

Antelope Valley Microcomputer Users Group

AVMUG Newsletter

January, 2004

Next AVMUG Meeting:

- *Wed. January 13, 2004*
- *7:00 P.M.*
- *Lancaster Senior Center*
- *777 West Jackman*
- *Lancaster, CA*
- *Information: 661/942-1912*

NOTE: Early Meeting!

This month we will be meeting on the **SECOND TUESDAY**, January 13th, instead of the third Wednesday!

This change is dictated by pending floor refinishing at the meeting hall. Sorry you're so late getting this newsletter. It's entirely our editor's fault. But please be there!



One of our 2003 meetings. You'll see big changes with the new projector for 2004 meetings!

Our Leaders:

Robert Lion President

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Marty Graham Secretary

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Dick Thompson Editor

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Our Internet Site:

<http://www.avmug.av.org>

Our Phones:

AVMUG 661/942-1912

MUG Flaps 661/946-3249

Computers from the Very Beginning

Monitors

Just as understanding computer memory can be confusing, so can understanding a computer display, one of the most important parts of a computer.

The display, which also can be called a monitor, is connected to a computer by a cable that attaches to a video card inside a computer. Troubles with a display can be traced to the cable, the card inside the computer, software that drives the card, the display itself or some piece of equipment nearby.

Monitors can be found in various sizes and shapes but even the best of monitors can be made to look bad if any of the other parts and pieces are not working correctly or of poor quality. A monitor is only as good as the video card in your computer and the software that runs that video card and monitor.

Let's focus first on the monitor.

Of all the parts and pieces that make up a computer system, the

monitor is one part that you shouldn't scrimp on. If you plan to have a computer for a long time, then buck up and spend the money for a good one. Although you may buy a new computer, you can always use your old monitor on it -- especially if you buy a good quality monitor.

In that purchase, there's a lot to consider.

Although you can find monitors less than 17 inches in size, I don't recommend buying one. Since some very cheap systems come with smaller monitors, it's something you should guard

against when looking at buying a system that comes with a monitor.

Resolution and dot pitch are very important when it comes to monitors.

A computer screen is made up of dots and these are measured in dot pitch. In this case, you always go with the lowest number, with a cutoff of 28 dot pitch. Anything larger than that will give you a grainy display. More expensive models come with a dot pitch of 24.

Resolution is another measure of a monitor. Common resolutions include 640x480,



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800x600, 1024x768 and 1280x1024. Even if your monitor can do higher resolutions, if your video card can't, then you won't be able to use them.

Why should you care about resolution? By using higher resolutions, you can fit more on your screen. A Web page viewed at 640x480 displays very little information. By boosting your resolution to 800x600 or 1024x768, you can fit more pixels on the screen, thus increasing your viewing area.

Another feature to check before buying a monitor is its refresh rate. Although many makers claim their monitors are able to display higher resolutions, these are often delivered at a rate lower than 72Hz, meaning that your eyes will see flicker. This is hard on your eyes and will make your eyes tire quicker than a higher refresh rate.

In today's world, the hot item is a "flat panel" LCD monitor; but, just because it's hot and the

salesmen are pushing it, doesn't mean you should buy it. Although many of us lust after a flat panel, there are drawbacks:

- * Small type often doesn't look good on one. If you're considering one, be sure to look at some small type faces in the store before you buy it. If a salesperson is handy, get them to start Wordpad (or Word) and make the type nine- or 10 point. Be sure to check around the edges of the LCD to see if the image blurs on either side.

- * Often, an LCD is "fixed" to a certain resolution, such as 1024x768. Be sure that you like the way icons and type appears on screen before buying. If the type is too small (or too large), try another resolution. If the type appears jagged or blurry, then the LCD might look best at one resolution.

- * Color is not rendered sharply by less expensive flat panels. If it's a bargain basement flat panel, the color on a normal CRT probably will be better.



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The availability of these flat panels mean that the CRT monitors -- the old style larger monitors -- are getting less expensive. About a year ago, I purchased a 21-inch Sony (almost top of the line) for less than \$500 off the Internet. It has beautiful color, is capable of rendering higher resolutions at a high refresh rate.

The push to flat panels also has opened up a huge market for used monitors since many people are replacing the older CRTs with this new style of monitor. Because of this, I've found used 17-inch monitors for less than \$80 and 19-inch monitors for about \$125.

Bottom line: A good rule of thumb for monitors is at least a 1024x768 resolution at 72Hz, no dot pitch larger than 26 and no smaller than 17 inches.

Unless you've got a space problem (CRTs are much larger than flat panel monitors), I'd stick with CRT monitors rather than a flat panel, which will cost less

in the future as manufactures ramp up production of them. You can bet on that.

By *Charlie Paschal*

Editor/Publisher, Palmetto Per-

sonal Computer Club, Columbia, SC

Columnist, The (Columbia) State newspaper, SC



President's Corner: Direction

I hope you had a great New Year. This is a great time to start your New Year's resolutions. AVMUG has a talented board ready to take on 2004 and meet what I think will be one of the most challenging years facing the club. This year, we will continue to adjust our programs and structure to be responsive to present and future member needs.

For AVMUG to be successful, everyone will have to do their part in improving and aiding the club to grow. Like many other user groups, we must broaden the appeal of the club to attract new members. We will try many things in an effort to find our best set point. Our meetings should be as beneficial as we can make them. I think you will find you will benefit in direction portion to your contribution and participation. This is your club and it can only be as good as you make it.

This year, some our gifted

members will be asked to contribute their expertise to assist the club in critical areas. If you have information or ideas that can help the club, please let me know. Our club computer will have current office and digital programs installed and we will need experienced members to do mini (5-10 minute) demonstrations to qualify the club to additional free user group software. If you have experience in 2003 Microsoft Office Suite applications, please share your knowledge. We should have our media projector operational soon, and will project our demonstrations on the big screen.

This year, we will ask presenters to provide an informational handout sheet at the meetings. I recommend you set up a binder to house your notes and informational sheets. Our Librarian will maintain a club notebook, for members to re-

view. These informational handouts and a copy of the past years newsletters will be provided in our new members kit which we should have available by June.

We will need a few people to take on minor projects to keep the club functioning. We also will need a club liaison to assist with user group relations and interaction with the senior center and our sister club, the Lancaster Photography Association. We also need a volunteer to assist with setting up hot and cold water for the meetings if we are to continue to have refreshments.

To strengthen our club relations, we will provide club name tags. I want to encourage members to get to know each other and share their computing experiences. We are a small club and should get to know each other and share our experiences.

Our Vice President, Gerry,



President's Corner: Direction

has some strong leads for guest speakers. We will also use more "member" talent this year. If you know anyone who would be a good presenter, or if you have any program ideas, please make your recommendations to Gerry. We need to set up a list of presenter talent for this and future years.

Marty, our secretary, will set up a group of file folders which will include our years activities, programs, board notes, name list of members and officers, listing of Lifetime members, newsletters, and treasurers reports so next year, there will be a years history to hand to the new administration. This should prove invaluable to new officers in planning out future club events and analyzing club trends.

Our treasurer will continue to maintain our financial records and make periodic reports to the membership.

Dick Thompson will continue his exceptional job as Newsletter Editor. I've asked him to select articles this year which

concentrate on computer basics, so the expertise level in the club can be built up.

Ray Coronado will be our new Librarian and will be setting up our club notebook and providing our great club user disks. He will explain the new month's program selection at our meetings. If you have any favorite freeware programs, please let him hear your suggestion.

Ray Coronado will also lead our club workshop sessions and we will examine possible organization of the workshops in to smaller groups. We anticipate a basic group, and an intermediate/advanced group. Each group leader could bring in a computer or use the club computer and our club monitors for demonstrations. Hands on PC equipment installation and basic maintenance as well as more advanced topics as requested could be covered. If the workshop format proves beneficial and popular, we can have more of them. Working in a small group, you will have more op-

portunity to ask questions and actually try hands on projects. If you know of any companies that are getting rid of their old computers, please pass the word to us and maybe we can get them for workshop demonstrations and disassembly.

This will also be a year of growth. We will provide you with club welcome cards, so you may hand them out to anyone you talk to who is interested in attending a meeting. When guests arrive, please make them feel welcome. We need each of you to bring in at least one new member so the club will have an adequate treasury for our door prize drawings.

This year, we shall streamline the club and update the bylaws to reflect how we actually operate. With some members having privacy reservations, the club will only require your name with your dues, and if you desire to have a newsletter emailed

to you, you will have the option of providing an email address.

I hope you will support the board and I with your participation to make this one of our best years yet.

Bob Lion

