

HURSTVILLE SENIORS COMPUTER CLUB

www.hurstvillesc.org.au

“keeping up with our grandchildren”

NEWSLETTER

June 2007

Member of ASCCA.

Australian Seniors
Computer Clubs
Association



Ken McRae



Paul Wallbank

The popular **Ken McRae**, in his interesting short talk, described the idyllic rural and small town Australia of his youth, a time when kids understood where eggs and milk came from. It certainly took us back to a time that is regrettably almost gone. Ken reminded us that we should cherish those good times

MAY SPEAKER: PAUL WALLBANK

One of the delights of attending our monthly gatherings is meeting and hearing experts like Paul Wallbank addressing vital and practical issues relating to the use of Microsoft Vista. The large number of questions asked during and after the meeting reflect the popularity of the speaker and the importance of the subject. Members are also advised to read previous issues of this newsletter for informative articles on Vista.

The following is a very brief extract of Paul's talk:

PROS AND CONS OF VISTA

THE PROS

It's been over six years since XP was released and times have changed dramatically. Personal music players are common, net usage patterns have changed, DVD burning is standard and security is a bigger problem than ever.

So Vista's more than overdue on the market.

The security problems of XP have been partly addressed by Vista. Vista makes it harder for Internet Explorer to download **malicious files** from websites. In the past, drive-by spyware downloads have been the curse of computer users.

Vista's User Access Controls makes the user more aware of what they are doing when they tick a box or click OK and hopefully this will slow the spread of spyware.

The Help System update is way overdue and it ties the help system into the Windows indexing and search features.

Microsoft has made a big point of their improved searching and indexing features in Vista. It will make organising your data easier regardless of where your data is located

Probably the biggest single change since the release of XP has been the explosion of personal media players, podcasts and online media. Vista has improved the way Windows synchronises with those devices.

Mobile phones are increasingly assuming the functions of personal media players and most small offices and homes now have laptops that need to share data with a desktop or server, often when there's no Internet connection.

Already this function is working very well between workstations, mobile phones and the Windows 2003 and upcoming 2007 servers. It seems that Microsoft is really going to push this aspect with the upcoming Windows Home Server.

Better graphics. The graphics engine has been overhauled allowing Windows to take advantages of the massively improved functions of modern graphics cards. They've even upgraded Minesweeper and Solitaire to show off what it can do.

Features like the Sidebar and Gadgets are part of that. Unfortunately all these features come at a hardware cost and Windows Vista needs some good hardware to perform well.

THE CONS

To get a good experience out of Vista you are going to need good graphics hardware. The recommendation is at least a 256Mb graphics card and I'd suggest an inexpensive 512Mb card as the best option.

Vista deals with the fact that many systems won't meet that specification by setting up a more basic interface if it deems your computer

Our Next meeting will be Wednesday 27th June at 1.30pm

can't handle the demands of the **Aero** desktop. But this really defeats the purpose of getting Vista for a lot of users.

Coupled with the funky display is a change to navigation. It can be remarkably awkward to find your way around Vista's settings. What took three screens in XP, and two in 95 or 98 now takes five. This is particularly true in the network settings.

Incidentally, if you have a Wireless router/modem supplied by Bigpond then you'll find the Vista networking Wizard just doesn't work. You have to abandon the wizard and do the installation through the manual settings.

This illustrates a basic problem with Microsoft. They desperately want to make things as easy to use as the Apple Mac, but they can't quite get it right. Another area that Microsoft has traditionally struggled with is indexing and searching. I mentioned being dubious about this earlier. Historically Microsoft has struggled to get a half decent indexing feature in their systems and this is one of the reasons Vista was two years late to the market.

Transferring data from an older machine to a Vista box is painfully slow.

Microsoft isn't saying what is the problem.

DRM (Digital Rights Management) is the curse of modern technology. While we all want to download movies or transfer LPs and CDs to our iPods, the record and movie studios want to stop us and charge more

DRM effectively cripples many of the features we want to use our computers for.

Vista's DRM manifests itself in many ways, some of which are going to be unpredictable. If you are using a computer to generate your own works or you want to convert existing media to digital formats, then moving to Vista could be a serious mistake.

A further mistake Microsoft has made in my opinion is that there are too many versions of Vista. In Australia, we have four versions available for retail purchase. If we include the Enterprise edition for corporates, the Basic edition for developing countries and special versions for overcoming European competition complaints, then there are at least eight.

Each version has different features and we are already seeing a lot of confusion in the market place about this. It's tempting to just recommend Vista Ultimate and be done with it, but at \$750 retail it's an expensive option.

Security still remains a problem. While Vista has fixed a number of problems, it is still very prone to being compromised.

CONCLUSION.

Vista has been described as XP with a tutu.

That said though, it is an improvement upon XP as it takes advantage of new technologies and meet the demands of modern users.

Any of you who listen to my radio spots or subscribe to my newsletter know that I advise against getting a new OS for at least six months. This gives those of us in the industry time to get our heads around the system.

It lets hardware and software developers iron out the inevitable bugs that affect any new system.

Most importantly, it means you can avoid frustrating and expensive surprises.

Regardless of the pros and cons of Vista, it's here and it isn't going away. We find many people simply cannot find new XP systems. Vista is pretty much all you are going to get, particularly if you are looking at a laptop. So we are all going to have to deal with the pros and cons sooner or later.

Looking at Vista, overall it is a step forward in the evolution of computers and on a properly specified machine it works well and very smoothly.

It has many things that will help, it has many that will frustrate you until you get used to them.

But at the end of the day it's just a computer operating system and a computer remains a tool to do things you need or enjoy. We need to keep this in perspective with any computer or operating system we buy.



CLUB NEWS

Our Committee is doing a great job keeping the Club in the forefront of innovations and improvement for our members.

Indeed our Maintenance Team has installed Vista and Office 2007 on some computers and the training of our Tutors will commence soon. You are advised to read Paul Wallbank's comments.

Our Guest Speaker for the coming meeting is the well known Computer Trainer for our umbrella body, ASCCA.

PETER STANHOPE

Peter will continue our series on the VISTA Operating System, and as well will demonstrate the new **Windows Media Player 11** which has the potential to become your complete media centre for your Sound System

Our **Ten Minute Speaker** in June will be **Geoff Smith**, a regular member of our Club

REMINDERS:

1 The AUGUST meeting will be our Annual General meeting and the election of office bearers. Nomination forms for the election of officers will be available at our July meeting

2. ANNUAL FEES.

This is the end of the Financial Year. Your annual fees are now due. Please pay your annual fees to your Tutor or to the Treasurer at the June meeting

Just as a matter of interest I wonder how many members and friends visit our website on a regular basis. Web statistics show that in this quarter more than 550 visitors checked out our website and a few from other parts of the World. In 2006 we received 1300 visitors to our website which brings me to the point that our website is an excellent source of all sorts of news, some great hints and Help pages and copies of Newsletters.

The website is all maintained by our Web Design Group led by FRED SCOTT

Is it not time that you have a look at our website and use the facilities?

While we are on the general activities of members we would ask that more members attend our interesting monthly meetings at which we have a regular member delivering a Ten Minute address on LIFE BEFORE COMPUTERS and a regular visiting Guest Speaker generally on computer related issues.

An average of sixty seven members regularly attend our Monthly Meetings (out of more than 300 paid up member)

NO MORE NUISANCE CALLS

You may have recently read that the government will restrict and limit telemarketers with hefty fines for those who contravene the Do Not Call Register Act 2006. You may sign onto the government's "Do Not Call" register. Launching the register in Sydney recently,

Communications Minister Helen Coonan said telemarketers could be fined up to \$1 million if they breach the new Do Not Call register.

Demand to register on the www.donotcall.gov.au website was so great recently that it crashed after receiving more than 50,000 applications.

You may register at the above website

GOOGLE TIPS

Another of the useful services offered by Google, in addition to its web search capabilities, is Google Maps.

Tip 6: Use Google Maps to generate online maps, both for here in Australia and also for overseas.

To access Google Maps for Australian locations, type "**Google Maps Australia**" in the Google search box, then left click the *I'm Feeling Lucky* button.

Type the required location in the search box (eg: "**McMahon St Hurstville NSW**"), then left click the **Search Maps** button.



There are options to display a map in conventional "street directory" format, as a satellite image view, or in hybrid format which superimposes street names on satellite images.

Zoom and scroll facilities are available to explore maps in more detail and surrounding areas.

It is also possible to nominate start and finish locations and display a route map to get from one to the other.

FIVE RULES FOR MEN TO FOLLOW FOR A HAPPY LIFE:

1. Get a woman who helps at home, cooks and cleans up.
2. Get a woman who can make you smile and laugh.
3. Get a woman who you can trust and who does not lie to you.
4. Get a woman who is good in bed and who likes to be with you.
5. It is very important that these four women do not know each other.

