

Nybbles & Bytes



www.neopc.org

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The Presidents Desk –

Lee Gerber



Ahhh, February. Spring is right around the corner.

I sure hope that Punxsutawney Phil doesn't see his shadow this year. I'm so looking forward to warmer weather. Keep your fingers crossed on February 2nd.

And, don't forget your sweetie on Valentines Day, February 14th. Candy is dandy, but maybe that someone special would like a little computer trinket instead. Whether its candy, flowers, or geek stuff don't forget to check out our affiliate's page for some great deals that also contribute to our club's coffers.

Please check all those new computers that you received for Christmas to make sure all that trial anti-virus software is still functioning and protecting your "stuff".

Log in to our web site for the latest updates on our event calendar and don't forget to use the "Forum" for any questions or comments.

Webmaster Bulletin -

Dick Rose



I hope all of you are watching "Site Activities" page on our website to see any changes that I make listed in chronological order.

Last month we had another case of 'hackers' attempting to disrupt our "Coming Events" page. Apparently someone broke our security code for updating the display.

Finally I altered the 'login' and 'password' and it has cleared it up.

For some time we have pondered as to what changes we can make to whet your interest in viewing our site more often. With that in mind I would like to hear from our members regarding ideas which will turn them on. Send me your ideas by using the form on the website under the "Members Only" area, specifically the "What do you think" page.

Letter from the Editor -

David A. Vydra



I am perplexed. When my term as the editor began, it was hoped that we could renew and energize the “Nybbles and Bytes” newsletter. Even though we have more than 100 in our membership, only a few are onboard participants. We only see a small group on a regular basis at the General Meeting. The Officers and Helpers are doing yeoman work. But, for the most part, there are many we seldom see. And, perhaps, even fewer are even heard from. We now provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences with all of us. As usual, there is the “Forum” which is there for assistance in the event you hit a bottleneck or a problem that you cannot find the answer too. While the Forum may not be an instant feedback venue, the support provided will generally be on point.

Rather than clutter the Forum with events that are not inquisitive in nature, we are now providing the “Members Podium”. This is a column in the newsletter for all of our general members. We all want to hear about the good and the bad experiences you have had in the world of computers. Did you find a new application that you enjoy? Share it with us. Did you purchase a new PC, Printer, Scanner, Camera or other digital device? Share it with us. Were there problems? How did you correct them? Was it smooth sailing? Let us know. As opposed to the Forum, which is for getting answers, the Members Podium is for sharing experience.

So far, there have not been any articles submitted. This is sad! So, so Sad!



Through the Gates:

Enter to the Trove of Bills Treasures and Travails

A monthly column dedicated to revealing some of the unknown or lesser known features or foibles of the Microsoft line of products.

By: David A. Vydra

For the past several weeks, I have been pondering the question of direction for this column. While observing the General Meetings and the morning FUNSig I have noticed that there are those who have experienced a lack of understanding with some or all of the parts and functions with regard to their computing in general. While I want to remain true to the basic premise of this column, I am considering the fact that perhaps, at times, my articles are out of scope for many of the membership. As a result, perhaps it would serve you better if we begin anew with some basics and work our way up from there. With that in mind, the column this month will be somewhat of a question and answer session within the scope of the personal computer system. Of course, I will provide the questions as well as the answers. In another column, we might consider having the members ask questions. However, the questions will have to be based on Microsoft products only.

1. What is a Computer?

ANS: A computer is a box constructed with metal and plastic. There are varied shapes and sizes. As a computer, the box will contain various parts which are necessary to create its functionality. The parts are constructed using metal, plastic, silicone and chemicals. (Note: The metals and chemicals are in some part dangerous to the environment and should always be disposed of properly through recycling. With mercury and lead being the most hazardous.) In and of itself, a computer is just a dumb box. It cannot do anything without an operating system, productivity software and input. In a nutshell: A computer is a device that takes information(DATA), does something with it called processing and gives output/storage. A modern computer has two (2) components. They are called Hardware & Software.

- a. Hardware: All the physical parts of the computer.
- b. Software: The instructions that run a computer. Includes the OS and Production Applications.

2. What are the physical parts?

ANS: It varies from computer to computer. But, there are several required basics which are:

- a. The System Board; (Commonly referred to as the Mother Board) which has slots and connectors to which the other parts are attached or inserted.
- b. Memory; The storage device used by a computer to hold the currently executing program and its working data. A modern computer's main memory is built from random access memory integrated circuits. In the old days ferrite core memory was one popular form of main memory, leading to the use of the term "core" for main memory. Additionally, it was usually soldered to the system board and was not generally upgradeable. Today, the modules are changeable within the system board specifications. All memory of this type requires power to function. All data is erased if there is no power. This is referred to as "Volatile" memory.
- c. Hard Drive; computer hardware that holds and spins a magnetic disk and reads and writes information on it. The information is retained even with power off. This is referred to as "Non-volatile" memory. Much of the software needed to use the computer is retained on the hard drive. Primary of which is the "OS" or operating system.
- d. Floppy Disk Drive; A small, portable plastic disk coated in a magnetisable substance used for storing computer data, readable by a computer with a floppy disk drive. The physical size of disks has shrunk from the early 8 inch, to 5 1/4 inch ("minifloppy") to 3 1/2 inch ("microfloppy") while the data capacity has risen. These are pretty much relegated to history. However, the earliest computers used a combination of memory and floppies to function prior to the introduction of hard drives. It was not unusual to see several stacks of floppies around a computer. Though non-volatile, they were subject to accidental erasure if placed in the vicinity of a magnetic source such as a vacuum cleaner.
- e. Optical Drive: Here there are various flavors. Initially, it was a CD-ROM. (ROM = Read Only Media). Similar to the CD drive and disk used in radios for playing music. However, the CD-ROM contained computer based programs. Over time, improvements allowed for the writing of data to a CD through a recording function. As with Floppy Disks, there were size limitations. As development progressed, recording sizes improved and the ability to re-write data emerged. The next step was the introduction of DVD capability to optical drives. Originally they were only DVD-ROM. Capacity was more than doubled over CD's and the capability to read, write and re-write was inherited over time. A computer today will most likely have a DVD-R drive and no floppy.
- f. Processor; The part of a computer which controls all the other parts. Designs vary widely but, in general, the CPU consists of the control unit, the arithmetic and logic unit (ALU) and memory (registers, cache, ram and rom) as well as various temporary buffers and other logic. Today, the modern processor is made from silicon layers, upon which the transistor and capacitor circuits are minutely etched. The control unit fetches instructions from memory and decodes them to produce signals which control the other part of the computer. This may cause it to transfer data between memory and ALU or to activate peripherals to perform input or output. The processor, system board and the memory form the central part of the computer to which all other parts connected through circuitry. Though small, the processor of today is very powerful in its capabilities. It will also generate a tremendous amount of heat and has to be constantly cooled. There are two basic processor configurations or types for the personal computer. The X86 which harkens back to almost the beginning of personal computing. It is the most commonly used. Gaining in use is the X64. The difference is primarily in which OS they are capable of handling. The X64 processor is able to run the latest 64-bit OS and Production Applications. This then, allows ever faster computing.

3. What is an OS?

ANS: (OS) The low-level software which handles the interface to peripheral hardware. The OS schedules tasks, allocates storage, and presents a default interface to the user when no application or production program is running. The OS may be split into a kernel which is always present and various system programs which use facilities provided by the kernel to perform higher-level house-keeping tasks. Some would include a graphical user interface and window system as part of the OS, others would not. In its infancy, the personal computer OS was known as a DOS (Disk Operating System) and required the learning of many basic commands which had to be manually entered. Though clunky and sometimes difficult to learn a DOS based system was extremely capable. While widely used, the personal computer did not enjoy the popularity of today. With the advent of "Windows", a graphical interface, the average person developed a greater interest. The facilitation an operating system provides and its general design philosophy exert an extremely strong influence on programming style and on the technical cultures that grew up around the machines on which it runs. This is a primary reason there is more than one OS available in the market today. Which one you use will basically depend on personal choice. Most likely it will be the OS that was installed on the computer when you purchased it. When we refer to the OS as "Low-Level Software" we are primarily referring to its place on the hierarchy of the entire computer. The OS is the foundation without which production applications could not function.

Next month we will try to cover peripherals and production applications. Between now and then, I would encourage you to send questions or suggestions. They may be either about some of what we covered this month or what we will cover next month and beyond. As with the "Members Podium" column, send your questions and/or suggestions to info@neopc.org. Be sure to use the phrase "Through the Gates" as the subject without the quotes.

While not written in stone, I expect or hope to include an article or two about IE8 which will be released shortly and Windows7 as we near a release date. I would also encourage questions regarding one or the other. If you have a question about both, send separate emails.

Microsoft will soon discontinue selling Windows XP through our sales channels. In industry terms this is called "End-Of-Sales" (EOS). The last day Microsoft Authorized OEM Distributors can purchase Windows XP from Microsoft will be January 31, 2009. For major PC manufacturers, this EOS date was June 30, 2008. OEM Distributors can continue to sell Windows XP to their system builder customers subsequent to January 31, 2009, while they work through their existing inventory. *Microsoft® notice.*

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Members Podium -



All Members

Submitted by:

Unfortunately, we do not have any entries for this month.

We look forward to having one or two, perhaps even more, during the forthcoming months.




Coming Events

February 2009

Event_Date	Event
02/10	*** COMPUTER FUNDAMENTALS OPEN FORUM *** MORNING SESSION. NORTHEAST OHIO PC CLUB (NEOPC) - 9:30AM FAIRVIEW PARK SENIOR CENTER - FUNDAMENTALS OF COMPUTER USE - ANY AND ALL TOPICS DISCUSSED - BRING A QUESTION, BRING A TOPIC - GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME - ALWAYS COFFEE - FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.
02/11	NORTHEAST OHIO PC CLUB (NEOPC)-GENERAL MEETING-PORTER PUBLIC LIBRARY, 27333 CENTER RIDGE ROAD, WESTLAKE, OH; 6:30PM SOCIAL (PASTRIES AND BEVERAGES); 7:00PM CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS; 7:15PM MAIN PROGRAM FOR THE EVENING "TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR MICROSOFT EXCEL" BY BILL JELEN. BILL'S TALK INCLUDES THE USE OF THE NEW VERSION, MICROSOFT EXCEL 2007; 8:30PM RAFFLE AND DOOR PRIZES.
02/19	FEBRUARY 19, 2009 LADIES ONLY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP AT WESTLAKE PORTER PUBLIC LIBRARY FROM 2:00 P.M. TO 3:30 P.M. THE LIBRARY IS LOCATED AT 27333 CENTER RIDGE ROAD, WESTLAKE, OHIO. ALL LADIES ARE INVITED, WHETHER OR NOT MEMBERS OF NEOPC. COME WITH YOUR QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS ABOUT SOFTWARE YOU HAVE.
02/24	NEOPC/CAGG COMPUTER CLASS ORIENTATION MEETING - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 10:00 AM - IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN ANY OF THE (FREE) CLASSES WE CONDUCT AT THE FAIRVIEW SENIOR CENTER YOU NEED TO ATTEND ONE OF THESE MONTHLY MEETINGS TO DETERMINE WHICH CLASS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE INVITED TO.
02/24	NORTHEAST OHIO PC CLUB ***FUNDAMENTALS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP*** (SIG). FAIRVIEW PARK LIBRARY (LOWER LEVEL) 7:00 - 8:30PM. FUNDAMENTALS OF COMPUTER USE - ANY AND ALL TOPICS DISCUSSED - BRING A QUESTION, BRING A TOPIC - GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME - FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. FOURTH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.
02/25	FINAL DAY TO SUBMIT "MEMBERS PODIUM" ARTICLES FOR NEXT MONTHS NEWS-LETTER

2008-2009 Board of Directors (Elected Officers)

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