



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

Volume 23 Number 8

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Help your newsletter

You are invited to share favorite websites, reviews of software or just general computer experiences. Send your article or notes to editor@rvpcc.org.

NEXT MEETING: August 11, 2007 at 9:15

There will be an extended Q & A session. Then we will help with Homer's rewiring project.

FREE OFFICE PROGRAMS

By Bob Johnson

There are many free word processors and spreadsheets available. Googling "Free word processors" brings up a long list. Two of them deserve more attention. One of them is Open Office (www.openoffice.com), which Bill Scott demonstrated at the August club meeting as part of his Linux presentation.

A second one is "Google Docs & Spreadsheets" (<http://docs.google.com>). Google offers a word processor and a spreadsheet that run on their system. All you need to run them is an Internet connection; nothing is downloaded to your PC. In-process and finished documents are stored at Google.

I tried to test the Google applications, but I wasn't able to get them to run. After setting up a Google account, I got the warning, "Your cookie functionality is turned off. Please turn it on." I followed Google's instructions and reduced my privacy level, but I couldn't get past the warning. Some Google trouble-shooting information suggested reducing the privacy settings to zero and shutting off the firewall, but I wasn't willing to do that. Bottom line: I wasn't able to test Google Docs & Spreadsheets. Oh well, the grapes were probably sour anyway. If any one else more frustration-tolerant has tried the Google programs, please let the club know your opinion.

All is not lost — the Google versus OpenOffice question was answered in the September 2007 issue of Maximum PC. An article directly comparing Google Docs & Spreadsheets with Open Office reported that if you need a word processor or spreadsheet just now and then, Google is good enough because of its easy availability. However, for every other factor (versatility, support, appearance of finished product, and editing feature), Open Office is better. In their words, "*Open Office doesn't just beat the pants off Google Docs & Spreadsheets – it also gives Microsoft Office a run for its money.*"

Here's a fun link to check out:
<http://rvpcc.org/ftp/HomeSecurity.wmv>

Secretary's Report

July 14, 2007

The July Meeting of the RVPCC was opened by Earl Abbott at 9:15a.m. He welcomed all members.

DOOR PRIZE: \$10.00 - Ed Mullikin. He donated the money back to the club.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

Secretary - Margaret Ann Hoag stated that the minutes of the last meeting were published in the newsletter. They were approved as published.

Treasurer - Helen Trenor gave the treasurer's report. She gave the treasury balance and said that the club was solvent.

Membership - Del Kirschner stated that the records were up to date.

Public Relations - John Yeatts said that he and Bill Scott are working on several ideas for next month's meeting. They would still like more ideas for future meetings.

Roanoke County Schools - Homer Duff said that the Adult Classes have ended for the Summer. He stated that there is no schedule yet for the Fall Classes. There is some reorganization going on and to please promote Adult Education. He also asked for help in straightening cables on computers. There is a need for floppy disks.

Newsletter - Sandy Johnson said that the July Newsletter is available online.

PROGRAM:

Bill Scott and John Leary gave a demonstration on Linux, Ubuntu and Kubuntu operating systems. Questions and answers were given during the presentation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Margaret Ann Hoag, Secretary



PREZ' NOTES

Well, another month has flown away. I hope you are enjoying the summer time. I'm trying to grow tomatoes, but some four legged critter is helping himself to my fruit. Each day, I find two, three, or four pieces of tomatoes that I was going to enjoy. I'm trying to come up with some computer-controlled apparatus to discourage my unwanted critter, but have not yet decided on exactly what to do. I could put up a fence, but half of the summer (and half of my tomatoes) are history. With just a little more procrastination, I won't have to worry about this year. I'm thinking that next year, I could plant my tomatoes by my basement window, and place my computer inside the window. I could place an infra red LED laser, some mirrors, and a laser receiver around my tomatoes. When the unwanted critter came for a free meal, my computer sound card would turn on an ultrasonic sound source to discourage my hungry, unwanted critter, and hopefully encourage him to stay away.

Homer and I had a recent phone conversation and agreed that a part of the August RVPCC Program would be to have volunteers work on the computer wiring in our meeting rooms. The wiring connecting keyboards, mice, speakers, monitors, etc. has become a "rat's nest" and could be improved if members pitched in and helped out. Whenever an equipment problem occurs at our meeting (or in a classroom lesson), everything comes to a halt until the problem is solved. We can help everyone who uses the room if the wiring is better organized.

Homer has some definite ideas where the "rat's nest" wiring could be better organized. Let's make this a "part 2" of the August program. People could wear old "working clothes" if desired.

Well, its 1:40AM, time to turn off the VCR with its Lawrence Welk reruns, turn off the computer, and go to bed. I hope to see you many of you at the next meeting.

Earl Abbott



Does the back of your PC look like this? Want to learn how to “neaten” it? Homer is offering hands-on training as we help him get these wires organized after the regularly scheduled portion of the meeting. “Get dirty” clothes are suggested.

MORE ON LINUX

The Bill Scott – John Leary presentation on Linux and Ubuntu whetted our appetites. For more on the subject, read the magazine article at <http://www.maximumpc.com/linux>.

The article covers how to get started in Linux. It also discusses network connections, video drivers, managing music, email, playing videos, managing photos, games, antivirus, spyware, and compatibility with Microsoft Office

VIDEOS ON FLIXXY.COM

www.flixxy.com is one of the many on-line sources of videos. It is a collection of “the best videos on the web.” It appears to be more “family safe” than other sources, but there are still some videos that may be considered PG. Here are four videos on Flixxy that are must-not-misses:

[Powers of 10](#) (9:01 minutes) A slide show starts at ground level and zooms up so far that even the Milky Way galaxy can’t be seen. Then it zooms the other way – it starts at ground level and zooms in until an individual proton is seen.

[Sensational dancing horse](#) (6:28 minutes) A performance by a horse that even non-horse-lovers will enjoy.

[21st century learning skills](#) (6:06 minutes) This video shows a fascinating set of facts on technology and the future. Such as -- did you know that China will soon become the number one English speaking country in the world? And – there are 2.7 million searches performed on Google each month. Who answered these question before Google?

[Internet help desk](#) (6:38 minutes) Have you ever talked to a help desk? This comedy act confirms all our suspicions!

To see these videos, go to flixxy.com. Scroll down the two columns of videos to find the recommendations above. However, don’t do it until you have some time available – you’ll find many other videos to watch.

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Meeting space provided
by Roanoke County
Schools

Windows Live OneCare

Microsoft has a new product that should take much of the worry and effort out of the managing of viruses, spyware, and firewalls. Windows Live OneCare combines many functions into one product that keeps your computer safe and your protection updated. Its features include:

Anti-virus – includes email attachments.
Firewall – two-way protection, both incoming and outgoing.
Spyware – detection and removal.
Periodic hard drive defragmentation.
File back-up and restoration, manually or automatically.
Automatic updates and enhancements.
Works in the background, out of sight.
On-line 24/7 support.

This is not the same product as Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner that analyses problems but does not protect the computer from problems.

Live OneCare has completed its beta testing. A 90-day free trial of Live OneCare is available now. After the free trial, the cost is \$49.95 per year. One subscription can be used on up to three computers. To read more about it, or to start your 90-day free trial, go to www.microsoft.com and search for OneCare.

Some fine print: Works on Windows 98 up, but does not work on the 64-bit versions of Vista and XP. Before installing, you'll have to remove your existing anti-virus and firewall programs.

All this sounds good, but shouldn't Microsoft include this protection in Windows? Something seems wrong with the idea of paying Microsoft for protection against threats caused by inadequacies in Microsoft software.

Web sites to check out:

Health

www.my.webmd.com

This is a good site to start your medical research. It is also a way to quickly find out about a new or current medication.

Internal Revenue Service

www.irs.gov

Check this site for last minute tax changes. You can also print tax forms directly from the web site.

Energy Saver

www.hes.lbl.gov

This site gives tips on how to save on energy costs and how to improve existing heating and cooling systems. It lists Energy Star appliances.

Vision Health

www.eyecareamerica.org

This site gives self-tests, problem prevention, etc.

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**We Meet the 2nd
Saturday of the Month
Next Meeting
August 11, 2007**

Place: Arnold R. Burton Technology Center
Room 105
1760 Roanoke Boulevard
Salem, Va. 24153
Time: 9:15 a.m. - noon

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