

McHenry County Computer Club

USERS GROUP FOR PC-COMPATIBLE SYSTEMS



JULY 2008
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The July 2008 meeting of the McHenry County Computer Club is July 12, at the Salvation Army Building, 290 W. Crystal Lake Ave., in Crystal Lake. Enter the building at the parking level double door under the awning. The treasurer will be there by 8:30 AM for Club financial transactions.

Membership

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.

Meetings : 2nd Saturday of the month.

N.B.: The Salvation Army has asked us not park in front of the dumpsters or in other designated spaces. Your vehicle is subject to towing if it is not parked in the appropriate spaces.

Meeting Agenda

09:00 General Business Meeting

09:15 Demo: Graphics: [Demonstration of editing photos for e-mail, web site and printing, using Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.](#) - Cindi

10:00 Break

10:15 Q&A

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

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Direct inquiries, comments, articles to the Editor to Lucë at info@Mc3ComputerClub.org

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

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

UPCOMING DEMOS

July - Graphics - Cindi ; short demo online security by LITH Bank of America

August - Maintenance - Lyle

September - Overview of Vista - Jim Bierle; Helicopter flying - John Katkus

October - Routers - Lyle

November - Excel - Jack

NOTE: Excel is scheduled for November partly as a result of Excel's being the top area of interest in our recent survey on demos. This survey did identify a number of topic areas within Excel, but we have had demos in most of these areas over the past several meetings. **So I would like some further feedback on what to cover in November.** Please stop by the Raffle Table and let me know of any thoughts you have. - Jack

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Al Davidson ; Dan Weise ; Bruce Eckersberg

Web Sites from the Flash Drive Programs Demo

The demo was on programs that can be run from a flash drive, independent of the computer to which it is attached. The first part of the demo covered the U3 approach to flash drive programs. This addressed the system and programs included on many SanDisk flash drives and the additional programs that can be found on the U3 web site. Some of these programs are available for free and some at an extra cost.

One or more “suites” or packages of free programs can be found at the following web sites. Most of these sites also have additional programs that can be added to the suite, or used stand alone. The portableapps site has a shell with only a menu program if you want to develop your own suite.

<http://portableapps.com/>

<http://www.lupopensuite.com/index.htm>

<http://www.winpenpack.com/main/news.php>

<http://pensuite.wininizio.it/eng/index.php>

The following web sites have available a number of free programs that can be run from a flash drive. Many of these programs are included in one of the suites above. Any not in a suite could be added to it.

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

<http://nedwolf.com/Freeware-Portable.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-portable-programs.htm>

http://www.download.com/3120-2001_4-0.html?qt=portable%20apps&tag=nl.e415

A good free menu program can be found at the following site if you wanted to develop your set of flash drive programs totally from scratch. It can also be used with you computer’s hard drive.

<http://www.pegtop.net/start/>

contributed by Jack Luff

Converter Box Coupon Holders

I have tried three Converter Box products, Radio Shack's DTX9900 and 9950 and Best Buy's Insignia NS-DXA1. I believe Radio Shack no longer sells the DTX 9900; it was less than perfect. Both the RS DTX 9950 and the BB NS-DXA1 work OK. Of the two the Best Buy product set up easily and, in my opinion, is the better product. *contributed by George Boulet*

Questions & Answers

Q: I have many pictures in My Pictures, but I don't know how to select several. All I seem to be able to do is select one or all.

A: Control key plus right mouse click will highlight individual files, and you can then move, copy, or delete those selected.

Q: I am trying to delete IE7 by deleting the files it installed, but there are some files I am not allowed to delete.

A: You have to un-install IE7 to go back to IE6, if the install was incomplete and IE6 is not working.

These two knowledgebase articles at Microsoft have more information on re-installing IE6:

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/318378/en-us>

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/304872/en-us>

Q: I am trying to delete games from the C drive. Using add/remove programs, but it says that files are corrupted and can not remove the program.

A: That can happen if a virus gets on the computer or if you accidentally delete the install information that tells add/remove programs what to take out.

I would rename the directories involved. That way if you are trying to remove something important, it won't be gone and you can rename the directory back. After a week or so of using the computer with the directories renamed and you have no problems, then delete the directories.

Q: I am trying to connect to different WiFi hot spots without knowing the ip address. How do I find out how to connect to them?

A: You should never have to worry about the ip address and that should be supplied to you via DHCP (Dynamic Host Control Protocol).

What you may really be asking if the WiFi access is encrypted or secured, how do I connect? The answer to that is if it's secured and they don't give you instructions on how to use that hot spot, it's not really free and it's private. And therefore illegal to use it. When I travel, either the hotel tells you how to use their service or it's not secured. In either case when using public WiFi, be sure to use a good firewall!

Q: I get pictures via email and I save them on my hard drive. And then I change the name of the pictures and I can no longer double click on them, but I have to use Open With to see them.

A: When you renamed them, you must have changed the file extension on the pictures. Out of the box, Windows does NOT show the file extensions on all files. But this important function is tied to that file extension.

In WinXP, open Windows Explorer. Click on Tools, folder properties, View, Find and uncheck 'Hide extensions for known file types.'

What's with the Online Passport Office Site?

I finally got around to renewing my passport the other day. I started it six months ago and went in and printed off the forms, but never got around to the pictures, etc. So I compared the six-month-old form to the new form on the Website and found they were different.

So I went in and filled out the two-page form, got to the end, and pressed the button to "Create Form". Nothing happened. I pressed a few more times. Nothing. Being mildly paranoid, I presumed I had done something wrong. So I did it again. Same result. Paranoia in charge, I figured it was this computer, my downstairs Internet laptop running Vista Home Premium. Up to the big HP in my office running XP. Same thing. Did it twice. Same result.

Back downstairs to my old laptop, which uses XP. Same. That's about six times I filled out that form. Of course on all of my machines I use Firefox!

To Google for help. Read through a few pages of similar complaints. They talked about Internet machinery I have never heard of. But someone said something about IE. It worked with IE.

Sure enough! Got in IE and the "Create Form" button brought up the appropriate form and it printed out very nicely!

There is an e-mail address at the bottom of their form instructing anyone who has any technical problems with the site to notify them. I did so. Twice! When and if the Darfurian recipient is ever able to translate and answer, I shall instruct my heirs to see what they had to say!

Moral of the story: If you are dealing with the Government, better use Bill's products!

by Joe Marto

Strange people running around out there!

My wife delivers library books to senior citizens. She recently was at the apartment of a 91 year old lady when the Comcast man came to investigate her telephone problems. She had recently switched from AT&T to Comcast and when people would call her, she would hear people talking but they could not hear her. One or the other would hang up and call back later and it would be fine.

When she explained this to the Comcast man, wearing his Comcast T-Shirt and ball cap, he asked, "How many phones to you have?" "Three" she replied. "Well, that's the problem right there. You can only have one phone in these apartments. The wiring is too old. It can't handle more than one phone" he announced with a voice full of authority! "Well," she said, "can you fix the wiring?" "Oh no, ma'am. That wiring belongs to AT&T and by law we cannot touch it!" He had her sign his hand-held machine and left.

When my wife reported the incident to me I was filled with more than a little indignation! She lives in a Cunat building and I checked with their head of maintenance. He confirmed that the buildings were all newer and prewired with 4 or 6 pair standard communication wire. There were jacks in the LR, DR, Kitchen and each bedroom!

When I recounted this tale at the last Computer Club meeting, Jim Beierle, a retired AT&T man, and another member, a former Comcast man, could hardly believe it! They both said that the problem was that when Comcast installed their service by simply plugging their box into one of the jacks, they failed to disconnect the AT&T line in the Network Interface Box. I have not yet verified this, but I'm sure it's true.

by Joe Marto

Flash Drive Tales

As some of you know, I am a bit of a flash drive “nut”. My first drive was a 256 meg USB 1.1 unit, essentially as soon as they became available. Most recently, I have been using a 4 gig and an 8 gig unit, the two faster ones from the demo last November. These have been perfectly satisfactory. In fact, the 8 gig unit alone would be adequate if I did “diskcleaning” a little more often. However, with larger capacity units becoming available, I would drool over the Fry’s ad, and a number of others, every week. I decided I had better decide on a course of action, rather than do something on impulse.

My decision was to buy a 32 gigabyte unit when the price fell below \$100. I made that decision when the prices were in excess of \$150, so I felt I had some time to wait. However, my ever helpful wife suggested I might want to check on eBay and therein lies the story.

I checked prices on eBay at the end of April and saw that units were selling at auction for under \$100. There was a lot of seller activity with people having units for sale for a few days and then disappearing. There also seemed to be some difficulties with certain sellers with them disappearing for a few days and then reappearing. There also were warnings of units being modified to seem to have greater capacities than they really had. Against this background, I took the plunge.

I successfully bid on a unit from Germany for about \$75. I gave this unit to my son and then successfully bid on two units from Hong Kong for about \$45 each. I did a cursory check of all units when they arrived and they seemed satisfactory and quite fast. (In retrospect, I ignored a couple of suggestions of possible problems.) After a few days of use, my son reported that he was having problems saving data to the unit beyond about 4 gigabytes. I “load tested” the units I had and found a similar situation. I could save up to 4 gigabytes, but when I went beyond that, a disk check reported that the data had problems.

Since I had the “bug”, I tried again. I successfully bid on a unit from a different seller in Hong Kong for about \$45 (also). When it arrived, it had the same problems as the earlier units, except that it may have had 8 gigabytes of actual memory. I registered a dispute with eBay with each of these sellers. The first and third immediately refunded my money. The second asked for the return of the “defective” units for replacement. Before sending them, I asked for assurance that he had true 32 gigabytes available. I received no response and then found that this person was no longer registered as a seller on eBay. This dispute is now with PayPal, with no response from the seller and the dispute nearing the end of the time for him to respond.

The third seller is also no longer registered as a seller on eBay and the first, while still registered, has nothing like flash drives for sale.

I tried once more with a seller that claimed that he was selling the only true 32 gigabyte units on eBay. I won two for a bit less than \$40 each. I paid immediately, but send him a message asking for assurance that his “true 32” claim was true. He refunded my payment without shipping anything and then registered a dispute with eBay for nonpayment. This is being sorted out with eBay.

One of the problems I ignored with the first units was that the burst read speed was slower than the average read speed. I am not sure the cause of this. The other problem was that the drive could not be reformatted as NTFS. NTFS essentially pre-allocates all the space on the drive and this process would not work correctly if the same physical space is used more than once.

This all turned out quite well since my son gave me an Amazon gift certificate for Father's Day and I was able to use it on an OCR Technologies 32 gig flash drive for less than my threshold after rebate. (And my rebate request has been acknowledged.)

Of course, there is more to this story. I first checked on Amazon the Monday after Father's Day. The price then was \$133 with a \$20 rebate expiring that day. I decided I was willing to see what followed that rebate. It was a \$30 rebate, good until the end of June. For no good reason, I decided to wait another day. The price became \$129. I decided to act. Shipping was from somewhere in the Chicago area since it arrived the next day. Since then the price has been as high as \$173 and in early July is \$159 with a new \$30 rebate until mid-July.

One thing I did not take into account in all this is the characteristics of the drive. This is hard to do on eBay, but it is a little surprising I didn't worry about it, given the demo last November. However, the OCR Tech drive is a very good performer. It is advertised at 30 MB/sec read and 8-15 MB/sec write. My unit's burst write speed tested above 30 MB/sec and its average read speed was just below that value. I didn't test the write speed since it is affected by quite a number of factors as shown last November.

I am now soured on eBay as a source of 32 gigabyte flash drives, but in early July there is now well over 350 available there worldwide. Given my experience, there are only one or two sellers that are, in my opinion, auctioning true 32 gigabyte units. If anyone has any experiences, please let us know.

Fry's has an A-DATA 32 gigabyte flash drive in their July 4th sale for \$99. A-DATA makes quite a number of flash drives and I expect the unit on sale is at the low end of the performance spectrum, about half the performance of my OCR Tech drive. Another alternative is from Corsair. It is a 20 / 8 MB/sec unit for about the same price as my OCR Tech unit. A 30 MB/sec unit is available for a higher price. (I have not considered other factors like extra features in this comparison.)

As John K and others have noted, a portable hard drive is a reasonable alternative to a flash drive. 250 gigabyte units are available on sale for around \$100. However, hard drives have significantly higher random access times (~10X) over flash drives. Also, because of the characteristics of a hard drive platter, access time is noticeably faster on the inside than on the outside and probably is less overall than a flash drive.

contributed by Jack Luff

Excel Tips

Select All: With Microsoft Word, one of the choices under the Edit menu is Select All. There is no corresponding choice under the Edit menu with Excel. However, the option is available in a number of ways. The standard keystroke combination, Ctrl+A, works in Excel.

An option that is specific to Excel is to click the empty square in the upper left of the spreadsheet. (This is the square to the left of the A column header and above the 1 row label.)

Another Excel way to accomplish this is to press Ctrl+Shift+Spacebar.

Double Underline Text: As you know, to underline the text in a cell, select the cell and click the Underline icon on the Formatting toolbar. If you want to double underline the text, hold down the Shift key when you click the Underline icon.

Fill Handle Alternative: The Fill Handle can be used with the mouse to copy the contents of the current cell down or to the right. If your hands are on the keyboard, you can do the same thing using Ctrl+D to copy the contents of the cell above the current “down” to the current cell and Ctrl+R to copy the contents of the cell to the left of the current cell “right” to the current cell. Note that this process can be continued down or to the right as many cells as you wish. Note also that formulas are copied “relatively”.

Another Alternative: Another choice is to press Ctrl+Shift+” (double quote). However, in this case, the value of the cell above the current cell is placed in the formula bar and you can type additional material before completing the entry. Press Enter to put the contents of the formula bar into the cell. Note that, if the cell above contains a formula, it is the result of the formula that is placed in the formula bar.

External Workbook Properties: The Summary tab under File | Properties displays the various file information that is saved with a workbook and allows you to change it. If it is a workbook you use personally, this is not a big deal, but if it is a workbook that you have received from someone else and that you have modified, you might want to put your own stamp on this information.

Reset Row Height: If you have made adjustments to the height of a cell in a row and now have deleted the data that required this nonstandard height, to reset the row height to automatic, select a cell in the row and choose Format | Row | Autofit. You can adjust multiple rows by selecting a cell in each row make the same choice. Note that you don’t have the same option to reset the column width.

Splitting A Heading: Frequently the heading you want to put in a column is wider than the data in the column. You could split the heading over two (or more) rows, but Excel allows you to quickly place it within a single cell. Select the cell and choose Format | Cells | Alignment | Wrap text | OK. This splits the heading into two or more “rows” within the cell, adjusting the height of the row as necessary.

contributed by Jack Luff

Computer-Related Poetry ...

The computer swallowed grandpa.
Yes, honestly it's true!
He pressed 'control and 'enter'
And disappeared from view.

It devoured him completely,
The thought just makes me squirm.
He must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.

I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I've even used the Internet,
But nothing did I find.

In desperation, I asked Jeeves
My searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative,
Not a thing was found 'online.'

So, if inside your 'Inbox,'
My Grandpa you should see,
Please 'Copy, Scan' and 'Paste' him
And send him back to me.

contributed by Jim Bierle

Editor's Note: I apologize for not including an article last month that I had in my files. Jack had sent it to me in plenty of time, but it became, for me, a "purloined" email that managed to disappear from my view until Jack asked me about it. Sorry, Jack. It will NOT happen again.

Lucë/MC³ Editor