PPCUG*NEWS*

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Should You Upgrade to Windows 7?

David Soll

Monday, October 19, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.

Windows 7, to be released on October 22, 2009, is Microsoft's new Personal Computer Operating System. How does it compare to Vista, and Windows XP, still the current favorite? Should one upgrade? How does one do the upgrade? Are there advantages? If so, what are they? Is it worth the time and effort learning a new user interface?

David F. Soll is the Vice President and Chief Technology Officer for Omicron Consulting, an Information Technology consulting firm. He has worked with computer technologies from hardware design, network design, operating system development, through application development and architecture design for more than 30 years. He is a Senior Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and is also the Chair of the Princeton Chapter of the IEEE Computer Society and a senior member and former Chair of the Princeton Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). David received his BS in Electrical Engineering from Drexel University.

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

November 9, 2009 ---Doug Dixon—Holiday Tech Gift Guide
December 14, 2009 --Members Party
April 24 & 25, 2010 -Trenton Computer Festival

Summary of the September 2009 Meeting

At 7:20 p.m. Microsoft provided pizza and soda to those attending. 71 people attended the meeting.

At 7:30, Program Coordinator Sol Libes started the meeting. Sol announced that the October meeting will not be the second Monday because the Library is closed for Columbus Day. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2009.

Peter Laudati of Microsoft gave an overview of the planned release of Windows 7. He also gave out copies of the Windows 7 Release Candidate. Peter has an informative blog at: http://www.peterlaudati.com

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 III
What I've Discovered About Windows 7 (A)

by Lee Reynolds, leetutor (at) eartlink.net
Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL, www.brcs.org

Lee continues an overview of what the new operating system might look like, as well as what it is likely to have for features.

This time around we are going to take a look at the new aero effects of Windows 7.

New Aero Effects

AERO SHAKE
Let's open a few windows onto your Desktop to show some of the new Aero capabilities built into Windows 7. We'll put several of them there, all partially on top of one another.
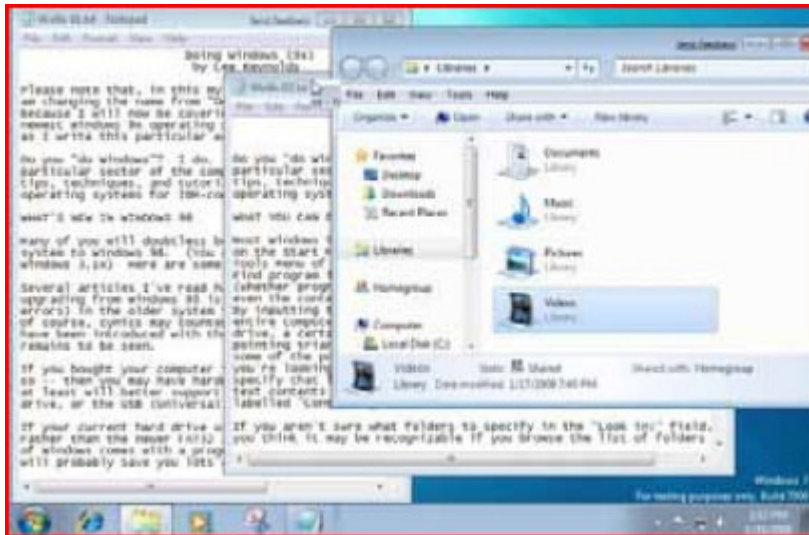
Figure 1 – Three Windows Before Aero Shake

Suppose you wanted to see the window where the mouse cursor is, which is partially obscured by a couple of other windows that are open. If you just click where the mouse is, then that window would come to the forefront, just as in previous versions of Windows.

Suppose as you click with the mouse on that window you shake it back and forth a couple of times, left and right. Magically all the other windows minimize to the Taskbar, and you are left with only the one you wanted to look at.
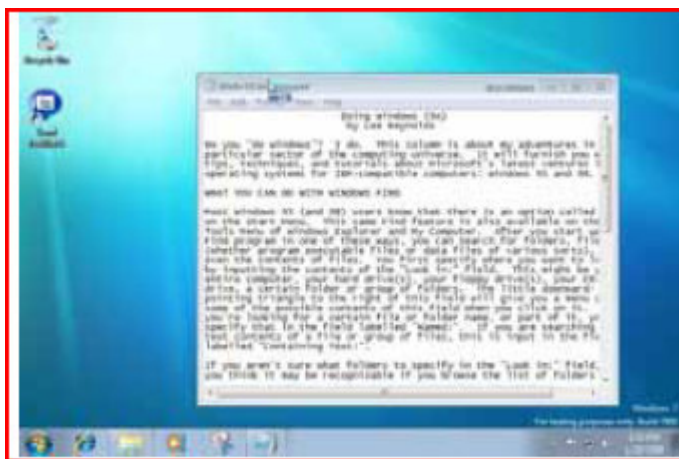

Figure 2 – After Aero Shake

A bit quicker than making numerous clicks to minimize or close all the other windows!
This feature of Windows 7 is called "Aero Shake", but that's only half of it.

If you now shake the one open window left and right a couple of times, all the other windows that were open but partially obscured appear back on the screen.

AERO SNAP
The screenshot (Figure 3) shows two windows open, one partially behind the other. Note that they are two views of similar text documents that have been opened in Windows Notepad.

Take the one on the left, put your mouse near the lefthand side of the Title bar and drag it over to the left until the mouse just barely touches the left edge of your screen. A faint outline of half the Desktop shows up.

If you release the mouse button, then the window that you moved toward the left side of the screen resizes and fills up that half of the screen!

Now take the window on the right, put your mouse near the right-hand side of the Title bar and drag it over to the right until the mouse just barely touches the right edge of your screen. Then the faint outline of the right half of your Desktop shows up, and when you release the mouse button the window will resize itself to the right half of your Desktop. Very easy to see the two windows side by side for comparison purposes, for example.
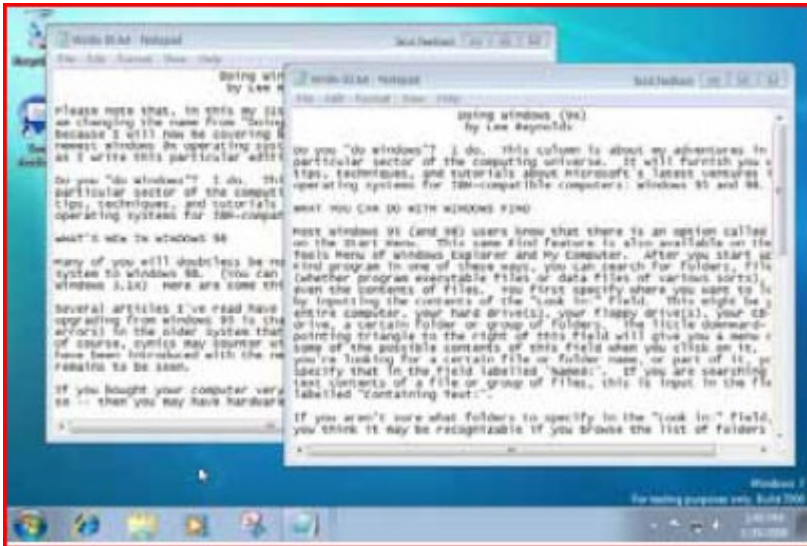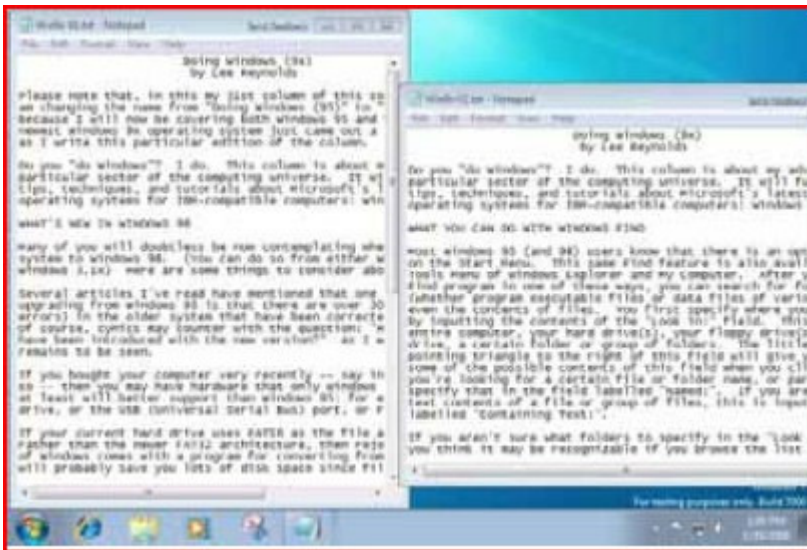

Figure 3 – Two Notepad Windows

Figure 4 – After Aero Snap

But that's not all there is to Aero Snap. Now let's open a single window of our display of a text document through Notepad, and next drag it to the top edge of the screen, until the mouse barely touches it. A faint outline of the entire Desktop shows up, and if we release the mouse button, then magically, the Notepad window maximizes to fill the screen!

(Of course, this works with any window, not just a Notepad window.) Finally, if we drag the maximized window downward away from the top edge, and let it go, it returns to its previous size.

One more thing about the Aero Snap feature: there are shortcut keys for these effects if you would prefer to use the keyboard rather than a mouse:

Windows key and Up Arrow - same as Maximize window
Windows key and Down Arrow - same as Restore window

Windows key and Left Arrow - same as display on left half of desktop
Windows key and Right Arrow - same as display on right half of desktop.

AERO PEEK
The Aero Peek feature has a number of characteristics. It is particularly useful if you have a number of windows open on your screen. Each of the windows will of course correspond to a Taskbar button.
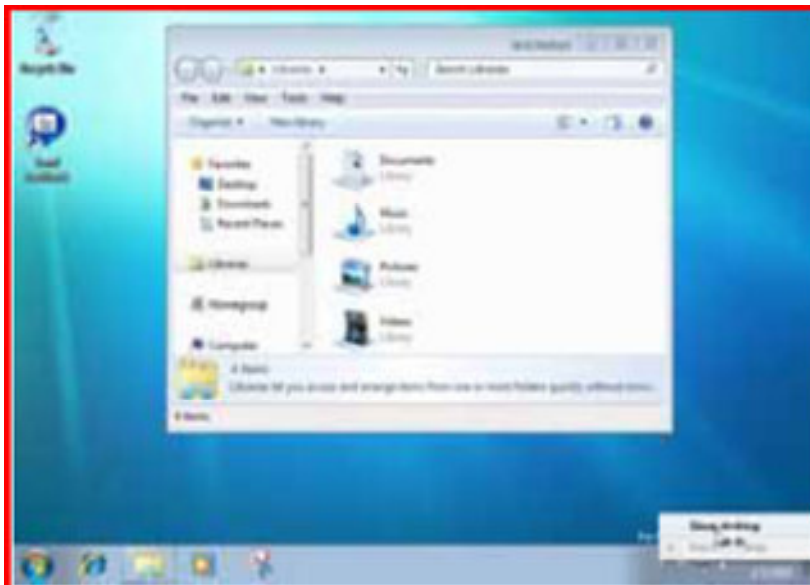
Some of the Taskbar buttons will appear to be several layers deep (one button behind another, like a row of dominoes), if you have multiple instances of the program open at the same time. If you have several tabs open in Internet Explorer 8, there will be a button for each of the tabs. When this is true, there is a little upward pointing arrow to the right of the taskbar icon which you can use to choose which of the program instances you want to work with.

Hovering over a Taskbar button (one which is not a pseudo Quick Launch button) without clicking it will open up a miniature image preview of that window over the Taskbar.

If you hover over any of those miniature image previews, then all other windows that are open on your screen become transparent and you see only the window whose image preview you are hovering your mouse over.

It is like you can peek through all the other windows to see that one window. (Of course, that is why the feature is called Aero Peek.)

So if you wanted to see what is in a window without transferring control over to it, you can very easily do so. If you actually click on one of those image previews, it becomes the active window.

Figure 5 – Show Desktop

You can also close a window (or a tab, in the case of an Internet Explorer Taskbar button) by clicking on the small "X" icon in the image preview.

Another part of Aero Peek is the replacement for the "Show Desktop" icon in the Quick Launch bar of previous versions of Windows. This is a small rectangle at the right end of the Taskbar.

If you hover your mouse over this area, you will see a tooltip reading "Show desktop", but also it will show you an image of your Desktop overlaid with rectangular outlines of any windows you might have open covering parts of the Desktop. So it is as if you are peeking behind all the open windows to see the Desktop.

If you actually click that rectangular area, rather than just hover over it, then it will act like the Show Desktop icon of previous Windows versions: all windows minimize to the Taskbar and you see your Desktop.

You can also right click the Show Desktop area of the Windows 7 Taskbar and it will give you a context menu from which you can choose one of the options: Preview Desktop, or Show Desktop.

Unfortunately, the Preview Desktop does not work (in fact, it shows as "greyed out" on the context menu) in the Virtual Pc environment. The screenshot in Figure 5 shows this:

Coming in Part IV
In the next installment, we will be covering:
The Start Menu And Its Properties
Taskbar Properties
Control Panel

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Open Office.Org 3.0
An Evolutionary Improvement

by Bill Wayson, bwayson (at) gmail.com

LINUX SIG Leader, Channel Islands PCUG, California, www.cipcug.org

OpenOffice.org (OO.o) is Free and Open Source Software's (FOSS) premier alternative to the Microsoft Office productivity suite. It offers a high level of compatibility with many of the ever-changing MS Office formats, provides many of the same features as MS Office, and works similarly to MS Office. This month, we will explore the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, which is available for Microsoft Windows, Linux, Apple's Macintosh, Sun's Solaris, and several other operating systems. Many, if not most, users of MS Office who require the broad, deep range of features of MS Office could change to OO.o and become productive after a very shallow learning curve.

If your requirements are more for just compatibility with Microsoft's Word document formats in a word processor, you can consider more streamlined FOSS alternatives such as AbiWord.

OO.o is a full-featured office productivity suite comprised of six integrated applications: the Writer word processor (which also has a Web page editing mode), Calc spreadsheet, Draw graphics program, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor.

OO.o 3.0 is an evolutionary improvement on the application suite, with new features, enhancements, and user interface improvements. Users of Apple Macintosh OS X systems benefit greatly from OO.o 3.0, which will now run as a native OS X application. OS X users will also have support for Microsoft's VBA macro language and the Calc Solver component, which allows solving optimization problems where the optimum value of a particular spreadsheet cell has to be calculated based on constraints provided in other cells. Both of these features are missing in MS Office 2008 for Mac OS X.

All users of OO.o 3.0 benefit from its improvements, including the two above. Another area of significant improvement is one where OO.o is breaking out of Microsoft mimicry mode: support for open document standards. OO.o 3.0 supports the latest OpenDocument Format (ODF) specification. In fact, ODF is the OO.o default document format. ODF is gaining wider acceptance worldwide, being adopted by more companies and governments as the standard for documents, and becoming supported by an increasing number of applications. OO.o will also read and write many other formats, including those of various versions of MS Office and Word, plain text, and several PDA document formats.

Additionally, it will read the newest formats introduced in MS Office 2007. Exchanging documents with users of Microsoft's products should not be an issue. The Writer screen now sports a handy zoom slider control, making it quick and easy to change the zoom level of the view. Additionally, it will automatically display multiple pages of the document as the zoom level is lowered. Writer now displays notes — notations added to a document that are not necessarily meant to be printed — at the edge of the editing window to the side of the document, making it easier to read them and see their context in the document. In addition, notes from different users are displayed in different colors, together with the editing date and time, facilitating collaborative work on a document.

Calc sees some useful improvements. One is in the charts feature. Now, custom error bars can be included, and regression equations and correlation coefficients can be displayed right in the chart. Another is a new feature, spreadsheet collaboration through workbook sharing. This feature allows multiple users to work collaboratively on a spreadsheet while avoiding editing conflicts. The users share a spreadsheet, each adding their data. The spreadsheet owner can then easily integrate the new data with a few clicks. And Calc now supports 1,024 columns per worksheet.

Draw now lets you crop images the same way that most other graphics programs do, by dragging handles located at the edges and corners of an image. This same improvement appears in Impress, too. Additionally, Impress now natively supports insert-

ing tables into presentations. Tables can be added directly into the presentation and edited within Impress as native Impress objects.

Improvements affecting the entire suite include a new set of icons, expanded feature support when exporting to XML, and a new gateway to the suite called the Start Center, which makes it more intuitive to get to where you want to go in the suite. There is nothing revolutionary in OO.o 3.0. What is new are several improvements and enhancements that will keep the suite in contention with its competitors. And we have not touched at all on the features OO.o already had before 3.0. If you need a productivity suite with both a broad and deep set of features and, particularly, if you are not married to Microsoft Office, you should give OO.o a look. It costs you nothing to try, you may just like it, so it just may save you hundreds of dollars.

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Pictures from the September Meeting

by Clarke Walker, Clarke_Walker (at) yahoo.com
Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

October Meeting

Because the Mercer County Libraries are closed on the second Tuesday of October for Columbus Day the October meeting is on October 19, 2009.

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

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