



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

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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
Saturday, January 9, 2010
9:15 a.m.

Topics:

Show & Tell

(Bring your new electronic toys and show them off!)

+

The New Year in Free Software

by

Andy McLaughlin

See the Best Videos

Tired of missing good video clips? Surprised when someone sends one you haven't seen? Then go to www.flixxy.com and see a collection of the best video clips out there. Flixxy's home-page header says it all: "*Flixxy.com. The best videos on the Net. Safe for office and family. We bring you the most interesting, humorous, and uplifting videos on the web.*"

Flixxy lists its videos in two categories, Most Recent and Most Popular. Most Recent includes several New-Years-related videos, "The World's Luckiest Man," and "Pigeon Impossible – A Short film." Most Popular includes "40 Presidents Morph," "Helicopter Cable Inspector," and "Did You Know?"

So go to Flixxy and enjoy. But be warned: like a good book, it is hard to tear yourself away once you dive in.

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Secretary's Report

December 5, 2009

The December meeting was held as a dinner meeting at The Village at Pheasant Ridge on December 5 at 6 p.m. We were served a dinner of roasted New York strip steak with soup, vegetables, and dessert. Following the distribution of door prizes to all present, the business meeting was held.

President Earl Abbott called the meeting to order following the dinner. He presented the slate of officers:

President: John Leary
Vice President: Bill Scott
Secretary: Kay Viskup
Treasurer: Helen Trenor
Public Relations: Andy McLaughlin and
Bill Farmer
Membership: Helen Trenor
Roanoke County Schools: Homer Duff
Web Master: Tim Johnson

A motion was made and seconded that the slate be accepted by acclamation.

The slate was unanimously elected.

There will be no regularly scheduled meeting on December 9.

After the election of officers for 2010, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Kay Viskup, Secretary

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PREZ' NOTES



January 3, 2010

Members and prospective members,

Roanoke Valley PC Club has met for many years at the Arnold Burton Technology Center* from 9am til noon, on the second Saturday of each month. We hope to continue at this venue.

* <http://www.rcs.k12.va.us/arbtc/>

Our Website has been <http://www.rvpcc.org/>
Interesting info about this website is at each of the following links.

<http://www.alex.com/siteinfo/rvpcc.org>
<http://www.robtex.com/dns/rvpcc.org.html>
<http://cqcounter.com/whois/domain/rvpcc.org.html>
<http://www.sitedossier.com/site/www.rvpcc.org>
<http://www.talkreviews.com/rvpcc.org>

A new slate of officers was elected last month. We aim to live up to the high standards of our predecessors. The past business of RVPCC has been "fun." We hope to expand. The new business of RVPCC will aim to be "more fun."

Expect also that there will be some intriguing and interesting PC insights shared at each of the forthcoming meetings in 2010.

John Leary
President (elected for 2010)



What is a Hyperlink?

Since we've been seeing hyperlinks in SoftTalk for years, an explanation is a bit overdue. As used in SoftTalk, a hyperlink is a reference to a "target," a website that the reader might want to visit. An example is <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperlink>. Clicking on this hyperlink will take you to the Wikipedia site and a definition of hyperlinks.

The hyperlink is usually dark blue and underlined. It is easy to set up since Word recognizes a website's format and sets up the hyperlink automatically.

When the hyperlink is activated, a new browser window is opened and the target website appears. There are differences in computer systems and browsers, but usually when the mouse cursor is passed over the hyperlink, the cursor changes to a pointing hand. Then the reader can activate the hyperlink by clicking on it. Some systems require control-clicking or double-clicking.

Your browser may ask permission to forward you to the target. Usually the reader can return to SoftTalk by closing the new browser window.

For those readers with systems that do not allow hyperlinks, the underlined blue link can be copied and pasted into the browser. Also, instructions are usually given about how to find the information without using the hyperlink.

A target site may have a hyperlink so long that it can't fit into the SoftTalk article. In that case, search instructions are provided.

Like most things computer-wise, there is a lot more to hyperlinks than their simple use in SoftTalk. Let's forget the "more" complications and enjoy a hyperlink's ability to take us to take us quickly and easily to new information.

Thoughts for the Day

Life is like a hot bath. The longer you stay in it, the more wrinkled you get.

Be the person that your dog thinks you are.

A picture is worth a thousand words, but it uses up three thousand times the memory.

Free On-line Photo Editors

There are several photo editors that allow you to edit your photos on-line in a browser window. These are free, with no software to buy or install. Smart Computing Magazine suggested two favorites, which SoftTalk tried on broadband, but not on dial-up.

Adobe Photoshop.com at www.photoshop.com. This editor worked well. It is a bit different from most others. It doesn't constantly update your image as you move sliders, but rather generates several preview thumbnail images based on the tool you selected. You look at the previews and select the one you want. This editor requires a free registration.

Picnik at www.picnik.com. This editor also worked well, and it was almost as fast as software installed on your own computer. Many editing tools are available, although some require subscribing to the paid premium service. No registration is required.

Both of these programs not only edit pictures on your own computer, but they can also edit pictures directly from online services such as Photobucket, Flickr, and MySpace, eliminating the need to re-upload the picture.

Give these two a try – the price is right!

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

More on Alternative Office Suites

Office Suite 2009 is one alternative to Microsoft Office. This sells for \$14.95 at Amazon, less elsewhere. One review posted on the 'Net said that Office Suite is actually the free OpenOffice.

OpenOffice from Sun Microsystems, is a free office suite that is compatible with MS Office. Sun also produces StarOffice, a \$34.95 program. Surprisingly, businesses will avoid free software but will buy a similar paid version. StarOffice is based on the same code as OpenOffice, but includes some additional features:

- Supplied on a CD

- Patches and fixes will be issued (OO requires a new download)

- Support, but limited to 3 incidents or 60 days.

- Indemnification against intellectual property lawsuits.

A comparison chart of StarOffice and OpenOffice is available at

<http://www.sun.com/software/openoffice/index.jsp>.

Or, google "star office vs openoffice" (without the quotes) and click on "OpenOffice.org" in the results list.

In addition to the comparison chart, Sun's website has a large amount of information on Star and Open office: video tours, how-to ideas, tips, training, and a list of 450 free add-ons for OpenOffice.

Lotus Symphony is another free office suite that has word processing, presentation, and spreadsheet programs. Symphony is MS Office compatible. One reviewer said that Symphony is based on the OpenOffice code but has a look and feel of its own. Dozens of free plug-ins are available to add features. For more information and to download Symphony, go to <http://symphony.lotus.com>. Or google "lotus symphony download" (without the quotes) and click on "IBM Lotus Symphony" in the results list.

Google Docs uses "cloud computing" for word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation programs that run over the 'Net with no software on your PC. You can store your documents on your own PC, or store them on Google's servers.

Google Docs has fewer features than the office suites, but it has enough features for normal functions since most users never use the advanced features. Documents stored on Google's servers are secure, but transmissions to and from Google can be intercepted. There may be some lags if your Internet provider is slow.

To try Google Docs, just google the word "docs" (without the quotes) and click on "Welcome to Google Docs" in the results list.

Microsoft is not very happy about these free and open alternatives to its profitable Office programs. Microsoft contends that having the source code of mission critical software open to viewing and modifying by anyone makes it more vulnerable to malicious hackers and cyber-terrorists. They also believe that the large-scale adoption of free open source software will put people out of jobs and create grave economic consequences.

A November 26 Kim Komando tip also discussed office software. Go to Kim's site and search for "looking for office software" (with the quotes). Click on the article with the same name.

To Our Friends in China...

Happy New Year (at least, by our calendar) to our friends in China. Our Website manager says there are many hits from your country. Would you consider contributing to this newsletter?

Our computer club members would be interested in how personal computers are used in China.

Also, we would like to learn more about using the Chinese language on computers. With 50,000 or so characters each representing a word, how can a computer keyboard be used?

We would like to hear from you. Please respond to the Editor at the email address on page 1 of this newsletter. Your response will be shared with our members in this newsletter.

Ultimate Tips for Web Searching in Less Time

From an HP newsletter published 11/6/2009

Most of us use search engines every day, but few know how to make the most of those searches. Given the enormous amount of information on the Internet, almost any search you do will yield thousands, or even millions of results. But if they aren't the right results, they don't do you any good. And who has time to spend trawling through loads of "sort of useful" information?

Fortunately, there are a few tricks to help you better focus your searches so you get the information you need in less time. Here are five search engine best practices to try the next time you need to search:

1. Use quotes to find a specific phrase

In order to find an entire phrase in a search, enter quotation marks "" around the terms. For example, the search query butter apples orange will yield results containing any mention of those words, whereas "butter apples orange" returns only results where those words appear together and in that order in either the title, the URL of the website or the keywords in the document.

2. Use + or – for more targeted word searches

Adding the plus sign (+) or the word AND before a word will require that it be found in all of the search results. Conversely, the minus sign (-) before a word, or the word NOT, requires any result with that word will not be shown in the results.

3. Describe what you need with as few terms as possible

Generally, the more words you use in a search query, the more results you'll get. But that doesn't mean you'll necessarily get more useful results. So starting with fewer words helps you keep your searches focused. And even if you don't find what you need, the results will likely give you a good idea of what additional words are needed to refine your results on the next

search. ..

4. Use search engine advanced search options

Many search engines give you the option to do an Advanced Search. You can filter results by date, language or other criteria. Advanced searching also makes the process of searching for specific words (as described above) fast and easy. You can even do site-specific searches.

5. Skip searching and sign up for alerts

If you find yourself frequently searching the same terms to find new information, you can save time by signing up for alerts. For example, if you frequently search for news of your favorite sports team, [Google Alerts](#) will send you daily, weekly, or "as it happens" e-mail updates. Another option: Microsoft's new search engine [Bing](#) offers RSS feeds for its web search results that you can subscribe to inside any feed reader. Just add "&format=rss" (without the quotes) to any Bing search URL to convert it into a feed.

Also: In addition to these tips, it's a good idea to explore the features and functionality of different search engines to see which one is right for your needs and fits your preferences. Apart from the well-known [Google](#), there's [Bing](#), [Ask](#), and [Dogpile](#), just to name a few. Happy searching!

Links for more information

Bing: www.bing.com

Google: www.google.com

HP Small and Medium Business:

www.hp.com/sbso/index.html

Looking for something on the internet?

http://www.hp.com/sbso/search_evo.html

Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools

Technology Through Rose-colored Glasses

This is based on an article in a 32-year-old issue of Design News. It appears to be as true today as it was back then

The enthusiasm of some product promotion people knows no bounds when it comes to proclaiming the virtues of their products. Ordinary language doesn't seem to do justice to the wonderful things they discover in their products and so they have developed a special language that cannot be completely understood by the average customer unless he or she has the translation. We offer the following interpretive guide:

NEW ... different color from previous design

ALL NEW ... parts not interchangeable with previous design

EXCLUSIVE ... imported product

UNMATCHED ... almost as good as the competition

DESIGN SIMPLICITY ... cost cut to the bone (manufacturer's)

FOOLPROOF OPERATION ... no provision for adjustment

ADVANCED DESIGN ... copy writer doesn't understand it

IT'S HERE AT LAST ... rush job; nobody knew it was coming

FIELD TESTED ... manufacturer lacks test equipment

HIGH ACCURACY ... unit on which all parts fit

DIRECT SALES ONLY ... manufacturer had an argument with distributor

RUGGED ... too heavy to lift

LIGHTWEIGHT ... lighter than rugged

YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT ... finally got one that worked

UNPRECEDENTED PERFORMANCE ... nothing we had before ever worked this way

REVOLUTIONARY ... it's different from our competitors

BREAKTHROUGH ... we finally figured out a way to sell it

FUTURISTIC ... can't figure out another reason why it looks as it does

ENERGY SAVING ... achieved when the power switch is "off"

DISTINCTIVE ... a different color or shape than our competitors

NO MAINTENANCE ... impossible to fix

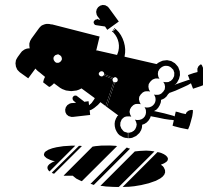
REDESIGNED ... previous faults are corrected, we hope

HAND CRAFTED ... machine that assembles it is operated without gloves

PERFORMANCE PROVEN ... will operate through warranty period

MEETS QUALITY STANDARDS ... ours, not yours

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED ... manufacturer's, upon receipt of the check



WINTER WEATHER ALERT
WHenever ice or snow occur
on our meeting day, check
the web site, www.rvpcc.org,
to see if the meeting has been
canceled!

Christmas Dinner

