



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

September 2009

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 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
 September 12, 2009
 9:15 a.m.
 Topic:
 Intro to Win7
 by
 John Leary

Wi-Fi WPA Security Code Can Be Cracked Easily

Did you catch the Wi-Fi security news in the August 29th Komando weekly newsletter? Kim reported, "Researchers in Japan say they can crack WPA encryption in about a minute."

WPA is an encryption system used to secure Wi-Fi networks. Kim says that if you are using WPA encryption on your Wi-Fi router, you should switch to WPA2. Check your router to see if it supports WPA2. If not, the manufacturer may have a firmware update. Otherwise, you should invest in a new router

Kim offers detailed instructions on what all this means and how to secure your wireless network in her article "Step-By-Step, Secure Your Home Wireless Network." Read it at <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=1629>. Or, go to her site at www.komando.com and enter "step-by-step"(with or without the quotes) into the "Search this site" box and click "Go."



If all else fails, read the instruction book!

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Secretary's Report

August 8, 2009

President Earl Abbott opened the meeting at 9:20 A.M. He has talked with Vice President, Ron Zoll, regarding Peasant Ridge for 2009 Christmas dinner. Earl mentioned setting up nominating committee for 2010 officers.

Door prizes were won by Bill Farmer, Helen Trenor, Bob Johnson, Stan Rogowski, and Earl Abbott.

Treasurer, Helen Trenor, presented the Treasurer's Report.

Secretary, Kay Viskup, said July minutes were published in newsletter.

Roanoke County Schools: Howard Duff. Earl mentioned possible contribution to Schools for use of school facilities.

Public Relations: Bill Scott - Program ideas for September. He will check with John Leary regarding installation of Windows 7. Sandy Johnson mentioned a program on photo editing software.

PROGRAM:

Andy McLaughlin presented a comprehensive program on Setting up a Web Site. He explained the different steps involved.

After Andy's presentation, Bill Scott showed his acquisition of a mini-computer, Adrino.

Earl Abbott adjourned the meeting at 11:AM

Respectfully submitted,
Kay Viskup _____

PREZ' NOTES

Sept 12, 2009

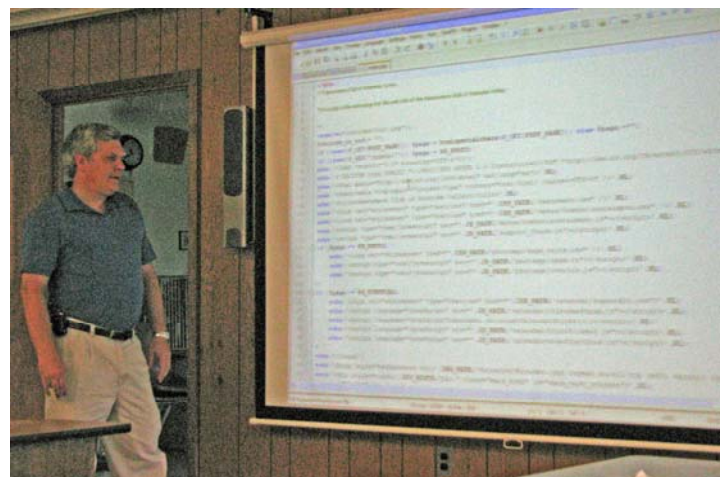
I hope everyone is well, happy, and enjoying personal computing.

There is a lot of activity in today's PC world: Microsoft is working on Win 7, Apple is working on a portable music box, and many are working on Internet devices. We are fortunate to have people in our club who follow these activities and discuss them.

George Lezan, who was a club member and retired GE design engineer, passed away recently. George was also an experimenter and inquisitive person who enjoyed studying circuits and processes and discussing ways to improve them. George also refurbished computers for disadvantaged people.

I am enjoying the RVPCC programs on setting up web sites, on conserving energy, and many other topics. You are invited to join us in discussing personal computing and related technologies.

Earl Abbott _____



Andy McLaughlin giving his presentation

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Weather information

Hurricanes are in the news this time of year. You can get up-to-date information on hurricanes 24/7 at the National Hurricane Center at <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>. There you will find:

- Locations of existing and potential storms
- Latest advisories
- Wind speed forecasts
- Path forecasts

For the weather buff, the site includes a vast amount of general information such as hurricane history, hurricane awareness and preparedness, wind profiles, the Saffir-Simpson Scale, and a large number of frequently asked questions.

The Hurricane Center belongs on your list of favorites.

For more general weather information, go the National Weather Center at <http://www.noaa.gov/>. This is the “parent” of the National Hurricane Center discussed above. The site offers current local forecasts, current local severe weather alerts, plus more weather-related information.

There are also several commercial, advertisement-supported weather sites, such as:

www.weather.com, the Website of The Weather Channel. The site has features and forecasts from their TV broadcasts, but with more details and supplemental information available. It includes forecasts at 1-hour intervals for the next 8 hours. Free e-mail severe weather alerts are available, and paid cell-phone alerts.

www.weatherunderground.com has much of the same information as The Weather Channel, but their daily forecasts can be shown for 3-hour intervals for the next 24 hours. There is a convenient map of all U.S. severe weather alerts.

www.intellicast.com shows its daily forecasts at 1-hour intervals for the next 12 hours. An interactive weather map is included which is interesting to play with.

Give these sites a try. The commercial sites are somewhat alike, but each has its own approach. You may find a favorite.

These are only a few of the weather-related sites available. A Google search for “weather forecasts” yields 10.6 million hits, enough to keep a weather buff busy forever. If you have a weather site that others should know about, let SoftTalk know and it can be included in a future issue.

Forgotten XP log-on password

Got visitors that want to check their email from your PC? Got grandkids that want to play games? Don’t want visitors and kids surfing your private files, changing your preferences, or downloading undesirable stuff? The experts say to activate the guest account to give visitors only limited access to your PC, and to password-protect your administrator’s account.

Sounds good, but what if you forget that administrator’s password? Of all your passwords, the one used to access XP is the most important. So, don’t get yourself locked out, make a password reset disk ahead of time, just in case. XP includes a Wizard that will make a floppy disk (or other removable media) to enable you to get into XP even if you forget the password.

Once the password-reset disk is made, it shouldn’t be left near the computer. That would be like hanging a key near your locked house door. One might argue that it would be easier to write down the password and keep the note secure. However, the advantage to the reset disk is that

once it is made, it will still be valid even if you change your password several times.

The procedure for making a password reset disk is described in an article in the August 2009 issue of Smart Computing magazine. Read the article for free, go to www.smartcomputing.com. Scroll down and click on “Search Now,” then click on “Browse all articles, Smart Computing only.” Click the button “Search for articles between dates,” enter “08/2009” (without the quotes) into both boxes, and click “Search.” The article will be the last item on the 3rd page of results. It is titled “Windows XP – Don’t Get Locked Out; Make a Password Reset Disk.”

This same article describes how to break an administrator’s password if all else fails. There is a way to boot up in the Safe Mode, change the password, and then reboot normally and use that new password. To learn the details, read the article – or ask any handy 14 year-old. The article also describes how to block this back-door method. Of course, with this last-resort blocked, having that password reset disk is even more important.

Windows SysInternals

Microsoft offers a free download of nearly 100 troubleshooting utilities rolled into a single suite named SysInternals. Each of the included tools contains a help file. Most of the files that Microsoft lists as its “top 10 downloads” are included in the suite. Not included are such “useful” things such as a screen saver that simulates the Blue Screen Of Death.

The suite is a treasure trove for those who like to “raise the hood” on their PCs.

The types of utilities included are:

- File and Disk Utilities
- Networking Utilities
- Process Utilities
- Security Utilities
- System Information Utilities
- Miscellaneous Utilities

The SysInternals home page with detailed information and descriptions is at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/default.aspx>. The entire SysInternals suite is

available free as a single 10.6 MB download. Or, individual tools in the suite can be run at SysInternals Live at <http://live.sysinternals.com> -- this service enables you to execute a tool directly from the web without downloading it. Simply go to the site, click on the tool you wish to try, and click on “Run” when asked.

Here are a couple of examples of the tools available:

Process Explorer Ever wondered which program has a particular file or directory open? *Process Explorer* shows you information about which handles and DLLs processes have opened or loaded.

Autoruns for windows This utility shows what programs are configured to run during system bootup or login, and the order in which Windows processes them. These programs include ones in your startup folder, Run, RunOnce, and other Registry keys. You'll probably be surprised at how many executables are launched automatically!

And if you really must have that Blue Screen of Death Simulator to amaze your friends and scare your enemies, just Google “blue screen screensaver” with or without the quotes.

A Handy volume control

If you don't have a volume control knob on your keyboard, changing the volume of a web page video or music requires you to open the volume control menu. Not very handy. Wouldn't it be handy to control the volume just by rolling your mouse's wheel?

Look no farther! “Volumouse” turns your mouse's wheel into a volume dial. You use it by pressing the ALT key and rolling the wheel. If the ALT key is not pressed, the wheel operates normally.

You can set Volumouse to use a key other than ALT. Or, if you don't use the mouse wheel for anything else, Volumouse can be set to always on.

Get volumouse free at <http://www.nirsoft.net/utills/volumouse.html>. Or, just Google or Bing

“volumouse” with or without the quotes. Volumouse works on Windows from 98 to Vista.

This was another great tip from Kim Komando. Thanks, Kim!

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

Printing PDF Documents

When you print a PDF document (such as this issue of SoftTalk), the size of the PDF page doesn't always match the size of your paper and its margins. The printed document may be smaller than your page (type will be too small) or larger than your page (parts of text or pictures will be missing).

"Print scaling" is the solution. While the PDF file is displayed on your screen, choose File > Print to get the Print menu. Or, right-click within the PDF document and select "Print" to get the Print menu. About half-way down the Print menu, under "Page Handling," click on "Page Scaling." Choose the option "Shrink to Printable Area" and click "OK" at the bottom of the menu. This will shrink an oversized PDF document to fit your printed page.

Another option under "Page Scaling" is "Fit to Printable Area." Fit is similar to Shrink, except that it

will not only shrink a large PDF, but also will expand a small PDF to fill a page. This can be unsightly if the PDF page contains only a small amount of text or a small picture.

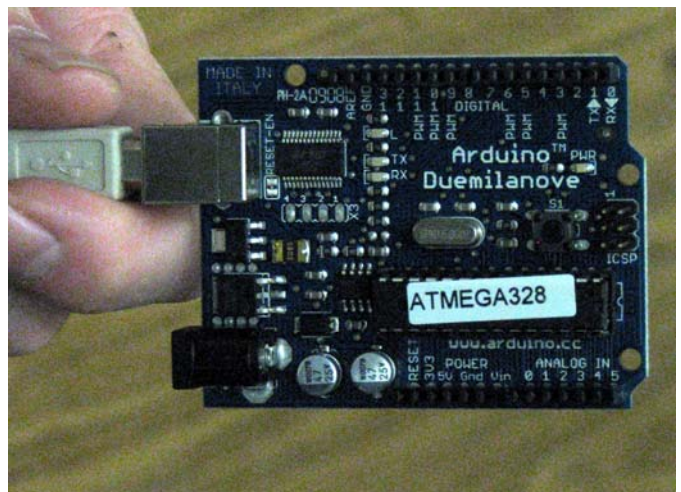
You can preview your printing on the right side of the Print menu in the Preview Block. The image to be printed is shown, and the dimensions of the image are shown, usually 8.5 by 11. Just below the image in the preview block is the "Units" for the dimensions, usually inches. Then comes "Zoom" which shows the percent that the printed image will shrink, such as "94." No "Zoom" number is shown if page scaling is not used.

Another PDF printing concern: If you want to print just a part of a lengthy PDF document, keep in mind that the page numbers used by the author of the document often don't match the page numbers used by your PDF reader. Find the pages you want to print by using the preview screen. Note what page numbers the PDF reader shows, and insert those page numbers into the print-range box.

Pictures from August meeting



Bill Scott showing his tool for measuring temperatures remotely



A close-up of the Arduino Duemilanove

Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools