

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

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Have you ever asked a friend or neighbor what they thought of a product? It's a good way to find out about products that turned out to be less than acceptable in quality or performance. But, what you get is the opinion of just one person based on their experience. What if you could ask 45,000 people about products and service after the sale? That's what *PCWorld* magazine did. They asked visitors to *PCWorld.com* to tell them about the mechanical soundness of their tech products and the quality of the tech support they received when those products requires service. The survey covered laptop and desktop computers, HDTVs, digital cameras, and printers. The results, Technology's Most (and Least) Reliable Brands, were published in the March 2010 issue of *PCWorld* magazine. Here are the top five brands in each of the categories.

Laptop computers - Apple, Toshiba, Acer, Gateway, and Asus

Desktop computers - Apple, Acer, eMachines, Sony, and Asus

HDTVs - Panasonic, Pioneer, Sharp, Insignia, and Samsung

Digital cameras - Canon, Panasonic, Nikon, Casio, and Fujifilm

Printers - Canon, Brother, Epson, Samsung, and Dell

Here are some comments about the product rankings this year compared to their ranking in the 2008 survey.

Laptop computers - Toshiba, Gateway, and Asus moved up in to the top five ahead of Sony, Dell, and Lenovo. The big mover here was Dell, which dropped from number four in 2008 to number nine (out of ten) in 2009.

Desktop computers - Apple, Acer, and eMachines maintained their position while Sony and Asus moved up to replace Dell and Lenovo. The big mover here was Sony, moving from number eleven (out of eleven) in 2008 to number four in 2009.

HDTVs - Samsung and Sharp remained in the top five while Pioneer and Insignia (a new comer to the list) moved up to replace Sony and LG.

Digital cameras - Canon, Panasonic, Casio, and Fujifilm remained in the top five while Nikon moved up to replace Kodak. Canon moved up from the number three position to number one to replace Fujifilm which dropped to number five.

Have you ever considered using some of those great family or vacation photos to creating a photo album? There are a number of web sites you can use to do that. Shutterfly, Snapfish, and Blurb are three such sites. Shutterfly and Snapfish are similar in that you create your album on line by uploading your photos to their web site. Blurb is actually a self-publishing service for books, from a text-only literary masterpiece to a cookbook. To create an album using Blurb you download their free BookSmart program and do all of the work on your computer, then upload

your completed album to their web site for publication. Pricing for a twenty page hard cover album on Shutterfly is \$29.99 and \$19.99 on Snapfish. On Blurb a forty page hard cover album is \$22.95. Another useful free service of Shutterfly and Snapfish is their online photo album (each site has a unique name for this service). You can upload your photos to an online album and then invite your friends and relatives to log on to the site and view your album. This is the easiest way to share a large number of photos.

For those of you using the free version of Avast antivirus there's a new program available, version 5.0. It can be downloaded and installed over top of version 4.8. The first thing you'll notice is a much improved user interface. Controls for the program are displayed in full screen windows and you have a lot more control over how the program works. During the download and installation watch for the following possible options:

Do you want to participate in the avast! Community? If you say yes the program will forward certain security-related information to Avast!.

Install the Google Chrome web browser - choose yes or no.

If registration is required, the time period for doing this has been reduced to 30 day. Registration is still good for one year.

Do you want to schedule a boot scan? If you say yes, when the installation is finished and you restart your computer, the program will start a scan of the hard drive before the operating system starts. This is OK but it'll take about thirty minutes to complete.

This has been mentioned before but it probably bears repeating. Any time you're downloading and installing something from the Internet, watch for additional programs or features that are offered in addition to the program you're downloading. Many times it's a toolbar like the Google toolbar. If you don't say no or take the check mark out of the check box, you get it.

Here are several web sites you might want to visit:

www.poodwaddle.com/worldclock.swf - we sure do eat a lot of chicken

www.co.benton.ar.us - choose Services and Assess before May 31

www.arstar.com/RenewalStart.jsp - click the mouse or drive to Gravette

If you're using a 32 bit version of Vista, the 32 or 64 bit version of Windows 7, and have a hard time remembering the location of functions that allow you to change the way your computer looks and works, try this. Right-click a clear area of the desktop, move to New and select Folder. Name the folder `GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}`. Note the period after `GodMode`. Double-click the icon and you'll have access to about 200 functions from one window. Vista users be sure to check the version of your operating system before you try this, it has been known to crash the 64 bit version of Vista. `GodMode` can be removed by deleting the folder on the desktop.

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The editor of the Bits and Bytes is suffering from a mild case of writers block. If you have a topic you would like to see covered in the newsletter, add it to the Newsletter Topics sheet located on the table at the back of the room.

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.