



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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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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# Welcome Back



## In this issue:

Cost of Lighting . . . . .	1
June Minutes . . . . .	2
Prez Notes . . . . .	2
During Vacation . . . . .	3
Earthquakes & Hurricanes. . . . .	4
MS System Sweeper . . . . .	5
Perfection Paralysis . . . . .	5
New Verb . . . . .	5
Grammar & Punctuation . . . . .	6
Travel Sites . . . . .	6
June Pics . . . . .	7
2011 Index . . . . .	8

Next Meeting  
Saturday, September 10, 2011  
9:30 a.m.  
Topic:  
Bootable Windows Recovery  
Utilities  
by  
Andy McLaughlin

## The Cost of Lighting your Home

The EPA estimates that eleven percent of the energy used in the typical U.S. home goes to keep the lights on, at an average \$115 annual cost. The EPA also estimates you can reduce your light bill by 50% to 75% by changing older incandescent bulbs for more efficient lighting.

It has become more than just a suggestion. Starting Jan. 1, 2012, a new federal law will begin phasing out many of today's incandescent bulbs. Only 100-watt bulbs will be affected in 2012, but the law will be extended on down to 40-watt bulbs in 2014.

A 5-page summary of "the light-bulb law" in PDF form is available at [http://www.energystar.gov/ia/products/lighting/cfls/downloads/EISA\\_Backgrounder\\_FINAL\\_4-11\\_EPA.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/products/lighting/cfls/downloads/EISA_Backgrounder_FINAL_4-11_EPA.pdf). The PDF includes shopping tips you will need to know.

## Secretary's Report

The June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RVPCC was called to order by the President, John Leary, at 9:30 a.m.

Visitors were introduced.

Jim Shaver gave us an introduction to Goodwill Industries and led us on a tour of their facilities. The local Goodwill trains people for jobs in the valley and also provides employment for some mentally and physically handicapped people.

Jerome Watson, Joe Custer's assistant, talked a bit about the computer system at Goodwill. At the present time, they are using Win 7 and Office 2010. He said that they could use volunteer help in "re-engineering" desk tops, inventory, and cannibalizing older machines.

At 10:45 a.m., Andy McLaughlin connected with us via Team Viewer to do his program on Google Docs remotely while he was out of town.

Google Docs does computing in the cloud. It can do:

- Word processing saving as .doc, .odt, .sxw, .html, .rft
- Spread sheets saving as .xls, .ods, .csv
- Presentations saving as .ppt
- Vector graphics (drawings) as .wmf **BUT WILL NOT** do jpegs
- Survey forms and results, can be exported to PDF and other forms.

To obtain the program, search for "google docs" without quotes. You will need a free Google ID — Gmail or any other Google program ID is sufficient

The documents are completely private with access only to you and anyone to whom you give a secret web link. **NOTE:** this is not good for sensitive information as the link can be forwarded to anyone.

A document can be made available to be edited by specific users who have a Google ID, by any user, or by the originator only.

In the second portion of the program, Bob Johnson demonstrated the use of Google Earth and Google Maps. He took us on a tour of Amsterdam.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandy Johnson, acting secretary

## PREZ' NOTES

Some web links worth visiting in September follow in the paragraphs below. Several shed light on Microsoft plans and progress towards Windows-8 Operating System. These notes are courtesy of Deb Shinder, Editor, at Win7News.net. Windows-8 insights are to be published at <http://www.WinNews.com> A final web link points to a PDF containing home network security "best practices."



Regards Windows-8, here are:

- (1) a video a info on its design features -- a radically new operating system  
-- Video is at <http://www.win7news.net/MQN0IK/110901-D9-Video>  
-- Design Features are at <http://www.win7news.net/MQN0IK/110901-Windows-8-Design>
- (2) a new feature that permits the "mounting" of ISO files from within Windows Explorer. This would/ will make it much easier to install apps that are distributed in ISO format, as are some downloads from MSDN and TechNet. Here's a link to commentary on this point--Mounting ISO files <http://www.win7news.net/MQN0IK/110901-ISO-VHD-Files>

(3) emerging plans for bridging the gap between the traditional Windows-7 HMI and the OS HMI used for touch-enabled devices. Steven Sinofsky's blog on this point makes interesting reading.

<http://www.win7news.net/MQN0IK/110901-Metro-Style>

Regards PC Security, here's the best find for your September reading:

(4) a seven page guide, published by the National Security Agency (NSA) on best practices for securing your home network. This one is worth reading.

-- Securing Home Networks [http://www.nsa.gov/ia/files/factsheets/Best\\_Practices\\_Datasheets.pdf](http://www.nsa.gov/ia/files/factsheets/Best_Practices_Datasheets.pdf)

*John*

## During our summer vacation:

**June 28** Google closes Health and PowerMeter services after failing to pick up enough users in the healthcare and energy usage markets. The services will continue to be available for a limited time. Users will be able to download their data.

**June 28** Microsoft rolls out Office 365. It is a \$6 per user/per month cloud computing subscription service that lets you access your email, important documents, contacts, and calendar from virtually anywhere on almost any device. 365 targets organizations with fewer than 25 employees that do not have IT staff or expertise.

**June 30** The News Corporation sold MySpace for \$35 million. It had paid \$580 million for the site six years ago. MySpace was a casualty of changing tastes. In the US, it has 35 million visitors a month, compared to Facebook's 157 million.

**June 30** Microsoft will discontinue the Microsoft Hohm service effective May 31, 2012 "due to the slow overall market adoption of the service." The service will continue to operate until that time.

**July 5** Microsoft has ended support for Office XP and Vista SP1. Security updates were no longer available after July 12. Vista users who upgraded to SP2 will continue to receive updates.

**July 5** Google to rename key brands. The Blogger and Picasa brands will be renamed Google Blogs and Google Photos, respectively.

**July 13** Netflix raises rates, angers customers. Netflix has angered some of its 23 million subscribers by raising its prices by as much as 60 percent for those who want to rent DVDs by mail and watch video on the Internet. The change is immediate for new customers and effective September 1 for existing customers.

**July 18** Hotmail to require better passwords. Hotmail will prevent you from choosing a very common password such as "123456" when you sign up for an account or when you change your password. If you're already using a common password, you may be asked to change it to a stronger password.

**July 21** Google drops their toolbar for Firefox 5 or newer. However, you can still add similar functionality to the browser with Firefox add-ons.

Google has declared that the Google toolbar for Firefox is no longer necessary since modern browsers are so capable. Of course, google is pushing their own browser, Chrome.

**July 21** Google shuts down Labs in order to better focus its resources and energy. Google Labs was an online playground where people could dabble with early versions of new services or products being worked on by engineers at the Internet powerhouse.

**Aug 15** Google to acquire Motorola Mobility. Some analysts say the acquisition of Motorola and its Android operating system may lead to an iPhone-killer. Others say that what Google really wants is Motorola's 17,000 patents (and 7,000 more pending). For a list of Google's 102 acquisitions since 2001, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_acquisitions\\_by\\_Google](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_acquisitions_by_Google).

**Aug 17** Google's street-view car was spotted taking pictures in the area, according to The Roanoke times. There was no word when the new pictures would appear, but Google said the processing of the images takes several months.

**Aug 18** IBM's two new prototype chips react like a human brain. They have the ability to adapt to types of information that they weren't specifically programmed to expect – meaning they can learn. A computer with the power of the human brain is not yet near. But IBM says their latest development is an important step.

**Aug 18** HP is getting out of the PC business by sale or spin-off and will concentrate on enterprise services. The reason? There isn't enough profit in PCs. Apple makes about seven times as much profit per machine as HP, while selling about a quarter as many. HP's move leaves just two American companies standing in the PC market: Dell and Apple.

**Aug 24** Steve Jobs resigns as CEO of Apple for health reasons. Tim Cook will be the new CEO. Jobs, 56, will stay on as chairman of the board. A longer article at [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44264089/ns/business-us\\_business/?gt1=43001#.TIWtH10I\\_vY](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44264089/ns/business-us_business/?gt1=43001#.TIWtH10I_vY) includes photos of Jobs showing a startling change in appearance from 2000 to present.

## Earthquakes and Hurricanes

**Earthquakes** are still fresh in local minds. The U.S. Geological Survey at <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/> is a source of earthquake news and information from around the world. Just a few minutes after the August 23 earthquake in Virginia, the USGS site posted a map showing the location with text describing the magnitude, location, and depth of the quake. Also included were links to Google maps showing the epicenter. Subsequent aftershock data also popped up quickly. A listing at the site showed that by August 29, there had been 16 aftershocks.

Tabs on the page such as *Learn, Prepare, and Hazards* lead to details about earthquakes, a timely subject that we probably never gave a thought to until August 23.

**Hurricanes**, another timely subject. (*BTW, tropical cyclone is the generic term and hurricane is the regional name used in the North Atlantic and parts of the eastern Pacific.*) When these storms threaten us, the best source of up to the minute information is the National Weather Service's National Hurricane Center at [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov).

On entering the site, you will find a map showing the current positions of storms in various stages of development, from tropical disturbances up to named hurricanes. If a storm is large enough to be named, clicking on its name on the map brings up a wealth of information, including current strength, location, and projected path and wind speed forecasts around the projected path.

As with the earthquake site, there is much that can be learned. The left side of the screen has a long list of history, information, and discussions related to hurricanes.

**Preparation for a disaster.** The Internet has lots of information on preparation. Probably the best source is [www.ready.gov/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/index.html). The site's home page offers plans to three different classes of users:

Ready Business – disaster plans for business  
Ready Kids – disaster plans in kid-friendly language

Ready America – disaster plans for individuals and families

Ready America includes information for 20 different disasters from biological threats to winter storms. We can feel relatively safe here from two disasters of the twenty, volcanoes and tsunamis. For each disaster, Ready America suggests three steps:

Get a kit – have equipment and supplies hand.

Make a plan – know what to do and how to do it.

Be informed – learn more about the potential emergencies that could happen here and the appropriate way to respond to them.

Also, you can learn about the emergency plans that have been established by Virginia and our local governments. The ready.gov site includes links to the state of Virginia and to FEMA. A link to Roanoke City is included.

With the 2011 hurricane season still active, and two storms pointing this way as this is written, hurricane preparedness tips and ideas are a “hot topic.” For information in addition to that available at the National Hurricane Center, go to [hurricanesafety.org](http://hurricanesafety.org), then click on “Prepare.”

### 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)

## Microsoft System Sweeper

By Andy McLaughlin

Microsoft is now offering some software that will build a standalone bootable CD or USB stick containing an anti-malware scanner. This is basically for situations where you can't boot your computer, or can't get to the point where you can install or run your antivirus program.

I've seen other solutions like this, usually based on a Linux boot environment, but this seems like a good utility CD to have available.

Note there are different versions for 32- and 64-bit Windows installations. Here's the link to the description and downloads: <http://connect.microsoft.com/systemsweeper>

*Thanks, Andy. SoftTalk went to the website and found Microsoft's description of Systems Sweeper: "...a recovery tool that can help you start an infected PC and perform an offline scan to help identify and remove rootkits and other advanced malware. In addition, Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta can be used if you cannot install or start an antivirus solution on your PC, or if the installed solution can't detect or remove malware on your PC.*

*Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta is not a replacement for a full antivirus solution providing ongoing protection; it is meant to be used in situations where you cannot start your PC due to a virus or other malware infection."*

RVPCC  
P.O. Box 322  
Salem, Va. 24153  
Web: <http://rvpcc.org>  
Email: [info@rvpcc.org](mailto:info@rvpcc.org)

## "Perfectionist Paralysis" = Procrastination

Ever feel lost when hearing the newest words? Like those used by the younger generations? Get all the latest definitions from the Urban Dictionary at <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>. Some of the words defined are like the Sniglets, words that should be in the dictionary but aren't.

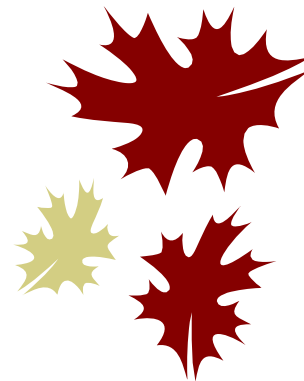
A large percentage of the words or their definitions are R or X rated, so this site can't be recommended for kids. But then, it was a kid that pointed out this site. No use aarping about it or being a worryholic.

Meeting space provided by  
Roanoke County Schools

## A New Verb

New words keep popping up in the computer world. By this time, most people of accustomed to using *google* as a verb as in "I *googled* that word."

But here is a new one: *snoped* as in "I didn't believe that so I *snoped* it." Of course, this refers to checking out the truth of a rumor at [www.Snopes.com](http://www.Snopes.com).



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## Today's Grammar and Punctuation

Have you noticed the odd grammar and punctuation in many of the emails that you get? It would certainly disturb Messrs. Strunk and White who published "The Elements of Style" in about 1959.

Following the rules seems to be difficult for many writers, so they do whatever they wish. "Rules are too stuffy, Dude!" Or maybe, 'Rules are too stuffy, Dude'!

If you ever wonder if the punctuation goes inside or outside the quotation marks, go to [www.grammarbook.com](http://www.grammarbook.com). Click on "English Rules" to get a list of subjects. Click on "Quotation Marks" to get an article that explains the rules and provides good examples.

Grammar Book is a good reference for more than just quotation marks. With 25 subjects on the list, rules for practically any situation are easy to find.

But grammar rules make dry, boring reading. It's the same stuff that put you sleep back in English class. There is a better (OK, less bad) source of grammar info. Check out the Grammar Girl at <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>. With personal experiences, little stories, and good explanations, she makes grammar fun (OK, not quite as painful).

Don't forget, if you are thinking of contributing an article or idea to SoftTalk, don't worry about all those rules. Just do whatever you wish and let your editor read Grammar Book or consult with Grammar Girl.



## Travel sites – an Update

Several years ago SoftTalk published a list of travel-related websites. That list is due for an update, especially since Kim Komando's 6/27/11 Tip-of-the-Day describing the US government's site-full of links to travel subjects at [www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel.shtml).

The government's site has 98 links listed under 7 different headings such as "International Travel" and "Recreation and Tourism." It provides one-stop shopping for almost all the information you need.

"Almost all" since there are a few from that older SoftTalk list that are still useful but are not in the government's site. Here are those others, with the links updated:

The CIA's World Factbook provides information on the history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues for 266 world entities. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

The national parks of the U.S. and Canada are great places to visit. For help in choosing a park in the U.S., go to [www.nps.gov/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/index.htm). For Canada, go to <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/index.aspx>

There are many sites about what and how to pack. Search for "packing travel" (without the quotes) to get a long list of informative sources.

Weather for US and international locations is available from The Weather Channel ([www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)) and Weather Underground ([www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)).

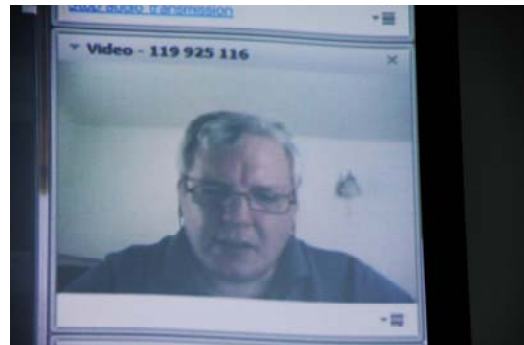
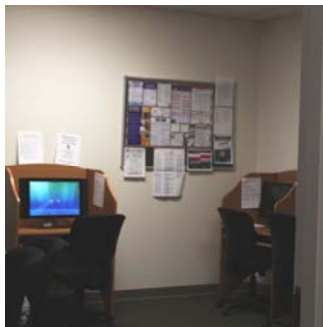
Electrical power is often a problem. [www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm) lists voltages, frequency, and plug types for every country. The Kropla home page ([www.kropla.com](http://www.kropla.com)) also has links to telephone calling codes, mobile phone guide, and television guides.

Time zones can be confusing, especially if the date line is involved. Use the World Clock site (<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>). It has a table of locations and times, plus a link to a time zone converter.

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# June Visit to Goodwill Industries



<b>SoftTalk Index for 2011</b>
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Article	Issue	Page	Article	Issue	Page
			<b>Sites</b>		
			Astronomy and Space Photos	2	4
			Earthquakes & Hurricanes	9	4
			Home Energy Audit	2	3
			Recovering Lost Property	3	3
			Slideshows on Web	2	4
<b>Fun</b>			<b>Software</b>		
Is it Disk or Disc?	5	5	Firefox 4	4	5
Living in the Computer Age	1	3	Google and Older Browsers	7/8	5
			IR-9	3	5
			Libre vs Open Office	3	5
			X-Files	2	5
<b>Grammar</b>			<b>Space</b>		
Grammar & punctuation	9	6	End of Space Shuttle Program	5	6
New Verb	9	5	SETI Operation to Shut Down	5	6
Punctuation Paralysis	9	5			
<b>Hardware</b>			<b>Taxes</b>		
Computer Jargon	1	3	Tax Scam	4	1
Easier Downloading	4	4	Tips for Filing 2010 Taxes	3	8
Finding the Cursor	2	4			
Microsoft Antivirus	3	4	<b>Tips</b>		
What's a font?	7/8	4	Internet Speed	4	6
			<b>Travel</b>		
<b>Members</b>			Travel Sites	9	6
Bill Scott	3	1	<b>Web</b>		
Ron Zoll	4	8	Internet Speed	4	6
			June 8 is World IPv6 Day	2	3
			What the Internet Killed	1	2
<b>Misc</b>			<b>Windows</b>		
ATT Capping Broadband Data	5	4	Change in AutoRun	4	3
Cost of Home Lighting	9	1	Faster and Better Googling	3	4
Emergency Kit for Car	2	6	MS System Sweeps	9	5
Information Deprivation Disorder	2	1	Operating Systems and Windows	5	3
iPads for Menus	3	3	Showing Desktop	7/8	5
Letter of Appreciation	3	5	Sneak Peek at Windows 8	7/8	5
Summer Happenings	9	3	Using IE6	5	4
What Time is it in Sydney?	5	5			
			<b>Photo</b>		
			End of Kodachrome	1	1
			Glimpse of Holland	5	5
			<b>RVPCC</b>		
			Weather Notice	2	5
			<b>Security</b>		
			Creating Strong Passwords	2	3