

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Have you just recently purchased a new computer? If not, take yourself back to the time when you purchased that last new computer. Remember what the screen looked like when you turned it on for the first time? Were there a lot of icons on the screen? How many of you looked at all of the icons and then said to yourself, "What are all of these icons for?" "Do I need all of these icons?" "Which ones can I remove?" "How do I go about getting rid of the ones I don't need?" This is pretty much the norm when you purchase a new computer. All of the computer manufacturers load a lot of "stuff", most of which you don't need, on their computers. As frustrating as this is for a lot of us, if they're being paid to install this "stuff" and it reduces the price of the computer, OK. Most of us probably appreciate the fact that we're saving a little money on the purchase but that's not much consolation when it comes to the task at hand, getting rid of the unnecessary "stuff". Let's look at some of the more common "stuff" you'll find loaded on a new computer; a trial version of an Internet security suit, a trial version of an antivirus program, a trial version of Microsoft Office, a link to a page to help you find an Internet service provider, a link to a program or web site that will let you load a collection of games, a link to the manufacturer's web site to help you learn about your new computer (How about helping me get this "stuff" off my computer?), a link to the manufacturer's web site that will provide updates for your computer, a link to the Share-To-The-Web upload folder, an icon for Install Rhapsody, an icon for RealPlayer, an icon for Bluetooth Instillation Guide, and an icon for Software Upgrades. The list goes on and on with icons or links for; OffPro07 Trial, eMusic, FREE Web Site, Get 15 Free Photo Prints, Lojack for Laptops, Memeo LifeAgent, Napster, Photo Works, Voice & Video Calls, and Vongo. Now, where do you begin and how do you go about getting rid of this unnecessary "stuff"? If you're a new computer user, you'll probably want to ask a knowledgeable computer user to help. You might consider bringing your computer to one of the Club's Open House Help Clinics. If you've been using a computer for several years and are comfortable doing basic maintenance, you can start by making a list of what you want to remove. Begin by going to the Control Panel, Add or Remove Programs (XP) under Programs, Uninstall a program (Vista). Look for a program you want to remove, click on it to highlight, and click Remove (XP) Uninstall (Vista). When the computer uninstalls a program it's not uncommon for it to leave the icon for the program on the desktop. When this happens, just right-click the icon, select Delete, and send it to the Recycle bin. That was the easy part. Some of the things on your list that you want to remove will

not be on the list in Add or Remove Programs/Uninstall a program. This is because they aren't programs. The icon on the desktop might be a link to a web page, a shortcut to a folder on the hard drive that contains information, or a shortcut to an executable file. You could right-click the icon on the desktop, select Delete, and send it to the Recycle bin, but in most cases that will not remove the associated information from the hard drive. Here is where a little computer savvy will be helpful. Pick one of the icons on the desktop you want to remove. Right-click the icon and select Properties. This will bring up a dialog box that provides the information you need to proceed. What you see in the text box to the right of Target is the path to the location of the data that's associated with the icon on the desktop. The easiest way to get to that data is to click the "Open File Location" button. Here is where you need the computer savvy. Based on what you find, you need to decide how to go about removing the data from the hard drive. If you find a single file, no problem. If you find a folder full of files and folders, be careful. OK, if this got a little too complicated, here are a couple of alternatives. Create a new folder on the desktop and call it "Junk". Use the right mouse button to drag-and-drop the unwanted icons in the Junk folder. When you release the right mouse button, select Move Here. This will get the icon off the desktop but will not, in most cases, remove any information from the hard drive. The second alternative is to use a free program called Decrapifier. Yes, this is a legitimate program that will allow you to select, from a list, what you want to remove, create a restore point, and then have the program automatically remove what you have selected. It works for programs that appear on the Add or Remove Programs (XP) or Uninstall a program (Vista) list and for the other "stuff" you want to remove from the desktop. As with any program that makes major changes to your computer, read the warning and disclaimer. The web site is www.decrapifier.com. Download the program to your Download folder and run the program by double-clicking the file, PC-Decrapifier-1.9.1.exe. The program does not install itself on the computer and does not add an icon to the desktop.

Well, the Club has endured for another year. Tonight you will be electing the officers and one of three board members to guide your club through 2009. This group will take over in September and once again it will be time to renew your membership. Unlike everything else, dues have not increased; they are still \$25 for a family and \$15 for an individual. We want to offer a very sincere "Thank You" to everyone who supported the Club this past year and hope that in 2009 the Computer Club will continue to be one of the organizations you feel worthy of your support.

If you're interested in old photos you'll find 543 pages of them at www.shorpy.com. Make sure you use the tab feature of the browser to look at some of them full size.

Having a problem with your computer? Having a problem doing something on the computer? Stop by one of the Open House Help Clinics we have at the John Ruehle Center and see if we can solve your problem. These clinics are from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday and the third Wednesday of the month. The clinics are open to the public so you can invite a friend or neighbor. There has been a significant increase in the number of people taking advantage of this service. If everyone arrives during the first hour there will probably be a wait.