

The

Computer Link

June 2009

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

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➔ **DEADLINE** ➔
for **NEXT ISSUE**,
One week after meeting

Chris Christensen Skypes Us to Baghdad

NNCUG Vice President, Chris Christensen, gave the membership a live demonstration of SKYPE photo-telephony by contacting his grandson at Camp Victory near Baghdad, Iraq during the June meeting at Westminster-Canterbury.

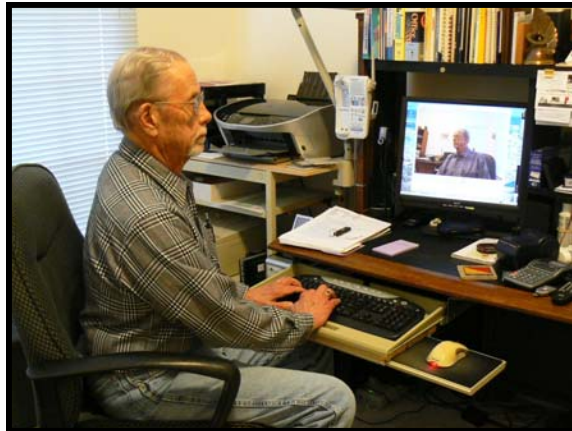
Chris first showed how to download the 1.8 gigabytes of free Skype software using Google and then walking us through the important various features that allows **free calling any where in the world** to other

Skype users. Whenever members are on line, the Skype page indicates who else is online and therefore ready to answer the phone. Just point and click, the phone rings, they answer and you are in the same room.

Chris limits his calls to a certain list he sets up on his computer and thus uses it for his inner circle. He also hung a camera on his laptop screen and was

set up for **face to face chats**. He cautions that only broadband users can use Skype, dial up is too slow.

For those wanting to call anyone using the computer, there is a way to dial into the hard-line system for audio only, not video. It costs pennies a minute.



Albert "Chris" Christensen getting ready to Skype *Self Portrait*

Vonage and Magic Jack have similar system. It can be set up using a Debit or Credit Card and you are billed when a certain amount, say \$10, has accumulated. Unlike regular phone bills,

there are no taxes.

The real treat came when connected **to Baghdad**. Chris aimed his camera at the audience and all were invited to ask questions about life about seven time zones away. His grandson appeared in his room with air conditioning that he had to turn off for a while due to noise interference. The temperature rapidly

Continued on Page 5

Things That You Can Do With That Flash Drive

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WEBSITES:

<http://portableapps.com>
http://u3.sandisk.com/download/Download_no.asp
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-vista/features/readyboost.aspx>

With the demise of the floppy disk, and the approaching demise of the CD disc for data purposes, the USB flash drive has become the defacto method of saving and transporting files between computers. **These small USB drives** are known by a variety of monikers, such as flash drive, pen drive, pin drive, and thumb drive. Since their introduction a few years ago, their capacity has increased, and their prices have plunged. They are readily available in the big box stores, discount stores, club stores, and online. The most recent ones I purchased for the holidays were 8 gig size (almost the equivalent of the data stored on 2 standard DVD discs, about a dozen CD discs, or about 5700 floppy disks), and cost under \$15 each. In the after-Christmas sales, some 8 gig flash drives were advertised for \$9 each (after rebate). This amount of non-volatile storage for the price was inconceivable just a few

years ago. I thought I was getting a bargain a few years ago when I bought my first flash drive, a 64mb Lexar, for \$49, and now a drive with about 64 times that capacity is about one-fourth the price! I have co-workers and students who wear their flash drives on cords around their necks, where they are referred to as **"geek beads"**.

Most of us use the drive simply for portable storage, the ability to carry files around with us, but in reality these flash drives can do much more than to simply be used for storage. Most of the USB flash drives on the market today comply with the USB 2.0 standard for high speed

8 gig flash drives were advertised for \$9 each (after rebate).

transfer, while there still are a few inexpensive, low capacity drives that are of the slower USB 1.1 speed standard, or only about 3% of the speed of the USB 2.0 drives. From a practical viewpoint, the user will not notice any significant difference in speed if small files are saved and read, but will notice a difference if large files are used.

There are some other standards for USB flash drives that many users may find beneficial, if their flash drives have the capabilities. Users of Microsoft Vista (Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, and Ultimate versions) may find it advantageous to

purchase flash drives that are labeled as "ReadyBoost". According to Microsoft, "Windows Vista introduces Windows ReadyBoost, a new concept in **adding memory to a system**. You can use non-volatile flash memory, such as that on a universal serial bus (USB) flash drive, to improve performance without having to add additional memory "under the hood." If the drive is compatible with the ReadyBoost standard, some of the flash memory in the drive can effectively and temporarily be added to the RAM (memory) installed in the computer, with an improvement on performance. If the Vista user with a compatible flash drive right clicks on the flash drive letter displayed under "My Computer" or Windows Explorer, and then left clicks on Properties - ReadyBoost, Vista will recommend how much of the available memory on the drive can be effectively and safely utilized by Vista. Other data stored on the ReadyBoost drive is protected from damage, and will not be harmed if the drive is used as a ReadyBoost drive. Because of the higher performance requirements, ReadyBoost compatible flash drives are **slightly more expensive than standard drives**, but are often the least expensive way to add memory to a Vista computer.

Another useful feature often found on a USB flash drive is known as "U3". Drives that are U3 compatible are

Continued on Page 4

How Can I Teach My Windows Mouse New Tricks? (And When Should I Buy a New Mouse?)

Written by *Gabe Goldberg*,
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For many people, the Windows mouse hasn't evolved much since the dawn of the PC. This is especially true of bottom-bargain gadgets often provided as standard PC purchase accessories: two buttons boringly labeled Left and Right, wired to the computer, and sensing motion through a small rotating sphere in contact with a desk or mousepad. If you're using one of these, a very economical upgrade can greatly improve your mousing game.

Perhaps the most basic mouse-tech enhancement was the **scroll wheel**, first available a decade or more ago, allowing easy up-and-down motion within most applications' files. If your hand is already on the mouse for file editing, spinning the wheel can be much more convenient than moving the cursor to the scroll bar and then back to the file area.

Since some mouse software only handles basic tasks, **more exotic functions** may require a simple software install.

(Many manufacturers provide diverse mouse critters and other pointing/tracking devices; if you're not using a Microsoft mouse, check the Web site for whatever gadget you have at hand, since similar capabilities may be available.)

Loc8tor

Googling "intellimouse" takes you to Microsoft's Web page where you can click Download Software and navigate to Download Mouse and Keyboard Software and select/download software for your device.

Many Microsoft mice ("mouses"?) allow tilting the scroll wheel left/right for horizontal scrolling of files too wide to fully display, providing convenient two-dimensional motion. And some allow the scroll wheel to be a third button to click, providing instant access to your favorite common function.

Even better, many Microsoft mice **add another button or two**, potentially making available a total of five quick-action functions. Intellimouse software provides great flexibility in defining mouse-button actions, such as Show/Hide Desktop, Forward/Back browser functions, Magnify, Copy/Cut/Paste, etc. Setting a button to Magnify gives one-click access to a tailorable (size/shape and degree of magnification) magnifying glass that's great for viewing small/intricate on-screen details.

Wireless mouse operation avoids tangling the mouse cable in desktop clutter and

Continued on Page 4

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Flash Drives *Continued from Page 2*

labeled as such. A **U3 powered flash** drive allows the user to carry special versions of hundreds of programs on the flash drive that can be run directly from the flash drive without being installed on the computer. This is an effective way to carry the actual software the user is familiar with, and run it on other computers.

When unplugged from the computer, U3 leaves no data or other information left on the computer that was used. Some of the popular **programs that come in U3** formats are the Firefox browser, Skype telephone, McAfee Antivirus (about \$15), RoboForm Password Manager, OpenOffice (the comprehensive suite of office software including a Microsoft compatible word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, database, and more, free), Thunderbird email client, and dozens of games. Most U3 drives come preinstalled with password protection and a "U3 Launchpad" which is a menu driven directory of the software on the U3 drive.

For those of us who have standard non-U3 drives, there is now an alternative that provides for the same functionality. This alternative to U3 that will run on almost all con-

temporary flash drives is called **"PortableApps"**, and can be found online at portableapps.com. According to the PortableApp website, "A portable app is a computer program that you can carry around with you on a portable device and use on any Windows computer. When your USB flash drive, portable hard drive, iPod or other portable device is plugged in, you have access to your

software and personal data just as you would on your own PC. And when you unplug the device, none of your personal data is left behind." Dozens of portable apps are available, including the Firefox browser, OpenOffice office suite, antivirus software, games, password managers, and many other pieces of software. The **PortableApp Suite is totally free**, and does not contain

any spyware or adware. In addition to the bundled suite, there are many other programs available, almost all free, which will run as portable apps. The PortableApp website keeps a running tally of new software that is available, including new releases and versions, as well as beta (pre-release) software. A simple click will install the selected software on the flash drive.



Mouse Tricks *from Page 2*

optical/laser operation is smoother and more reliable than old-style mouseball motion sensing. New mouse shapes are more **ergonomic**, improving hand positioning, important for people in intimate contact with their mouse for many hours per day.

And Intellimouse **software -- free to download** -- provides many more mousing capabilities and options including tailorable pointer icons, trails, and speeds. Don't settle for Mickey (mouse) when Mighty (mouse) is available. After buying a new device, check for newer software than came in the package --

you may pick up features or bug fixes.

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Genealogy Software - What to look for?

The NNCUG Genealogy SIG will start meeting again on July 9, 2009 1:30-2:30PM at Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury. The topic will be "**available software.**"

Currently there are at least ten family tree software programs from which to choose. Each has its positive features for recording your family's history. In addition to family trees, there is a wide array of software for creating family migration maps, documenting historical events during a person's lifetime, family reunions, publishing a family history, creating a family history website, creating wall charts and many other topics of interest to genealogists. At future meetings we hope to look at some of these software packages and learn about some of the most **useful online resources** for genealogy research.

For the first NNCUG Genealogy SIG meeting, two of the **top rated programs** will be demonstrated and compared. These are Roots Magic 4 and Legacy Family Tree 7. Both are intuitive to use and support GEDCOM imports from other family tree software programs. This program should be of interest to both beginners and experienced users who may want to consider changing software.

Future meeting topics;

- July 9– selecting the best **family tree software** for my purposes
- September 17– organizing my paper genealogy **documents into** digital form
- November 11– US **Census data** – a demonstration of different online ways to access such and pros and cons of each.

Ann Thompson, SIG Leader

May Meeting Minutes

The monthly meeting on 16 May 2009 at RW-C. Attendance was 24, three guests.

President BJ McMillan called order to the meeting at 9:15 AM with an open question period covering a wide range of internet confusion and computer problems. Treasurer, Jim Thompson proposed a **big ticket item raffle** in the near future.

Chris Christensen demonstrated the SKYPE program for audio and visual software for audio and visual communication. In the meeting room, he called his grandson in Baghdad and carried on a conversation. The system had minimal video confusion, and very clear audio with minor lag.

Raffle winners were **Bruce McMillan, Jim Thompson, and Chris Christensen.**

Don Beard , Secretary

Membership Report - June 2009

NEW MEMBER– None

RENEW June 2009 – Alan Christensen, Chris Christensen, Rick Crawford, Richard Davis, David Herndon, Ann Thompson, Steve Zukor.

RENEW May 2009 - Jean Ehlman, Helen McGonegal, Tom Miller, Tony Rabalnis, Thomas Warner.

Membership dues are \$20 annually. Please send to:

Jim Thompson, Treasurer, NNCUG, P.O. Box 774, Burgess, VA. 22432

For insertion into our local newspaper advertising, please send to bevnjim@netscape.com no later than 15th of the month.

Skype *Continued from Pg. 1*

rose to over 100 degrees at five in the afternoon. His son is a data base administrator. During Operation Iraqi Freedom he operated in both north and south and seen it all.

Chris also showed us a **cell phone version** for computer calling on the run. It is hard to believe how far the dial up phone capability has come in our life times. Thanks, Chris, for the great presentation. **Ed.**

The Computer Link

Northern Neck Computer
Users' Group
P.O. Box 1213
Kilmarnock, Va. 22482

NNCUG Meeting Dates

NNCUG GENERAL MEETING

Third Saturday 9:30 a.m.

Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room

BEGINNERS SIG

***Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666***

GENEALOGY SIG

***Meets bi-monthly, Thursdays 1:30 p.m. RW-C
Contact Ann Thompson at athompson@kaballero.com
to get on the mail list for announcements.***

PHOTOSHOP SIG

***First Tuesday every month, 9 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831
or message Bird@kaballero.com***

**For a photo treat visit
www.raptapp.homestead.com**



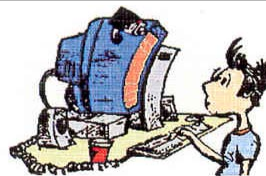
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Coming Attractions

Membership—June 20, 9:30 am RW- C Build a Website

Photo SIG—July 7, 9 am—Lancaster Library

Genealogy SIG—July 9, 1:30 pm RW-C Available Software