This Month

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Windows 7 is Here! Part II

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Getting Windows 7

There will be both upgrade and full editions of Windows 7. The version that will be available for U.S. use is Windows 7 Home Premium. There will be no "Basic" version of Windows 7 as there was for Vista. The upgrade version will cost about $120 and the full version will cost about $200. Most people will be obtaining the upgrade version, if bought in a store. If you buy a new computer between now and October 22, you receive a voucher from the manufacturer for a free upgrade to Windows 7 when it is available. You will have to install the upgrade yourself or obtain assistance. If you buy a new computer after October 22, your new computer will come with Windows 7 Home Premium already installed. It pays to wait if you can.

Upgrading from Windows Vista

If you are a Windows Vista user now and are contemplating upgrading to Windows 7 (I do recommend it), you should download and run the Microsoft Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor (Beta) utility. It will tell you if your computer hardware meets the minimum requirements for running Windows 7 and will identify anything that needs to be uninstalled or upgraded before the upgrade. It is available for download at Web address: tinyurl.com/mnmj8u. The Advisor is simple to use and will give you a printed report. Be aware you must have a DVD drive on your computer and not just a CD drive to install the upgrade. Windows 7 only comes on DVD discs.

Upgrading from Windows XP

If you are a Window XP user, you must now have a "high-end" computer to meet the minimum hardware requirements for Windows 7. If you bought an "inexpensive" XP computer originally, forget about upgrading. If you do upgrade you will have to do a "clean" installation where all your existing files are erased before installation. You will need to back-up all your data files

(Continued from page 1)

prior to starting and reinstall all your applications afterward. All your peripherals (printer, scanner, etc.) will require new "driver" software, if they are not too old. The windows 7 disc comes with many drivers on it. Usually, a new computer is by far the best route for XP users.

Will I have trouble learning to use Windows 7?
If you are a Vista user now, you should catch on to Windows 7 easily. They look very similar. There are some new features, which I will start covering in the next article. If you are a Windows XP user and buy a new Windows 7 computer, you will notice some differences on the Start menu and when you view and work in folder windows. However, Windows is still Windows and most things work essentially the same.

Editor:
I recently upgraded a HP Notebook with Vista Home Premium installed to Windows 7 Home Premium.

The installation took almost 4 hours, and there were a few minor glitches During the install, the program decided that it did not like having my Anti-virus program (Trend Micro) installed (even though it was turned off).which I unistalled. However, once Win7 had complete its upgrade, I reinstalled Trend Micro without any problems.

I did make a full backup of all of the files on my notebook from the Vista era, just in case...but luckily did not need them.

I then tried to upgrade a Win XP desktop computer to Win7. Since the upgrade from XP to 7 is considered a complete new install, I made sure to once again make a full back up of all files on my XP computer. I then ran all of the compatibility checks recommended by the Win7 install package. There were several minor applications that were rejected by Win7, and an indication that I did not have enough free space on the C: partition. (The install required about 13 Gb of free space during the install process).

Most computers come right-out-of-the-box with one

big C: partition on the hard-drive, and a smaller "restore" partition to return your computer to its original state it crashes. I re-partition my hard drive into at least 3 partitions: C: partition of the Operating System; D: Partition for my Data; and E: for my various Applications. Using Acronis Disk Director Suite 10, I revised the sizes of the various partitions to provide more for the install C: Partition.

Having run all of the suggested computer checks and compatibility checks and installed programs revisions, I began the WinXP to Win7 install. After several hours of the processing the install, the program proceeded to tell me that the video card (actually the Video system on the motherboard) was not up to Win7 standards and would have to be upgraded. The video on the monitor was skewed and erratic. The computer being upgraded was purchased in 2004 or 2005, and has decent specs, but would probably not be suitable 3rd party video card.

I then decided that the best thing to do was to uninstall Win7 and revert back to WinXP. I was unable to find an easy way to revert back to XP, so I decided to bite the bullet and perform a restore using the files on the hard drive. Of course, this would return the computer back to its original out of the box state. I realized that this would require that I reinstall of most, if not all, of my applications. This was not a big problem because, as you remember, I had made a complete backup of all files on my computer BEFORE attempting the upgrade. Yes, it took me almost a whole day to get my "old" WinXP computer back to its previous hard-working state.

In retrospect, unless your XP based computer is only a few years old, then I would agree with the suggestion to purchase a new computer with Win7 installed.

I have only been using Win7 on the notebook for a few days, and have only begun to learn its many features. It seamlessly connected to my wireless home LAN . While I had no problems with Vista, I feel that Win7 is more user friendly. Just be careful about what systems to upgrade...

Power to the Pixels!

by Dave Christenson,
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I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high megapixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can enlarge it, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. This is called noise. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itsy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or e-mail them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

Dufferdom
Tales from the Kingdom of the Ordinary User
Of Kicks and Kudos
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There come times in users' lives when they want to let some experiences out to be shared with others more–or less–fortunate. The intent would be to shepherd toward or warn against having similar experiences. Sort of like a personal *Consumer Reports*. It may be that other users have similar feelings of wanting to share desires, expectations, and outcomes, to share them here for the benefit of other CCS members.

If so, it may be that I can persuade the editors of Hard-Copy to collect and publish honest accounts from time to time, accounts with sufficient detail to be verified. If you have joyful or woeful experiences, not opinions, to pass along here, send e-mail accounts to Beata Kernan at admin1@ccs.or for her to transmit to me. Be sure to start the Subject line with "OKK**"**, from the title above. Remember that she is a sensitive lady of fine breeding who would be put off by raucous or violent comment.

Hail to Nuance, makers of *OmniScan*
That's hall as in hailstorms or hail stones. Maybe kick some gravel their way too. I have recently come from repeated attempts to exercise my gullibility. I am mature enough to recall when optical character recognition was a wonder to behold. One could scan a document–even with an early scanner—and pass the image to one of several OCR programs of the era, each advertising an accuracy rate above 85%. Rates rose and OCR programs dwindled. *OmniScan* swallowed its major competitor becoming pre-eminent, outstanding in the field. (Gets wet when it rains.)

It is now in Version 17, claiming another step, just short of perfection and ever more options in access and usage. I was hooked again, hoping this upgrade would solve the non-workability problems of my current version. Though many sources are now digital, there are still times when it would be useful to convert text and graphics on paper to digital media. So I tried to order it, first by e-,mail, then by phone.

My e-mail responses to their special offer were stymied at the final ordering stage by their repeated untrue judgements of false information from me. Repeated attempts to order by phone reached only the famous "All of our representatives are busy..." routine. Exactly the same for Ordering, Customer Service, and Support. Then at the end of their semi-hidden Contact Us option, their Submit command failed to send. I caught on. **I** was to submit to their impenetrability, unavailable.

I recalled having similar problems seeking their Support for my current version, then giving up. I'd surmise that their staff, if any, is not available to the public (maybe soggy from the rain). Their strengths, if any, must lie elsewhere, probably in advertising. The phrase, "A plague upon them" comes to my mind.

A Couple kudos to Epson for their Stylus CX7000F
I got this printer-copier-scanner-fax machine to save footprint space and on the sincere, personal recommendation of a salesman at Micro Center, who had recently bought his own and was happy with it. It worked well and reliably for some months, sipping its costly ink cartridges like martinis. It was clearly designed for younger eyes, able to catch its status messages zipping across its narrow display. Older eyes were consigned to trek through its ample manual. Finally it developed misfeeds and balky behavior, neither covered in the manual nor explainable by their ever-helpful support team, located offshore in the Philippines. On

that final, clear call, clear over to Manila, when the young tech rep was no longer able to find assistance in Epsom's extensive knowledge base, he set in motion a process which very soon delivered a new CX7000F with instructions on returning the faulty one—all for free. A pleasant surprise. I credit Epson for a pretty good machine and wonderful tech support.

Kudos to Canon for their MX850 All-in-One
Canon seems to do well across the board in the ratings games. It's a dependable choice. My MX850 printer-copier-scanner-fax machine does it all, well, and fast. It has two paper magazines: the usual one angled in back and a second horizontal holder secreted beneath, which can handle two-sided printing. Its 1.5 x 2 inch display is stable, readable, and presents extensive options and instructions so one needs less to read its online manual.

The Canon has five ink cartridges, the usual three colors and a black, all rather small, plus one larger black since most of users' printing is black. Initial hooking up is well-explained and Canon uses instruction sets which are already provided in Windows XP and probably in Vista, for those who tread there; they are also supplied for other operating systems, including Apple's, in a furnished CD.

And then one day, one dreary day as I was struggling with the subtle obscurities of sending faxes with *WinFax Pro* [and I drop a kick their way too, for non-ease of use], I resumed an aborted attempt to send a test fax and found I was then treading upon an ongoing voice call from elsewhere in the house, a threat to domestic bliss. In panic, my fingers wandered idly over the groups of keys, much as in Sir Arthur Sullivan's immortal song, "The Lost Chord". Nothing stopped the beeping nor would turn it off. But that was it: I pulled the last cord.

Then my marvelous MX850 misbehaved. After a series of off-ons, it settled into a state of reluctant, initially cooperative starts, always turning in less than a minute from any other mode

– printer, copier, scanner – into the fax mode, then stalled after a jump and a hiccup. I tried to live with if for awhile by doing starts and quick printing or copying. Unaware that the 1-year warranty was approaching, then at, expiration, I gave up and called Canon.

The live tech support rep, ever gracious, speaking perfect English, and located in a large support facility in Virginia, diagnosed the problem as corrupted memory in the MX850, which was beyond telephonic repair. So he immediately generated an express shipment, free both directions, of an exchange replacement. Upon its arrival, another tech support rep exercised monumental patience and walked me through reinstallation of the machine and its accessories – and as I crawled along the floor, tracing cables and checking proper connections.

My MX850 is once again a marvelous all-in-one, though it still has an appetite for new ink cartridges and displays gentle reminders on my monitor of their current status as their need develops. One of the English definitions of (small "c") "canon" is an accepted principle or rule. From my experience and for me, the capitalized term carries the reputation of highly rated products backed by enviably impressive support. Though it sounds like a commercial, to me, Canon rules. As does the customer. So it should be.

David Uffer is a long standing CCS member with decades of fringe contact with computers, closer as they got smaller. From time to time he recounts his PC experiences here. He occasionally attends CCS meetings when he can, admiring their content and availability. He is shy about e-mail but can be reached indirectly via Beata Kernan at admin1@ccs.org, using "Dufferdom" in the Subject line. ∎
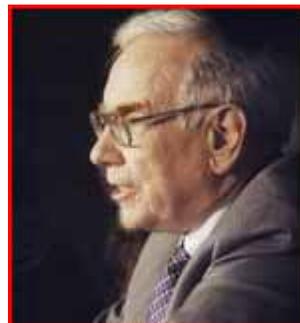
How to Forward Emails Appropriately
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A computer expert received the following directly from a system administrator for a corporate system. It is an excellent message that ABSOLUTELY applies to ALL of us who send emails. Please read the short letter below, even if you're sure you already follow the proper procedures.

Do you really know how to forward emails? 50% of us do, 50% DO NOT.

Do you wonder why you get viruses or junk mail? Every time you forward an email there is information left over from the people who got the message before you, namely their email addresses& names. As the messages get forwarded along, the list of addresses builds, and builds, and builds, and all it takes is for some poor sap to get a virus, and his or her computer can send that virus to every email address that has come across his computer. Or, someone can take all of those addresses and sell them or send junk
mail to them in the hopes that you will go to the site and he will make five cents for each hit. That's right, all of that inconvenience over a nickel!

How do you stop it? Here are several easy steps:

(1) You MUST click the "Forward: button first and then you have the full editing capabilities against the body and headers of the message. When you forward an email, DELETE all the other addresses that appear in the body of the message (at the top). That's right, DELETE them. Highlight them and delete them, backspace them, cut them, whatever it is you know how to do. It only takes a second.

(2) Whenever you send an email to more than one person, do NOT use the To: or CC: fields for adding email addresses. Always use the BCC: (blind carbon copy) field for listing the email addresses. This is the way the people you send to will only see their own email address. If you don't see your BCC: option, click on where it says To: and your address will appear. Highlight the address

and choose BCC: and that's it, it's that easy. When you send to BCC: your message will automatically say "Undisclosed Recipients" in the TO: field of the people who receive it.

(3) Remove and "FW:" in the subject line. You can rename the subject if you wish or even fix spelling.

(4) ALWAYS hit your Forward button from the actual email you are reading. Ever get those emails that you have to open 10 pages to read the one page with the information on it? By Forwarding from the actual page you wish someone to view, you stop them from having to open many emails just to see what you sent.

(5) Have you ever gotten an email that is a petition? It states a position and asks you to add your name and address and to forward it to 10 or 15 people or your entire address book. The email can be forwarded on and on and can collect thousands of names and addresses.

FACT: The completed petition is actually worth a couple of bucks to a professional spammer because of the wealth of valid names and email addresses contained therein.
If you want to support the petition, send it as your own personal letter to the intended recipient. Your position may carry more weight as a personal letter than a laundry list
of names and email addresses on a petition. (Actually, if you think about it, who's supposed to send the petition in to whatever cause it supports? And don't believe the ones that say that the email is being traced, it just ain't so!)

(6) One of the main ones I dislike is the one that says something like, "Send this email to 10 people and you'll see something great run across your screen." Or, sometimes they'll tease you by saying something really cute will happen. IT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!!! (Trust me, I'm still seeing some of the same ones that I waited on 10 years ago!) I don't let the bad luck ones scare me either, they get trashed. (Could that be why I haven't won the lottery??)

(7) Before you forward an Amber Alert, or a Virus alert, or some of the other ones floating around nowadays, check them out before you forward them. Most of them are junk mail that's been circling the net for YEARS! Just about everything you receive in an email that is in question can be checked out at Snopes. Just go to http://www.snopes.com

CLUB SUPPORTERS

November 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 NOPCC GENERAL MTG 6:30 pm	5	6	7
8	9	10 Programmer's SIG 6:30 pm	11 New/ Intermediate Users SIG Mtg 6:10 pm	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

and Students (under 21) , $20/yr. Meetings are held at 6:30 on the 1st Wednesday of each month at J.D. Meisler Jr. High School on Cleary Avenue in Metairie, Louisiana.

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Internet	Ray Paternostro	internet-m@nopc.org	737-9099
New/Intermediate Users	Tom Ford	new-user@nopc.org	985-643-3172

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours		887-5746
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.		*www.nopc.org*