



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

September 2010

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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.



It's Back-to-School for the kids
AND
It's Back-to-Arnold Burton Tech Center for
RVPCC

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Next Meeting

Saturday, Sep. 11, 2010

9:15 a.m.

Topics:

Remote Support with Audio and
Video chat, using Teamviewer"

by

Andy McLaughlin



Do-It-Yourself Tech Support

Here is a source for help. It covers subjects from finding drivers to resetting the Windows password. Bookmark this site for future reference.

<http://www.laptopmag.com/mobile-life/do-it-yourself-tech-support-for-pcs.aspx>

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Secretary's Report

August 14 , 2010

John Leary, President, opened the meeting at 10:15 A.M. In the absence of Helen Trenor, Earl Abbott handed out the door prize tickets. The winners were: Ron Gordon, John Leary, Kay Viskup, and Brandy Wine, Gainsboro's Librarian.

Bill Scott and Lewis Wilson discussed the possible consideration of using the new County Headquarters Library (which will be completed in 2011) for RVPCC's monthly meeting site. Lewis Wilson is checking into this. In the meantime, future meetings will be held at the Arnold R. Burton Tech Center.

Helen Trenor, Treasurer, gave Earl Abbott the August Treasurer's report. Sandy Johnson had audited the Treasurer's reports and found that all was in order. With the new dues Annual payment system in effect, and to be paid up to and through July 31, 2011, Sandy says she has a list of the amounts due by each of the members. Earl Abbott said he also had the list.

Kay Viskup, Secretary, said that July's minutes were published in August newsletter. Sandy Johnson prepared an index in August's newsletter and asked if it was of any value to continue an index.

Sandy Johnson brought up the matter of RVPCC's 2010 Christmas Dinner, and suggested contacting Ron Zoll regarding to use the Village at Pheasant Ridge facilities again. Bill Scott recommended Trailer House in Salem and John Leary also mentioned Sunnyside Restaurant in Salem. They are both checking into these locations and will report their findings at the September meeting.

No program has yet been set for the September meeting. John Leary will get in touch with Andy McLaughlin to get details.

John Leary brought up the subject of further advertising RVPCC's meetings to bring in new members. Kay Viskup volunteered to prepare a news release for the local newspapers to be put in their "community activities" columns regarding RVPCC's meetings. She will give it to John Leary and others for preview, changes and acceptance before mailing distribution.

There was a discussion regarding Don Thorne's website for publicizing RVPCC.

PROGRAM:

John Leary gave a program on Encrypting Your Data Using TrueCrypt. John passed out the TrueCrypt "how to" notes to members to follow his very interesting and knowledgeable presentation. A discussion followed his report.


The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Viskup, Secretary

PREZ' NOTES

September 2010



This Labor Day weekend, as we enjoy some of the best holiday weather ever, and as many folks gather at end-of-summer celebrations, its easy to forget things that really count. Last week, a visit from a gent who donates all of his time to creating business opportunities for veterans, got me to thinking about the thousands who will be coming home from Iraq. As a result, I pulsed some friends with email and searched the web in my own haphazard way. The results were heartwarming. Here are two web-links that tell about amazing people, and what they are doing to honor veterans, and for the families of the fallen. The links lead to video clips that really hold your attention.

(1) Portraits of the Fallen -- Kaziah Hancock
An artist who lives on a remote Utah ranch paints portraits of fallen soldiers free of charge for their families as part of Project Compassion. Video by KARE 11/ Minneapolis/ St. Paul.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/multimedia/video/?bcrefid=866157386#/Iraq/Portraits+of++the+Fallen/57707019001/58795775001/51748824001>

(2) Sunset Beach Flag Ceremony - Marvin Hume
Every day from May to November for the past 38 years, a WWII vet, has conducted a sunset ceremony on a Cape May NJ beach. He honors the ones who "didn't come back." Video courtesy of Comcast.

<http://www.comcast.net/video/honoring-fallen-vets/1536192981/>

Next month: back to Windows 7

John

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Backup Media

We all backup frequently, don't we?

Backing up the data on your computer isn't a lot of fun. It's one of those things in the same popularity range as paying insurance premiums and getting the six-month dental checkup. But we all backup regularly. You bet.

OK, we all know we should backup. Hard drives have a life span – it isn't a question of if they fail, but when. A hard drive isn't a rugged device and can be damaged by dropping or rough handling; that's something to worry about with a laptop. Also we must be concerned with fire, flood, and theft. And don't forget that cousin who likes to play on your computer.

The first problem in backup is actually getting yourself to do it. The second problem is choosing the media to record the backup onto. There are several choices for the media – choose one or more.

Additional internal hard drive. The most convenient and the fastest, but subject to loss or damage along with the computer. Very large capacity. Few laptops will have room for a second hard drive.

External hard drive. Probably the most popular backup device. They are convenient to use and have very large capacities at low cost per gigabyte. Speeds are increasing with new interfaces like the USB 3. External drives can be stored separately from the computer. However they are still fragile – knock one

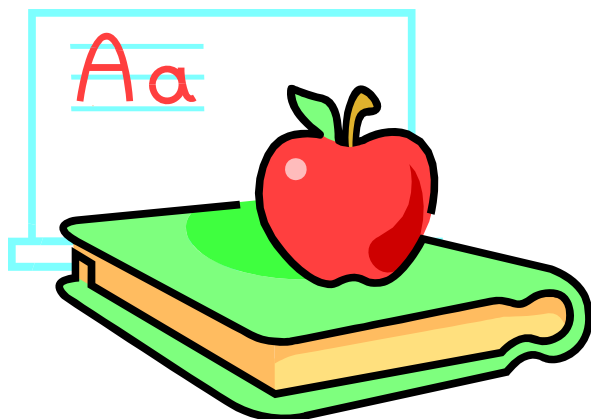
off the table and it is probably gone. It can be lost.

DVDs. Another popular backup. Convenient and relatively cheap. Capacity is only 4.7GB per disk, so backing up large amounts of data (like a vacation's pictures) will require multiple disks. Not easily damaged if properly packaged. Can be stored away from the computer or off-site. Some people (like Kim Komando) say that DVDs are not good for backup since they deteriorate over time and should be re-burned every few years. They can be misplaced.

USB flash drive. Convenient, but expensive. A 32GB flash drive runs around \$140, but prices are dropping. A flash drive is small, portable, and rugged. And easy to lose. Due to its limited capacity, it is best for backing up small amounts of important data.

The Cloud. There are several sites that will store your data on line where it won't be misplaced or lost in a fire or flood. You can retrieve your data from any computer. The storage costs vary with the amount of data you want to store. One is Carbonite (www.carbonite.com): \$55 per year, unlimited capacity. Another is SpiderOak (www.spideroak.com): 2GB is free; each additional 100GB is \$10 per month.

Has any member had good or bad experiences with backups that could be shared? Anyone developed a good backup method? Please send a note to your editor. Backups are important and we could all benefit from the experiences of others.



RVPC 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 info: RVPC.org

Keep a Calculator Handy

When you are at your computer and need to use a hand-held calculator, one is never nearby. But you already have an on-screen version, called "Calculator," included with Windows.

In XP, browse to Programs > Accessories > Calculator. When you find the program, right-click and hold the program name, drag it down to your Quick launch Toolbar, and release the mouse button. This will keep it handy, ready to use.

In Vista and 7, type "calculator" (without the quotes) into the search box, and then start the program by clicking on the name in the search-results list. With the calculator application is running, right-click the application's icon in the toolbar and click "Pin this program to the toolbar." The icon will stay in the toolbar and easily found.,

The calculator included with Windows is a basic calculator and does a satisfactory job. It is easy to use since the values can be entered from the keyboard or by mousing and clicking each number.

For those wanting more than basic functions, there are other free calculators available. The Moffsoft FreeCalc adds some convenient keys plus the on-screen equivalent of a paper tape. Microsoft offers Calculator Plus which adds scientific, mathematical, and conversion features to the basic Calculator, but no "paper tape." One of the best calculators appears to be SpeedCrunch. It is easy to use for ordinary arithmetic, including a "paper tape." It is also well suited to scientific and engineering calculations. SpeedCrunch seems to have everything except the conversions. If you need to convert furlongs to meters, you'll need Calculator Plus also.

If these choices aren't enough, googling "calculators" or "online calculators" will list millions of hits. There are specialized calculators available for almost any use, from knitting to finance.

Links to calculators: Microsoft Calculator Plus -- google "microsoft calculator plus" (without the quotes). The link for Moffsoft FreeCalc is www.moffsoft.com. The link for SpeedCrunch is www.speedcrunch.org.

FastStone Image viewer

Digital photography is great, but we all know that the photo viewers we use on our computers are not as good as we might like. Here is an improved viewer:

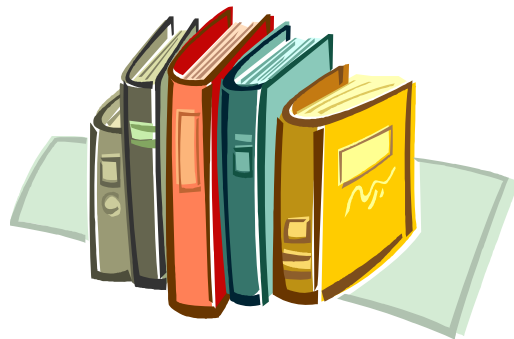
On 7/20/2010, Kim Komando recommended the FastStone Image viewer. Read her comments at <http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=9152>. The viewer has some editing functions, but it is primarily for looking at your pictures either individually or as a slideshow.

When a folder containing pictures is opened, large thumbnails of each picture are displayed, plus a quarter-screen image of the current thumbnail. Note that if the folder is large, it might take several minutes to load the thumbnails.

When a thumbnail is double-clicked, a full-screen image is displayed, almost free of distracting menus. Hidden toolbars pop up when the mouse touches one of the four screen edges. For example, the EXIF information (camera and exposure data) is easily seen, and you can add your own comments to be stored with the picture.

A long list of popular formats, plus 11 RAW formats, is supported.

The FastStone Image Viewer is free for a non-commercial user. Go to www.faststone.org to find an overview, a list of features, and a download link.



Meeting space provided by
Roanoke County Schools

Computer 'How To' for Newbies

Cut or Copy and paste

Cut-And-Paste and Copy-And-Paste are basic operations in Microsoft Word and in most other windows-based applications. First we select a portion of text by highlighting it, then right-click the highlighted text, and select Cut or Copy from the pop-up menu.

Cut removes the selected text, and Copy copies the selected text. Both actions store the text so that you can Paste it (insert it) at another point, or into another document, or even into an email.

To paste the cut or copied text, right-click on the spot where the text is to be inserted, then click on Paste in the pop-up menu.

Both cutting and copying work for any size text, from a few characters to pages-full of text. The cut or copied text is temporarily stored in the "Clipboard" and remains there until the next time Cut or Copy is used, so the same stored text may be pasted as often as needed.

The fun part is selecting the text to be cut or copied, using the mouse or the keyboard. Using the keyboard requires remembering various key combinations which isn't a lot of fun, so this article will cover the more common mousing moves. Give them a try – they will feel natural with just a little experience.

As usual, "click" means a single left-click. Right-clicks or multiple-left-clicks will be specified.

To select:

Any amount of text -- Hold down the left mouse button and drag the pointer over the text. Release the button when the desired text is highlighted.

A letter or character – click the character

A word -- Double-click the word.

A line of text -- Move the pointer to the left of the line until it changes to a right-pointing arrow, and then click.

Multiple lines of text – As for a line, but click and

hold, then drag the pointer up or down to highlight additional lines.

A sentence -- Hold down CTRL, and then click anywhere in the sentence.

A paragraph -- Move the pointer to the left of the paragraph until it changes to a right-pointing arrow, and then double-click.

-- Or triple-click anywhere in the paragraph.

Multiple paragraphs -- Move the pointer to the left of the paragraphs until it changes to a right-pointing arrow, and then click and drag up or down, as in highlighting multiple lines, above.

A large block of text -- Click at the start of the selection, move the pointer to the end of the selection, and then hold down SHIFT and click again.

An entire document -- Move the pointer to the left of any document text until it changes to a right-pointing arrow, and then triple-click.

-- Or, hold down Ctrl and press the "a" key.

-- Or, in the "Edit" drop down menu, click "Select All."

Select multiple areas -- To select multiple areas that aren't next to each other, make your first selection, hold down CTRL, and then select any other items you want.

To unselect areas – click anywhere on any non-highlighted part of the document.

Several more mouse techniques and all the keyboard techniques are described in your Word's Help section. Simply search for "select" (without the quotes.)



What's a Registry?

The Registry in our computers is a mystery to most of us. One definition says that “it is a central location for maintaining operating system, application, user, and hardware information.”

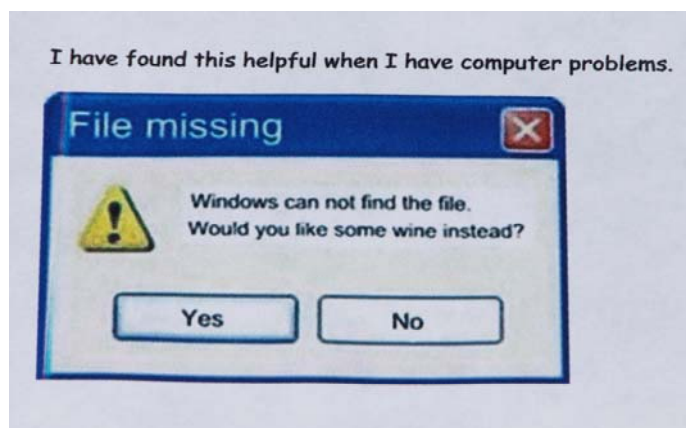
The Registry can be edited manually, but most computer users are reluctant to make any changes, and rightly so – make a mistake in editing the registry and you may have to reformat and then reload everything. Not a fun way to spend a day.

Your SoftTalk Editor had an early PC with a Registry-like area. When that area was accessed, the PC flashed a warning, “If you don't know what you are doing here, don't do it.” That message applies to today's Registry.

However, with some knowledge about what the Registry is and how it is organized, the fear goes away, or at least is reduced a bit.

If you subscribe to *Smart Computing*, *PC Today*, *First Glimpse*, or *Computer Power User* magazine, you can access the August, 2010, issue of *Smart Computing* magazine on-line and read the article titled “Windows Maintenance – Easy Registry Editing.” It covers Registry basics, how to back it up, and how to edit it.

Another source of information, although not as readable as the *Smart Computing* article, is <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/256986>



Iceland and Greenland

These countries have interesting places to see and things to do.



Seljalandsfoss waterfall in Iceland



Arctic River Rafting—yes, the water is COLD!



Watch icebergs drifting by from your hotel window in Tasiilaq, Greenland. This town is iced in from October to July!

Pics from August meeting



Meeting room at Gainsboro Branch Library



Ron Gordon with CD case



John Leary's actually reading the directions for his mini-recorder



Kay Viskup with her Idiot's book for MS Office



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