



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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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.

Happy New Year

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Next Meeting

January 12, 2008

SHOW & TELL

Bring your new Christmas 'toys' and show them off to the club!

Microsoft's Power Toys

Microsoft offers hundreds of fun useful Windows applications in its download center. However, most of them are for Win XP. The list for Win 98 is short and shrinking. The list for Vista is short but growing. Check out the free PowerToys. You'll find about 14 items including:

- CD slide show generator (this one works with W98)
- TweakUI for changing settings you don't normally see
- Power Calculator that includes scientific and conversion functions
- Image Resizer for batch image resizing
- Image viewer for RAW-format photos

Get'em here: Start at www.microsoft.com. Click Windows on the right side of the screen. Click Windows XP. Click "Downloads for XP" (the large type in the center of the screen). Click "Power Toys and Add-ins for Windows XP." Finally, click on your version of XP. Don't forget to read through the list of Add-ins, also.

Microsoft offers many more downloads in addition to those for Windows. To browse them all, go to www.microsoft.com. Click "Downloads and Trials" on the right side of the screen. On the left will be a long list of products and categories. Choose one, such as "Office" and enjoy browsing. You'll be sure to find something fun and useful in all these downloads. And the price is right!

See Weather alert message on page 4

Secretary's Report

RVPCC December minutes

President, Earl Abbott, opened the meeting at 9:20 a.m. He welcomed our new member, Andy McLaughlin.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

The slate of officers: President- Earl Abbott
 Vice President- Open
 Secretary – Kay Viskup
 Treasurer – HelenTrenor
 Public Relations – Bill Scott & John Yeatts
 Web Master – Tim Johnson

Ron Zoll volunteered to be vice president for the coming year.

Jim Ruble moved that nominations be closed. Bill Scott provided the second. The officers were elected unanimously.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

SECRETARY: The minutes were published in the newsletter

TREASURER: The club is solvent but there are still bills from the Christmas party outstanding

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Bill and John asked that the members be thinking about possible programs for next year.

ROANOKE COUTY SCHOOLS: Homer stated that the situation is about the same. The adult education division is giving classes at individual locations rather than holding classes at the school. The school thanked the club for its gift.

DOOR PRIZES: Bill Scott—Microsoft pen
 Jim Ruble--\$10
 John Yeatts—cup
 Bob Johnson—mouse pad
 Lewis Wilson—mouse pad

WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY: Whenever ice or snow occurs on our meeting day, check the web site, RVPCC.org, to see if the meeting has been canceled. The notice should be posted by 8:30 a.m. at the latest.

PROGRAM: Bill Scott showed off his new quad-core Vista machine. He explained why PC makers are going to dual and quad core machines. It helps the machines to do more work while running cooler.

FUTURE PROGRAMS: A visit to the new VDOT building
 A visit to Moog Company in Blacksburg to see how they use computers

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Kay Viskup,
 Acting Secretary

PREZ' NOTES

This is the first opportunity that I have to wish each of you a Happy New Year! Each of us has a February 29th, an extra day this year to do something good!

We have an opportunity to vote for a new President of our Country.

We are free! We are alive! Hopefully, each is healthy. Each one of us can identify some worthwhile activity that personal computers will help us to achieve, and share this information with others. Each of us can meet at Arnold Burton Technology Center on January 12th at 9:15 AM and experience this JOY OF COMPUTERS!!! I hope to see you there.

Earl Abbott

Free Software!

There is a lot of free software on the Internet. Games are always popular, so let's use that as an example:

Our own club site has several games. Go to www.rvpcc.org, click on [Favorite Links](#), then click on [Fun](#).

Microsoft has trial versions of its commercial games. Go to www.microsoft.com. Click [Downloads and Trials](#). Click [Download Center](#). Under "Download Categories" on the left side, click [Games](#). This calls up a list of 141 downloads.

Kim Komando's website has several games. Go to www.komando.com/download and click on [Games](#) in the lower left corner.

www.aol.com, www.msn.com, and www.yahoo.com all have long lists of games to download or play on line. Your editor's favorites on Yahoo are "Bounceout" and "Bookworm."

Another approach is to google "free Games." This produced 111 million hits, which should be enough to keep anyone entertained for quite a while.

Before downloading games or any software, make sure your anti-virus program is running and is up-to-date. For each download, look at the terms and conditions to make sure you aren't agreeing to accept keyloggers, trackers, or ads. Opt out if possible; cancel the installation if you can't.



Why is my computer so slow?

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 first in a series of articles on slow computers. This month is on spyware and viruses. Next month’s subject will be hard drives that are disorganized or too full. We’ll cover Win 98, XP, and Vista. For you users of Win 95, Me, NT, 2000, many of the ideas here may apply to your favorite.

Spyware on your hard drive.

The terms spyware and adware are often used interchangeably. In general, spyware tracks your Web surfing and reports your interests to a computer on the Internet. Adware sits on your computer and feeds you ads. Both types are intrusive and undesirable.

Some of the spyware comes in as cookies, small text files stored on your computer by Web sites. They have a bad reputation, but in general, cookies do more good than harm. They help you work with shopping sites and remember your preferences for a particular site.

Although some cookies are deleted when you close your browser, others remain on your hard drive. Those that remain might be used to track how you use the Internet and to direct advertising to you. A couple hours of surfing can add 100 or more cookies onto your hard drive, which can slow down its operations.

Eliminate performance-robbing spyware and tracking cookies by running weekly (or more often) two anti-spyware programs such as Ad-Aware, Spybot - Search and Destroy, or Microsoft Windows Defender. All three are free. Run two since the second program may find what the first misses. Be sure to update each program before running it.

Notes on the anti-spyware programs mentioned above: All three are free. The sources are:

Ad-Aware: www.lavasoftusa.com

Spybot – Search and Destroy: www.safer-networking.org

Windows Defender: www.microsoft.com/athome/security (It is included in Vista)

A virus or other evil items on the hard drive. Scan your computer weekly (or more often) with a purchased anti-virus program like McAfee or Norton, or a free anti-virus program like AVG or Avast. Be sure to update the program before running it. Better yet, set up your anti-virus program for automatic updating and automatic scanning.

To reduce the chance of getting infected, use a firewall like free ZoneAlarm that blocks both inbound and outbound transmissions. Microsoft’s firewalls block only inbound. Vista has an outbound firewall, but most experts have rated it as useless.

For an excellent article on protecting yourself on the Internet, read Kim Komando’s article “It’s a Cruel World. Protect Yourself” at <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=953>. Or, go to www.komando.com and search for Cruel World. The article should be first in the results list.

Notes on the programs mentioned above: The sources are: ZoneAlarm: www.zonealarm.com

AVG: www.free.grisoft.com

Avast: www.avast.com/eng/download-avast-home.html

Norton and MacAfee are sold in many local stores.

For those who want more information on slow computers ASAP, go to the following sites:

Windows 98: Microsoft’s support information is still available, although it is not being updated. Go to www.microsoft.com. In the home-page’s search box, type in “Windows 98: Tuning up your computer” and press return. In the search results, click on the article with that name. The article covers updates, the maintenance wizard, removing unwanted files, and speeding up programs. Search for “Add more memory to your computer” to see a good article on adding RAM.

Windows XP: Go to www.microsoft.com. In the home-page’s search box, type in “5 ways to speed up your PC.” This will cover disk clean-up, defragmenting, the disk error-checking utility, and spyware. There is also a paragraph on “Ready Boost” but that is in Vista, not XP. Search for “Add more memory to your computer” to see a good article on adding RAM.

Windows Vista: Go to www.microsoft.com. On the right side of the home-page, click on “Windows.” In the next screen, click on the Windows Vista box. Next click on “Help and How-to” in the dark-colored band near the top of the screen. On the next page, type “speed” into the search box and press return to see the following: Article 3, “Ways to improve your computer’s performance.” Article 4, “Why is my Internet connections so slow?” Article 7, “Ready Boost.” Also, search for “Preventing low memory problems” to learn more about adding RAM.

Showing Filename Extensions

For unknown reasons, Microsoft delivers Windows set up to hide filename extensions. The extensions are the dot-three-letters after the filename that tells you what type of file it is. EXE is a file that will run, DOC is a Word document, XLS is an excel Document, etc.

If you can see the filename extension, you can usually figure out what kind of file you have.

If you use Microsoft Outlook, you need to know what the extension is since Outlook forbids you from sending or receiving 72 specific kinds of files, based solely on the filename extension. A list of those 72 extensions can be found at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/ork2003/HA011402971033.aspx>.

In Win 98 and XP: To make Windows show you the filename extensions:
Open Windows Explorer (right click start button and click Explore.)
Click Tools, click Folder Options, click the view tab
Deselect the "Hide Extensions for Known File Types" check box
Click OK

In Vista: To make Windows show you the filename extensions:
Click Start, click Documents to get the Explore window
Press Alt to get the menu
Click Tools, click Folder Options, click the view tab
Deselect the "Hide Extensions for Known File Types" check box
Click OK

Q. A. A. Q.

Clean Up Forwarded E-Mail

Ever get one of those forwarded e-mails with address left over from previous forwardings? An e-mail message gets longer with each forwarding as it accumulates addresses.

Most e-mail programs automatically include addresses of previous recipients and senders. The included information is supposed to be helpful – if you see who has already gotten the message, you won't send it to them. Usually, all those addresses are just clutter. And the addresses can make their way to complete strangers or to people who harvest addresses for spam.

The easiest way to keep e-mail addresses out of your forwarded messages is to highlight and copy the message but not the addresses. Then paste the text into a completely new e-mail.

Or, you could erase the addresses as you forward. After you select the option to forward, highlight the addresses with your mouse and delete them. Some e-mail programs are set up to forward messages as attachments. In that case, you can't copy or make changes to the message. You'll need to change your program's settings. These settings might also be listed under "composing" or "sending." Choose to include forwarded messages within the e-mail text or "inline." You'll still have to erase names or addresses from the text.

One way to avoid the problem is by using e-mail program's Blind Carbon Copy (BCC:) function to send a mass e-mail. To do this, enter your own address in the To: field. Enter all the recipients into the BCC: field. Separate each address with a comma. The recipients will see only your address, but none of the others.



WINTER WEATHER ALERT

WHENEVER ICE OR SNOW OCCIUR ON OUR MEETING DAY, CHECK THE WEB SITE, WWW.RVPCC.ORG, TO SEE IF

Bill Scott's 'Ultimate' PC



Resting mode



Ready for action—Bill says he may
add more colors later



Front view—Doesn't this look
like he's ready for the ultimate in
games?



Andy McLaughlin, our newest member

**Meeting space provided
by Roanoke County
Schools**

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