

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Committee details</i>	Page 2
<i>OPEN News</i>	Pages 3-7
<i>NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK</i>	Pages 8-9
<i>When it comes to Email You have More options than ever</i>	Pages 10-12
<i>Tips Of The Week</i>	Pages 13-14
<i>Monitor Madness</i>	Pages 14-16

Next Meeting

6th June

LCG 7 PM

Followed by Windows 8

Demonstration

OPEN 1 PM

Newstream Articles

Deadline : 10 Days before Meeting

Editors Contacts:

Address: 8 Cadorna Street Mowbray Heights 7248 Phone 6326 5824

email address editor@lcg.org.au

Correspondence

Address all Correspondence to: Launceston Computer Group Inc PO Box 548
Launceston 7250

Membership

Single \$15, Family \$20 (Includes Email edition Newstream)

Printed & Posted Newsletter \$20 extra

Disclaimer: The articles in this newsletter may be reprinted as long as credit is given to the original author. Opinions expressed are those of the author & not necessarily the views of the Editor or the Group. Unless otherwise noted material is copyright 2011 for the Launceston Computer Group Inc.

LCG Committee 2012/13

President: Ivan Turmine
Vice President: Janet Headlam
Secretary: Iris Meek
Treasurer: Dennis Murray
Ass. Treasurer: Laraine Rist
MAC Librarians: Ivan Turmine
PC Librarian: Julie Hjort
Newstream Editor: Ron Baker
Public Officer: Judy Hall
OPEN Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney
Webmaster/Content: Tom Olsen
Auditor: Ron Baker
Liaison Officer: Eleanor Horder
"VICTOR" Co-Ordinator: Robert Tierney
LCG Committee: Glenn Gilpin,
Reinhard von Samorzewski, June
Hazzlewood

OPEN Committee 2012/13

OPEN Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney.
Chairperson OPEN: Laraine Rist.
Vice Chairperson OPEN: Robert Tierney.
Secretary: Heather Loffel.
Assistant Secretary: - open -
Treasurer: Dennis Murray.
Assistant Treasurer: Laraine Rist.
Publicity Officer: Iris Meek.
Membership Co-ordinator: Karia Wicks.
Beginners Co-ordinator OLearn: Eleanor
Horder.
Tutor Co-ordinator: Eleanor Horder.
Assistant Tutor Co-ordinators: - open -
Newsletter Editor Assistant: Iris Meek.
Maintenance Co-ordinators: Dennis Murray.
Technical Support: - open -
Co-ordinator of "VICTOR": Robert Tierney.
Webmaster/Content: Tom Olsen
OPEN Committee: June Hazzlewood, Judy Hall,
Janet Headlam, Sandra Viney, Bruce Dineen,
Kay Dawson.

OPEN NEWSLETTER – June 2012

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Hello everyone,

Last month and this month the Cancer Council has been having Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. Our turn is going to be Friday 29th June from 11 am—1 pm.

This year we have some great lucky door prizes donated by West Tamar Woodcraft. First prize is a 14" blackwood Lazy Susan valued at \$66. 2nd prize is a set of blackwood Coasters valued at \$29 and 3rd prize is a laminated Pot Pourri valued at \$26.

If you are unable to come on the day you can still be eligible for the draw. If you are able to donate to the morning tea you will receive a numbered ticket with name and phone number so that if you are drawn you will be contacted by phone.

If you are able to attend, please bring a gold coin donation and a plate with something on it to share on the day.

I know it is only June, but COTA (Council of the Aging) who run Seniors Week has changed a couple of things.

First there is no supplement in the newspaper outlining what is happening. They will only be available at Service Tasmania or LINC centres.

I have ordered 50 copies so when they come, get in fast as they'll go like hot cakes. To give you a taste of what is going to be on offer at OPEN this year, here is a sneak peek at topics for Seniors Week.

How to buy a Computer, the coming of Windows 8, Android, MAC, come and see sessions, Internet and you, mobile phones for beginners.

Places will be limited so look for registration information closer to October.

Until next time

Happy Computing

Rob :O

VICTOR TELEPHONE NUMBER

Help for members **0408 174235**



Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

Great Lucky Door Prizes will be

drawn at

OPEN June 29 following our effort for 2012.



VENUE TELEPHONE NUMBER

The club telephone is available during class hours.

63434928

10am –3 pm

OPEN Session Times
 At Studioworks, 1 Pipeworks Rd, L'ton
Standard Sessions \$5.00

OPEN NEWSLETTER – June 2012

SPECIAL WEDNESDAY SESSIONS

Monday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm – 3 pm	Beginners & PC Support
Tuesday	10 am –12	P C Support & Beginners + Mac
	1 pm – 3 pm	As above
	7 pm—9 pm	PC Support (Night Class)
Wednesday	10 am—noon	Special sessions or Meetings
	1 pm—3 pm	As for mornings (see rosters)
Thursday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm – 3 pm	General & Beginners
Friday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm—3 pm	Beginners

Date	Time	Topic	Details
May 30	10 am-noon	Basic Graphics	Judy. Laraine
	1pm– 3 pm	Advanced Graphics	Judy & Eleanor
June 6	10 am-noon	Graphics Workshop	Judy and Laraine,
	1 pm—	OPEN MEETING	
June 13	10 am-noon	Basic Graphics	Judy, Laraine, Sandra
	1:00—3 pm	1 pm—3 pm	Family History onLine
June 20	10 am-noon	Level 2-3 Graphics	Judy, Sandra, Laraine
	1 pm—3 pm	PSP X1 Graphics	With Judy, Eleanor, Sandra, Laraine
June 27	10 am-noon	Family History online	Judy and Sandra
	1 pm—3 pm	PSP X1	Judy, Eleanor, Laraine
July 4	10 am-noon	Graphics Workshop	Judy, Sandra and Laraine
	1pm	OPEN MEETING	
July 4	From 2 pm	Advanced Graphics	With Judy,

Computer Filing System

Further to my article in last month's Newstream, beginners should starting using a filing method of the own. To create your filing system [using Windows 8]:-

Open Windows Explorer in the Quick
Open Windows Explorer in the Quick
Launch Bar



Open C Drive [under Computer]

Right click in an clear space and select
New/Folder and name it with some-
thing you will remember [usually your
name]

Open the new folder and repeat part 3 nu-
merous times and create new folders
for Photos, Documents, Games... as an
example.

In future, when copying files to your com-
puter, select your new files, instead of
letting windows making the selection.

As the number of files on your computer
increase, you can make other sub
folder to sort your photos into dates
or locations as an example.

Try to envisage your computer as a filing cabi-
net, the only difference being is that you have
to create your own ***Draws & Folders.***

OPEN NEWSLETTER June 2012

Windows 8

All new future students will have Windows 8 installed on the their new laptops from the end of this year. So as to keep abreast of the changes in the new operating system, a PC at OPEN has been set-up with the pre-release Windows 8 Customer Preview. In the next few months, I will be listing some of the significant changes to the current Windows 7.

Apart from those already previewed in the Customer Preview, I will list any new changes since the release:-

Windows Media Centre will be a paid-for add-on - and mandatory if users want DVD playback support.

All members are encouraged to have all look at the new Operating system

Windows Operation Speed-Up

The minimize and maximize window animations that first debuted in Windows Vista were an improvement over the effect in Windows XP. While this new effect had a high "cool factor" especially with the slow motion key) it eventually wore off and created an unnecessary delay when switching between windows.

Disabling the effect will instantly make your Disabling the effect will instantly make your computer feel more responsive and faster. Give it a try and see for yourself:

Click on the Start Button and type in System Properties Performance and hit Enter.

On the Visual Effects tab locate and remove the check from Animate windows when minimising and maximising.

Bruce Dineen

MEETINGS

OPEN JUNE 6 AT 1 PM

LCG JUNE 6 AT 7 PM

**Followed by a look at
WINDOWS 8**

OPEN NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2012

PICTURE PLACEMENT IN MS WORD

An Alternate Strategy—by Dennis Murray

In the May edition of Newstream USA contributor Katherine Murray (*no relation*) wrote of the perils of inserting images into Word documents. Getting the text and pictures to co-exist peacefully in a Word document is one of the more complex tasks that can be encountered in word-processing.

The conventional way of performing this task is to right-click the image and **Format Picture** using the various **Wrapping** options. Initially the image is inserted **In Line** with the text which means that any text typed after the image is inserted will appear on the next line on the page. This can leave an unsightly and wasteful blank area beside the picture.

The **Square** option allows the space beside the picture to be used for text. There is also the added benefit of the image now being 'movable' - if you hover your mouse over the image you should see the 4-pointed 'star' which signifies that the image can be moved by holding the left mouse button down and dragging the picture into place. You should also notice that the text re-aligns to wrap around the moving image.

Other Wrapping options include Tight (for use with oddly-shaped images) In Front Of Text, and Behind Text. Each have their own specialised uses.

But in some instances Word can still appear to have a mind of its own, so rather than struggle with an uncooperative program I often take the coward's way out—I compromise by using Word's Tables functions to work around the problem as explained in the next column

USING WORD'S TABLES TO TAME IMAGES

While tables are great for presenting information such as price-lists and timetables in an ordered manner they can also be used for locking images in place, and getting the text to stay where YOU want.

Tables are made up of Columns and Rows with each of the 'boxes' being called a Cell. When you first create a Table the Cells are usually of a pre-defined width and height, as shown in Rows 1-3 below :

Doesn't	seem to be
much room	for typing
words in	these cells
Too much text to fit on one line	See how the cell grows !

It appears that you only have room to type a single line of text in each Cell but they will expand to hold more text— as we see here in Row 4.

	The picture is locked in the merged cells so we can type here without affecting the image.
--	--

Cells can also be merged so that 3 shallow cells become 1 deep cell to hold an image :

The Cells on the right-hand side of the table could also be merged to form a single text-box and if the document

appears too 'boxy' the borders can be removed so they don't appear on the printed document.

The bottom cells have been merged to create one wide cell to 'flow' text across the page.

WINDOWS 7 TIPS

During the years I have been contributing to this newsletter I have often recommended using the keyboard function **Print Screen** to record error messages or to provide a graphic image that can enhance the understanding of certain techniques—the adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is often true when trying to explain a certain procedure.

The Windows 7 **Snipping Tool** enables a section of the screen display to be captured and saved directly into an image file. There is no need to Print Screen, Open a file (e.g. MS Word), Paste the image and Crop to an appropriate size—the Snipping Tool does all the work for you.

Try this ... press the Windows key (*on the keyboard naturally*) type SNIP into the Search box and Snipping Tool should appear at the top of the Programs list. Use your mouse cursor to draw a box around the area you wish to Capture and then go to File, Save As to give a name the image file and save it in an appropriate folder.

Windows 7 doesn't automatically show many program icons in the System Tray at the bottom right of your screen—most of them are located in a separate box that you access by clicking an up-arrow on the Taskbar.

If you want quicker access to one of those icons e.g. the one you click to Safely Remove a USB flash drive you can 'drag' it out of that separate box and on to your Taskbar.

Do you really need all those program items on your Desktop? Just as we found the Snipping Tool program by typing the name in our Start Menu box it is possible to locate any program by typing its name in and waiting for '7' to display it in the list.

Note that the Snipping Tool is also available in Vista.

Dennis Murray

NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

There have been a lot of TV ads lately about the NBN. I sent an email asking when Mowbray would be connected and what the cost may be and whether the service would be provided by my ISP. Below is the reply I received and I thought that it may provide answers to members queries.

Dear Mr Baker

Thank you for your emails dated 1 May 2012 concerning the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The Australian Government understands that access to affordable, high-speed broadband is increasingly essential to the way Australians communicate and do business. That is why the government has established NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) to design, build and operate a new high-speed NBN.

The NBN will provide access to high speed broadband to 100 per cent of Australian premises. It will connect 93 per cent of homes, schools and businesses to a high speed fibre network capable of providing broadband speeds of up to one gigabit per second (Gbps). Seven per cent of premises will be served by a combination of next generation fixed wireless and satellite technologies providing peak speeds of 12 megabits per second (Mbps).

As you may be aware, NBN Co released its first three year national fibre rollout plan on 29 March 2012. The indicative plan lists 3.5 million homes and businesses, where work is completed, underway or due to begin up until mid-2015. According to the plan, construction planning commenced in parts of Mowbray from January 2012 and the last construction work is due to begin in June 2013. On average, it will take 12 months from the start of the fibre network rollout in a given area until services are available. You can enter your address in the rollout map at www.nbnco.com.au/rollout/rollout-map.html to find out more

information about when the NBN is rolling out in your area.

You may be aware that NBN Co will offer a free connection to the network when the NBN is rolled out in each suburb. This includes the standard installation of a network termination device (NTD)--the box which provides connection to the NBN--at the premises of all consenting customers. This installation means that for most people it will be a simple exercise of plugging existing equipment into the NTD in order to access NBN services. It is important to note that in some cases charges may apply for non-standard installations.

NBN Co will offer multiple opportunities to premises owners to connect to the NBN during the period leading up to the migration of customers from the copper network to the fibre network. NBN Co will be considering a levy for future connections to premises that have not taken up previous offers to connect. That decision is yet to be taken but owners are encouraged to take up the opportunity for a free connection as the NBN is rolled out.

NBN Co will contact residents and property owners to explain connection options when the NBN rollout commences in your area.

The government is committed to affordable broadband prices for all Australians. Current NBN retail service prices compare favourably with prices for ADSL2+ broadband services.

Service providers are now providing NBN services that deliver superior performance and the option to upgrade to speeds much faster than those available on the copper network. A number of retail service providers have released pricing details for their NBN plans. For example:

- Skymesh is offering NBN fibre services from

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

\$29.95 per month for a 12 Mbps download and one Mbps upload (12/1 Mbps) service with a 15 gigabytes (GB) (5 GB peak and 10 GB off-peak) data allowance

- Exetel's NBN plans start from \$35 for a 12/1 Mbps service with 50 GB data allowance
- Optus plans start from \$39.99 per month for a 12/1 Mbps service with 40 GB (20 GB peak and 20 GB off-peak) of data allowance (when bundled with any contracted Optus post paid mobile plan from \$19 per month)
- Telstra NBN plans start from \$49.95 per month for a 25 Mbps download service with 50 GB data allowance (when bundled with a full service Telstra home phone plan)
- iiNet's plans start from \$49.95 per month for a 12/1 Mbps service with 40 GB (20 GB peak and 20 GB off-peak) of data allowance
- A number of other service providers offer NBN services starting from \$39.95 and \$49.95 per month, and some have improved their NBN offers as competition between providers increases.

NBN service providers are also offering plans with significantly higher speeds and data allowances for interested customers. Plans currently range from \$45.00 to \$164.95 a month for download speeds of 100 Mbps download and 40 Mbps upload, with data allowances ranging from 25 GB to two terabyte (2000 GB) a month.

Importantly, there is no additional line rental fee with NBN services as is typically charged by retailers for an ADSL service. Service providers such as Exetel and Internode provide a phone service at no extra charge with their broadband plans, and iiNet offers a phone service for an additional \$9.95 per month that includes free local and

national calls.

A number of internet and telephone service providers have already released pricing plans. Those plans offer a range of different price points and service levels for broadband, voice and bundled services. You can visit www.nbnco.com.au/getting-connected/certified-service-providers.html for more on NBN service providers.

You can visit www.nbn.gov.au and www.nbnco.com.au or freecall 1800 881 816 for more information about the NBN.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

National Broadband Network Implementation Division |
Australian Government | Department of Broadband,
Communications and the Digital Economy

TALKING TECH: WHEN IT COMES TO EMAIL, YOU HAVE MORE OPTIONS THAN EVER

Far from being dead, email is still a viable means of communication, especially for business correspondence. [According to a recent survey by Ipsos, email is, at present, quite a bit more popular than social networking](#), with 85 percent of almost 20 thousand adults saying they use it (compared to only 62 percent for social networks). But the way we use email is changing, and we have far more options for sending and receiving mail than we had a decade ago.

When I first started using email, it was basically a text-only medium. But many people are primarily visual, and plain text pales in comparison to what they were already seeing in their word processing documents and on web pages. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and graphics can add immeasurably to email messages, as can font enhancements such as boldface, italics, colored fonts, highlighting and so forth.

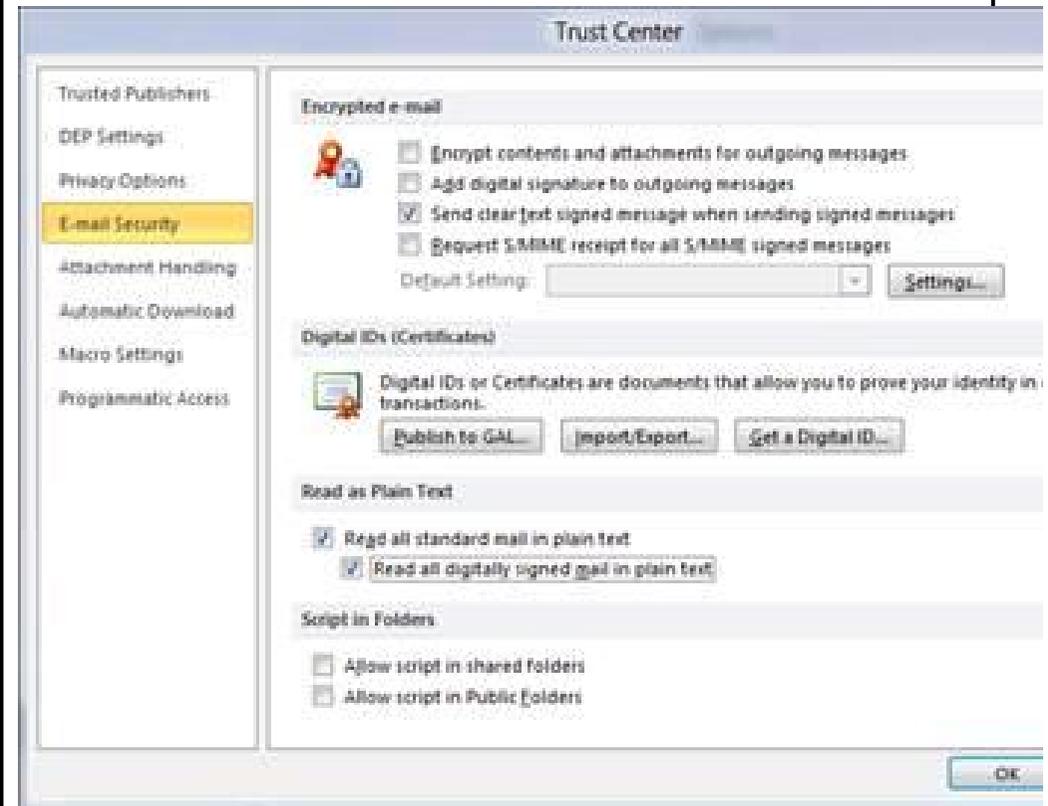
HTML mail uses the same technology as web pages to allow you to get creative with email messages. In addition to the above, you can add backgrounds, sound, animations and pretty much anything you can do in an HTML web page. However, there are drawbacks to these capabilities, too. These enhancements make email messages much larger, which can be a problem if your ISP or mail server provider (or that of the person with whom you're exchanging mail) limits the file size for email messages.

In addition, if you send HTML messages to someone who is using an email program that doesn't support HTML, or if the recipient or his mail server administrator has turned off HTML for incoming messages, your messages may look garbled or at the very least, lacking in the visual elements. The recipient won't see the message as you intended. In some cases, the recipient sees the HTML source code in the body of the message, replete with all the tags.

Finally, HTML mail can present security risks. Because messages can contain links, those links can point to malicious websites. Other elements such as beacons can be inserted; these are invisible or disguised graphics that are stored externally (on some server on the Internet) and can alert the sender that the message was opened. That's used by spammers to verify that they have a "live" email address. [HTML messages can also contain scripts that can perform malicious actions.](#)

Most email clients support HTML mail and many have it enabled by default, so if you're concerned about the security issues, set your mail client to display incoming mail in plain text. For example, in Outlook 2010 you do this by clicking the File tab and selecting Options, then clicking Trust Center in the left pane followed by clicking the

Trust Center Settings button in the right pane. Then click Email Security in the left pane, and in the section labeled Read as Plain Text, check the box that says Read all standard mail in plain text and the box that says Read all digitally signed mail in plain text, as shown in the screenshot:



Most email programs will provide a way to do this somewhere in the settings.

I used Outlook as an example because that's what I use for my email client. I like it because I can set up all of my different accounts – Exchange, Hotmail, Gmail, etc. – and have them all in one interface on my desktop. However, more and more people are using web interfaces to send and view their mail these days. And those interfaces

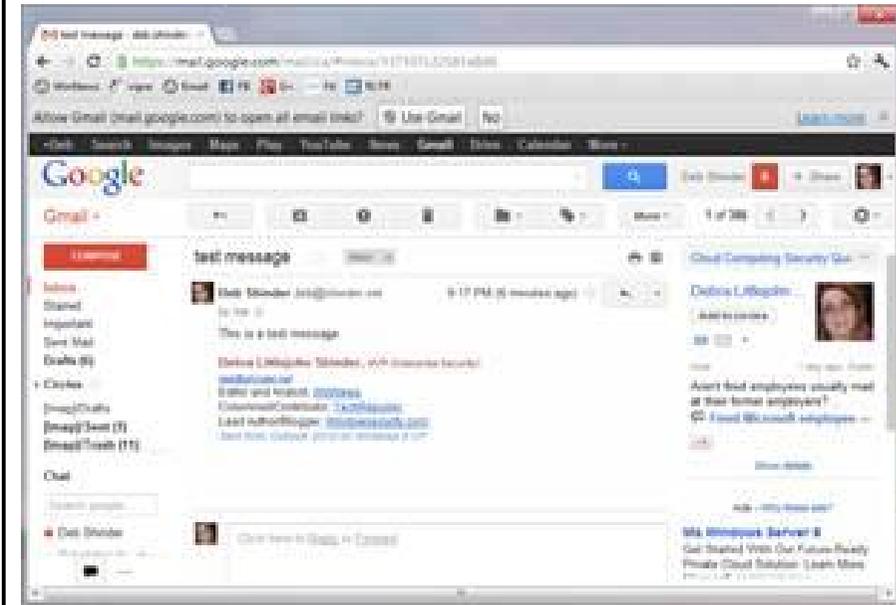
(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

are getting more and more sophisticated so that they're now very functional.

The top free webmail providers are Gmail (Google), Hotmail (Microsoft) and Yahoo! Mail (Yahoo!). They're easy to use and you can access them from any web browser, without having a mail client installed on the computer. You can also set up their accounts in a standard mail client or smartphone email app.

Because they're free, you may have to deal with advertising within the web interface, as shown in the screenshots of Hotmail and Gmail below. This is pretty non-intrusive and a small price to pay for free mail service.



Many people today – especially young people – prefer to use social networking sites as their primary means of online communication. However, you can still use email to communicate with them there. Facebook has integrated email so you can send email messages to a person's Facebook account (without having to be their Facebook friend or even have an account on Facebook yourself).

To do this, you need to know the person's public username that's associated with his/her Facebook account and the recipient needs to have set up the Facebook email account.

Once that's done, you can send mail to username@Facebook.com. The messages then appear in that person's Facebook Messages, along with their private messages sent through the Facebook Chat feature. If you have a Facebook account and have set up Facebook email, you can send messages from that account within the Facebook Messaging interface, too. You can find out more about using the Facebook email feature on the [Messages Basics page of the Help Center](#).

Just recently, Facebook has introduced a new feature that [syncs a user's Timeline ad-](#)

(Continued on page 12)

[dress and Facebook email address](#) – unless you’ve already selected an email address before, in which case it won’t be affected. This is an effort to integrate the email feature more, to compete with Gmail’s integration with Google+.

In fact, that integration of email with social networking is a growing trend. As shown in the screenshot below, even traditional mail clients like Outlook have incorporated social networking into their interfaces. If you install the Outlook social connectors, you can connect your Facebook, LinkedIn, Windows Live and other social accounts to Outlook. Then when you open email from a person, you can see his/her social status updates in the bottom pane below the message.

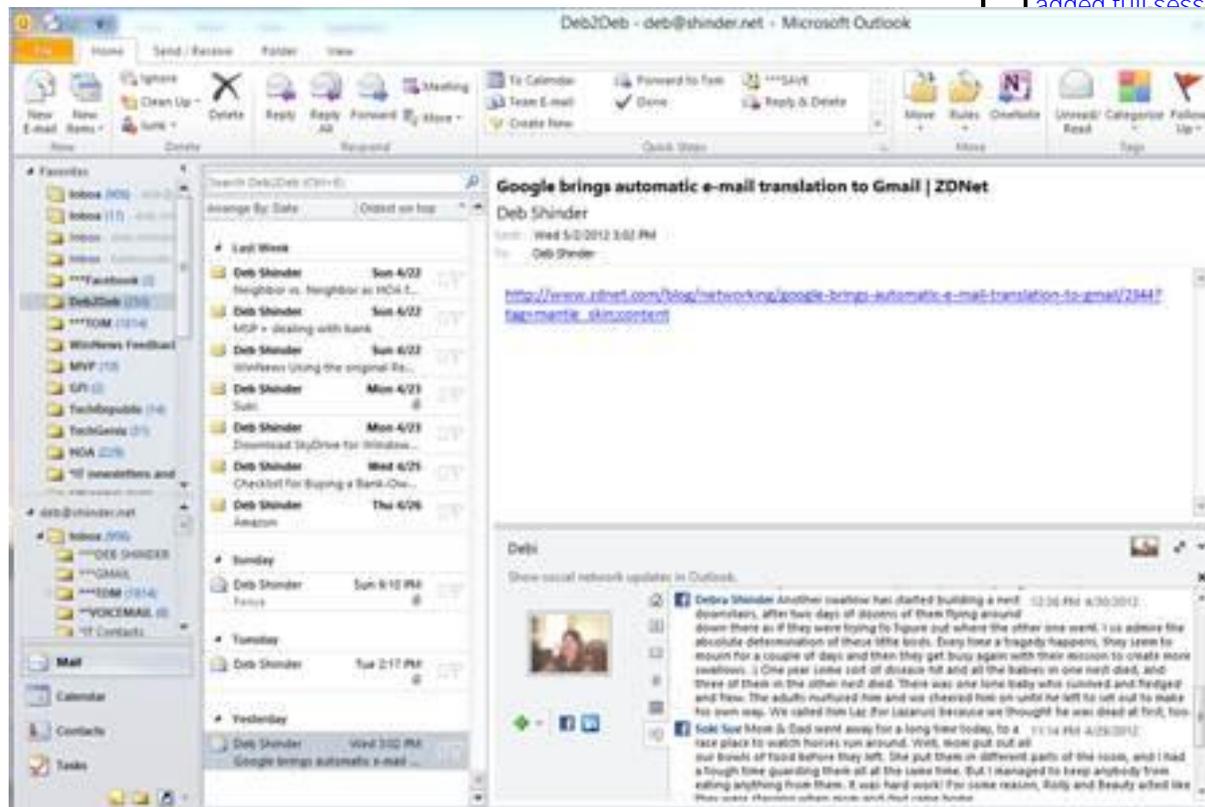
easier to communicate with people all over the world. [Google recently announced that they’re bringing automatic language translation to Gmail](#), whereby you will be able to write a message in your language and have it arrive in your friend’s mailbox already translated into his/her language.

[Microsoft did a major makeover on Hotmail last fall](#), integrating it with SkyDrive and doing away with email storage limitations, as well as integrating with Office Web Apps and adding active view so you can watch videos inline and reply to social networking messages or accept invitations directly from Hotmail.

What if you’re concerned about the security of your messages? [In 2010, Microsoft added full session HTTPS encryption to Hotmail](#) and [Google began encrypting Gmail](#)

But if you want to be able to control what recipients can do with after they receive them, there’s another option. Preventing the forwarding of messages used to require that you have an expensive corporate solution as Microsoft’s Rights Management Services (RMS), but now there is [Led Opolis](#) available that will do the same thing. It’s billed not as another email services, but as a “parallel” service for sending sensitive messages and attachments.

People have a lot of options these days.



If anything, email is becoming even more useful as features are added that make it

XP TIP OF THE WEEK: SUPPRESS TIMESTAMP FOR LAST ACCESS OF NTFS DIRECTORY

1. When you access a directory (folder) on an NTFS-formatted volume in Windows XP, by default the timestamp is updated so there is a record of when it was last accessed. If you don't want that to happen, you can edit the registry to suppress this action. As always, be sure to back up the registry before you make changes to it. Here are the instructions for the registry edit:

Open your favorite registry editor

2. Navigate to
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\FileSystem
3. In the right pane, double-click the registry value NtfsDisableLastAccessUpdate
4. If the registry value is not there, create it as a new DWORD value: (right-click empty space in the right pane, click New, then DWORD value, then name it and double-click it
5. Change the Value Data setting to 1

CLOSE THE REGISTRY EDITOR AND REBOOT

1 WINDOWS 7 TIP OF THE WEEK: CREATE A RECURRING ALARM WITH TASK SCHEDULER

1. Maybe you need to take medicine at a certain time every day. Maybe you just want to be reminded to get up and move around so you won't "grow to the desk." Whatever the reason, you can use the task scheduler in Windows 7 to create a recurring alarm. Here's how:

Click the Start button and in the Search box, type task scheduler and press Enter

2. In the right Actions panel, click Create Task
3. On the General tab, type a name for the task, such as Take medicine
4. Click the Triggers tab.
5. Click the New button
6. Select On a schedule for the "Begin the task" field
7. Select Weekly and check the days of the week that are applicable
8. Check Repeat task every and select the time frame (such as 4 hours) from the dropdown list
9. Select a duration of 12 hours or 24 hours or whatever time frame you need to spread it over

10. Check the Enabled box

11. Click OK

12. Click the Actions tab to pick what actions you want to take place to alert you (such as displaying a message on the screen)

CLICK OK

1 WINDOWS 8 TIP OF THE WEEK: CREATE A STORAGE SPACE

1. Storage Spaces is a brand-new feature in Windows 8 that lets you create a storage pool from multiple hard drives, combining them into one virtual drive. Here's how:

IMPORTANT: If you have data on the drives you're going to use, back it up first because you will lose all data on the drives when the storage space is created.

In Control Panel Category view, go to System and Security and then Storage Spaces or just type Storage Spaces on the Metro Start screen

2. In the Storage Spaces right pane titled Manage Storage Spaces, click Create a new pool and storage space
3. In the list of drives available, select the ones you want to use for the storage space
4. Click Create Pool
5. Specify the drive letter you want to use and a name for the new drive
6. You can specify a logical size for the drive that's larger than the physical capacity, and when it starts to get too full, Windows will prompt you so you can plug in another drive to add to the storage space
7. Select the resiliency type: None, Two-way mirror, Three-way mirror or Parity (the information box at the bottom of the dialog box explains each choice)
8. Click the Create storage space button

THE STORAGE SPACE WILL APPEAR IN WINDOWS EXPLORER LIKE ANY PHYSICAL DRIVE

1 WINDOWS PHONE TIP OF THE WEEK: ENABLE GROUP MESSAGING

1. You can enable Group Messaging on Windows Phone 7.5 so that you can communicate with multiple persons in a thread. By default, it's disabled. Here's how to turn it on:

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

- On the Start screen, swipe toward the left to access the list of apps
2. Scroll down and press Settings
 3. Swipe toward the left again, to the applications section
 4. Press Messaging
 5. Move the On/Off switch for Group Messaging to the On position

NOTE: Group Messaging uses MMS instead of SMS so this will use more data.

TALKING TECH: MONITOR MADNESS

A few weeks back, I wrote about today's high-performance video cards and how to choose the best one for your particular computing needs. But how great your video card output is doesn't mean anything without the display device to which that output goes. It's your monitor (or monitors) that turns the video signal into a picture that's pleasing (or not) to your eyes.

Everyone who has followed my writing for a long time knows that I'm a multiple monitor junkie. [The more screens, the better](#), and the bigger they are, the better - well, at least up to a point. I guess I could be happy with only two or three of these "[extreme screens](#)."

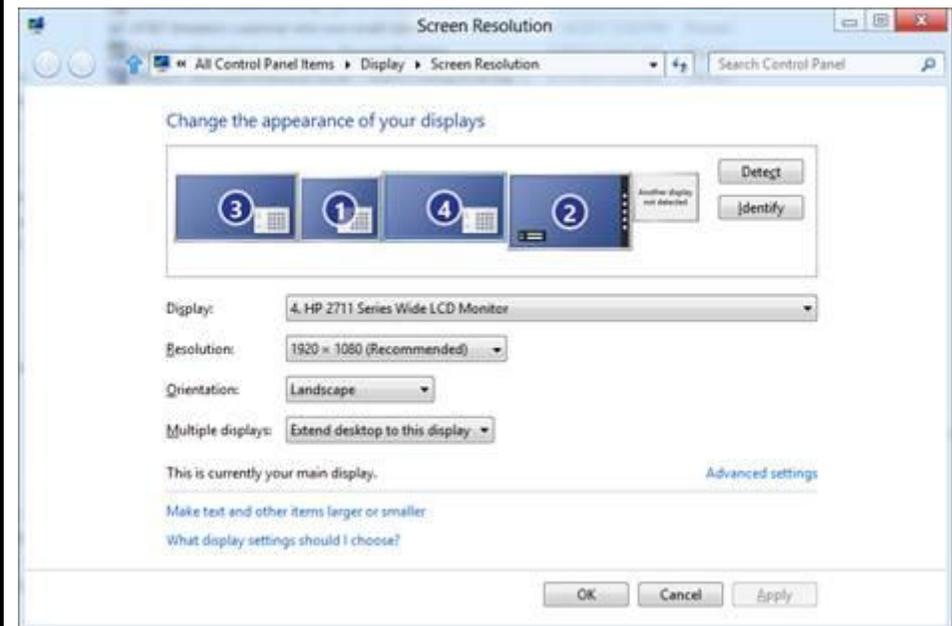
But when it comes to selecting monitors, it's not just about the size and number; it's also about the quality of the display - and, increasingly, about special features that are built into modern monitors. We've come a long way from that hefty little 12 inch monochrome monitor that came with my original IBM PC. Today's flat panels weigh a lot less and give you far more screen real estate.

Most modern monitors use LCD or LED technology, although there are also a few OLED monitors on the market now - if you're willing to pay the price. Because OLED doesn't use a backlight, it can display very deep blacks and can also be super thin and ultra-lightweight. However, [Sony's 25 inch OLED model will set you back almost \\$5,500](#), which pretty much limits it to those who are doing discerning graphic/video work and/or who have lots of spare money.

One of the first things most folks think about when buying a new monitor is size. Popular computer monitors marketed to consumers range in size from 14 to 30 inches (measured diagonally from the bottom-left corner to the upper-right corner). Vendors often round up in advertising the monitor size, so a "25 inch screen" may actually measure only 24.7 inches. Flat-panel monitor sizes refer to the viewable area only, whereas the old CRTs often included the border casing in the measurement.

The monitor size is one of many numbers you'll see in the manufacturer's specifications that can help you when you compare monitors. Another important number is the maximum resolution that the monitor supports. The resolution is the number of horizontal and vertical pixels you get. A pixel is a unit of measurement, and the more pixels in an image, the better the quality of the picture. Resolution is expressed as horizontal pixels by vertical pixels. Thus a monitor set to 1920 x 1200 pixels is 1920 pixels wide and 1200 pixels tall.

Most monitors will support a number of different resolutions. You can set the resolution separately for each of your monitors in the Windows' Display applet in the Control Panel (in Windows 7, it's easier than ever to get there; just right-click an empty space on the desktop and click Screen Resolution).



The [aspect ratio](#) and the resolution are related, in that two monitors might support the same pixel width (e.g., 1920) but not the same pixel height. The first might be 1920 x 1200 and the second only 1920 x 1080. That means the picture on the second monitor will appear to be wider in relation to its height. The aspect ratio is expressed

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

as two numbers representing the relationship between the width and height. Two different resolutions can have the same aspect ratio, but the proportions will always be the same.

Popular aspect ratios have grown wider over time. Those first old monitors were almost square, with 4:3 ratios like old-time TV sets. Today the most popular aspect ratio is 16:9 (the ratio of that 1920 x 1080 monitor), as it's the standard for HD video. In fact, it's getting difficult to find a monitor with the 16:10 aspect ratio of that 1920 x 1200 resolution (and expensive if you do find one). Although the slightly wider monitors are best for watching HD movies, many computer users prefer the 16:10 ratio because it gives you more vertical pixels and works better for tasks such as docking two document windows side-by-side.

Another "ratio" that you'll want to pay attention to when you select a monitor is the contrast ratio. This is a measurement of the ratio between the whitest white and the blackest black that the monitor can display. The higher the contrast ratio, the better. The contrast ratio is expressed in a similar format to that of the aspect ratio (two numbers separated by a colon). Comparing contrast ratios can be confusing because there are two kinds: dynamic and static. The static ratio is the way contrast was originally measured, and will usually range between 500:1 and 3000:1. The dynamic (or active) ratio will be much higher, such as 50,000:1 or even 100,000:1. Be sure you aren't comparing apples to oranges when you consider contrast ratios.

No matter how impressive the specs are, at the end of the day you have to be able to hook your monitor(s) up to your computer. That means you want video inputs that match the outputs on your video card(s). Sure, you can often use an adapter if you have to, but that introduces the opportunity for interference. So if you do have to go from one type of output (such as DVI) to another (such as HDMI), try to get a cable with the correct connectors on each end rather than adding an adapter to the mix. Many monitors in use today have three inputs: VGA, DVI and HDMI. On the newest ones, you'll find the latest standard, Displayport (which [we discussed in the earlier article on video cards](#)).

What else matters? Some monitors come with built-in speakers. HDMI cables will carry both video and sound over one cable. This is convenient, but the speakers often don't sound as good as dedicated computer speakers, and you can't get as much stereo separation or have surround sound like you get with a set of 5.1 or 7.1 speakers. However, it does save space (and possibly money) so weigh your priorities when considering whether this feature makes a difference.

Another feature that some monitors include is the ability to tilt and/or swivel the screen.

Getting the proper viewing angle can make a huge difference in comfort when you sit in front of the monitor all day. Some monitors only tilt vertically while others will let you adjust the height and still others will pivot on the base. I have a pair of 24 inch HP monitors that will pivot to a portrait orientation, which is handy for certain tasks.

Of course the latest and greatest thing in monitors is touch capability. They're more expensive than non-touch monitors but the prices have come down a lot over the last couple of years. It's now possible to get a [23 inch multi-touch monitor with support for 1920 x 1080 resolution](#) for just a little over \$300. Expect to see more touchscreen models hit the market when Windows 8 is released, since it's such a touch-centric OS.

3-D television sets are finally starting to get some market traction, after a rather slow start - and you can get [3-D computer monitors](#), too. Unfortunately, most still require you to wear special glasses in order to get the 3-D effect, but the 3-D experience is especially attractive for an immersive gaming experience.

Some might argue that monitors themselves are an endangered species. After all, if you believe all the hype, the PC is dead and in the future all computing will be done on tablets and smartphones. Even if that scenario somehow comes to pass and handheld devices become powerful enough to do all that we power users want to do (something that isn't going to happen next week), I suspect a large number of us are still going to want to plug those phones and pads into a large display when we sit down to do some serious business, at least in the near future.

There will likely come a day when we'll be able to roll our large screen monitors up and take them with us. [Flexible display technology](#) will make it possible for almost any surface to become a monitor. Forrester Research Analyst Sarah Rotman Epps predicts that will happen around 2015 - which is only three years away.

In the meantime, I'll make do with my four screens (27 inch, two 24 inch and a 60 inch HDTV that acts as the fourth monitor). Tell us what your take is on the state of the display industry. Do you think large monitors are on their way out, to be replaced by laptops and tablets for routine web browsing, emailing, and apps, and much bigger screen TVs for watching movies and video, viewing and editing photos, etc.? If not, what's the sweet spot for you when it comes to monitor size? Do you have a favorite brand or brands? Which criteria are most important to you in selecting a monitor? Sound off on this topic in [our forum](#) or [email me](#).

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

POINT OF VIEW: "GREEN" COMPUTING

[Microsoft announced that they're embarking on a "green energy initiative"](#) this summer, with a goal to become "carbon neutral" beginning in July. Many other software and hardware companies have done the same, pouring millions of dollars into the effort to go green and making claims of reduced carbon emissions. Microsoft is reportedly investing over \$3 billion to build new, more environmentally correct facilities.

Certainly no one can argue with the fact that using less power saves money, and that's a good thing for companies and their stockholders. But going overboard with the "green initiatives" probably negates those savings and adds more cost, when companies create entire new departments just to implement and monitor these programs, run advertising campaigns to toot their own "good corporate citizen" horns and start acting as the "carbon police" over their employees.

Don't get me wrong, I'm very much in favor of conserving natural resources. It bugs me no end when I see monitors left on when nobody is using them, empty buildings lit up and air conditioned to meat-locker temperatures, water faucets left running in between actual use because someone was too lazy to turn it off. I hate waste; I'm the gal who saves and reuses the aluminum foil, for Pete's sake.

But I'm not so crazy about this whole "carbon offsets" business. And in fact, many of the most enthusiastic environmentalists aren't so crazy about it either. [The Federal Trade Commission started investigating the offset industry back in 2008](#), but it continues to be big business.

Meanwhile, the effects of "too much of a green thing" can cost companies more than the money they spend on their new green data centers and office facilities. It can even cost them customers. When the "green" hard drives came out, they offered the [not-so-compelling characteristic of reduced performance with very little savings on energy consumption/cost](#).

In addition, when companies overspend on their green efforts, they end up passing those costs (like any other major costs they incur) along to their customers, by increasing the price of their products and services and/or reducing the quality or quantity of those products or services.

There are real, effective measures that companies can take to make an impact on overall energy consumption. One of those is to embrace the concept of telecommuting. More employees working at home means less gasoline consumed,

fewer cars on the road polluting the atmosphere, reduced need to heat and cool and light up office space, elimination of the need to construct new buildings, and so forth. Microsoft has certainly moved steadily in that direction over the last decade. When my husband was first offered a job with the company in 2004, he turned it down because we didn't want to move to the Seattle area. In 2009, the offer came with the ability to stay in Texas and work at home - and he took it.

There is also a great deal of waste that traditionally goes on in the corporate environment, such as unnecessary travel as a "perk" of high-level positions. Cutting back on just some of that would save companies money *and* reduce the negative impact on the environment. On the other hand, setting up new offices for new "environmental" departments and sending them around the country or world to keep tabs on the energy use of other employees just seems a bit off to me. Has anyone ever done a study on the environmental impact of environmental impact programs?

Bitches 'til the End!

Man, I'll tell ya, women can be cold until the end!

The doctor, after an examination, sighed and said,

'I've got some bad news.

You have cancer, and you'd best put your affairs in order.'

The woman was shocked, but managed to compose herself and walk into the waiting room where her daughter had been waiting.

'Well, daughter, we women celebrate when things are good, and we celebrate when things

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

don't go so well. In this case, things aren't well. I have cancer. So, let's head to the club and have a martini.'

After 3 or 4 martinis, the two were feeling a little less sombre. There were some laughs and more martinis.

They were eventually approached by some of the woman's old friends, who were curious as to what the two were celebrating. The woman told her friends they were drinking to her impending end, 'I've been diagnosed with AIDS.'

The friends were aghast, gave the woman their condolences and beat a hasty retreat.

After the friends left, the woman's daughter leaned over and whispered, 'Momma, I thought you said you were dying of cancer, and you just told your friends you were dying of AIDS! Why did you do that?'

'Because I don't want any of those bitches sleeping with your father after I'm gone.'

And THAT, my friends, is what is called, 'Putting Your Affairs In Order.'

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY....

Women are like phones:

They like to be held, talked to, and touched often.

But push the wrong button and!!!

