Microsoft Windows 7

Peter Laudati

Monday, September 14, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.

Microsoft is planning to release Windows 7 on October 22nd. The speaker will be demonstrating the release version. Windows is the most popular personal computer operating system. This new version is expected to be faster, more reliable, easier to use, and have new features and enhancements.

Peter Laudati is a Developer Evangelist with Microsoft. In his current role, he works with developer communities, user group support, special events. Previously he worked on several application development projects and provided architectural guidance for large customers throughout the area. His blog can be read at http://www.peterlaudati.com.

Mercer County's Lawrence Library
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
US Alternate Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in no way imply endorsement of its programs.

In this issue:

Upcoming Schedule

October 19, 2009 ----- David Soll—Should you upgrade to
‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑ Windows 7
November 9, 2009 --- Doug Dixon—Holiday Tech Gift Guide
December 14, 2009 -- Members Party

Summary of the August 2009 Meeting

At 7:30 p.m. Program Coordinator Sol Libes started the meeting. Sol announced upcoming meetings for other computer focused organizations in the area.

Joel May spoke on "Weird and Wonderful Web Sites". His presentation can be found at:

http://ewingsnet.com/documents/Presentations/WeirdAndWonderfulWebSites.html

Submitted by Clarke Walker

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Link of the Month

The Ewing SeniorNet has changed is name to the Computer Learning Center at Ewing. But the web site name is the same:

http://www.ewingsnet.com/

Have you discovered a useful link or add-on? Then share it with the members of the P PC UG.

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Exploring Microsoft Windows 7 Beta 1, Part I
A Little Background on My Early (Mis) Adventures with Windows 7

by Lee Reynolds, leetutor (at) eartlink.net
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Probably most of you know Windows 7 is Microsoft's latest and greatest offering in terms of operating systems. A public beta download was made available on January 9th, intended for testing purposes. This beta version will stop working on August 1st.

The official final version is planned for introduction late this year or early next year (depending upon who is making the prediction; nobody knows for sure.) You may still be able to download the beta from this website:
http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/betadownload.aspx

BETA DOWNLOAD
A couple of days before Microsoft made available its public download of the next version of Windows, I downloaded a version available through MSDN (the Microsoft Developers Network), intending to install it as a virtual machine on my Windows Vista desktop computer. With my slo-o-o-ow DSL connection, I had to wait over 5 hours to get it loaded onto my hard drive. (It is about a 2.5 gigabyte file.)

VIRTUAL PC INSTALLATION

Then I installed it as a virtual OS, using a copy of Microsoft's free program Virtual PC 2007, that I have been using for the past two years to get access to and test other operating systems.

The installation process itself for Windows 7 took over two and half hours! Next, when I tried it out, the load was extremely unstable. I kept getting a popup message saying that Windows Search Indexer had stopped working; this message would appear just about every couple of minutes.

When trying out the new beta Internet Explorer 8 built into the operating system, it seems just about every web page I looked at would crash, and Internet Explorer would restart, and try to recover the web page. In addition, I couldn't download an anti-virus program so as to get rid of the security message popup from the taskbar complaining about no anti-virus program being present.

STABILITY PROBLEM

What was wrong? I had previously read a number of articles about Windows 7 that raved about the unparalleled stability of the Windows 7 beta.

This didn't seem to be true in my case! I recalled that the computer had lost power during my 5 hour download about halfway through, when Florida Plunder and Loot (sorry, I mean Florida Power and Light, of course) had one of its all-too-frequent blackouts.

The download had appeared to resume okay when I restarted the computer, but maybe there was something wrong with the file when it completed. So I downloaded the public beta (another 5 hours of twiddling my thumbs and cursing) and then tried again.

Before I started installing the new load in Virtual PC 2007, I researched the problem I had with the previous load; by googling the net, I found the answer, on this web page:

http://msdnrss.thecoderblogs.com/2009/01/11/installingthe-windows-7-beta-with-virtual-pc-2007-sp1/

The problem was that I had used the initial version of Virtual PC 2007 (which worked perfectly well with all my other virtual OSes, including XP Home, XP Pro, and Vista Home Premium), but the above article said installing Windows 7 as a guest OS required the version with its Service Pack 1 built in. I was gratified to see that after I upgraded my version of VPC 2007, the installation of Windows 7 Beta went very smoothly and only took half an hour. All the crashes of Windows 7 disappeared, too.

ABOUT MICROSOFT VIRTUAL PC 2007

Microsoft Virtual PC 2007 is a free download available from Microsoft; it is the first version of this program that is compatible with Windows Vista as well as Windows XP. An overview of its features is presented here:

http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/virtualpc/overview.mspx

Microsoft Virtual Pc 2007 Product Information

MS Virtual PC 2007 is available in both 32-bit and 64-bit versions, and works with Windows Vista Business, Enterprise, and Ultimate editions, as well as Windows Server 2003, Windows XP Professional, and Windows XP Tablet Edition.

(When you try to install VPC 2007 on a Vista Home Premium PC, it will give you a warning about not being compatible, but I have seen web pages on the internet from people who have said it works perfectly well with that version of Vista, and I also have a friend in our computer club who has done it successfully.)

With Virtual PC 2007, you have the program installed in your main OS (Operating System), called the "host OS", and as many virtual machines (each with possibly a different OS) as you can comfortably handle with your amount of memory and disk storage.

Each virtual machine is called a "guest OS." You can pause any guest OS virtual machine so that it doesn't use CPU cycles, and you can save and restore the configuration file at any time.

With the Virtual Machine Additions installed, you can copy and paste, and drag and drop between the host and guest OS.

Each guest OS will be able to handle any CD or DVD drive on the computer, and you can set it up to be able to access other hard drive partitions. The guest OS can also access the internet through a web browser. With the current version of VPC, the guest unfortunately cannot access any USB devices like printers, flash drives, or external USB drives. (It does handle keyboards and mice connected by USB, however.)

I decided two years ago I would download MS Virtual PC 2007 and try using it to choose between Vista and XP Pro. This is much more convenient than dual booting the two Windows versions, because they are run simultaneously on my computer, and only need to click on an icon in the Notification Area (formerly called the System Tray) of Vista, to switch to XP.

This allows instantaneous switching, rather than what multi-booting requires, which is to restart the computer and wait for the several minutes necessary to boot to another operating system.

The current version of Virtual PC 2007, with SP1, can be downloaded for free from here:

http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=28C97D22-6EB8-4A09-A7F7-F6C7A1F000B5&displaylang=en

SOUND PROBLEM
My next problem was that the sound didn't work in the Windows 7 guest OS. I turned to my old friend Google and found this page:
http://blogs.msdn.com/virtual_pc_guy/archive/2009/01/13/windows-7-on-virtual-pc-nwindows-7.aspx

A person calling himself Hermes had encountered my problem and found a solution which he detailed in a comment he posted in the Virtual PC Guy's weblog January 17.

I tried his solution, and it worked.

GRAPHICS PROBLEM
I was happily exploring the new features of Windows 7 for several days. Then...

A new problem developed from the fact that Microsoft hasn't upgraded its graphics driver for Virtual PC 2007 since introduction of the program two years ago. Of course, the guest operating system actually uses your host machine's real CRT, or LCD screen for display, but it emulates a driver for a graphics card described as S3 Trio 32/64 PCI with 8 MB Video RAM.

This is a very old graphics adaptor. It barely supports some of the "Aero" effects of Vista and Windows 7, and it doesn't support the requirements of Windows Media Center or Windows Media Player.

VIRTUAL PC 2007 TO DUAL BOOT
I really wanted to explore those aspects of the new OS. So I decided I would quit using Windows 7 as a virtual machine and instead install it as a real operating system on another partition of my hard drive.

Since I had all my virtual machines stored already on a separate partition, and had previously backed them up to an external USB hard drive, I wiped this out and used my Windows 7 Beta installation DVD to install it there.

Then I could dual boot with Vista and Windows 7, which was nowhere near as convenient as running them simultaneously, but apparently was necessary in order to continue my investigations of the new OS.

Future articles regarding the Windows 7 Beta, will contain explanations of what I have discovered about Windows 7, including some screenshot illustrations.

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Exploring Microsoft Windows 7 Beta 1, Part II
What I've Discovered About Windows 7 (A)

by Lee Reynolds, leetutor (at) eartlink.net
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SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
For those who are wondering, these are what Microsoft says are the system requirements for Windows 7:

• a 1 GHz or faster processor (for both the 32-bit and 64-bit version)
• at least 1 GB of main memory (RAM)
• at least 16 GB of available disk space to install the operating system
• a graphics adaptor that supports DX9 graphics with at least 128 MB of memory (in order for Aero to work)
• a DVD-R/W drive

MAIN IMPROVEMENTS
Windows 7 is essentially a much improved Windows Vista. It has these main improvements over Vista, among many others:
• easier home networking through a new facility called HomeGroups
• a much more capable Windows Backup tool
• a redesigned and more functional Taskbar
• a new concept for organizing files and folders called Libraries
• the ability to use Windows Instant Search over other PCs in a network
• improved support for multimedia using Windows Media Player and Windows Media Center
• a much friendlier version of Vista's User Account Control
• some new capabilities of the Aero interface, notably "Aero Peek" and "Aero Shake" and "Aero Snap"

MAIN FEATURES
Let's start taking a look at the Windows 7 Beta in an organized travelog through all the main features, complete with screen captures. First, we take a look at the Desktop.

THE DESKTOP
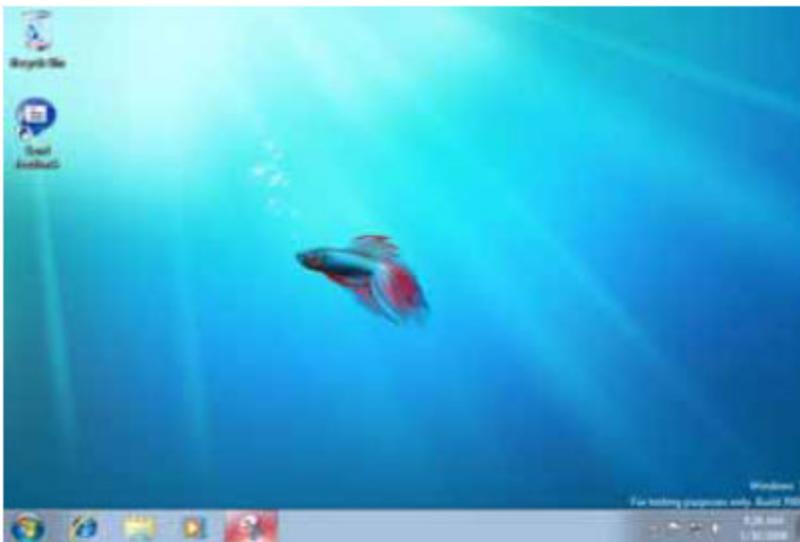When you look at the Windows 7 Beta Desktop (Figure 1), you will not see many differences from Vista's.

Figure 1 Windows 7 Desktop

One difference you will see immediately, is that there is a little message etched into the lower right hand corner of the screen reading: "Windows 7 For testing purposes only. Build 7000".

Also, there is a shortcut on the Windows 7 Desktop labeled "Send Feedback". This is your mechanism for telling Microsoft about what you like and dislike, what bugs you found, etc. It will only send the report to Microsoft if you have a Windows Live ID number. The facility for sending feedback is also present in every window you open, at the top right near the Minimize, Maximize and Close buttons.

As in Windows Vista, the Start button of Windows XP and previous versions of Windows has been replaced by a small round "orb", which only tells you it is related to "Start" if you hover the mouse over it for a second or two, and then a tooltip pops up briefly.

Notice that Microsoft decided to eliminate the famous Sidebar of Vista. You can still have "gadgets" located on your Desktop, but more about that later.

THE TASKBAR

Let's take a look at the new Windows 7 Taskbar. Note that the icons are a bit larger and therefore the Taskbar is wider than what you may be used to from previous versions of Windows.

You can adjust these smaller by using Taskbar Properties, but then you may lose some of the neat "Aero" effects. When you first install Windows 7, you see icons for Internet Explorer, Windows Explorer and Windows Media Player.
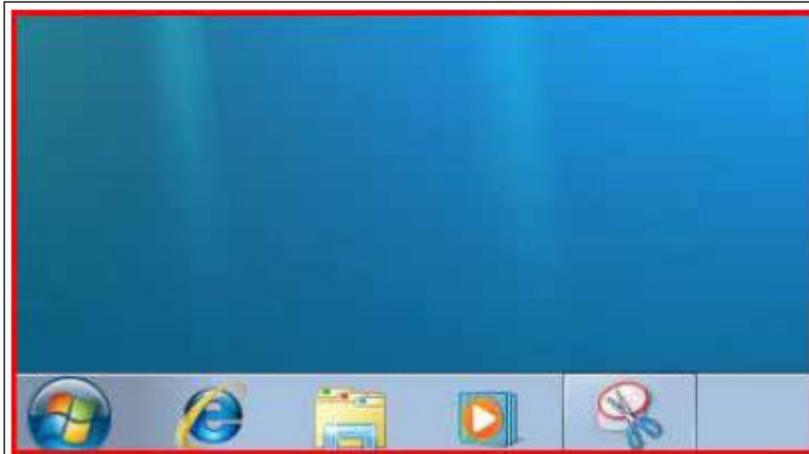

Figure 2 Windows 7 Taskbar

This is similar to what was present on what was called the "Quick Launch Toolbar" in earlier Windows.

The line at the right end of this group of icons separating them from the Taskbar proper. Does this mean the Quick Launch Toolbar is now gone in Windows 7? Yes, it does. The entire Taskbar in Windows 7 is now a mixture of pseudo Quick Launch icons and the ordinary buttons present for running programs.

You can distinguish a button on the new Taskbar as being one for a running program by the fact that the button appears to have a square surrounding the icon. (Thus, the righ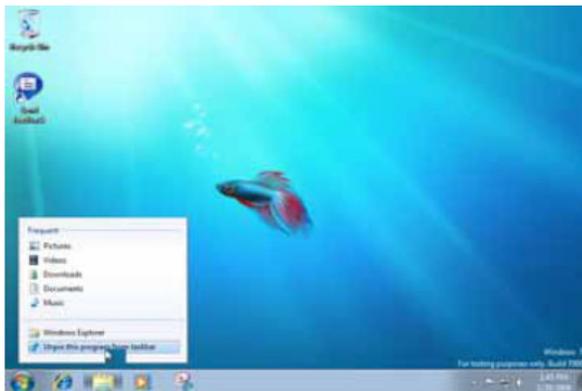tmost icon in the screenshot (Figure 2), which is for the built-in Snipping Tool, has a square around it because the program is running – that was what I used to take the screenshot.)

Figure 3 Windows 7 Unpin

Also, if the button is a pseudo Quick Launch button, then you can right click it and select Unpin from Taskbar on the context menu to remove it. The screenshot below shows this right click menu for the Windows Explorer icon.

If you right click one of the pseudo Quick Launch icons on the Taskbar, you get what is called a "Jump Menu". The screenshot shows a Jump Menu for Windows Media Player.

All of the icons are moveable on the Taskbar. Just click and drag any icon left or right anywhere you want.

The next screenshot shows the "Notification Area" of the Windows 7 Taskbar. (This is what was called the "System Tray" prior to Windows XP.)
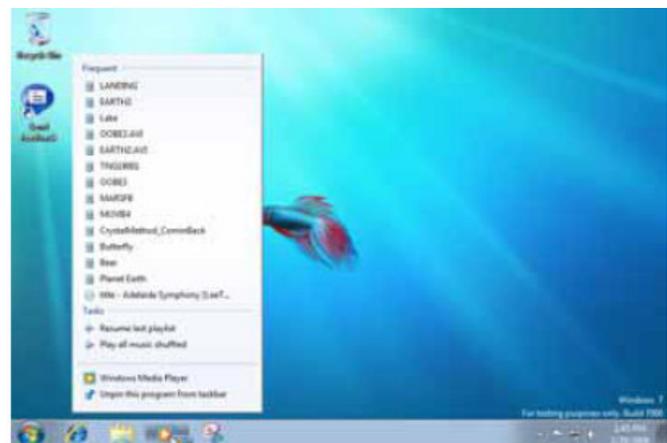

Figure 4 Windows 7 Jump Menu

Notice that there are only a few icons present in the Windows 7 Notification Area. One is normally the "Action Center" icon, which will notify you of important actions you need to take, like downloading a Windows update or turning on the Windows Firewall.

Figure 5 Windows 7 Notification Area

All of the Notification Area icons can be individually adjusted to determine whether or not they appear there and whether or not notification messages will be displayed.
More about that later.
If there are hidden icons in the Notification Area, you will see a little upward pointing arrow on the left which when clicked gives you a display of the ones not shown. Notice that now the Taskbar is wide enough to show the date as well as the time at the right end in the Notification Area.

There are other properties of the new Taskbar, which will be described further in the Aero Effects section.

Next Time
That is all for now, come back next month for Part 3, which will cover the New Aero Effects:

Aero Shake
Aero Peek
Aero Snap

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Program Coordinator Sol Libes doing shadow puppets. (Could he be creating the new P PC UG logo?)

Officers Sought

We have several vacant positions.

Please see any Board Member if you are interested.

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All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.

This and previous Princeton PC User Group Newsletters can be found at:

http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltr.html

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