



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

April 2011

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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  
Saturday, April 9, 2011  
9:15 a.m.

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## IRS Notification of Your Fiscal Activity sn123456

From: **IRS Notification Department** ([taxsupport@t.irs.gov](mailto:taxsupport@t.irs.gov))

Sent: Tue 2/15/11 10:46 AM

To: xxxxxxxxx@hotmail.com

1 attachment

TAX-PAYMENT-NOTIFICATION-IRC\_LegalAuth-021511.zip (103.7 KB)



After the last annual calculations of your fiscal activity we have determined that you are eligible to receive a tax refund of \$618.19.

Please submit the tax refund request and allow us 6-9 days in order to process it.

A refund can be delayed for a variety of reasons. For example submitting invalid records or applying after the deadline.

To access the form for your tax refund, please click here.

Regards,

Internal Revenue Service

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After receive your application our Taxation Office will contact you by phone or email in 48-96 hours with further information if you are eligible to receive a Taxation Refund and how can be done.

**THE EMAIL ABOVE IS A SCAM! IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SIMILAR TO THIS, DO NOT RESPOND!** (One of our TaxAide clients received this email before his return had even been efiled.) The IRS does not send Emails! They will send you a letter via snail mail.

Sandy Johnson, AARP Tax Councilor

## Secretary's Report

The President, John Leary, called the meeting to order at 9:15AM.

Sandy Johnson, Acting Secretary, reported the minutes of the last meeting are in the newsletter.

There was no report from Webmaster, Tim Johnson.

Homer Duff said there is nothing new from Roanoke County Schools.

Helen Trenor, Membership Chairman, reported one former member, Ed Mullikin, has rejoined. The club now has 17 members.

Andy McLaughlin & Bill Farmer, Public Relations, asked for suggestions for future programs. Free online services and photo editing software were suggested.

Helen Trenor, Treasurer, gave the current financial report. There was some discussion about how to increase income and reduce expenses. An increase in the membership fee and/or a change in the meeting location to the Goodwill on Melrose or the new Roanoke County Library once it is finished were suggested.

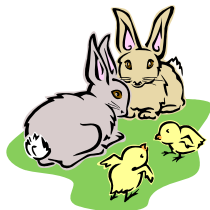
The winners of the door prizes were: Earl Abbot, Bill Scott, Art Sellers, Helen Trenor, Ron Gordon & Homer Duff.

Sandy Johnson brought a cake for Bill Scott's "going away" party.

Andy gave a very informative slide show program on free (or almost free) software including new versions of popular web browsers (Firefox, Google Chrome, IE), desktop email programs, free substitutes for MS Office, photo editing programs and several computer utility and backup programs. His presentation is available on the RVPCC website ("Free Software for 2011.pdf").

The meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.

Ron Gordon, Secretary



## PREZ' NOTES

For April readers of SoftTalk, I have two news items. The first item is trial ware; the second is "tech news." Read on if you are interested in either of these areas.



First: NXPowerLite. This program shrinks the size of PowerPoint, Word, Excel, JPEG and PDF files by up to 95%. It can be integrated with Microsoft Office, or integrated within your email client (eg: Outlook Express or Thunderbird) so you automatically compress email attachments as they are sent. The files output by NXPowerLite remain in their original format, and lose no functional capability or visual integrity, but they are much smaller. A free (30 day trial) download of this program is available on line at this web link:

<http://www.neuxpower.com/products/nxpowerlite-desktop/download/>

Files output by Neuxpower remain in their original format and keep all their attributes and visual content integrity. They look and function identically to the originals, but are much smaller!

Second: Tech news for April talks about "3D Printing" manufacturing technology. This is literally the "Xerox" capability for machines. Naturally the first copyable machines are computer parts. Here's a reference news clipping. "The Navy has proposed a project to build a swarm of micro-robots with 3D printing capabilities and other high-tech features. The robots could create programmable materials, large structures and even replicas of themselves. The key words in this amazing news item are "3D Printing". You can find out more about this technology by reading the Wiki entry at this weblink: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3D\\_Printing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3D_Printing).

The most interesting phrase that you will see in this article, is (in my opinion) the one that talks about "real object replication."

John

## A Change in AutoRun

We are accustomed to having our flash drives and external hard drives autorun (start automatically) when we plug them in, just like CDs and DVDs. This has been discovered to be serious security problem, and Microsoft has taken action. In recent updates, AutoRun was disabled for flash drives and external hard drives in Windows Vista and Windows 7, and now in Windows XP.

Your flash drives and external hard drives will still work, but you will have to start programs manually. You can use Windows Explorer to find the drive and click it. Or, you can click Start and My Computer in XP, or Start and Computer in Vista and 7. Find the new drive in the listing and double-click it to open it. Then you can browse for files and programs.

CDs and DVDs will still autorun with no changes.

If you feel strongly about this change, and are willing to accept the security risk, Microsoft offers a fix-it tool that will re-install the autorun feature for the external drives.

This change in autorun was covered in a 3/29/2011 Kim Komando tip. To read all the details and learn the reasons for the change, go to <http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=10523&page=1>



## Speed Up Your Start Up

It is a pretty sure bet that your PC is starting up slower than it used to. The startup process slows down over time because many programs install a component that runs during startup. Sometimes this is necessary, sometimes not. When you become impatient waiting for Windows to start, it is time to do something.

You can manually prevent applications from loading during startup by using Programs > Start Up, or MSConfig > System Configuration Utility. Neither of these approaches is suitable for beginners. And neither approach will answer the most important question, “Do I really need this program to load at startup?” There is a new way to find an answer to that question.

A Komando Download of the Day was the free startup manager program “Soluto” from [www.soluto.com](http://www.soluto.com). Your editor tried it and found it effective and relatively easy to use. Soluto removed 12 applications from startup and saved 11.3 seconds of startup time on what was thought to be a clean machine. Of course, nothing is without a cost; Soluto itself added 3.8 seconds to the startup time.

Rather than wade through a square foot of text here describing how the program works, read a review of Soluto at <http://www.thewadi.com/soluto-review-the-boot-is-just-the-beginning/>. Search for “soluto reviews” without the quotes to see more reviews. Kim Komando’s tip is at <http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=9426>.

In brief, Soluto watches your computer during startup, and then presents you with a list of the startup items, categorized into easy to remove, maybe remove, or don’t remove.

Don’t worry that you might change something that you shouldn’t. Soluto shows you all the changes you have made and lets you put things back the way they were.



## Newbies Corner Easier downloading



Downloading a program has become a bit more complicated than it was in the early days of XP. Then when we downloaded a program, like CCleaner for example, we were given a choice of saving or running the file.

Somewhere in the many service packs, upgrades, and patches, the Microsoft XP security wizards eliminated our save/run choice and now we must save the file. Then, to run it, we must make a note of the name of the downloaded file, find out where our computer saves files (usually in "Downloads"), go there with Windows Explorer, and double click the file to run it to set up the new program.

Vista and 7 have the same inconvenient procedure.

But there is a handy shortcut. While the file is downloading, a screen pops up showing the download progress and indicating when the download is complete. The latest file to download is at the top of the list.

If you double-click that downloaded file in the progress screen, it will run. No notes, no searching, no frustration. Not quite as easy as the old save/run choice, but almost.

Note that your PC may prefer that you right-click the downloaded file and then click Open in the pop-up menu.

## Zettabyte

In their recent annual report, IBM quoted a study predicting that global data volumes will increase by 29 times over the next 10 years – to 35 zettabytes. A zettabyte is a 1 followed by 21 zeroes. One part of IBM’s plan for the future is to provide “a way to manage and mine this deluge of potentially valuable information.”

Wikipedia lists the following:

Kilobyte	(KB)	10 <sup>3</sup>
Megabyte	(MB)	10 <sup>6</sup>
Gigabyte	(GB)	10 <sup>9</sup>
Terabyte	(TB)	10 <sup>12</sup>
Petabyte	(PB)	10 <sup>15</sup>
Exabyte	(EB)	10 <sup>18</sup>
Zettabyte	(ZB)	10 <sup>21</sup>
Yottabyte	(YB)	10 <sup>24</sup>



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 info: [RVPCC.org](http://RVPCC.org)

Meeting space provided by  
Roanoke County Schools

## Firefox 4 is here!

So what if we XP users can't use Microsoft's new Internet Explorer 9! We have other choices, like Chrome, Opera, Safari, and the new Firefox 4 that was released in final form in March

A review of Firefox 4 by CNET was enthusiastic, ending with the conclusion "Firefox 4 is arguably the best browser on the market today." Read the CNET review at <http://download.cnet.com/mozilla-firefox/>.

Did you catch the weasel-word "arguably?" The on-line dictionary defines arguably as "open to argument: an arguable question, still unresolved."

Walter Mossberg's review in the March 31 Wall Street Journal was more neutral than CNET's. Mossberg said that the new Firefox4 was a catch-up effort to win back users who have been switching to Chrome. His conclusion was "Firefox 4 is worth a look, but you aren't likely to see lots of big features you haven't seen before."

Read Mossberg's review at <http://ptech.allthingsd.com/20110330/new-lean-firefox-4-re-built-to-play-catch-up/>. Or watch his video-review of Firefox 4 at <http://online.wsj.com/public/page/personal-technology.html>

Here is a quickie look at what Firefox 4 says about itself:

- ▶ A new look, simplified, yet easy-to-customize to suit you.
- ▶ Fastest Firefox yet, now competitive with Chrome, which was considered to be the fastest.
- ▶ Keep your mobile and desktop browsers synced.
- ▶ Take sites that you access often and give them permanent icons in the browser.
- ▶ A wide variety of add-ons. Ten are featured in a special collection, such as an add-on that captures screen shots and allows annotating.

So take that, Microsoft, we XP users don't need your IE9! Want to give Firefox 4 a test drive? Download it free at <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/fx/>.

## Labeling CDs and DVDs

Don't use a ballpoint pen, pencil, general-purpose marker, or crayon. The reason is that the image layer is under a thin plastic coating, close to the surface you write on. Pencils and ballpoint can mechanically damage the plastic coating. Aggressive inks can dissolve the coating or leach into it, making the disk unreadable.

A description and pictures of the layers in a disk can be found at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cd>

The best way to label disks is to use special CD marking pens whose inks do not damage the lacquer surface of the disc. Sharpie makes a pen that is labeled "CD / DVD Marker." It has a fine tip on one end and an ultra-fine tip on the other.

Write only on the label side of the disk, in the clear inner diameter or designated label area. Some disks come with white areas to make the label easier to read.

An alternate method is to use adhesive paper labels that are designed for optical discs and do not peel off. Use labels with a high-quality adhesive that won't corrode the plastic coating.

Misaligned paper labels cannot be pulled off a disc without damaging the coating and the image layer below, so use a labeling kit device to get the best alignment. Be sure to apply the label properly since labels applied off-center or with ripples can harm your CD drive.

More information is available at <http://www.supermediastore.com/article/u/how-to-dvd-cd-labeling-guide>.



## Door Prize Winners

### Internet speed

How fast does your Internet download information? Are you getting the speed you expect from your ISP (Internet Service Provider). Are you getting what you are paying for?

For a free test for broadband Internet speed, go to [www.speedtest.net](http://www.speedtest.net) and run the speed test. Upload speeds will be much slower than downloads – that is to be expected.

A slow download speed may not be the fault of your ISP since delays and slowdowns can occur with the source or with busy or overloaded routers upstream from your ISP. Run the speed test at various times over a week or so, and keep notes.

If you are paying for 30 MBPS (megabits per second) and getting 15, call your ISP and ask why. Perhaps you need a different (more expensive) plan. Or perhaps you need a different ISP.

Don't click on those free scans for PC or registry errors offered on the Speedtest site. Some "free scans" put a virus on your machine then demand payment to remove it. It is a good rule of thumb to avoid any free scans no matter where you find them.

Late flash: At SoftTalk's press time, Kim Komando another speed test. Perhaps someone could test it a write a few notes about it for the next SoftTalk. Read about the new speed test at [http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=10535&utm\\_medium=nl&utm\\_source=dotd&utm\\_content=2011-04-01-article&utm\\_campaign=end](http://www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=10535&utm_medium=nl&utm_source=dotd&utm_content=2011-04-01-article&utm_campaign=end).



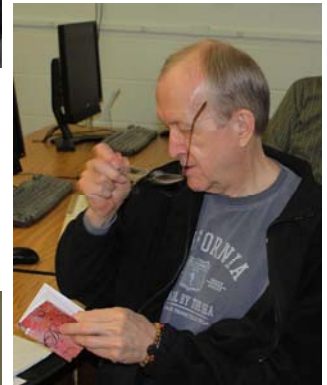
Art



Helen



Earl



Ron



Bill

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Web: <http://rvpcc.org>  
Email: [info@rvpcc.org](mailto:info@rvpcc.org)

Plan to go out to lunch as a group after the April meeting. John is suggesting a place in Oakwood Place which sells BBQ (and other stuff). He says it is near our meeting place and easy to get to.



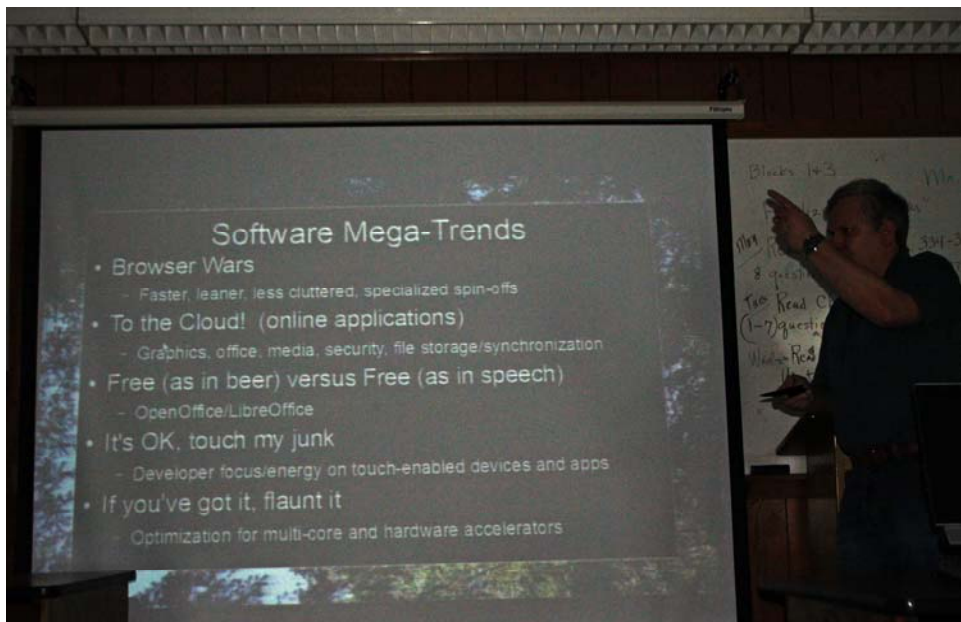
Bill Scott got some photo software to use with his new camera.



Bill Scott brought in an early hard drive.

This one was the size of a cigar box, very heavy, and only 10 or 20 megabytes!

Homer Duff's replacement door prize. (Remember that he got an empty box last month.)



Andy McLaughlin giving his presentation on free or almost free software for 2011

- ### Software Mega-Trends
- Browser Wars
    - Faster, leaner, less cluttered, specialized spin-offs
  - To the Cloud! (online applications)
    - Graphics, office, media, security, file storage/synchronization
  - Free (as in beer) versus Free (as in speech)
    - OpenOffice/LibreOffice
  - It's OK, touch my junk
    - Developer focus/energy on touch-enabled devices and apps
  - If you've got it, flaunt it
    - Optimization for multi-core and hardware accelerators

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### Arizona Beckons



Ron Zoll and his wife, Carolyn, will be moving to Arizona as soon as they sell their condo in Pheasant Ridge.

Ron was Vice President of the club a couple of years ago.

Goodbye Ron, and good luck. We will miss you.