

Email report – meeting 13/06/2012 at Stowupland School

We had 11 members at our meeting ; apologies received from Sylvia, Harry, Pat & Brian.

Agony Corner:

We reviewed some items from the last meeting before moving onto new ones.....

1) Issues with 'Dropbox.

- Confirmed that recipients of a Dropbox link do not have to have Dropbox installed on their machine (from last meeting).
- A link to Dropbox in the last email illustrated its usefulness, i.e. to a selection of pictures (too big for email) from the previous session when Marian showed us how to restore an old photo. Just clicking on one of the pictures opens the gallery (<http://tinyurl.com/littlemuriel>).

2) 'How can I permanently change the default microphone settings in Skype?'

- Our member reports that, in spite of following the instructions in the last email and contrary to its own claims, 'Skype' continues to select its own preferences for the audio set up.
- A new versions has just been installed but not yet tested.
- In addition to information in the last email, there's a useful video on checking sound settings. Go to <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-gb/support/user-guides/> then, towards bottom of page, start the video 'Friends can't hear you voice on Skype?'.
If this doesn't solve problem, click the link on RHS of same page 'Go to support network' <http://community.skype.com/t5/English/ct-p/English?profile.language=en> and post your own question. It's necessary to return to this to view any replies.

3) 'My friend sent a word file but I can't open it, I just get an error message saying that it is not compatible.'

- In answering this question last time, it was assumed that the recipient was using Word 2003 or earlier rather than Office 2007/2010. It transpires, however that 'Word' is not installed and that the problem programme is Microsoft 'Works'.
- I've since had a look at Microsoft Works and, contrary to what I said at the meeting, it *is* possible to both read and save doc/docx files (at least in version 7) in Works, so there's no obvious reason for the problem in this case. Your friend should also be able to save her Word files as 'Works' files 'wps' which you will be able to read easily.
- Or try this. Save the email sent file to a known folder on your machine. Then open Works word processor, go to file menu and click open. The Open dialogue box appears - navigate to the folder where the file is saved then in the 'Files of type' drop down menu select doc or docx as the case may be. Click open and the document should appear.
- Failing this, you can download a 'Word' viewer programme from the internet at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/891090> . Please note that if the files you want to look at are 'docx' then you will still need the compatibility pack obtainable from this same link (and as described at the last meeting).

4) 'When I first view my emails they are in a small strip and difficult to read, why?' We discussed this again.

- This is the 'Preview' pane which allows you to check whether the mail is genuine or whether you want to view it or not.
- If you don't want it, just click delete. If you do want to see it in full, double click and it will open in it's own window.

5) A discussion on last month's session

- A link to the pictures worked on was posted in the email (Item 1 above, Dropbox)
- Marian used Photoshop Elements, perceived to be the best value for money, but many commercial programmes will allow you to follow the same procedures. A good free programme to try is PhotoPlus from Serif <http://www.serif.com/free-photo-editing-software/>.

6) How do I get rid of the 'Bing' search engine? This was installed when I mistakenly downloaded MSN which has now installed itself as my home page.

- To restore the 'Home' page you want. In IE navigate to, say, the BBC site. On the RHS of the tool bar there's a picture of a house, click the down arrow. Select 'Add or change home page' then click the top box, then yes. BBC will now become your home page.
- To get rid of 'Bing'. Go to Tools, manage Ad-ons then Search providers. Select 'Bing' then at the bottom RHS of the box click Remove.
- To clean up the number of Tool bars, go 'Tools', then Toolbars then just un-tick the toolbars you don't want. These procedures can give you a lot of extra space at the top of your browser.

Computer & Internet Security

This is a topic that comes up at many of our meetings so it was decided that it would be worthwhile to devote this month's topic to this subject. I put together a PowerPoint presentation 'Scratching the Surface of Computer and Internet Security', a compilation of all the basic issues and methods of how to protect yourself from those who may wish to invade your privacy in all its forms.

- There's too much to go through in detail here so I've made the presentation available to all members through a Dropbox link (*sent to Stowmarket U3A Computer Group members directly*). Click on this link and the Presentation will download onto your computer. This is compatible with Office 2003 as well as Office 2007/10. If you don't have Powerpoint installed you can download a free viewer from <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=13>
- We looked at some of the terms used and what they mean before moving on to the basic essentials for protection.
- Some time was spent discussing passwords; how 'strong' they need to be and some ways of never forgetting them.
- Having gone through a series of Do's and Don'ts we moved onto Wifi.
- When away from home, it's important to be careful when logging onto 'Free Wifi' services that don't require a password as these can be hijacked by others who imitate them and interfere with your machine.
- At this juncture, John showed us his T-Mobile Pointer, a device that enables up to 5 Wifi devices (tablet, laptop etc.) to receive a mobile 3G signal; these and the simpler dongles (plugged into one machine) are known as Mifi (My Wifi) devices. The advantage of the pointer over the dongle is that you can position it for the best signal irrespective of where in the vicinity your machine is. John gave us a lot more information and I'm sure he would be happy to help if you ask him.
- Time was spent discussing email security and how to secure confidential information. Encryption is possible in email programmes but by no means straight forward. Since the meeting I've read about two simple methods one of which is to put a Notepad or Word file in Dropbox and share that file only with the person with whom you wish to correspond. The other is to create a 'dead letter box', e.g. you could set up a dedicated Gmail account and share the password only with your correspondent. Log into the account, compose your email, *save it without sending it* and notify your friend that a message is waiting. They can then log into the account and the message will be there in the Drafts folder.

- We had some fun playing with shortened web addresses. These are very useful (I use them a lot!) but need to be treated with caution if received from an unknown source. We accessed <http://tinyurl.com/> and I demonstrated how to make a very short address from a long one; e.g. the 59 character Microsoft address above becomes <http://tinyurl.com/bnl9h85> , just 26 characters.
- If you are suspicious you can visit <http://longurl.org/> , paste the short address in the box and it will show you the full address so you can check whether or not it is legitimate. (We discovered that URL is short for 'uniform resource locator' a specific character string that constitutes a reference to an Internet resource.
- A question was raised about files saved by the virus checker and put into 'quarantine' in the virus vault. Can they do further harm and is it safe to delete them? Once a virus checker has done its work the offending programmes are quarantined (i.e. safe from doing harm) so that you can have a look at them and it is perfectly OK to 'Empty the Virus Vault if invited.
- Amongst the final tips is a link to a Google site which tells us how safe or otherwise a particular site is <http://www.google.com/safebrowsing/diagnostic?site=google.com> (<http://tinyurl.com/667e5z>). By replacing the last google.com with another domain, e.g. bbc.co.uk say, you can check what kind of malware the site has hosted over the last 90 days. Frighteningly 'Google' gave the worst result of any web site we checked! See screen shots here <http://tinyurl.com/6n5fkaf> & <http://tinyurl.com/7ckv879> .
- Finally we looked at the web site <http://ask-leo.com> . This site is a goldmine of computer Q & As; if you sign up to the free twice weekly newsletter you will be provided with a link to a 1,000+ page pdf archive of all his topics in 2011 (download and save to your computer). We explored this in some detail and everyone was very impressed (too big to attach here, strongly suggest you sign up!).

Next Meeting:

Will be next **Wednesday 11th July**, 1.30pm at Stowupland School.

We will take an in depth look at the '**Windows Context Menu**' - the 'right click' to you and me. This has many functions depending on where/when it is used.

Although we have a topic for August (iTunes and Beyond..), there have been no suggestions for the months thereafter. If there is a topic that you think most people would be interested in exploring, or better still if you could volunteer to give a talk yourself, please let me know.