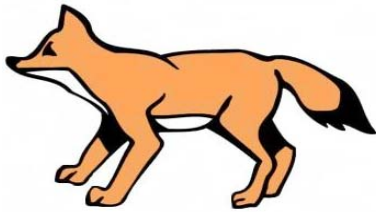


Fox Tales



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

NEW DIRECTION AS WE HEAD TOWARDS 2012: BEYOND VHS-C

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

September is the month when we make nominations for our Association's Officers, followed in October with elections. Our current officers will be looking at continuing, but if you have an interest in making your mark, feel free to speak with someone on the nominating committee and make it a race. There are other appointed positions which likely retain the same officers. We could still use a volunteer for Publicity, and may create new positions to target ongoing efforts with the Downloads of the Quarter and a new position as Video Producer/Editor.

At our last general meeting, Craig McGregor volunteered to look into the feasibility of us going back to capturing our meetings on video. As has been discussed in this column many times, we have several members who are unable to attend our meetings, but faithfully retain their membership. In an effort to keep them involved, we tried to utilize Live Meeting to let them attend from afar. The process is somewhat cumbersome, and in the 2011 Survey addressing preferences for remote viewing, only three respondents expressed an interest in watching the meeting "Live". Whereas, 10 indicated that they usually attend meetings and would not need to view a video, but 13 said that they would like to be able to watch a recorded video of a meeting at their convenience. Might that mean that regular meeting attendees would choose to not attend and just watch a recording? I believe that a recording is just that: a one way show. There is an advantage to actually being there so that any questions or comments may be addressed by the presenter (Not to mention the camaraderie, coffee and donuts!) We discussed this at our last Executive Meeting and have decided to begin research on what we will need to move forward.

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The "FOX TALES" Newsletter

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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)

Our regular meeting place is in the South Point Center community room located at 810 Preston Lane in Oswego, Illinois. The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M.

Visitors are always welcome!

"USERS HELPING USERS"



4 Technology Trends That Could Affect You

Tech-Tip# 329 By Mark Tiongco - August 28, 2011

Technology not only continues to be a driving force in our everyday lives, but since we've become so dependent on it, we should be mindful of the trends that could directly impact how we live, attend classes and do business.

The following trends address the continuous evolution of digital technology and how you can adapt and benefit (by saving money!) from knowing what technology can help (or not help) you.

Computing Horsepower

It's safe to say that computers built in the last 5-6 years still have relatively enough horsepower to help people plow through everyday tasks like email, MS Word/Excel, Facebook and iTunes. However, one trend that could help consumers who are looking to buy a new rig is the advent of integrating the graphics card and the CPU into one single package....

"...As rapid as technology continues to advance, consumers aren't obligated to hop aboard quickly in fear of getting left in the dust and becoming obsolete."

Read the Full Article Here! <http://tinyurl.com/3sj7kou>



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Buying a New Windows PC

By Dick Maybach

August 2011 issue, BCUG Bytes, Brookdale Computer Users Group, NJ

www.bcug.com n2nd (at) charter.net

Sooner or later, you'll be looking for a replacement for your PC. What requirements must the hardware satisfy? This article will assume you will be using the Windows 7 operating system, although almost any PC that supports Win 7 will also support any Linux distribution. If you purchase your PC from a well-established vendor, it will arrive with Windows already installed and well checked-out. However, most of us keep our PCs for several years, which means that their performance should exceed what is needed today. Software vendors know that to sell new versions of their products, they must add new features, and these require more from the hardware. Moore's Law, which says that integrated circuit performance doubles every 18 months, has been true for 30 years and shows no signs of changing in the near future. As a consequence, six years from now, PCs will be eight times as powerful as today's models, and software designers know and depend on this. Buying a barely adequate PC means that it may not adequately run any software on it that it wasn't delivered with.

Let's begin by looking at what hardware Microsoft recommends as a minimum for Win 7.

- 1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit processor
- 1 gigabyte (GB) RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)
- 16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
- DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

We see that the first choice is between a 32-bit and a 64-bit processor. At present, most home applications are available only in 32-bit form, and while these will run in a 64-bit environment, doing so provides little advantage, except that 64-bit CPUs can handle more RAM. (See the RAM discussion below.) This will probably change, perhaps as early as the next release or so of Windows. You might be tempted to go for a 64-bit processor, thinking that you will be able to upgrade to Win 8 or 9; however, don't forget Moore's law. When the time comes to upgrade, you will certainly find that your PC is hopelessly under-powered. A 32-bit processor is the correct choice, unless you have special requirements.

Processor clock speeds can now exceed 3 GHz, but processor architecture also greatly affects its computing rate, with the result that clock speed is not as good an indication of computing power as in the past. Indeed, AMD has stopped using clock speed to characterize its processors. Manufacturers achieve higher performance by putting multiple processors (called *cores*) on a single chip. Get at least a 2-core processor and preferably a 4-core one. You may not see much advantage initially, but Windows slows down as the number of updates increase, and you probably will add new applications, which become more resource-hungry with each release. Note the important difference between multi-core processors and multiple processors. The former are single packages with more than one computing component; the latter are multiple packages, each with its own stacks, cache memory, and input/output. Only the Professional, Enterprise, and Ultimate versions of WIN 7 can make use of more than one processor, although all 32-bit versions of WIN 7 can use up to 32 cores.

Finally, consider getting a CPU with a Intel-VT or AMD-V supported and enabled. Without this, you can't run Windows Virtual PC, <https://www.microsoft.com/windows/virtual-pc/default.aspx>.

Continued on next Page
→

Buying a New Windows PC (cont'd)

By Dick Maybach

RAM is cheap, which means you should get as much as you can use. However, a 32-bit processor, can access a maximum 4 gigabytes of memory, and memory includes not only RAM, but also video RAM. If you have a high-end graphics controller with 1 GB of video RAM, your processor can use only up to 3 GB or RAM. Remember though, that many people use just a video controller on their motherboard, and such units use regular RAM for video storage. Once your system fills RAM with data, it begins to use swap space on your disk, and this drastically slows performance. I recommend you install as much RAM as your processor can address, 4 GB if you use an integrated video controller, perhaps somewhat less if you have a separate one. You can see a problem developing here; because the recommended RAM is at the limit of what the processor can see. To use more RAM, you have to use a 64-bit CPU and operating system, which is why I think that we will soon see a move to this configuration.

I recommend at least a 2000-GB (2-TB) hard disk. You do not want to run out of disk space and have to port all your software and data to a new one. Faced with this, most home PC users would decide to purchase a new PC. A competent PC shop can do this for you, and while the cost is reasonable, it will certainly exceed any savings you realized by skimping on the original disk size.

Most home PC users will find that the minimum video controller specified by Microsoft is adequate, but if you play action games or have specialized needs, such as photo editing or computer-aided design (CAD) you probably need a separate high performance video card, perhaps one compatible with DirectX 10 or 11. Graphics cards have faster processors than those mounted on motherboards and their video RAM is separate from that on the motherboard. You will have to do some research into the recommendations of your software vendors, not just for what you now use, but also for what you may soon install. However, replacing your video controller is much easier than changing disks, so you can upgrade later if needed. Pay attention to the connector for the display; although VGA is still common, many high-performance controllers use Digital Visual Interface (DVI), High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI), or Display Port.

Besides the basics above, you also need some peripherals, and the most important of these is the display. You will probably follow the recommendations of the PC vendor, but consider getting a larger one than standard. As we age, our vision dims and blurs, and more visual real-estate allows us to magnify images, which makes computer time more comfortable. Be a little careful here, and be sure the display interface is compatible with your video controller. Of course, you need a read-write DVD drive, and you may want to get one that handles Blue-Ray. If you have a pile of diskettes, you may also want a floppy drive, but the need for these is fading fast. Get as many USB ports as you can (version 2.0 or later), and at least two should be on the front panel. If you run out of ports, you can add USB hubs, but the result is a tangle of cables, power cords, and power supplies. (This will happen anyway, but try to avoid making it worse.) Keyboards and mice are cheap commodities and are easily upgraded. Current PCs use USB ports to communicate with keyboards and mice, so you may not be able to transfer these from your old system.

The Tip Corner

By Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA
August 2011 issue, The LVCG Journal www.lvcg.org nsheff (at) aol.com

Windows 7

Just got Windows 7? Notice something missing? Well if you want to see a list of what happened to those programs you liked in XP or Vista here is a simple way to find out. Open Help and Support then type "What happened" in the search box. Windows will give you lots of results for the query, such as: What happened to the NetBEUIprotocol?, What happened to ActiveSync?, What happened to Sticky Notes?, What happened to Windows Calendar?, What happened to the Run as command?, What happened to the Quick Launch toolbar?" and many more. Say you picked the "What happened to the Run command?" This is what you get: "The Run command no longer appears on the Start menu in this version of Windows. The search box that appears on the Start menu provides much of the same functionality as the Run command. However, the Run command is still available if you prefer to use it. You can even add it to the Start menu for easier access.

(Continued on Page 6)

To add the Run command to the Start menu Click to open Taskbar and Start Menu Properties. Click the Start Menu tab, and then click Customize. In the list of Start menu options, select the Run command check box, and then click OK. The Run command will be displayed on the right side of the Start menu.

Tip: You can also access the Run command by pressing the Windows logo key +R. Check it out.”

Google Images

A while ago Google switched over to a different display method for their images. If you want to turn it off and go back to the original, here’s what you do: Scroll to the very bottom of your Google image search and click on Switch to basic version. If you want to go back to the regular way, simply scroll back to the bottom and click Switch to standard version.

System Tools

Just for a little review, there are a bunch of very useful programs in the System Tools folder. To get to them you access the System Tools by going to All Programs | Tools. When you open the folder in XP you can find the following programs:

- ▶ CHARACTER MAP, which allows you to copy and paste letters and symbols from other fonts into your document without switching fonts.
- ▶ DISK CLEANUP, which frees up space on your hard drive by eliminating unused and temporary files.
- ▶ DISK DEFRAGMENTER (Defrag), which speeds up your computer by reassigning or eliminating stray bits of data.
- ▶ FILES AND SETTINGS TRANSFER WIZARD, for transferring files and data from one drive to another.
- ▶ INTERNET EXPLORER (NO ADD-ONS), which allows you to access the internet without any Explorer add-ons interfering with it.
- ▶ SCHEDULED TASKS, which allows you to schedule a specific time to run updater, defrag, and other system programs.
- ▶ SYSTEM INFORMATION, which tells you the basic ram, processor, etc., of your system.
- ▶ SYSTEM RESTORE, which will restore your Windows system to an earlier time.

In Vista and Win 7 you can find all of the above and more. Check it out. all you would like to find in a template. But do not lose heart, once downloaded you can continue to tweak the form until it does what you want the way you want it.

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President's Column (cont'd)

It has been over six years since John St. Clair used his video camera to “tape” our meetings. Newer cameras do not use tape, but rather create a digital file. This has several benefits. There is no need to buy expensive tapes (as we did years ago). Those tapes had to be kept as a physical archive of the meetings, and someone had to be responsible to manage them. (Thanks to John for that!) If I recall correctly, not too many people took advantage of the DVDs that John produced.

Now cameras have removable digital media. This makes it easier and faster to off load the files from the camera onto a hard drive, and the media can be re-used. Editing the raw video is a simpler process, and it is no longer necessary to fast forward sequentially through a tape to get to a desired segment. The edited result can then be posted online and viewed remotely (in several formats.) There may be software that comes with the camera to accomplish this, or other video editing software may do the job. In any event, much as we did when we looked at LCD Projectors, we are moving ahead with looking at what is available, what features are desired, etc. So we are looking at someone who may be able to help Craig in the video department. We will discuss this project at our next meeting and I will share some reviews of “Video Cams” and video editing software. If you have some experience with either, please add your review – commentary!

At the September meeting, I will take a brief look at a few free applications that are available “In the cloud.” One is a floor planning application and another is a file sharing utility. At last month’s meeting, Kathy Farrell had an overview of how the FVPCA Web site is managed. Interesting to see how it all comes together. Thanks you Kathy! We also had a look at the 2011 FVPCA Member Survey. The 2011 – DOQ-3 was distributed and will still be available at the next meeting. We will also have a look at some sample ID Badges that Kathy will print up so we can decide on which format to go with.

Speaking of the survey, I have sent Kathy a copy, which will be posted on the website soon. If you are interested, have a look at the results on our web site. I will try to get some of the prior survey results up there as well. I was a bit cramped for time, so I did not have too many charts, but the numbers are there. Thanks for all of the respondents! (About 88% of our active members took the time to complete the survey.) It may be interesting to compare prior survey results and see any trends...

We have almost everyone’s photo, and will soon be moving ahead with the membership directory. If you have not had your photo taken, we need to either take it at a meeting, or you will need to send it in. We may have an old one on file, but if not, we will likely insert some caricature next to your information. Please send us a useable portrait!

Otherwise you may look something like this:



Hope to see you at our meeting on September 17th at South Point. As always, bring a friend!

Templates (From Page 6)

A template is a prepared form or pattern within various programs such as document and spreadsheet programs. They allow a user to develop a form that allows for easy entry and automatically formats and calculates data.

If you are a user of the Microsoft Office suite you are probably aware of them as Microsoft makes mention of templates and even has a folder of them within their suite.

But are you aware that there are literally hundreds located on the internet? But that is not all. There are even templates designed for the free suite put out by Open Office. Just Google open office templates and find body mass calculators, ovulation schedules time cards, shift scheduling and so much more. You do not have to reinvent the wheel every time you sit at your computer. One little caveat though, these are usually presented by users and sometimes do not cover all you would like to find in a template. But do not lose heart, once downloaded you can continue to tweak the form until it does what you want the way you want it.



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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:



www.fvpca.org

Courtesy of APCUG



This Month's Program will be:

Computing in the Cloud—Jon Jackman
"MegaUpload" and "Floorplanner"

A Review of What We need in a Video Camera

Nominating Committee to be appointed for 2012 elections.

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

September 17, 2011

**Location: South Point Center—Multi-Purpose Room
810 Preston Lane Oswego, Illinois**