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MARCH MEETING

OPEN's monthly meeting for March will be held on Wednesday the 5th at 1:00 pm
New members of the club are invited to attend as we are always looking for new ideas and feedback on how the club is performing.

There will NOT be meeting for the Launceston Computer Group in March.
The next LCG meeting will be at 7:15 pm on Wednesday April 2nd.

Newstream Articles

Deadline : 10 Days before Meeting

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Membership

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LCG Committee 2014/15

President: Janet Headlam

Vice President: Ivan Turmine

Secretary: Iris Meek

Treasurer: Dennis Murray

Ass. Treasurer: Laraine Rist

PC Librarian: Vacant

Mac Librarian: Vacant

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Auditor: Ron Baker

Publicity Officer: Iris Meek

"V.I.C.T.O.R." Co-Ordinator: Robert Tierney

LCG Committee: Glenn Gilpin, Reinhard von Samorzewski, Eleanor Horder, Bruce

Dineen

OPEN Committee 2014/15

O.P.E.N. Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney.

Responsible for the smooth running of the Centre on a daily basis

O.P.E.N. Chairperson: Laraine Rist.

Chair all meetings of OPEN and ensure that they run smoothly

O.P.E.N. Vice Chairperson: Robert Tierney.

Chair meeting when the Chairperson is unavailable.

O.P.E.N. Minute Secretary: Heather Loffel.

Handles all incoming and outgoing communications

Responsible for the documentation and distribution of all meeting minutes

Treasurer: Dennis Murray.

Responsible for all monies and banking

Assistant Treasurer: Laraine Rist.

Help the Treasurer where necessary.

Newsletter Editor: Dennis Murray.

Publicity Officer: Iris Meek.

Responsible for all advertising

Membership Co-ordinator: Eleanor Horder.

Keep Membership database up to date.

Co-ordinator O-learn: Eleanor Horder

Tutor Co-ordinator: Laraine Rist, Robert Tierney & Dennis Murray.

Keep regular contact with Tutors to bring ideas and concerns to meetings

Maintenance Co-ordinators: Dennis Murray.

Responsible for the maintenance and repairs to all computer equipment

"V.I.C.T.O.R." Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney.

Webmaster/Content: Tom Olsen. <<mailto:webmaster@lcg.org.au>>

OPEN Committee: Janet Headlam, Karia Wicks, Sandra Viney, Kay Dawson.

OPEN NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2014

A VERY BUSY START TO THE YEAR

There may have only been 28 days in February but it was a very busy month.

First up were our Annual General Meetings on the 5th ... The main change from the OPEN perspective was that an interim committee will take over the role of Tutor Coordinator which was vacated by Bruce Dineen. The committee is Laraine Rist, Robert Tierney and Dennis Murray.

On the LCG side Janet Headlam was elected to the position of President.

A full listing of office-bearers and committee-persons is on our website www.lcg.org.au.

On February 19th we held the first of our new special classes with about 15 people attending Rob Tierney's **Internet Security** presentation in the morning and then most of those attending my **Password Management** session in the afternoon. We hope that you all gained something worthwhile from those sessions.

I'm also pleased to advise that we have recruited some new tutors for this year.

Jimmy L is helping our Android tablet users and is available for both morning and afternoon sessions on Mondays. Jimmy will also be conducting a special session on March 19th from 10:00 am to 12 noon, and another session in mid-April

Sheryl M is helping out with our Friday morning sessions and with the Monday Beginners class, while **Janet H** (*the younger one!*) is providing assistance for our Tuesday evening classes.

A special 'Get Well' message to our hard-working Chairperson, Assistant Treasurer and tutor Laraine who had surgery recently. We'll miss you while you are out of action but understand that you'll need time for a successful recovery.

Dennis Murray

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★ **VICTOR PHONE NUMBER 0408 174 235** ★

★ **Contact the Coordinator Rob Tierney for assistance with computer problems at home** ★

★ **(Bookings are subject to availability of tutors.)** ★

VENUE TELEPHONE NUMBER

Don't forget that the club telephone is available during class hours.

******* 6343 4928 *******

Members and tutors can be contacted at the clubrooms **during class hours** by telephoning the number shown above.

Monday to Friday 10am – 3pm

Tuesday evenings 7pm—9 pm

MAINTENANCE and BREAK-DOWNS ARE FACTS OF LIFE

A few weeks ago I received notification from Aurora (*the power company*) that my home would be without power for 7 hours or so on a date in mid-February. This wasn't going to be a major problem for me because I'm away from home for most of the day.

So apart from the possibility of a pool of water in my kitchen when I arrived home I wasn't too concerned.

Unlike that pre-planned power interruption by Aurora our computers rarely give us any indication that they are about to need attention.

And so it came to pass that around the time of our AGM early in February two of our computers, OPEN 1 and OPEN 4 decided to exhibit major problems, with both going into an endless 're-boot loop' - just as Windows XP was about to arrive at the main desktop screen each of the computers would turn off and re-start ... repeatedly!

Compare this situation to the recent spate of 'wild weather events' where people have lost power for several hours while crews work away to re-connect electricity services—it takes time!

Computers aren't all that different — diagnosing the problems, reinstalling the operating system, programs, printers and other devices isn't always a 5-minute job. Sometimes the best we can do is to set up a temporary replacement computer which will provide basic services until repairs are made. Don't be too critical if one or two of your favourite programs or facilities aren't available.

One point I would make is that if a particular computer or piece of equipment is giving trouble then please let a senior tutor or the 'maintenance coordinator' know.

In one of the cases mentioned above I was surprised to learn that the computer had been giving trouble 'for quite some time' but no-one had mentioned it to me.

I would also remind tutors and students that from time to time changes to operating procedures are required and usually notifications of the changes are displayed at the club.

Please take the time to read the information. **Dennis**

ALWAYS SOMETHING TO CONFUSE US?

Digital Versatile Disks (DVDs) have been around for quite a while so we'd probably be forgiven for thinking we knew all there was to know about them.

But with a few of our members experiencing troubles when burning DVDs recently I thought I should advise you of the differences between the various types.

The **DVD-RW type** is usually suitable for all DVD-equipped computers and laptops manufactured in the last 6 or 7 years.

The **DVD+RW type** isn't always compatible with computers and laptops that are more than 5 years old, and that relates to both burning them and playing (*or reading*) them. If you have an older computer and your DVD-burning program rejects the DVD disk placed in the drive then it is possible that it is an incompatible DVD+R.

Both the types mentioned above have a capacity of 4.7 Gigabytes. That may not be sufficient for burning a lengthy movie or a large data compilation.

Dual Layer DVDs have a capacity of 8.5 GB and can only be used on computers that have a Dual Layer DVD device fitted.

So, when burning DVDs make sure you are using the type that is compatible with your computer's 'optical drive'.

Flash-drives and portable Hard Disks are all the same, OK?

Recently I helped one of our members do a VHS to DVD movie conversion. The movie file was recorded on our B_Server computer and was around 6 GB in size.

The best DVD creation program was on OPEN15 so the file had to be copied to a flash-drive and transferred between computers. But even though I was actually using a 250 GB portable hard-drive the transfer could not be made.

Why? Because the portable drive was formatted in the **old FAT32 file system**, and FAT32 has a maximum file size of around 4 GB. I then grabbed a new 8 GB flash-drive and formatted it with the **NTFS file system**.

Problem solved, data transferred successfully **Dennis**.

OPEN NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2014

FAMILY HISTORY 2014

Wednesday March 12

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Wednesday March 26

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

New information is being added to our resources on an on-going basis to help you trace your family's origins. Contact the club for more information.

Classes limited to 8 people.

Join Judy, Margaret G and the other tutors for these informative sessions.

BUYING AND SELLING ONLINE

USING eBay

Wednesday, March 19th

10:00 am til 12:00 noon.

Rob Tierney will take you through all the procedures you need to know in order to buy and sell safely and successfully using eBay, the on-line auction site.

From setting up your account, placing an advertisement, bidding for an item you wish to purchase, and arranging financial transactions to complete a sale or purchase, Rob will guide you through the processes.

LEVEL 2 & 3 GRAPHICS

With Paint Shop Pro 7 and 8

Wednesday March 12

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

BEGINNERS GRAPHICS

With Paint Shop Pro XI

Beginners

Wednesday March 26

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

(re-introduced after 3 years)

ANDROID FORUM WITH JIMMY LAVERTY

Wednesday, March 19th

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Jimmy will be conducting regular sessions to provide Android owners learn how to come to grips with their tablets.

Find out what 'apps' are available to make Android life more enjoyable, how to change your settings and perhaps even share your own experiences with other members of the class.

INTRODUCTION TO EXCEL SPREADSHEETS **Wednesday, March 5th 10:00 am to 12 noon**

Many of our members learned the basics of Spreadsheets during their e-Learn or O-Learn courses but haven't had much experience since.

Our session on March 5th will provide a refresher course on the basics and show you that Excel can be used for tasks other than 'crunching numbers'. A follow-up session will be held on April 2nd from 10.00 am to 12:00 noon.

OPEN Session Times

At Studioworks, 1 Pipeworks Rd, L'ton

Standard Sessions \$6.00

[Some special tutorial materials may incur additional charges]

Monday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm – 3 pm	Basics and Beyond
	3:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Beginners Class
Tuesday	10 am –12	O-Learn & Beginners [all day]
	1 pm – 3 pm	Mac [all day]
	7 pm–9 pm	Basics (Night Class)
Wednesday		Special sessions or Meetings
		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 Class

OPEN NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2014

SPECIAL WEDNESDAY SESSIONS

Please register on the sheets – numbers may be limited

Date	Time	Topic	Details
March 5	10 am–12 noon	Introduction to Spreadsheets	Learn the basic steps with Microsoft Excel. Spreadsheets are a great way to process your numerical data.
	1 pm onwards	OPEN Monthly Meeting	Presentation of Financial Reports and General Business discussions. New members are encouraged to attend.
		No Meeting in March	Launceston Computer Group Next meeting will be on April 2nd, 2014 at 7:15 pm.
March 12	10 am–12 noon	Level 2 and 3 Graphics Class	Advanced graphics using Paint Shop Pro 7 and 8
	1 pm–3.00 pm	Family History	Judy, Margaret G and the team will help you trace your ancestors.
March 19	10 am–12 noon	eBay Presentation with Rob Tierney	Rob will provide a detailed explanation of all aspects of eBay—buying and selling and all the steps required.
	1 pm–3.00 pm	Androids with Jim Laverty	Jimmy will provide Android users with tips on how to tame your tablets.
March 26	10 am–12 noon	Family History	Use our extensive range of resources or use Ancestry.com on-line to research your Family History.
	1 pm–3.00 pm	Graphics Beginners PSP XI	Re-introduced after 3 years this course enable users at all levels to learn Graphics skills.

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2014 were due on December 1st, 2013. if you haven't yet paid your subs please do so on your next visit to the club. Single Membership \$20, Couples \$30 per year

OPEN NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014

WINDOWS UPGRADE HAS 'EATEN' ALL MY FILES

A few of our members have recently upgraded their Windows 8 computers to the new 8.1 version.

Windows 8.1 does a few things differently, most of them positive but one or two are quite puzzling.

One of our members recently complained that they had 'lost' all their documents and pictures during the upgrade. Thankfully all that data had been copied on to a portable hard drive.

But rather than having 'lost' all the data the reality was that Windows 8.1 just wasn't showing it in the usual place, namely the Libraries.

Don't ask me why but for some reason Windows 8.1's default setting is to hide the Libraries. To make them visible you need to go to the **File Explorer > View > Navigation Pane** and tick the box that says Libraries.

However I will take this opportunity to remind members of two articles published in the newsletter last year. Those articles included diagrams of the file structure that exists on most computers with the most pertinent point being that all **your files are (usually) stored on the internal hard-drive**, normally called the C: drive.

Regardless of whether you can see the Libraries your files should still be located where they always were— for operating systems from Vista onwards they will be in the Users area of the C: drive. For XP they will be in the Documents and Settings area on the C: drive.

In my opinion understanding the Folders and Files structure on your computer is most important and should be one of the first things you learn, yet I often find that is a topic that troubles even those who have many years of computer experience.

Dennis Murray

THE SCAMS JUST KEEP ON COMING

Just a few days ago a member contacted me to ask whether I could assist him with a procedure that Telstra were going to conduct on his Internet equipment, as he did not feel confident that he could do it alone.

The story went like this ... Phone calls had been received from a number displayed on his phone as "OVERSEAS" and the caller told our member that he had a virus in his 'gateway' (*in other words his ADSL modem*). To rectify the problem he needed to contact "Telstra North Sydney" on an '02 8003 xxxx' area code number and speak to a staff member who would guide him through the process.

My first question to our member was "Have you been having any unusual problems with your Internet service?", followed by "What did the caller sound like?"

My suspicions were aroused ...

1. The call was from "OVERSEAS".

The caller had a 'foreign accent'.

1. A quick 'Google' revealed that most North Sydney telephone numbers are in the 02 99xx xxxx range.

2. Google-ing "Miller Street North Sydney" (*the address given*) revealed that quite a lot of people had complained of harassment and intimidation from overseas callers claiming to be from Telstra.

3. Although the name of the contact person was of 'Anglo' heritage the Telstra ID number given was not the usual Telstra format

4. A visit to the Australian Government's ScamWatch website advised that it was unlikely that Telstra would make unsolicited calls to customers offering technical assistance.

Had our member made the contact without consulting someone else what would the likely outcome have been?

(continued in next column)

THE SCAMS JUST KEEP ON COMING (cont.)

Most scams are about money ... taking it from your account and putting it in the scammer's account!

Let's turn the clock back almost two months to the time when another of our members received a similar call but in that instance the (*bogus*) problem being claimed was that her computer was being used to send out SPAM e-mails and was interfering with other users in her area.

Our member allowed the caller remote access her to computer to 'fix the problem'. At the end of the process she was told that the charge was a mere \$10 and was asked for credit card details. Because our member did not have a credit card she suggested that the amount be charged to her normal Telstra account or alternatively she could pay it in person at a Telstra shop.

That's when the phone call ended, but not the problem. Giving remote access to the bogus caller had allowed them to lock the computer with a password that not known to our member so she no longer had access to it. A full re-install of operating system, programs and data was required.

If by now you're thinking that the caller had gone to a lot of trouble to collect a mere \$10 then you may be missing the real intent of the call ... **to obtain credit card details**, or what is called a 'phishing expedition'.

I can only theorise that this was the objective behind the call that made to the other member just a few days ago—to obtain credit card details.

There are a few variations of this scam and some of them include an element of intimidation ... "If you don't fix the problem your Internet will be cut off", "Your computer will be reported for interfering with other people's services etc."

Most of us receiving a call that we believe has originated from a 'reputable company' will try to do the right thing and allow the caller to fix the problem—even though there may not be one.

But if you have even the tiniest suspicion please take the time to consult one of our experienced members or to verify that call is from the company that it's claimed to be.

SCAMWATCH REPORT

February 2014: SCAMwatch is warning people thinking about buying a franchise or small business to beware of exciting new franchise opportunities that may actually be scams.

Franchising scams can come in the form of a pyramid scheme dressed up as a reputable franchise. These scams may appear to be slick and professional, with a sophisticated website, marketing material and buzz-words. The scammers may also promote the franchise as a golden opportunity for investors to join a 'proven' business that requires minimum effort, experience or skill with instant rewards.

A legitimate franchisor will provide a prospective franchisee with a disclosure document 14 days before entering into an agreement or handing over any money (as is required by law under the Franchising Code of Conduct). This document should contain important information about the franchise, including the payments to be made, the contact details of existing and former franchisees, and inform franchisees of their cooling off rights.

The tell-tale sign of a pyramid selling scheme is that they recruit people rather than selling a legitimate product or service. In a recent example of such a business opportunity it is difficult to identify the true nature of the business and pin-point what is actually being bought or sold.

In the end all pyramid schemes collapse, leaving participants with empty pockets and potentially in hot water too as these schemes are illegal in Australia.

If you are interested in joining a franchise, make sure you know what you're getting into – pyramid selling schemes are often highly sophisticated and hard to tell apart from genuine offers. If you sign up to a fake franchise, you will lose your money.

HOW THESE SCAMS WORK

- You come across a franchise system or small business opportunity advertised online. You may come across the website directly or alternatively through an online selling platform.
- The website appears to be the real deal, with a slick and professional design. It may contain information that appears plausible for a genuine business site such

as a business model, mission statement, industry statistics, diagrams, support services for franchisees such as mentoring and training programs, and free marketing tools. It may also use buzz-words such as 'risk-free', 'not-to-be-missed', 'high return', 'unique' and 'innovative' to entice you to join.

- Despite all the information provided, if you actually look for what the franchise is selling, it is hard to put your finger on exactly what is being bought or sold.
- In order to participate, you have to pay significant upfront costs to join the franchise.
- Once you sign up, you will be required to recruit other 'franchisees' or 'franchise partners' to join the scheme. You find that you will not only never get the returns that were promised, but you will also have to continue to approach and sign people up.
- If you sign up prospective franchisees, including family and friends, you will not only be involving them in the scheme, but also breaking the law.

IN THE END, ALL PYRAMID SCHEMES COLLAPSE AND YOU WILL LOSE YOUR MONEY.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Seek full **information** – ensure that you receive a disclosure document from the business before handing over any money. If you are not provided with such a document, **walk away**.
- **Make sure the business you are dealing with is the real deal** – ask around, search online and contact existing and former franchisees. Don't just rely on information from the business but seek out independent sources to verify the information. If you have any doubts, don't sign up.
- **Understand what you are purchasing** – ask yourself, what is the service being sold? Do not enter into an agreement if you do not know what is being offered.
- **Do not succumb to high-pressure or buy-it-now sales tactics** – take your time to understand what you are agreeing to.
- **Minimum effort does not reap maximum rewards** – there are no get-rich-quick schemes and the only people who make money are the scammers.
- **If you believe that an offer is a pyramid scheme, do not take part** – it is very likely that you will lose your money and you could be breaking the law. Participating in a pyramid selling scheme is illegal in Australia.
- **Remember** – these days, it's easy for a scammer to create a professional looking website and use marketing jargon.

Information about what to look for when choosing a franchise and what should be con-

tained in a disclosure document is available in the [ACCC's franchisee manual](#).

REPORT

You can report scams to the ACCC via the [report a scam](#) page on SCAMwatch or by calling 1300 795 995.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on how these scams work, check out the [pyramid schemes section](#) on SCAMwatch.

For more information about your rights and obligations as a franchisee see the [ACCC's online franchising information](#).

If you are interested in buying into a franchise, check out the [ACCC-Griffith University free online pre-entry program](#), which will give you invaluable advice about what you need to know before signing up to any offer, and what you need to ask. Genuine franchise systems will be able to answer these questions; most scammers will not.

To find out more about your rights and obligations as a small business under Australia's competition and consumer laws, contact the ACCC Small Business Helpline on 1300 302 021.

Stay one step ahead of scammers, follow @SCAMwatch_gov on Twitter or visit http://twitter.com/SCAMwatch_gov.

You have received this email because you have subscribed to receive SCAMwatch radar alerts on scams targeting Australians. These alerts are issued by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and can be viewed on its SCAMwatch website <http://www.scamwatch.gov.au/>.

If you have any doubts about an email's source, verify the sender by independent means - use their official contact details to check the email is legitimate before clicking on links or opening attachments.

GOLF AND THE FROG

A man takes the day off work and Decides to go out golfing. He is on the second hole when he Notices a frog sitting next to the green. He thinks nothing of it and is About to shoot when he Hears, Use the 9 Iron.' The man looks around and doesn't See anyone. Again, he hears, "Go on the 9 Iron.' He looks at the frog and decides to Prove the frog wrong, puts the Club away, and grabs a 9 iron. Boom!

He hits it 10 inches from the cup.

He is shocked. He says to the frog, 'Wow that's amazing.. You must be a lucky frog he asks? The frog replies, 'I am for sure a Lucky frog.' The man decides to take the frog With him to the next hole. 'What do you think frog?' The man asks. "' 3 wood.' The guy takes out a 3 wood and, Boom! Hole in one... The man is befuddled and doesn't know What to say. By the end of the day, the man golfed the Best game of golf in his life and Asks the frog, 'OK where to next?' The frog replies, "'Where else, Las Vegas ...

' They go to Las Vegas And the guy says, 'OK frog, now What?' The frog says, "' Roulette.' Upon approaching the roulette table, The man asks, 'What do you think I should Bet?' The frog replies "' \$3000, black 6.' Now, this is a Million-to-one shot to win, but After the golf game the man Figures what the heck.

Boom!

Tons of chips come sliding back across the table The man takes his winnings and Buys the best room in the Hotel. He sits the frog down and Says, 'Frog, I don't know how to repay you.

You've won me all this money and I am forever grateful.' The frog replies, "' KissMe.' He figures why not, Since after all the frog did for Him, He deserves it.. With a kiss, the frog turns into a Gorgeous 25-year-old girl. 'And that, Your honour, is how the girl and all that money ended up in my room. So help me God

A last reprieve for the enduring Windows XP?

Woody LeonhardBy Woody Leonhard

By now, every Windows XP user and his third cousin should know that on April 8, the clock runs out on the venerable OS.

But recent developments might give XP users a bit of a reprieve. When and how Microsoft will blink are the open questions.

Microsoft's original stance: The end is the end

The folks in Redmond continue to insist that XP is well and truly done on April 8. But there could be half a billion XP computers still out there humming away, depending on how you count them and what assumptions you're willing to make. Getting an accurate count is exceptionally difficult, because many of them aren't connected to the Internet via a browser. Consequently, they don't appear in independent Internet stats. But whatever the precise number, a huge number of PCs are officially end of life in just over two months.

Contrary to what some XP users believe, "end of life" doesn't mean that XP computers will stop working, that XP can no longer be installed, or that existing security patches will be pulled from Windows Update. It means that officially, on April 8, Microsoft will no longer support XP — there will be no more updates for the OS.

Regular Windows Secrets readers have seen numerous stories on living with XP for the long term. See, for example:

- ?Preparing Windows XP for the long haul – Aug. 12, 2010, Top Story
- ?Building your own XP Service Pack 4 – Dec. 1, 2011, Top Story
- ?PC security after XP's official end of life – Sept. 19, 2013, LangaList Plus
- ?Securing XP PCs after Microsoft drops support – Dec. 19, 2013, Top Story

If you've been reading this newsletter, you know that XP's end is coming. But you probably didn't know that Microsoft's moved the goalposts — repeatedly. What end of life means, precisely, has been redefined by Microsoft at least three times in the past couple of months. And there's a strong possibility that the definition will change again before April — to the confusion of most XP users.

So what did end of life mean? Back in the good old days — say, three months ago — Microsoft's description of the April deadline suggested nothing less than the complete end of any XP support: no tech-support help, no new enhancements, and no security updates. (That, as it turns out, isn't quite correct. As I'll discuss below, Microsoft will no longer give away updates — but businesses with corporate-licensing plans can

pay for them after April 8.)

Then, in early January, Microsoft altered its official XP obituary page, adding that "Microsoft will also stop providing Microsoft Security Essentials for download on Windows XP."

That certainly sounds threatening!

Backpedaling a bit on a hardline stance

To date, I've not seen an official clarification of what "stop providing Microsoft Security Essentials" precisely means. For example, it could mean that you can't download MSE using an XP-based browser. If so, it's silly — you just download MSE on a different machine and install on XP. Or perhaps MSE's installer might simply block XP. In that case, what happens if you reinstall XP? (Microsoft will require XP activation, even after EOL.) You can't reinstall MSE, either? Even Microsoft wouldn't be that callous — I hope.

To add to the confusion, in mid-January Microsoft's Malware Protection Center announced in a TechNet blog that it would continue to provide updates to MSE for XP machines for another 15 months. The blog states, "To help organizations complete their migrations, Microsoft will continue to provide updates to our anti-malware signatures and engine for Windows XP users through July 14, 2015."

That's certainly a customer-friendly development — although I'm still scratching my head about blocking MSE downloads on XP. It's possible that somebody at the Malware Protection Center ran a simulation of the fallout from some nasty virus compromising half a billion XP machines after April 8. That could cause something of a hiccup on the Internet!

That MPC statement is noteworthy because Microsoft will not only update MSE signatures but the MSE engine, too. Bravo.

In a more recent development, Computerworld broke the news in a Jan. 26 story that Microsoft will update the Malicious Software Removal Tool (MSRT) for Windows XP through July 14, 2015. MSRT isn't a first-line-of-defense AV tool, but it's effective at removing existing infections. It's also delivered via Microsoft Update, so most XP machines will get it.

Some safe assumptions, some wild speculations

If Microsoft's backpedaling were limited to just those two AV products, I'd not be very impressed. Many third-party vendors offer better anti-malware protection and have publicly stated that they'll continue support for XP. But I am impressed by Microsoft's willingness to soften its XP end-of-life stance. The company has nothing to gain and everything to lose if it completely alienates its millions of XP users.

Many believe XP deserves to die because it's been around for 12 years. I take issue with that. XP was first released in October 2001, so technically it's 12 years old. But it was rewritten for Service Pack 2, which appeared in August 2004. And Microsoft sold XP through its System Builders program until Jan. 31, 2009. That's just five years ago.

During the unfortunate Vista era, many PC buyers went out of their way to get XP. So as far as I'm concerned, XP hit the bit bucket only when Windows 7 shipped in July 2009. That makes XP, by my admittedly jaundiced reckoning, a sprightly four and a half years old!

That said, there's no doubt that those running XP are living on borrowed time. Windows 7 and 8x offer enhanced security and better compatibility with modern software and peripherals. Most XP users should be planning to replace XP.

But it's also a bit disingenuous to effectively force Windows users to buy Win7 or Win8 — then force them to line Microsoft's coffers once again a few years later when those operating systems are made obsolete.

Here's a parting tip: If you work for a company that has a Microsoft volume license and a suitable Windows retirement contract, you can buy "Custom Support" for XP, as reported in a Computerworld story. That service costs U.S. \$200 per PC per year and includes updates to XP itself. Rather than cut off

individual XP users, I think Microsoft should offer a personal "Custom Support" option for, say, \$20 or \$30 a year. That would do a lot of good for the millions of XP users — and earn Microsoft some much-needed customer loyalty.

Hey! I can always hope.





RESPECT YOUR PARENTS
THEY PASSED SCHOOL WITHOUT GOOGLE.



Practice safe text, use commas
... and never miss a period.

