



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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We can afford the time to beat out SPAM; Right?

by LIONEL MELANCON

Recently, I'm seeing amusing TV ads about *SPAM*, not the kind we, since about 10 years ago, learned to hate but the food product that WWII and Korean Vets learned to hate. The food product has chosen a humorous theme to try to wash the bad taste of both varieties out of our mouths.

If you're too young for Korea or WWII, let's talk about the more recent kind, not the food kind.

Analysts at Ferris Research estimated that the cost to

businesses last year was \$10 billion and millions of hours were spent by us just deleting what we find in our e-mail boxes each time we log on. Why? Because SPAM is big bucks.

When you log on to your computer and send a message, it may cost a few cents or a few dollars, depending on how much your service provider charges. Say you pay \$20 a month for unlimited access, and you send 20 e-mail messages, you might say you pay \$1 for each message if you don't use the Internet for anything else. If you send 40, you pay 50 cents per message. The more you send, the less it

costs. Suppose you send 100 million messages, your cost per message is practically nothing.

That's the reason for SPAM. If you send 100 million and 100,000 are rejected as you and I might, that leaves 1,000 people who might buy your AWhatsit@ for \$2. That's \$1,980 profit for your \$20 investment. Not bad when it cost little or nothing to send all those ads. That's what SPAM is all about, making money.

Last year, AOL alone blocked over 500 million SPAM messages and received 20.4 million

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Read about Roanoke's 'green' housing international competition at www.GreenBlue.org.

Microsoft presentation

Microsoft's Richard Katz (right) spoke at July meeting and passed out shirts and other goodies; see minutes, page 3

Photos by Tim Johnson



**(Meets 2nd Saturday
of Month)**

Next Meeting
Sat., Aug. 14

Place: Arnold R. Burton
Technology Center, Room
105, 1760 Roanoke
Boulevard, Salem, Va.
24153

Time: 9:15 a.m. - noon

Today's Program:

Distance Learning with
Speaker Inez Farrell,
instructional technology
director for Virginia West-
ern Community College

This newsletter is

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The President's Desk

Lionel Melancon president@rvpcc.org



Part of this is for those of you who couldn't make it to our last meeting. You were missed, but more importantly, you missed an excellent presentation by Richard Katz from Microsoft. Richard came all the way from San Francisco just to give not only an interesting presentation, but also some fine gifts. You'll read about what you missed in the secretary's report. Maybe he came from San Francisco to have Barbecue at the Wildwood Restaurant where we saw him after the meeting. I doubt that, because there are too many fine restaurants near his home.

Since mentioning our Secretary, I'd like to call your attention to those who may not have heard. Margaret Hoag lost her husband in June. Margaret, all of us at RVPCC offer our sympathy, we all love you.

By the looks of the number of non-members at our meeting, I think we may have picked up a few new members. We could stand a few more than we're now carrying, so now is a good time to invite friends and acquaintances to join you at our

monthly meetings.

Everyone at Saturday's Microsoft meeting received a free, (no strings attached) MSN Premium four-month trial membership.

I've loaded mine, and it is interesting. It doesn't take the place of anything you don't want it to, but it could be your home page on your browser if you wanted it to.

It's easily customized so those who haven't loaded it might have fun playing with it. So far, it looks like it might be worth the monthly or, better, the yearly cost.

On the subject, MSN Messenger is a part of the gift, or it can be downloaded for free for those who haven't received the trial membership. Anyway, it looks like a cool way to communicate, and anyone who wants to can get a MSN password. If you subscribe and (share each others password), anytime any one of us is on line, we'll know and can chat.

So if anyone wants to chat with me, put this in your contact list: lioneljm@msn.com. I'll be chattin' with 'ya.

Lionel



Secretary's Report July

By Margaret Hoag
secretary@rvpcc.org



Kathleen Wood (left) admires shirt won by mother, Phyllia Morris seated beside

Lionel Melancon, president, called the meeting to order and welcomed guests. He extended the club's sympathy to Margaret Ann Hoag in the loss of her husband and RVPCC member, Nelson Hoag. He also thanked Azella Tingler for the new name tags.

OFFICER UPDATE:

Vice President - Ernie Arnett
- Absent

Secretary - Margaret Ann Hoag - Thanked the club members for their expressions of sympathy. The July minutes were not in the last newsletter so we will approve the last three sets of minutes at the August meeting.

Membership - Del Kirschner
- The membership is stable. Del asked the guests to sign the sign-in sheet.

Treasurer - Azella Tingler - All bills are paid and we have sufficient money left in the account.

Public Relations - Bill Scott
- Bill asked for ideas on programs.

Public Relations - Sandra Brown Kelly said the May newsletter was lost in the mail and would be

sent out. Anti-spam programs were thought to be the culprit.

Roanoke County Schools - Homer Duff - Left before Business Meeting.

Webmaster - Tim Johnson - Tim asked if anyone had something they wanted on the web.

A Q&A period followed.

PROGRAM:

Tim Johnson introduced our speaker, Richard Katz, a Microsoft presenter from San Francisco, who demonstrated how to optimize your broadband experience.

Katz first talked about the MSN Web Site. Then he went on to MSN Premier Web Site. MSN Premier is pay service that gives you extra benefits. It costs \$9.95 a month or \$100 a year.

Among the different sites he showed were: Home, Money, Calendar and Digital Image.

Everyone received a card for access to MSN Premier for four months free.

Names were drawn for Microsoft prizes. Many T-shirts and

pens were given out also.

MICROSOFT PRIZES:

1. Ron Laucella - Encarta
2. Azella Tingler - Streets & Trips
3. Georgiana Conklin - Digital Image
4. Carolyn Daugherty - Works Suite
5. Margaret Ann Hoag - Digital Image
6. Mel Canady - 1 year subscription to MSN Premier
7. John Yeatts - 1 year subscription to MSN Premier
8. Mike Marsh - 1 year subscription to MSN Premier
9. Patricia Snowadzky - Office Professional
10. Earl Abbott - Pen
11. Jack Wood - Pen
12. Phyllis Morris - T-shirt
13. Diana Struven - T-shirt
14. Tim Johnson - T-shirt
15. Cal Aliff - T-shirt

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Ann Hoag
Secretary**



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PERSONAL COMPUTER CLUB

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To:

Spam

Sites to See

By **BOB JOHNSON**

Here's a magical site I stumbled across that other Harry Potter fans might enjoy:
www.jkrowling.com.

Another great web site that I enjoyed is this one listed in Kim Komando's July 26 cool-site-of-the-day newsletter:
www.moviemistakes.com

This site lists mistakes in movies and TV. It describes 45 mistakes in "Spiderman2."

The most mistakes were in "Pirates of the Caribbean" with 251 goofs.

Mistakes are things like props changing between views, odd lighting equipment or people appearing in a scene, and factual mistakes like the wrong uniforms being worn.

The site also lists Easter Eggs, the hidden extras in DVDs.

From Page 1

complaints. Unfortunately, the wrong approach has been used, by writing all kinds of SPAM blocking programs, and we still wasted millions of hours deleting the unwanted junk we find in our in boxes. Taxing spammers won't work; who could collect from sources all over the world? A new and innovative approach is being proposed by Microsoft. Considering the old adage "time is money," a senior researcher there has proposed that the time element be attacked *computation time*.

Right now, sending a message over the Internet involves your computer talking to another computer, a mail server. The two computers talk to each other using the SMTP protocol. After identifying each other, the message is handed over almost instantaneously.

The solution is to slow the exchange down by forcing the sending computer to solve a mathematical puzzle involving the recipient, time, date, location or any number of variables which makes the computer work (perhaps for just a few seconds) to solve the puzzle and send the message.

What are a few seconds when we send an e-mail to Cousin George?

With any change to the name, address, date, etc., a spammer sending millions of messages will be limited to the number of solutions his computer can make each day. What about faster computers down the road?

Microsoft is throwing in a wild card called *k*, which changes as computers get faster; *k* makes the puzzle more complicated and requires more time to solve.

So it may take our e-mail a little longer to go through; what's 10 seconds. To a spammer, 10 seconds added to each e-mail will permit about 8,000 messages a day instead of millions.

I have an extra 10 seconds, how about you?

Meeting space provided by:



Web hosting provided by:

<http://www.icn.net/>

