scan an ISBN, put the iSight down , process the book and do the next one. When I put the iSight down, it would often change its focus from close up to farther away. Which meant I had to fiddle with moving it about or use the manual focus controls Booxter offers to get it back in line. On a few occasions, I felt it might have been easier to just type in the ISBN. ;-).

I did find that scanning a group of books then getting the information was a better process for this. By choosing Booxter's: "add multiple books" you can either scan or type a group of ISBNs. when you are done, click to enter the entire list into your library. This made it even easier to use my PowerBook to enter books. I would go to a bookshelf, enter a number of ISBNs, then connect to the Internet and get the information.

above: Booxter's Library view

Booxter

Booxter

Once you have created a database, Booxter provides features to access the information. Booxter has an interesting way of organizing the data. The main window can either be in list or browse view. In list view, you select, using pulldown menus, a criteria for the list. For instance, you would like to see what books are in a particular bookshelf, you then select location (assuming you were this specific when you entered the information), then select the location of interest and you get a list of items there. This same feature works with any other database field. The browse view just lists the books in your database. Clicking on on opens a drawer with more information about hat book.
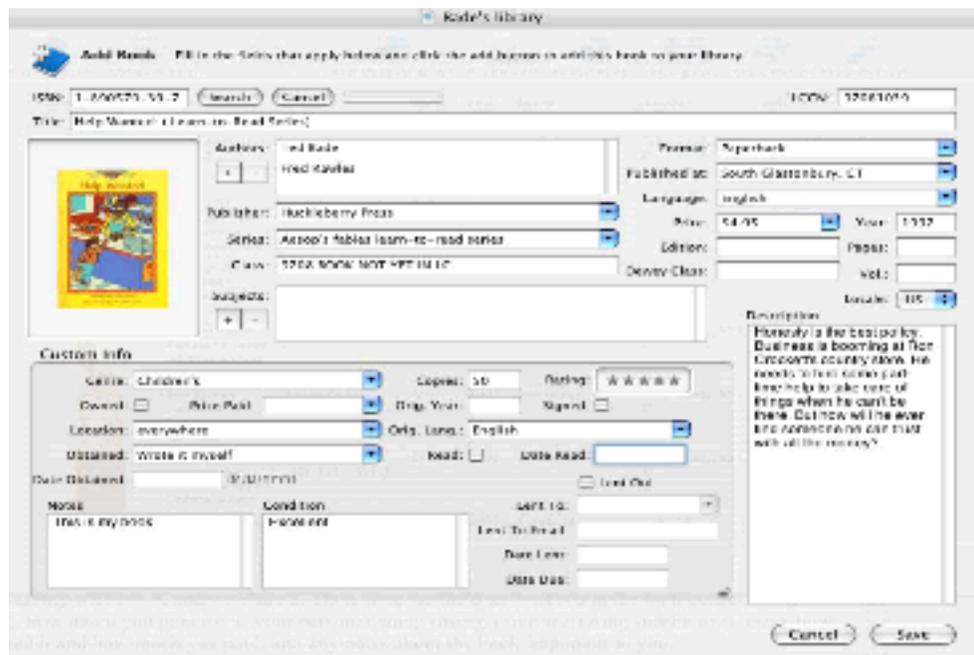
Another way of organizing your book collection is very similar to a playlist in iTunes. You can create a "booklist". Just like in iTunes there are two types of lists, the regular one you plop whatever you like into and the "smart" type that culls from your library books that meet a specific criteria. So you can create a list of your favorite books, or a smart list with your favorite author, genre, or even those you have loaned out. Of course, like in iTunes, you can use the little search bubble and enter any piece of text and Booxter will sort the list based on the word you enter.

Booxter lets you take your database with you. You can export it as a file which can then be used in another database program, (I don't know why you would want to do this, since Booxter has plenty

of power on its own). If you have a 3G iPod, you can export the list to the iPod and reference the list on the road. With your database on the iPod, you can check to see if your copy of "Gadding with Ghouls" is the same edition as that of your friends, or what is available in the bookstore. A wise shopper might keep a list of books they want or need to buy as gifts on their iPod, for quick reference.

Finally, you can play a game with Booxter. It is a simple timed multiple choice game. It asks a series of questions about the items in your book collection and you select from the answers provided. It is an easy game if you have read the books in your collection!

Booxter is a terrific program. It can be used to easily create a database of information about the books in your book collection then access this information with the ease of use and functionality of iTunes. It uses the Internet to gather information about your books through the use of an ISBN which you can either type or scan in. If you are interested in organizing your book collection, Booxter is a must have application! This has got to be the most valuable $15 shareware program I have tried! Go get a copy!

Another Computer Quiz

by Stuart Rabinowitz

April Quiz:

The trivia and minutiae of the computer related world. The answers will appear next month or you can submit an answer sheet at the General Meeting. Good Luck.

1 In late February, 2005 Jef Raskin a leader in the personal computer field, passed away. What is he recognized for?

2 In March, 2005 a computer user group celebrated its 50th anniversary. What is the name of that group? (BTW it is not HUGE)

3 Between July and November 1946, John Tukey coins the term that has become central to computing. What is that term?

4 In April 1947 the Electronic Control Company (Eckert and Mauchly) develop the tentative instruction code C -1 for what they call a Statistical EDVAC. This is the earliest published document on the programming of an electronic digital computer intended for commercial use. The EDVAC did get built, but was sold under a different name. What was the name of that computer?

5 In 1949 the first popular book on electronic digital computers, Giant Brains or Machines That Think was published. This book also contains a discussion about a machine called "Simon," that has been called the first personal computer. Who wrote the book?

6 Who published the first book about computer generated music in 1959?

February Answers

1 In 1974 Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was in its infancy, with programs able to recognize only a few specialized fonts. Who developed the first OCR program to recognize any style of print?
A Ray Kurzweil. The company & software were later sold to Xerox and sold as 'TextBridge'.

2 In 1975 the first Charge Coupled Device (CCD) flatbed scanner was developed. Who developed it?
A Ray Kurzweil

3 Also, in 1975 the first text-to-speech program was developed, by whom?
A Ray Kurzweil

4 In January,1976 Walter Cronkite used a machine to read aloud his signature sign-off "And that's the way it was, January 13, 1976." What machine read the sign-off?
A The Kurzweil Reading Machine (KRM) which put together these three new technologies omni-font OCR, CCD (Charge Coupled Device) flatbed scanners, and text-to-speech synthesis to create the first print-to-speech reading machine for the blind. The Kurzweil Reading Machine (KRM) was able to read ordinary books, magazines, and other printed documents out loud so that a blind person could read anything they wanted.

5 IBM shipped the first copies of Fortran to customers in 1957. Who was the principal person behind the development of Fortran?
A John Backus says that drudgery, rather than necessity, is what inspired him to propose developing the first automatic programming language, Fortran, or formula translation.

6 Who was responsible for the whole input-output system in Fortran?
A Roy Nutt, head of the data center at United Aircraft, and later founder of Computer Sciences Corp.

Configuring a Basic User's PC

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor & Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

Don't be alarmed by the high-falutin word "configuring". It just means deciding what components -- otherwise called "parts" -- will perform various PC functions. It's like old-days car buying: reviewing a dealer checklist to pick dozens of individual features, from radio to power steering to disc brakes and more.

The good news is that almost any current PC with a printer and Internet connectivity will handle mainstream requirements. That means that a generic Windows PC is usually adequate -- but you should upgrade if you'll do anything challenging or exotic.

Just as when buying a car, the first step in buying a computer is deciding what you'll do with it: e-mail, Web searching/viewing, word processing? Financial work with Quicken? Digital photography? Simple games? Ultra-demanding tasks like high-end games and digital video editing?

Just as when making any major purchase, a small investment in learning pays off for years. Before buying a PC, learn the basics: -- take a class, buy a book, attend local computer user group meetings, consult Web sites, read technology magazines at the library.

As you look at applications' system requirements (processor speed, RAM size, hard drive storage capacity, video card speed and memory, etc.) note differences between minimum and recommended specifications. Vendors are often too optimistic -- and that's being charitable -- about what's needed for their software to run productively. It's much safer, and not much more expensive, to buy at least the recommended choices. In fact, I usually buy a little more power than I need. This bumps cost just a little and it avoids future problems and upgrades. Purchasing this way greatly extends a PC's life and makes it more compatible with future innovations, at least for a while.

Remember that as PCs evolve, a range of choices is always available, from bleeding-edge new to borderline obsolete. An equally valid – and more economical -- approach to configuring is finding the current technology "sweet spot" the point where cost, performance, compatibility, and useful life are in balance.

A key decision is whether to buy a brand-name system or an unknown-brand machine, have a PC built to order, or build it yourself. Choices for laptop computers are much more limited: brand-name systems dominate, trailed by a few off-brand manufacturers. There are no build-it-yourself options, though manufactured systems can be customized extensively.

Each purchasing choice has advantages and advocates. Brand-name systems can be evaluated and compared by consulting references such as Consumer Reports magazine, are available everywhere via catalog or online shopping, and may have better standard or optional warranties (often worthwhile for quick service and peace of mind). But brand-name systems sometimes suffer from using commodity parts vs. best-quality components.

Unknown-brand machines can be reliable money savers or risky acquisitions. I'd only buy such a system from a trusted store with a flexible return policy. I favor having PCs built to order by small local shops with established reputations, offering maximum flexibility and consultation during design. And I've enjoyed watching my PCs take shape as they're assembled from a tableful of parts!

Some people build their own PCs, often with training and mentoring from computer user group volunteers. This demystifies system innards, greatly facilitating diagnosing and repairing

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Configuring   Continued from Page **8**

problems and upgrading components. Build-to-order and build-yourself allow specifying brand-name parts for improved performance and reliability.

No matter where you purchase, look carefully at monitor choices. Traditional CRT monitors prices have declined, allowing buying larger devices with better resolution. And newer/thinner/lighter LCD panels offer a powerful -- though sometimes less flexible -- alternative. Visit stores to compare brands and models and explore settings to match your preferences.

Decide how you'll back up your software and data. Choices include a second -- perhaps external or removeable -- hard drive, writable optical media such as DVD, and tape. The first two are most often used, with each having unique advantages. Follow your backup plan regularly; nothing ruins a day like losing months or years of can't-be-replaced data, not to mention having to reconstruct all your software.

Small choices can make large differences in productivity and comfort. For example, mouse technology has advanced far beyond the traditional two-button wired device. Mouse alternatives include trackball and wireless devices, gadgets with many extra programmable buttons, wheel mouses allowing horizontal/vertical scrolling, etc. Considering how much time you'll use your pointing device, it's worth spending a little extra money to have the device that suits you best!

Windows offers many choices for easing use -- enlarging type, making keyboarding easier, providing special audible and visual cues, etc. Accessibility options are found in different places -- usually via Control Panel or the Start menu. It's worth exploring these to tailor your PC to your individual preferences. Similarly, small add-on programs can greatly improve a PC's comfort factor. Remember that Windows is highly configurable: you can change how it looks and operates. As you become familiar with your new PC, explore options/settings/preferences. Just as you wouldn't insist on driving a car with seats and mirrors exactly as they came from the dealer, don't be captive of Microsoft's initial settings!

Name-brand computers usually include software bundles. Vendors shout about how valuable they are and how much money you're saving on them -- but that's only true if you'll use the software provided. As soon as you have your machine, examine pre-installed software and remove anything you know you won't use. Then defrag your disk and then install the programs you'll use. These simple steps will make your machine run better by decluttering it.

Finally, If you understand how to do this, use built-in tools such as MSCONFIG to chop out unneeded services started by default when your system boots.

Software bundles often include junior-grade versions or limited-time trial copies of critical tools such as anti-virus and anti-spyware software. For system reliability and security, upgrade these to full versions and subscribe to update services.

Not much else in modern life besides computers keeps getting faster/better/cheaper. And it's not hard to find or build a computer that meets needs for several years, runs reliably, and doesn't break the bank.

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