

HURSTVILLE SENIORS COMPUTER CLUB

www.hurstvillesc.org.au

“keeping up with our grandchildren”

NEWSLETTER

April 2010

Member of ASCCA.

Australian Seniors
Computer Clubs
Association



When George Thompson started our Computer Club twelve years ago in April 1998, he had much more in mind than the teaching of computers to seniors. There was another fundamental motive. He tried to instill confidence, self-assurance, improvement in general skills and, above all, the social interaction so necessary for Seniors to enjoy life. George's aim was for members to keep their brains active and alive; to get more acquainted with the ever developing world of technology, and to endorse the Club's slogan "keeping up with our grandchildren".

Initially courses were geared to teach basic computer knowledge and the use of computers in certain applications such as Microsoft WORD. Later it became apparent to George that the mere teaching of computer skills had evolved into a process of developing and inspiring confidence, reducing fear and anxiety, which the use of computers inevitably brings, and, yes, to use computers effectively. Interestingly many tutors and students who started back in 1998 are still with us today. Despite initial challenges, George was rewarded with an enthusiasm and an eagerness to apply the benefits of computers to enhance daily life, to socialise and to communicate with relatives and friends around the world.

GUEST SPEAKER

Our guest speaker at the April meeting will be **Rob Drummond** of Quantum Technologies who will describe and demonstrate equipment for the sight impaired, specifically for those who use computers

“For 21 years Quantum has designed, developed and distributed products that are aimed at empowering children, students and adults who have a print disability (blindness, low vision, and learning disabilities). We have seen the power of assistive technology and its ability to transform lives and provide opportunities for learning and living life to the full.” (from Quantum website)

TEN MINUTE SPEAKER

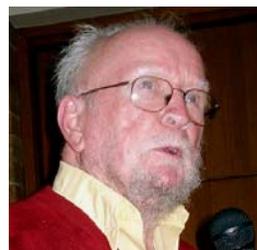
Joyce Pickup - an experienced Tutor, who conducts the Monday Paint Shop Pro sessions, will demonstrate the value of FACEBOOK for Seniors

Facebook is a social networking website with which users can add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves and their activities. One can create profiles with photos, lists of personal interests, contact information and other personal information. Communicating with friends and other users can be done through private or public messages or a chat feature. Users can also create and join interest groups, and is free to use.

Additionally, users can join networks organized by clubs societies and different interest groups

Facebook is becoming increasingly popular with Senior Groups. According to a recent survey there has been a surprisingly steep rise in Facebook members aged 55 years and over. The survey, taken from January to July of 2009, saw an incredible 513.7% increase in Facebook members in this age category.

LAST MEETING



Jim Jacobs of the Endeavour Club, Caringbah displayed and demonstrated several new computer gadgets, including a computer and internet-enabled HD television. Despite a few

technical challenges Jim's presentation was instructive and entertaining. Jim was supported by **Walter Skarschewski**, the President of the Endeavour Club.

Our Ten Minute speaker, **Henri Joubert**, reviewed the fun and learning one could enjoy with YouTube. A short summary of that quick talk follows.



In a short time YouTube has grown to become the ultimate destination on the web for videos and was eventually acquired by Google.



Through Google one may access YouTube or click on the link below to see our Wednesday class in action.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mryvk8d6QGA

Once in YouTube one may search for and play any of the millions of videos on almost every topic.

How to save YouTube videos to your computer?

The simplest way is to copy the URL of the desired video and paste it into <http://keepvid.com> and click on Download (don't be fooled by the sponsor's advertisement). Otherwise search for **youtube video download** for a great selection of software. There are even YouTube videos on how to download videos.

HOW TO PLAY FLV VIDEOS ON YOUR DESKTOP

The default format for flash videos like the ones hosted on YouTube is .FLV. and it isn't difficult to play them on your system. VLC media player (www.videolan.org/vlc) plays almost anything, including Youtube videos, and is an excellent replacement for Media Player. There are a number of other free stand-alone FLV players too. Just do a Google search for **FLV player** and you'll find a lot of them.

While all of this sounds a bit daunting, YouTube can be a lot of fun and instructive.

At a later date we will show you how to upload videos to Youtube.

Enjoy !

Some of Thursday's Tutors



Maria Gianonne, Betty Saltmiras and Henri Joubert

LAPTOPS

While students would prefer to do all their work and practice sessions on their own laptops they should understand that space is at a premium in our classrooms. Members wishing to bring their laptops to class, should discuss the matter with their tutors.

In addition, many newly purchased laptops will have Windows 7 preloaded, which raises additional issues for Tutors who may yet have to become acquainted with the new operating system.

Be patient. Tutors are fast catching up with the innovations in Windows 7 and in compiling teaching materials.

Just as important, is the issue of insurance and liability.

Please note that this Club will not accept responsibility nor any liability for laptops being used on the Club premises.

Are you interested in Video Photography? The Club is running classes and we have some places in the Video Editing/Camera Class. Please contact the head tutor. See page 4 of this newsletter

FREE SOFTWARE

As described in previous editions of this newsletter here are some FREE and excellent Open Source computer utilities which will save you plenty of money. They are worth every cent you don't spend.

1. For those members who have reported difficulty accessing our email newsletter and those from ASCCA, I suggest that they install a free programme called **FOXIT Reader**

www.foxitsoftware.com/downloads/index.php

which will open any PDF file. (It is possible that your Adobe Acrobat Reader programme may have become corrupted)

2. **VLC**: an excellent media player and a worthy alternative to the overloaded Windows Player, can play just about all music and videos in almost every format. Download from here:

www.videolan.org/vlc/download-windows.html

3. Mozilla **Firefox**. A great alternative to Microsoft Internet Explorer. It does not attract as much spyware and malware as does IE. Download from here:

www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/firefox.html

You might also try Mozilla Thunderbird as an email programme - as good as, if not better than, Outlook Express.

4. An excellent replacement for NERO, which can be somewhat complicated, is the simple and effective and lightweight **BurnAware**, downloadable from www.burnaware.com.

Much easier to use than NeroBurn.

5. Over the years our Tutors have usually recommended AVG Free as an excellent virus and Spyware utility.

In various internet tests **Microsoft Security Essentials** scores, overall, better than AVG in capturing viruses and malware.

www.microsoft.com/security_essentials

(If you get a message "Not available in your country or region" when clicking on this link, then copy and paste the link into your browser address bar)

Maintenance of our computers is time consuming and as our Maintenance team members are all volunteers time is clearly at a premium. In order to carry out this increased work load we require additional time and now need to reduce classes by one session per month. However, our Tutors are flexible and will where possible allow extra time per session.

OPTICAL DISCS Part 1 (of 5)

What is the life expectancy of CDs and DVDs ?

The life expectancy of optical discs depends on many factors, some controllable by the user, others not.

Factors that affect disc life expectancy include the following:

- type
- manufacturing quality
- condition of the disc before recording
- quality of the disc recording
- handling and maintenance
- environmental conditions

There are three basic types of CD and DVD discs:

- ROM (Read Only Memory)
- R (Write once)
- RW (Rewritable) and RAM (Random Access Memory)

Each uses a different data layer material:

- CD and DVD ROM use moulded aluminum
- R use organic dye
- RW and RAM use phase changing film

Deterioration of this material is the primary cause for disc degradation and, ultimately, "end of life" for the disc, assuming proper physical handling.

Among the manufacturers that have done testing, there is consensus that, under recommended storage conditions, CD-R, DVD-R, and DVD+R discs should have a life expectancy of 70 to 200 years or more; CD-RW, DVD-RW, DVD+RW, and DVD-RAM discs should have a life expectancy of 25 years or more. Little information is available for CD-ROM and DVD-ROM discs (including audio and video), resulting in an increased level of uncertainty for their life expectancy. Expectations vary from 20 to 100 years for these discs.

Manufacturers claim that CD-R and DVD-R discs have a shelf life of 5 to 10 years *before* recording, but no expiration dates are indicated on CD-R, DVD-R, or DVD+R packaging, nor are there published reports of tests to verify these claims. Still, it would be prudent, in light of these claims, to purchase new discs as they are needed rather than to order large quantities and stockpile them for future use.

RW and RAM discs are generally not considered for long-term or archival use, and life expectancy tests are seldom done for this medium. Rewritable discs use a phase-changing metal alloy film for recording data and aluminum for the reflective layer. The alloy film is not as stable as the dye used in R discs because the material normally degrades at a faster rate; however, these discs should still be stable enough to outlast the current CD or DVD technology.

Because CD technology is only about twenty years old (and recordable technology is younger than that), these expected life spans are estimates based on accelerated aging tests. As the testers at Kodak put it, chances are that if there is a significant error, the disc won't work. Either it works or it doesn't.

How the discs are handled and stored can greatly affect their longevity. CD-Rs, with their dye layer, are especially prone to light. Leaving them on a desk can lessen the dye's reactivity when passed through the recorder's laser beam. The dye's chemical state also makes for the shorter life span before they are recorded. As time goes on, the dye loses its ability to change from transparent to opaque. In other words, if you are only going to use one every six months, do not buy the 50-pack.

CD-RWs have a similar problem with their alloy layer. After many recordings and erasures, the alloy loses its ability to change from one state to another.

The Technical Group

