



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

May 2009

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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](mailto:editor@rvpcc.org).



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### Next Meeting

May 9, 2009

9:15 a.m.

### Topic:

‘What do the dogs do while you’re at work?’

or

Adding a wireless camera to your home network

by

Andy McLaughlin

### Misinformation

Light bulbs are actually dark bulbs. They do not emit light when they are turned on, but instead suck up all the dark in the area. There is a vacuum inside the bulb that pulls the dark inside the bulb and anchors it firmly. After a bulb has sucked in all the dark it can accommodate, you can see the black smudges on the inside of the glass. When the smudges get too dark, the bulb will no longer work.

2. All electronic devices are driven by smoke. Have you noticed that when an electronic device releases its pungent smoke into the surrounding atmosphere, the device immediately quits working? Surely you’ve had a power drill or a computer stop working after the power-smoke has escaped.

3. The life lesson here? There is a tidal wave of “scientific nonsense” running loose in the world. The information age is also the misinformation age. Be on your guard – someone out there is eager to sell you light bulbs guaranteed to suck up the dark, or to get you to vote for the candidate who will solve all your problems. Use your common sense to ward off the con men. Enjoy all the benefits of our high-tech world. Life can be beautiful when you avoid getting sucked in by dark bulbs.

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## Secretary's Report

Saturday, April 11, 2009

The meeting was called to order by the President, Earl Abbott, at 9:20 a.m.

Door prizes: Flashlight-Beryl Middaugh; disks-Ron Zoll; candy-Bill Farmer; disks-Sandy Johnson

Officers' reports:

Treasurer: The report was given by Earl. The club is solvent.

Secretary: The minutes from the March meeting are in the April SoftTalk.

PR: Bill Scott and Earl Abbott will do a program in May on energy savings.

Andy McLaughlin showed a poster he has designed for the club. It may be downloaded from the club site and posted around the valley. Look for it on the club site under files-RVPCC Bulletin Board Poster.

Andy also had a couple of hints: For a slow running laptop, try cleaning the fan to see if that speeds up the computer.

For a blue line on your display, check for a loose connection.

And for the musically inclined, he showed a digital tuner for a guitar.

Program:

John Leary used his new netbook computer to show us how to set up a cellular network, using his Kyocera KR2 cellular modem.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Johnson, acting secretary

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## PREZ' NOTES

May 1, 2009

I hope everyone is well, happy, and enjoying personal computers (PC). We enjoy our discussions about how our lives are being affected by PC. We enjoy meeting new people with similar interests and would love for you to check us out. You might just want to return again and again. You won't know until you have tried. People bring new ideas and new gizmos and we enjoy the knowledge about the gizmos and the people who bring them.

Check us out. You might enjoy it enough to want to return and to tell others about RVPCC.

Earl Abbott

### RVPCC Meetings

**When:** 2nd Saturday of every month

**Where:** Arnold R. Burton  
Tech Center  
Room 105  
1760 Roanoke Blvd.  
Salem, VA 24153

**What time:** 9:15 am until noon

### Web Sites discussed at the April meeting

Video download helper—([downloadhelper.net](http://downloadhelper.net))  
an exclusive Firefox add on for downloading videos from the Internet

Speakeasy.net—tests the speed of Internet connection

Media coder—([mediacoder.sourceforge.net](http://mediacoder.sourceforge.net))  
free universal media transcoder;  
converts most popular audio and file formats in batches

## New Fees at Kodak Gallery

A recent e-mail from the Kodak Gallery described a new fee structure. For storing pictures occupying up to a total of 2 GB (about 2,000 1-MB photos), a user must spend a minimum of \$4.99 a year on prints or other products. For storage of over 2 GB, a user must spend a minimum of \$19.99 per year. If the minimums are not met, the pictures in the account will be deleted.

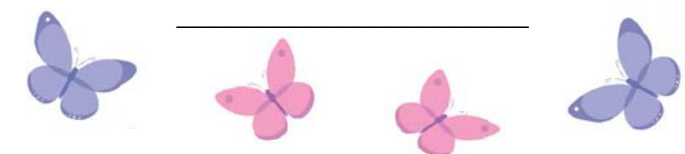
In the early days, no purchase was required. Then for about the past 5 years, the Gallery required an annual purchase, but with no minimum specified. Now it has added the minimums. The reason given was that the Gallery “wants to focus on its best customers, not folks who merely want to take advantage of free picture storage.” However, Kodak’s current financial problems may be a contributor.

Kodak’s e-mail announced two other changes:

To quote Kodak: *“FREE high-resolution downloads of your digitized photos—anytime, anywhere. Soon you can download any of your Gallery pictures in their original, high-resolution format at no cost -- a benefit no other company offers for free.”* Several years ago Kodak allowed high-res downloads of both your own pictures and of friend’s pictures. Later, Kodak changed to low-res-only free downloads, added a fee for high-res downloads of your own pictures, and prohibited high-res downloads of friend’s pictures. Now the fee for your own hi-res downloads has been removed, but still no high-res friend’s pictures.

Quoting Kodak again: *“FREE shipping on Print orders over \$4.99 -- and shipping is just \$1.50 for print orders under \$4.99. You won’t find that pricing with any other service.”* This change is welcome since it will reduce the cost of an order.

Avoid using one of the photo-sharing services for backup or for the only storage of your precious pictures. Back up your pictures on an external hard drive or use an on-line back-up service to reduce the chances of losing something irreplaceable.



## The Comic Sans Typeface

Of the many typefaces that can be used in a document, Comic Sans may be the most controversial. (This article is printed in Comic Sans.)

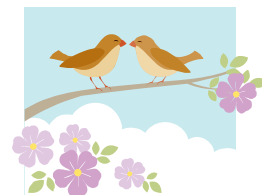
In 1994, Vincent Connare designed Comic Sans. It was an informal, casual typeface that imitated comic book lettering. The “Sans” in the name is short for “sans-serif” since most of the characters do not have serifs, the small features at the end of the strokes such as those used in the classic Times New Roman typeface. The popular Arial typeface is also sans-serif although “sans” isn’t used in its name.

Comic Sans is owned by Microsoft and has been offered in various forms since 1995. It is one of the almost 200 typefaces that come pre-installed in Microsoft applications like Word and Excel.

Comic Sans looks something like hand lettering. It has been growing in popularity, to the dismay of the people who feel it is too casual to be used for serious documents. A “Ban Comic Sans” movement is active and emotions can run high -- googling “Comic Sans” gets over *12 million hits*.

A good article about Comic Sans and the controversy appeared in the April 17, 2009, Wall Street Journal. To read the WSJ article, click on this link: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123992364819927171.html>. Or, google “typeface inspired by comic books” without the quotes. Click on the search result “Typeface Inspired by Comic Books Has Become a Font of Ill Will.”

Use Comic Sans in your documents, but use it for casual, informal purposes only, or you’ll lose points if a reader is one of the “Anti” people.



## Acer

The April 9 issue of the Wall Street Journal carried an article about the Taiwanese-based computer company, Acer. The article said that Acer is the world's third-largest PC company by unit sales. Wikipedia said that Acer recently moved into third place, passing Lenovo which has dropped to fourth. HP and Dell are numbers one and two.

In terms of notebook PCs only, Acer is number one in the world.

Acer's product lineup includes desktops, laptops, netbooks, PDAs, servers and storage, displays, peripherals, and e-business services for home, education, government, and businesses.

Acer was founded in 1976 under the name Multitech. The name was changed to Acer in 1987. It has expanded by acquiring many familiar names: Texas Instruments (laptops only), Gateway, Packard Bell, and e-machines. The growth has not been without controversy. HP is suing Acer for 3.2 Billion US\$ for patent infringement.

Acer branded PCs are sold by outlets such as Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Target, Kmart/Sears, Staples, and OfficeMax. "Aspire" is a model name that Acer often uses. There have been some complaints against Acer. Since any rating quoted here may be outdated quickly, potential buyers should check out [Acer America Corporation](#) with the United States [Better Business Bureau](#).



This is the poster that Andy McLaughlin designed for the club. It can be downloaded at [rvpcc.org](http://rvpcc.org) and put up in desired locations by any of the club members.

## Health Information From Merck

MerckSource is a website dedicated to providing credible health information that is unbiased by product advertising. Features include:

- Comprehensive health information.
- Condition guides to enable you to learn more about your health condition.
- Suggested questions to help you prepare for your next doctor appointment.
- Complimentary subscription to the *Harvard Health E-Newsletter* and *The Source Report* newsletter for registered users.
- Health centers for men, women, seniors, and children.
- Interactive health tools, trackers, and risk assessments.

Merck says that their site is "A world of health information at your fingertips." The link to MerckSource is: [www.MerckSource.com/health](http://www.MerckSource.com/health). Registration is optional and free.

Meeting space provided by  
Roanoke County Schools

## Need Hard Drive Space?

Very large hard drives, both internal and external, are appearing with lower prices. It is amazing how quickly the capacity is rising and how quickly the prices are falling.

In their on-line store, Western Digital is offering a 1 Terabyte (that's 1,000 MB) internal hard drive for \$150. They also have a 2 Terabyte external hard drive for \$330. Both of these are single drives, not a stack-up of smaller drives.

The prices change frequently. Best Buy appears to have better prices for the Western Digital drives than the Western Digital on-line store. But that's today – the prices could change tomorrow. The bottom line is to do your research and check several sources before buying a new drive.

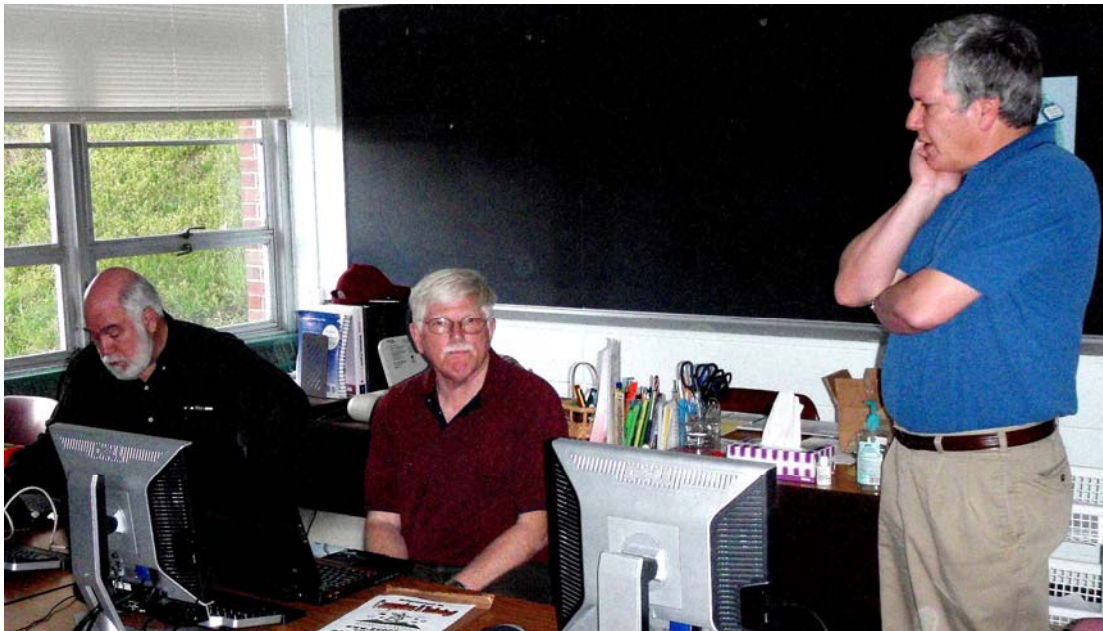
The very large drives are exciting, but what about the user who doesn't need that much capacity? The smallest internal hard drive available from Best Buy on line in mid-April was 160 GB, for \$80.

## Hobby 'Net Links

[www.photosecrets.com](http://www.photosecrets.com) - Photography  
[www.hulu.com](http://www.hulu.com) - View Movies and TV shows, free  
[www.fictionaddiction.com](http://www.fictionaddiction.com) - Beat writer's block  
[www.genealogical.com](http://www.genealogical.com) - Genealogy  
[www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com) - Create a family tree  
[www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com) - Find adoptable pets  
[www.emusic.com](http://www.emusic.com) - Download music (not free)  
[www.FNPrg.com](http://www.FNPrg.com) - Manage movie collection (not free)  
[www.birdtrail.blogspot.com](http://www.birdtrail.blogspot.com) - Bird blog by James Owen

These sites are from the 1/09 issue of Smart Computing. To read the full article, with a good description of each site, click on this long link: [www.smartcomputing.com/editorial/article.asp?article=articles%2F2009%2Fs2001%2F16s01%2F16s01.asp](http://www.smartcomputing.com/editorial/article.asp?article=articles%2F2009%2Fs2001%2F16s01%2F16s01.asp). Or, copy the link and paste it into your browser.

If the links don't do the job, Google "smart computing" "discover your hobby Online" using the quotes as shown. Then click on the search result "Smart computing Article – find it online."



John Leary, Bill Scott, and Andy McLaughlin at the April meeting