

Uses for old CDs?

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by Gordon Woolf

What do you do with that pile of now-useless CDs? One-off transfers of large files that will never be needed again, last year's editions of anti-virus programs and free trials of ISPs that merged or went belly-up.

There are also the many "frisbees" -- the output of CD writers when you forget to disable the screen saver or defragmenter or there was a hesitation in the power supply.

Increasingly too there will be the backup CDs made with low-grade dyes that fail after a year or less.

Recyclers don't want any of these plastic discs so they end in the wheelie bin on their way to landfills. But why? There are uses for some of them at least, as I found when I asked some net-friends (people I've never met face-to-face, but who are everyday contacts over the Internet).

A common suggestion is to use them as coasters, but they have a problem in that role -- the liquid stays on the surface and still drips from the glass or stubby.

Carole Majors in the USA had an answer for that: "I found a lovely recipe for crocheting CD covers that make them into real absorbable coasters. I think it turned up one day while I was 'googling' for some resource on CD-R uses...
<<http://www.crochetmemories.com/archive/misc4.html>>

Marc Zeedar (who wrote a very different kind of word processor, Z-Write, that is currently only for the Mac but which he's promised to transport to Windows): "I've heard they make beautiful mobiles -- the lovely rainbow colors from the CDs look pretty spinning around"

Former Adobe magazine editor Wendy Katz in Seattle tells:

"My husband had an old microwave oven that he was intent on destroying, and he used to put the trashed CDs in it and fire it up. Made a heckuva sound and light show, with an olfactory track to boot. One new microwave and two impressionable kids later, he's kicked the habit." That's one suggestion we don't recommend.

Sue Mitchell in Fairbanks, Alaska, looking forward to a summer which we would regard as being too cold for winter, but who, unbelievably, has an ISP with the name "mosquitonet", wrote: "I've seen people selling clocks made from CDs with the hands inserted through the hole in the center. Either with painted faces or just plain as they were manufactured.

To that, and closer to home, Loraine Chapman, who seemingly commutes between publication production work in Brisbane and Thailand, added: "You have given me an idea Sue. I am going to use one of my 'dead' CDs as a backing for a crosstitch clock -- been wondering what to use for a 'circle'! Perfect!!

More recently, Judith Ball, editor of the 'Motherboard' user group newsletter in Redding, California, commented: "I teach a DTP/graphics class for our computer organization, and my students have learned to make Christmas tree ornaments AND greeting cards out of them, using the Stomper's Click'NDesign CD Labeling software. Design a label for each side, punch a hole at the top of the CD and thread a colorful string through it to tie to a tree branch, etc. The holiday designs of these adults are limitless! Our initiator even put her family's pic on the CD with Christmas holly and snow around it as a greeting card."

Others suggested some commercial sites on the web where I found a desk organiser. The blurb states:

"Made with three CDs, this desktop object d'art has a place for your business cards (or sheets of notepaper), a handy clip to hold urgent notices, and a spring funnel for your favorite pen. And, it brightens up your desk with color and bits of fancy."

These seem highly priced at \$30 in US currency, but they seem to be works of art: "Myra's famous abstract designs are output on a digital press, then laminated on to a used, discarded CD. Add some clever construction and glass beads... and voila! All Dis-Organizers have a cork, felt or foam bottom so as not to mar your desk or slip. From friendly ceramic animals and miniatures to floral landscapes and witty mechanical puns... Recycle with style!"

There's more information and pictures at
<<http://www.nanosite.com/confab/disorganizer.htm>>

The same artist has also recreated from two reject CDs a handbag based on those beaded bags of the early 20th century. Myra described them as a "homage to the past, using discards of the present..." She's selling them for up to US\$120!

If anyone has better ideas, let me know, either through this publication or direct to gordon@worsleypress.com

Incidentally, the site with the crochet-CD coasters also has a pattern for covers for usable CDs. Little woolly jackets for CDs seem a step up on the so-called jewel case.

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