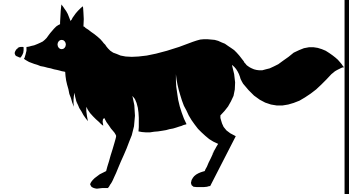


# FOX TALES



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## Spring Has Sprung

Each year I am amazed at how quickly things turn green and the blossoms bloom as the landscape turns from dingy to beautiful. Things change so fast. Even the weather seems to go from cool to warm and back to cool every other day. It appears that things in the computing arena change almost as fast! Wondrous devices are bigger and faster, and sometimes cheaper than ever before, though I am sure they cannot match Mother Nature for the awesome fragrances drifting around at this time of year.

We could easily have a segment at each month's meeting on the latest gadgets and devices in a "Show and Tell." Last month we passed around a small electronic artificial intelligence (AI) game called "20 Q", which has been out on the market for a year or so. I discovered it at a Christmas party last year. It is a fascinating little device that will guess what you are thinking within 20 questions. It seems to be able to read your mind. I went out and got several as gifts for my sons. (Of course one found its way into my stocking!)

Turns out several members had also seen this fascinating toy. I just discovered an online version at [www.20Q.net](http://www.20Q.net) that seems to work even better than the toy itself. It has more answer choices and develops a database of items to really narrow down on just about anything you can think of. After the game is over the online version provides feedback and clears up the inaccurate responses that you made which kept it from getting to a solution sooner. I was thinking "coffee mug" and it kept telling me I was thinking of a "glass". It then showed me which answers I answered "incorrectly." If you like the game on line, you may go out and buy one of the "lite" take-it-anywhere versions for about \$10.

In other news, we continue to look elsewhere for meeting locations. For May and June we will have our meetings at the conference room at the Aurora Public Library – Eola Branch. It is off Eola Road near Waubensee Valley High School and is part of the Eola Community Center that is operated by the Fox Valley Park District. The Library entrance is on the South end of the building.

This month we will be having the first of several program topics on networking. During these programs we will be going through basic information on simple networking, networking terminology, equipment needs, printer and file sharing, device sharing, Internet connectivity, wired and wireless set-ups, and trouble shooting, etc. We have touched on some of these areas before, but felt that there is really a need to re-visit the networking topic. If you have more than one PC, there are advantages to having a home network in place.

Come join us at the Eola Branch of The Aurora Public on May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 17<sup>th</sup> and see for yourself. Consider bringing a friend along... Visitors are always welcome.

Happy Spring!

Jon Jackman  
President - FVPCA

## TechNews

By Sue Crane, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California  
Scrane5@socal.rr.com  
www.bigbearcc.org

BREAKING NEWS!! Microsoft will release Vista in two versions. The volume-license business version will ship in November 2006, but the consumer version will not be available until 2007 – too late for the holidays. Some MS partners feel this move will take a huge bite out of 2006 holiday sales, but others say they are not surprised.

Sun Microsystems recently released the beta software for Java Platform Standard Edition 6.0, code-named Mustang. The update should make it easier to use scripting languages such as PHP or Ruby to write Java applications and improve diagnostics to spot bugs. Last year, Sun modified the license around Java to allow developers to see the source code. Sun also changed its development practices so that outsiders can see and contribute to Java development. The completed software will be available in the fall.

Microsoft Office 12 (Office 2007) will offer new features, including an all-new user interface and new XML-based file formats, but no significant price increase. Office Standard will sell for \$399, while Office Professional will sell for \$499. Microsoft released an initial beta of Office 2007 in November 2005, with a second beta planned for this spring. The company is replacing its Student and Teacher edition with a \$149 Home and Student edition that can be used by all home users and removing the Outlook and including OneNote. The Student and Teacher edition and the home version of Office can be used on up to 3 PCs in a home, but cannot be upgraded. The ProPlus version will include Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access and Publisher plus the Office Communicator, InfoPath and server-based content management and forms management capabilities. Many of the new capabilities will be included in SharePoint Portal Server, which has been expanded to handle forms management, spreadsheet hosting and content rights management. The "Core CAL(client access license)" combines licenses for Windows Server, Exchange Server, Office SharePoint Portal Server and Systems Management Server. The new "Enterprise CAL" includes those licenses, as well as Microsoft Operations Manager, Microsoft Office Live Communications Server and rights-management and security products. Microsoft is also using the SharePoint brand for a new Web site development program. Microsoft Office SharePoint Designer 2007, like Microsoft's Expression Web Designer software is based in part on FrontPage. Office 12 is scheduled for release in fall 2006.

Nearly one-third of American Internet users go online just for fun rather than to check e-mail, read news or use a search engine according to Deborah Fallows, senior research fellow at the nonpartisan Pew Internet & American Life Project, which examines the social impact of the Internet. A survey of 1,931 Internet users found 30 percent of respondents said they went online "for no particular reason" on the previous day. The survey also showed that 34 percent of online men were surfing for fun on an average day, compared with 26 percent of women. The Survey said that sending or receiving e-mail ranked highest with 52 percent of Internet

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users saying they did this on a typical day. Using a search engine ranked second with 38 percent, while reading news online was third with 31 percent.

Lego has picked 100 lucky fans who will be the first members of the public to get their hands on Mindstorms NXT, the latest generation of the company's programmable robot toys. Last year some Lego fans figured out a way to hack the development tools on a company Web site. Instead of going after them with lawyers, Lego responded by saying, "That's terrific." The 100 Lego fans named last week have a chance to help develop the product by road-testing it and then share their impressions with Mindstorm executives. The 2006 version--which is expected to be publicly available in August 2006--gives users the ability to build and program robots that incorporate visual, sound and touch-sensitive sensors that can be controlled wirelessly using Bluetooth devices. Mindstorms director Soren Lund hopes many of the developer-program members will create attractive and impressive robots that Lego will be able to showcase on the Mindstorms NXT Web site when the product officially launches this summer..

The organizers of RoboCup, an international robot world's World Cup of soccer held annually, plan to have a new category this year named the "RoboCup Citizen Eco-Be League," which will feature the tiny Eco-Be robots, which measure less than one square inch. Citizen is releasing a developer kit so teams can create their own Eco-Be robots. This year's competition will be held from June 14-20 in Bremen, Germany, and will feature separate competitions for robots in various size categories as well as humanoid and 4-legged leagues.

What's Your "Brain Age"?

If millions of Japanese are to be believed, it is the secret to a happy and healthy old age as millions of them take up Nintendo's brain training. Players have to complete puzzles as quickly and accurately as possible, including reading literary classics aloud, doing simple arithmetic, drawing, and responding rapidly to deceptively easy teasers using voice-recognition software. The player's "brain age" is then determined. The first in the English-language series of games, Brain Age, is due for its US release on April 17, followed by Big Brain Academy in May. Brain Training for Adults, a package of cerebral workouts aimed at the over-45s, is said to improve mental agility and even slow the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease and also proves addictive to over-45s anxious to ward-off old age.

When Daniel Hickey's doctor suggested he have a microchip implanted under his skin to provide instant access to his computerized medical record, the 77-year-old retired naval officer immediately agreed. "If you're unconscious and end up in the emergency room, they won't know anything about you," Hickey said. "With this, they can find out everything they need to know right away and treat you better." Some doctors are welcoming the technology as an exciting innovation that will speed care and prevent errors. But the concept alarms privacy advocates. They worry the devices could make it easier for unauthorized snoops to invade medical records. VeriChip Corp. is selling kits containing scanners and the large-bore needles used to insert the chips, and recommending that doctors charge patients about \$200 each. At an academic computing conference in Pisa, Italy, researchers plan to demonstrate how it is possible to infect a tiny portion of memory in an RFID chip with a vi-

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*(TechNews...Continued from page 3)*

rus.

Started by Westinghouse in 1942, STS is the oldest, and generally most prestigious, national science competition for high school students. Intel took over the competition in 1998 as part of its overall effort to promote science education, for which it spends \$100 million annually. 40 students make the finals, plucked from 300 semifinalists and more than 1,500 total entrants. Shannon Babb, 18, won top honors, which included a \$100,000 scholarship, for her research and remediation work on pollution. Yi Sun, 17, won a \$75,000 scholarship for his discovery of new geometric properties. Yuan "Chelsea" Zhang, 17, came in third place to win a \$50,000 scholarship. Zhang, from Rockville, Md., studied the plaque buildup of arteries that leads to heart disease. Students taking fourth, fifth and sixth places get \$25,000, while those ranking 7th through 10th receive \$20,000. The remaining 30 finalists receive \$5,000, and every finalist gets an Intel Centrino notebook computer.

Intel's new Core microarchitecture takes advantage of similarities to fuse certain types of x86 instructions into more manageable chunks. 3 new chips--code-named Merom (a notebook chip), Conroe (for desktops) and Woodcrest for servers)—are based on the Core microarchitecture. Intel has said all 3 chips will deliver significant performance increases compared with current chips--as much as an 80 percent improvement in the case of Woodcrest--while consuming less power. One way the new architecture makes this happen is through macro-ops fusion and micro-ops fusion. When the Pentium M chip that is the model for the Core architecture--was introduced in 2003, it used a technique called micro-ops fusion to glue pieces taken from the same instruction back together, reducing the overall amount of work the processor needs to complete a task. The new chips will also be able to combine separate large instructions that usually appear in pairs into a single instruction, known as macro-ops fusion, which increases performance, but also reduces the amount of power used by the chip. Merom is scheduled for the second half of the year. It's really a major change in clock and in the amount of time it takes to execute a sequence.

Google Desktop 3 is a free, downloadable program that includes an option to let users search across multiple computers for files. The application automatically stores copies of files, for up to a month, on Google servers. From there, copies are transferred to the user's other computers for archiving. The data is encrypted in transmission and while stored on Google servers. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has urged consumers to boycott the software, warning that Google could be forced to turn over the data to the government.

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.

# Upgrading Your Monitor

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

In December I wrote about buying a PC for 2006, but other than size I was vague about the monitor.

Many more folks than I thought are getting the urge to watch high definition video on their personal computers. If high definition has you captivated, pay attention to the technologies known as HDMI and HDCP.

HDMI or High Definition Media Interface is a technology that connects video receivers and DVD players to devices such as a television. It makes no difference to HDMI if your set is high definition or not. The technology handles both standard and high definition resolutions.

HDCP or High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection is a completely different animal. Intel developed the technology specifically to prevent distortion or any kind of electronic interference between source and receiver. For example, HDCP encrypts the digital content of anything that a device such as a DVD player might send through a Digital Visual Interface (DVI) to a television set, a projector or a computer monitor. The encryption used is not a form of copy protection, but a process designed to protect the integrity of the data. In other words, HDCP makes sure that what is sent is what's received.

It's important to understand that HDCP is content protection, not copy protection. It won't prevent you from pausing live programming or recording a program to view at a later time. Any content provider that did this would soon be at war with its customers.

As long as features such as "time-shifting" keep appearing, protecting copyright material becomes increasingly difficult. Copyrights are important because without them there is no protection for the artists, authors, and performers who create material or those who use them.

Your home equipment can implement any kind of copy protection, but a content provider might allow no copies whatsoever. Another provider might let you make a limited number of copies. Still another provider might put limitations on how the material is used. Many factors come into play. The mechanism for distribution, source, equipment design, and equipment configuration all have their unique effect. A content provider will usually insist on enforcing its own brand of copy protection.

HDCP makes its appearance at the DVI connection, the last link in the video chain. HDCP makes no decisions on any type of copy protection strategy, it merely protects the choice.

It may be a let down to find out that HDCP isn't an issue yet. However, it will become more important when high definition takes over. Expect all high definition DVD players to eventually use HDCP.

*(Upgrading....Continued on page 6)*

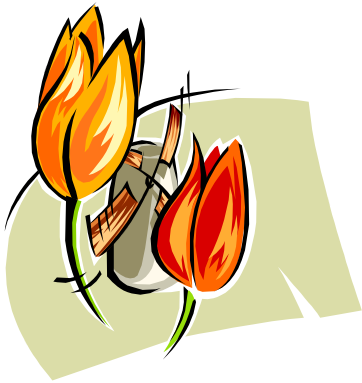
*(Upgrading...Continued from page 5)*

If you own a DVD player that isn't HDCP compliant, you will still be able to use it even if your TV isn't HDCP compliant. You just won't experience high definition quality images. HDCP will restrict playback to standard quality. This prevents pirates from getting perfect copies of movies or other digital content. Upgrades are definitely in most people's future.

Windows Vista will certainly support HDCP, as will upcoming versions of the Mac OS. What it comes down to is if you want to watch high definition content on your computer monitor, the monitor must be HDCP-compliant.

Almost any television set you buy today will use HDCP, but very few computer monitors are HDCP compliant. Do your research carefully. If you want to watch high definition on your monitor, it must be HDCP compliant.

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#### **NOTES FROM THE EDITOR**

I received a letter from the manager of the Computer Shows at the College of DuPage and he has moved the show to the DuPage County Fairgrounds in Wheaton, Illinois.

The schedule of the shows:

	August 27, 2006
	October 22, 2006
June 25, 2006	December 3, 2006



## 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.

**David Chrestenson  
and  
John Player**

*"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](http://www.fvpca.org) ) The formal meeting starts at 9:00 A.M. Non-Member Visitors are always welcome.



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27 STONE HILL ROAD • OSWEGO, IL 60543  
Phone: (630) 554-1728 • Fax: (630) 554-1198  
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Member of  
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2006-2007

### Fox Valley PC Association

#### President

Jon Jackman 630/892-7767  
e-mail [jockojokj@aol.com](mailto:jockojokj@aol.com)

#### Vice President

Tom Anzalone 630/482-9808  
e-mail [tanzalone2@earthlink.net](mailto:tanzalone2@earthlink.net)

#### Secretary

Bill Swiss 630/554-1225  
e-mail [Hvybigbill@aol.com](mailto:Hvybigbill@aol.com)

#### Treasurer

Richard Chamberlain 630/892-9361  
e-mail [Rsqrdchmb@aol.com](mailto:Rsqrdchmb@aol.com)

#### Newsletter Editor

Bill Swiss 630/554-1225  
e-mail [Hvybigbill@aol.com](mailto:Hvybigbill@aol.com)

#### Membership Coordinator

Jon Jackman 630/892-7767  
e-mail [jockojokj@aol.com](mailto:jockojokj@aol.com)

#### Website Webmaster

Bob Tuftee 630/553-0513  
e-mail [retjtt@comcast.net](mailto:retjtt@comcast.net)

#### Publicity Coordinator

Bill Swiss 630/554-1225  
e-mail [Hvybigbill@aol.com](mailto:Hvybigbill@aol.com)

#### Program Coordinator

Craig McGregor 630/554-1923  
e-mail [Craig.McGregor@ACXIOM.COM](mailto: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](http://www.fvpca.org)**

Courtesy of our Club member, Bob Tuftee



“Programs of the Month”  
Check With the Club Web Site

The Next Meeting Will Be  
**May 20, 2006**  
The Location will be at the Aurora Public  
Library—Eola Branch  
Non-Member Visitors are always welcome.