

Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for June 3, 2010

Carl Bulger presided.

The FCC is looking for 10,000 people to test their internet broadband transmission speeds. See <http://www.TestMyISP.com> to sign-up or for more info. An article in the Washington Post this week said that only about 20% of internet users know what their download and upload speeds are. I'm one of those. I went to www.speedtest.net and discovered that mine was approximately 10 Mbps for downloads and 2 Mbps for uploads, about twice what I thought it was. I'm using Verizon FiOS. Bob Blum then tested speeds that Comcast was providing us in the classroom and on the two public-access computers: 11.92 Mbps for downloads and 4.48 Mbps for uploads.

One visitor at the Verizon meeting said that she lived within two miles of the Senior Center and still is unable to get FiOS fiber optic service. Dan Lee asked Asst. City Manager Denise Mahoney about this. She said that everyone within Bowie's official city limits can get FiOS except for a small area behind the New Town Center in the area near the new City Hall.

We have two new members, long-time Bowie residents who just retired: Pam Holmes and Mary Kirkeby. Both used computers at work, but now have time to pursue personal interests and are exploring what features they would like to have on their own PCs.

Pam asked, "How do you transfer the stuff on your old computer to a new computer." Microsoft Windows Easy Transfer (free download) will facilitate the transfer of data and settings. Programs can be transferred several ways. Paid programs can be uninstalled from one computer and re-installed on the new computer either from the internet or from a disk, if you have one. You'll need the license key and the username you used when you first registered the application. Free apps can be downloaded from the internet. Eric Hein and Dick Henthorn maintain a list of useful free applications on our website: <http://BSCCclub.home.com-cast.net/freeware.htm>.

The new PC will probably come with the Windows 7 operating system. If the old computer has the same version of Windows 7, you might be able to make an image of the old hard drive and copy the image to the hard drive of the new computer. This is not recommended because the two copies of the operating system have different license keys. You would be losing one valid copy of the operating system. You would also probably lose some special software provided by the vendor, which is good and bad. You'd get rid of "bloatware" (free trial periods of security software, etc., links to all sorts of commercial sites, free games, etc.) but you'd lose cookies and links for services you may want and need.

Another way to transfer applications is to set up a home network between the two computers and put the applications that you want to transfer into Shared Files & Folders on the old computer. Then go into Shared Files and Folders on the new computer to obtain the applications. I recently installed Windows 7 on one of my computers and was unable to re-establish my home network. Windows 7 reviewers warn about this, but Eric Hein says he has been able to establish a home network between computers with Windows 7 and Windows XP operating systems.

Dropbox <https://www.dropbox.com/> is another place to store your data and applications until you are ready to transfer them to your new computer. Up to 2GB storage is free. \$9.99/month will get you up to 50 GB.

Someone asked whether it was safe to use Wi-Fi (wireless) "hot spots" and how do you do it? If you have a computer with a wireless capability, you can pick up wireless internet signals from other computers and from special servers in public "hotspots". Vic Kiviat subscribes to Smart Computing Magazine's daily newsletter. Here's what he forwarded from June 10:

The JiWire Wi-Fi Finder (<http://v4.jiwire.com/search-hot-spot-locations.htm>) catalogs 300,000 Wi-Fi Hotspots in 144 countries. Use the on-screen map

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or enter your ZIP code to search for hotspots in your area. The resulting list will give you details about costs, the address, and more. 16 hotspots are listed for Bowie.

In Rob Pagararo's column in the June 15th Washington Post says that Starbucks is eliminating their charge for using their hotspot. Perhaps this is a general trend?

Just remember that hackers prey on unsuspecting users of public hotspots. A hotspot is not the place to do your online banking and other sensitive transactions.

Error Message: "Memory is Low". You may have too many applications open or a memory intensive application open. Your Random Access Memory (RAM) memory chips do not have enough capacity to handle all the code and data and you have not allocated enough virtual memory on your hard drive to store information temporarily.

Missing toolbars in your browser? In Internet Explorer or Firefox click on View >> Toolbars and put checkmarks beside those toolbars you want to display. If you want more space for the display hit F11 to get rid of the toolbars temporarily. Don't forget to hit F11 when you are done to bring back the toolbar display.

In the Sunday, May 30th Washington Post, Rob Pagararo had a long article on Linux and, in particular,

the new 10.04 Lucid Lynx version of the Ubuntu distribution of Linux. It is free, open source software that can be downloaded from <http://www.ubuntu.com>.

Bob Blum demonstrated it on his laptop. Bob Rapczynski also demonstrated an earlier version last year on his laptop. Both have tried various distributions of Linux including Mint, Mandriva__VM, Open Suze, KDE, Gnome. Both seem to prefer Ubuntu. Ubuntu comes out with a new version every six months which is numbered yy.mm it was released plus a zany adjective followed by the name of an animal, both beginning with the next letter in the alphabet after the previous version. Only about 1.6% of web client operating systems use Linux compared to 5.8% for Mac OS X and 86.14% for Windows operating systems. But Linux is the operating system on about 60% of servers and Windows has the other 40%. Linux is used in many smart phones, PDAs, TiVo's, and dozens of other applications. It often is "embedded" in electronic chips.

Besides being free, one of the advantages that users brag about is that they experience less malware. When malware is discovered, the time required for a fix is considerably less than for proprietary operating systems like OS X and Windows because of the hundreds of users who work on the solution. One vendor of a Linux application downloaded software last November that contained a

trojan that opened a backdoor in users' computers. Like Mac users, some Linux users arrogantly brag about the resistance of Linux to malware attack. This arrogance leads to the type of carelessness exhibited by this vendor. The error wasn't discovered until recently, which means that the vendor's customers were exposed to external control of their computers and theft of their data for six months. The trojan was lodged in the Linux kernel which made it very difficult to detect even if a Linux user employed the type of anti-malware software that Windows users routinely use.

Disadvantages of Linux are tricky setups and incompatibility with old hardware.

For those Linux users who still want to stay in touch with Windows, there is a Windows emulator called WINE.

Here are some good links to learn more about Linux:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linux>
<http://www.ubuntu.com/>
<http://www.linux.org>
<http://www.debian.org/>

The Debian GNU/Linux 4.0 distribution has about 283 million lines of code. One advantage of being part of the Open Source community is that over a thousands of programmer/developers offer their contributions. 283 million lines of code would cost 7.83 billion U.S. dollars to program in 2010.

www.redhat.com/ RedHat specializes in commercial distributions.

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