

Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for Feb. 4, 2010

Carl Bulger and Dan Lee presided.

Bob Rapczynski brought an old Toshiba laptop to the meeting to demonstrate how to change the hard drive, memory, and battery.

He routinely changes the hard drive because he has Windows XP on one hard drive and Linux on the other.

With help, he hooked it up to the projector and, at Vic Kiviat's suggestion, downloaded from <http://www.Belarc.com> its free utility that will scan a computer and report on all hardware and software that it detects. Furthermore, it will report the status of security upgrades from Microsoft.

This was helpful to our discussion of random access memory (RAM). Someone asked how they could determine how much and with what kind of memory their computer is equipped.

Bob had two unmatched memory sticks in his laptop. You can go to <http://www.crucial.com> to learn the specs for your brand and model computer.

Enar Sanders said that he could not get Windows Media Player to play YouTube videos with the .flv file extension. Bob Blum suggested that he download a free Firefox browser add-on called "VLC" from <http://www.videolan.org/vlc>

Here's how the website describes it:

VLC media player

VLC media player is a highly portable **multimedia player** and **multimedia framework** capable of reading most audio and video formats (MPEG-2, MPEG-4, H.264, DivX, MPEG-1, mp3, ogg, aac ...) as well as **DVDs**, **Audio CDs** **VCDs**, and various **streaming** protocols. See the [full features list](#).

It can also be used as a **media converter** or a [server to stream](#) in unicast or **multicast** in IPv4 or **IPv6** on networks.

Blum and Rapczynski demonstrated how to do it: Open up Mozilla's Firefox browser, go to the Tools menu >>Add-Ons >> Browse All Add-Ons >> In the Search Box type "VLC Media Player">> >> Install Now >> Restart Firefox.

Mozilla Firefox only offers Version 1.0.2 as a web plug-in but you can download the latest version 1.0.5 directly from the Videolan website.

Ezio Cerrelli then signed into his email using the Toshiba laptop connected to the projector. He used VLC Media Player to play an amusing You Tube video that he had received as an attachment to an email from another member.

Cynthia Bravo asked about Panda in the Cloud security software and how it would compare with free AVG. Many of our members use

free AVG, some use free Avast, and at least one uses free Avira. Do we have anyone who uses Panda in the Cloud.

There are organizations that test and review paid anti-virus software, the best of which is <http://www.av-comparatives.org/> but I don't know any that do exhaustive tests on FREE security software. The paid applications generally have many more features than the free software. Several security software vendors offer free anti-virus and malware scanning services over the internet. This is a win-win situation because an external scanner is more likely to detect a clever piece of malware. If they detect a virus, trojan, or other malware, they can analyze the malware to determine whether it is new or a changed version of older malware. Even if it is something they are familiar with, they can update their statistics for the prevalence and distribution of that particular malware. The biggest plus for them is that they have a chance to sell you on one of their paid security software applications.

Bob Blum recommends Threat-Fire, a free heuristics-type scanner from PCTools. It detects suspicious behavior before the malware has a chance to firmly entrench itself in your computer. It does not depend on malware signatures, so there is no delay between first deployment of malware on the internet and an effective countermeasure. Obtain it at <http://www.threatfire.com/>. This will not interfere with most other anti-virus products.