



BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

November 2009

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Meets 4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center
2001 George St., Midland, MI
<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

This month's date: November 18th

**THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Bill Tower
will give a presentation on backing
up your computer.**

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

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President's Corner

Well, Windows 7 is now out. I've got my copy, but have not installed it yet. I like to do a clean install for a new operating system so I have to inventory my C drive before I start. I only store the operating system on my C drive, but when you do a clean install, you lose the links to your applications and have to reinstall them too. It is a good time to get rid of all of the junk that accumulates in Windows which an upgrade won't do. One thing to note, is that you can only do an upgrade from Windows Vista, but not from Windows XP. If you have Windows XP, you can buy the upgrade version of Windows 7, but you must reformat your hard drive and do a fresh install. One other comment on upgrades: if your machine is over two years old, I don't recommend it. Even though Microsoft has done a good job of tuning Windows 7, it still requires a significant amount of resources.



Jim Rapoza, who writes commentary for the magazine eWeek, recently had an article (you can read the article at tinyurl.com/y8vtjeq) that raises some cautions for those who are considering moving to the "cloud." Rapoza talks about someone who found out that their Gmail account had been disabled because a bank had erroneously sent some confidential information to his email account.

— Howard Lewis

(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)

What you missed!

At the **October** meeting, Frank Koenig give an excellent presentation on how to safely setup your own personal hotspot at home. By setting up your own hotspot, your friends and family can access the Internet while at your house without interfering with your home network.

Upcoming Activities

In **November**, Bill Tower will give a presentation on backing up your computer. The presentation will include the pros and cons of using an online backup site versus backing up on your own media.

December will feature the annual holiday party. The club will provide pizza and soft drinks while everyone else should bring a dish to share. While we are enjoying ourselves, Joe Lykowski will give a presentation on "The Future of Geek." Joe will talk about where technology is

going and how it will affect our lives.

Remember, our November & December meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, due to the holidays.

Also in November, board elections for 2010 will take place. Be sure to attend this important meeting.

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Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order)
 Web Sites:

<http://www.blackfriday.info/>

If you are planning on making a purchase, you might want to take a look at this site which provides some information on upcoming Black Friday deals. However, be aware that some so-called "leaked" Black Friday ads may show up that may be inaccurate or incomplete, so don't jump the gun on those purported bargains.

<http://truecar.com/>

This site provides information on the sticker price, invoice price and what others are paying for a similarly equipped new car. You might be able to save significant dollars by investigating the price of that car.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEe3xfWfkG8>

I've always been infatuated with jet fighters! This video has a couple of French pilots putting their Mirage 2000 fighters through their paces in a simulated dogfight. The planes were equipped with HD cameras for the video. There is no CGI, it is all real footage.

www.hulu.com

Some of the old television shows were classics. Hulu has many shows from the 50s and 60s. They even have "The Dick VanDyke Show."

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., January 12th, 2009, @ Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

Elections for next year's board positions will take place @ this month's meeting.

Membership Enrollment form

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
 ZIP _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) NEW Member ____ renewal ____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB Attn: membership chairman
 P.O. box 132
 Midland, MI 48640-0132

you may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Changing the Windows Focus (Windows Vista & Windows 7)

If you routinely have more than one Windows application visible on your desktop at a time, you would have to click in the window to interact with it. With Windows Vista, Microsoft made it possible to activate a window by simply hovering the mouse over the window you wish to use. To turn on this feature:

1. Click *Start* and type *Ease* into the **Search** box and hit *Enter* to access Windows' **Ease of Access Center**.
2. Click on *Make the mouse easier to use*.
3. Next check the box marked *Activate a window by hovering over it with the mouse*.
4. Click *Save* and close the **Ease of Access Center**.

Now as you move the mouse pointer around the screen, the active application will become the one that is currently under the pointer.

Create A New Folder In Windows 7

When you are in **Windows Explorer**, you typically create a new folder by right-clicking in the location for the folder, selecting *New* and clicking on *Folder*. This would present a new folder ready to be renamed. Windows 7 has now added a shortcut to speed up this process. With Windows 7, once you are at the location for the folder, simply press *Ctrl-Shift-N*. A new folder will be created ready to be renamed.

Print Names And Email Addresses In Outlook 2007

If you use Outlook as your primary address book, you are probably storing their names, email addresses, phone numbers, physical addresses, and so on. If you need to find information for one of your contacts, you will need to have access to Outlook unless you print a hardcopy of your contact names and e-mail addresses.

To print the names and e-mail addresses of your contacts in Outlook 2007:

1. Within **Outlook**, click *Contacts*.
2. On the **View** menu, point to *Current View*, and then click *Phone List*.
3. Choose the fields that you want to print by adding or removing fields.
4. On the **View** menu, point to *Current View*, and click *Customize Current View*.
5. Click *Fields*.
6. Add or remove fields to display the information you wish to print.
7. The fields in the **Show these fields in this order** box are the fields that will print.
8. On the **File** menu, click *Print*.

Using this procedure, you can generate a report containing the names, phone numbers, email addresses, etc. that you can access without having to go into Outlook.

Finding Help In Windows & Windows Programs

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HELP IS EVERYWHERE

Windows and Windows programs actually have a tremendous amount of help and assistance built into the software. Unfortunately, most users don't know where to look, or don't know how access this help. A good analogy would be a man who drowned, even though six people threw him life jackets. You may ask "Why did he drown if he had all those life jackets?" The unfortunate fact is that he didn't know what a life jacket was, or how to use it.

How often have you needed help in a Windows programs and didn't know where to look? It just so happens that Windows has lots of places that provides you with help. In the distant past, most software programs came with lots of books, manuals and other printed material. However, in those days, the cost of the software was much higher and could easily absorb the cost of these manuals. In present times, the software industry has gotten extremely competitive, and cannot afford to print elaborate manuals and include them with the product. But, a tremendous amount of help is readily available to you, if you know where to look.

Actually, the subject of help should actually be broken up into two distinct categories. There is the type of help you need when you're working in a program and something specific comes up that you are not familiar with, and need assistance. The other type of help is when you need real beginners information on how to learn and use the basic program features.

GETTING HELP WHILE WORKING IN A PROGRAM

Listed below are 3 methods for obtaining help and information instantly.

1. The universal key in Windows to obtain help is F1. In almost any situation, whether it is in a specific program or just on the plain Windows desktop, using this key will generally bring up a help screen in which you can navigate and probably get answers to the question at hand.
2. The second most important way to get help is to use the help menu on the program in which you are working. While not every window program has a menu at the top of its operating window, the majority of Windows programs do have this listing. Clicking on "HELP" will generally bring up a list of various options. A very common option is an item which is labeled "index." Clicking on this will bring up a bunch of choices for you to select alphabetically or by topic. You can click the help area you are looking for, or generally type in the subject in the field which is presented, to have the program show you what is offered.
3. A third, and largely overlooked methods of obtaining information, is by right-clicking on the item in question. The protocol of right-clicking to obtain information and other features is becoming more and more widespread in Windows and Windows programs.

The three methods presented above can provide you with a tremendous amount of assistance while working at your computer. While these methods do not replace the need to use manuals, they offer the user the opportunity to obtain help very rapidly via a few simple mouse clicks.

The best way to learn more about this, and understand the protocols, is just to try it. So, start clicking away and see what comes up.

PRINTED DOCUMENTATION

Typically, programs come with a very short printed document which includes just about enough information to help you install the program. Today, most installation disks are CD's (or DVD's), and of course, optical disks have lots of space where other material in addition to the program itself can be stored. Sometimes, the complete manual for the program is on the CD and the installation process for the software actually sets up an icon where you can click and have the manual brought up. Some manufacturers however, just put the manual on the CD and never let you know that it's there. Of course, if you're conversant with exploring the contents of the CD by using Windows Explorer or another file manager, you can take a quick look at the listing of files and generally locating the manual is fairly easy.

Once you have the manual located, it will more than likely be in a PDF file, and you can read it on your machine, or print it out using your printer if you so desire. If you feel that you are going to have many reasons to continually use the manual, it probably pays to print it out.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

One thing you should be aware of however is that manuals can often be several hundred pages, and can take a considerable amount of time, paper, and ink to print out. Also, the cost of printing the manual can be substantial if there is lots of color used on the pages. Printing out of a manual can run anywhere from five cents to 20 cents a page, using your own printer, depending upon the complexity and use of color on the pages. Very often, for major programs where there are third party books available, it makes more sense to purchase a ready-made 3rd party manual which will probably have even more information than the manual on disk. This is true mostly of those programs which are very widely used such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, Photoshop, and similar programs.

Generally, when the manual is on the program's CD, it is often in a format called PDF, which stands for "portable document format." This format requires Adobe Acrobat reader to view it on your computer. Most computers these days have Adobe Acrobat reader already installed, as it is a very widely used program. And, if you double-click on a file that has a PDF extension, it will automatically launch Acrobat Reader and the document in question will be available for you to read, print, or whatever you would like to do. Adobe Acrobat reader is part of the Adobe program called "Acrobat". This program has become universally used for creating documents which can be distributed widely, and easily read on any computer. The reader portion of the program has been made available by Adobe as a free utility.

THIRD PARTY MANUALS

If you decide to buy a manual, here again, you have a variety of choices. Very often the software manufacturer has manuals available which you can purchase directly there. Unfortunately, these manuals may not be as good as those which you can purchase directly from a book supplier. A typical case in point is the manual for WordPerfect. For many years, I have been using the original WordPerfect manuals in addition to the third party manuals produced by QUE Corp... These QUE WordPerfect manuals which are typically entitled "Special Edition - using Corel WordPerfect X", have been vastly superior to those manuals which are available directly from Corel, or whatever company currently owned the WordPerfect product. The QUE manuals for WordPerfect are generally are over 1000 pages, very well-organized, and offer extremely good value. Anytime I'm looking for a manual for any program, QUE is my first choice.

With the Internet, and book stores like Barnes & Noble or Amazon, finding books has become a very simple task. Go to the Web site, and do a search on the program name in question. A listing will come up, with info on the book, pricing, etc... Then it's a simple matter to make one's choice. While a local book seller may be able to provide you with some of the choices, the Internet will have a far greater number of choices available.

I hope the material presented here will assist you in using your computer in more and better ways. To me, the secret to getting any job done was never that one had to know everything about everything associated with the task. But, knowing where to look for answers to the things that you aren't familiar with, is the real key to success.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook for future reference. #####

Stealth Spyware: The New Spyware Threat

Written by Kristofer Simon, a member of the Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois

Fox Tales, Volume 22, Issue 6, June 2009

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For most of us, the word spyware is not an unfamiliar term anymore. It can mean cookies that track your movements on web pages or other little programs that put garbage applications on your machine. While spyware intentions have not changed much over the past few years, their infection practices appear to be doing so. The newest kind of spyware, which I personally came in contact with a few months ago, should be referred to as "stealth" spyware. What I mean by that is that this spyware installs on your machine without you even knowing about it. You do not become aware of the spyware infection on your machine generally until the next time you reboot and the spyware program activates. In this short article, I will describe my experience with a piece of this spyware and what I had to do to get rid of it so that, hopefully, none of you have the same experience that I did.

The piece of spyware that infected my machine was called "XP Police Antivirus." I became infected, I believe, after visiting a third party website that provided updated information and screen shots for Nintendo Wii games that were about to hit the market and that were in development. As I said earlier, this program was a piece of "stealth" spyware and installed on my machine without my knowledge. It did not slow down the performance of my machine at all (at least not that I was able to notice), nor did any installation screens pop up during the install. The next time I booted up my machine,

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

an icon appeared on the lower right hand part of my screen that looked like the XP Security Center shield. When I put my cursor over it to see what it was, it said "XP Police Antivirus." For just a split second, I wondered if maybe Microsoft had tried to install a new version of an antivirus program they created on my machine, but I quickly realized that this was a piece of spyware that had infected my machine without my knowledge.

The program tried to fool me into thinking that anonymous users from the Internet (it would put public IP addresses in the warning dialog boxes) were attempting to access my computer maliciously and it recommended that I install the full program to prevent these attacks. I wasn't going to do this because I had the full and up-to-date version of McAfee Security Center so I knew this was bogus. When I tried to remove the program through the Add/Remove Programs option in the Control Panel, I was able to wipe out the program temporarily but the next time I rebooted my machine, the application icon was in my system tray again and I was getting the same bogus dialog boxes about people trying to access my computer. This spyware also put another program on my machine called Security Center 2009 that also was made to look as realistic as possible.

Finally, I went on my Motorola Q Smart Phone and searched on the XP Police Antivirus program. Immediately, I got a link to a page that told me that this was a piece of stealth spyware and told me how to get rid of it. I actually had to go into the computer's registry (kind of like the computer's brain) and delete the entry that the spyware had made there, as well as delete a number of files the program had put on my machine. Once I did that, the spyware programs (both XP Police Antivirus and Security Center 2009) were finally gone but I still had one more hurdle to overcome from this program. The spyware also installed a software program known as a "browser hijacker."

For those of you who don't know what this is, let me explain. Let's say you launch a web browser and you want to go to www.cnn.com to see the latest news. You type www.cnn.com into the address bar of your browser and either hit "go" or hit return. The browser initially begins to go to that page, but suddenly the browser gets "redirected" to another page. This happens every time you try to access a web page. These programs are EXTREMELY hard to get rid of but I was able to get rid of the one on my machine using a third party program that found the program and removed it.

While this may sound like a dire situation, the most important thing you can do as an end user in these situations is to remain calm and scrutinize every program that you see on your machine, that you haven't specifically downloaded (ex. a game, a patch from Microsoft, etc.). If you do get infected by stealth spyware and can't seem to get rid of it, go to a non-infected PC or web enabled cell phone and do a search on the program's name. You will almost always get a link telling you how to get rid of the program. Also, never send personal information over the Internet to any site that you cannot confirm is a legitimate site that you use (ex. Amazon.com, Paypal, etc.). Using these steps you can help eliminate most of the problems caused by spyware, but you should always remain vigilant. You can get infected with a stealth spyware program from just about any website, so be careful out there! ###

Privacy and Google Voice

Written by Michael Gemignani, a member of HAL-PC, Texas

HAL-PC Magazine, May 2009

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I had originally intended to follow up on my previous column concerning ways we can get crosswise with the law using our computers, but I decided to postpone that discussion when I saw the announcement that Google is making available a service that will expand our ability to manage our phone service, but, at the same time, will vastly increase Google's ability to know more about us.

Basically, if I choose to use all of the capabilities of Google Voice, Google can obtain a complete record of all of my phone calls, not merely who called me or whom I called, but a recording of each and every one of those calls. Some would say that Google's collecting this much information about me goes far beyond merely recording my Google searches or my clicking on banner ads or on links to other sites. Google might be seriously infringing my "privacy."

Of course, if I choose to use Google Voice, presumably I know what I am getting into. I can voluntarily give up some of my privacy in the interests of convenience. I am under no obligation whatsoever to use Google Voice. But what is privacy, and how much of it have I already lost in this technological age?

Most people, I think, would be surprised to know that the Constitution of the United States does not give anyone a right to privacy. The right to privacy was created by the courts, most particularly the United States Supreme Court, in such cases as *Roe v.*

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Wade, which gave a woman a limited right to an abortion based on her right to privacy.

Privacy has several meanings, but, basically, it refers to a person's right to control his private property, including his own body, and the information publicly available about him. Immediately, then, we see that the right to privacy is not absolute. My car is my private property, but I am not free to use it however I choose. I am not even free to use my body however I choose; for example, when my body is in the front seat of a car, I am obligated by law to restrain my body with a seatbelt.

The balance to be struck between my right to restrict the information publicly available about me and the government's and the public's reasonable "need to know" is often controversial. If I am a public figure, such as a candidate for high office, I am expected to reveal more about myself so the public can better decide whether to vote for me. But even if I am the humblest of private citizens, if I use a charge card, a record is made not only of my purchase, but of the time and place where I made the purchase. If I make a phone call, the phone company has a record of the number I called in its logs. If I sign on to a website, there is a presumption that I visited that site at the time and from the IP address indicated on the site's log.

Moreover, cell phones are easily tapped, and there is no expectation on privacy when using a cell phone. Even computers that are not properly shielded emit electromagnetic waves that can be picked up with the proper equipment and the computer's activity duplicated exactly on another computer. There are, of course, other means of spying on my computer activity, such as packet sniffing for one. And though such sophisticated mechanisms to invade my "privacy" would hardly be justified in the case of an ordinary citizen, the mechanisms are out there. The only secure computer is one that is shielded against emitting radio waves and is totally isolated from the outside world. And, of course, those who truly want to know more about me, for reasons good or bad, are developing increasingly powerful means to do so.

Just as the notion of intellectual property has had to be rethought in the light of modern technology, so, too, does the notion of privacy. Just as there is the balance to be struck between my right to control what is mine, including information about me and the limitations on my control based on the legitimate needs of society, I can often decide what personal balance I am willing to strike. I can pay cash for all my purchases so there will be no records from my charge cards. I can use a pay phone, if I can find one, so I cannot be traced to the numbers I called. I can forego use of the Internet so that not even cookies will find their way to my hard drive. And I can refuse to use Google Voice.

Where I draw the line concerning my privacy is one of the choices left to me, or is it? Access to the Internet is almost a necessity for much of our work and leisure. Cell phones are beginning to replace land lines, and many people already use VOIP for their phone service. Perhaps Google Voice is a bridge too far, or maybe it is simply just another milestone on a road we have been traveling for decades. Are we still controlling technology, or is technology controlling us?

The Rev. Dr. Michael Gemignani, an attorney and Episcopal priest, is also a former professor of computer science who has written extensively on legal issues related to computers. Although he is now retired, he enjoys writing and speaking about computer law and security. Contact him with any questions or comments about this topic. ###

Windows 7 is Here! Part I

Written by Robert Nisbet, a member of the Asbury Computer Club, MD

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This first article will answer several basic questions about Windows 7. Future articles will cover aspects of the operating system of interest to most users.

Q: What is Windows 7?

A: Windows 7 is the next generation of operating system for PCs from Microsoft. It will replace Windows Vista – and Windows XP as it is phased out.

Q: Is Windows 7 the official name?

A: Yes. Microsoft considers this version the seventh version of Windows and has dropped the "fancy" (i.e. XP, Vista) names for now.

Q: Is Windows 7 a major change from Windows Vista?

A: Not relative to what you see, though there are some nice new user features which are addressed in future installations. Many improvements are "under the hood." Some pundits have characterized Windows 7 as "Windows Vista the way it should have been."

Q: I have a Windows Vista computer. Can I upgrade to Windows 7?

A: Yes. The upgrade will be easy and preserve all your files and settings. All your hardware that works with Win-

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

dows Vista will work with Windows 7.

Q: I have a Windows XP computer. Can I upgrade to Windows 7.

A: Possibly, but... This is not so easy. You first have to make sure your computer will run Windows 7. Then, you have to decide if it is worth it. You will have to save all your data files and then reformat your hard drive and start all over with the Windows 7 installation.

The next installment will cover how to get Windows 7 and the upgrade process for various users in more detail. ##

Windows 7 is Here! Part II

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Getting Windows 7

There will be both upgrade and full editions of Windows 7. The version that will be available for U.S. use is Windows 7 Home Premium. There will be no "Basic" version of Windows 7 as there was for Vista. The upgrade version will cost about \$120 and the full version will cost about \$200. Most people will be obtaining the upgrade version, if bought in a store. If you buy a new computer between now and October 22, you receive a voucher from the manufacturer for a free upgrade to Windows 7 when it is available. You will have to install the upgrade yourself or obtain assistance. If you buy a new computer after October 22, your new computer will come with Windows 7 Home Premium already installed. It pays to wait if you can.

Upgrading from Windows Vista

If you are a Windows Vista user now and are contemplating upgrading to Windows 7 (I do recommend it), you should download and run the Microsoft Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor (Beta) utility. It will tell you if your computer hardware meets the minimum requirements for running Windows 7 and will identify anything that needs to be uninstalled or upgraded before the upgrade. It is available for download at Web address: tinyurl.com/mnmj8u. The Advisor is simple to use and will give you a printed report. Be aware you must have a DVD drive on your computer and not just a CD drive to install the upgrade. Windows 7 only comes on DVD discs.

Upgrading from Windows XP

If you are a Windows XP user, you must now have a "high-end" computer to meet the minimum hardware requirements for Windows 7. If you bought an "inexpensive" XP computer originally, forget about upgrading. If you do upgrade you will have to do a "clean" installation where all your existing files are erased before installation. You will need to back-up all your data files prior to starting and reinstall all your applications afterward. All your peripherals (printer, scanner, etc.) will require new "driver" software, if they are not too old. The Windows 7 disc comes with many drivers on it. Usually, a new computer is by far the best route for XP users.

Will I have trouble learning to use Windows 7?

If you are a Vista user now, you should catch on to Windows 7 easily. They look very similar. There are some new features, which I will start covering in the next article. If you are a Windows XP user and buy a new Windows 7 computer, you will notice some differences on the Start menu and when you view and work in folder windows. However, Windows is still Windows and most things work essentially the same. ###

Windows 7 is Here! – Part III

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So far in this series we have covered some general questions about Windows 7 (May) and obtaining and installing Windows 7 (September.) This month I will start to cover some of the new features of Windows 7.

Caveat for upgrading from Vista

Something I forgot to address in the last issue is for Vista users upgrading to Windows 7. In your upgrade box you will find two DVDs. One is for 32 bit Windows and one is for 64 bit Windows. Choose the 32 bit disc for your upgrade. Don't worry about the difference for basic computing. Now, one of the two choices you have when you start the upgrade disc is the option

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

called Upgrade. This is called an “in place” upgrade where the new operating system replaces the old operating system, but (hopefully) leaves everything else in place – your data files, settings, etc. NEVER, ever, ever start this process without first backing up all your data files to an external medium. Nine hundred ninety eight times out of a thousand everything will go fine, but you don’t want to end up among those few where it does not and lose all your data. The Windows 7 DVD contains a Windows Easy Transfer Wizard tool that will backup all your files and settings for you and put them back on the Windows 7 computer. If you are not computer savvy, you may need technical assistance to accomplish all this. Just to reiterate for XP users, Windows 7 ONLY comes on DVD, so if your XP computer only has a CD drive, forget about investing in the upgrade.

What’s New in Windows 7?

There is no way in a few short paragraphs to describe in-depth all the new or improved features in Windows 7. For these articles I will just give you a basic overview of several of the most obvious so you better know what to expect when you see your own desktop and start using your new (or upgraded) computer.

While Windows 7 initially looks and acts a lot like Windows Vista from the user standpoint, there are a number of new and improved features designed to make using the computer easier and to improve productivity. I will cover some in this article and more in the next edition. Some are things you will not use every day, but it is good to know they exist – and understanding them will help you use Windows 7 more effectively.

Windows Aero

Aero is the “glassy” transparent look of windows that was introduced in Windows Vista. Things look even glassier in Windows 7. The idea is to deemphasize the windows itself and bring the focus onto the contents of the windows. The Aero effect also is seen on the taskbar and in several neat window management features carry the Aero label.

Windows 7 Taskbar

One of the first things you notice on the Windows 7 desktop is that the taskbar along the bottom of the screen still is there, but looks different. The icons on it are bigger and there are three icons already on it. Normally, the taskbar has only displayed icons for applications, folders, and files you had “opened.” Also, just to the right of the Start button (or orb) there was a small area with a few icons on it. This was called the “Quick Launch Toolbar.” Now, those two areas have been more or less combined. You can have both “shortcuts” to frequently used things on the taskbar (which you can “pin” there) as well as having it reflect the things you have opened. How do you tell one from the other? It can be confusing at first until you note that the “open” items each have a “glassy” box around them whereas the shortcuts do not.

You also notice a new button on the far right end of the toolbar. This is the Aero Peek button. Say you have several open windows covering the desktop and want to see your analog clock or weather bug gadget (described below) on the desktop. Just rest your mouse cursor on the Aero Peek button and the open windows become transparent allowing you to see the desktop. Move away and the windows return. Not the greatest advancement since sliced bread, but pretty neat nonetheless.

You also notice that if you open multiple files using the same application – say, Microsoft Word – there is only one Word icon on the taskbar, not one for each document. Hover your mouse over the Word button and you see live thumbnails of each document over the button, similar to what you see in Windows Vista. However, move the cursor up to one of the thumbnails and a full screen live preview appears. Once you find the file you want to work on, click that thumbnail and the document is on the screen.

Desktop Gadgets

What are gadgets anyway? They are handy little utilities that do something (hopefully) useful for you. There are analog clocks, weather bugs, slide shows, stock monitors, and literally hundreds of others to choose from in all types of categories. Gadgets were introduced in Windows Vista and resided in a reserved area along the right side of the screen called the Sidebar. Users complained that the sidebar ate up too much screen, so in Windows 7 gadgets have been moved to the desktop. You can place them anywhere you want or not have any at all. It’s up to you. Since they are on the desktop, they often are hidden behind windows, hence Aero Peek described above.

Libraries

I am going to end this edition with another significant change in Windows 7. That is the introduction of the library concept for file management. You will see them, but may never fully use them. Still you need to understand what they are. Since the earliest days of Windows, we have had folders to keep our files in – the Documents folder being a prime example. All these folders resided on our computer. Well, the concept of personal computing has drastically changed over the last few years.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Many homes have networks of several computers; some homes have home servers – essentially a basic computer with a huge hard drive to store files you want on it. In business, the file a person may need to use daily could be located on a far distant computer.

This is where libraries come in. Not to get too technical, but libraries do not exist physically. They are just a way to aggregate the folders and files you use and need to access in one handy place. You still have a Documents link on your Start menu just as you did in Vista. Now when you open it you see “Document Library” and the folders and files you have created. You also still have a default folder on your computer where Windows can store the things you create. This is called “My Documents.” (Sound familiar? Déjà vu all over again.) However, you also can “store” – and access in your Documents library – files which exist on another computer on your home network or even in another location over a network or the Web.

Many of you may never find the need to take full advantage of the library concept. However, it is a significant step forward in file access and management that does not tie the user to just one computer any more. Good job Microsoft, for a change.

The Technology Revolution[s] Go On

A Look Back and Ahead at Trends

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Scholars of the revolution process remind us that, like France’s, most revolutions are half over before the affected people know they are under way. Whether we have noticed or not, here are some well underway:

1. On-premises storage: Most users know the dangers of “going naked,” i.e. without backing up data while hoping for the best. Remember those s-l-o-w hard drive backups on tape that always failed to create a full restore? We resolved, of course, to backup all the data, at least, on a bushel of floppies, but didn’t get around to it. Iomega’s ZIP disks held much more than 3.5” floppies but at too high a price. Write-once backup CDs were much cheaper and usable on all computers, but burning several tied up the computer and user quite a while. Still better were DVDs and automated external hard drives using USB or Firewire cables. Then came Vista, which rejected all my previous backup software programs. I still miss “Bounceback,” which was included with an external Seagate and made file-by-file backups, not just images. Today, with 1-T drives going for a little over \$100, nearly all of one’s data and pictures, at least, can be salvaged easily from such a drive. Solid-state drives use even less energy. Their prices and capacity are tracking Moore’s Law right on schedule. Within five years, spinning-platter hard drives will be found only on museum shelves near the eight-inch floppy drives. This month’s 8-Gb thumb drives should be replaced with similarly-priced 64-Gb drives by next July. These, also known as flash drives or key drives, sometimes make moving files between computers (by “Sneaker-net”) easier than getting administrator privileges and moving them via a network.

2. Off-premises storage: This long-needed form of “cloud computing” meets an urgent need. Gmail pioneered—and inspired its competitors to offer—2-Gb per account of free permanent storage of email and attachments on their distant sites. Web download sites offer a free utility to treats one’s Gmail account as a regular drive visible in the My Computer folder. With a high-speed Internet connection, the drive becomes a place to store files without opening email. OK, that is the theory anyway. My Gmail account opens fine in the regular way, but my Gmail drive does not. After being told the Login failed, I clicked on the help file to find the cure, but instead got this message: “The Help for this program was created in Windows Help format, which depends on a feature that is not included in Windows Vista.” Arrrrggghh. Why am I not surprised?

For other choices for off-site storage that can be accessed from elsewhere, two popular choices at Mozy.com and Carbonite.com. Mozy, which boasts over a million customers, offers 2-Gb free storage per computer or unlimited backup for one computer at \$4.95 a month. Carbonite offers a 15-day free trial, but then unlimited storage costs \$5 monthly. Another highly-rated service, ElephantDrive.com charges \$4.95. Idrive, gets mixed reviews. Its pricing seems a bit vague, starting with 2-Gb Free Basic, then 10-Gb more free if the user supplies five email addresses of potential customers. I use Carbonite but Mozy’s impressive ratings might convince to try it on another computer. One note of caution about selecting one other than Mozy or Carbonite: One of the Big Two competing with Mozy not long back was Xdrive. It shut down in January, 2009. If we want to trust our data to distant strangers, I only trust the current Big Two. At just \$60 per year per

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

account, even a one-terabyte external hard disk costs more.

3. Device convergence: The Blackberry and iPhone stretched the minds of tech enthusiasts. Thousands of downloadable apps and functions quickly arrived for sale. Wireless Web access spreading throughout much public space, computers, cameras, and once-mundane cell phones have merged with GPS. This melding in turn raises Expectations, and inspires market options to meet them. Intel’s tiny, cheap, low-powered Atom microprocessor quickly led to ultra-small Netbooks powered by the almost-abandoned Windows XP Basic. With improved batteries and solid-state storage drives, some of these little machines can fit in a topcoat pocket and remain self-powered on a flight nine hours on a flight from New York to Los Angeles and maybe to Hawaii. Tech-poor nations that were never wired for tele-phones have skipped over the copper-on-poles era and have cell phone (read “Web”) access in areas far from pave roads. Even the U.S., which is not in the top dozen of “wireless access” nations will soon convert remaining water towers, church steeples, power-plant chimneys, and bare hilltops to points of access. Satellites and microwave transmitters can fill most of the remaining gaps. The changes streaming at us with such speed compare to telescoping the Pony Express, conti-nental telegraph and telephone systems, commercial radio, and television into one generation. In our immediate future we will adopt or adapt still-developing technologies now originating in nations that used to look to us for innovation.

(To be continued in a future edition of the ICON Graphic)

How I Fixed My Corrupted Recycle Bin

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After recovering from a severe system crash on my laptop running XP, I discovered that I had a corrupted recycle bin. When I opened the Recycle Bin, no files at all would appear, yet when I chose to empty the Recycle Bin, the message would ask if I wanted to delete 76 files. I said not to delete the 76 files. I then created a test file, deleted it, and, again, no files would show-up when I opened the Recycle Bin. When I said to empty the recycle bin again, it now asked if I wanted to delete 77 files, which confirmed my suspicion that the deleted files were actually in the Recycle Bin, but I just couldn’t get access to them.

I eventually discovered that the files were in the following directory, accessed via the Command Prompt, in a folder named: C:\Documents and Settings\Sandee\Recent.

After several attempts to repair the Recycle Bin without success, including running ReplBin.reg and other registry repair techniques, here is what finally worked:

1. My Computer
2. Local Disk (C:)
3. Tools
4. Folder Options
5. View
6. Clicked on SHOW HIDDEN FILES AND FOLDERS
(I keep this option checked anyhow)
7. Un-clicked on HIDE PROTECTED OPERATING SYSTEM FILES (This should usually NEVER be unchecked, but I unchecked it so I could get access to the Recycle Bin operating system hidden folder)
8. Chose APPLY TO ALL FOLDERS, chose APPLY, and clicked OK.
9. Right-Clicked on RECYCLER file and renamed it to RECYCLER-BAD
10. Created a dummy file and deleted it.
11. Rechecked my Recycle Bin icon on my Desktop again, and...
12. VOILA! My newly deleted dummy file was there and all is well again!