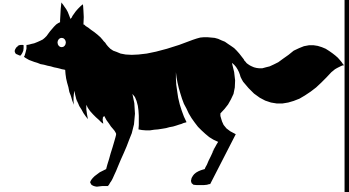


FOX TALES



Official Publication of the
Fox Valley PC Association
"Established January 1985"

Volume 19, Issue 4

FEBRUARY 2006

Tech News

By Sue Crane, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California
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Microsoft Previews IE7

Internet Explorer's program manager, Eric Lawrence, recently posted a blog that said IE7 plans to support the Transport Layer Security protocol by default. He also explained how IE7 will behave differently from earlier versions when it encounters potential security problems. From an HTTPS page, users will be forced to access insecure content via the information bar, since only the secure content will be rendered by default. IE7 is also rumored to have tabbed browsing similar to competitor Firefox.

A Computer for Every Kid

A \$100 laptop? A global effort is underway to make it happen by next year. It was a pipe dream only a few months ago but soon will be reality. An ambitious effort from MIT Media Labs to put a \$100 portable in the hands of every child in the world is picking up big corporate partners, top engineering talent, and interest from several countries. One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), a nonprofit venture, is expected to start distributing machines late next year and to produce 100 to 200 million in 2007.

AMD plans 4-core Opterons by 2007

Advanced Micro Devices put a quad-core server processor on its road map and promised to upgrade its software investments, as it outlined its general technology direction for the next couple of years. The new processor will incorporate four cores connected together by a new version of the Hypertransport Interconnect technology, and will support DDR3 (double data rate 3) memory. The 2006 dual-core chips will also introduce AMD's Pacifica virtualization technology and its Presidio security technology into AMD-based systems. AMD's goal for 2006 is to improve its standing within the business PC market, both in desktops and notebooks.

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Phishers use Phony IRS Tax Refund to Scam Consumers

A spam e-mail message has been sent around the world telling people they are eligible for a \$571.94 tax refund from the IRS. The e-mail offers a link to a fraudulent IRS Web site, but the link actually goes through a legitimate Government Web site. The link in the phishing e-mail goes to a forged IRS Web site that asks for a Social Security number, tax returning filing code and credit card details including security codes and PIN. The government is aware of the issue and is working to fix it.

New TIVO Product Promotes Targeted Ads

After introducing a generation of television viewers to the joys of skipping over ads, TIVO plans to launch a new service to let its subscribers seek out the advertisements they've cut loose from their TV viewing. Digital video recorder (DVR) maker TiVo is positioning the new service, scheduled for a mid-2006 launch, as a way for subscribers to find targeted ads in categories that interest them. The opt-in technology will let TiVo subscribers use keyword searches to look for information on specific products or services. The ad service will be free for subscribers; pricing for advertisers is still being determined.

Microsoft Considers Making Desktop Apps Free – With Advertising

Although no specific plans have been made, executives within Microsoft are examining whether it makes sense to release ad-supported versions of products such as Works, Money, or even the Windows operating system itself. Microsoft officials confirmed the authenticity of the paper, dated winter 2005, but declined to comment on its contents. But Chief Technology Officer Ray Ozzie and Chairman Bill Gates outlined some of the opportunities and the challenges Microsoft faces in a series of October memos. In the blunter of the two memos, Ozzie said Microsoft had an obligation to act on the shift to ad-supported software. .."It's clear that if we fail to do so, our business as we know it is at risk," Ozzie wrote. "We must respond quickly and decisively." The company's exploration of ad-supported software extends even to Windows, it's most important product. An ad-supported version of the operating system could make some sense, Microsoft researchers argue, noting that the product reportedly earns \$9 per year per user.

A New Kind of Music Label

40 years ago Jac Holzman changed music distribution with the release of The Doors' album on his independent Elektra music label. He's introducing a similar change with Cordless Recordings – the first all-digital music label operated by a major record company, the Warner Music Group, which is launching on the Web and on digital music services such as iTunes and RealNetworks' Rhapsody. Music from the label's first six bands is being sold only online in 3-song "clusters" instead of albums. The bands will be promoted on blogs and sites like MySpace. Artists get to keep ownership of the master recordings they release under Cordless. If they want to release their music elsewhere after a short contract is up, they are free to do so. The Cordless Recordings labels is an experiment for Warner Music, which has increased its focus on digital distribution, and a bet that inexpensive Internet distribution and

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marketing may give labels a cost-effective way to nurture new bands. On the label side, it's an attempt to reach out to a music-consuming world that is deserting radio and record stores for iTunes and MySpace.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

The President's Two Cents

This past month we have allowed FVPCA members to take our web-based survey. There are numerous questions which will collect a variety of responses on various issues that we hope will give us direction in the coming year. If you have not already do so, please set aside a few minutes to complete it. You may find a link to this survey at the Fox Valley PC Association web site: www.fvpca.org (via the "Take the Survey" button.) Presently, there were 21 members who have responded to the survey, but we would like to see everyone submit their responses. You should note that if you have missed a correct response, it will be indicated in a pop-up window directing you to the problematic response. If completed successfully, a complete list of your answers will be displayed when you submit the form on-line. Be sure to select a response other than "Choose an item below". There were a few who did not choose one of the other choices, so the value was "Choose an item below". That was my fault. I may try and clean up those responses before compiling the results for our March meeting. My bad... Remember, one of the respondents will qualify for a multi card reader. We will likely add another prize or two as well.

Our January meeting followed a small snow storm which may have kept some of our regular members away. Held at the Batavia Public Library, it was convened in a board room setting and allowed us FREE wireless Internet access. Although it was not needed for Tom Anzalone's program on Linspire, access to the Internet did offer us an opportunity to use Google for us to try and answer some of the questions during our Q&A session, or look at some of the links relevant to Tom's program. Those that came early may have been able to see how we established a Wi-Fi connection.

We will be back at the Civic Center location in February, but we will be looking at additional options to obtain some sort of Internet connection during our meetings. It will be interesting to see from the survey data if the numbers of members using something other than dial-up has increased. If the changes in e-mail addresses are any indication, I suspect that to be the case. There seem to be more options to allow you to connect to a faster Internet connection than a year ago. Whether it is cheaper DSL costs, more free Wi-Fi access locations, Wi-Fi locations for a fee or wireless broadband anywhere subscriptions from Verizon, Sprint and others, more and more people are getting connected faster than ever before. As a majority of all computer users spend at least some time on the Internet, we feel that this will be the direction that we will be headed. Please bear with us as we explore alternatives to the OPD Civic Center this year.

Also, do not forget that security is an ever increasing concern, which is mentioned at nearly every meeting. Windows updates, firewalls, anti-virus, anti-spyware and other measures are required to keep things running smoothly.

Thanks to Bob Tuftee for the upgrade to our web site. It is now hosted by APCUG for free. It offers 25MB of web space, so we may be asking members to consider submitting a page that they created and have Bob upload it to our Club's site. We may even have a contest for "Best Member Web Page." An interesting idea. What do you think?

We look forward to seeing you at our February meeting. Oh, and don't forget to check your membership renewal date and be sure to try taking the survey!

Jon Jackman
President - FVPCA

Care and Feeding of CD's

By Lynn L. Kauer, Editor
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I read an interesting article in the September 2005 issue of Popular Photography written by David D. Busch titled, "The Truth About Disc Rot." It paralleled some other magazine and news articles I have read on the same subject. The following is what we should know and understand about CD (and DVD) discs as storage devices. For the purposes of this article, CD's and DVD's are considered the same as far as backup media is concerned. The only difference is that DVD's can hold more data.

We save things that are important to us. Those of us who take digital photos know that simply storing them on the hard drive of our computer is not a wise or safe thing to do as the disc may crash and we will lose everything. Thus, we copy the photos to a CD or DVD disc so that they will be always available for a long period of twenty or more years. However, will they really be there when we look for them?

The media of choice for backup and storage purposes less than ten years ago was tape backup. Some commercial enterprises continue to use digital tape for backup purposes. Tape is rarely used, if at all, for home use anymore. Actually, the backup media of choice for commercial use is moving toward external hard drives. Where does the CD fall into all of this?

There are hosts of backup utilities that utilize the CD for backup purposes. Most CD manufacturers advertise that CD media is good for 20 to 100 years depending on the depth of marketing they are trying to offer. The National Institute of Standards Technology (NIST) tests products for longevity. The catch is that longevity is available if the user adheres to very strict rules and standards. Let us look at some interesting facts.

Handling

When a CD is burned, a laser shoots through the bottom of the disc into the dye layer located under the top protective plastic covering on at the top of the CD. This is the layer where the laser burns pits into the dye layer to allow the compute to interpret what is being written by the computer. When the bottom side of the disc becomes scratched or soiled, the laser is diffused and the data is not clearly written.

Secondly, if the top layer becomes damaged, moisture can penetrate the surface and cause the layer to slowly disintegrate and is the beginning of what is called "Disc Rot."

How often have you watched someone open a CD case and directly pull on the edges of a CD until it is released from the case? Notice how the CD is bent while it is being removed? This bending is causing tiny cracks to develop in the reflective (protective) layer of the CD. To properly remove a CD from the case, press down on the inside of the retaining plastic that holds the CD in place. This causes the retaining ring to become slightly smaller so that the CD slides off easily with out bending forces.

When handling, always pick up or carry the CD by the outer edge. Avoid placing your fingers on the read (bottom) side of the disc as this will cause acid penetration of both protective layers to begin.

Reliability

CD-R is a disc that that can be written to once while CD-RW are discs that can be written to many times reportedly 1000 times. CD's that the least reliable for archival purposes are the CD-RW's. These discs include a layer that is altered by the CD burner each time it is rewritten. Experience has shown that when these discs are used with another computer, it is a common for the second computer to be unable to read it.

I burn a new music CD monthly for each show that I do. (I entertain at nursing and retirement homes.) I burned and placed the CD-RW into my karaoke player, it would not recognize it. In addition, my second computer would not recognize it either. Only the computer that originally burned the CD was able to read it! Imagine if I had saved all of my music and photo images on a CD-RW. When the computer would eventually be replaced, the disc would likely be unreadable. It is better to save data on CD-R discs, as they are readable with any computer with a CD player.

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CD-R's aren't permanent either. The organic dyes layer that the burner works with are similar to dyes in film. When exposed to sunlight, heat, cold and humidity and UV exposure the dye layer changes over time. How often have you watched someone place a CD on the dashboard of a car or keep it in a glove box? Proper storage of CD's is critical to their useful longevity.

Dyes

There are many types of dyes used for the production of a CD. To quote the above mentioned author, "Under the NIST's accelerated "stress test," which includes exposure to very bright light, high temperature and humidity, recorded CD discs using phthalocyanine dye combined with a gold/silver allow reflective layer proved to be considerably more stable than all other types of CD-R media. Discs using azo dye as the data layer had less stability under light, temperature and humidity testing. Media using cyanine dye performed well when exposed to light, but had longevity problems under temperature and humidity stress."

DVD's, which generally use a modified form of a stabilized cyanine dye for the recording layer, are less predictable in terms of longevity. NIST data suggest that, despite lower data capacity, you might be better off in the long run using premium CD-R's instead of DVD+/-R discs."

The author went on to say that it's not always possible to tell what kind of dye was used for the manufacture of the disc because the dyes can be tinted. Cyanine based CD's (most common) have a light green or blue tint on the data side. Phthalocyanine dyes are often light green while the azo dye tends to have a blue color.

While it's possible to tell the dye type by reading the specs from the manufacturer, a better indicator might be the reflective layer. If a gold reflective layer was used then the likelihood of using a good quality dye is increased. Be aware, some cheap discs appearing to have a gold layer may be simply paint. Buyer beware!

Recommended brand discs are Fujifilm, Imation, Kodak, Maxell, TDK, Verbatim and Mitsui/MAM-A.

Protection and Care of CD's

Manufacturers recommend storing CD's vertically in a cool, dry area instead of horizontally. The reason is to prevent warping and damage from humidity.

Also, never use solvent based pens to write on them similar to permanent felt tipped pens. The solvent can penetrate the protective layer and damage the reflective layer below. The only safe place to write on the top of a CD is in the clear center portion of the hub when using a felt tipped pen.

It is better to apply a label to the top of the disc for identification purposes. Never write on the label with a ballpoint pen when it is applied to the disc. The tip of the pen can cause stress cracks in the protective layer.

When using CD-RW discs, I use removable labels — www.digitalinnovations.com.. They can be written on many times and then removed and replaced as necessary.

For discs that I intend to keep for archival purposes I print the contents on the label with an ink jet printer — www.fellowes.com.

When cleaning to remove fingerprints or smudges on the read side on the read side of the disc, always use a CD or lens cloth wiping radially out from the center. Never clean using small circular motions on small portions of the disc as it can cause diffusion of the laser beam. Isopropyl alcohol or clear or soapy water can be used to clean a grimy disc. Never use acetone, anti-static agents or wood based products such as toilet paper or facial tissue to clean a disc.

When applying labels, be sure to center the label on the disc to avoid "off balance" condition when the disc is being used. When the disc is rotated at high speeds, the "off balance" condition can unbalance the disc and cause problems with high speed readers. For this reason I purchased a label applicator that perfectly centers the label each time versus putting the label on the disc "by eye."

The Future

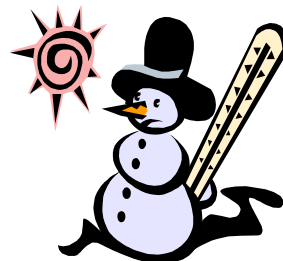
Like the 1.4 MB floppy drive, tape drives, Zip discs and LS 120 disks that are no longer being used, the CD as

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we know it will likely bite the dust in about ten years. I predict the media of choice for backup and archival purposes will be that of external drive media similar to USB jump drives and flash card burners or other external drive sources. Personally, I use a 160 GB external hard drive to backup my computer data including music and photo files. Because of transportability, I also backup my music and photos on CD's and store them at an offsite location in a safety deposit box.

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POTPOURRI

by Bill Swiss, Editor

WARNING

Do not trust any software to be up to date on location and date. I was using my latest issue of Microsoft Streets and Trips 2005 to get the address and location of the Batavia Public Library for the Newsletter and boy was I embarrassed when Bob Tuftee called me on the phone and said I had the wrong address in the Newsletter which had been printed.

So, I made sure of this issue by holding back on the finished product till I had gotten all the information I needed and then take it to the printer. I even got the President to give me a short message for the membership like we did in earlier times. Thanks Jon.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

At the Board Meeting on Friday February 3rd, we were discussing future activities. I questioned Jon about the customary Video taping of the meeting and it was the opinion of the majority of the Board that it will be discontinued. I would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to John St.Clair for his years of work doing all the Video camera work and then editing the tape to fit the desired format.

Another note I brought up was the different programs that were to be presented at later meetings. Do any of you members remember the program given by one of our members on buying and selling on eBay. I sure would like to get more information on that activity. I was reading an article in

one of the exchange newsletters that I get and the author discussed the various books that are available for people doing that activity. The article is copyrighted so I can't copy the article in this newsletter. Maybe I can get permission from the author.

ANOTHER WARNING

When buying ink cartridges be sure you have the correct number on the ink cartridge for your printer. I was working on this Newsletter when I ran out of ink, so I took out the packages of cartridges I had purchased a couple of weeks ago to put them in my printer.

When I turned on the printer after I installed the ink cartridges I got a message on the monitor that I had the wrong ink cartridge in the printer. I took out the cartridges and replaced them with the old cartridges and the printer worked but the message on the monitor said that the ink was very low and I should replace the ink cartridges. I went out and purchased a new set of correct cartridges for the printer and they didn't print out anything. Darn.....

This printer was my favorite Epson CX5200 and I opened the service manual and tried all the various hints and tests to solve the problem. No luck on getting it working. So I went out and bought a new Epson CX4800 with all the rebates, etc. It works great and it is so light I can carry it down the stairs.

Make sure you get the correct cartridges for your printer and not refills either.

The "FOX TALES" Newsletter

The "Fox Tales" Newsletter is published monthly by the Fox Valley PC Association, Post Office Box 369, Oswego, IL 60543, a non-profit organization, established to provide information about IBM PCs and IBM Compatible personal computer systems to our members.

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The Following Members have
paid their dues.

***Dennis Craig
and
Jon Jackman***

Thank You"

THE FOX VALLEY PC ASSOCIATION

The Fox Valley PC Association is dedicated to the task of providing computer information to our fellow members. We are a non-profit organization. The group has been active since January 1985. The dues are \$30 per year. Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month.

The meeting location will be described on the Club Website. (www.fvpca.org) The formal meeting starts at 9:00 A.M. Non-Member Visitors are always welcome.



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Fox Tales



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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:

www.fvpca.org

Courtesy of our Club member, Bob Tuftee



"Programs of the Month"

"Running Applications from a USB Pen Drive" by Tom Anzalone

And "Using a WebCam on a Simple Network" Tom Anzalone & Jon Jackman

The Next Meeting Will Be
February 18, 2006
At the Oswegoland Park District
Civic Center