INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Next Meeting
Wednesday 6th October 2010

Meeting 7-30
Guest Speaker (tentative)
JON HORSFORD

LCG Committee 2009/10

President: Iris Meek

Vice President: Janet Headlam

Minutes Secretary: Larraine Rist

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OPEN Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney

Webmaster/Content: Tom Olsen

Auditor: Ron Baker

"VICTOR" Liason: Robert Tierney

General Committee: Mike Armes, Sue Armes, Glenn Gilpin, Harvey Tavener, Reinhard von Samorzewski,

OPEN Committee 2009/10

Chairperson OPEN: Robert Tierney. *Chair all meetings of OPEN and ensure that they run smoothly*

Vice Chairperson OPEN: June Hazzlewood. *Chair meeting when the Chairperson is unavailable.*

Secretary: Margaret Carrington *Handles all incoming and outgoing communications Responsible for the documentation and distribution of all meeting minutes*

Assistant Secretary: - open -. *Help the Secretary where necessary*

Treasurer: Dennis Murray. *Responsible for all monies and banking*

Assistant Treasurer: . *Help the Treasurer where necessary.*

Publicity Officer: Karia Wicks. *Responsible for all advertising*

OPEN Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney. *Responsible for the smooth running of Centre on a daily basis*

Membership Co-ordinator: Karia Wicks.

Keep Membership database up to date.
Beginners Project Co-ordinator: Eleanor Horder.

Tutor Co-ordinator: Robert Tierney. *Keep regular contact with Tutors to bring ideas and concerns to meetings*

Assistant Tutor Co-ordinators: Eleanor Horder and Janet Headlam.

Newsletter Editors Assistant: Dennis Murray. *Collates and produces the OPEN Newsletter for inclusion in LCG monthly 'Newstream'*

Technical Co-ordinators: Dennis Murray (PC's) and Joel Harbottle (Mac). Responsible for the maintenance and repairs to all computer equipment

Co-ordinator of "VICTOR": Robert Tieney.

Webmaster/Content: Tom Olsen. OPEN Committee: Iris Meek, Harvey Tavener, Robin Walker, Barry Symons, Laraine Rist.

A HANDY BIT OF GEAR

Over the years that I have been associated with the OPEN Newsletter the overwhelming majority of articles have been devoted to software and learning.

This article focuses on a piece of hardware—**a wireless broadband modem**.

In the past a lot of people have been surprised when I have told them that I was not connected to the Internet, and I have always explained that by saying that I have access to the 'Net at my workplace, at the community centre that I attend on most Wednesdays and of course through my involvement with OPEN.

But a few months ago I finally took the plunge. I didn't want sign up for a long term contract and I didn't want to pay a couple of hundred dollars for fixed hardware. So the decision was made to purchase a Telstra prepaid wireless broadband modem. For $99 I got the USB device (*about the size of a large flash drive*), 1 Gigabyte of 'free' downloads which would last for a month, and a $30 mobile phone recharge voucher.

On Windows XP and Vista the software for the modem installs automatically the first time that the device is plugged in—for Windows 7 you need to download the software from the Internet (*using another connection obviously!)*

After the initial installation you may need to ring the company (e.g. Telstra, or Dodo) to activate the service. After that you should be ready to start browsing.

To start a session insert the modem into a USB port on your computer, wait for the on-screen box to appear, then click the "CONNECT" button. You should then be able to connect to the Internet, to download your email or view Web pages that you are interested in.)

Since purchasing my wireless broadband device I have found that the best recharge option for me is to pay $40 to obtain a further 1 Gigabyte of downloads which will last me for another month.

Some people may question the value of that option—$40 is certainly a lot to pay for an allowance of 1 Gigabyte. My rationale is that it is not the cost of the service that is most important but what advantages it provides.

As many of you will know I provide a good deal of computer assistance for OPEN members and other people in their homes. In the past my ability to provide that assistance efficiently has often suffered

Cont next column

The club room is much tidier since the installation of the book shelves. Thank you Barry Symons.

Remember too that the club tries to keep on hand some storage devices such as USB drives, C D's and DV D's for copying and backing up your lessons. These can be purchased at very good prices.

due to the lack of a piece of software e.g. a 'driver' to make a printer work, or an update to an anti-virus program. At other times both the person concerned and myself might have been frustrated by the lethargic performance of a dial-up connection struggling to download a sizeable attachment to an e-mail.

The wireless broadband modem overcomes such difficulties. Recently, in just a few minutes, I was able to update a member's AVG anti-virus program and download a back-log of e-mails that had been held up due to problems with mail server settings.

And I can recall that about a month ago several OPEN members were 'off the air' due to their ISP having problems with the local telephone exchange.

A club-owned and operated device could have been shared between those members so that they could access e-mails and other information that may have been important to them.

And the latest facility I have discovered is that I can insert a micro-SD card into my device and use it as flash-drive at the same time.

Dennis Murray

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SENIORS WEEK at OPEN
October 1-7

Fri Oct 1 10-noon

How to Buy a Computer
Speaker Rob Tierney

Sat Oct 2   2-5 pm Speakers TBA

Mon Oct 4 10-noon — SKYPE
Speaker Tom Olsen

1-3 pm Mobile Phones— Speaker Rob Tierney

Tues Oct 5 10-noon The Internet and You Speaker Rob Tierney

1-3 pm Apple Macs Speaker

Wed Oct 6 10-noon Family History - Speakers Margaret Gilpin and Iris Meek

1-3 pm Graphics with Paint Shop Pro — Speaker Eleanor Horder

Thurs Oct 7 10-noon The Internet and You—Speaker Rob Tierney

1-3 pm—SKYPE—Speaker Tom

PLEASE NOTE:

Both Skype classes have been fully booked.

OPEN will be open for people who would like to take the opportunity to view some of the classes available to senior students at the club.

There will also be a chance to book in for future lessons as class vacancies arrive and to have a cup of tea or coffee with a snack for all participants.

New to Computing????
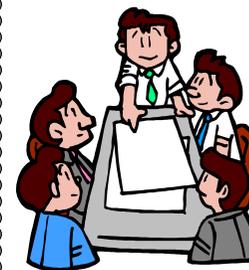
From turning the computer on, to word processing, play games to relax, insert pictures and make cards. How to use the internet and send emails. File management and making folders.

Using digital cameras and organizing photographs.

Other programs.

See us at OPEN.

For those of you who enjoy some good computer reading I have found some great articles in the October issue of Australian PC User.

Darren Yates tested 24 cameras and gives his overall appraisal on them.

He also looks at Gadgets and home entertainment gear and offers advise on how to be methodical.

Darren tests PC's that do business and tells you the price of them and what the tech terms mean.

There is a section about Multi function centres...thirteen of them in fact!

He has trouble shooting tips galore and offers an introduction to Linux.

To top it off. this prolific writer offers a one-stop Buyers Guide to the perfect PC.

We know of Darren at our club through "Take the Teacher Home".

Rose Vines and Helen Bradley have excellent articles in this current issue, along with several others.

We are still on the look-out for Tutors to help with classes on all days of the week. Tutor co-coordinator Eleanor Horder and Rob Tierney would be pleased to meet interested person who feel they have a couple of hours to help out with our many

A get well wish for all our tutors and students who have been suffering various illnesses the past couple of months.

We hope to see you back at OPEN as soon as possible.

FAMILY HISTORY ON-LINE

October 6 — 10 am to noon
October 13 - 1 pm—3 pm
October 27 - 10a m—noon

The team will guide you through the processes used to research your ancestry.

Contact the club for more information
Classes are limited to 8 people.

GRAPHICS

Please check the registration sheets at the club to find out if there are places available.

The dates for the next classes are :

PSP Graphics Oct 6 — 1 pm - 3 pm

LEVEL 2 & 3 GRAPHICS
With Paint Shop Pro 7 and 8

Wednesday Oct 20 — 1:00 pm to 3.00 pm

Advanced Graphics for students who have already completed Basic Graphics classes.

It involves more advanced features of the Paint Shop Pro graphics programs.

PSP XI Graphics October 27 1-3

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

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)
	3.30—5.30	P C Support
Thursday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm – 3 pm	General & Beginners
	3.30—5.30	Absolute Beginners
Friday	10 am –12	General & Beginners
	1 pm—3 pm	Beginners

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SPECIAL WEDNESDAY SESSIONS
Please register on the sheets – numbers may be limited

Date	Time	Topic	Details
October 6	10 am –noon	Family History	How we use links and programs.
	1 pm—3 pm	**PSP Graphics**	**With Eleanor Horder**
October 13	10 am—12 noon	Basic Graphics	With Karia, Laraine & helpers
	1 pm— 3 pm	**Family History**	**With Margaret Gilpin and Iris**
October 20	10 am—12 noon	Card making	A popular session at this time of year.
	1:00—3 pm	**Level 2-3 Graphics**	**With Eleanor, Karia and helpers.**
October 27	10 am—noon	Family History	With Margaret, Iris and helpers
	1 pm— 3.00	**PSP XI**	**Advanced graphics techniques**
November 3	10 am –noon	Graphics Workshop	With Karia, Eleanor, Laraine and Iris
	1 pm—	**OPEN Meeting**	

SENIORS WEEK AT OPEN October 1 to October 7   Call in for a cuppa and a chat with members.

OPEN NEWSLETTER — October 2010

Back up your data...(prepare for the worst)

Always assume something will go wrong. It is far less stressful if you make it a habit to back up your data regularly. Knowing you can dig through the back-up for a file or revert to a previously saved system image will lesson panic attacks.

Similarly; having active antivirus, anti spyware and firewall software will head off many problems.

* * * * * * * *

If you locate a solution to a problem online which involves quitting all programs or rebooting the system, *print it out* before you tackle the problem. 'Saves discovering you no longer have access to the browser or the internet while fixing a problem.

Graphics Workshop

November 3 - 10 — noon

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Do you ever experience the frustration of having to repeatedly click the Minimize button in several open 'windows' before you can get back to your desktop?

There are **two keyboard shortcuts** that will make life easier:

Holding down the Windows key and tapping 'D' will take you directly to the desktop, so you can do whatever you need to. Repeat the shortcut (Windows key plus 'D') and you will be returned to the original window.

To Minimize all the windows you have open hold down the Windows key and press 'M'.

A couple of tricks to avoid receiving email from tricksters.

When you create your email address have a combination of letters and numbers. It is harder for someone to randomly guess your email address.

Keep separate email addresses for business and personal mail.

Remain vigilant. Ask yourself why for example, a foreign pharmacy would be offering cheap drugs or medicines??? They just need you to reply and your hooked! I know...I've been there!

Web browsers and email are the main target of scammers and they are getting sneakier every day.

Drag anything suspect directly into your Deleted Email folder. If it is useful, it is then recoverable.

Next LCG Meeting
October 6 at 7.15
Guest Speaker (tentative) Jon Horsford

LAUNCESTON COMPUTER GROUP, Inc.
Meeting held at 1/1 Pipeworks Road

Meeting Minutes:

Date: Wednesday 1st September 2010

Meeting:

Barry Symons, President in the chair welcomed all and opened the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Present:

Barry Lumley, Dennis Murray, Karia Wicks, Ron Baker, Reinhart Samerzewski, Harvey Tavener, Glenn Gilpin, Eleanor and Lou Horder, Ted Bramich, Iris Meek, Laraine Rist.

Apologies:

Janet Headlam, Julie Hjort, Tom Olsen, June and Bert Hazzlewood.

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th August were accepted as read, Confirmed: Glenn Gilpin
                                                                    Seconded:
Harvey Tavener

Business Arising from the Minutes:

- August Market – Julie and Glenn attended the stall, 3 Family History CD's and 2 ink cartridges from Carbil were sold. Next market October.
- ASCCA Volunteer insurance: The age limit for cover is 75 yrs at present, our inquiry is to attempt to have the age limit raised to 80 yrs. This insurance covers any activity involving Club operations.
- Computers 8 & 9. Dennis proposed that the Club purchase 2 new computers from Carbil as per their quote at $1,000 each to replace the older computers. Seconded Harvey Tavener.
- School for Seniors article for term schedule – We were too late for the present term. It is proposed that we will enter an article for the next schedule 2011.

Correspondence:
Nil

Financial Report:

Accounts paid up to Sept 1st 2010

Another Computer Store Balance of rent	$1,000.00
Corporate Express	60.48
Tas Printer Cartridges	154.45
MACshop	99.00
LCG Petty Cash	170.70
Telstra Bigpond	125.00
Petty Cash Log	150.75
Total	**$1.760.38**

Accounts to be paid

Corporate Express Reflex Paper	33.55
Tas Printer Cartridge	85.00
Tas Printer Cartridge	60.00
Tas Printer Cartridge	27.00
Another Computer Store rent to end August	1000.00
Total	**$1205.55**

Bank Balance	**$24,639.15**
Including Victor	$5,551.64
	Excluding Petty Cash

Moved: Iris Meek   Seconded: Glenn Gilpin

General Business:
ASCCA Conference – Iris is also attending

(Continued from page 8)

LINK – A conference is to be held at the Grand Chancellor in November, June will seek sponsorship.

Barry suggested that as the Club has existed for 15 years, we may need to look to some changes in the future. This created some discussion with no real outcome. It is evident that we do need more volunteers. Glen suggested that a history of the Club be created.

Seniors Week – Volunteers as hosts and to make cups of tea & coffee would be appreciated. There is a form of interest for members to fill in if interested. The Government donated $2,000.00 to Open for participating in the Week. A flyer is being prepared for letter drops etc.

Older Persons Reference Group – is open to all seniors.

Ancestry – has been updated without the American/Canadian section.

The death of Margaret Muddle was recorded. Margaret was a long-time member of Open. Iris will attend her funeral.

Projector – Dennis is to re-investigate to get a resolution. It was suggested that it would be ideal to have a trial. Independent Living may have some suggestions, maybe a demonstration at a meeting.

Iris mentioned that in the 15 years that the club has existed, it has gone ahead in leaps and bounds. It now owns everything, borrowed items have been returned to their original owners.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th October at 7.15

OPEN COMPUTING
MINUTES OF MEETING
WED 1ST SEPTEMBER 2010
MEETING OPENED 1PM

PRESENT:
Judy Hall (Chair), Margaret Carrington, Robert Tierney, Dennis Murray, Karia Wicks, Eleanor Horder, Harvey Tavener, Iris Meek, June and Bert Hazzlewood, Kay Dawson

APOLOGIES:
Tom Olsen, Janet Headlam, Pauline Hardy, Bev Elmer, Larraine Rist.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:
Amendment; In relation to our Insurance provider, Armstrong should have read Armitage

Harvey Tavener moved the minutes be accepted, seconded by June Hazzlewood.

BUSINESS ARISING:
Iris: Asked Karia to give her details of the amount of $145.00 on the QBE volunteer insurance quote.

Rob: Will give Iris details of the Seniors Week advertisement to go in the Examiner.

June: Encourages us to attend O.P.R.G. (Older Persons Reference Group) meetings.

Iris: Plumber came in and checked the leaking taps in the kitchen and toilets and passed judgment that they were

functioning correctly. It just goes to show that they do not drip 100% of the time, just nearly all the time. However, he said he would come the next rainy day and replace the washers.   Margaret is to follow this up with Geoff Daw, whom at the time of writing, will return from overseas in two weeks time.

CORRESPPONDENCE IN:

Mac Shop-Account to be paid

Tas Printer Cartridge Company-Statement

Corporate Express-Statement

Another Computer Store- receipt

My State- cheque book

My State-Statement

Telstra Account

Seniors Bureau-Brochures for Seniors Week

Broadband for Seniors kiosk-revised rules

ASCCA-Newsbreak

June will enquire about extra information that is now
available
with regard to installing a Kiosk in class. She also
said she received an
Email from ASCCA informing us that the dead line
for their competitions
has been extended to 13th September.

Rob said extra P.C. Authority is offering 12 monthly
subscription of $60 or a monthly subscription of
$34.95

CORRESPONDENCE OUT:

Premier Bartlett- Invitation to attend Seniors Week
Opening Day

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Iris moved the financial report be accepted, seconded by Kay Dawson

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Judy: has registered UK Heritage Plus Ancestry for $215 on a trial basis for 15 days.

June: asked for Victor Report each month. Also advised that Association of Independent Retirees will be holding their conference at The Grand Chancellor and we will be manning a table there. 8th – 10th November, no cost to OPEN Also LINC, School for Seniors, Another Computer Store, Independent Living, National Seniors

Rob: explained our itinerary for Seniors Week. Also it was moved by Rob that we purchase a sticky note easel for $50: it would be useful for demonstrations. Seconded by Karia

Iris: Margaret Muddle, who was a member of OPEN/LCG died and we should send her family a card of condolences. Iris also moved we buy a disk cleaner, Karia seconded.

It was decided not to purchase a new projector at this time and Dennis suggested that if we should decide to do so at a later date, then we should have a demo first before we make a final decision.

Dennis: has a quote from Bill Carbil for duel core $820 for boxes only.

Upgrade Windows 7, 32 bit. Approx $1,000 with screen.

Tom: Wants a handle on the toilet door: Eleanor to ask Lou to carry out this essential job.

Meeting closed 2.20pm

BECAUSE OF SENIORS WEEK,

NEXT MEETING WILL BE A WEEK EARLY

TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER AT 3.30PM.

IE 9 puts Microsoft back into the browser game

By Woody Leonhard

Internet Explorer has been a distant third-string player to Firefox and Chrome for so long, **we thought it could never catch up.**

But with a slick new interface and enhanced Windows 7 features, IE 9 — now in public beta — just might put Microsoft back at the top of the browser game.

For the past four years, I've sung the praises of Firefox, going so far as recommending it in all of my books. I've used Firefox and, more recently, Google's Chrome almost exclusively. But last week, a friend of mine started shouting online, "Ya gotta see this! Microsoft's come up with some great new stuff!" My reply? "Yeah, sure."

A few months ago, I played with an early beta version of Internet Explorer 9. It left me cold — more of the same old IE stuff, piled higher and deeper. Meh.

Microsoft released the public beta of IE 9 last week, complete with a heavily rejiggered user interface and a number of much-hyped enhancements. And after trying it for a few days, I have to admit that I was impressed — so impressed that I've continued to use it, from time to time, even when I don't have to.

I'm not going to bore you with a recitation of the IE 9's list of new features. Microsoft's patented marketing machine has churned out more info than you'll ever want or need. Instead, let me point out what I think shines in IE 9 — and what still leaves me cold.

Oh, and by the way: it's true that Internet Explorer 9 will not run on Windows XP.

(Continued from page 11)

Tab dancing with the new IE interface Although Microsoft touts it as one of IE 9's greatest inventions, I'm ambivalent about the browser's new tab interface. I think it's cool — but in a limited way.

Let's start with tear-away tabs. Firefox and Chrome have had them for ages. When you click on a tab and drag it, the tab blossoms into its own browser window. Drag the new standalone tab back to its original window, and the tabs go back to their previous location. In Version 9, Internet Explorer finally does this, too. But IE 9 has an additional trick up its sleeve.

If you drag the favicon — the tiny icon to the left of the Web address — onto the Windows desktop, Windows creates a shortcut to the Web site. You knew that already, yes? Double-click on the shortcut, and Windows fires up your browser and takes you to the site. Windows has done that forever, with all the major browsers.

New to IE 9 — and currently unique to IE 9 — is the ability to drag a tab to the Windows 7 taskbar. When you drop a tab onto the taskbar, you pin the site to the taskbar (as with the Dummies site shown in Figure 1), just as you would pin programs. (Currently, you can drag a Web site in the browser's search/URL address bar — but not a tab — and pin it to your default browser's taskbar icon.) This new feature makes launching sites you go to everyday, such as windowssecrets.com, just a little faster.

Figure 1. You can pin individual Web sites to the Windows 7 taskbar.

When you click on the newly created icon in the taskbar, IE 9 appears with the site's icon on the left side (note "Mr. Dummy" to the left of the left-pointing arrow in Figure 1); the forward-and-back arrows take on the color of the icon. If you click on the site's icon, you're returned to the site, just as when clicking on the IE 9 Home icon.

I wouldn't call that a breakthrough innovation, but it does show some ingenuity. Chrome 6 has, for a long time, had a similar feature called Application Shortcuts (click the Tools icon, choose Tools, Create Application Shortcuts), but it doesn't work as well.

Pinning a site on the Win7 taskbar is neat, but it doesn't hold a candle to the revolutionary new Tab Candy, er, Panorama feature that's evolving in the Firefox 4 betas. Panorama lets you group tabs together, stick them out of the way, and bring them back as a group. It's a slick way to combine related tabs in a set and switch sets as you change tasks or topics. There's a good overview of Panorama on Aza Raskin's blog I'll have a more

thorough review in a forthcoming Top Story, after the final feature set has shaken out in Firefox 4.

Quicker graphics, faster Java — and HTML5 Every browser claims to be the fastest, and every browser manufacturer can whip out studies (possibly bought and paid for) that prove theirs runs rings around the competition. Performance numbers for beta software can never be trusted; that said, IE 9 really does feel fast.

A new, faster JScript engine called Chakra and hardware-based graphics acceleration probably account for the browser's improved speed — especially the latter, which uses your PC's graphics processing unit's (GPU) oomph to offload work by the system's main CPU. At this point, IE 9 and Firefox are both showing some impressive results with GPU acceleration.

Google doesn't have much acceleration built into Chrome 6. But whoa Nelly, watch out for Chrome 7! In a Chromium blog Chrome's engineers claim they have a fancy 2D canvas acceleration feature that will make Chrome 7 run 60 times faster than Chrome 6 in some benchmark tests. Makes one wonder whether version 7 is that much faster or 6 is that much slower.

HTML5 may add another component to IE 9's quickness. A new (and still-emerging) standard, HTML5 allows Web designers to bring animation to their sites without relying on Adobe Flash or Microsoft's Silverlight. With properly constructed HTML5 tags, plus a browser that can translate those tags into commands run directly by your PC's graphics card, HTML5 should make graphics-intensive Web browsing fast indeed.

Microsoft's way behind the pack on adopting HTML5; Firefox and Chrome have been adding HTML5 features for several versions. (There's a good HTML5-compatibility comparison on the "When can I use …" site <http://WindowsSecrets.com/links/mrobi86js2jdd/888067h/?url=caniuse.com%2F>.) Still, I give Microsoft two thumbs up (if I could grow another

hand, I'd make it three) for embracing HTML5 at the expense of both Flash and Silverlight. Some day — maybe not in the next year or two, but some day — those almost-weekly Flash patches and hidden Flash cookies (described in my August 5 Top Story <http://windowssecrets.com/2010/08/05/02-Eliminate-Flash-spawned-zombie-cookies>) will become a thing of the past.

Comparison tests for IE 9, Firefox, and Chrome You can download beta versions of the three most popular Web browsers from their respective sites: IE 9 and the somewhat-less-stable Chrome 7 Canary build. On its "Exploring IE" blog -customer-enthusiasm-for-a-more-beautiful-web.aspx, Microsoft claims it dished out two million copies of IE 9 in the first two days.

However, before you download and install these betas, keep in mind that they might not work with most current browser add-ons. I recommend you do your testing on a second, nonproduction machine.

If you want to run side-by-side tests, I suggest this regimen:

Start with a quick and automatic browser/HTML5 compatibility test at Niels Leenheer's site When I tested the IE 9 public beta, it came up with a raspberry-generating 101 points out of 300 (including bonus points). Firefox 4, beta 6, pegged 213; Chrome 7 Canary build rang in with 253 points. (Browser manufacturers will give a million reasons to justify their lagging scores — some of which, no doubt, are valid.)

Then try Google's HTML5 showoff site"HTML5rocks." Look at the samples in the Studio section with all three browsers. I bet you'll find that some samples work in IE 9 and Firefox and some don't — but (ooooh! aaaaah!) they all work in Chrome 6 — and most work in Chrome 7 Canary.

Next, give Microsoft the benefit of the doubt and run the "Test Drive" speed tests on the Internet Explorer 9 Beta info page Of course, it will

demonstrate that IE 9 runs rings around Firefox and Chrome. You expected different? Still, the specific test and demos are impressive.

Finally, turn to Microsoft's IE 9 "Beauty of the Web Experience" site and click through to see some fabulous HTML5-based sites.

Living with Internet Explorer 9's foibles IE 9, in its current beta form, has a couple of user-interface characteristics that bother me.

I understand that Microsoft wanted to reduce the browser's overall clutter — to let the Web sites shine through while the browser fades into the background (in other words, to make IE look more like Chrome). But even after working with it for a while, I still don't understand why MS put the address bar on the same line as the tabs. If you get more than a handful of tabs, the address bar shrinks to the point where it's unusable.

What's more, the address bar is now the Search bar, too — and I frequently find myself wondering exactly what key words I was searching on, when the search string gets long. Perhaps it's just a senior moment, but Firefox and Chrome both leave me plenty of room for refining a search. I bet MS changes that before IE 9 ships.

The new download manager may be skimpy — but it's sure a lot better than nothing (which is what we've had through eight versions of IE). I just wish there were a way to change priorities when downloading more than one file, so I can have IE 9 devote more bandwidth to the file that I want first. I also had trouble with grayed-out Pause buttons, but that might just be the beta blues.

Based on my look at IE 9 beta, I believe this will put Microsoft back into the browser game after a long time playing catch-up. But it won't take on a commanding lead. Firefox's Panorama looks like a groundbreaking new feature. Chrome's updating so quickly, it's likely that IE will go back to eating dust not long after it sees the light of day. Know what I like the most about IE 9? It's going to make Firefox and Chrome (and possibly Opera) better, too. That's good for everybody

The "Middle Wife"

I've been teaching now for about fifteen years, I have two kids myself, but the best birth story I know is the one I saw in my own second grade classroom a few years ago.

When I was a kid, I love "Show and Tell" so I always have a few sessions with my students. It helps them get over shyness and usually, Show and Tell is pretty tame. Kids bring in pet turtles, model airplanes, pictures of fish they catch, stuff like that. And I never, ever place any boundaries or limitations on them. If they want to lug it in to school and talk about it, they're welcome.

Well, one day this little girl, Erica, a very bright, very outgoing kid, takes her turn and waddles up to the front of the class with a pillow stuffed under her sweater.

She holds up a photo of an infant. "This is Luke, my baby brother, and I'm going to tell you about his birthday".

"First, Mum and Dad made him as a symbol of their love, and then Dad put a seed in my mum's tummy, and Luke grew in there. He ate for nine months through an umbrella cord". She's standing there with her hands on the pillow, and I'm trying not to laugh, wishing I had my camcorder with me. The rest of the class is watching her in amazement.

"Then, about two Saturdays ago, my mum starts saying and going, "Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh". Erica put a hand behind her back and

groans. She walked around the house for like and hour. "Oh, oh, oh". (now she is doing a hysterical duck walk and groaning).

My dad called the middle wife. She delivers babies, but she doesn't have a sign on the car like the Domino's man. They got my mum to lie down in bed like this (then Erica lies down with her back against the wall).

"And the, pop! My mum had this bag of water she kept in there in case Luke got thirsty, and it just blew up and spilled all over the bed, like Psshhheew! (Erica has her legs spread with her little hands miming the water flowing away. It was too much!)

Then the middle wife starts saying "push, push" and "breathe, breathe". They started counting, but never even got past ten. Then, all of a sudden, out comes my brother. He was covered in yucky stuff that they all said was from mum's play-centre (placenta) so there must be a lot of toys inside there. When he got out, the middle wife spanked him for crawling up in there.

Then Erica stood up, took a big theatrical bow, and returned to her seat. I'm sure I applauded the loudest. Ever since then, when it's Show and Tell Day, I bring my camcorder just in case another "Middle Wife" comes along.

SENIORS BUMPER STICKERS

I'M RETIRED
I was tired yesterday.
I'm tired again today.
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LIVE EACH DAY
LIKE IT'S YOUR LAST.
One day, you'll get it right.
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I DON'T THINK ABOUT DYING.
It's the last thing I want to do.
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I'm speeding because
I have to get there before
I forget where I'm going.
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