

## Digital Stories - An Introduction

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"Wait," you say. "Isn't this the guy who parks a comment or two at many of this club's programs?"

One and the same.

"If he's writing something himself, he must not have a program in hand for this week," you posit. I'd suggest that we not look at it that way.

In fact, I put in a proposal to the International Convention Powers That Be for a session that would help Rotarians learn to use simple and free tools to better tell their clubs' stories digitally. This program is to build a piece of that idea for you, and you don't even have to buy a plane ticket to Canada to benefit from it! What a deal, this.

To start with, it's my contention that we Rotarians have for decades done all sorts of wonderful things and not done much to tell anyone about it. Why not? Perhaps we're just humble. Perhaps we needed a break from volunteering our time after the event ended. Perhaps we don't have an easy way of telling our stories. On the assumption that at least part of the issue is that third item, let's take a digital step in what I hope you'll find to be an interesting direction, digitally speaking.

My goal is for you to get to the end of this presentation and say to yourself, "Self, I think I could make a video!" Digital video is one of those things that 94.5% of people think is very hard, but is actually wildly easy. If you can find a picture on your computer, you probably have all the prerequisites one would need. I should add, by the way, that 73.2% of all statistical information, in this presentation and elsewhere, is made up by the person who provides it. The percentage that applies to stats in this paragraph, however, is much higher.

Consider what a video typically is. It usually isn't the work of high-end computers worth the GDP of a small nation. Instead, it's just some pictures and/or footage lined up and stitched together, perhaps with some music, or a voice recorded to add info, or both. If there were simple and free software that allowed you to pick what you wanted and put it in the lineup you want, that would be pretty cool, especially if it were something you could get a feel for simply from reading a PDF file from some online Rotary club's site.

Well, there is such software out there, and it's almost surely already on your computer. Kind of like putting on a coat you haven't worn in a while and finding money in one of the pockets, this is.

What follows is a step-by-step tutorial on how to make a simple video, with possibly useful commentary along the way. I hope this is something you'll try, because the chances are good that you and your Rotary club have interesting stories to tell, and digital video is one thunderously good way to share them. And don't worry, we won't get too geeky-technical as we go.



I'll take you through creating a video made from still images using a program that is already on a Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7 machine: Movie Maker. Mac people, you have a program called iMovie, and it works much the same way.

There are plenty of good tutorials for that nice piece of software at:

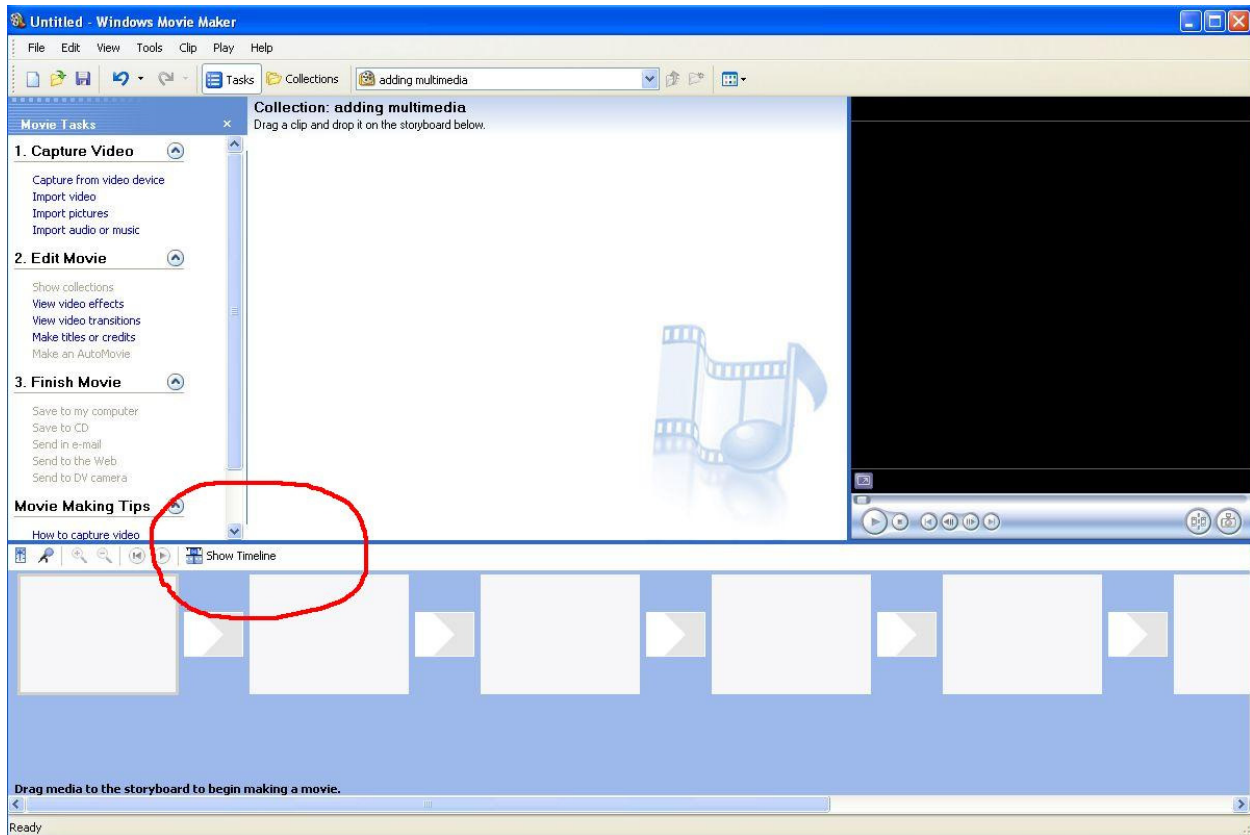
<http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#imovie>

First, you'll need to find the program. Start by clicking on All Programs, which is in the lower left of this picture. You'll get a list of the programs on your computer, and somewhere in there is likely to be one

called, "Windows Movie Maker." If you don't see it there, click on "Accessories," and it should be there.

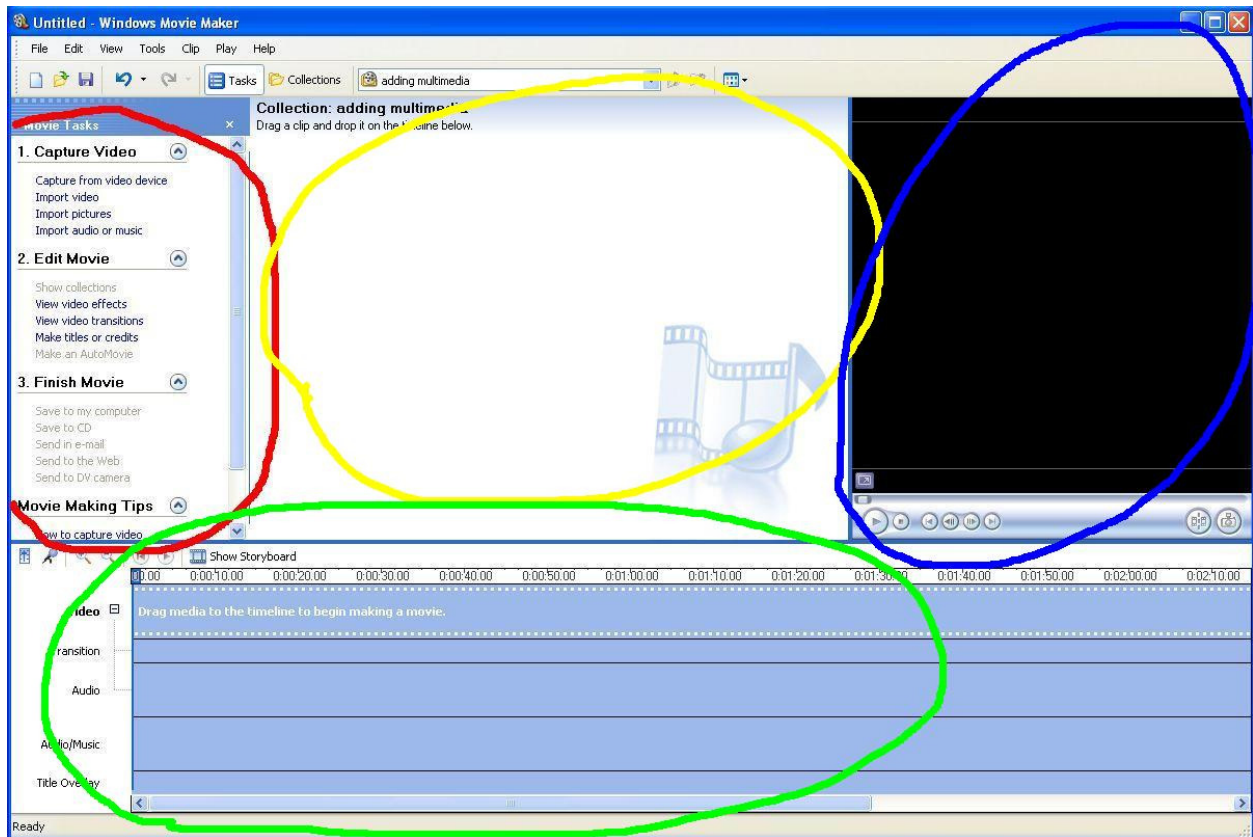


Start the program by clicking on it, and you'll get what, initially, you might find to be quite the intimidating range of stuff on your screen. Go on to the next page to see that of which I speak.



A lot going on there, no? Worry not! This is all stuff we'll conquer thoroughly over the next few minutes. Start by clicking "Show Timeline," which you'll find where that red circle is above. That changes the look of the bottom part (to be explained in mere moments), and gives you something that provides more control over what you create. If in doubt, just humor me and click it.

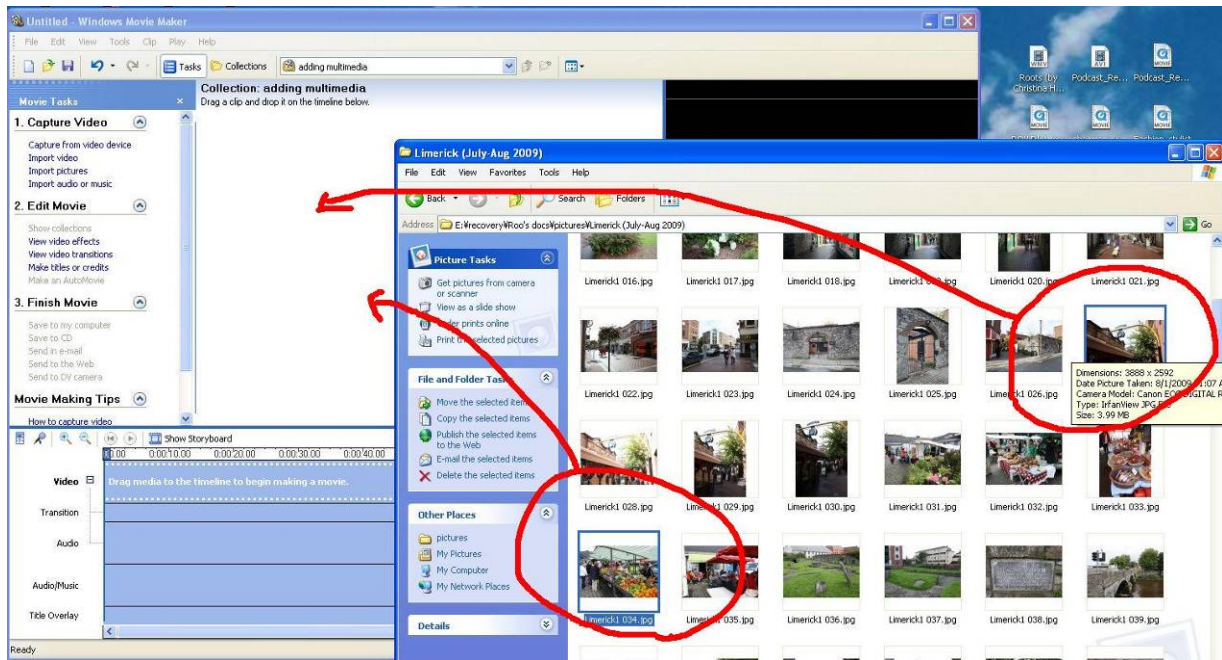
So what are the sections of this program? Well, let's start with the black part on the right. That's the preview area. As we start creating our masterpiece about the crab feed fundraiser, that's where we can see what's happening before we finalize the piece. Very useful, that. If you're looking ahead (those of you who always have to open a Christmas present early, no doubt), it's the part circled in blue. At the bottom you'll see what we call the timeline, which in the graphic below is circled in a gaudy neon green.



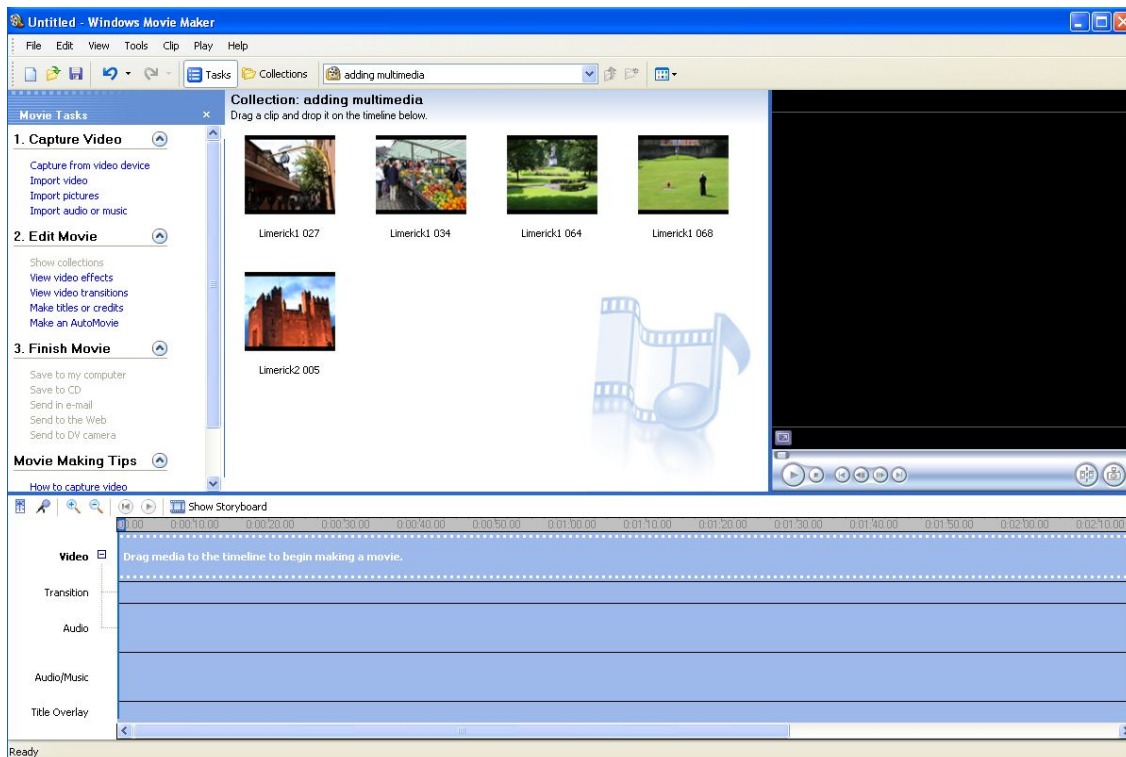
The timeline is where we'll line up what we want to appear in the video. That's the stuff that will be in the media collection area, which is the part circled in yellow. If we want a picture of Bill dishing crab in the video, we'll need to bring it into the collection area first.

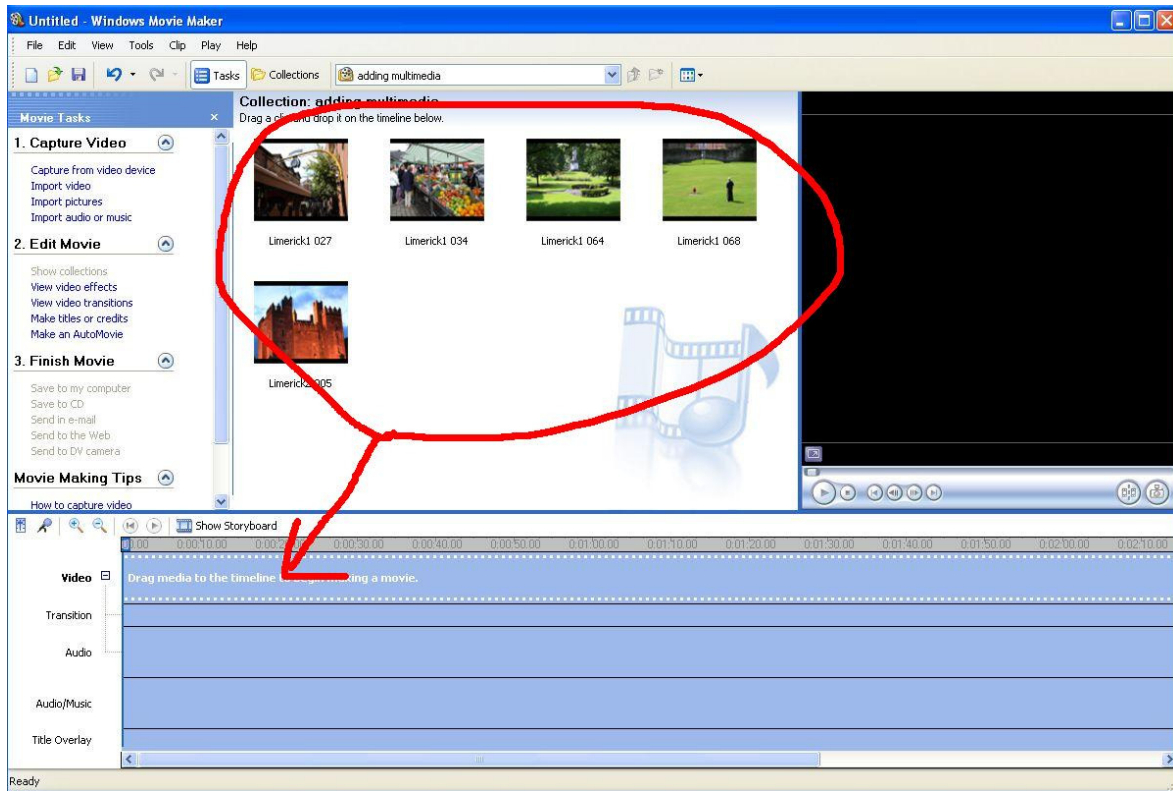
The red area on the left is the set of tasks we'll want to do (import pictures, add transitions, save to the computer, and the like). If you don't see these at all, try clicking on "Tasks" near the top of the screen. If you see the bold titles but not the options under them, you probably need to click on the little down-arrow-looking-thing to the right of the title.

Next we'll move some pictures into Movie Maker. In this shot, you'll see I've opened a folder of pictures from a trip to Limerick, Ireland, and the red lines show how I am dragging them to the collection area. We could also make this happen by clicking "Import pictures" and choosing

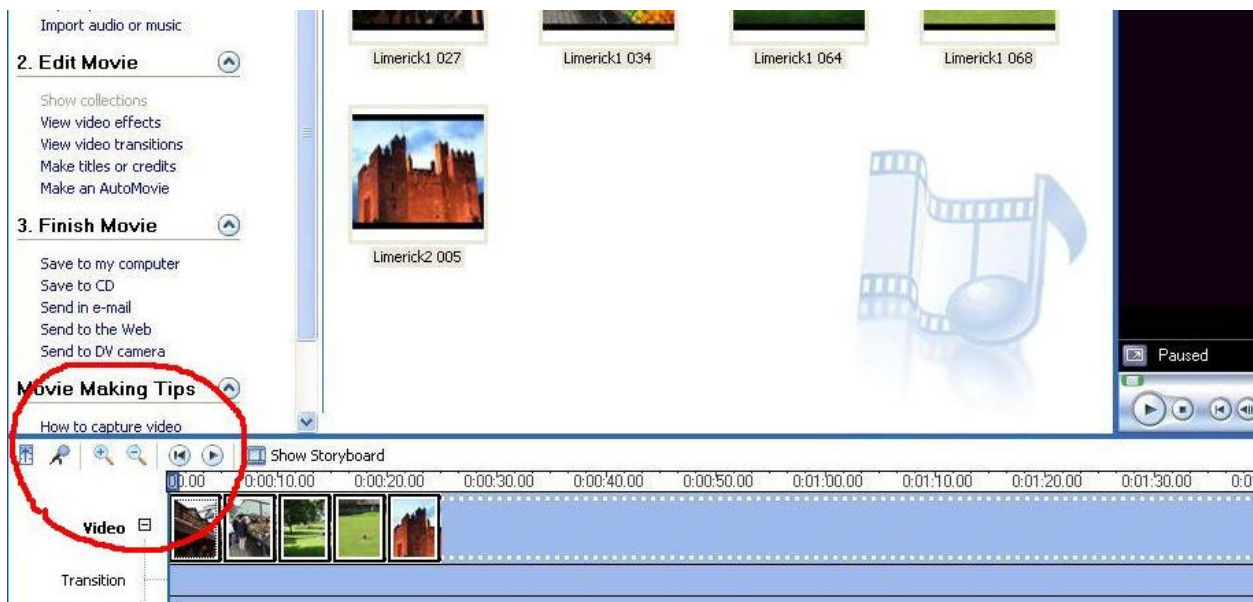


the ones we want from a particular folder. I'm a big fan of just dragging what we need straight in, though. Cut out the middleman, I say, and get what you need! Still, it's good to be polite about it. 8^) This is what the collections area looks like once they're in:

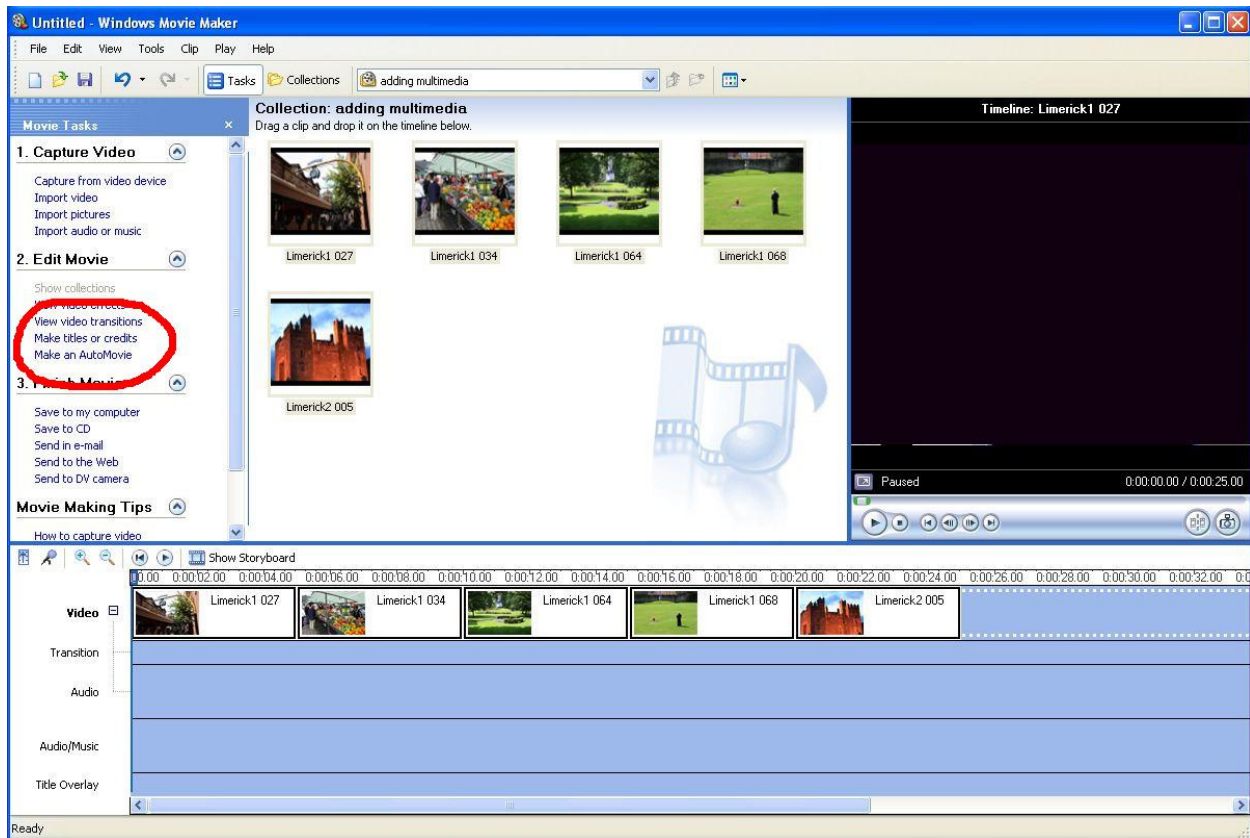




To get these fine pictures into our timeline, just click and drag across the lot of them and then pull them into the top line of the timeline where the red arrow is pointing.

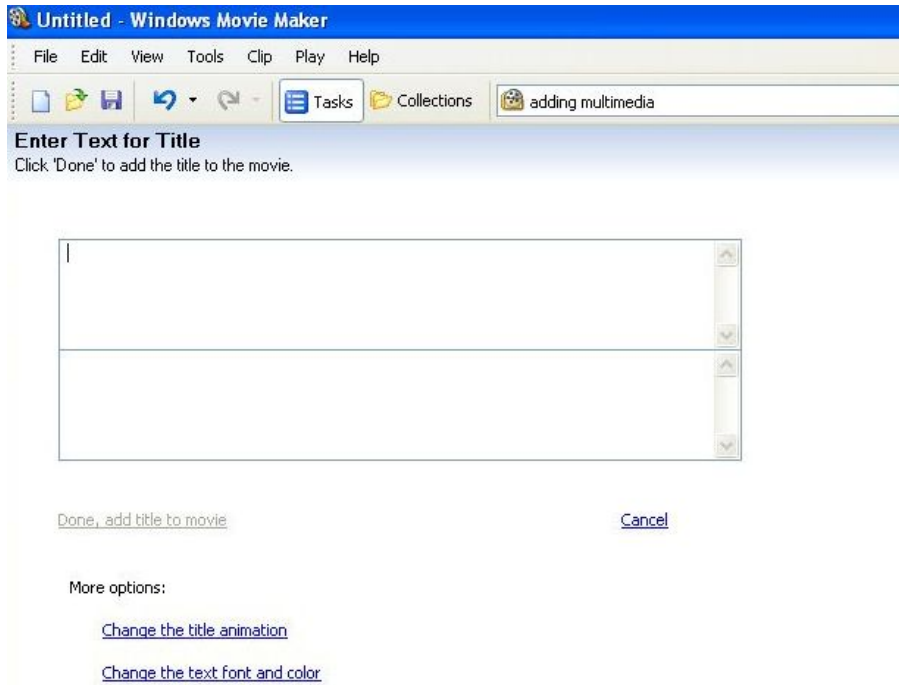


The red circle in the picture above shows the inconspicuous little zoom icons, which look a lot like magnifying glasses. These are helpful in being able to work with the pictures in more detail, as shown below. Note that the time length of the picture doesn't change, but rather just how we see it.



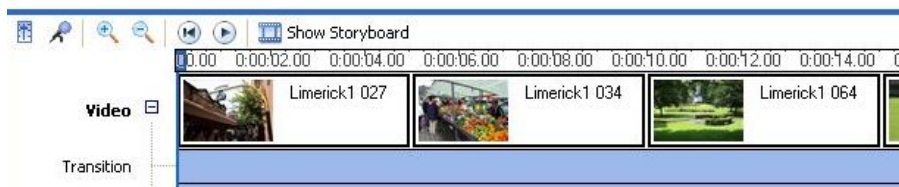
If you try clicking on the play button on the black preview screen (the big circle with the arrow pointing right), you'll see these five pictures, one after the other, as they'd appear in a video.

This is a good time to add a title. Making such things happen isn't too hard - there's a suspicious looking option (circled in red above) called "Make titles or credits." That's our guy. It will give you a number of options, such as putting a title at the beginning, or after one of the pictures, or on top of a picture, or at the end. We'll go with the



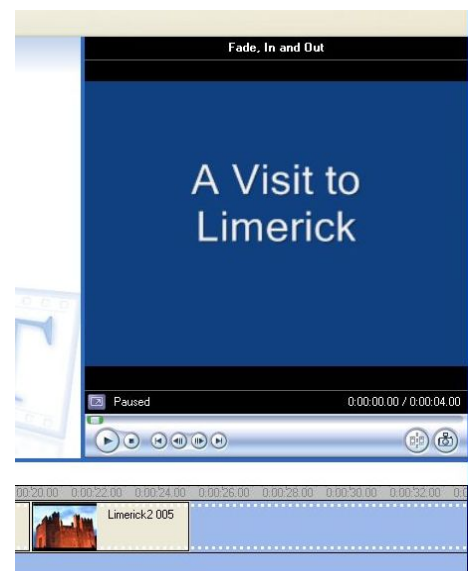
beginning one just so people aren't thrown into our pictures without some sense of what they're about to see.

The rectangles in the middle are where you can put your title, which might be "The Mother of All Crabapaloozas," or whatever floats your boat.

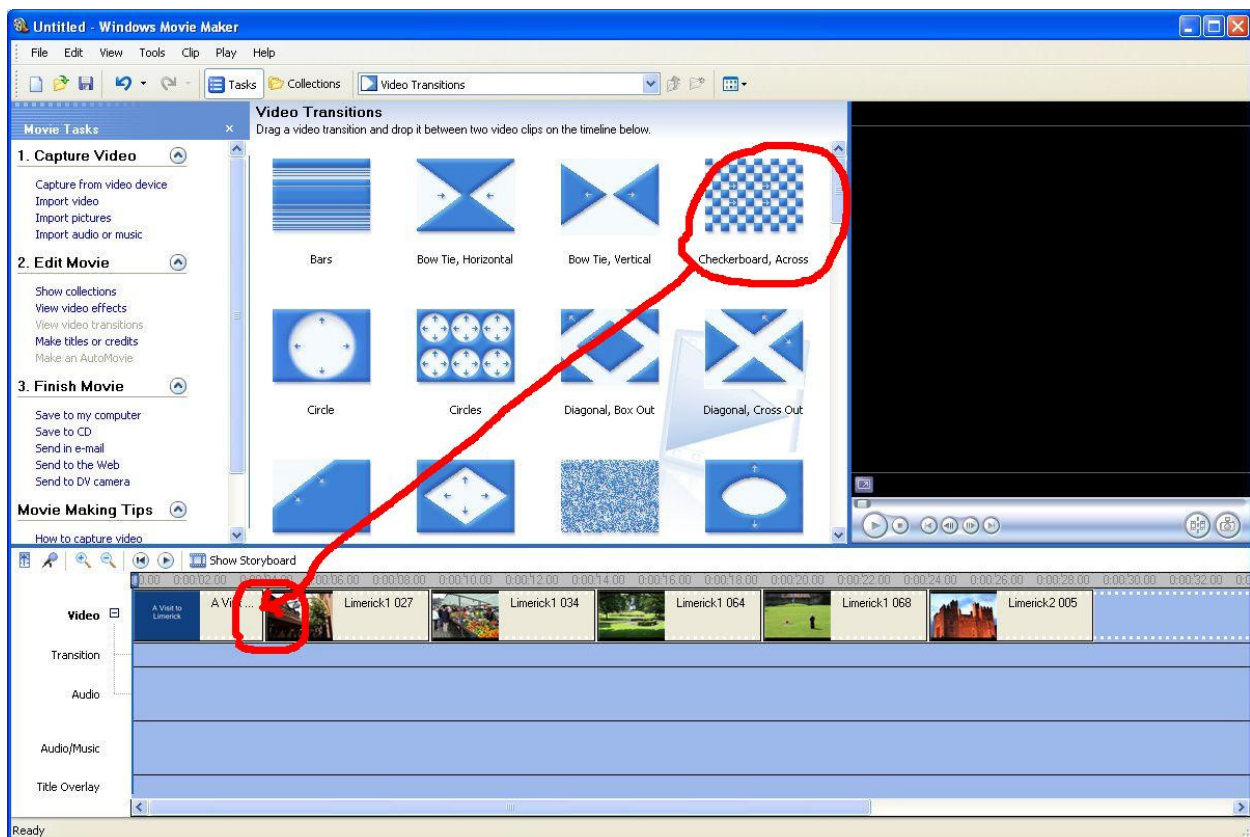


As you type in the title, you'll start seeing what that would look like in the preview window on the right. If you don't like it, clicking "Change the title animation," or "Change the text font and color," will give you all sorts of options on how titles can appear.

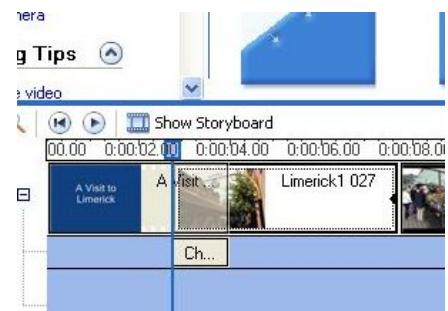
I'll leave the color and text as it appears and add the title, "A Visit to Limerick." Clicking "Done, add title to movie," will plop an image in the timeline of the title. Now that it's in the timeline, we can make changes to how the title changes to the first picture, etc.



The title is typically four seconds long, and the program defaults each picture to five seconds. Currently, it does what's called a "cut" when it gets to the next one. That means there is no transition, and the effect, in the piece above, is that you've got a fairly abrupt jump from one picture to the next. To address this, we'll click on the "View video transitions" option on the left. We're going to add some pizzazz using this cool tool. In the next graphic, you'll see that a bunch of blue options have appeared in what was the media area. Click (and hold) on one, and then try dragging it between any two pictures.

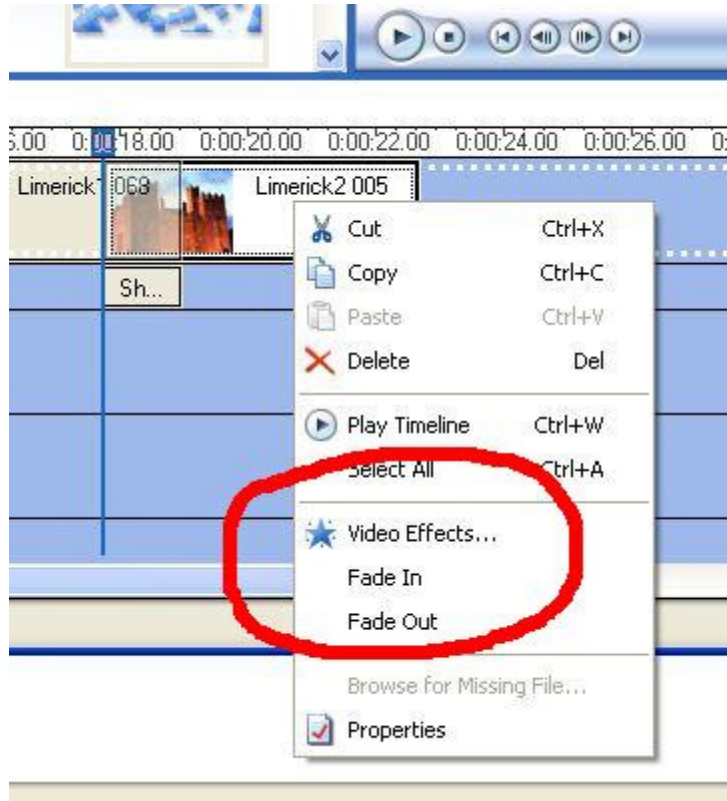


What will happen is that a blue line will appear between the two (letting you know it knows the two you want to work with). Unclick, and the items will overlap. Pressing play will show you what results.

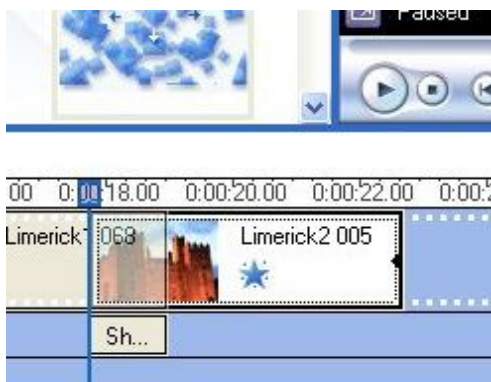


I should point out that what we're doing at the moment (telling about video in a document) may be making this seem harder than it is. I genuinely hope not, as a bit of playing with these tools can create a movie person out of anyone!

I'll show you how to add an effect to a clip, but first we have to select a clip to alter. In this picture on the right, it shows one clip that is white (the others are kind of tan), with dots around the edge. This is a "selected clip." If you right-click on the clip, you'll get the options in the picture on the right.



From here, you can add a number of different effects (experiment with this later), or you can do what I'll do, which is to choose "Fade Out" in order for the last picture to go to black once the video ends. Once the fade (or any effect) is added, there will be a blue star on the clip (as on the left). The icon will be like the one in the picture above next to "Video Effects."



For those who are going to try this, make sure to save your project as you go. Technically, what you're creating is a project, and it won't be a video until you're done and save it as such.

Let's take stock of where we are. We've picked out a group of pictures (from a trip to Ireland, or the crab feed, or the soup kitchen, etc.), we've given them a title, we've learned to add transitions between the pictures, and added a simple effect such as fading out.

Create the actually movie by choosing "Save to my computer" from the "Finish movie" area from the tasks on the left. You will then get some options on how to save it, though the defaults should work for you just fine. The file that results is a (geek speak coming:) .wmv file, which is the kind of video that Window Media Player plays. That video could be uploaded to a video site such as YouTube, or projected at a meeting.

You may be curious to see what this video I just described actually looks like. I added my voice and saved the piece, ending up with what you'll find if you click here:

[http://www.nextvista.org/rhmaterial/TI/Limerick\\_video.wmv](http://www.nextvista.org/rhmaterial/TI/Limerick_video.wmv)

Doing what we have done is already enough to create something you could use on several fronts. One option is as a video slideshow at a meeting to allow those who couldn't participate in the activity the chance to learn a bit about it. Another would be to send the slideshow to members who are away or sick and unable to attend. The key is that video is a tool that helps members connect with club activities and each other in a powerful way. That is to say, video can build goodwill and better friendships.

There is still much more one can do, such as adding music, footage from camcorders, and the like. In the comments section, please add a note

letting me know if this is something interesting to you, and if so, I'll try building more tools to help folks learn to do this.

For those wanting to learn more right away, I encourage you to go to YouTube. There are heaps of helpful videos for learning any given piece of software, and what you search for is your key to finding them. For example, if you search for "Movie Maker tutorial," you can find and watch good videos to help you learn to use the program.

It's my hope that more clubs will start using video to tell what we Rotarians are doing to make the world a better place. I believe that if we were to do so, more people would take an interest in our organization. And to whatever extent we can use technology to help more people find the joy and meaning that come from service, we should.