

TURNING YOUR COMPUTER INTO A "SLIDE LIBRARY" PROJECTOR

What is a slide show?

I see a slide show as a grouping of images according to a theme, a location, or an event. As digital photography allows us to take profuse amounts of (perfect) pictures of a scene, we end up not just taking pictures. We end up effectively taking series of mini slide shows that are easy to work with. Such sequences can tell more about an environment than single pictures can. When we view these short sequences, we also often get a movie-like effect without realizing it. With these thoughts in mind, you may want to think of taking all your pictures for a slide show. That could turn out to be an art form.

So it becomes natural to handle slides (old slides, negatives, as well as new digital pictures) in a computer not as individual pictures, but in batches (folders). What we end up with are randomly accessible elements of a slide show which can be selected and adapted quickly and simply to an audience. It is a big help in the entry or capture process, and in the formulation of a slide (show) library.

What do I want for a slide show?

A number of options are in front of us to make a "slide show", most seem to be based on movie making. To me this is fine if the objective is to make something like a karaoke where the sing along is synchronized with the music. Also, I may want to make a movie to "can" a presentation because I am tired of repeating it. However, I get bored with having to wait for the pictures that I care about to show up if they are in a video.

What I want for a slide show starts with what I could do with a carrousel projector. I want to talk during my slide presentation. I want to stop to emphasize certain slides, and the point of emphasis can be different depending on the audience. I want to be able to quickly switch trays, and skip over material that this particular audience does not care about. I want to be able step backwards as well as forward.

But with a computer I would like also not to have to handle the equivalent of the trays. I would like not to have to rearrange my slides in order to make a different slide show. I would like to be able to make a presentation anytime someone drops in. And I want all of that at the best resolution possible on digital media for long shelf life

Eventually I will want a random access slide projector which contains all my slides. This is what Multimedia Computers are aiming at, and some will let you do a show from your couch (Media Center Computers).

The VASS Function

The **VIEW AS A SLIDE SHOW** function (**VASS** - please pronounce as only one word) does most of what I want. It works with JPEG files which retain the original image resolution. I can use *Windows Explorer* to select the mini slide show folder, and (with VASS), I can start a slide show from any picture within the folder. I can stop, step backwards, single step forward, and I can resume the slide show any time I want. I can jump over groups of slides in the same folder, or quickly jump to an other folder. The VASS function also loops when it reaches the end of a folder. If I have short mini slide shows, I can sort of loop in place while I talk.

People who are actively engaged in making slide shows use this VASS function a lot just to put their pictures in order.

Making a Slide Show Library & Storing for Future Use

It was while organizing 1,300 digital (vacation) photos into event or location folders that I realized that I was actually developing a library of small slide shows. With the VASS function I had identified the groups to be selected and with "copy and paste" I had them in the proper folder. I was building a library by naming each folder as I created them. The VASS function was helpful to review the contents of each folder. After two hours I had a small library of 30 folders which, temporarily, occupied 2.3 Gigabytes of space on a DVD, half its capacity. I had a slide show library ready for a random access slide show. I did not have to use any special software. Our pictures were easily accessible for later access such as rotating, removing the bad ones, reordering, enhancing. But in the meantime I could easily show them before I did anything else. I could show them anywhere there is a computer (in this case with a DVD drive).

BTW the pictures came from a 4 Megapixel (2272X1704) camera. Each picture used between 1.7 and 1.8 Megabytes of space.

All the slides Stay in the Machine

The 2.3 Gigabytes are less than 1% of a 250 Gigabyte hard disk, and there are 500 Gigabyte hard drives available today. So it is not far fetched to think of storing ALL of your slides on a hard disk. The advantage will be in the time saved in organizing and accessing something like 260,000 Four Megapixel photos because it will be done with the help of the operating system.

So effectively the "Multimedia" Computer ends up being a slide projector (with the VASS function) which will hold all of your slide carousels, and a lot more. We are approaching a point where RAID Arrays will become economical and improve on the reliability of hard disks. So we should not be afraid to consider keeping large amounts of data in the computer, but we need to do that carefully (subject of an other paper perhaps). Soon you will have a trade off between how much of your time is taken by keeping your slide library outside the computer versus keeping it inside.

Sharing the Mini Slide Shows

"So we did as he told us" they say, "now we have all of our slides in the computer. Granted my partner and I are the ones who look at them the most. And it is not a problem to look at them on the computer screen. And he will probably figure out a way to get the slide show on the BIG TV in the living room some day. But will we still have to make a movie when we share our mini-slide shows with family and friends?"

Typical Answer: Maybe! However, it is more likely that the following scenario will work. But first we need to put our "Computer Savy Hat" on again. As a member of a computer club, it is very likely that your correspondents already have a computer. If they have a computer it is very likely that they will be using XP. Then the VASS function is available to them, and sharing becomes simply the act of mailing a CD or DVD which contains the slide show folders that you want to share. Let them use the slides any way they want to. Let them include the pictures in their slide library if they want to. Let them print what they want. Let them make their own movies. (They will be so proud to do that FOR YOU, GRANDMA) and so on. It is little work for you, and you can send so much. You can both be on the phone and see the slide shows together on both machines with so little work. For atmosphere you can put music (MP3) on the disk that you sent the slides on.

I believe that the major viewers of photos and slide shows are the people who take them. Next are friends and family with computers. For the others, making a movie or a DVD may not be that taxing. However, it is very likely that the majority of the remaining correspondents will have a VCR instead of a DVD. In that case you will need to be able to copy your slide show movie to a VHS tape.

Video Clips as Slides with Motion, Video Scenes as Slide Shows with Motion

The reason that I am writing this document is that I see video clips as slides with motion. I would like to be able to treat storage, processing, and displaying in the same way as digital images. So for the Video SIG I will focus on how to turn a computer into a similar library: The objective will be to gather movie clips into movie scenes (folders) or combination slide/clips shows. The Video SIG in effect is already working with Multimedia Computers which will become the "Video/Slide Library" Projector of our dream.

I expect to see a "View as a Movie" (VAM) function to appear, if it is not yet here.

Multimedia vs. Media Center Computers

Most of the Multimedia machines so far are based on *XP Home Edition*. For more than a year now Microsoft has introduced a special version of XP PRO, the *Media Center Edition* (MCE). One special element is that specialized hardware is needed to work with the MCE OS, and it is not possible to upgrade a *Home Edition* or basic XP PRO machine to produce a MCE machine as far as I know.

However the MCE machines look to me like the machine that I am describing in this paper with the additional ability to do the show and tell functions from a couch with a

remote control. With the remote control you can jump from live TV to stored TV, to slide shows, to home videos, to music all from the couch. And all your Audio, Slides, and Videos will be stored in the machine.

These issues will be discussed in the Video SIG. It is hoped that before not too long the following HOW TO can be published.

"Turn your computer into a random access "Multimedia Library" Home Theater"

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