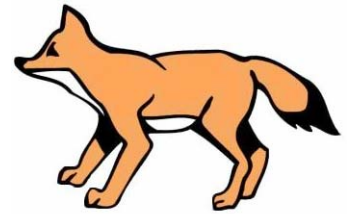


FOX TALES



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Message from Northern Ontario

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

I am up on a fishing vacation in northern Ontario, and I will share the experience in a segment called, "Technology in the Wilderness" at our next monthly meeting. After a long day on the lake, a group of fellow fisherman is preparing to play a game of Euchre in our cabin "suite" on Lake St. Joseph. I brought along my Acer Aspire Netbook hoping to connect to the Internet via the satellite connection that they have here. Being at such a high latitude the antenna must be aimed at a very low trajectory. With any cloud cover, the best Internet speed is less than dial-up, if it can be received at all. I had hoped to use Skype to make a phone call. (The nearest cell phone connection might be in Dryden, Ontario, which is 142 miles away as the eagle flies!) When I tried to call my wife on Skype the other night, I could hear her, but she could not hear me. Upon doing a speed test, there was a very slow download speed and a non-existent upload speed. When I learned that I understood why I was having a problem with the Skype connection. (I could download her voice, but my uploaded voice to here was poor and unintelligible. SKYPE audio is supposed to work on a fast dial-up connect, but we do not even have those speeds here at present.) Darn! I will also be unable to manage the monthly conference call with my brothers this evening. Oh well!

I have seen some other people up here at the Old Post and Village fishing resort in "the Store" with their laptops. They have said that they can get on the Internet, albeit slowly, so I will try later. I hope that it clears up so that I can get this to Dean so that he can send the *Fox Tales* to our printer in time to meet the deadline. I will try again this evening before I hit the sack, or before departing in the morning on Lake St. Joseph for another 10 hour day of fishing, complete with a shore lunch. This is really some trip. I have never caught so many walleye and northern pike in my life! No trophies yet, but I did manage to split the pot for the largest walleye on Monday (at 21 ".) Tuesday's walleye was 23" long! The largest northern is 38"! With two days to go, I still have a chance!

Anyway, I will share the technology challenges I have seen up here and some surprises too at our July 18th meeting. I also gave Dean a Bluetooth adapter so that he can do a mini-program on his experience. There will be a chance for a member to get a Bluetooth adapter as well. I did not bring along my notes from the last Executive meeting, and I have not had Internet access to see if we have had an e-mail response yet from the Oswegoland Park District on our latest chapter of Internet access. I can say that we did take a look at what is available. The suggestion from Norm to get a wireless card at the last meeting was noted and explored. We also looked into getting a wireless router that would enable anyone at a meeting to logon to the temporary Internet service via the wireless card.

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Speed Demons

Written by Bill Roman, Advisor to the Board of Directors, The PC Users Group of Connecticut
www.tpcug.org br (at) numbercrunch.com

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There is an issue that I feel must be addressed, since the issue continues to come up on a regular basis. As a PC technician I constantly get asked why the clients' computer has become so slow, and if there is anything wrong with it.

The first thing I tell the client is that there are two main culprits that contribute to a PC becoming very sluggish. The first being lack of RAM memory. This answer usually elicits a quick response from the user that they "only do e-mail, Internet and word processing" or some similar response. I then go into a discussion with the user that there are two kinds of memory in a computer: hard drive storage, which holds all their music, pictures, documents, etc. and RAM, or working memory. A user could have plenty of hard drive space to store all of their documents and stuff, but when they don't have enough RAM, the computer will, over time, become slower and slower.

Why you ask? When the computer was originally purchased (usually somewhere between 2 and 5 years ago) Windows XP, in this case, required about 512MB of RAM to run properly. As Windows critical security updates and service packs are installed, as well as upgrades and updates to all sorts of programs used on a daily basis (antivirus, Internet Explorer, AOL, Adobe Reader and Flash Player, printer updates, etc), the programs NEVER get smaller, always bigger.

Now, several years later and the programs being used are double or triple in size, but the computer is the same one with the same specs as when it was purchased. Adding more RAM memory is a quick, cheap way to improve performance to an aging computer, and extend life before a replacement is in order. Windows XP should have at least 1024 MB (1GB) of RAM to run properly, and Windows Vista (32bit) needs 3GB of RAM. More is not better in the case of Vista for technical reasons I will not go into in this article.

This is only half the battle. The other half is to beat down what I will call the "moochers". Years ago when I would inspect a computer for sluggish performance, it was usually because of a rogue game that was installed. Back then quite a few games adopted the theory that the only reason you owned your \$3000 or \$4000 computer (yes, it was that much back then, even more depending on how far back you go) was to play some ridiculous \$49 game. The game would change many settings that allowed the game to work properly, but made it miserable to perform simple tasks like type a letter.

Now, in 2009 every program under the sun assumes that they are the main focus, and must be given priority at all times. What does this mean to you, the end user? Each time when an upgraded revision of Adobe Reader comes out it always wants to include the new "MSN Toolbar" or "Yahoo Toolbar" etc. This adds unnecessary junk to your browser, which slows down getting online. In addition, many of these programs load an additional program when Windows starts to speed it up when starting it.

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Speed Demons (cont'd)

This is just lousy practice that is a very poor substitute for tight efficient programming. If the program was small and lean there would be no need for "speed loaders," which make your computer take an exorbitant amount of time for Windows to start.

Not to pick on, but a classic example of this is how much Apple's iTunes has grown through the years. iTunes 6 which was released in January 2006 was about 35MB in size. iTunes 7.5 was 52MB and iTunes 8.1 (the current release) is now up to 70MB. The program is twice as large only three years later, and loads a number of programs when Windows starts to aid loading this memory hog.

What to do about this? In short be mindful when installing updated programs to unselect add on tool-bars and, if available, to kick them out of starting up when Windows loads. I have discussed at our local computer club meetings to do your best to keep running processes to a minimum. By clicking control, alt, delete once (with no programs active) will bring up the task manager and show how many processes are running. A good number for Windows XP is less than 35, and for Vista it's about 45.

Startup Cop and the free CCleaner utilities have the ability to disable or remove programs from starting, but I would check online in a Google search before disabling anything unless certain. I do hope this article sheds some light on the subject of pokey computers.

Remember, it's not so much the hardware as it is software that kills a computer! Until next time!

Written by Bill Roman, Advisor to the Board of Directors, The PC Users Group of Connecticut

Message from Northern Ontario (cont'd)

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

A 5 GB download limit would not be exceeded in 3 hours, so we would likely not violate the EULA regarding video streaming during our 3 hour meeting. (We want to use the Internet to do Live Meeting and stream our meeting to interested members, as well as save the session so it could be downloaded from our website at a later time for more convenient viewing experience. Other bandwidth demanding programs have been mentioned as possibilities.) The expense for a wireless connection runs about \$60 a month and the connection speeds range from 700 Kbps to 1.2 Kbps, according to the AT&T sales rep at the Oswego store, Jennifer. We are not sure that the slower speed of wireless would meet our current and future needs. Ironically, Jennifer lives in the Southbury subdivision adjacent to the South point location. She indicated that U-Verse is not yet available, but she gets 5 Mbps speed at her home over the Elite AT&T DSL plan. She looked into what we might get from AT&T. Unfortunately; it is not a residence, so the cost of the plan is about \$72 a month. Looking into Comcast, the expense is around \$60 a month. So we passed this information along to the OPD and are waiting for a response. We even wondered if we might be able to pursue a grant that might cover the expense. In any event, we continue to explore the options to determine what will work the best for our association. Well, it is off to see if I can send this out and then get to sleep for another day out on the lake! [Unable to connect on Tuesday night as there was a misting rain. Wednesday morning I had 890/75 kbps, so we will give it a try and see.]

Please ask a friend to join you at the next meeting. We always try to provide interesting content at our meetings and also schedule a chance for anyone to discuss current trends in any topic related to digital technology and support for those who may need it!

Free Software Helps Caregivers

Written by Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, Fort Collins, CO

kByte™ Newsletter, June 2009

<http://www.frpcug.org>

[twriterext\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:twriterext(at)gmail.com)

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An article with the title “Caring for the Caregiver” appeared in the in the November/December 2007 issue of AARP magazine¹. Here is an extract from that article:

“A cascade of studies in recent years has shown that caregivers stand at particular risk for a host of mental and physical illnesses, many of which have roots in stress, exhaustion, and self-neglect—symptoms some medical professionals have begun calling caregiver syndrome. . . . According to a 2004 national survey by AARP and The National Alliance for Caregiving, nearly 23 million households are currently home to a caregiver, most often a woman who is taking care of someone 50 or older. Some 43 percent of these caregivers are over 50 themselves—13 percent are over 65—and they spend good chunks of their weeks on a heady range of chores, from medication management and bathing to feeding, clothing, and arranging health care services. . . . Unfortunately for many friends and family members of caregivers, it is difficult to know when to step in—or what to do....”

I recommend this article to all caregivers, and to friends and family members of caregivers. Yes, it is difficult for friends and family members of caregivers to know what to do. It can also be overwhelming for a caregiver to add another task—coordinating help from those friends and family members—to an already burdensome schedule.

Both caregivers and those willing to help may find a scheduling solution with a web site called [Lotsa Helping Hands.com](http://LotsaHelpingHands.com). This web site allows a caregiver or family member to:

“Create a free of charge, private, web-based community to organize family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues – a family’s ‘circles of community’ — during times of need. . . .”

There are three primary templates:

1. Caregiving
2. Eldercare and Long Term Care
3. Military and Veterans Families

There are four additional templates:

1. Volunteering
2. Parenting
3. Schools
4. Religious Groups

These templates allow one person to coordinate the activities of others by identifying the needs and allowing volunteers to accept tasks. All of this activity takes place online, relieving the caregiver of the burden of many phone calls and separate schedules. For those familiar with Google Documents™, there is a slight similarity between the two. However, the Lotsa Helping Hands templates are designed specifically for care giving situations: “Each community includes an intuitive group calendar for scheduling tasks such as meals delivery and rides, a platform for securely sharing vital medical, financial, and legal information with designated family members, and customizable sections for posting photos, well wishes, blogs, journals, and messages.

(Continued on Page 5)

Free Software Helps Caregivers (cont'd)

Now, when someone asks ‘what can I do to help?’ the answer is ‘give me your name and email address’ – the system takes over and allows people to sign up and start helping.”

A web based service such as Lotsa Helping Hands is certain to generate questions about privacy and security. You will find answers to these questions in the “Terms of use” page of the web site. Included in the Terms are descriptions of the data security, data integrity and access (among other) protections.

[Note: The scheduling features are not dependent upon the use of private information. It is not necessary to include medical, financial or legal information on the web site—although that information is protected].

Lotsa Helping Hands has many non-profit partners, including the Alzheimer’s Association, the Family Caregiver Alliance, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and many more. Check the Partners page of the Lotsa Helping Hands web site for more information.

You can read what national media, such as Business Week, NY Times and others have to say about Lotsa Helping Hands by clicking on the links on the Media page of the Lotsa Helping Hands web site.

I have not personally used this service, although there was a time, not so long ago, when I would have used it had I known about it. After reading the description of the service, and the “How It Works” section of the web site, I am convinced that the service is, indeed, very valuable and also secure. I recommend that caregivers try this service. There is at least the potential to reduce your levels of stress and exhaustion associated with your role of caregiver.

Windows 7 RC1, Part 3

Dean Holste, FVPCA Member

Well, I have encountered my second problem with the new Windows 7 RC1 operating system. The mouse I use is from Microsoft, a USB optical kind. I use the scroll wheel quite a bit but it was not working with Windows 7. After tunneling through their website, I found Microsoft’s Intellipoint 7 software. The website states that it was compatible with the Windows 7 RC1 system so I downloaded it to my desktop. Software installation went smooth. I then brought up the program and began setting up the mouse controls. My mouse, the M/S Optical USB Blue was not specifically listed so I chose the closest matching description. After setting everything up the scroll wheel still did not work. I decided to restart the computer hoping that would set things into place. The restart went well until I logged in, once I logged in the computer shutdown. Unexpected, but interesting. Okay, lets fire it up again and see what happens. Once again after I logged in the computer shutdown. Did something go wrong with the driver installation? Even though the Intellipoint software is suppose to be Win7 compatible, is it really? I once again restarted the computer this time going into safe mode. Once in safe mode, I went to Add & Remove programs only to discover that I could not remove the software, only change it. Next I went to system restore. I went back to a previous known good point and did a restore. After a restart, the same thing happened again, system shutdown. At that point I walked away from the computer. I’ll go back again in a few days to investigate what’s going on. In the mean time I think I’ll pre-order Windows 7 from Tiger Direct for the discount price.....



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There are a growing number of locations that offer free Internet via a wireless Wi-Fi connection! We would like to find a place where we could meet and have Wi-Fi too!

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 (except December.)

The meeting place for (July) will be at the Oswego Civic Center, 5 Ashlawn Ave, Montgomery, IL The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M. Non-member visitors are always welcome. If you can, please come early & help with set-up. Thanks!

"USERS HELPING USERS"

Membership Renewals

Dean Holste

Welcome to our newest member!

William Bates

Thank-You for your continuing support!!

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 (and almost anything "digital") to our members.

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Fox Valley PC Association Officers & Board Members

President

Jon Jackman 630-892-7767
e-mail jockjoj@aol.com

Vice President

Tom Anzalone 630-482-9808
e-mail tanzalone2@earthlink.net

Secretary

Bill Palmer 630-859-8939
e-mail william_palmer@att.net

Treasurer

Dean Holste

Newsletter Layout Editor

Dean Holste
e-mail deanolste@sbcglobal.net

Membership Coordinator

Bill Powell 630-553-1887
e-mail wpnkp81@sbcglobal.net

Website Webmaster

Kathryn Farrell
e-mail: farrellkathya@aol.com

Publicity Coordinator

VACANT
e-mail

Program Coordinator

Craig McGregor 630-554-1923
e-mail Craig.McGregor@ACXIOM.COM

Fox Tales

Fox Valley PC Association
P.O. Box 369
Oswego, IL 60543-0369



The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:

www.fvpca.org
Courtesy of APCUG



Have a computer hardware problem or a technical question? Head over to our website and click on the red question mark to send your question! We will research it and have an answer at the next meeting or sooner if needed.

July Program:

Technology in the Wilderness
With Jon Jackman

The Next Meeting Will Be at 9:15 A.M.

July 18, 2009

At the Oswego Civic Center
5 Ashlawn Ave. Montgomery, Illinois