

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

September 2008
Don Hood, President

Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Suite 120 Bella Vista, AR 72715-3016

Web site: www.bvcompclub.org

E-mail: jrc@bvcc.arcoxml.com

Searching for information on the Internet can sometimes be frustrating and time consuming. A search engine can offer you a bazillion web pages, none of which provide you with the information you're looking for. This could be the result of the search engine you used and/or the key word(s) you asked it to look for. Different search engines use different criteria for their search. For example, ask Google to search for *antivirus* and it will find 151 million web pages, MSN will find 443 million pages, and Yahoo will find 437 million web pages. Which on one these search engines is the best? You'll have to do some experimenting and decide which search engine you think returns the most number of relevant entries on the first two or three pages. After you've selected the search engine you prefer, your next task is to learn how to compose your search request. Let's say you're interested in purchasing a new Ford automobile and you type *new ford* in Google. That will return about 56 million web pages about Ford cars, Harrison Ford, and all things new. So, how do you narrow the search and make the results more relevant? You do it by carefully selecting specific key search words and using advanced search techniques. Advanced search techniques include Boolean searching (the use of OR, AND, NOT), parenthesis, quotation marks, and the + and - symbols. Let's say you're interested in web sites about dogs. You could do a search for *dogs* and then do a search for *canines*. If you use the Boolean operator OR, *dogs OR canines*, you can combine the two searches and receive a list of web pages that contain information about dogs and/or canines. If you were interested in dogs, but not poodles, you would use the NOT operator, *dogs NOT poodles*. If you were only interested in the boxer breed, you would use the AND operator, *dogs AND boxers*. You need to restrict your search when you use key search words that have a dual meaning, like boxers. You might find it easier to use the + symbol as a substitute for the AND operator, but the number of web pages retrieved will usually not be the same. The - symbol can be used as a substitute for the NOT operator. When using the + and - symbols, the way you type your query in the search box can make a difference. Entering *dogs+ poodles* or *dogs +poodles* will return a different number of web pages than entering *dogs + poodles*. Let's say you need new tires for your car, so you type *automobile tires + new* in the Google search box and press the Enter key. This query will get you over two million web pages. Here's a good place to use quotation marks. Typing *"automobile tires" + new* will reduce the number of pages to around 250 thousand, about half of which have nothing to do with new tires. Now, type *"automobile tires" + "bentonville arkansas"*. This gets you a list of 287 web pages with ten local area tire dealers at the top of the first page. There is also a link to 834 businesses within an hour of Bentonville, most of which sell tires. Placing quotation marks around two or more words improves the results because it limits the results to

an exact phrase. Some search engines allow you to force the order of processing by using parenthesis. If you were looking for information about cancer in senior citizens caused by smoking you could use *senior citizens AND (cancer OR american cancer society) AND smoking*. You can further restrict the search by specifying domains. If you add *site:gov OR site:edu* to the search request, *senior citizens AND (cancer OR american cancer society) AND smoking site:gov OR site:edu*, you will be shown web pages that are on government or educational web sites. This can be helpful when searching for reliable information. This example also reduced the number of web pages from 225 thousand to about eighteen thousand. Case is not important when typing key search words, but Boolean operators need to be upper case.

Programs you download from the Internet are categorized based on what you need to do to legally use the program. Freeware is just what the name implies, it is free. A word of warning, use caution and research the program before downloading and installing it on your computer. There a lot of free programs on the Internet that have undesirable programs bundled with them. It could be spyware, adware, a key logger, Trojan horse, or some other form of malware that could be detrimental to the health of your computer. Rather than sell their program, the developer makes money by bundling the malware. When you install the free program the malware is also installed, almost always without your permission or knowledge. Shareware programs are usually offered two ways. You can download and use the program. If you decide it's a program you want to continue to use, you're honor-bound to pay for the program. Other shareware programs will work for a specific length of time (fifteen or thirty days) before becoming inoperable. If you want to continue to use the program, you must pay for the program and obtain a license. Then there are programs you can download that are categorized as demos or free trial versions. These can be fully functional or have parts of the program disabled until you pay for the program and obtain a license. If it's a fully functional program it's going to stop working after a trial period (fifteen or thirty days is common). If the program is designed to help you maintain your computer in good working order, like a registry cleaner, it's almost certain to have limited functionality until you purchase the program.

In October you'll begin to see more classes that will be taught using the new Windows Vista computers. E-mail and Internet will be offered for the first time in October. In November, Digital Photography and PC Maintenance will be added. In December, Advanced Computing will be offered for the first time. For those of you that have Windows XP, classes will still be conducted using the Windows XP computers until some time during 2009.

It's time to renew your membership. Unlike everything else, dues have not increased; they are still \$25 for a family and \$15 for an individual.

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 probable be a wait.