# HURSTVILLE SENIORS COMPUTER CLUB

www.hurstvillescc.org.au

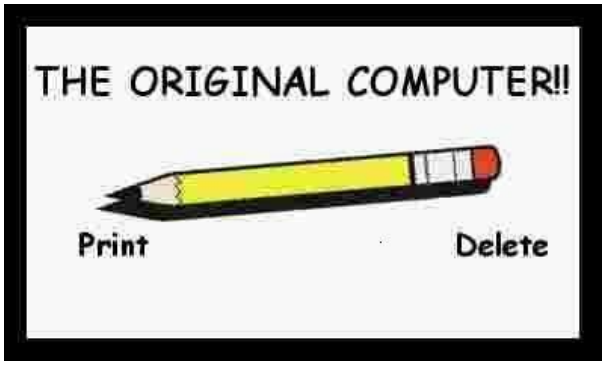
"keeping up with our grandchildren"

NEWSLETTER

May 2007

Member of ASCCA.

Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association


**DEFRAG MYSTERIES**

How often do you hear that "My computer is suddenly running sooo slow" or "My computer is shutting down or locking up for no reason"

Is this you? Is your computer running slow? Is it locking up on you? Are programs suddenly terminating?

Perhaps it's time to Defrag! And after you have successfully defragged, clean your computer of all the gunk that your system inevitably loads.

When you "defrag" your hard drive, you run a disk defragmenting program to optimize the placement of files on your hard drive. Here's what happens. As you use your computer, it writes to the first available spot on the hard drive. Over time, files tend to get rearranged on your hard disk, or fragmented.

There are many DEFRAG utilities besides the one built into Microsoft Windows, Try **Speedefrag** which can be downloaded from a number of freeware and shareware sites. (or "Try before you Buy" software such as Diskeeper, Powerdefrag and Defragmenter Lite)

If your disk is fragmented, when it tries to load a program, it may have to grab one file from the middle of the hard drive, one towards the outside, then back to the inside. The net result is that you computer runs slower.

When you run a defrag program, it puts the pieces back together, organizes them in similar groupings, so your system loads faster. It's probably a good idea for the average user to defrag once every 2-3 months or so, depending on how much you use your computer.

*"640K ought to be enough for anybody."*
*-- Bill Gates, 1981*

Be careful when running defrag. First off, it takes a long time to defragment a large hard drive (I usually run mine it at night). Also, the defrag program takes files off your hard drive and sticks them into your system RAM while reorganising your disk. If you lose power during a disk defragmentation, it can spell disaster for your computer. At best you'll mess up a program or two but at worst you may no longer be able to access your hard drive and Windows. Definitely not something to do during a thunderstorm!

Now, how do I defragment my hard drive? First you should run Scandisk by following the steps below:

- Double-click My Computer
- Highlight a local hard disk drive by clicking on it once.
- Right click the highlighted local drive
- Click Properties and choose the Tools tab
- Under Error Checking click the Check Now button. A dialog box will pop up, tick both check boxes and click on Start (This is NOT as complicated as it sounds).

After the hard disk has been scanned, return to the Properties, Tools window and click the Defragment Now button.

NOTE 1

Make sure all AntiVirus software is disabled along with any background applications that may write to the hard drive which you are defragmenting.

NOTE 2

Sometimes Defrag restarts and never completes checking the hard drive. It will start over and over again. This issue is caused when other programs or files are being accessed in the background as defrag is being run. If defrag detects any type of a file change while being run it will restart. So turn off all other programmes, especially your screensaver and anything else running in the background

*Thanks Henry*

**Next Meeting is Combined on Wednesday 30 May**

**ILLEGAL OPERATIONS**

I've been getting a lot of questions about this particular topic lately, so I thought I would address it again. This is for anyone who has ever had trouble with the illegal operations error, so listen up!

Don't you hate it when you see this error: "This program has preformed an illegal operation and will be shut down"?

In all actuality, it can happen for a variety of reasons. In my experience, most of the time it's due to a software conflict of some sort. It usually involves a program running in the background on your computer.

If you find you have a bunch of stuff sitting in your system tray (it's the little box opposite to the Start button on the taskbar), you may find that shutting down some of those programs will help tremendously. Most programs already have an option to shut down if you right click on their icon, so it's very easy to do. One of these is usually the culprit. (For example, RealPlayer causes a lot of problems). This is especially true if the program with the problem appears to be the only thing running.

You can also use the **Ctrl + Alt + Del** key combination to shut programs down manually, but you also run the risk of accidentally shutting your computer down. (Make sure you don't close Explorer or Systray in the process). Only do this after you've shut down all your system tray icons and are continuing to have problems.

If you shut down all of those background programs and still haven't resolved the conflict, you may have a Windows driver that's messing things up. Try booting in Safe Mode and running the program. (To get to Safe Mode, hit the **F8** key just as Windows starts to boot, before the first Windows loading screen comes up). If all works well in Safe Mode, you may have to reinstall or update your drivers.

Another possibility is the program has a corrupted file. Try uninstalling, then reinstalling the program.

If you're still having problems after trying all that, contact the program's vendor and see if they know what's going on. Although they may not be able to help you, it's still worth a try. Keep in mind that every computer is as unique as you and me once we start using it, so sometimes even the guy who wrote the program won't know why it's causing a problem on your machine and no one else's.

I can usually resolve the illegal operation problem by taking the steps above. Don't panic if you see this error message crop up from time to time at random intervals. It usually happens after Windows has been running for a while without a reboot. Only take the actions above if the problem appears every time, or almost every time, you use a particular program.

*Thanks Steve*

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers"
-- Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

**GUEST SPEAKER**

Our Guest Speaker for May will be Paul Wallbank, Manager and Owner of PC RESCUE, who also maintains a comprehensive and user friendly website (**http://www.pcrescue.com.au**)

PAUL presents *Q AND A* SESSION on Radio ABC and occasionally appears on other radio Stations and has written a number of “Dummies” books.

He will talk on Microsoft Vista, the Pros and Cons. Bring along your Questions.

*Following is an excerpt from Paul’s March edition of PC Rescue to show what he covers*

**PC RESCUE MARCH 2007**

**Exploding batteries**

Another exploding laptop makes the news. This one was another Mac, apparently not affected by the earlier battery recall. This guy was very lucky his building didn't burn down. These battery issues are becoming a serious concern. Some research on this digs up tradies with similar stories about cordless power tools. We recommend NOT leaving unattended recharging Lithium Ion battery powered devices such as laptops, mobile phones and power drills.

**Strange Outlook Express goings-on**

If you are an Outlook Express user, you might have noticed strange files appearing in your Recycle Bin named things like Inbox.bak. This is due to an update issued last month by Microsoft. Now, Outlook Express makes a backup of it's folders while carrying out maintenance. This is a good thing as we've seen a lot of lost data in OE. Should you see those files in your Recycle Bin, don't worry. In fact, it might be worth leaving them there just in case something horrible happens to your email.

**Free email accounts**
Free email accounts have been around for almost as long the Internet, but things have got interesting with Gmail, Google's free mail service, ceasing to be by invitation only and Yahoo! mail announcing "unlimited" storage. Even Hotmail now has 1Gb of storage for its free service.

The advantages of free email accounts in the past have been that they are disposable. But now they are becoming feasible as storage. Other advantages are that spam and virus protection tends to be better managed by the big providers and you don't have to scrap your email address when you change Internet providers.

There are also some disadvantages with these accounts. It's difficult to back them up and if they are down, or you have problems with your Internet connection, you can't access them or their address books. They also have a stigma for business users and some subscription services refuse to let you subscribe using these addresses.

Free email isn't for everyone but it's worthwhile for users who travel or want to be flexible and they are a good backup account. As they are free, you've got nothing to lose. Just make sure you regularly log on to keep the account active.

**Microsoft Office**
Microsoft has released Office 2007. While we recommend businesses should stick with Office 2003 and earlier because of some compatibility issues, the student and academic edition is very well priced. It is important to be aware that Microsoft has changed its policies with software supplied with new computers and you no longer get disks supplied with the system.

We really dislike this policy as it makes repairs, data recovery and upgrades far more difficult. It's designed to complicate life for you, the customer, while putting a few more pennies into Bill Gates' pocket. We'd suggest either sticking with your existing Microsoft Office for as long as possible or switching to one of the many Office Alternatives.

The most common free Office alternative is Open Office, another popular alternative is 602 Office while Google has a free online spreadsheet and word processor. Both of these work well but they do have some problems with formatting and compatibility with some of the more obscure features of Microsoft Office. They aren't suitable for most business users, but for home customers who don't want, or need, to spend upwards of $150 these are a good option.

**Microsoft Updates**
Microsoft hasn't released any security updates this month (their software's that good!). However they seem to have resurrected the Windows Genuine Activation Notification tool. This thing is a buggy pain that further convinces us that Microsoft, along with Apple and Symantec, are seriously losing the plot.

If you haven't installed it already, choose not to, and when it asks you if you'd like to be reminded again, tick the box that says NO. Keep in mind the little beast will try to dob you in to Microsoft for doing so. If you've already installed it, leave it alone if it isn't causing trouble, if it is then join

**IT Advantage**
Get more from your computer. IT Advantage membership gives priority emails, security and virus alerts, reduced support rates and other benefits. For more details visit our website at www.pcrescue.com.au/itadvantage.htm

Regards, Paul *Wallbank*

*"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."*

*Ken Olson, President, Chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977*

**OUR SHORT TALK SPEAKER**
Ken MacRae will relate the interesting story of his life before computers

**CLUB NEWS**
Our May Committee meeting will be a combined one of Head Tutors and Tutors as well as Heads of the Special Interest Groups, the latter as they provide valuable and essential inputs in the efficient running of the CLUB

Frank and Ted of the MAINTENANCE CREW have been extremely busy during our April-May break largely due to the unauthorised changes that some of our members make to the computers. Please help us by not making changes.

And by the way, we have purchased a **spanking new HP Laser printer** for your use.

**NEW MEMBERS**
We extend a warm welcome to the following new members in our Club:

Saxon Sorensen
Margarette D'Arcy
Joan O'Donovan
Mirna Mundigo
Maria Trevisan

THE CLUB

The Hurstville Seniors Computer Club was formed in April, 1998 to teach Seniors to use computers. Clubrooms are in premises provided by the Hurstville Council in the Hurstville Seniors Centre, and in an Annexe in the MacMahon St. building. Tuition is held during week days in an informal atmosphere - cost being a minimum. We are an entirely voluntary organisation, the aim being to help fellow Seniors.

| | |
|---|---|
| Correspondence | Hurstville Seniors Computer Club Inc.<br>PO Box 173, HURSTVILLE BC1481 |
| Telephone - Clubroom, 91 Queens Rd | 9585 9184 |
| Telephone - Annexe, 14 MacMahon St | 9580 5233 |
| Telephone - Senior Citizens Hall | 9570 3297 |
| Web Site - | www.hurstvillescc.org.au |
| E-Mail – Clubroom | clubroom1@swiftdsl.com.au |
| E-Mail - Annexe | senior9@swiftdsl.com.au |

Monthly Meeting — Hurstville Seniors Centre, 91 Queens Road, Hurstville
1.30pm, last Wednesday of the month (except December)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Fees | Joining Fee | $20 |
| | Annual Fee | $15 |
| | Training Fee | $4 per session |

**********

| | |
|---|---|
| **PATRON** | **Mervyn Lynch OAM** |
| **PRESIDENT** | **Pamela Samuels** |
| **VICE-PRESIDENT** | **Frank Grosz** |
| **SECRETARY** | **Marie Thompson** |
| **TREASURER** | **Geoff Turton** |

TUITION IS IN ONE HOUR SESSIONS

If you can't attend your booking, please let your Tutor know.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Mondays** | **Joyce Pickup** |
| **Tuesdays** | **Margaret Butt** |
| **Wednesdays** | **Marie Thompson** |
| *No lessons on meeting day* | |
| **Thursdays** | **Betty Saltmiras** |
| **Fridays** | **Shirley Boxhall** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Technical - Advanced and Basic**<br>*Mondays at the Annexe* | **Ted Crichton** |
| **Digital Imaging Group**<br>*First Tuesday in the Clubroom 1.30pm* | **Ian Chesterfield** |
| **Genealogy**<br>*Second Wednesday at the Annexe 1.30pm* | **John Shortland** |
| **Web Design Group**<br>*First and Third Wednesday 1.30pm* | **Fred Scott** |
| **Internet**<br>*Thursdays at the Annexe* | **Frank Grosz** |
| **Video Editing Group**<br>*Friday Annexe 9 - 10.30, 11 - 12.30* | **Bill Baker** |
| **Maintenance Crew - *Queens Rd*** | **Frank Grosz**<br>**Ted Barnett** |

**Newsletter Editor** — **Ian Chesterfield**
imcpvc@bigpond.com 9529 3420

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS**. If you change your address, phone number or e-mail, please inform the Treasurer.

**BIRTHDAY BOYS AND GIRLS for June**

**Have a great day!!!**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ian | Robinson | 1-Jun |
| Denis | McDonald | 5-Jun |
| Doreen | Wallworth | 5-Jun |
| Thelma | Case | 7-Jun |
| Maureen | Cooper | 9-Jun |
| Patricia | Costello | 9-Jun |
| Helen | London | 12-Jun |
| Barry | Porter | 13-Jun |
| Lorraine | Quinn | 15-Jun |
| Ian | Chesterfield | 17-Jun |
| Albert | Foster | 18-Jun |
| Raymond | Quick | 18-Jun |
| Jennette | Blundsen | 21-Jun |
| Margaret | Jones | 22-Jun |
| Bud | Mestern | 24-Jun |
| Maria | Flynn | 30-Jun |

Most of us don't use the Num Lock key.

The Num Lock key is at the top of the numeric keypad on your keyboard.

If you hold that key down for five seconds you can turn on Accessibility Options that will cause your computer to beep whenever you accidentally hit the Caps Lock key, Scroll Lock key, or the Num Lock key.

When you hold it down for five seconds, a light will come on indicating the Num Lock key is depressed. A dialogue window will appear and tell you that you've turned on your Accessibility Options and give you the option to click OK if you want to keep the Option on.

This works with Windows XP Home or Professional.