Bits and Bytes

If you're using Windows 7, Service Pack 1 is being offered via the Windows Update program. Microsoft is calling it an Important update, but it's not set to automatically install, you'll need to agree. At this time it's not mandatory, but will probably be required in the future to enable you to keep your computer up to date. The update doesn't make any major changes to the operating system and doesn't include any new features. The areas of the operating system that are updated will fix problems that most people never encountered; printing XPS documents, problems with HDMI audio devices, and folder options in Windows Explorer. It looks like the primary purpose of the update is to insure that you have all of the security updates that have been released for Windows 7. If you installed the beta version of Service Pack 1, it will have to be uninstalled. Here's some suggestions. Go to the Windows Update site (the link is on the All Programs menu), check for updates, and install any important and recommended updates that are available. Open your browser and delete temporary Internet files, cookies, and history. Run Disk Cleanup. Update and run your malware detection and removal programs. Update and run your antivirus program. Run Disk Defragmenter. Create a system restore point. Back up any critical information you have stored on the hard drive. Temporarily disabling your antivirus program before you install the service pack is your option. Some antivirus programs can interfere with service pack

installation. Do not use the computer while the service pack is being downloaded and installed. If you have a high speed Internet account and you've done all the things listed above you should be able to complete the update in less than 45 minutes. If you have a dial-up Internet account, take your computer somewhere where you can access a high speed connection or order a DVD. Fortunately there have been very few problems reported with this service pack installation. You might be thinking all of the procedures that were suggested are unnecessary, but if you ever have to try to recover from a service pack installation gone bad you'll be glad you did everything.

How many times have you heard the word "back up"? If someone says you should back up your computer, what do they mean? Well, lets talk about two back procedures. But first there are a couple of things you should do when you purchase a new computer. Most of the computer manufacturers don't give you a recovery/restore disc or a disc with the drivers and programs that are installed on your new computer. They give you the privilege of making these discs. Lets use an eMachines computer as an example. You will be prompted to create a Factory Default Disc. They should have said discs because it will take three DVD's. These DVD's will enable you to restore your computer to its factory default status. In other words, the way it looked and worked the day you took it out of the box. You will need a fourth DVD to create a Drivers and

Applications disc. Other brands of computers will have you make a Start Up Disc that can be used to start your computer if you experience a major malfunction. It's essential that you make these discs but there are tremendous down sides to restoring your computer to its factory default condition. If you can't retrieve your personal information (the documents, letters, spread sheets, financial information, photos, music, email, contacts, favorites) before restoring your computer, and you haven't made a copy (back up) of that information, all will be lost. That's one form of back up, copying all of the information you've created and stored on the hard drive to a CD or DVD. Another tremendous down side to restoring your computer involves reinstalling all of your programs and updating the operating system, software, and hardware on your computer. If your computer is three or four years old you will have hundreds of Microsoft updates to download and install. Then there's the task of configuring your computer to look and work the way you want. All of this can take hours if not days and brings us to another form of back up, a full system back up. Don't be mislead into thinking you can just copy everything on your hard drive to a second internal hard drive or an external USB hard drive. The process is commonly referred to as cloning the hard drive and requires a special program. What these programs do is create a bootable copy of your hard drive. The back up copy can then be used to start your computer and transfer all of the information back to the hard drive in the computer. This process should take about an hour and when finished, your computer will look and work just like it did the day you cloned the hard drive. If your interested in doing this, here are a couple of programs you can consider Acronis True Image Home 2011 and Paragon Backup and Recovery (Advanced) Free. Acronis is not free, it's $49.99 for one PC or $79.99 for three PC's. They do have a free trial version. Paragon is free and can be downloaded from http://download.cnet.com.

The hot items in the computer world right now are netbooks and pads. For the last few years the netbook has been very popular. It's compact, light weight, and if you purchase the right one, fully functional except for an optical drive. The Acer Aspire One 721 is a good example. It has; 11.6" screen, AMD Athlon II processor, 2GB of memory, a 250GB hard drive, card reader slots, built in Wi-Fi, webcam, and microphone. Best of all it has the Windows 7 Home Premium, 64 bit operating system for around $425. But, everyone agrees that the white hot item right now is the "pad". Motorola just released their Xoom (pronounced is if were spelled Zoom) and Apple has released their iPad2. These are not fully functional computers. They use a unique operating system, have limited memory (16, 32, and 64GB), no hard drive, no card reader slots, iPad does not have a USB port, no optical drive, and do no not run standard computer programs, they run applications. They have cameras, can access the Internet by Wi-Fi and work email. The price ranges from $499 to $829 depending on the model and features. You would probably have to classify these as niche or prestige products but it's estimated that iPad2's first day sales will exceed the 300,000 original iPad's sold on the first day just one year ago.

The editor of the Bits and Bytes is still looking for suggestions. If you have a topic you would like to see covered in the newsletter, jot it down on a piece of paper and place it in the red suggestion box. Suggestions for classes, workshops, or presentation are also welcome.

Having a problem with your computer? Having a problem doing something on the computer? If you're a Club member 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. If you're not a Club member you're welcome to join the Club and take advantage of this service.