

**2002 Roundup, April 11-14, Orlando, FL  
Nonprofit Techie Saddlebag Session, Friday 2:45-3:45 PM**

**Note taker: Lisa Rau, Confluence**

**Introduction**

This session is a little like the dueling banjos except it's the dueling geeks.

**Rob Stuart (Strategic Technology Initiatives)  
Matt Sharp (Packard Foundation)**

How groups can help integrate tools into their work, and talk about the special role that nonprofit techies play in bringing those tools to those groups.

**Questions they will try to address:**

How to integrate these tools into the work so they are not intimidating.  
How the tech saddlebag can make a difference.  
How to push the envelope without looking like a techno-geek.  
Where to get advice.

**The Techno-color gear**

- Digital sound
- Digital imaging
- Digital video
- Wireless
- And other fun stuff

**Digital Sound:** Music is the universal language. Music can help convey information, put people in a good mood to better hear information, good for storytelling. Music has a relatively low cost to entry – a sound recorder is built-in to most computers, and the infrastructure that has been built up around the sharing of music, etc, can be used for speech and other audio content.

The infrastructure is there to download media files – this can be used to convey information and instructions.

**Digital Images:** A picture is worth 1,000 words. A great way to document things, and put a face on things. Images can help bring additional understanding. Multiple media outlets – we see more images on the web and ability to drop images into MS Word and MS Excel. Our brains are good at assimilating image information – so a combination of words and images is more powerful than either alone. With respect to email, attaching a picture to an email is transformative in

terms of providing people with context for information. People will remember the content of information in an email more if there is a picture that goes along with it.

Digital imaging may seem like a luxury, but the per-use cost is low. Many devices have rechargeable batteries. People tend to use more rather than less, and then things like organization of digital photos becomes more important. A small digital camera was displayed that costs \$299 – some are available for \$100.

Some digital cameras have underwater housings as well.

**Digital Video:** Digital video can captivate people. Just setting up the camera and letting it roll is an excellent documentation tool. Rob videos focus groups and can re-use the clips for other purposes. It documents the environment more completely. Can get a PC / laptop card. Both the control of the video camera as well as the content flow through a “firewire” in real time – dealing with large volume of data. The costs of digital video are falling and the editing tools are getting easier.

It is nice to lend tools to groups so they can see how useful it can be. One group put digital sound, music and imaging together – (case study is MoveOn.org). This was a challenge to make a mailing list “come alive”. The challenge was it was a remote mailing list provided via CD ROM. This started with the founder talking. (a demo was shown).

What does it take? It takes money. A lot of these tools however aren’t as expensive as people think they are. It does take time to learn how to use this stuff, plug it in effectively and get it to work. Finally, it takes patience to know what it is and get it to work.

#### **From Matt:**

Wireless receiver: Sometimes Matt sees something on his Palm that we want to print out – he thought “802-11-b” – he demonstrated the ability remote print via a wireless connection to a printer from his Palm. Matt also showed the wireless connection from his laptop.

A wireless receiver costs \$149 or so.

Matt also brought out a little USB worm light. He demonstrated a piccolo – it is a 64 MB of storage on a USB. When running Windows XP it is like a portable floppy – the driver is on the disk – it’s like a plug-and-play device to put pictures, or other items on it.

Using an 802-11-b ad-hoc network, he used NetMeeting to show the ability to connect – although this doesn't make much sense because if you are in range of the wireless device, you can just talk to someone.

Global information networks – the range of information sources available to PDAs is large.

### **Some Lessons**

The saddlebag and the high-tech things have to match up with what the groups actually need. It is important to integrate the tools into the work so they aren't so intimidating. Just showing people in the course of the work what the tools can do helps a lot. It is important to show people that the tools can solve problems, not create them. We don't want to push tools on people who are not ready. There should be appropriate support and training. There should be evaluation to make sure it is working.

That being said, it's fun to push the envelope a little and be creative. We don't know if something is going to work unless we are creative.

### **Q&A**

#### **What is the best tool for a saddlebag?**

PDA, imagination, paper, insights to not be afraid, the piccolo, education, a wireless connector between your mouth and their ears, a clip on the bag to keep it closed so stuff doesn't fall out, a subscription to the circuit rider Listserv, N-TEN membership.