



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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HAPPY EASTER

Oh, NOOOOO!

(Ed note: Author's name not used to protect the guilty)
Did you every have an OH NO moment? I did, and it was painful. Recently a message popped up on my screen suggesting that I upgrade my Real Player 10 to Real Player 11. OK, no problem, I did it. Bad decision.

Near the end of the download, progress slowed and then stopped. The dreaded PC lockup. After a long wait, I rebooted. Almost nothing worked anymore. Couldn't go on-line. Couldn't remove Real Player 11. Couldn't run anything expect some simple games. Using a restore point didn't help. Then I realized that I hadn't properly backed up my data and photos for a year. They'd be gone if I had to wipe C: and reload. That was an OH NO moment.



I carried the PC into the Geek Squad at Best Buy – my machine wouldn't even run their diagnostics! I was advised to try restoring XP -- if that didn't work, to wipe C: and reload from scratch.

To make a long painful story short, restoring XP worked and all my data was still available, but most applications wouldn't work. The first thing I did was to make those backups. Then I had to spend many hours downloading 79 updates to XP, and reinstalling and updating most of my applications. I did not update Real Player 10! I've learned an important backup lesson.

NEXT MEETING

April 14
TOPIC:

Buying and Selling
On e-Bay
By
Libby Chittum

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Help your newsletter

You are invited to share favorite websites, reviews of software or just general computer experiences. Send your article or notes to editor@rvpcc.org.



Secretary's Report

Saturday, March 10, 2007

The March meeting of the RVPCC was opened by Earl Abbott, President, at 9:15 a.m. He welcomed all members. He also asked RVPCC members if they wanted to continue Door Prizes or not. Please let him know.

OFFICERS REPORTS

Secretary: Margaret Ann Hoag, secretary, stated that the minutes of the last meeting were published in the last newsletter.

Treasurer: Helen Trenor, treasurer, gave the treasury balance and said that the club is solvent.

Public Relations: John Yeatts and Bill Scott announced the programs for the next few meetings: April - Buying and selling on E-Bay, May - A program on Virtual Reality, June - Bill Scott will talk on robots. They would like ideas for future programs. Ernie Arnett gave a demonstration on how to use a Thumb Drive and answered questions.

It was mentioned that most of the new computers will not have a Floppy Drive. If you plan on buying one, it probably would be best if you bought a portable one. Then it could be used at different sites.

PROGRAM: Steve Hartman of

Lee Hartman & Sons gave us a very comprehensive program on HDTV. He brought a 46" Sharp LCD HDTV with 1080 pixels and showed us the difference between a standard TV and an HDTV. He also showed us how far electronic devices had come, bringing equipment from years gone by and then showing their equivalent today. He answered many questions. He stated that Lee Hartman & Sons would have a large booth at the Home Show at the Salem Civic Center, March 23, 24, and 25 if anyone had further questions.

A Q&A PERIOD followed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Margaret Ann Hoag Secretary



We Meet the 2nd Saturday of the Month

Next Meeting
April 14, 2007

Place: Arnold R. Burton
Technology Center, Room
105, 1760 Roanoke
Boulevard, Salem, Va. 24153
Time: 9:15 a.m. - noon

*This newsletter is
published by the RVPCC.*

PREZ' NOTES

I had mentioned during our last meeting that I wanted to reduce our dues. That was before we received an email informing us that our web hosting was no longer free, and could be continued if we paid for it. I will put my desire to reduce dues on "hold", and will revisit the idea if we can increase the number of dues-paying-members while controlling costs. My idea was to reduce dues from \$30 to \$25 per year. If we did reduce dues, the members who had paid their \$30 would get a \$5 refund.

I believe our officers are doing a great job this year, everyone is doing his (or her) job well. We are getting the programs that members have requested. We will try to get Microsoft back for a program if we double our membership. Let's tell others about our club, and invite them to our meetings. I hope to see you at the meeting.

Earl Abbott

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What Needs to be Backed Up?

Backups are as simple as copying your vital files to anywhere other than C:. You can simply copy the files manually or you can use a backup program like the one furnished with Windows.

The tougher question is: Which files do you really need to back up? First, back up files that are both important and irreplaceable such as photos, financial records, and documents. Next, consider e-mails, addresses, and favorites (bookmarks). Finally, you may also want to include items that are not vital such as games scores. Every user will have his or her own ranking of importance.

There is no need to back up Windows or any other software that can be reloaded from the original discs.

Following is a list of file types that Kim Komando recently recommended backing up:

1. Photos, music and home video
2. Financial statements
3. Personal writing and art
4. E-mail, contact list and calendar
5. Web browser bookmarks (or Favorites)

She wrote that backing up My Documents should cover most of your backup needs. The My Documents folder contains My

Backup Media

What can we back up our data onto? There are several choices, depending on the size of your data and the size of your wallet.

The primary question is how much backup space do you need. If you have just data without photos or video, you may not have a lot to back up. Even after years of accumulating files, you probably have less than 4 gigabytes to back up.

However, get a digital camera and you'll find that your photographs add up fast. Multiply the average size of your photos by the number of photos you want to store. That will be roughly a gigabyte per 400 pictures. Double this for future photos. Double it again for making additional copies of the photos if you enhance them.

Videos are space hogs. Figure about 17 gigabytes per hour of tape. Double this for future videos. Double it again if you edit video into a finished presentation since you will create duplicate files during editing.

Here are some choices of media to used for backup:

Pictures and My Videos folders. Also, most people also keep their written documents in My Documents.

Floppy: The floppy is obsolete. It only stores only 1.4 megabytes, not enough for even one medium-resolution photograph. Still OK for individual items, however. A floppy will hold many pages of Word or Excel documents. About 42 cents each.

CD: At 700 megabytes each, CDs may be becoming obsolete also. CD-Rs (write once) are about 38 cents each; CD-RWs (write many times) are about \$1.29. If you need a CD drive, get a DVD drive instead since it will burn and read both CDs and DVDs. There is some concern about long-term storage – the life of a home-recorded CD may be only two years or so.

DVD: One DVD holds 4.7 gigabytes. A DVD drive will burn and read CDs and well as DVDs. Write-once DVDs are about 60 cents each; write-many-times DVDs are about \$1.75. A DVD internal drive is well under \$100. Sony drives, and probably other makes, will burn both + and – DVDs. A drive is fairly easy to install if there is a space in your case for it. There is some concern about long-term storage – the life of a home-recorded DVD may be only two years or so. (See Media on page 4)

**Meeting space provided
by Roanoke County
Schools**

(**Media** from page 3)

Flash drive: Capacity has been low but is increasing rapidly. Four gigabytes is the largest size commonly offered today – they go for as low as \$54. An 8 gig flash drive is available for about \$125. With XP or Vista, a flash drive installs itself. Win 98 requires a driver to be downloaded. Expensive for long-term storage. Believed to have a long life. No installation. Can move from PC to PC.

Internal hard drive: A good solution is a second internal hard drive (internal meaning inside the PC). Do-it-yourself installation is fairly easy if there is a space in your case for it. Prices are dropping and sizes are increasing daily. A 160 GB hard drive is under \$100. However, a drive with an ATA interface will be higher – your owner’s manual should tell you which interface your PC needs. Probably the easiest option to use. Good long-term reliability.

External hard drive: Probably the best solution today is an external hard drive. It sits on a shelf and a cable plugs into a USB 2.0 port. With XP or Vista, it installs itself. Win 98 requires a driver to be downloaded. Speed is high, but lower than the internal hard drive. On April 1, Best Buy advertised a 250 GB external hard drive for \$99.99. Almost as easy to use as an internal drive. Good long-term reliability. No installation. Can

move from PC to PC.

On-line storage: Search Google for “backup storage” to get information and prices. Transfer times depend on your Internet speed – large uploads can take a long time. One service, www.iBackup.com, says that your PC will think that their on-line storage is an additional hard drive. They advertise \$9.95 per month for 5 GB. A year’s rental can buy a hard drive. Long-term reliability depends on the provider staying in business.

The prices mentioned above are from a quick look at websites like Best Buy and Staples. Prices vary wildly – watch for sales.



USB Thingys

So what is the proper name for those little USB thingys? Thumb drives? Jump drives? Travel drives? Micro vaults? What is a good generic term? One enthusiastic user has a good solution – she calls them “Wonder Sticks.”

Father – Grandfather Backups

Week 1: Make your backup.

Week 2: Make another backup on week 2, but don’t erase week 1. Now you will have a current backup (father) plus the week-old backup (grandfather).

Week 3: Erase week 1 and use that media or space to make a new backup on week 3. Again you will have a current backup plus a week-old backup. The newly made week 3 is now the father and week 2 slips to grandfather.

Week 4: Continue the pattern. Erase week 2 and make a new backup on week 4. Again you will have a current backup plus a week-old backup

If you erase your backup and then make a new backup each week, you could be out of luck. Suppose something happens to your PC after you erase the old backup and before you can record a new one.

Paranoid? Overcautious? No way! You have to remember that PCs are evil beings that are constantly watching you and waiting for the worst possible moment to pounce and create a problem.

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