

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Those of you who've purchased a new Windows 7 computer or who've upgraded to Windows 7 should have discovered that there's no e-mail program. For whatever reason, Microsoft decided to not include an Outlook Express or Windows Mail type program in Windows 7. It's interesting that in the file structure of Windows 7 there is a Windows Mail folder, and it does contain some files, but something has been omitted to prevent the program from working. You can install the Windows Vista version of Windows Mail in Windows 7, but it's not an easy process. Once installed, the program works just like it did in Windows Vista. But, Microsoft probably won't support the program when it's installed in Windows 7, so long term that's not a viable option. Microsoft wants everyone to use their Windows Live program. More about this program in just a little bit. The question remains, what are you going to use to send and receive e-mail? If Cox is your Internet service provider you can keep your Cox e-mail address and use their web based e-mail program. Just go to the Cox home page and log in to your e-mail account with your User ID and Password. One of the advantages of using a web based e-mail program is that all you need to use the program is Internet access. If you're not on Cox, what are some of the other free web based e-mail programs that are available? If you have a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) Internet account you might already be using Yahoo for e-mail. Yahoo also offers a free e-mail account to anyone regardless of their Internet service provider. Another option would be a free Hotmail account, offered by MSN.com or a Gmail account from Google.com. There are a lot of other free web based e-mail programs you can use, just make sure you review their features before you chose. Check www.email.about.com/od/freeemailreviews/tp/free_email.htm for a review of eighteen free e-mail programs. If you don't want to use a web based e-mail program there are some free e-mail programs you can download and install on your computer. Here is a site that lists twelve, http://email.about.com/od/windowsemailclients/tp/free_email_prog.htm. If you just purchased a new Windows 7 computer or upgraded to Windows 7, make sure the program has been updated to work with Windows 7. Now to the program Microsoft wants everyone to use, Windows Live Mail. It's one of the services included in Microsoft's Windows Live Essentials program that includes Messenger, Mail, Writer, Photo Gallery, Movie Maker, and Toolbar to name a few. To begin, you need to create a Windows Live ID. This can be either somename@hotmail.com or somename@live.com. While most folks using Windows XP and Windows Vista probably won't be interested in using the Windows Live program, here's something you should consider if you decide to try the program. Your Live ID is not only your key to accessing the program, it's an e-mail address. If you chose somename@hotmail.com as your ID, that e-mail address cannot be set up in Outlook Express or Windows Mail. If you chose

somename@live.com, that e-mail address can be set up in Outlook Express or Windows Mail, allowing you to send and receive e-mail just as you would when using your default e-mail address. For those using Windows 7, after you establish your Live ID, go to the Microsoft site (www.download.live.com/wlmail), download the program, and install it on your computer. During the installation process you'll be given the opportunity to install any or all of eight programs that are part of the Windows Live program. If you wanted just Live Mail, this is where you would make that choice. The program is going to look and work very much like Outlook Express and Windows Mail. One of the nice features of the program is that in addition to Hotmail, you can set up multiple e-mail accounts from providers like Cox, Yahoo Plus, Gmail, and others.

When a search engine like Google returns several hundred thousand web sites in response to a search, how do you know which are safe and which to stay away from? There are a couple of programs that had the potential to keep you out of trouble when searching for information on the Web. The two are Web of Trust (WOT) and McAfee's SiteAdvisor. The intent of these programs was to rate web sites as safe, questionable (use caution), or dangerous. By placing a rating symbol next to each of the web sites listed in the Google search you were less likely to inadvertently end up on a dangerous site. Now that's invaluable information and something everyone should use, but here's the problem. Over time it been noted that the ratings are not 100% accurate. Some good safe sites have been rated as dangerous and some dangerous sites have not been noted as such. This doesn't mean you shouldn't consider using these kinds of programs until they develop one that's 100% accurate, you just need to add some common sense. If you've been using a perfectly safe site that all of a sudden receives a dangerous rating, don't stop using the site, just make sure they haven't made any changes that would justify the dangerous rating. If a site you don't know anything about is rated dangerous, you'd be wise to stay away. If a site that's rated safe turns out to be bad, report it. These programs, while not perfect, along with a little common sense, can help protect you and your computer when searching the Web.

We've made some changes to the January and February class schedule. Always check the Club's web site for the latest information. If you're interested in taking a class, don't wait until the last minute to call Marie Herr (273-2558). You might be told the class has been canceled because not enough people signed up. Never just go to the training center.

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 work stations for members and one for nonmembers.