

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

October 2009
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

Some folks are eagerly awaiting the event, others couldn't care less. No matter which group you're in, it will happen. No, it's not the Arts and Crafts Fair that starts on the 15th, it's the release of Windows 7 on the 22nd. For Microsoft this is a BIG deal. Since Windows Vista was not a very successful operating system they needed to do everything possible to make Windows 7 lighter, free of major bugs, more stable, more secure without being intrusive, and most important, more compatible with hardware, software, and drivers. So far, most of the reviews and articles about Windows 7 have been favorable. The ultimate test will come after being released to the public. If it doesn't do all of the things mentioned then it could meet the same fate as Windows Vista. This would be disastrous for Microsoft. If the corporate community starts to hear a lot of negative talk about the operating system they probably won't be willing to invest millions of dollars to migrate from Windows 2000 and Windows XP. It looks like Microsoft has already addressed this possibility. More on this topic later in the newsletter. As with every new operating system release, there will be some problems. This creates a dilemma for anyone needing or wanting to purchase a new computer. Normally it's wise to wait three or four months before you purchase a new computer with an operating system that has just been released. This gives the manufacturer and Microsoft time to fix the initial round of problems. If you wait until after the first of the year you will have missed the best time to purchase a new computer. Normally, the best prices are offered during the Christmas season. For those of you who had to recently purchase a new computer, you should have been offered a free upgrade to Windows 7. After October 22nd there will be Windows Vista computers for sale and until January 31, 2010, they should continue to offer a free upgrade to Windows 7. This option allows you to upgrade when you feel the time is right. The down side is you have to do the upgrade. The computer manufacturer will provide you with the disk you can use to upgrade your computer. More on this a little bit later. Do you have to upgrade to Windows 7? Absolutely not! If it aint broke, don't fix it. Will your Windows XP computer still work OK? You bet! Microsoft will provide mainstream support for all versions of Windows Vista until April 10, 2012, and extended support for Windows XP Home, Media Center 2002, Media Center 2004, Media Center 2005, and Professional edition until April 8, 2014. Mainstream support is what you get for the first five years after an operating system is released. Extended support means all you get for free are security updates and access to the information on the Microsoft web site.

If you want to move up Windows 7 there is an easy way and many hard ways with a lot of restrictions. The easy way is to wait until after October 22nd and purchase a new computer with a factory-installed version of Windows 7. If you have or will purchase a new computer between

June 26, 2009, and January 31, 2010, with a factory-installed version of Windows Home Premium, Business, or Ultimate you should be offered a free do-it-yourself upgrade to Windows 7. Notice Windows Vista Home Basic was not included. If you're thinking about upgrading your Windows Vista computer to Windows 7, download, install, and run the Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor. Microsoft says, "In general, if you are running a PC with Windows Vista and the Upgrade Advisor says you can upgrade it, the transition to Windows 7 should be pretty smooth, although you may first need to update your Windows Vista system to the latest service pack." Upgrading from Windows Vista to Windows 7 shouldn't bother your programs, personal data, or settings, but, you had better copy all of your personal, can't afford to lose, data to a CD or DVD. Finally, if you have a 64-bit version of Vista you will have to upgrade to the 64-bit version of Windows 7. If you have a 32-bit version of Vista you will have to upgrade to the 32-bit version of Windows 7.

If you want to upgrade your Windows XP computer, now the task becomes much more difficult. First, download, install, and run the Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor. The minimum system requirements for the 32-bit version of Windows 7 are; 1 gigahertz processor, 1 gigabyte of RAM, 16 gigabytes of free hard drive space, DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM (Windows Display Driver Model) 1.0 or higher driver, and a DVD drive. Using a computer with these minimums would probably not be much fun. You'd probably want to double or triple the processor speed and memory and have a lot of free hard drive space. Now comes the part that makes it more difficult, you can't upgrade from Windows XP, you have to do a clean install. That means copying all of your personal information from the hard drive to a CD or DVD before the installation process erases the hard drive so it can install Windows 7. After you get Windows 7 installed you'll have to re-install all of your programs and copy your personal information back to the hard drive.

You might see an article about running both Windows 7 and Windows XP on a computer. There are two ways to do this. First would be to dual boot - install each operating system in its own portion of the hard drive (called a partition). When you start the computer, you select the operating system you want to use. The second option is a program designed to allow businesses to upgrade to Windows 7 and still use Windows XP unique programs. To use this option requires Windows 7 Professional or Ultimate, a special CPU (Central Processing Unit), Windows Virtual PC, and Windows XP Mode. This is Microsoft's attempt to get corporations to upgrade to Windows 7.

If you decide to install Windows 7 yourself, do some research on the Internet. If you Google *windows 7 upgrade* you'll find a lot of web sites that provide information and detailed step-by-step instructions on both upgrading and doing a clean install. Read what they have to say and print the how-to instructions.

=====

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. We now have three stations for members and one for nonmembers.