



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

September 2008

SCHOOLS ARE OPEN DRIVE WITH CARE

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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.

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Next Meeting

Saturday

September 13, 2008

9:15 a.m.

Topics:

Setting up a web page

By

John Leary

Travel Etiquette

While everyone wants to respect the customs of the country they visit, it turns out that many people make mistakes. What might be perfectly acceptable in one country, might be totally taboo in another. In Japan it's not only acceptable to slurp the noodles in your soup, but it's considered good table manners to do so. On the other hand, if you're enjoying a nice bowl of soup in England, slurping is considered rude and would seem rather uncouth.

At www.vayama.com/etiquette you can read about customs in 50 different countries. This would be a good site to study before you visit one of these countries.

Another tip from this site: If you receive a gift in Japan, don't open it upon receiving it since that would be impolite. However, in Austria, do open your gift immediately otherwise you will be seen as being rude.



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Secretary's Report

Saturday, August 9, 2008

The President, Earl Abbott, called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m.

Door Prizes: Beryl Middaugh won a Lenox book and software; Bob Johnson, an IBM cup; Helen Trenor, a tiny radio; John Leary, a club pen; Homer Duff, Linux network software.

Officer Reports:

Vice President: Ron Zoll is working on a location for the Christmas dinner. He will have more to report at the September meeting.

Secretary: The minutes from the July meeting are in the August newsletter. Kay Viskup will be back in Roanoke for the next meeting.

Treasurer: The club is solvent.

Public Relations: Bill Scott mentioned that he found another computer club in the valley. It is mostly for professional programmers. It meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 6-8 p.m.

Our club is now listed on the Roanoke County web site. It was also listed in the Sunday issue of the Roanoke Times.

Program: Earl Abbott showed his Sony home theater set up. He also showed how the speakers can be calibrated for any size room.

Next month, John Leary will present a program on how to build a web page.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sandy Johnson, Acting Secretary

1.5 Terabyte Hard Drive

Some of us remember when 300-megabyte hard drives were large. And then came those 1-gigabyte monsters for only \$700! Hard drives continue to get bigger. Seagate Technology recently announced a 1.5-terabyte drive for \$450 which holds about 300 DVD movies without compression. This price will probably drop – 1 terabyte drives now sell for less than \$250.

Seagate said that in three years hard drives will be over 3 terabytes.

PREZ' NOTES

Sept 3, 2008

I hope everyone is well, happy, and looking forward to our September 13th meeting.

We will have a good time talking about computer hardware, software, and computer-related issues. Last month, I gave a presentation on the SONY BRAVIA System which allows one to have a home theater system tailored to one's needs and pocket book. There are other systems on the market, and one can tailor a system by himself. It is interesting to see how much the computer has influenced systems like the BRAVIA. The optical drive, hard disk drive, sound card, processor and RAM all work together in the BRAVIA as well as those components "work" in our computers. The programming and the sensors and actuators may be different from what is in our computers.

A similar case can be made for cell phones, gaming machines, etc. The field of medicine is being influenced by computers. An elderly person can have a defibrillator-pacemaker-system all implanted into one's body. Photography is being influenced. The list could go on, and on.

The objective of the RVPCC is to be the best Club we can be. We can't investigate ALL of the applications of computer hardware and software. We need FEEDBACK from our readers as to where your interests lie.

I hope to see you at our Sept 13th meeting, or to hear from you via email.

Earl Abbott

RVPCC meets the 2nd Saturday of the Month

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

Time: 9:15 a.m. until noon

A Shortcut for Word

hERE IS A HANDY SHORTCUT ... Darn, I did it again! I had the caps-lock on and typed my text in all caps. Did you ever do that and end up having to re-type it? Annoying, isn't it!

Here is a handy shortcut to fix that caps-lock goof: highlight (you know, press mouse button, move mouse over the text, release mouse button) what you should have typed in lower case and press Shift-F3. Presto – the highlighted characters pop into lower case.

That shortcut is handy, but the “long-cut” is almost as easy and is more versatile. After you make the caps-lock goof, highlight the problem area and then click “Format” in the menu bar near the upper left corner of the screen. In the drop-down menu that appears, click “Change Case.” Then in the “Change Case” menu choose one of 5 different formats:

Sentence case: Probably the handiest – All lower case with the first letter a capital.

lower case: All characters lower case.

UPPER CASE: All characters upper case.

Title Case: The first letter of each word capitalized, all others lower case.

tOGGLE cASE: Swaps all character from one case to the other.

Some folks feel that they are faster keyboarding than mousing. Did you notice that in the “Change Case” menu that some letters are underlined? Instead of mousing through the menus and finally clicking the selection, press Alt and the underlined letter. For example, to apply the sentence case to a selection, hold down Alt and press o, then e, then s. Release the Alt key and press the Enter key.

By the way, the use of the Alt key and the underlined letter works throughout the Microsoft world. It is a handy trick for a task that you use often.

Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools

Passport information

Keep your passport up-to-date. You'll be ready for grabbing one of those last minute trips at a great price. And don't forget that a flying trip to Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean requires a passport now. Land and sea arrivals still require only a government-approved ID now; a passport will be required beginning June 1, 2009.

Most countries require your passport to be valid for a minimum of 6 months after your arrival date. Other countries also require your passport to have been valid for a minimum of 6 months before you arrive.

Does your passport have a sufficient number of blank pages? Many countries require two adjacent blank pages or two facing blank pages. Make sure you have enough blank pages for each country in a multi-country trip. South Africa has refused entry to tourists without the proper blank pages. If you are short of pages, the passport office can add a packet of blank pages. Allow 4 to 6 weeks. There is no cost unless you use the expediting service.

Before a trip abroad, determine the specific passport requirements for each country. Don't rely on what has been required in the past – countries often change their regulations. And be sure to find out if you need a visa – many countries require one.

Yellow fever inoculations are required for visits to some countries. Malaria prevention meds and some other inoculations may be required or recommended.

The Internet is a great source for passport, visa, and medical information. Put Google to work for you well before your trip so you will have time to conform to all the paperwork and medical requirements.



How to Clean a Mouse Ball

Turn off the computer and turn the mouse over on its back.

Remove the donut-shaped ring that retains the ball by turning the ring in the direction of the arrow. Turn the mouse over and let the ring and the ball fall into your hand.

Clean the ball with a rag moistened with rubbing alcohol.

Clean the interior of the mouse: Inside the mouse will be little wheels and rollers that are turned by the moving ball. There will probably be a line of gunk on each wheel or roller where it touches the ball. Clean each of them by scraping with a fingernail or a plastic spoon, or use a Q-Tip moistened with rubbing alcohol. Use tweezers to remove strands of hair inside the mouse.

Gently roll each wheel and roller with a fingertip. It should turn freely and smoothly.

One wheel may be held in position with springs – push it and let go to see if it moves freely and smoothly.

Reassemble the mouse. Drop in the ball, place the donut ring in position, and rotate it to lock it.

Turn on your computer and enjoy smooth mousing.

Optical mice don't have mechanical parts that clog up. Get one of these when get your next mouse – they are relatively inexpensive.

Clean your mouse pad at the same time you clean your mouse.

Disaster Preparedness

Are you prepared in case a sudden emergency should strike our area?

ReadyVirginia.gov has prepared a list of things you should do in an emergency. There is even a list of things you should have in a kit and plans you should make. Especially useful are special lists of things for older folks, kids, and pets.

Why not check it out and be prepared.

Clean your Mouse Pad

Look at your mouse pad to determine what it is made of. Usually, a pad is made of a spongy foam with either a finely knit fabric top or a plastic top.

Try cleaning just a corner first if you think your mouse pad may not be colorfast.

The mouse pad accumulates dirt, which transfers to the mouse ball. Clean the mouse pad when you clean the mouse.

If your mouse pad has a fabric surface, rub it gently with a moist washcloth or rag and a bit of shampoo. The shampoo is milder than household cleaners or soaps.

If the mouse pad has a plastic surface, use any mild spray household cleaner and a cloth or rag. Dish-soap or shampoo can be used in place of the spray cleaner.

Rinse off all of the cleaner and pat the surfaces dry.

Let the mouse pad dry completely before using it. Don't put a mouse back onto a damp pad, and do not put a damp pad on a wood surface.

Hobby Sites

From the August 2008 Smart computing:

www.FindMeAHobby.com Find a new hobby to start.

www.hobby-hour.com Lists hobbies, but concentrates on metal detecting, electronics, guitar, and fishing.

www.plastic-models.com Covers all areas of plastic modeling

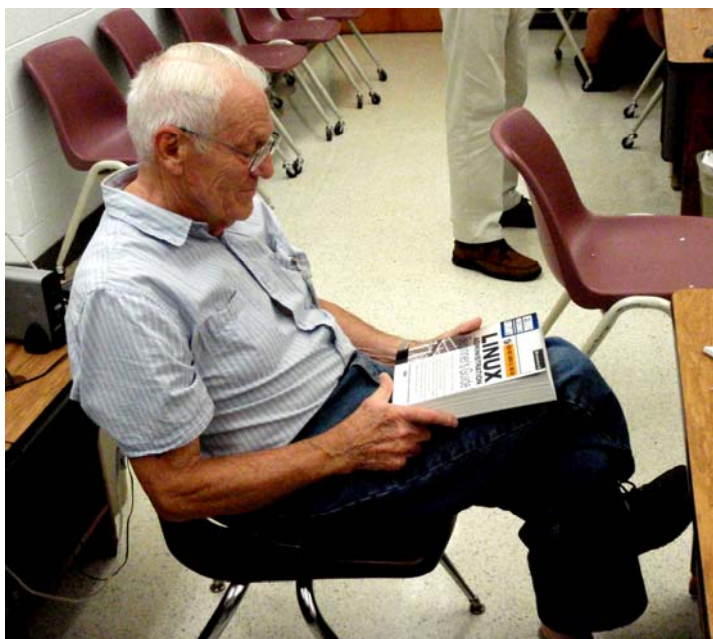
www.geochaching.com Learn about GPS and geocaching.

www.ehobbiesandtoys.com For collectors of toys and games.

www.hobbyhen.com For craft enthusiasts.

www.chessbaron.com For chess enthusiasts.

Pictures from the August meeting



Beryl Middaugh checks out his door prize



Earl Abbot setting up the Sony sound system



When all else fails, read the instruction booklet!



Enjoying surround sound



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