



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

Volume 24 Number 2

Serving the Roanoke Valley

February 2008

## RVPCC Officers

**President:** Earl Abbott  
[president@rvpcc.org](mailto:president@rvpcc.org)

**Vice President:** Ron Zoll,  
[vicepresident@rvpcc.org](mailto:vicepresident@rvpcc.org)

**Secretary:** Margaret Hoag,  
[secretary@rvpcc.org](mailto:secretary@rvpcc.org)

**Treasurer:** Helen Trenor  
[treasurer@rvpcc.org](mailto:treasurer@rvpcc.org)

**Public Relations:** Bill Scott,  
[pr1@rvpcc.org](mailto:pr1@rvpcc.org);  
John Yeatts, [pr@rvpcc.org](mailto:pr@rvpcc.org)

**Membership Chairman:**  
Del Kirschner, 989-8913,  
[membership@rvpcc.org](mailto:membership@rvpcc.org)

**Roanoke County Schools:**  
Homer Duff, 774-6862,  
[rcschool@rvpcc.org](mailto:rcschool@rvpcc.org)

**WebMaster:** Tim Johnson,  
562-0140, [web@rvpcc.org](mailto:web@rvpcc.org)

**Email:** [info@rvpcc.org](mailto:info@rvpcc.org),  
[members@rvpcc.org](mailto:members@rvpcc.org)  
[officers@rvpcc.org](mailto:officers@rvpcc.org)

**Web:** <http://rvpcc.org>,

**Newsletter Editor:** Sandy Johnson, 774-3979;  
[editor@rvpcc.org](mailto:editor@rvpcc.org)

### 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](mailto:editor@rvpcc.org).



### In this issue:

Cell phone disposal . . .	1
January minutes . . . . .	.2
Prez' Notes . . . . .	.2
Slow Computer . . . . .	3
Mouse Tricks . . . . .	.4
Quick Launch Toolbar .	4
Jukebox . . . . .	5
Free Credit Report . . . .	5
Batteries on planes . . .	5
Pics from Show & Tell .	5

Next Meeting  
February 9, 2008  
9:15 a.m.

Arnold R. Burton Technology Center  
1750 Roanoke Boulevard  
Salem, Virginia

### Topics:

**Changes in taxes for 2008?**  
Sandy Johnson, AARP tax counselor  
&  
**Photo Picture Frames**  
Bill Scott

## Cell phone disposal

Got a new cell phone? Have you disposed of the old one? Any personal information on that old phone?

Just resetting the phone isn't good enough. Like a hard drive, it just appears to be clean – much of the data is still on the phone.

Check your old phone's instruction manual for details on fully erasing the phone. If you can't find it, check the manufacturer's web site. The instructions should be there, but they might be deep in the site and hard to find.

Erase all those private conversations, passwords, and bank account numbers.

**Valentine's Day is February 14th**

This newsletter created with  
MICROSOFT PUBLISHER

## Secretary's Report

### MINUTES OF RVPCC MEETING - JANUARY 12, 2008

President Earl Abbott opened the meeting at 9:20 AM.

Earl introduced the officers that were elected at the December 8th, 2007 meeting. He also stressed that members try to increase the membership of the club in the new year. Members should speak and pass on to people who are interested in computer learning and fellowship offered by RVPCC.

**Door Prizes:** Kay Viskup, Lewis Wilson, Helen Trenor, John Yeatts and Andy McLaughlin won Memorex CD-R disks. Pens were won by Bill Scott and Bob Johnson. Earl Abbott won a mug.

#### **OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

**Secretary:** Kay Viskup read the minutes of the December 8th, 2007 meeting. Minutes were accepted as presented.

**Treasurer's Report:** Helen Trenor read the Treasurer's Report. Helen also read a thank you note from the A.R. Burton School for the RVPCC donation for its use of the school premises.

**Public Relations:** Bill Scott and John Yeatts have not heard on the proposed programs to visit the new VDOT building and visit to the Moog Company. They are following up. They need ideas on future programs and trips.

**Roanoke County Schools:** Homer Duff reported he spoke to the Principal of Burton who personally thanked him for the RVPCC's donation.

**Web Master:** Earl Abbott reported that Tim Johnson was away and unable to send the January 2008 bulletin in time for January 12th meeting. It was suggested that another RVPCC member should be available to substitute for Tim as Web Master in case he is unable to send bulletin to members prior to a meeting. Discussion to continue at next meeting

#### **SHOW AND TELL:**

Bill Scott brought in a photo he is giving his son, which shows a collection of his son's yearly school pictures. He explained how he had to resize the pictures to make them all the same size and included a printed caption beneath the pictures. He has registered this idea with Shutterfly.com.

Earl Abbott brought in an Aiptex still camera, which records voices.

Bob Johnson showed a digital photo key chain which can display up to 60 photos.

John Yeatts interjected that there are larger digital frames on the market, which use the same principles as the key chain. The frames use USB memory sticks and cords.

#### **PROGRAM:**

Andy McLaughlin gave a presentation on using "portable applications" on a flash drive to bring a "Home Environment" along while away from home and using a borrowed or public computer. His drive contained portable versions of the applications he uses often.

Andy pointed out that applications and files from the portable drive will not remain in borrowed computer's hard drive. Portable versions of applications are available at [www.PortableApps.Com](http://www.PortableApps.Com). (Continued next column)

## PREZ' NOTES

ROANOKE VALLEY PERSONAL COMPUTER CLUB aka RVPCC is:

A social organization? A learning organization? A service organization?

RVPCC is, or can become, all of this, and more! This is a good place to meet people who share an interest in personal computers, people who are interested in learning more about personal computers, and all that pc's can do. We have Q & A sessions at some of our meetings. This happens when some people bring Q's, some people bring A's, and we match the Q's with the A's. We can learn many interesting facts at our meetings. Some person brings a gizmo to the meeting and demonstrates or describes it. Questions and/or comments invariably arise, and synergy happens. I like to say that one plus one plus synergy yields more than two, this combined or cooperative work or force is one of the secrets of our organization. Come and invest some time with us and share in the fellowship and satisfaction that can result.

Earl Abbott

{Minutes continued}

Bill Scott showed his shirt-pocket size hard drive which uses the USB cable for both signal and power. He uses this hard drive as a backup.

There was discussion that these portable hard drive units (or any back-up media) should not be stored near the computer, but kept safely in another room, or even in a bank safety box. A disaster like a fire or flood could wipe out the computer and the backup stored nearby.

Also mentioned was a source of information about flash drives, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USB\\_flash\\_drive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USB_flash_drive).

#### **QUESTION AND ANSWERS**

Homer Duff described school instruction and sparked a discussion on voice recognition as an aid for students with limited typing skills.

Andy McLaughlin talked about a program that can clear old Windows passwords from a computer. The program can be found at <http://home.eunet.no/~pnordahl/ntpasswd/>.

There being no further discussions or business, Earl Abbott adjourned the meeting at 11:20AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kay Viskup, Secretary

RVPCC  
P.O. Box 322  
Salem, Va. 24153  
Web: <http://rvpcc.org>  
Email: [info@rvpcc.org](mailto:info@rvpcc.org)



## Why is my computer so slow? Part 2

One of the more common complaints is “My Windows PC doesn’t run as fast as it used to.” There are many factors that can cause this. Most of them can be cured without having to be a computer guru or a master mechanic.

This is the second in a series of articles on slow computers. This month is on hard drives that are too full or disorganized. Next month will be on how much RAM is needed.

### Hard drive is too full.

Windows needs hard drive empty space to swap files in and out. There are several things you can do to free up space. Be sure to back up your data before working on your hard drive.

Clean out unused files. Windows loves to accumulate hundreds of temporary and other no-longer-needed files on your hard drives, wasting space and degrading performance. These files build up very quickly. The easiest way to clean out this deadwood is to run the Disk Cleanup Utility found in Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Cleanup. It will first determine how much space can be cleared and give you a chance to say yes/no on cleaning various areas. Laptop users note that “Hibernation file cleaner” removes hibernation. If it is on your list, uncheck it since you need hibernation for better battery life. Desktop users can check this to remove it.

Some good third-party cleanup programs are available, such as the free “CCleaner” from [www.ccleaner.com](http://www.ccleaner.com).

Remove unused applications. Review the programs loaded on your hard drive and eliminate those you no longer need, like that home floor-plan designer you last used a year ago. Find one you want to remove? Uninstalling often has more challenges than installing. Here are some actions to try:

Look in Start > All Programs. If you are lucky, there will be an Uninstall listed for the program you want to remove. Click the Uninstall.

In the Control Panel, look in “Add/Remove programs.” (In Vista, it is in “Programs and Features.”) If the program is listed there, highlight it and click Remove.

Use Windows Explore to look in C:\Program Files. Find your program’s name and expand that folder. Look in the right-hand part of the screen for a file named Uninstall. The description in the “Type” column should be “Application.” The name might be a bit different, like Audacity’s “unins000.exe.” Click on it to run the uninstall.

If you don’t find an uninstall under your program’s name in C:\Program, but you do find a “setup” or “install” application file, click on it to run it. Uninstall is sometimes an option in the install file. If it isn’t, cancel the installation.

The application’s original disk might have an uninstall on it. Or, the original disk’s setup program might have an uninstall option. If it doesn’t, cancel the setup.

As a last resort, check the vendor’s website and see if you can find an uninstall or a remove program. Or, look for a “Contact us” link where you can e-mail for help.

Both MacAfee’s and Norton’s anti-virus programs are difficult to remove completely. Both vendors offer removal tools on their websites.

Reduce the size of the Recycle Bin. First empty the Recycle Bin, if you haven’t done it using Disk Cleanup. By default Windows reserves 10% of the disk for the Recycle Bin. This was OK back when hard drives were much smaller, but it is too much on today’s much larger hard drives. Try 5%. To reduce the size, right-click the Recycle Bin icon, then click “Properties.” Move the pointer on the control bar (Win 98 and XP) or type in a smaller number (Vista).

Remove trial and sample programs from a new computer. Manufacturers load new PCs with unwanted trial and sample programs and services. Rather than take time to remove each one, download the free PCDecrapifier from [www.pcdecrapifier.com](http://www.pcdecrapifier.com). This program removes many common trial programs and offers.

Remove files created by Internet Explorer. Start Internet Explorer, click on “Tools” near the upper right corner, then click “Delete Browsing History” in the drop-down menu, then click “Browsing history.” This will remove the names of the all the sites you have visited. Next, click on the box that removes temporary Internet files. Removing browsing history and temporary Internet files also improves privacy. Note: In older IEs, “Tools” will be near the upper left corner – click it, click “Internet Options,” and click the “General” tab to find the browsing history.

Remove cookies. Cookies are a controversial subject – they take up a lot of space but many are helpful. Spyware programs remove the dangerous ones. To remove them all, both useful and useless, click on “Cookies” in the same “Delete Browsing History” menu described above. In older IEs it will be under the “General” tab described above.

Delete old e-mails and favorites. Have a lot of old e-mails saved locally? Have a lot of favorites (book marks)? Read through them and delete the ones you don’t need to keep.

Hard drive is disorganized. When Windows records information on hard drive, it places pieces of the information (Continued on page 4)

Meeting space provided by  
Roanoke County Schools

(Slow computers continued from page 3)

wherever it can find space. After months of adding and removing files, the information becomes scattered all over the drive, requiring more time to retrieve it.

Run “Disk Defragmenter” found in Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools. It requires 15% of your hard drive to be free since it needs space to move files. Defragging will take maybe an hour, longer with large drives. It will occupy most of the CPU and hard drive capacity, so don’t use the PC during defrag. Run Defragmenter during a low-use time or start it at bedtime and let it run during the night. Run each 6 months for Win 98, 12 for XP and Vista. Run twice as often if your PC is heavily used.

For Win 98: You should run ScanDisk to fix hard drive problems before defragging. ScanDisk is found in the same folder as the defragmenter. In ScanDisk’s “Thorough” mode, allow 8 hours or more. Be sure to check the “Fix errors automatically” box. Both ScanDisk and Defrag stop and restart from zero whenever a program running in the background writes to the hard drive. Win 98 halts ScanDisk or Defrag after 10 restarts. Both ScanDisk and ScanDisk should be run in the “Safe Mode” which stops those background programs. Win 98’s Help has good instructions on how to enter the “Safe Mode.”



## Mouse Tricks

Go to the Control Panel and double click Mouse. You’ll find several interesting mouse tricks there.

**Buttons** tab: Have trouble double-clicking fast enough? There is an adjustment for that, and a place to test it.

**Pointers** tab: Here are different “fonts” for pointers. Windows default is probably in use, but there are many others to try. Also, make sure the “Enable pointer shadow” box near the lower left corner is clicked. It makes the pointer easier to see.

**Pointer Options** tab: Here you can adjust how fast the pointer moves in relation to a mouse move. And, you can turn on “pointer trails” which looks interesting but probably isn’t useful. You can also turn on the “show pointer location” which flashes circles around the pointer when you press the control key. This is handy if you often “lose” the pointer on the screen.

**Wheel** Tab: You can adjust how many lines scroll by per each “notch” of the wheel.

## Quick-Launch Toolbar

The Windows Quick-Launch Toolbar is a small toolbar just to the right of your “start” button in the lower left corner of the screen. It displays icons for applications you use often, such as your web browser and your e-mail. The icons on your desktop may be covered up, but the Quick Launch Toolbar’s icons are always visible.

To install the Quick Launch Toolbar, right click in any blank area of that blue stripe across the bottom of the screen. Click on “Toolbars” in the popup menu. Click on “Quick Launch” in the next menu.

A useful icon to have on the Quick Launch Toolbar is the Show Desktop icon. It avoids minimizing applications one-by-one to expose the desktop, then restoring the applications one-by-one. Instead, just click on the Show Desktop icon and instantly all the applications are minimized and you see the desktop. Click it again and all your applications are back.

If it isn’t in your toolbar, it can be loaded easily. Google the words “restore show desktop icon” without the quotes. The response from Doug Knox ([www.dougknox...](http://www.dougknox...)), about the third response down, has a tiny program that you can download, unzip, and run to restore the icon. It works on Win 98, XP, and Vista.

Note that pressing the Windows Logo key plus D does the same thing as the Show Desktop icon, but it is easier to use an icon than to remember a key combination.



## Jukebox

Information about a jukebox site is being circulated on the 'net. Check it out at [www.tropicalglen.com](http://www.tropicalglen.com).

This is a jukebox; but it is no ordinary jukebox. It will play many of your favorite songs from 1950 through 1982. Each year has about 40 of the great songs for that year. Click on a year and it will give you 10 song titles where you can begin, but once it starts, it will play all 40 in random sequence. Other than choosing a starting point, you can't choose what to play. Just start the music and enjoy. Obviously, this is a broadband thing, not a dial-up thing!

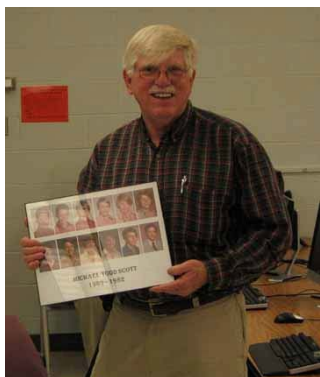
At the bottom of the screen is a section that allows you to listen to music by genre (show tunes, TV show themes, Doo Wop, and 16 others) instead of by year.

This is pretty neat ... and it is free. The price is right, but to comply with copyright laws, you don't have much choice of individual songs and you can't download the music.

One of the best features is that it will play in the background. That means you can listen to the music while doing other computer work. It's available 24/7. Hey, you can turn your computer into a very expensive music player!

---

## SHOW & TELL



Bill Scott with 12 year picture



Earl Abbot with new camera

## Free Credit Report

You can access the web and obtain a free credit report from any or all of the three credit reporting companies, without signing up for any paid services. The credit reporting companies are Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian.

Log onto <http://www.annualcreditreport.com> and select the company or companies, then follow the directions.

---

## Batteries on Planes

The U.S. Department of Transportation has made the following announcement:

*As of January 1, 2008, travelers may no longer pack spare lithium batteries of any kind in checked baggage. Passengers wishing to carry spare lithium batteries for devices such as laptops, cell phones and cameras are now required to pack them in their carry-on baggage with the terminals covered/insulated. Travelers may check bags that contain batteries, as long as they are installed in electronic devices.*

*Please see the following web site for tips on traveling with spare batteries:* <http://safetravel.dot.gov/tips.html>.

There is no problem with batteries installed in devices. The problem is with spare batteries. The spares must be in your carryon and insulated by placing in a plastic bag or by covering the terminals with tape.

The headlines mention lithium batteries. However, the detail-pages at [safetravel.dot.gov](http://safetravel.dot.gov) discuss "batteries" rather than "lithium batteries." This may mean that all spare batteries of any type should be treated the same way – in carryons and insulated. Until this is made clearer, don't give a fussy inspector the chance to hassle you. Put all your spare batteries in your carryon and insulate them.

---