Best-selling author and instructor Lynda Weinman demonstrated Dreamweaver 3 and Fireworks 3 at SBMUG's December meeting.

The News...

SBMUG

IT'S TIME for SBMUG members to elect a new **Board of Directors.** We are, in fact, a bit behind schedule, since past elections have been in December. So to catch up, we'll elect our new BOD at the February meeting. We hope you'll attend and cast your votes!

Our long-time *Mouse Times* editor, **Carla Aiello**, has resigned for a well-deserved rest. SBMUG is seeking guest editors to fill the post for this year's remaining issues — see "End of an Era" for the whole story. Be well, Carla, and please keep in touch!

The End of an Era

By Mac Bakewell, SBMUG President; and
Nancy Van Antwerp, Mouse Times Editor Emeritus

CARLA AIELLO's leaving the SBMUG marks the end of an era for us. Her participation spans nearly ten years, from 1991 to 1999. Her guidance and unfailing behind-the-scenes energy, as well as her input and planning in the earlier years, have had much to do with making our club the up-beat, knowledgeable, informed, and fun Macintosh community we know today. Carla shared a vision with Ed Togami, James Owen and several others of creating a club more involved in our local community, and a volunteer network that would serve local Mac users. Today that vision is wonderfully carried forward.

Carla began her involvement in the early 1990s when she became the SIG (Special Interest Group) coordinator, beginning with a small Beginner's Group SIG, and arranging speakers for each meeting. Membership burgeoned, other SIGS blossomed: the Communication SIG, Advanced Topics SIG, Internet SIG & FilemakerPro SIG. During this period, Carla ensured each group had speakers, arranged refreshments, called and coordinated volunteers, and was the volunteer coordinator for the main meeting. Her welcoming smile and can-do attitude brought many would-be members into the Club and our membership grew from about 200 members in the early '90s to more than 350 in 1997.

Carla began her tenure as President in 1995, continuing her deep personal commitment to invite new people to attend meetings and to encourage volunteers to assume positions of leadership, ensuring a vigorous board with fresh ideas. With a considerably larger membership, it became necessary to move from the Goleta Library's small meeting room to another larger facility. With the help of Eric Andresen (brought on board by Carla), SBMUG moved to GRC (General Research Corporation) and its sophisticated meeting rooms. These larger facilities allowed us to move around, enjoy often lavish refreshments (with Harold Fue's help), and get acquainted.

After a two year stint as President, Carla stepped over to become the *Mouse Times* Newsletter Editor. With a newly designed front page, the result of a design contest which Carla instigated, the newsletter took on a professional look. Club members submitted lively articles, pertinent articles from other sources were included, advertising took hold, and the *Mouse Times* of today is eagerly received

February & March Presentations

As many of you are already aware, the February 17 SBMUG presentation will be by the renowned author, Adam Engst.

Adam is the publisher of TidBITS *<http://www.tidbits.com>*, one of the oldest and largest Internet-based newsletters. TidBITS began in 1990, and is now distributed weekly to hundreds of thousands of readers. Adam has also written and co-authored numerous Internet books and magazine articles, including the best-selling *Internet Starter Kit* series, and the Peachpit Press *Eudora 4.2 for Windows & Macintosh: Visual QuickStart Guide*. His latest book, a collaboration with David Pogue, is called *Crossing Platforms: A Macintosh/Windows Phrasebook*.

Adam's publishers have sent a few copies of both *Eudora 4.2* and *Crossing Platforms* to raffle at our February meeting, and I've been looking them over. The Peachpit book clearly explains how to use Eudora's powerful features, and the *Crossing Platforms* phrasebook is a brilliant tool to help Windows and Mac users understand each other's language. It's a compact 321 pages, laid out like a bilingual phrasebook, with the first half as A–Z Macintosh-Windows, and the second half A–Z Windows-Macintosh. Recently, I wrote Adam the following about *Crossing Platforms*.

I'm a full-time Mac consultant – and a PC illiterate. The closest I usually get to Windows is Virtual PC installations, but lately I've had a few clients asking me how to share their broadband connections with Wintel machines. Although I've set up a number of Mac LANs with IPNetRouter, until I got your book I'd never understood Windows' TCP/IP settings. *Crossing Platforms* actually fell open to that page last night, and already I feel game to plunge into cross-platform connections. This is a great resource, and I especially appreciate tidbits like "the occasional PC Card Ethernet adapter, for example, requires you to specify the type of Ethernet cabling in the Advanced tab." I will be ordering my own copy today.

If any of you would like to purchase copies of either of these books before the February 17 meeting, Adam will be happy to sign them for you there. Both books are available at Amazon.com. [*Or support your favorite local bookstore – if they sell computer books, they'll probably have it. —Ed.*]

The February 17 SBMUG meeting begins at 6 PM at the Santa Barbara County Education Auditorium at 4400 Cathedral Oaks Road (see map on back cover). The first hour features a general question-and-answer session, with the presentation to follow. Refreshments will be served, and the public is invited. Bring your PC and Linux friends! —*Mac Bakewell, SBMUG President*

Digital Cameras in March

Digital cameras are fast becoming a preferred accessory to our Macs (and PCs). They come in a variety of flavours and shapes and sizes and prices! Have you found yourself looking at the counter in the camera store or in the computer magazine trying to make heads or tails of what you see? To zoom or not to zoom? Megapixels? White balance? Macro or micro? VGA, SV or JVC? Are you thoroughly confused?

Well, if you make a point of coming to our March 16TH meeting, Chuck Chaney of Samy's Cameras will un-confuse you – and me! Chuck is the extraordinarily well-informed, well-versed and well-rounded digital camera specialist of the South Coast. He will bring a selection of cameras, concentrating on the mid range of price and capabilities. He will show a professional camera, and a few lower priced ones, also. Chuck will explain what the different features are, and what to look for for your particular use. Since there are different ways of transferring the images from the camera to the computer, and sometimes more than one way from one camera, he will make this very clear and understandable to us. He will be demonstrating by taking actual shots and showing them on the screen, so we will all come away with a feeling of "By golly, I've got it!" —*Pia Oliver, Program Chairperson*

Other Users' Group Meetings:

❀ The **SBMUG Beginners'** Special Interest Group (SIG) now meets on the first Monday of the month 7PM–8:30PM at the Goleta Public Library, 500 N. Fairview, Goleta, CA. Contact Dale Lowdermilk for more information.
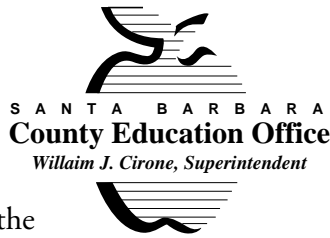*<dale93150@aol.com>*

❀ The **Goleta Desktop Publishing Users Group** meets the first Thursday of each month at 7PM at the Goleta Public Library, 500 N. Fairview, Goleta, CA.
<http://www.troutcom.com/gdtpug/>

❀ The **Santa Barbara PC Users Group** has regular meetings at 7:30PM on the **last** Tuesday of the month (except December). Their usual meeting place is the Louise Lowry Davis Center in downtown Santa Barbara. See their web site for more information, as well as links to other groups and events. *<http://www.silcom.com/sbpcug/>*

SANTA BARBARA
County Education Office
Willaim J. Cirone, Superintendent

ERA Continued from page 1

by all. During this time, Carla continued to send out e-mail notices of meetings, was the Santa Barbara *News Press* contact person, and wrote personal notes to members whose membership was about to expire. It could be honestly said she was our "behind the scenes" angel. With sadness, Carla recently stepped down from that demanding role.

Thoughtful, highly organized, energetic, intelligent, incisive, kind, considerate, committed-and willing to work behind the scenes — Carla has brought all those qualities to SBMUG. In large part because of her ongoing efforts, SBMUG is the club that we are all proud to be part of today. Now Carla's off to new endeavors. We owe her much gratitude, and we wish her well.

Filling Carla's many roles, especially her *Mouse Times* editorship, is no small task. In these fast-changing times, where so many computer-related publications have succumbed to online publishing, and so many graphic designers have shifted their focus to the Web, the SBMUG board has decided to turn their search for a new *Mouse Times* editor into a contest. This year, we are inviting six guest editors to publish one issue each. The winner, chosen by membership vote at the end of the year, will be awarded a "significant prize" — perhaps even a free trip to MacWorld 2001!

SBMUG Secretary, Robert Winokur, has produced this first issue. Ed Togami is in line for the next, and Howard Glenn and Ed Morin will produce the third. Those interested in editing any of the other three Mouse Times 2000 issues should contact Mac Bakewell *<mac@sbmug.org>* or Ed Togami *<etogami@silcom.com>*.

While working with Carla on the *Mouse Times,* I learned from her new heights of perseverance and patience. She'd get a concept in mind and move towards it, assimilating her varied resources and contacts and growing new ones. Putting the right people together is a real art, and I appreciate her skill at this. On a personal level, she is highly encouraging and supportive of me as a co-volunteer, as a graphic artist and as a person. I admire her spirit immensely and count her friendship as a blessing. — *Ann Dockendorf*

Watching sweet Carla, who holds at least one graduate degree, tidying up the food table during our meetings is to me the essence of SBMUG: quietly friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. — *John Wiley*

Carla took on the challenge of making the club more open and inclusive. She encouraged volunteerism by rewarding and publicly acknowledging everyone who helped or worked cooperatively. She made personal phone calls to request specific tasks of people before almost every meeting. She emphasized how important it was to groom potential new volunteers and leaders. She became the virtual "project manager" for the SBMUG, making sure that every detail was dealt with by delegating each responsibility to someone (and double-checking that it was being done), and by doing the task herself when needed. And she worked tirelessly behind the scenes to try to fix problems, or listen to gripes, or patch up misunderstandings between those trying to do what they thought was best for SBMUG.

Carla tried to do all of this with charm and grace and style. Despite having serious health problems to deal with, she asked you rather than told you, she thanked you for doing your job rather than expected you would do it, and she stayed upbeat and positive publicly even when it wasn't always positive behind the scenes.

The legacy of her contributions are a healthy, growing and evolving club, with a great reputation, with active membership and volunteers – and refreshments – at every meeting! —*Becky Davis*

Future Meeting Dates:

All are the third Thursday of the month except as noted in **boldface.** The April or May date may change back to the third Thursday, so watch for further announcements.
March 16
April 13 (second Thursday)
May 25 (fourth Thursday)
June 15

Font usage

by Paul Norton · Member, SBMUG

YOU NEVER STUDIED FONTS in school—and your Smith Corona, Royal, or IBM Selectric didn't give you many choices anyway. Even if you're still in school you aren't likely to learn anything about fonts. Now you've got a dozen or more on your Mac. What are they all for and does it make any difference which one you use?

Font usage can make a huge difference in the effectiveness of your communications—by as much as five to ten times! The information summarized here comes from a book entitled *Type and Layout* by Colin Wheildon (Strathmore Press, Berkeley, 1995). It is based on a quantitative study of reader comprehension with 224 readers—111 men and 113 women.

If you as the writer/publisher do everything right, about a third of the readers still won't comprehend it anyway. You can hope for a more select audience on a good day, but already this author may have written you off.

Here's the answer—use Times or Times Roman and you'll be OK. [*The* Mouse Times *uses a similar font, Adobe Garamond. — Ed.*] Use white paper and black ink. Keep your lines less than 60 characters wide. Before you read on for the details, do a check on what the pros use. Grab any book or almost any magazine and see what the font looks like and how many characters are in a line.

Critical communications should use the best practice—

- Writing assignments
- Reports
- School communications
- User group announcements
- Web site information
- Suggested ideas for holiday presents

Font styles

Fonts come in two basic styles:

- serif
- sans serif or nonserif

Serifs are the little "feet" on letters.

letters

Serif fonts have these little feet and sans serif fonts don't.

Examples of serif fonts are:
- Times or Times New Roman
- New Century Schoolbook
- Palatino

Examples of sans serif fonts include:
- Helvetica or Arial
- Geneva

The examples are all 12 point size, but you can see the type faces are slightly different in real size.

Font usage

Here are two paragraphs to read, the first in Times (12-point with 15-point line spacing) and the second in Helvetica (12-point with 18-point line spacing)—

Serif type faces were developed over a period of hundreds of years, beginning before the printing press. They help the eye recognize words, resulting in faster reading and higher reader comprehension. All body text should be set in a good serif font in order to communicate most effectively with the reader. The text should be in lower case, justified, and plain rather than bold.

Sans serif type faces were developed in recent times to give a modern look to text. They don't help the eye recognize words, resulting in slower reading and *5X* poorer comprehension. With few exceptions, sans serif fonts should be reserved for headlines. Occasionally you see them in short sidebars (a short article subordinated within a long article)—although minimal use of a poor choice is better than maximum use, a good choice is preferred by the reader at all times. Unjustified body text impairs comprehension by 40%.

Reader comprehension scores

	Good	Fair	Poor
Serif font—	67%	19	14
Sans serif font—	12%	23	65

Sans serif fonts make it difficult to hold your concentration when reading. You'll find your self having to go back

and start over more often with sans serif font text.

Text should be justified. Not left ragged right or left. How big a difference can this make? According to Wheildon's measurements, the impact of type justification on reader comprehension was surprisingly large—

	Good	Fair	Poor
Justified—	67%	19	14
Ragged right—	38	22	40
Ragged left—	10	18	72

"Justified" text has uniform margins on both left and right hand sides of the text column. Most paragraphs in the *Mouse Times* are justified.

"Ragged right" text has uniform left hand margins and ragged right hand margins. This paragraph is set ragged right.

"Ragged left" text has uniform right hand margins and ragged left hand margins. This paragraph is set ragged left.

Body text width

A body of 12 point text 6 to 7 inches wide across standard letter paper is a little too wide. The line width should be no more than 60 characters and no less than 20. Look at how the pros do it in magazines, newspapers and books.

The worst offense

People are more sensitive about writing in all capitals since the advent of email, where it is considered "shouting". It's actually worse than that in comprehension terms! Body text in all capitals rates about 7% comprehension whether you use serif fonts—

BODY TEXT IN ALL CAPITALS PREVENTS THE EYE FROM EASILY RECOGNIZING WORDS AND SLOWS READING DOWN TO A CRAWL. READERS LOSE THEIR PLACE AND HAVE TO REREAD SECTIONS OVER AND OVER. COMPREHENSION IS ALMOST ELIMINATED WITH THIS PRESENTATION STYLE.

or sans serif fonts—

BODY TEXT IN ALL CAPITALS VIRTUALLY PREVENTS THE EYE FROM EASILY RECOGNIZING WORDS AND SLOWS READING DOWN TO A CRAWL, WHETHER IT IS DONE IN SERIF OR SANS SERIF FONTS. READERS LOSE THEIR PLACE AND HAVE TO REREAD SECTIONS OVER AND OVER. COMPREHENSION IS ALMOST ELIMINATED WITH THIS STYLE OF PRESENTATION.

Attempting to emphasize importance by using all capitals is defeated because comprehension is low—look at those software licence agreements.

The IRS likes to use all capitals when they write you. They haven't told me how they like to read replies in all capitals.

What can you do with sans serif fonts?

Headlines are not fussy about the type face. Here's the reader comprehension summary reading headlines—

	Lower case	Capitals
Times	92%	69
Helvetica	90	57
Times italic	*86*	*62*
Helvetica italic	*85*	*59*

Notice the insignificant difference between serif (Times) and sans serif (Helvetica)—all high scores for lower case headlines. The penalty for all capitals is 25-30% even in headlines!

Headlines in all capitals were standard until the 1950s. 75% of western newspaper headlines are now set in lower case

You can use sans serif fonts for headlines if you like, but it isn't an improvement. Just a bit of variety which is OK.

What you should have learned

Use a serif font for body text. Column width is important—20 to 60 characters per line—about 3½ inch lines with 12 point type is good.

Don't print in bold. Bold print reduces comprehension by a factor of two! Italic sections are OK though, not much of a penalty.

Extra credit

Text should be black on white or light tint—light tint (10% at most) is OK and attractive to readers. One space between sentences.

Put the headline at top—flow content from top left to bottom right. Brightly colored headlines attract readers—but hurt comprehension—67% comprehension score using a serif font drops to 27% with spot color

Headline kerning—adjusting the letter spacing—can undermine legibility. Slightly condensing headline spacing (70-90%) is good

No periods at the end of headlines.

Kinko's Ad – full page

Digital Camera Buying Guidelines

by Arthur H. Bleich · <arthur@dpcorner.com>

[*Editor's note: Our March 16 SBMUG meeting will feature a presentation on digital cameras by Chuch Chaney of Samy's Cameras. Bring your digital camera questions to the meeting!*]

Part 1

EACH year, when I write this article for TidBITS, I say: "This is the year to buy your first digital camera." (See the "Digital Cameras" series of articles beginning in TidBITS-407.) But this year really is the year, because for between $750 and $1,000 not only can you get a quality camera, but also a great printer, a charger and batteries, a card reader, and even an additional higher capacity memory card.

Digital Cameras series
<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tbser=1022>

A few features and specifications have changed or improved since I wrote about them last, so let's first run down a checklist to give you some guidelines. In next week's issue, I'll wrap up with my personal camera picks.

1. The digital camera you buy should have at least 1,280 by 960 true optical resolution (that's roughly 1.3 million pixels, commonly referred to as 1.3 megapixels). You'll then be able to get excellent prints up to about 8 x 10 inches. If this is your first digital camera, it's not necessary to go into the 2 megapixel range although there is one inexpensive 2.1 megapixel digital camera worth considering.

2. There's an old saying: "Familiar things are best." Look for a digital camera that operates most like the film camera you've used. This means fast start-up and fast shot-to-shot time. Many digital cameras are still slugs when it comes to these two features.

3. If possible, check out the camera's menus. I recently reviewed a digital camera for MacAddict that had menu items festooned around the LCD monitor in such a disorganized manner that a 747 cockpit instrument layout looked like it'd be easier to learn. Menus should be intuitive and easy to navigate.

4. Cross off any camera with only an LCD monitor for pre-viewing. They are notorious for washing out in sunlight and you usually have to hold the camera in an uncomfortable position to use them. A well-designed digital camera has an optical viewfinder in addition to the LCD monitor for easy, eye-level viewing.

5. Digital cameras that use standard floppy disks may seem like the ideal way to go but most fall short on speed and resolution. Besides, floppies are fast fading away in the Mac world.

6. The digital camera should come with written documentation so you can refer to it with camera in hand. You'd be surprised at how many so-called quality camera manufacturers try to save a few bucks by putting the documentation on CD-ROM, expecting you to print out 150 pages after you've spent close to $1,000.

7. Read a few reviews before you decide. Most digital photography Web sites have very thorough and detailed reviews. On the other hand, read digital camera reviews in computer magazines critically; the reviewers are not usually experienced photographers, and get sidetracked with bells and whistles.

Digital Camera Resource Page <www.dcresource.com>
Digital Photography Review <http://photo.askey.net/>
Imaging Resource News
<www.imaging-resource.com/NEWS.HTM>
Steve's Digicams
<www.steves-digicams.com/diginews.html>

8. Be prepared to buy a couple sets of rechargeable NiMH (Nickel Metal Hydride) batteries and a good charger unless your digital camera comes with them or uses Lithium-Ion batteries. Quest and Kodak batteries are long-lasting, and the Maha c204f charger is an absolute jewel. Two sets of batteries and a charger will set you back about $50 to $70 from places like CKC Power.

CKC Power <www.ckcpower.com>
Kodak Power Sources
<www.kodak.com/US/en/digital/accessories/power/>

9. Transferring images to your computer can be tedious unless both camera and computer have USB. But USB on a digital camera should not be a prime requisite. You can get inexpensive USB and SCSI memory card readers that let you transfer pictures to your computer in a flash. The Microtech USB CameraMate ($85 from places like CKC Power) takes both Compact Flash and SmartMedia cards, used on most digital cameras today. And Norman Camera has a couple dozen discontinued Minolta SCSI readers ($120) which, with the appropriate PC card adapter work fine with older Macs.

Norman Camera <www.normancamera.com>

10. Printed pictures will only be as good as the printer you use, so plan to buy a decent photo-quality printer. Printers are like the speakers in your stereo system. It does little good to have the finest electronic components pushing sound through a set of tinny speakers. Although the Epson Stylus Photo 750 ($250) has traditionally been the choice of most Mac users, the new USB HP 970 Cse ($400) delivers absolutely stunning output.

Stylus Photo 750
<www.epson.com/printer/inkjet/styphoto750/>
HP 970 Cse <www.pandi.hp.com
/pandi-db/prodinfo.main?product= deskjet970c>

If I had to choose between an expensive digital camera without the extra peripherals (batteries, card reader, printer, etc.) and a less expensive digital camera with them, I'd go for the lower priced camera with all the goodies. Why? Because you'll eventually be buying another camera based on what you've learned from your first digital camera. But in the meantime, you'll be getting the most convenience and best output from the digital camera you've bought.

Part 2

Is it finally time to buy a digital camera? The digital camera market is already several years old, early adopters are now old pros, and more people consider the switch to digital photography every day. In part one of this article, I asserted that this year really is the year to buy a digital camera, whether it's your first or a successor to an earlier model, and I offered a checklist of features that you should look for in the current crop. In part two, it's time to pull away the curtain and give you my list of best picks for beginners for this year.

If you want to see pictures of the digital cameras described below and check out a comparison chart that lists their features, click on over to my site, the Digital PhotoCorner.

Digital PhotoCorner <www.dpcorner.com>

The "Model A" of Digital Cameras — The Fuji MX-1200 is the first-ever blister-packed digital camera, but don't let plain-clothes packaging put you off; this camera will deliver excellent pictures. Even though it doesn't have autofocus, its *f*-4.5 to *f*-11 lens (38 MM equivalent) will keep objects sharp over a large range and its top shutter speed of ½750 second will stop most action. When you want to get in really close (like up to four inches), flip a switch to Macro mode. It has excellent low-light capabilities, a

manual mode to control white balance and exposure compensation, five flash modes, and has about the easiest menu of any digital camera I've ever used. It's ready to go in about two seconds after you turn it on, and you can click off shots every three to four seconds. It's a good-looking digital camera, too, and will take 32 MB SmartMedia memory cards (4 MB included). The MX-1200 marks a defining moment in the history of digital cameras. Street price: about $250.

Fujifilm <www.fujifilm.com>

The Low Light Champion — The Olympus D-450 Zoom has a 3x optical zoom lens, autofocus, and a fast shot-to-shot time of about one second thanks to its big buffer that stores shots as they're being processed. It includes a whole slew of features including video out, two light metering modes, and a choice of three ISO ratings: 160, 320, and 640. I've shot pictures with this digital camera at night where the camera recorded details I couldn't even see. It can also store uncompressed TIFF images, has a fast sequence mode of up to two frames per second, five flash modes, shutter speeds of ½ to ½1000 second, and a fast *f*-2.8/*f*-8 lens which is needle-sharp. Olympus is one of the most experienced optical houses in the world and has been in the forefront of photographic innovation (including digital photography) for more than 80 years. A nice feature is that distances can be pre-set to capture fast action so the camera isn't slowed down by having to focus. If big prints are what you're looking for, this camera will deliver. Included are Adobe's PhotoDeluxe, Enroute Quick Stitch Panorama software, and an 8 MB Smart Media memory card. Street price: about $390.

Olympus D-450 Zoom <www.olympusamerica.com
/product.asp?c=63&s=12&p=16&product=379>

Finally, Big Yellow Scores! The Kodak DC240 Zoom is one of the first Kodak digital cameras I found to be just right: solid and well built. Its shot-to-shot time is fast for the first two images, and then slows to a still-creditable four seconds or so between shots. But its simple and elegant controls and menus are where this charcoal and silver beauty excels. If you can't figure them out in less than five minutes, give up on digital cameras. In essence, Kodak has reverted to their roots in that you need only to push a few buttons and the camera does the rest. The LCD monitor is a bit grainy in low light and a tad jerky when you move it quickly from one scene to another, but since you're not shooting movies, it's tolerable. It has a 3x optical zoom, an aperture range of *f*-2.8 to *f*-16, shutter speeds of ½ to ½750 second, and four flash modes. It also comes

with four AA alkaline batteries so you can get going right away, while the included charger juices up the four NiMH rechargeable batteries that also come standard. Also supplied: an 8 MB Compact Flash memory card and Adobe's PhotoDeluxe and PageMill. For video out you can toggle between NTSC or PAL and, along with its standard serial port, the DC240 Zoom features USB. Street price: about $395.

Kodak DC-240

   <www.kodak.com/US/en/digital/cameras/dc240/>

A Voyeur's Dream Cam — The Minolta Dimâge EX-1500 Zoom costs more than the others and will take you longer to learn to use, but it has one feature no other digital camera in the world (that I know of) offers: the entire lens assembly can be detached from the camera body and placed in any imaginable position you desire. A five foot optional cable allows you to hold the LCD monitor in a comfortable position while poking the lens around a corner, over a fence, or even into a hole in the ground. I found it great for cat photography; the small handheld lens part becomes very non-threatening and allows for some unusual angles. It does have a few quirks: the lens cuts slightly into the optical viewfinder's field of view at its widest setting; you have to open the battery compartment to insert or remove the memory card; and its LCD monitor is jerky when you move the camera to frame your scenes - all annoying, but not fatal. With a 3x optical zoom, *f*-3.5 lens, ¼000 second shutter speed, five flash modes, a burst rate of up to 7.5 frames per second at high resolution, and its detachable lens feature, this is a one-of-a-kind digital camera. Street price: about $550.

   Dimâge EX-1500 <http://minoltausa.com/mainframe .asp?productID=200&whichProductSection=1&whichSection=2>

The Scrunch Eliminator — The Canon PowerShot A50 Zoom has a unique optical 2.5x zoom which, at its widest setting, it is the equivalent of a 28 MM lens on a 35 MM camera. Although most people crave more telephoto power, it's the wide end of the zoom that produces the most visually interesting shots, with great depth of field and dramatic spatial relationships between objects in the foreground and background. You can also get more of a crowd into the picture at close quarters without having them scrunch together. In its miniature brushed duraluminum case, it looks like it was designed not only to see, but to be seen. It has an *f*-2.6 lens, shutter speeds from 2 to ⅟750 second, four flash modes, and is able to capture uncompressed images if you need the highest quality. It has an interesting feature that forces the camera to

shoot at the slowest speed commensurate with good exposure which, among other things, will let you pan with a moving subject or object to keep them sharp while blurring the background. If you choose this digital camera, plan on spending another $80 or so for a kit containing a rechargeable Lithium-Ion battery and a charger/AC power combination because it comes with only a disposable battery. Street price: about $325.

Canon PowerShot A50

   <www.powershot.com/powershot2/a50/main.html>

Hi-Res & Smokin' Fast — The Toshiba PDR-M4 is the only 2.1 megapixel digital camera in this group. Alas, it doesn't have an optical zoom lens but it does have 2x digital one (which, unfortunately, lowers resolution when used). Nevertheless it's a speed demon: two seconds from power-on to ready, less than a second between shots, a burst-rate—at its highest resolution—of four shots in two seconds, and some super-slow shutter speeds (up to eight seconds) to allow great, special effects night photography. It's a mini-camera (the most compact of the group) and if you have big hands you'll have to adjust somewhat, but that's a small price to pay for the quality of images you'll get. The camera includes a Lithium-Ion battery which can be charged in-camera or with an optional external charger. (Put a spare battery on your shopping list, though, to have as a backup.) With an aperture of *f*-3.2 or *f*-8, a normal shutter speed range of between ¼ and ⅟1000 second, 4-inch macro capabilities, five flash modes, NTSC video out, and an 8 MB SmartMedia memory card included, this is quite a package for the price. It comes with both serial and USB. If you need super-high resolution and speed, and can forego the zoom lens, this little jewel could be a good choice. Street price: about $400.

Toshiba PDR-M4 *<www.toshiba.com/taisisd/dsc /products/cameras/pdrm4/index3.htm>*

A Digital Tomorrow Today — All of the cameras above are good values with outstanding features and realistic prices: the flexibility of digital photography has finally come down to earth for a wide range of consumers.

Arthur H. Bleich is a photographer, writer, and educator who lives in Miami. He has done assignments for major publications both in the U.S. and abroad and is currently Contributing Editor of Digital Camera Magazine.

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Dave Sisson of Santa Barbara's popular **Jandd Mountain-eering** *<http://www.silcom.com/~jandd/>* spoke at our January meeting. For the past fifteen years, Dave has used Macs exclusively to run his business — from production, through shipping, sales, and inventory, to year-end accounting. Jandd has used numerous business software applications, and Dave has developed a number of successful routines himself. Jandd now has 24 Macs integrated into their business network.

Pia Oliver praised Apple's rapid turnaround following the repair of her son's dead PowerBook 5300, one he'd bought used on E-Bay. She put it into the shipping box on the Thursday before Christmas, and was surprised by its unexpected return the following Monday. Thinking that Apple had found it hopeless and returned it without repairs, Pia was overjoyed to see the smiling "Happy Mac" icon when she turned it on. Apple technicians replaced the power supply and logic board.

Macworld Expo Report

SBMUG members gave their take on this year's West-Coast Macworld Expo at our January meeting. Steve Jobs has changed his title from "interim" CEO to "Internet" CEO, meaning that Apple will be retaining the man responsible for Apple's vision and success;Mac OS X was demonstrated, with an exciting new "Aqua" interface and new features to make the Mac easier and more fun to use; and Apple's new Internet strategy featuring iTools, iReview, and free e-mail at the "mac.com" domain.

Around Town …

High-speed Internet access has come to Santa Barbara — to some parts of it, at least. **Cox Communications**' hybrid fiber-coaxial (HFC) **cable** is battling for market share against **GTE** and the **local ISPs**' various flavors of **digital subscriber line** (DSL). Judging by reports on the SBMUG e-mail list, there's no clear winner yet. Some SBMUG members who have access to both services are comparing their speed, reliability, cost and peculiarities, as well as the quality of the vendors' customer service. The subject is sure to be under discussion for quite a while, on the SBMUG e-mail list and at the monthly meetings. Come to this month's meeting on February 17 and share your questions and experiences with us.

Meanwhile, if you are not on the SBMUG e-mail list but want to be, go to *<www.sbmug.org/list>* and follow the simple instructions there.

… Apple …

Apple has discontinued the **UK version of Mac OS**, replacing it with an "International" version based on US English, stirring up a tempest of protest among British users, who are already smarting from Apple's cancellation of Apple Expo 2000 there. Critics of the move point out that most English-speaking countries use spelling similar to the UK. The move could hurt Apple UK's education market—Windows is still available in a UK-localized version. Others are accepting of the change, and consider the controversy merely a "tempest in a teapot." *<www.macworld.co.uk/ukos/>*

… & The World

Those of you considering purchase of one of Palm Computing's Mac-friendly products will be interested in **Palm V wireless connectivity.** Raven Zachary reported on OmniSky (previously known as OpenSky), "a wireless Internet service for the Palm V that is twice as fast as the Palm VII, doesn't require a Web clipping service (you can use fully featured Internet applications such as a Telnet client or Usenet news reader), and allows for unlimited usage for a flat monthly fee." *<http://www.omnisky.com>* The report appeared on ZDNet's MacWeek site.
<http://macweek.zdnet.com/1999/12/19/osxing.html>

InfoWorld's Gripe Line columnist Ed Foster frequently writes about the **Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA),** a decade-long effort to clarify the rules in legal disputes over usage rights and warranties. Such disputes are currently covered by conflicting federal and state laws regarding intellectual property and consumer protection, and the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Article 2 which covers sales of goods.

Among the issues: **"shrink-wrap" software licenses,** which the buyer must read and agree to after purchase (U.S. courts have often refused to enforce terms of standard forms that are presented to customers only after a sale); vendors' **changing of terms** after purchase (TCI is accused of sending a rewritten user agreement to its @home cable modem service users, other vendors have changed user agreements without notice); whether vendors may **remotely disable software** (Logisticon, a software vendor in Santa Clara, caused a three-day shut-down of Revlon Group's systems over the phone lines because of an unpaid balance on warehouse management software); whether vendors may **prohibit transfer** of software to a new owner (for example, if you sell your old Mac with Microsoft Word installed); and whether vendors may **disclaim warrantees** for defective, buggy, or virus-infested software (as the current UCITA draft allows).

Critics of UCITA say software vendors have dominated the drafting process and more input from users is needed.

InfoWorld has an introduction to the UCITA issue with links to articles and updates at *<www.infoworld.com/cgi-bin/displayStory.pl?/features/990531ucita1.htm>*

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Signature_____Date_____

Annual membership dues are $25. Make checks payable to SBMUG. Send completed form & check to:

SBMUG Treasurer P .O. Box 60922 Santa Barbara, CA 93160

Monthly Meetings 3rd Thursdays

Santa Barbara County Education Office

4400 Cathedral Oaks Road

Upcoming meetings: February 17 & March 16

6–7 pm Questions & Answers · 7–9 pm Presentations (see page 2)

Meetings are at the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) auditorium, 4400 Cathedral Oaks Road (½ mile west of Hwy 154). Just inside the driveway entrance, turn right and follow the road up the hill to the end. Turn left into the parking lot — you'll find us in the auditorium.

Currently scheduled meeting dates through June 2000 are shown on page 3. Program information and meeting dates will also be listed on our Web site: *<www.sbmug.org>*.
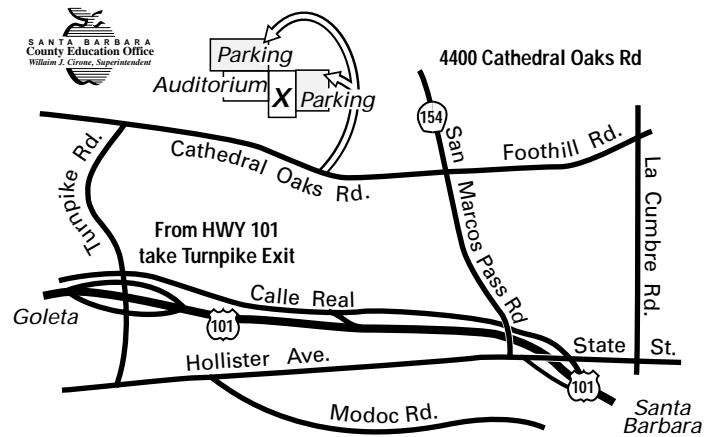
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