

McHenry County Computer Club

Users Group for PC-Compatible Systems



August 2011

Volume 28 No. 8

The August 2011 meeting of the McHenry County Computer Club is August 13, at the Salvation Army Building, 290 W. Crystal Lake Ave., in Crystal Lake.

Our membership is \$26.00 a year. NOTE: This fee offsets the running of the club; membership benefits include help with computer problems. Please pay Lyle Giese, our treasurer, or the designated Board Member in his absence.

Meeting Agenda

- Introductions & Reports
- Demo: Excel Q&A - Jack Luff
- Break
- Q & A

The Newsletter is published monthly by McHenry County Computer Club, online.

Editor-in-Chief: Lucë York ; Webmaster: Cindi Carrigan

Direct technical questions to MC3 at: info@Mc3ComputerClub.org

MC3 website: <http://www.mc3computerclub.org/>

upcoming demos

- August - Excel Q&A - Jack Luff
- September - Anniversary Part ; "Odd Ball Internet" - Lyle Giese
- October - TBA - Bob Wagner
- November - Email Roundtable Discussion
- December - Word - Lucë York

MC³ OFFICIALS

President : Larry Freeman lpfreeman@hotmail.com
Vice President : Bob Wagner rmwagner@ameritech.net
Secretary : Shirley Teetsov
Treasurer: Lyle Giese Lyle@lcrcomputer.com
Database Manager : Dan Weise
Newsletter Editor : Lucë York info@Mc3ComputerClub.org (for articles & suggestions ONLY)
Past President : John Katkus
Webmaster: Cindi Carrigan
Board Members : Jack Luff ; Dave Lutes ; Jim Bierle ; Bruce Eckersberg ; Lem Erita

Questions & Answers

Q: In Vista or Win7, a file extension of .xyz does not exist. How do I add that to the default program, associate menu?

A: From Control Panel, Folder Options, View tab. Uncheck Hide extensions for known file types. Find or create a file with a file name that uses the extension you want to create.

Create a test.xyz or find a *.xyz file. Right click on this file and select properties.

In the properties window, next to Open With, click on the Change.. button. When you select the proper program and save/apply that choice, that file extension is now added to the Default Programs -> Associate window.

The downside is there is no easy way to delete something from that list. It would probably take registry surgery to do that. But the goal is to add an extension there, and this works. But then I doubt that you will really need to remove an extension from that list.

Q: If you have an old OS, do you still need to click on the update popup box?

A: Yes. Once in a while it would be useful to do that. But you do not need to do it often. I am thinking on the order of once every few months. WinXP is still getting plenty of updates, but I think Win2000 is EOL'ed and does not get any more updates.

Q: I have a Speedstream DSL modem. It does not give me a steady green DSL light. It just flashes.

A: That means it cannot detect a good DSL signal. I would do the following:

Try another DSL modem if you have one handy. This modem may be bad. Take the modem out to the phone line access box on the outside of your house and plug it directly into the phone line that should have the DSL signal on it (you may need a long power extension cord!) If it works out there, there is probably a problem with the wiring inside your house. If it does not work out there, either the modem is bad or the DSL signal is missing from the phone company.

As we discussed at the meeting, older houses and houses that had very cheap wire installed for the phone lines may not be using twisted pair cable, or the installers did not pair up the wires correctly. If the cable is 4 wires, colored red, green, yellow and black, that is NOT twisted pair cable and is not usable for DSL signals. Even twisted pair cable, if miswired in the jacks, can cause the DSL signal not to work inside the house.

Q: When selling/giving a 4-year-old laptop to a friend, what is the best way to clear off personal data, programs/applications, etc?

A: Just trying to uninstall programs and erase data is definitely not good enough. There is way too much info hidden in .ini files and in the Windows Registry. If the other person is friendly and trustworthy, I would consider using the factory disks to format and take the machine back to factory condition and apply all Windows updates.

If you are giving or donating to an un-trusted person or to a charitable organization, I would find a secure format utility on the Internet. Do a secure format and then re-install the factory disks to the machine.

Q: When buying a new laptop, what is more important: Processing speed/cpu ; Amount of ram ; other?

A: You first need to analyze how you are going to use the laptop. Is weight important? Is battery life important? Is the size of the screen important? Do I need a wide format with a keyboard with a full size number pad on it?

CPU: Most users don't need all the horse power they buy. Unless you are going to be editing photos or movies, I don't care too much about the CPU. But the bigger, faster the CPU, the more power it uses and that is important in terms of battery life on the unit.

Keyboard: Many of the wide format laptops now have a full numeric keypad in the keyboard. Is that something you use or is it something you don't care about? Or would you rather have a smaller unit to carry around?

Ram Memory: 4g is the absolute minimum I would equip a machine today - more if you are going to work with large or graphic files a lot.

Hard drive: Most machines have more hard drive space than you really need. I would look at the solid state *vs.* conventional hard drives. The SSD (solid state hard drives) will use a lot less power and give you more battery time. Forget about 'limited write cycles' on SSDs. SSDs are very reliable and have built-in error correction and will probably outlast conventional hard drives and are not vulnerable to breakage when dropped as a conventional HD is when it's spinning. But SSDs tend to be smaller and more expensive than conventional HD and that is your tradeoff.

Battery life: Depending on how you utilize the laptop, you may or may not care. If long battery life is important, check if you can get an extended/bigger battery.

Warranty: check out extended warranty for accidental damage coverage and what exclusions may apply. Extended warranties without accidental are not worth considering, in my opinion.

Q: I have a PC with a couple of hard drives on it, and each HD has windows installing on it. How can I best reclaim that space without reformatting or losing the other files?

A: My recommendation is: don't try. It's way too hard to figure out what you can delete or not delete. I would look for the files you need to keep and back them up. Then format the hard drive and put those files back on the second hard drive.

In Vista or Win7 to format a hard drive, Control Panel, Administrative Tools, Computer Management, Disk management. You will then be at a GUI that will show each physical hard drive and the partitions on them.

Each Physical HD will be one line in the bottom right quadrant of the screen with different sections of each partition on the physical HD. You can right click on any partition except the boot partition and reformat from this GUI.

Take your time and make sure you format the right partition! It's not easy to undo a format.

Freeware

by Al Schrader

Bloglines Reader

Sign up here:

<http://www.bloglines.com/>

This month's column is not going to be on freeware, but I'm writing about a web site where freeware, among other items, are available and it's free to join.

Bloglines is the fastest way to find and track your favorite websites and blogs in real-time. Easily customize your dashboard with multiple view options, drag and drop organization, and exclusive widgets. Get the latest news on all your interests and trending topics exactly the way you want it. I currently have 31 feeds set up on mine, which I set up so I can thumb thru the latest articles. Each includes a picture and a short paragraph, so if I want more information, all I do is click on it and up comes the full item. Think of this as a way to visit, in my case, 31 web sites all in the same place without all the extra baggage normally associated. Bloglines makes it easy to join, setup, and view any of the 7,000 available feeds that are of interest to you. I have used this for many years and give this a thumbs up.

Note About Goggle Chrome

I came across a new feature in Google's Chrome browser, "print preview". The print feature now allows you to preview the page before the actual printing in the wrench menu. To activate this feature you must enable the feature. In the Chrome URL address bar type about:flags this will lead you to list of available experiments. Scroll down the list until you see the option "Print Preview". Click the Enable link.

Then, when you print using the wrench menu, a preview copy will open for you to review.

Jim Beierle

New Computer Recycling Location

The new McHenry Goodwill store is now providing free computer and computer accessory recycling. Dell is sponsoring this program.

I dropped off my first item to the Goodwill PC recycling center: a small printer that stopped working years ago. The McHenry Goodwill store has separate doors for donating items. A young man came out to greet me and asked me whether the printer works. I said "no," that it was a candidate for the PC recycling center. I didn't get to look at the recycling center (pile), as he just walked away with the item.

Jim Beierle
