



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

Volume 17 Number 8

Serving the Roanoke Valley

August 2003

Do Not Call Registry

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency has now created The National Do Not Call Registry.

The National Do Not Call Registry is open for business (July 2003), putting consumers in charge of the telemarketing calls they get at home, not for business phone lines at this time. The Federal Government created the national registry to make it easier and more efficient for consumers to stop getting telemarketing sales calls you don't want.

The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, will begin enforcing the National Do Not Call Registry on Oct. 1, 2003. That's when consumers who put their numbers on the registry by August 31, 2003 will notice a downturn in the number of telemarketing calls they get. Beginning in July 2003, you may register online at DONOTCALL.GOV or by phone, toll-free, by calling 1-888-382-1222, TTY 1-866-290-4236 from the number you wish to register.

If you register by phone, you must call from the number you want to register. If you register online, you must provide an email address for confirmation. You will have to open an email and click on a link in it within 72 hours for your online registration to be complete. The only identifying information that will be kept in the registry will be the phone number you register. You can expect fewer calls within three months of the date you sign up for the registry.

Placing your number on the National Do Not Call Registry will stop most telemarketing calls, but not all. Some

types of calls are exempt. Political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors, and the business of insurance, to the extent that it is regulated by state law, are permitted to call you. Please see one of the web sites below for complete details.

Your number will stay in the registry for five years, until it is disconnected, or until you delete it from the registry. After five years, you must renew your registration.

The law requires telemarketers to search the registry every three months and synchronize their call lists with the phone numbers that are on the registry. If you receive telemarketing calls after you have registered your telephone number and it has been in the registry for three months, you can file a complaint at DONOTCALL.GOV or by calling 1-888-382-1222, TTY 1-866-290-4236. You will have to know the company's name or phone number to file a "do not call" complaint. A telemarketer who disregards the National Do Not Call Registry could be fined up to \$11,000 for each call.

Please Visit this Web site for full details and to register your phone number.

<http://www.donotcall.gov>

For more information on the FTC do not call registry you can also visit <http://www.ftc.gov/donotcall>

For detailed information visit this site for government publications <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/mark/donotcall.htm>

Ernie Arnett

HEALTH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

By Edward G Allen, MD

When using a search engine, information may be overly simplified, incomplete and even inaccurate. You will have to look for signs of quality in a site.

High –quality internet sites have these features.

1. Unbiased-are they selling you something.
2. Are they recognized experts in a field.
3. Is funding and sponsorship shown?
4. Is the information timely and updated
5. Mission statement of the group
6. Author's names clearly shown and references and sources listed.
7. Experts have reviewed content for accuracy

These items may be difficult to verify at many sites, and one should try to find the same information on several sites. This can be time consuming and it is easier to let someone else pre-screen sites for you. The Medical Library Association has the "Top Ten" most useful sites for consumer health news.

1. Center for Dis. Control : <http://www.cdc.gov/>
2. Healthfinder: www.healthfinder.gov
3. Health Web: <http://healthweb.org>
4. HIV In site: <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu>
5. Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com>
6. Medem: <http://medem.com>

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The Next Meeting

Place: Arnold R. Burton
Technology Center
1760 Roanoke Boulevard
Salem, Va. 24153
Date: Sat., August 9, 2003
Time: 9:15 AM - 12:30 PM
Room 105

This newsletter is published by the RVPCC. Its contents are the views of individuals and not necessarily those of the membership.

Upcoming Presentations:

August 9

Special Meeting Location this month -

Meeting at WDBJ-7
for a tour of their new facility!

September 13

To be announced.
Elections are coming up!

From The President's Desk

by Tim Johnson
president@rvpcc.org



Ever feel like the rabbit in "Alice in Wonderland"? Well this month that's me! I must apologize for the newsletter being late. There were just too many irons in the fire and I ran behind on getting the newsletter to the publisher.

I hope you enjoyed the meeting at WDBJ7. I really wanted to attend but we had a nice trip to Charlottes-

ville to pick my daughter up from cheerleading camp. They had a blast and slept all the way home... and then some!

Remember we will be talking elections during the next few meetings. Be thinking about how you can step up and help in running the club. We look forward to hearing from you!

7. MEDLINEplus: <http://medlineplus.gov>
8. Natl. Women's Health Information Center <http://www.4women.gov>
9. NOAH: New York Online: <http://noah-health.org>
10. Oncolink: <http://oncolink.upenn.edu>

The Pew Internet and Life project has some statistics on internet use for health information.. 62% of internet users, or 73 million are elderly. 58% are sporadic users and do not usually get advice on how to search. 86% find what they are looking for and 61% feel that the internet has improved the way they get health care.

The top 1
Top interests are disease information, diet, and drugs. with increases seen for mental illness, and sensitive medical topics.

Rece, the complete 43 page report in pdf format heart with sites for heart disease, cancer, and diabe diabetes can be located at: <http://www.pewinternet.org> Click Reports and select Vital Decisions from the list.

RVPCC Officers

President:

Tim Johnson...562-0140
president@rvpcc.org

Vice President:

Ernest Arnett...540-483-4854
vicepresident@rvpcc.org

Secretary:

Margaret Hoag
secretary@rvpcc.org

Treasurer:

Azella Tingler...989-7808
treasurer@rvpcc.org

Public Relations:

Lionel Melancon
pr@rvpcc.org

Public Relations:

Bill Scott
pr1@rvpcc.org

Membership Chairman:

Del Kirschner...989-8913
membership@rvpcc.org

Roanoke County Schools:

Homer Duff...774-6862
rcschool@rvpcc.org

WebMaster:

John Yeatts
web@rvpcc.org

Email:

info@rvpcc.org
members@rvpcc.org
officers@rvpcc.org

Web:

<http://rvpcc.org>

Editor:

editor@rvpcc.org

Secretary's Report

By Margaret Hoag
secretary@rvpcc.org



July 12, 2003

Tim Johnson called the meeting to order.

Opening Remarks:

Tim took the newsletter to the mailer on Wednesday and they processed and mailed it the same day. Charlene Nance contacted Tim from Automated Mailing after reading our minutes about the club's displeasure with their service. They are doing a great job. They did go through a slight transition stage after personal changes but are back to their excellent service.

Tim stated that there are three meetings left until we form a nominating committee in October. So start thinking about how you will volunteer for an officer position.

Officer Update:

Secretary: Margaret Ann Hoag - Minutes approved as corrected.

Membership Chairperson: Del Kirschner - We had 3 guests today: Connie Kirk, Carol Hylton and Bill Farmer.

Treasurer: Azella Tingler - All bills are paid and we have sufficient money left in the account.

Public Relations: Lionel Melancon Program for July - Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern. Program for August - Tour of the new WDBJ TV Station.

Public Relations: Bill Scott - Corrected some information about copying music in his program last month.

Roanoke County Schools:

Homer Duff - The schedule for Roanoke County Schools Fall Classes will soon be out. Encourage family and friends to sign up.

Webmaster: John Yates - Absent.

Editor: Tim Johnson did the newsletter again this month.

Vice President: Ernie Arnett - The Christmas Dinner is all set, just a few details to work out. Ernie thanked those who submitted articles for the newsletter. Please indicate if you care if they are edited or not.

Program:

Steven Smiraldo, Image Specialist from Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern gave our program today. He showed us how he creates 3D images of buildings, bridges etc. using Cinema 4D software. He also showed animations, renderings, video capturing and editing. He brought calendars, for members, to show some of their work.

Door Prizes:

1. Jim Ruble - \$10.00 Certificate
2. Ernie Arnett - CD
3. John Cook - Paper
4. Ed Mulligan - Pass
5. Margaret Ann Hoag - Fancy Paper
6. Lionel Melancon - Portfolio
7. Lionel Melancon - CD
8. Earl Abbott - pen
9. Ira Chaffin - Floppy Disks
10. Carlton Crouner - CD

A Question and Answer Period followed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Ann Hoag
Secretary

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genetic algorithm can be written telling a computer program what it is wanted. The program now in use could do the job for him in short order.

The article describes an animated stick figure which tries to walk, falls on it's back and flails it's legs helplessly. Then it appears at the left of the screen and takes a few baby steps, and falls again. Appearing once again learn to raise it's knees and takes a few confident steps but once again falls over on its's side. After trying over and over, the figure eventually strides off the screen as though its motion had been captured from videos of a human walking. The figure was not taught to walk by an off screen animator, but evolved the capacity to walk on its own.

Thanks to a small miracle of computer programming, and an algorithm telling the program what was wanted of the stick figure, it learned as we all do, by trial and error. Standing, falling and trying again eventually discarding the parts of the last effort which didn't work, and might have hurt, and trying again until all the bad tries were discarded and the good efforts kept, the stick figure "learned" to walk because it was the correct solution to what was asked of it.

According to the article, if the entire McMaster-Carr industrial supply catalogue of 400,000 items; screws, bolts, hinges, and everything else imaginable were put into the gene-pool, somewhere in that mix is a machine. Simulated evolution, using an algorithm to direct it, may be the fastest way to design, or render. For more detail, see the August issue of Discover magazine. It'll probably appear next month on their web site: <www.Discover.com> as the articles are usually a month behind the magazine release.



ROANOKE VALLEY
PERSONAL COMPUTER CLUB

RVPCC
P.O. Box 322
Salem, Va. 24153

Web: <http://rvpcc.org>
Email: info@rvpcc.org

To:

Who Remembers?

By
Lionel Melançon

This may be a little ole-time for some of you or perhaps for one reason or another, especially if you were a girl in those days, you may not have experienced the macho Wyatt Earp feeling some of us had, walking around campus with our leather holstered Keuffel and Esser log-log Decitrig slide rule strapped to our sides. I did, and now have mine in a shadow box frame above my PC, reminding me of times gone by.

Before the Personal Computer, or for that matter before computers, as we know them today—as far back as 1630 the slide rule was the preferred method of doing complicated calculations. Carpenters, navigators, merchants, artillerymen and tax assessors came to rely on specialized slide rules. How much gunpowder would it take to fire a 12 pound ball 1,200 feet. For every calculation there was a slide rule that could do the job. They helped create the steam engine. Enrico Fermi used his to calculate exactly how far to withdraw a cadmium control rod from a graphite and uranium pile to control a nuclear chain reaction in 1942. Moments after his final calculation, he put away his trusty slide rule, I assume he was beyond the stage of wearing a holster, smiled and demonstrated a self-sustaining nuclear reaction.

Fermi didn't live long enough to see the \$395.00 Hewlett-Packard HP-35 electronic pocket calculator which spelled doom for the old faithful slide rule. After all, though some could make calculations out to five decimal places, the only trouble was they couldn't tell you where the decimal place was supposed to be—you had to figure that one out for yourself.

Those of us who had one, might remember fondly the finely cut markings, the silky feel of the slide, the shiny tiny screws holding it together, no hard drive to crash, no diode to burn out, no chipset to go bad, or power supply to start humming—just draw, that baby from it's leather holster and you were ready to design bridges, or atomic bombs.

Extracted from "Darwin in a Box"

by
Lionel Melançon

"A genetic algorithm can make a computer genuinely creative, capable of imaginative leaps and subtle connections which would elude the minds of many engineers." Now that's a pretty profound statement. But it's happening. Take Steve Smirolido's July demonstration of how to render a building. It took months of patient work to accomplish some of his renderings. According to the August issue of Discover maga-

zine, a new way has been developed. Using the elements which he used in his program—bricks, colors, textures, tile, etc., they could be used as genetic elements in a new program, which according to the article, can reason and make choices. A

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<http://rvpcc.org>

Email:

info@rvpcc.org

The RVPCC Newsletter
SOFTTALK is produced with:



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