A Raspberry Pi Picture Frame

April 27, 2024

My goal was to create a picture frame which I could easily update from my computer. I tried a couple of the commercial picture frames and found them sorely lacking, so I thought, "Why not use a pi for this!" I decided that I wanted to be able to organize, filter, edit, rename and whatever else on my PC and then slurp the result over to the pi seamlessly. I decided to use rsync for this purpose as it is easy to implement on both the pi and the Mac. I'm very comfortable with this being driven by scripts from the command line since a command-line interface is where God intended us to be. :)

I therefore created the following directory structure on my computer and on the pi in a folder called ~/PictureFrame/PictureFrame_LR (since this unit lives in my Living Room):

drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Apr 25 13:51 Desktop
drwxr-xr-x	4 ic	ic	4096 Apr 26 07:29 FocusFolders
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Apr 25 14:59 Miscl
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Apr 25 14:59 Misc2
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:27 Misc3
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:27 Misc4
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Misc5
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Misc6
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Misc7
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Misc8
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Misc9
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Primary
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Secondary
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Feb 8 08:28 Tertiary
drwxr-xr-x	2 ic	ic	4096 Apr 26 08:56 configfiles

This approach allows me to easily have multiple different PictureFrames, each with its own specific set of managed photos. For example, I could have PictureFrame_LR, PictureFrame_Office and PictureFrame_GuestRoom by simply defining the above directory structure for each and populating them appropriately.

Each of the above folders (except Desktop, FocusFolders and configfiles) is intended to have an arbitrary number of zero or more pictures in it. This allows me to display photos with a user-defined frequency.

"Primary" pictures are those which I want to see most often, while "Secondary" pictures are shown less often than "Primary" but potentially for longer than "Miscx" pictures. Finally, "Tertiary" pictures are those which I feel obligated to show, but choose to show only rarely.

Having nine "Misc" sets allows me to become more atomic in the presentation in the future if I choose to do so without having to rearrange everything. It also allows me to easily insert sets of pictures which are only relevant for a particular period of time, or for a particular audience.

There is just one file in Desktop which becomes the computer's desktop, and it is briefly shown whenever there is a transition from one set of pictures to the next.

The FocusFolders folder contains zero or more folders which in turn contain sets of photos which I want to temporarily "focus" the frame on displaying. This is done by adjusting the configuration file (doframe.cfg).

The configfiles folder contains the configuration files for the doframe.sh and BigBen.sh scripts (which are described later).

The block logic is as follows:

If there is a "Focus" folder specified, then show that folder only. Otherwise perform:

Sequence 1:

Show Primary folder with specified timing Show Misc1 to Misc3 folder with specified timing Show Primary folder with specified timing Show Misc4 to Misc6 folder with specified timing Show Primary folder with specified timing Show Secondary folder with specified timing Show Misc7 to Misc9 folder with specified timing

repeat Sequence 1 three times, then show the Tertiary folder (with specified timing), then restart the entire process.

Note: In the following, all scripts and configuration files appear in parentheses - e.g. (doframe.sh) - and are listed by name at the end of this document. All script files are located in the home directory unless otherwise specified. Config files are in ~/ PictureFrame/configfiles.

Process

I started by creating an Alpine image including XFCE using Craig's excellent tutorial (Thanks Craig!) which can be found here (IPv6 only):

www.makiki.ca/Pi/alpine_linux_installing_gui.html.

I manually rcp'd a few jpeg files onto the pi for testing and development and then created a script (doframe.sh) to implement the block logic. It uses feh [https://feh.finalrewind.org] as the display application. I loaded feh by executing:

sudo apk update sudo apk add feh

With that working, I needed to get rsync going in order to populate the photo folders. On the pi I just had to:

sudo apk add rsync

Fortunately, rsync is a standard app on MacOS, but it is available for Windows and Linux as well.

I then wrote the synchronization script (SyncUnit.sh) which lives on my Mac (but could easily live on a Linux box or - with some modification for batch or PowerShell - on a Windows box) to drive the synchronization process. Running this script will add and delete files on the pi so that the pictures and configuration files are identical on the Pi PictureFrame and on the source computer.

With this all working I decided to add a clock chime. I love the Westminster Chimes, so I found mp3 files for the quarter hour, half hour, three-quarter hour and hourly Westminster chimes. But I ALSO wanted to have the time announced, and the espeak voice just doesn't cut it for me. So, I wrote a script (maketime.sh) which runs on a Mac and uses the MacOS say utility to create AIFF formatted sound files for the times. However, I was using mocp on the pi, and it needs MP3 formatted sound files. So, I wrote a script (AIFFtoMP3.sh) to address that issue. Finally, I wanted to have the file names uniformly formatted to make scripting easier, so I wrote a script (fixtime.sh) to address that.

With the sound files in place I wrote a script (BigBen.sh) to drive the Westminster chimes and time announcement, and added a single line to the user's crontab (by calling cron -e):

*/15 * * * * /home/ic/BigBen.sh

I added support for configuration files to both doframe.sh and BigBen.sh and added them (doframe.cfg) and (BigBen.cfg) to the configfiles folder so that they could be easily maintained from the source computer. The pi could now be run without a keyboard or mouse (so, "armless"?).

I am using my Home Assistant configuration to control the power to the screen, so it is only on during certain hours, but the pi is always on.

To make the PictureFrame run automatically at boot, I first had to modify /etc/lightdm/ lightdm.conf and add the line:

autologin-user=ic

in the [Seat:*] section to cause my user [which is ic] to be automatically logged in on boot. Then I created two files: one (zz-pictureframe.desktop) auto-runs the doframe.sh script and the other (xfce4-power-manager.desktop) removes the menu from the desktop. These both live in the ~/.config/autostart folder which xfce reads and executes when it starts up.

Finally, I decided that I wanted a way to reboot the PictureFrame without having to power it off or log into it, so I added a RESTART=YES parameter to the doframe.cfg file and then wrote a script (reload.sh) which processes that variable and uses sudo reboot to reboot the PictureFrame. I had to apk add sudo and create the file /etc/ sudoers.d/ic with the single line entry:

and added this line to the crontab using crontab -e to check once per minute for a reboot request:

* * * * * /home/ic/reload.sh

I then reworked the SyncUnit.sh script to reset the RESTART=YES flag.

Et voila!

The future:

1) I want to add proximity sensing so that the screen will only be on when there is someone present in the room, timing out and turning off the screen after one hour of non-presence.

2) I want to add a Pi camera which will look out my front window and create a continuously updated webpage which I can browse from my computer. The chair in which I most often I sit faces into the room, and it's an understandably unacceptable burden to turn my head to see out the front window when I can have a Pi camera do it... :)

3) I want to run two monitors, each with an independent PictureFrame configuration on one Pi 4.

#/bin/sh # doframe.sh - create a Pi Picture Frame ####################################	<pre>if [! -d \$FOCUSFOLDER]; then echo Primary >> \$FLAG \$FEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG fi # When TERT=3 then Tertiary set is shown TERT=0 while :</pre>
CONFIGFILE=\$(DIR)/configfiles/doframe.cfg FLAG=/mp/doframe.flag AWK=/usr/bin/awk DATE=/bin/date FEH="/usr/bin/feh -Z -x -F -Y -B "black" -qon-last-slide quit" GREP=/bin/grep #Timeouts PRIMARYTIMEOUT='\$GREP ^PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -f= '(print \$2)'' SECONDARYTIMEOUT='\$GREP ^TERTIARYTIMEOUT \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -f= '(print \$2)'' MISCTIMEOUT='\$GREP ^TERTIARYTIMEOUT \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -f= '(print \$2)'' MISCTIMEOUT='\$GREP ^FOCUSTIMEOUT \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -f= '(print \$2)'' FOCUSTIMEOUT='\$GREP ^FOCUSTIMEOUT \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -f= '(print \$2)'' fi [.\$SECONDARYTIMEOUT == .]; then TERTIARYTIMEOUT=5 fi if [.\$MISCTIMEOUT==.]; then FOCUSTIMEOUT=5 fi if [.\$FOCUSTIMEOUT==.]; then FOCUSTIMEOUT=10 fi D=`\$DATE +"%Y%m%d.%H%M%S" echo \$D Program Start -===> \$FLAG etho CONFIGFILE=\$CONFIGFILE >> \$FLAG etho CONFIGFILE=\$CONFIGFILE >> \$FLAG etho CONFIGFILE=\$CONFIGFILE >> \$FLAG etho SD Program Start -===> \$FLAG etho SD Procus Folder is currently UNDEFINED >> \$FLAG else FOCUS=2.] then FOCUS=2.] T	<pre>wille . do D= \$DATE +"%YY%m%d.%H%M%S" FOCUS=`\$GREP ^FOCUSFOLDER= \$CONFIGFILE I \$AWK -F= 'tprint \$2}'' if (.\$FOCUS = .); then FOCUSFOLDER=NULL else FOCUSFOLDER=NULL else FOCUSFOLDER=SDIR/FocusFolders/\$FOCUS echo 3D Focus Folder is currently defined as: \$FOCUS >> \$FLAG if if [-d \$FOCUSFOLDER]; then echo FocusFolder \$FOCUSFOLDER selected >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$FOCUSTIMEOUT \$FOCUSFOLDER 2>> \$FLAG else for x in \$(seq 1 3); do echo Misc\$x >> \$FLAG; \$FEH -D \$MISCTIMEOUT \$DIR/Misc\$x; done echo Primary >> \$FLAG \$FEH -D \$MISCTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG if if -0 \$MISCTIMEOUT \$DIR/Misc\$x; done echo Primary >> \$FLAG \$FEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG echo Secondary >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG echo Becondary >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG echo Becondary >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG echo Becondary >> \$FLAG for x in \$(seq 7 9); do echo Misc\$x >> \$FLAG;\$FEH -D \$MISCTIMEOUT SDIR/Misc\$x; done echo Primary >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG echo Becondary >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG if if [STERT = 3]; then echo Tertiary >> \$FLAG \$FEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG if if [STERT = 3]; then echo Bo Iteration \$ITERATION.SREPEAT >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Primary 2>> \$FLAG if if [STERT = 3]; then echo Bo Iteration \$ITERATION SHEPEAT >> \$FLAG sFEH -D \$PRIMARYTIMEOUT \$DIR/Tertiary 2>> \$FLAG if if [STERT = 4]; then if [ERATION=4]; then if IERATION=4 49 ; then if IERATION=5 44 9; then if IERATION=44 9; then if IERATION=5 44 9; then if IERATION=5 44 9; then if IERATION=5 44 9; then if IERATION=5 5FLAG if done</pre>
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	•

	dofrar	me.cfg			
#######################################	#######################################				
## THESE ARE THE PARAMETERS FOR doframe.sh ##					
## All timeouts are expressed in seconds ##					
## Include RESTART=YES as a parameter to force the PictureFrame to reboot ##					
## Include RESTART=EXIT as a parameter to force doframe to exit ##					
#######################################					
PRIMARYTIMEOUT=10					
SECONDARYTIMEOUT=5					
TERTIARYTIMEOUT=5					
MISCTIMEOUT=5 #FOCUSFOLDER=MattChristmas	Times are in seconds.				
FOCUSTOLDER=MailCrinstmas					
#RESTART=YES	The FOCUSFOLDER named				
	here must exist in				
	~/PictureFrame/FocusFolders				
	~/PictureFrame/FocusFolders				



#!/bin/bash UNIT=PictureFrame_\$1 WHICHHOST=\$2	SyncUnit.sh		#!/bin/ash # This will force doframe to exit or PictureFrame to reboot
THEDIR=/Users/ic/Data/Sync/SyncPictures/##PictureFrame/\$UNIT CONFIGFILE=\$THEDIR/configfiles/doframe.cfg			based on the existence of a flag in the doframe.cfg file or EXIT parameter
GREP=/usr/bin/grep MV=/bin/mv	Note that this file MUST live on the source computer, NOT		AWK=/usr/bin/awk DATE=/bin/date GREP=/bin/grep
if [.\$WHICHHOST == .]; then WHICHHOST=ic@pictureframe.local fi	on the pi PictureFrame		KILL=/bin/kill MV=/bin/mv PS=/bin/ps REBOOT=/sbin/reboot SUDO=/usr/bin/sudo
cd \$THEDIR 2> /dev/null			SODO=/usr/bin/sudo
cat << EOF			CONFIGFILE=/home/ic/PictureFrame/configfiles/ doframe.cfg
***** SyncUnit.sh ***** SyncUnit.sh is used to synchronize a PictureFrame from this PC.			D=`\$DATE +"%Y%m%d.%H%M%S"`
It assumes that you have the proper directory structure which will be reflected onto the PictureFrame unit which you specify.			HUPFLAG=`\$GREP -i ^RESTART=YES \$CONFIGFILE` EXITFLAG= \$GREP -i ^RESTART=EXIT \$CONFIGFILE` if [.\$1 = .EXIT]; then
EOF			EXITFLAG=RESTART=EXIT fi
case \$PWD in \${THEDIR}) echo Synchronizing the PictureFrame unit called \$1 with the files on this computer in the directory			\$GREP -v -i ^RESTART= \$CONFIGFILE > \$ {CONFIGFILE}.tmp \$MV \${CONFIGFILE}.tmp \$CONFIGFILE
echo \$THEDIR rsync -azPdelete . \${WHICHHOST}:~/PictureFrame/ # Reset RESTART=YES flag if set in doframe.cfg \$GREP -v -i ^RESTART=YES \$CONFIGFILE > \${CONFIGFILE}.tmp			if [.\$EXITFLAG = .RESTART=EXIT]; then THEPID=`\$PS ax I \$GREP doframe.sh I \$GREP -v grep I \$AWK {print \$1}'`
\$MV \${CONFIGFILE}.tmp \$CONFIGFILE echo "#RESTART=YES" >> \$CONFIGFILE			THEOTHERPID=`\$PS ax I \$GREP /usr/bin/feh I \$GREP -v grep I \$AWK '{print \$1}``
*) CAT << EOF			\$KILL -9 \$THEPID \$THEOTHERPID echo \$D Exiting doframe.sh
ERROR: \$THEDIR does not exist			exit -
Usage: SyncUnit UnitID Who@WhichHost Where: UnitID is the suffix of the PictureFrame_directory to use for this synchronization Who@WhichHost is the user name followed by the @ symbol followed by the name or IP address of the picture frame to be synchronized.			if [.\$HUPFLAG = .]; then echo \$D Reload=No >> /tmp/doframe.flag exit fi
EOF			echo \$D Rebooting this PictureFrame >> /tmp/doframe.flag
esac			\$SUDO \$REBOOT

	#!/bin/sh # This must be run on a Mac # This creates a complete set of time files in timefiles which can then be moved to the Pi and used with mocp.						
	for x in 01234567891011121314151617181 do for y in hundred-hours 153045; do echo "The time is \$x \$y" say -v Daniel "The time is \$x \$y" -o timefiles/Timel done done						
do for y in h ech	AIFFtoMP3.sh 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 ; hundred-hours 15 30 45 ; do ho "The time is \$x \$y" ne -m m timefiles/Timels\$x\$y.aiff timefiles/Timels\$x\$y.mp3	<pre>#/bin/ash for x in 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9; do mv Timels\${x}hundred-hours.mp3 mv Timels\${x}15.mp3 Timels0\${x} mv Timels\${x}30.mp3 Timels0\${x} mv Timels\${x}45.mp3 Timels0\${x} done</pre>	15.mp3 30.mp3				
cd ~/	/ash ESTAMP=`/bin/date +"%Y%m%d.%H%M%S"` arexclude *.tgzexclude *.jpgexclude *.JPGexclude *.HEIF	exclude */.cache -cvpzf ~/Dev/Pictu	maketar.sh				

{DATESTAMP}.tgz . echo Created ~/Dev/PictureFrame_and_BigBen.\${DATESTAMP}.tgz

```
BigBen.sh
#!/bin/ash
                                                                   if [ "$MIN" = ":00:" ]; then
THEMINUTE=hundred-hours
#BigBen.sh - play Westminster Chimes (Palace of Westminster,
                                                                         TIME=`$DATE +"%H hundred hours"`
London)
                                                                   fi
#Robert Taylor 20181024 - Revised for Alpine Pictureframe 20240206
#use mocp --help for details on "Chime" items
                                                                   echo Hour=[$HOUR] Min=$MIN TheHour=[$THEHOUR]
#Driven by $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg file containing these entries
                                                                   TheMinute=$THEMINUTE
#PLAY=:QUARTER:HALF:THREEQUARTER:HOUR: <- When to
play chimes
                                                                   if [ $MIN = ":15:" ];then
#ChimeVol=20
                                       <- Volume to play chimes
                                                                         WHICH=QUARTER
(mocp -v)
#VoiceVol=175
                                                                         DELAY=9
                                       <- Volume to play voice
                                                                   elif [ $MIN = ":30:" ]; then
(mocp -v)
                                                                         WHICH=HALF
¥ACTIVÉ=:06:07:08:09:10:11:12:13:14:15:16:17:18:19:20: <- Active
                                                                         DELAY=12
hours
                                                                   elif [ $MIN = ":45:" ]; then
#CHIME=[YESINO]
                                       <- Provide chimes during
                                                                         WHICH=THREEQUARTER
active hours
                                                                         DELAY=17
#SPEAK=[YESINO]
                                       <- Announce time during
                                                                   elif [ $MIN = ":00:" ]; then
active hours
                                                                         WHICH=HOUR
#MUTE=[YESINO]
                                                                         DELAY=19
fi
echo RUNNING BigBen.sh
                                                                   if [ "$WHICH" = "" ]; then
                                                                         echo Nothing to do. Exiting.
DIR=/home/ic
                                                                         exit
CFGDIR=$DIR/PictureFrame/configfiles
                                                                   fi
AWK=/usr/bin/awk
                                                                   CHIME=`$GREP -i ^CHIME= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg | $AWK -F= '{print
DATE=/bin/date
                                                                   $2}
MOCP=/usr/bin/mocp
                                                                   SPEAK=`$GREP -i ^SPEAK= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg | $AWK -F= '{print
GREP=/bin/grep
                                                                   $2}'
SLEEP=/bin/sleep
                                                                   echo WHICH=$WHICH CHIME=$CHIME SPEAK=$SPEAK
if [ `$GREP -i ^MUTE= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg | $GREP -i YES` ]; then
                                                                   $GREP -i ^ACTIVE= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg
      echo BigBen is muted. Exiting.
      exit
                                                                   if [ `$GREP -i ^ACTIVE= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg | $GREP $HOUR` ]; then
fi
                                                                         echo CHIMING
                                                                         if [ `$GREP -i ^PLAY= $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg | $GREP :$WHICH:'
# Start the mocp server (it will just error out if it's already running)
                                                                   1: then
$MOCP --server
                                                                            CHIMEVOL=`$GREP -i ^CHIMEVOL $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg |
                                                                   $AWK -F= '{print $2}'
if [ "$CHIMEVOL" = "" ]; then
THEDATE=`$DATE +"%Y%m%d.%H%M"`
THEHOUR=`$DATE +"%H"`
                                                                                CHIMEVOL=30
THEMINUTE=`$DATE +"%M"
                                                                            fi
                                                                   echo Chime=$CHIME ChimeVol=$CHIMEVOL
if [ "$1" = "" ]; then
                                                                            if [ "$CHIME" = "YES" ]; then
      MIN=`$DATE +":%M:"`
                                                                             $MOCP -v $CHIMEVOL -I $DIR/BigBenFiles/
else
                                                                   BigBen_$WHICH.mp3
      MIN=:$1:
                                                                            SLEEP SDELAY
      THEMINUTE=$1
fi
                                                                            VOICEVOL=`$GREP -i ^VOICEVOL $CFGDIR/BigBen.cfg |
                                                                   $AWK -F= '{print $2}'
if [ "$2" = "" ]; then
                                                                   echo It is $TIME
      HOUR=`$DATE +":%H:"`
                                                                           if [ "$SPEAK" = "YES" ]; then
$MOCP -v $VOICEVOL -I $DIR/BigBenFiles/TimeIs$
else
      HOUR=:$2:
                                                                   {THEHOUR}${THEMINUTE}.mp3
      THEHOUR=$2
                                                                            fi
fi
                                                                         fi
                                                                   fi
TIME=$THEHOUR:$THEMINUTE
                                                                   echo $THEDATE "BigBen.sh run" > $DIR/BigBen.lastrun
```



PLAY specifies which of the four possible chimes will be played ChimeVol specifies the volume of the chimes if played VoiceVol specifies the volume of the voiced time if used ACTIVE specifies the hours (in 24 hour format) when sound will be made CHIME specifies if Chimes will be played SPEAK specifies if the time will be announced MUTE allows for a silencing of the system without making other changes. This is an additional utility which I created at the last minute.



https://thepihut.com/blogs/raspberry-pi-tutorials/running-two-monitors-with-a-raspberry-pi-4

https://retropie.org.uk/forum/topic/30856/solved-using-feh-to-display-image-on-second-monitor-runcommand_onstart/3?lang=en-US

https://retropie.org.uk/forum/topic/30856/solved-using-feh-to-display-image-on-second-monitor-runcommand_onstart/2?lang=en-US

https://gist.github.com/okanon/d8469d76079782501b09c67e8d5ee04b (WiFi Config)