

# The Bridge

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For group information  
please visit our Web site:  
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## Main Meeting Wednesday, Jan 22 Southwest Tennessee Community College

5983 Macon Cove, Memphis

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## Farris Meeting Room A

Second Floor - Farris Building

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New Users & Wizards 6:30 p.m.  
Main Meeting 7:30 p.m.

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Arrangements for the  
January Meeting were  
not final before the  
newsletter deadline.  
Come and be surprised!  
Bring a Friend!



# The School Bell

## News From MPCUG Education Services

By Gil Hennon, Education Services Coordinator

What was the coolest Christmas present of 2002? Well, it would be hard to beat the multi-media Internet Refrigerator from LG Appliances Corporation. Start with a standard 26 cubic foot side-by-side refrigerator. Make it out of titanium. Add a 15 inch LCD monitor with touch screen controls on the front door. Add four high-fidelity speakers and a 20 gig hard drive. Load it with an embedded Windows operating system and virus protection. So, what can you do with it besides keep beer and foods cold? How about:

- Send email
- Surf the Web
- Watch television (remote included)
- Play Internet radio or download and play MP3 music
- Take pictures with a built in digital camera, then save or email them
- Leave messages via keyboard or electronic pen. Add audio and visual multi-media effects. "Post" your messages on the refrigerator screen.
- Use the calendar to track birthdays, special events, and appointments
- Download, store, and organize recipes
- Track food usage and expiration dates

The Internet Refrigerator software performs self diagnosis and lets you know when one of its components is malfunctioning. The only requirement is an available broadband high-speed Internet connection. For more information and an on-line demonstration, go to <http://www.lgappliances.com> and do a search for "internet."

On a more serious note, Microsoft Internet Explorer users have had a lot to complain about lately. According to eWeek Magazine, a poll of their readers exposed several major headaches users have recently experienced with the browser. Most seriously affected have been Windows 98 systems, where a cumulative patch for IE often keeps the machine from rebooting. Trying to start in Safe Mode causes the system to lock. The only way to recover is format and reload everything except the cumulative patch.

Another gripe being heard concerns Microsoft's Windows Update service. Contrary to Microsoft's own recommendations, the Update service requires users to lower their Internet Explorer security settings. Attempting to use Windows Update service with IE security set as recommended foils the update's automatic download feature. The security for active scripting, automatic downloads, and ActiveX controls must all be reduced in order to install patches that Microsoft considers "critical."

Most users are informed of these patches by Microsoft's "Windows Critical Update Notification" service. Some customers have noticed that this beneficial information channel is starting to become another marketing tool. Some of the "Critical Notifications" turn out to be news of an available product or upgrade. Many users received an email "critical notification" recommending they move up to Internet Explorer 6.0. When they check the Web site they discover there is nothing critical about the upgrade. It was

just a ruse. Those who did not accept the upgrade continue to get "critical notification" email. It doesn't stop until they accept the new software. Consequently, many Microsoft customers are now paying very little attention to those alarming email messages.

One solution for all of the Internet Explorer problems seems to be gaining momentum. The Mozilla organization reports that downloads of their new browser are steadily increasing. Mozilla 1.2 had a bug when it was released about a month ago. It wasn't a serious bug, nor was it security related, but the release was pulled from the Web site for about 24 hours until the bug was fixed. How about that for responsiveness?

The Mozilla browser might look very familiar to you. Mozilla has always been the "engine" inside Netscape. It contains email and news client software, just like Netscape, and also a Web page composer. Mozilla 1.2.1 has several new features you might wish had been available long ago.

One is the built-in pop-up stopper. Uncheck the preference box that says "Open unrequested windows" and you'll never see anything you didn't ask for! Mozilla also contains several "managers" that remember passwords, help fill in Web forms, and keep track of downloads. Some of the manager features are very helpful, and some of them get in the way. Fortunately, they can be customized to fit your needs or turned off easily. In fact, just about every feature of the Mozilla browser can be controlled by the user. If you would like to give Mozilla a trial run, download release 1.2.1 and prepare to be spoiled. Get it at <http://www.mozilla.org>

MPCUG Education Services will stay out of your refrigerator, but we do want to get into your computer problems. Bring them to the Wizard's Session immediately prior to each monthly meeting. John Schuster and his loyal followers will get you back on the right track fast so you can log more refrigerator time!

*There ain't no rules around here!  
We're trying to accomplish something!  
- Thomas A. Edison*

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# Windows XP for Dummies

Book Review

Reviewed by Tommy Towery

You know you're a dummy when you get an easy book, and never get around to using it. That's the way I was with this one, and it is my fault that the review comes so late. This book is exactly what it says it is, a book for dummies (aka the "uninformed"). And if that is the position in which you find yourself in this age of ever changing hardware, software, and operating systems, then this book will help you.

The truth be known, it was not the right book for me. That is my fault. I expected it to be a book that would take me from *Windows 98* and *Windows 2000* into the brave new world of *XP*. Well, it does that, but it takes a lot of following the yellow brick road to get to Emerald City.

The author expects that you know nothing about *XP*, which is good. But he also expects you to know nothing about icons, and cursors, and windows, and desktops, and folders and files. It is a "start from the basic" dummy book. If you have been into computers for as long as some of us, this is way too basic a book for your needs.

The first bit of pure *XP* knowledge that this dummy gained was on page 127, which explained how I could change the user account picture next to my name on the logon screen. Now that is neat. It then tells you how you can set up multiple accounts so that each family member can

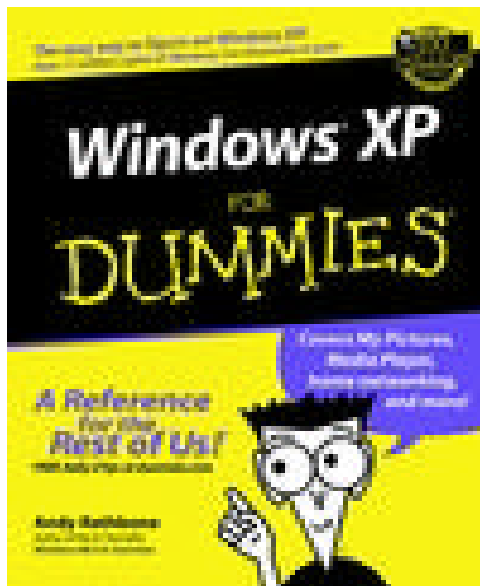
have his or her own settings – a procedure not new to *Windows 2000* users. Chapter nine goes more into the network concept, which might not be new to some *Windows* users, but might be handy if you are joining the rest of the world and setting up your own home network. Chapter 10 takes you into a better knowledge of the *XP*'s desktop, start menu, and taskbar. There are some different items and ways of looking at things here in *XP* than in previous versions, and it explains them all very well.

In Chapter 11, the author once again expects that you know nothing about "My Computer" or files or folders, and Chapter 12 expects that the dummies of the world have never surfed the Web or sent e-mail, because the examples are all very simple. Another new world of sound, movies, and the media chapter are the concentration of Chapter 13, and a good amount of knowledge of these items is easily understood reading the chapter. Many new multi-media users will find this chapter very helpful in understanding the lingo and other things.

The next best chapter for those of you who are just migrating from an earlier version of *Windows* to *XP* is Chapter 18, which explains 10 exciting new features of *XP*, especially the remote access. Then the author turns around in Chapter 19 and lists 10 aggravating things that come with *XP* but tells you how to fix them – like *XP* leaving the volume control off of the taskbar.

Bottom line: if you are just now entering the world of *Windows*, the whole book will help you. If you are simply migrating from an earlier *Windows* version to *XP*, you will waste your money on the first half of the book. But then, you might feel that it is not a waste if you get what you wanted to know out of the last half.

*Windows XP for Dummies* by Andy Rathbone. (2001). John Wiley and Sons. \$22. 384 pages.



# How to Use Microsoft Windows XP – Bestseller Edition

*Book Review*

Reviewed by Rick Fischer

Targeting the beginner, *How to Use Microsoft Windows XP* outlines the most critical features of *Windows XP*, then shows you how to use them.

When I move to a new operating system I create a set of notes for myself on the new features. My notes are always in the form of a checklist. This time Que has done it for me. *How to Use Microsoft Windows XP* is my checklist – with step-by-step instructions and color screen captures that show me what to do. Although I am not a beginner, I appreciate the straightforward introduction to this new operating system.

**Lots of Bookmarks.** My copy is full of bookmarks that signal something I will return to often.

**Publishing a file to the Web.** It's a new feature and one I probably wouldn't have discovered if I only had one of the large reference-type books.

**Working Away** (from the office). Not a new feature, but one I now understand better and will try. In a simple "Here's what it can do and here's how to do it" style, you can easily decide whether the feature is useful to you. And, if it is, here's

how to start using it immediately.

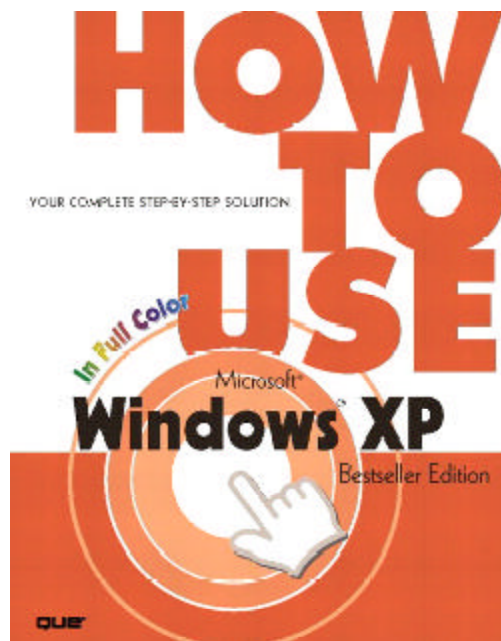
**How to Record Music.** I see I don't need an add-on program to copy tracks from a CD. Nor do I need one to make movies.

I know I will return to how to change display settings, customize the task bar and change folder options. I also have sticky tabs in how to back up your files, the restore function and system maintenance functions.

And, few of the topics take more than two pages to explain (exception: "how to make music"). The "hint" at the end of the topic is well worth your time. It gives alternate ways of doing something or provides a caveat that really helps you understand what's going on.

A beginner should be delighted with this book. The more experienced will appreciate what it took to reduce pages and pages of dense text to a very accessible tool.

How to Use Microsoft Windows XP – Bestseller Edition by Walter Glenn. 2003. Que. 282 pages. \$30.



# Silicon Gulch Comes to Town!

By Gil Hennon, Editor

*Editorial*

Because of a super-heater project due to deliver by the end of the year, we decided to stay home for Christmas. In an email to the Old Timers, we expressed sad regrets that we were breaking more than ten years of tradition. Even more seriously, we would miss the Old Timers' renowned Christmas dinner and, of course, their famous grog.

One of the high points of each annual trek out to Silicon Gulch is the after-dinner conversation—sometimes referred to as “the bull throwing session” or “the war stories.” That’s when the Old Timers recount some of the past year’s adventures tracking down viruses and other computerized evil. Down in the Gulch, they have buried a lot of malicious code, but every virus and Trojan they snuff is pretty quickly replaced by an equal or even worse threat. After a big meal at the Old Timers’ cabin, washed down with plenty of grog, there are plenty of wild tales around the fireplace. So it was with a great deal of disappointment that we bowed out of the festivities this year. It would be a quiet Christmas with the family, or that was what we expected. And that’s how it was for a little while.

Late in the afternoon on Christmas Eve, the phone rang. It was our neighbor across the street, the one who keeps an eye on our place when we are away. Only he knew we were staying home this year. Were we aware, he wanted to know, of a very odd-looking vehicle in our driveway and its even more suspicious occupants. Oversized versions of the Seven Dwarves had been going in and out of the huge, ugly truck for nearly a half hour. Several were out and about the neighborhood at that very moment.

Well, no, we didn’t know about any of that. I peeked out the window and recog-

nized what might have been the result of an Alabama wedding between a tank and a school bus. The Old Timers’ acquired their truck from an Army surplus junk yard. Its basic color is rust—real rust—accented with petrified mud and lingering patches of faded paint from several dozen failed attempts to beautify the beast. The wheels are big enough to climb out of the ruts in the old road through the Gulch and provide about three feet of clearance between the ground and the rectangular cab and body. Imagine a railroad boxcar on tractor tires and you’re getting close.

Behind the driver’s seat, protruding from the roof, is a swivel mounting for a machine gun. The weapon is long gone. In its place is a directional antenna made from a Pringles potato chip can. As I watched, the can swivelled back and forth across the horizon. The huge truck suddenly leaned toward the wheel with the broken spring, then righted itself and rocked from side-to-side.

We weren’t expecting the Old Timers at our house. We had not prepared for them. I suddenly wondered how many split seconds our small Christmas turkey would last in an encounter with Old Timer appetites. As it turned out, that worry was premature. Inside the truck we found only a few of the Old Timers. One was fiddling with a laptop computer haphazardly connected to a tangle of cabling that stretched across several large boxes. He was making a list of wireless access nodes discovered during their “war drive” from the Gulch and paying no attention at all to a pair of his cohorts offering inscrutable advice from the seat all the way at the back of the truck. I stepped carefully around the boxes and curiously peeked inside a couple of them. They were filled with food, or, to be

specific, were full of the fixings the Old Timers always prepared for their Christmas feast. And, of course, there were about a dozen big jugs of grog! One of the back seat occupants asked why I was late. The other was smitten with hiccoughs and belches. I lifted the jug wedged between them. It was nearly empty!

Outside the truck, a few nosy neighbors had gathered at the end of our driveway. A half block away there was another commotion in progress. We never get all of the details from there, but it seems that the rest of the Old Timers had scattered throughout the neighborhood yards, carports, and houses. They were testing the limits of Bluetooth communications by playing cell phone games around and between various obstacles. One of them wandered haphazardly around houses and fences, stopping every few yards to hold his shiny new PDA to his ear. Then he would yell, "Do you hear me now?"

When we finally got all of the Old Timers herded back to our house and the truck emptied, neighbors began going back to whatever they were doing before all the excitement began. Well, not all of them right away. A few who stayed for a closer look at the truck quickly developed head wobbles and began mumbling among themselves.

We brought extra tables from all over the house and our turkey and dressing got lost among the Old Timers' provisions. There wasn't enough room left for anyone to sit in the dining room though, so everyone wandered about the house. What might have been a badly organized parade wound continuously through the dining room, where plates were refilled and cups reloaded with grog on each passage. But as the tables emptied and bellies filled, the crowd gravitated toward the den in much the same way as it always happened at the cabin in the Gulch. There was still something missing. Everyone seemed expectant, but not quite ready to start the conversational phase of the

party. Lack of grog wasn't a problem. There was just no one willing to tell the first tale. Then one of the Old Timers went to the computer on the desk in the corner. He brought up a browser, did a Google search, and found a Web cam site focused on a large hearth with a crackling fire. Everyone sighed collectively and settled down on couches, cushions, or just the floor. The recap of 2002 began.

It started off pretty much like any other year. There were still a few old viruses left around. Sircam and Magistr were among the worst problems of 2001, and they still were doing business-enough to keep them in the top ten infections of 2002. The same was true of Nimda, the worm that caused so much trouble for server administrators. Nimda embarked on a comeback tour in mid-year when the security patch that had killed it was mistakenly omitted from a cumulative upgrade and systems were again vulnerable. The MyParty virus showed up just after the New Year celebrations were over, and a lot of computers were infected when their owners tried to look at what they thought were pictures on a party animal friend's Yahoo Web site.

The Yaha virus used a similar ploy, encouraging email recipients to install an attached Valentine Day screen saver. As you can probably guess, instead of a screen saver, the computer was infected with a mass-mailing virus that harvests email addresses from temporary Internet file folders. Even though most computer users have learned-possibly the hard way-not to open unexpected attachments, Yaha still fooled enough of them to be one of 2002's more successful infections.

In March and into April, an email that appeared to be from Microsoft was both a hoax and a virus. Recipients were encouraged to immediately install an attached operating system patch file. The attachment was named and numbered in a manner similar to previous Microsoft patches, but when run it installed the Gibe

virus and a Trojan backdoor into the computer which allowed a remote hacker to take control. Microsoft quickly confirmed the presence of the virus and put warning information on its Website. Copycat hackers revived this hoax later in October using the Apher worm as a payload. They also tied Microsoft and Russia's Kaspersky Labs into the text, but the gag had gone stale and few users fell for it the second time around.

Even though Napster was forced to shut down its servers by court order, music fans weren't ready to stop swapping files. A fresh swap tool named Kazaa exploded in popularity. Any file that is downloaded more than three million times per week from a single source is going to interest virus authors, and Kazaa was no exception. First the Benjamin worm targeted Kazaa swappers in May, and then the KWBot worm came after them in July. Benjamin and KWBot both used a similar scheme to spread; they disguised themselves as music and movies to attract victims. Both worms were also initially mistaken for "decoy" files planted by the movie and music industry on free peer-to-peer services in an effort to frustrate file swappers. The Kazaa tool has also been found to contain spyware and an underhanded background application that steals sales commissions from charity and non-profit Web sites, but that doesn't seem to bother Kazaa's fans. It continues to be the most popular download on the Web.

The summer months were also invaded by an updated variant of the Frethem mass-mailing virus. Frethem contains an embedded SMTP mailing engine that finds email addresses anywhere on an infected machine. Although it is not destructive, Frethem spreads rapidly and also uses the Internet to notify its "home" server of each successful infection. Frethem exploits a vulnerability in Microsoft Internet Explorer, and was one of the factors that led to the discovery of

many other security vulnerabilities in the IE browser, which resulted in a steady procession of software patches for IE and also Outlook.

An old hoax staged a revival near the end of summer. Many users deleted a Windows system file named JDBGMGR.EXE when an alarming email message claimed the file was a virus. This hoax originated a couple of years ago and perhaps gets some credibility from the file's whimsical icon—a teddy bear! It is a Java control file that normally is found in the windows\system32 folder. Deleting it causes no harm to a computer, although an error message may appear in its absence when certain types of Java code are encountered on the Web. JDBGMGR.EXE can easily be replaced by copying it from another computer back into its customary location. The hoax's worst effects were to clog email servers for several days and eat up a lot of bandwidth all around the world.

Rogue code authors staged their version of the Olympic Games in September with a rash of new infections. Throughout the month the frequency of suspicious Trojan attacks against Windows 2000 servers led to the discovery of widespread exploitation of an operating system vulnerability. The Backdoor.IRC.Flood Trojan was installing instant messaging clients in servers, then modifying system security settings to allow remote control of the system resources.

Also in September, the anniversary of the World Trade Center attack offered an opportunity for the Chet virus to infect machines. Chet arrived in an email attachment named 11september.exe and seemed to be a memorial presentation. Chet mailed itself to everyone in the infected machine's address book, but a bug in the code made the virus unstable after it had run for a while. It originated in Russia and was mainly a problem there and in Europe. Politically, Chet was notable be-

cause it displayed a message on the screen claiming that the “U.S. and England have been bombing Iraq” and that “a money laundering scandal is the purpose.”

Windows was not the only system to have several security holes exposed during 2002; Linux code coughed up some vulnerabilities too. Fortunately, only one Linux hole wasn't plugged before it could be exploited, and the Open Source community is still the best at admitting its faults and speedily fixing problems. The Linux.Slapper worm did get under the door in September by using a unique peer-to-peer networking attack against Linux Apache Web servers. The worm moved so quickly that nearly 30,000 servers were infected in about 48 hours before a patch fixing the open SSL protocol could be distributed. Slapper also exposed one of the few chinks in Open Source armor: Since source code is publicly available, copycat hackers were able to churn out several Slapper variants very quickly.

Last, but not least for September, many Windows users were brought down by the Klez virus. Klez was not really a new threat—it had been around for several months—but the resurrected variant, Klez.H, turned out to be the “baddest bug” of the year. Klez infections peaked during September and for six months of the year it was found on more computers than any other virus. Klez accounted for one out of every four infected computers in 2002. Much of its success is due to its secrecy. Klez teases a user with error messages that cannot be confirmed, but does not otherwise produce a payload that advertises its presence. It spreads by email, but spoofs the sender so no one knows exactly where it came from. It also sends out random documents from the infected computer to surprised recipients. Klez knows how to disable anti-virus and Internet communication tools to keep users from discovering its presence. Klez

is also one of the most difficult viruses to remove from an infected system.

The number two bad bug of 2002 followed in October. The Bugbear worm (known as Tanatos in Europe) is a variant of last year's Badtrans worm. Both move very quickly using misleading email subject lines like “Get 8 issues free” to entice users to read the mail, then exploit a vulnerability in Microsoft Outlook that allows them to infect without needing the user to open the attachment. If that's not bad enough, both Badtrans and Bugbear install a keystroke logging tool that records everything a user types and sends it back to its home server. When those keystroke logs contain passwords and credit card numbers, the virus author has hit pay dirt! Bugbear, like Klez, is a very difficult worm to remove.

November and December brought in some more new viruses, but so far none have been seriously threatening. Winevar is very destructive, but hasn't spread too much. Besides mucking about in the Registry and disabling software it doesn't like, Winevar tends to display smart-aleck dialog boxes that insult the user, so it is quickly recognized. The Lioten worm (perhaps better known as the Iraq Oil network worm) travels from one machine to another through shared folders visible across a network. Lioten hasn't had much success infecting computers protected by a firewall.

As the last virus tale wound down on Christmas Eve, most of the Old Timers were already snoring. Santa had to maneuver through sprawled hills of bodies and paths blocked by arms and legs to put presents under the tree. His effort was apparently worth the trouble though. There had been at least a glassful of grog left in that last jug, but after Santa was gone, it was empty!

At the crack of dawn on Christmas morning, the Old Timers climbed aboard their monster truck. Just before they roared out of our driveway and down the

## November - December Meeting Report

street, they mentioned that as bad as the viruses and worms of 2002 were, we probably haven't seen anything yet. They expect that future malicious code will be even smarter and more selective. It will know how to target specific computers or users. It will be adept at harvesting specific information from homes and offices. It will live very comfortably in any network environment without making its presence known. Viruses in days to come will trash operating systems when their primary task is complete so no one will ever know exactly what information was compromised. Worms and Trojans will infect more computers quicker than ever before, taking advantage of super-fast processors and networks. The Old Timers expect anti-virus and other protective tools to improve too, but, as usual, they will always be playing catch-up. The bad bugs always have the advantage. So be vigilant and suspicious. Anything unusual might be an indication of infection!



Our own Wizard, John Schuster, showed us how he works his magic on vintage audio recordings to bring them back to near their original quality. John demonstrated three audio editing programs, Diamond Cut, Dart Pro, and Cool Edit Pro. His favorite is Cool Edit Pro, which costs about \$200, but is the most powerful and easiest to use of the three. Along with the demos, John brought us up to speed on audio terminology. We now know that a song is actually a track, and why we must match the impedance of source and destination when connecting audio equipment.

A track John copied to his PC from an old 78 RPM record had clicks, pops, rumble, and a background noise. He uses a four step method for restoration. In each step, he experiments on a small, representative portion of the track until he finds the solution that produces the best results. Then he performs an undo to put the portion back as it was originally and applies the solution to the entire track.

1. Use a "declick" filter to remove clicks and pops that the editing program is already configured to recognize.
2. Experiment with equalization to remove or reduce the frequencies that contain unwanted noise.
3. Visually locate and remove the clicks and noises large enough to be identified in the displayed waveform. These can be "cut out" as long as one is careful to match the transition of the wave and not create an abrupt change.
4. Create a background noise profile from a portion of the track that should be completely quiet, then use the profile as a template for the editor to know what it should remove from the entire track.

John warned us that not all noise can be successfully removed. At some point, the sound of the recording will start to degrade. But his demonstration showed that a lot of improvement can be achieved through careful editing. For a conclusion, John treated us to his "home studio" recording of "My Wild Irish Rose" in four part harmony—and each of the four parts performed by John himself! The talents of MPCUG members know no boundaries!

*Imagination  
is more important  
than knowledge.  
- Albert Einstein*

# Special Edition Using Microsoft Visio 2002

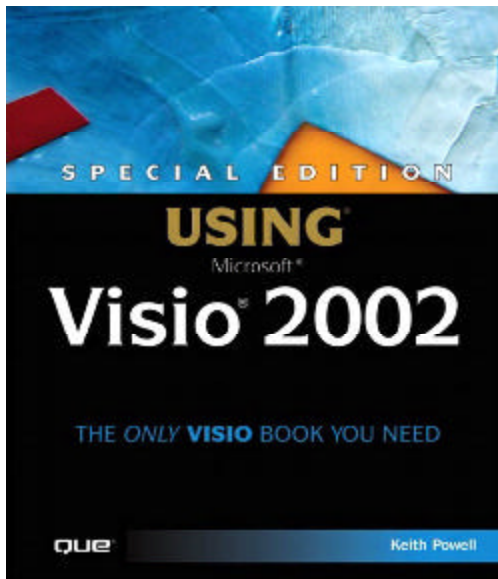
Book Review

Reviewed by Rick Fischer

Your *Visio* manual will get you going and, thanks to a very mature design, you'll be able to get work done almost immediately. But, as I recently discovered, there's a lot more to learn about Microsoft *Visio 2002*.

Surprise. There are more tools available than appear on the screen. I hadn't noticed the option to see more icons. There are lots more.

I had figured out the various logics of connecting shapes (static and dynamic), but they are spelled out clearly in the book (chap 8). That chapter also covers how to make and save your own shape designs.



## New Territory (for me)

I bookmarked the section on finding objects. The Find Shape tool initiates the search function. I clicked, I told it I wanted a PDA (palm-type device), and seconds later there appeared in the stencil area a picture of a PDA. Great!

How about a phone? Same drill. Within seconds I got a portable phone. Ok, I was *thinking* house-type phone, but this will do for now.

But *Visio* also will look for objects stored at the Microsoft site. I connected to the Internet and ran the phone search again. Up pops an office-type phone (with all the buttons to transfer calls) and another cell phone design.

I found the section on creating new stencils very useful. You'll learn step by step how to create a new stencil with all the shapes you typically use. Don't

forget, Microsoft stores lots of extra shapes on its Website.

Many of you work in a corporate setting where it is expected that your work will have a consistent look. Easily done with custom templates (see chap 12).

I was not aware *Visio* had Wizards. Perhaps that's because they are four levels down in the menu structure. So I learned from this book

I revisited *Visio's* charts and graphs feature. Powell says "think of *Visio 2002* as being a 'Cadillac' of chart making and chart manipulation, whereas *Excel* falls more into the 'Pinto' category" (p. 256). *Visio* does offer a lot of control (although so did *Harvard Graphics*). You will learn how to custom-make each chart.

Powell shows you how to customize *Visio 2002* (chap 20) and play with Mind Maps (chap 27). That section left me wanting to know more about the subject of "mind mapping." Sorry, no references cited. I will have to start a fresh search on my own. I've been to seminars on the topic but everyone seems to want to sell you a mind map, not tell you how to do it yourself.

I visited several of the references in the resources section (App. A). I downloaded the free *Visio* Smart Clip Art add-in from the Microsoft site. Cool.

*Special Edition Using Microsoft Visio 2002* will show you the boundaries of *Visio* and guide you in getting your work done. I think I have a pretty good grasp of what *Visio* will and will not do. Isn't that what a book like this is supposed to do?

Special Edition Using Microsoft Visio 2002 by Keith Powell (2002). Que. 514 pages. \$35.

# Absolute Beginner's Guide to Adobe Photoshop Elements 2

*Book Review*

## Reviewed by Rick Fischer

"*Absolute Beginner's Guide to Adobe Photoshop Elements 2* teaches you how to perform digital photography magic by explaining the fundamentals of correcting and improving images, and then building on those skills for even more amazing results. Not only will you learn the nuts and bolts of color correction and digital manipulation, but you'll also receive a crash course in preparing your pictures for use on the Web. This book also includes valuable how-to advice you can use over and over for quick reference help."

That's what it promises. It just doesn't promise that it will happen over night.

And that's a good thing, because even a beginner's guide to a complex topic like this takes time - and practice.

The tag line on the back cover says: "Who knew how simple Photoshop Elements could be?" Who indeed? Plan on using the program a lot to develop those skills.

## The approach

The book is heavy on text with supplemental black and white screenshots to make major points. The narrative carries the instruction. You'll find checklists mixed in with the description. And it seems to work.

Topics like color systems and Photoshop Elements tools lend themselves to description. But I also think the idea of "working" should also consider the reader. That's why we see books that range from the those heavy on narration (gray text) on one extreme, to those that are constructed as checklists with a color picture for each step on the other. The buyer needs to consider his/her own learning style. This book is a blend of those two approaches.

Since the "Absolute Beginner's Guide to. . ." is part of a series, you might see whether it fits your preferred learning style. It seems to be targeted at the same people who would buy "The Complete Idiot's Guide to. . ."

## Content

As a beginners guide it walks you through everything - work area, tools, menu selections, basic concepts. We open files, save files, import from cameras and scanners and print.

The magic of a program like this comes from playing with our images. So we have to learn the fundamentals. This is where a tutorial would have been helpful - something that implies homework, or something to practice on. Lee covers the different color systems, the terms used in color corrections, and what it means to apply an effect. This is best done in a class with a good instructor or with a really well-designed self-paced program.

We see how layers are used in *Photoshop Elements 2*. That's a good time to bring in the concept of adding text and shapes since they usually reside on their own layer.

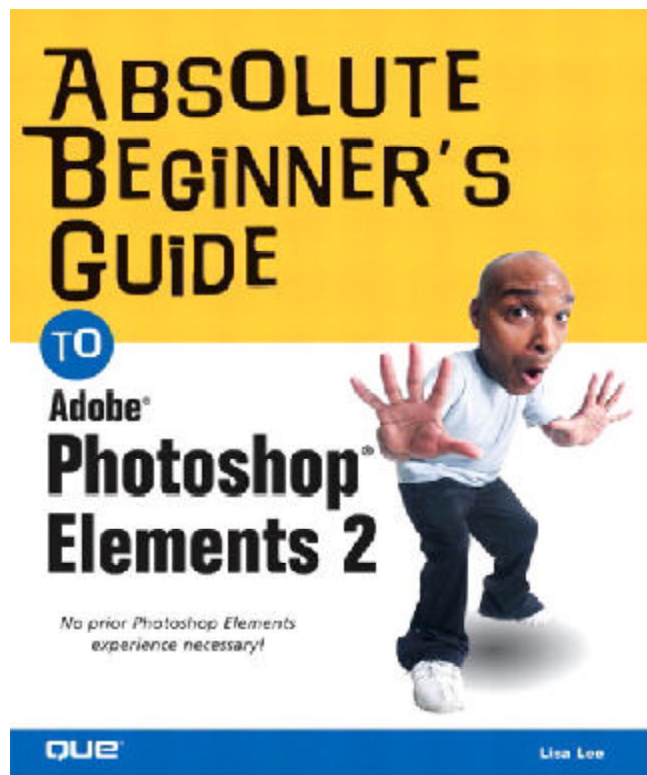
I bookmarked the section on repairing images and read with interest the parts about moving elements from one image to another. I also bookmarked

the part that explains (fortunately in checklist form) how to insert an image in text.

Should you need to “stitch” together several images into a panorama, she’s got you covered. We end by noting the special capabilities for grouping images into a PDF slideshow (I’m very interested in this one) and placing images into frames for the Web.

I read the book as one would read a novel, from front to back. I highlighted topics of particular interest. I now have the fundamentals and know where to find the answers. Now it’s up to me to practice, practice, practice.

Absolute beginner’s Guide to Aobe Photoshop Elements 2 by Lisa Lee. (2002). Que. 414 pages. \$19.



## Memphis PC Users Group Membership Application

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Membership # \_\_\_

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Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: \$35 per year

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	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JAN 2003	6	7 DOT.NET	8	9 VISUAL STUDIO	10	11 WEB WRITERS MS OFFICE
JAN 2003	13 WORDPERFECT	14	15	16	17	18
JAN 2003	20 CLIPPER	21	22 MAIN MEETING	23	24	25 INVESTMENTS
JAN - FEB 2003	27	28	29	30	31	1 INTERNET HARDWARE
FEB 2003	3	4 DOT.NET	5	6	7	8 WEB WRITERS MS OFFICE
FEB 2003	10	11	12	13 VISUAL STUDIO	14	15