



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.



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Next Meeting
July 11, 2009

9:15 a.m.

Topic:

To be announced

Plus

Q & A

IT'S OFFICIAL!!! Windows 7 to be released October 22
Upgrades for a new Vista PC will be free

Microsoft has announced that anyone buying a new Vista PC after June 26 will receive a free upgrade to Windows 7 after the October release. Here is Microsoft's statement:

"So you want a new PC and you want Windows 7? No problem. We've worked with PC manufacturers to help you protect your PC investment. The companies below offer selected PCs that qualify for the Windows 7 Upgrade Option. Buy a qualifying PC today, then follow the manufacturer's instructions to get the software upgrade. Prices and delivery methods will vary, please check the manufacturer's website for full details."

Note that the upgrade will come from the manufacturer, not Microsoft. There is a list of participating manufacturers on the Microsoft Windows 7 website, which implies that not all manufacturers are participating. Before you buy a new Vista PC, make sure you will receive the free upgrade to Win7. Getting it in writing might be a good idea. You'll get an upgrade to the same version of Win 7 that you purchased in Vista. Vista Home Premium will be upgraded to Win 7 Home Premium7. No free jumping versions, like from Vista Home Basic to Win 7 Home Premium.

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Secretary's Report

June 13, 2009 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by the President, Earl Abbott at 9:17 a.m.

Earl read the Treasurer's Report: The Club is solvent.

All Officers present were invited to give comments.

Program: Energy-Saving Tips

Bob Johnson provided Standby Power Data <http://standby.lbl.gov/data.html>

The Data lists the power consumed by many household and personal computer products.

Bill Scott demonstrated his Kill-A-Watt meter and answered questions about electrical power consumption in the house. Bill shared a Solar Panel Installation article from *This Old House Magazine*. An extended conversation followed about solar power installations and applications.

Earl Abbott demonstrated his infra red temperature sensor and answered questions about heat sources and heat losses in the house. The infra red temperature sensor has a laser pointer built-in so that the temperature of the illuminated spot is indicated. It is possible find to find places where more insulation is needed.

Meeting was closed at 10:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Earl Abbott, Acting Secretary

Get Rid of Bing in IE8

Bing (originally named "Live") may show up as a second tab when you start IE8, slowing the start-up. And Bing pops up a screen when you close all tabs, which is annoying. Thanks, Microsoft, for forcing this change on us. One solution is to use Mozilla Firefox instead of IE. But if you want to use IE8 but don't want to use Bing, then just get rid of Bing.

Some instructions found on-line say to remove Bing
(Continued next column)

PREZ' NOTES

July 1, 2009

I hope everyone is well, happy, and enjoying personal computing.

Last month, we had energy saving tips. We can continue this subject and have a good time discussing the impact of technology on today's environment.

This impact has been aided by the personal computer.

I hope to see you at the meeting.

Earl Abbott _____

(Bing continued)

by using Add-Remove Programs in Control Panel, but what can you do if Bing isn't listed and you can't remove it?

If Bing shows up in a second tab on your homepage, it means that your PC is loading a second homepage along with your usual homepage. Open IE8 and click on the right-pointing arrows in the upper right corner. In the menu that appears, hover over "Tools!" In the menu that appears, click on "Internet Options."

In the "Internet Options" page, under the "General" tab, the first item is "Home page." There may be two homepages listed. The first is your usual homepage, like Cox or Google. The second homepage listed may be www.live.com. -- this is the one that causes Bing to load. Delete the www.live.com line, click "Apply" and then click "OK." That should stop the Bing. Your Bingless home page should load faster.

You can still use Bing, just call it up like any site by entering www.bing.com into your browser, or doing it faster by entering Bing and then pressing Control-Enter.

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BD = Blu-ray

Another acronym to remember. We all know CD and DVD disks. Now there is BD, or Blu-ray disk.

In 1980, CDs were released and revolutionized the audio industry. In 1997, DVDs were released and revolutionized the movie industry. And now we have Blu-ray disks with the capacity needed to store high-definition video. This is important since Hi-Def video takes 5 times the storage space per hour than Std Def video. As the industry moves to Hi-Def, users are going to need playback systems with much more capacity.

To compare capacities of single layer disks:

CD	0.7 GB, stores 1 hour of audio
DVD	4.7 GB, stores 2 hours of standard definition video at the best resolution
BD	27 GB, stores 13 hours of Std Def video, or 2¼ hours of Hi-Def video

Double layer DVDs and BDs have roughly twice the capacity of single layer disks.

Disks store information in pits along a spiral groove that runs from the center of the disc to its edge. A laser reads these pits with a beam of light. The more data that is contained on a disk, the smaller and more closely packed the pits must be and the more precise the reading laser must be.

CDs and DVDs use a red laser to read and write data. Blu-ray uses a blue laser that has a shorter wavelength (405 nanometers) than a red laser (650 nanometers). The blue beam can read pits that are less than half the size of the pits on a DVD. And the BD's track pitch, the distance between the spiral grooves, is also less than half that of a DVD. The

BD's track pitch is 0.32 microns (one micron is one millionth of a meter). For comparison, a human hair is about 100 microns in diameter. The smaller pits, smaller beam, and shorter track pitch together enable a single-layer Blu-ray disc to hold about five times the amount of information that can be stored on a DVD.

A Blu-ray disc is the same diameter and about the same thickness (1.2 millimeters) as a DVD. In a DVD, the data is sandwiched between two polycarbonate layers, each 0.6-mm thick. The Blu-ray disc records its data on top of a 1.1-mm-thick polycarbonate layer. A hard coating is applied over the data to protect it from scratches and fingerprints

Blu-ray also has a higher data transfer rate than today's DVD -- 36 Mbps (Megabits per second) versus 10 Mbps. A Blu-ray disc can record 25 GB of material in just over an hour and a half.

Blu-rays come in the formats we know: read-only, recordable, and rewritable. There is also a new version, BD-RE, for HDTV recording.

The name "Blu-ray" comes from the blue laser light. But why "Blu-ray" and not "Blue-ray?" The name with "blue" could not be copyrighted; with "blu" it could.

There will be disks with even greater capacity in the future. Pioneer is developing a disk that may hold up to 500 GBs of data. Pioneer's lasers use ultraviolet light which has a wavelength that is even shorter than blue.

To read about Blu-ray in greater detail, go to www.howstuffworks.com and search for "Blu-ray" without the quotes. The articles there include pictures and graphics to help understand the information.



Don't miss the music and fireworks at River's Edge in Roanoke on July 4th. It's FREE!

Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools

Vista SP2 is now available

A brief review of an article in *Computer Power User magazine*, August 2009.

Despite the upcoming Windows 7, Microsoft hasn't forsaken Vista and has released Vista Service Pack 2 as an optional update. You can ignore it if you wish. But should you install it? *CPU* magazine says, "Yes."

Vista's SP2 adds features that are interesting if not groundbreaking, and fixes a whole lot of bugs.

How to get SP2

Download it now from Microsoft. The download is between 360 and 500MB since it contains all the fixes since SP1. Or, let Windows' automatic updates install it. It may have been installed by the time you read this. The automatic update package will be 43 MB since it is designed for a PC with a copy of Vista that has been kept up-to-date and contains all the earlier fixes. If your PC isn't up-to-date, the installation of SP2 may not be successful.

Install SP2

Before installing SP2, you must have:

- 1) A legally licensed and properly working copy of Vista.
- 2) SP1 installed plus all updates since SP1.
- 3) 4GB or more of free drive space.

SP2 includes a new utility called the Service Pack Clean-up tool, and it's a good idea to run it after installing SP2. To run it, just open the Start menu, type **compcln.exe**, and press ENTER. Click Continue on the UAC dialog box that appears. When prompted to continue, press Y.

What's New With SP2

- Improved Hardware support and enhancements.
- Operating system experience updates.
- Network and server improvements.
- Blu-ray burning-drives are supported.
- Connecting to Wi-Fi routers via WPS has been improved.

Bluetooth 2.1 Secure Simple Pairing is included for better security

Windows Search 4.0 is included, like it or not.

Minor Updates

In addition to literally hundreds of bug fixes, there are numerous tweaks and improvements in SP2. Here are a few:

Tablet keyboard improved.

Sidebar uses less memory.

RSS Gadgets have improved response time.

DirectX 10 performance improvements.

File management speed improvements.

Take the Leap

Computer Power User magazine says: "Given all the fixes and minor feature improvements SP2 affords Vista, we can't envision a scenario where you wouldn't want to make the upgrade to SP2."

If you are a subscriber to Smart Computing magazine or one of its sister publications, you can read the entire article on line.

RVPC Meetings

When: 2nd Saturday of every month

Where: Arnold R. Burton
Tech Center

Room 105
1760 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153



Photos from June meeting

taken by Andy McLaughlin



Bill Scott with his 'Kill A Watt' meter proving that a 100-watt equivalent CF lamp does indeed draw only 24 watts.



And away we go!!! Earl Abbot finding hot and cold spots using a laser-guided infrared sensor that he found at Harbor Freight.

Computers are taking over everything!



In June, we transited the Panama Canal in a 108' 24-passenger catamaran. The bridge was interesting. Notice the PC, the electronic images, and the controls. AND there wasn't the customary 'wheel' to steer the ship! Just a small joy-stick on the arm of the captain's chair.

Sandy Johnson
