

Sun Vista Computer Club

Beginners Course

2011 - 2012

Caution

This document is a “work in progress”, and will be updated as we go along (this is the first year I have taught the course, so the lesson plans have yet to be written), depending in large part on the amount of time and energy I have to devote to its creation.

Feedback is welcomed. If there is any part you feel is unclear, or missing something, be it vital or trivial, let me know so that it can be improved and expanded.

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Computer Club Beginner's Course

Introduction

This document is intended to supplement the PowerPoint presentations that were created for the course, and were used as a guide during each of the lessons. For those who missed a lesson, these notes should fill in the detail of what was discussed during each lesson. That is, they should add some “flesh” to the “skeleton” that the PowerPoint presentation provides.

Lesson 1

Topics to be covered during the course:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Terminology | -The basic parts of a computer, and what you see on the screen |
| 2. Getting connected to the Internet | -How to use a WiFi connection |
| 3. Browsers | -Different Browsers and how they work |
| 4. E-mail programs | -Different e-mail programs and how they work |
| 5. Photo management | -Getting photos from your camera, saving and e-mailing them |
| 6. Word processing (Word) | -Basic text document management skills |
| 7. Spreadsheets | -How to use a spreadsheet as a smart calculator |
| 8. Anti-virus | -What you should know about Anti-Virus programs |

Terminology

To get started, you really need to know the terminology of various parts of your computer (which we will assume is a laptop), and what it is you see on the screen, so you can understand what is being talked about.

Parts of a Computer - The keyboard



Fig. 1. A typical laptop keyboard layout differs from a typewriter keyboard in that it has 12 “function” keys along the top row, and “escape” key at top-left, Control (Ctrl) and Alternate (Alt) keys to the left and right of the space bar, and four “Arrow” keys for moving the cursor around on the screen.

The Keyboard - unless you have one of those new “tablets”, your computer will have a keyboard, which will be the main way in which you will interact with the computer. Not all keyboards are created equal...each manufacturer has their own particular way of laying out the keys, but by and large the differences are very modest, and it is safe to say that ALL keyboards will have all the important keys in roughly the same location.

- ❑ **Escape Key** -The first key on any keyboard (i.e the Top-Left key), the Escape key is used for just that...escaping from a program or operation. A good example is when you are viewing a slide-show of pictures that are sized to fill the screen, and you want to stop the show, or select a different photo. There are no Back/Pause/Next buttons visible, but pressing the Escape key will halt the slide show and return you to a view where you CAN control what is being viewed.
- ❑ **Control** -There are two Control (ctrl) keys on the bottom row of the keyboard: the left-most key, and a duplicate to the right of the space bar. When used in conjunction with other letter-keys (A-Z), the Control key will invoke special operations, such as:
 - ✓ Ctrl-A - Selects ALL items in a particular window
 - ✓ Ctrl-C -Copies the selected item to the clipboard
 - ✓ Ctrl-P - Prints the selected item
 - ✓ Ctrl X - Cuts the selected item and saves it to the clipboard
 - ✓ Ctrl+V - Pastes the contents of the clipboard to the current location of the pointer
 - ✓ Ctrl+Z - Undoes the previous action
- ❑ **Function Keys** - Along the top row of the keyboard there are 12 function keys which invoke actions depending on the program you happen to be working with. Generally speaking, the common actions of these keys, within most programs, are as follows:
 - ✓ F1 - Opens a Help screen
 - ✓ F2 - Allows you to re-name the selected file
 - ✓ F5 - Refreshes (or re-draws) the screen, or re-issues the last command. For example, pressing F5 in most browsers will refresh the current web page (I.e. Have the computer re-read the web page); pressing F5 while you are in a file list will force the program to re-read the folder contents.
- ❑ **The Function key** - Down on the bottom row, the second key is labeled “fn”. Holding this key down when you select one of the 12 function keys in top row will impart a whole new meaning to that function. For example,
 - ✓ Fn+ F3 - Opens the default Browser
 - ✓ Fn + F4 - Toggles the display between the primary and secondary monitors (if one is attached)
 - ✓ Fn + F5 - Puts the laptop to sleep
 - ✓ Fn + F6 - Locks the keyboard
 - ✓ Fn + F7 - Reduces the brightness of the screen
 - ✓ Fn + F8 - Increases the brightness of the screen
 - ✓ Fn + F9 - Play/Pause function in appropriate program
 - ✓ Fn + F10 - Stop a video or slide show
- ❑ **Alt** -Located immediately to the left and right of the Space bar, the “Alt” keys invoke various actions depending on which program you are in. For example, on a typical menu bar that contains File, Edit, and View menus, you will generally see that those menu titles are shown as File, Edit, and View. The underline implies that pressing Alt+F will open the File menu, Alt+E will open the Edit Menu, etc. These “Keyboard Equivalent” key combinations are often shown within menu listings. The Ctrl and Alt keys can also be used together in some programs to allow even more options.

- ❑ Windows - Pressing the “Windows” key will open your default browser.
- ❑ Print Screen- pressing this key (usually in combination with the “Fn” or “alt” keys depending on your brand of laptop) will not cause your screen to be printed, but it will capture the screen image and save it to the clipboard where it can then be ‘pasted’ into a document, or a photo editing program.
- ❑ Insert - Usually found as the next-to-last key on the top row, this key will typically toggle between “Insert” and “Overwrite” modes in a text editor. If you find that when you go to insert a missed word in a line of text, every letter you type just replaces a letter you wanted to keep, you are in “Overwrite” mode. Press the “Insert” key once, then try typing and you should find that as the new letters appear, any existing text to the right of the cursor is moved over to make room.
- ❑ Home - Pressing this key will, typically, move the cursor to the top line of a list, the first cell of a spreadsheet, or the start of a line of text.
- ❑ Page Up/Down - Again, depending upon the particular program you are running, pressing either of these keys may take you to the next or previous page, or scroll you up or down in your browser in ‘page’ amounts.
- ❑ End - Like the ‘Home’ key, this key will move you to the bottom of a list, the last page in a document, or to the bottom cell in a spreadsheet.
- ❑ Enter - This key replicates the “Carriage Return” key on a typewriter in that it will move the cursor to a fresh line (although with most text editors this action is never necessary unless you want to start a new paragraph, and should be avoided) but it does a lot more. It is basically the key that you use to tell the computer, “OK, I’m done entering things, so go ahead and do what I have told you to do.”
- ❑ The Arrow keys - These are used to move the cursor around, in those cases where you just need a small movement and don’t want to use the mouse.

The Mouse / Touchpad



Fig. 2. A standard “wired” mouse comes with two “click buttons” (left and right), and a central scroll wheel.

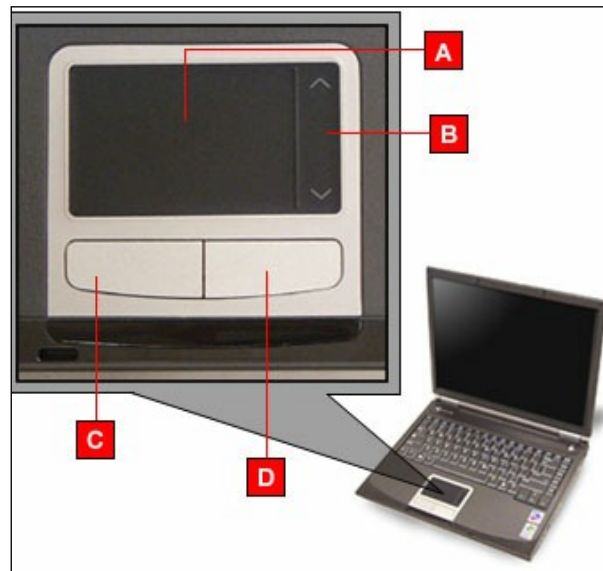


Fig 3. Almost all laptop computers have replaced the mouse with a touchpad. Moving your finger in area A replicates movement of the mouse, area B provides scroll control, and buttons C and D emulate the click buttons on the mouse.

The mouse is a device for moving the pointer around on the screen. It will typically have two buttons (a

Left and a Right button, which you use to tell the computer to take actions), and it may also have a “Scroll Wheel”, usually situated between the two buttons. The mouse may be wired directly to the computer, or it may be wireless, allowing you to move it around freely without it getting tangled up with other junk on your desk. Depending on the mechanism used to make it wireless, you may have to keep it within line-of-sight of an optical reader on the computer. (The mouse used with the Computer Club’s computer can be used almost anywhere in the computer room because it employs radio signals).

Almost all laptop computers these days have substituted a “Touch Pad” for the mouse (although you can always plug in a USB mouse if that is your preference). The pad will come with two buttons that emulate the Left and Right buttons of a traditional mouse, and usually have an area on the right hand side of the pad which behaves like a scroll wheel when you run your finger up and down in this area. The action of the Left button can be duplicated by “tapping” once (or twice if a ‘double-click’ is called for) on the touch pad.

The primary actions of a mouse/touch pad are:

- Moving the “Pointer” around on the screen
- Clicking - Causing some action to occur at the location of the pointer
- Double Clicking - Causing some action to occur (usually launching a program, or opening a file)
- Dragging - Causing some object (e.g. Window, slider bar, object to be moved or resized) (you always have to “Click and Drag”), or to be “highlighted” [“selected”].
- Scrolling - moving an object (such as a page of text) up or down in a window

Special forms of “Clicking” also exist, such as:

- Shift-Clicking - Used to select a range of items in a list
- Ctrl-Clicking - Used to select/de-select specific item(s) in a list

The most frequently used combinations of mouse and Ctrl key functions are Copy, Cut, and Paste. You will find that you use these functions a lot when editing text (such as when you are writing e-mail).

- **Copy** - This is used when you want to duplicate a word, sentence, or paragraph. First, highlight what it is you want to duplicate by placing the cursor immediately to the left of it and left-clicking once, then left-clicking and dragging the cursor to the end of what you wish to select (release the mouse/touch pad button when it is all selected), or alternatively placing the cursor to the left of the object and clicking, then moving the pointer to the end of the object and Shift-Clicking. Then press Ctrl-C to copy the selection to the Clipboard.*
- **Cut** - This is used when you want to move an object (e.g. Word, sentence, picture) from one location to another. Select the object in the same manner previously mentioned, then press Ctrl-X (think of it as a pair of scissors ;-). The object will be removed and written to the clipboard.
- **Paste** - This function is used to take an object stored on the clipboard and place it wherever you would like it to be. Simply place the cursor in the appropriate location, and press Ctrl-V (V was chosen because it was right next to the C and X keys on the lower row of letters of the keyboard).

* *The Clipboard* is part of the computer’s memory in which selected objects may be stored on a temporary basis so that you can ‘Paste’ them somewhere. Although some programs may permit you to save several different objects, and choose which one you want to Paste, in most cases any time you Copy or Cut a new object, it will simply overwrite whatever you had on the clipboard. When you turn off the computer, the clipboard is erased.

What's on the Screen

Every program window has certain common elements that you need to recognize and understand. One window that is a little different is the main window you see once the computer has been turned on and “booted up”. This one is known as the “Desktop”, and you cannot move it, or resize it.



Fig. 4. The “Desktop” on my computer, showing dozens of program icons, and the Side-Bar with the currency exchange, clock, and calendar “gadgets”. Along the bottom of the screen is the task bar, showing that I was running “PagePlus X4”. The Start button is at the far left, and the System Tray (which provides quick access to programs which run “in background” forms the right hand side of the Task Bar.

Program windows, on the other hand, can either fill the entire screen, be reduced to some smaller size of your liking, or “minimized” so that it simply becomes a tab on the so-called “Task bar” along the bottom of the Desktop. So long as they fill less than the full screen (or are not minimized) they can be moved anywhere on the screen, and can be resized to be as big or as small as you like.

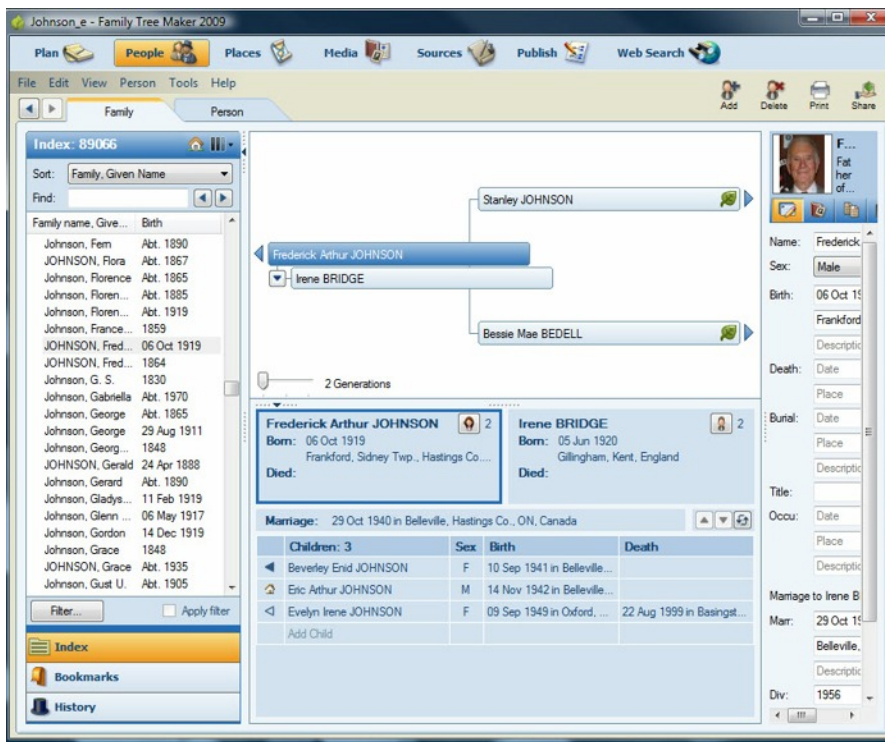


Fig. 5. A typical program window in its “smaller than full-screen” state. The dark bar across the top of the window is the “Title Bar” and will usually contain a program icon and the name of the file you are currently dealing with.

In the top-right corner of the Title Bar are three buttons which control the size of the window. (The middle one can display either the ‘Maximize’ or ‘Restore’ options shown in the enlargement above).

Resizing buttons. Up in the top-right corner of any program window there are three small buttons: one that looks like a dash or hyphen, one that looks like a picture frame (or two square frames on top of one another), and an X in a red box. The first two of these are the window re-sizing buttons. (It could be argued that the third button is for re-sizing the window too: clicking on it will close the program, and the window will disappear completely!)

Minimize button - clicking on the ‘dash’ button will make the window collapse to nothing more than a title on the task bar, regardless of what size the window was. To restore it to whatever size it had been, simply click on the tab, and it will pop open again just the way it was.

Full/Resize button - If the window fills the entire screen (i.e. if it is “Maximized” or “Full”), then the icon on the button will be the two small frames. Clicking on this button will reduce the program window to whatever smaller size it was the last time it was in that state. While it is in this less-than-full condition, you may move it around the screen, and change it to whatever size you like. Whenever the window is reduced to less than full size, the middle button’s icon will be changed to a single square frame that represents the full screen. Clicking on this button will then maximize the window so that it fills the entire screen.

Moving and Re-sizing a Window - To move a program window you have to click and drag in **the title bar**. The Title Bar is the 1/4” strip across the top of the window that typically shows the name of the program, and also holds the three re-sizing buttons up in the top-right corner. You can click and drag anywhere else in the window to your hearts content: it may have any number of weird and wonderful effects, but it will not let you move the window! To re-size the window, simply move the pointer to one of the window’s edges. When the pointer is on the boundary, it will change to a double-headed arrow. If you then click and drag, you will change the height or width of the window. If you move the pointer to one of the four corners of the window, it will change to a diagonal double-headed arrow, and by clicking and dragging you will be able to control both the height AND width of the window at the same time.

Lesson 2 - Browsers

What is a browser? A browser is simply a program which allows the user to connect to the Internet to access any of the hundreds of millions of web pages that are now available. Every computer which has a Windows operating system, be it Windows 98, Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7, comes with a browser included: Internet Explorer. There are many other browser programs available, however, virtually all of which are free downloads.

Before we can put a browser to use, however, we have to be connected to the Internet.

Getting connected to the Internet

The three primary means of getting connected to the Internet are:

1. Phone
2. Cable, or
3. WiFi

With a telephone line you can get connected by using "dial up modem", which was about the only way that you get connected during the early days of the Internet. You would connect your modem to your computer with a phone line, and the modem itself would then be connected into an external phone jack. When you ask the modem control program to get connected, it would open the telephone connection and electronically dial the number of your Internet Service Provider (ISP). There would then be a lot of beeping and buzzing, and with any luck you'd get connected. By and large, this method was fairly reliable and generally quite cheap. Its most serious handicap was that it was slow, (no better than 56K bits per second) and if you had any intention of downloading or uploading photographs or videos, you needed to have time to burn.

More recently, a new type of modem referred to as DSL (which stands for digital subscriber line) has been introduced which is capable of upload speeds of 640Kbps, and download speeds of as much as 6.1Mbps, reducing the transfer time for files from minutes to seconds. Since the transfer of a file containing all of the web page information from the website to your computer is necessary every time you care to look at a web page, it is obvious that time is of the essence, and the faster your connection to the Internet, the more enjoyable and less frustrating your experience will be.

DSL modems can be used with a cable TV connection as well as a phone line, so most, if not all, the cable TV companies have gone into the business of the Internet Service providers. The biggest of these in the Yuma area is Time Warner, but unfortunately they are cable service has not been extended far enough out of the city to reach Sun Vista. Hence, if you wish to use a DSL connection to the Internet at Sun Vista, your only option is a land line telephone provided by Qwest. The company will provide high speed Internet connection for you without your having to use their voice telephone services.

WiFi

The most common way of connecting the laptop computer to the Internet is through WiFi—a wireless connection between the wireless communication card built into your computer, and a wireless router that is connected to the Internet. A router is simply an electrical device which is capable of managing multiple two way wireless data connections. Like the Linksys wireless router used by the Computer Club, these and wireless routers are invariably connected to any Internet Service provider by a hardwired data cable, and they typically have provision for several hardwired links to various computers. In the case of the SV Computer Club, the main club computer is connected to the router, and hence to the Internet, by just such a data cable. Everyone else, such as those of you in the Beginners course, are connected to the router through a wireless connection.

Some of you may be using a wireless connection provided by your cell phone service --Verizon can provide you with a device which plugs into a USB Port and allows you to connect to the Internet through the Verizon cell phone service.

The DSL modems provided by Qwest has a built in wireless router, which will enable you to wirelessly connect your computer to the Internet no matter where you are in your home.

Getting connected to a Wireless Network

In the right hand segment of the taskbar along the bottom of your screen there will be an icon (a little picture) which will indicate whether or not you are connected to the Internet. This icon will differ depending on what operating system you are using. With Windows XP and Vista, the icon resembles two computer monitors superimposed with either a red X (indicating you are not connected) or a blue globe. With Windows 7, this icon has been replaced with a series of bars similar to those that show signal strength on a cell phone.

If you hover the mouse over this icon when you are connected, a popup window will tell you the network to which you are connected, provide an indication of the signal strength of the connection, and tell you whether not you have Internet connection. Right clicking on the icon will cause another popup to appear which will offer the option of connecting to a network. Clicking on this option will present another larger window that will display a list of all of the Wireless Networks that your computer has been able to detect. It will list them in order of signal strength. Occasionally, you will find that the list presented represents the networks that were available at the location where you last had the computer turned on. To have your computer perform a new search for networks its current location, click on the small button just above the slider bar, which has two opposing blue arrows in it.

To get connected to one of the available networks, click on the desired network to highlight it, and then click on the "Connect" button at the bottom of the window.

Browsers

A Browser is nothing more than a program that permits you to communicate with the Internet and view or interact with any of the millions of web pages that are available to be seen. This includes such things as checking the weather forecast, finding out what shows are on at the theatre, paying bills from your bank account, ordering some sort of merchandise, or looking up answers to cross-word puzzles. Since these activities have become the primary tasks of most computers these days, there are many companies who have created browser software for consumers, and it is all available for free.

Foremost among the many software companies who have created browsers is Microsoft, and every computer that comes with a Windows operating system comes with Microsoft's browser installed. It is called "Internet Explorer". Early versions of the program were not that great, so others quickly tried to produce programs that did a better job. Currently the prime contenders in the field are:

- "Firefox" by Mozilla
- "Chrome" by Google
- "Avanti", and
- "Safari"

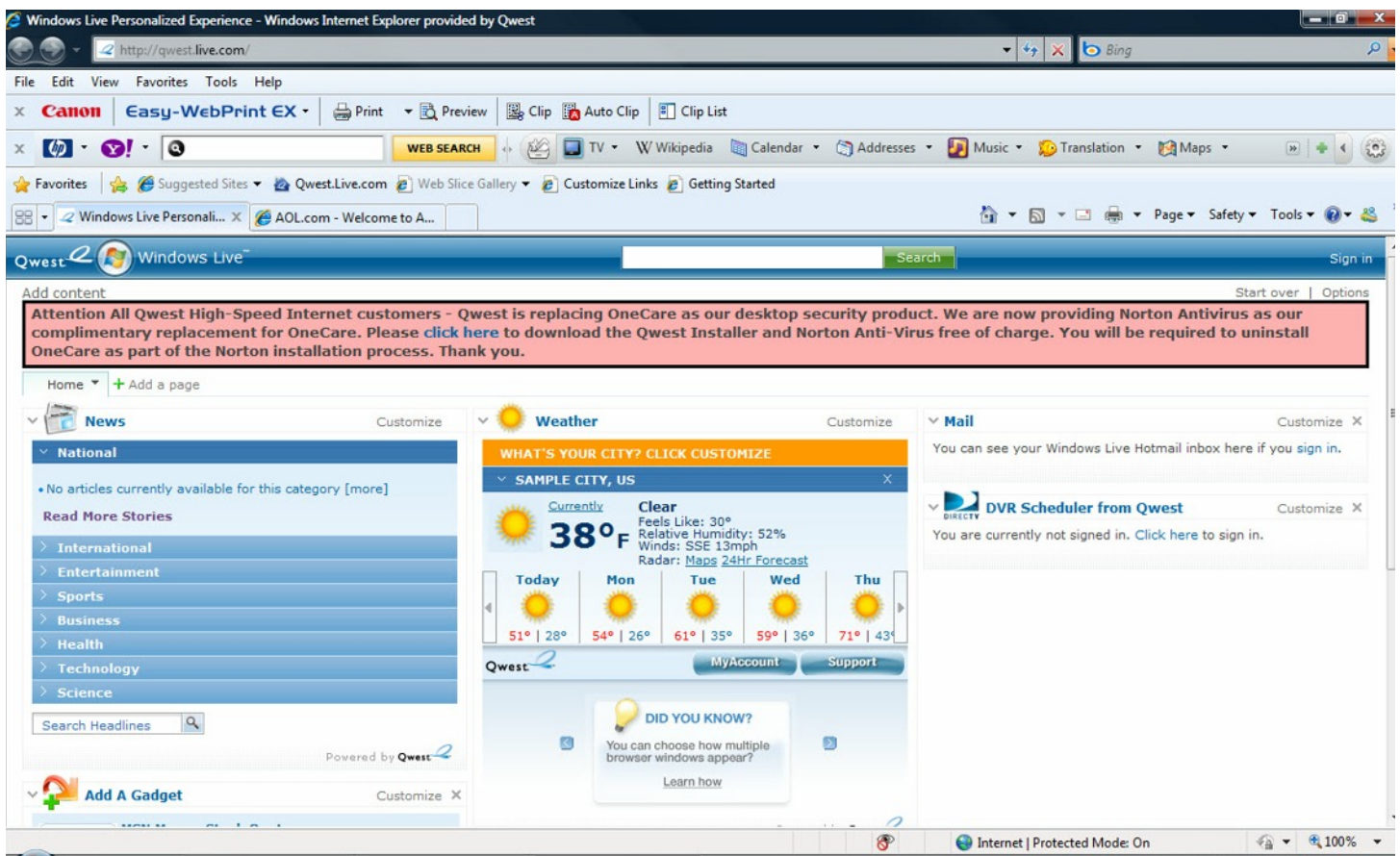


Fig. X. Microsoft's "Internet Explorer" browser program, which comes installed on any computer with a Windows operating system, looks like this.

I used Avanti for a number of years, before switching to Firefox because of the favourable reviews I'd read in computer magazines. What I liked about Avanti was its 'tabbed' approach to viewing more than one web page at a time. In the early days of Internet Explorer, every time you wanted to view another web-page you had to open another copy of the program. IE was a bit of a "resource hog" to begin with (i.e. it used a lot of the computer's computational power, which in those days wasn't very much), so running multiple copies of the program could quickly bog you down. Avanti was one of the first browser programs that allowed you to have several web pages open simultaneously, and to switch back and forth between

them by simply by clicking on the appropriate “tab” for the page you want to bring to the foreground. Virtually all browsers, including Internet Explorer, have adopted this methodology.

Since browser programs are your gateway to the Internet, they have naturally become targets of hackers and other criminals who try to exploit any weakness in the program that might allow them to gain access to your computer while you are on-line. Hence, it is critical that companies who create browsers have the resources to keep up to speed in this area, and that they ensure that any program weaknesses that are discovered are quickly “patched”. This is one of the main reasons that I.E., Firefox, and Chrome have become the dominant browsers in the marketplace.

Chrome is the newest of the “Big 3” browsers, and it’s primary advantage over the others is that it is, by comparison, a smaller, faster program. Google has evidently gone to a lot of trouble to “tighten up” the program code, which means it takes up less space on your hard drive, and executes more quickly, thus speeding up your browsing experience.

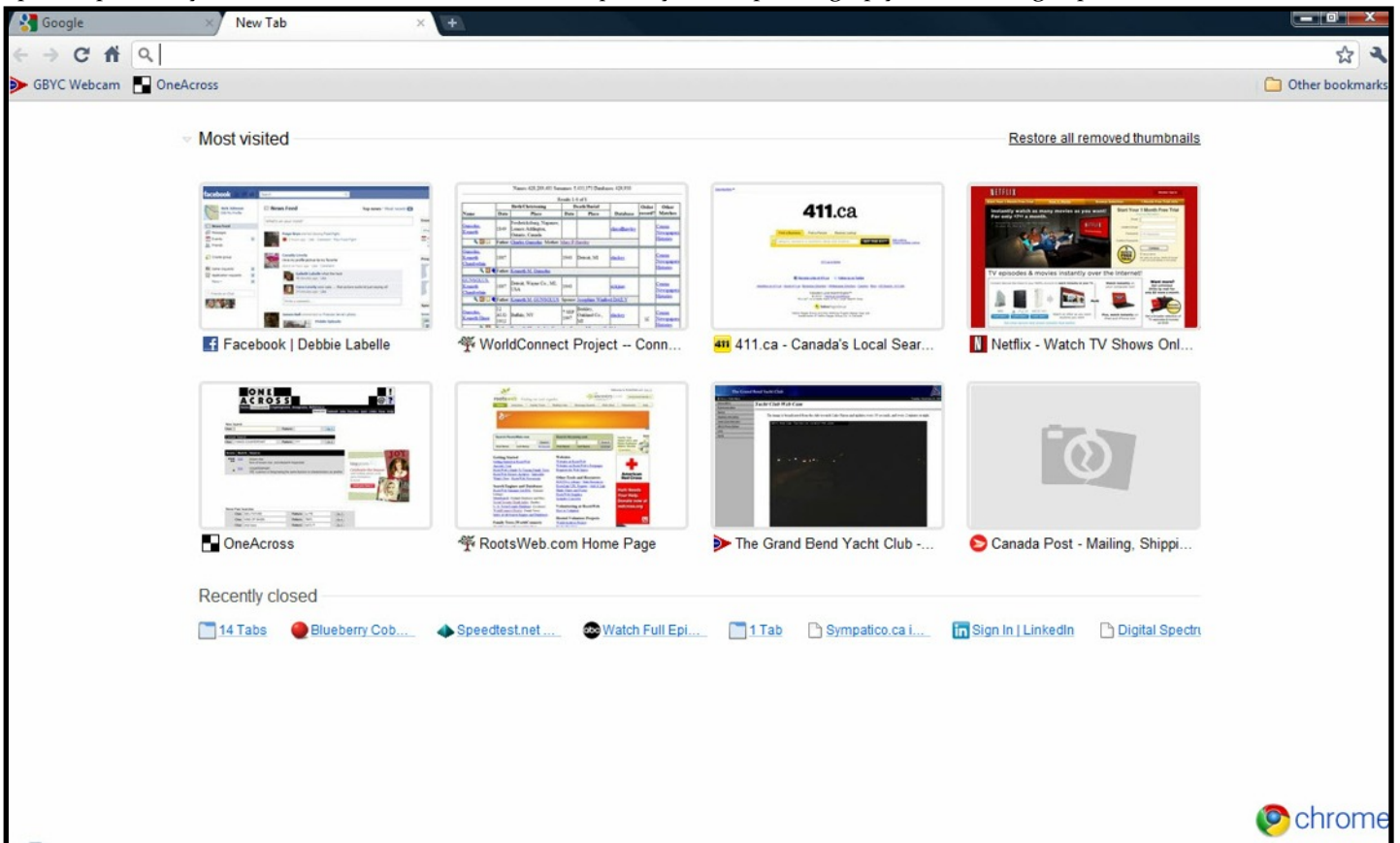


Fig. X. Google’s “Chrome” browser program has a very clean appearance, and takes a graphical approach to selecting from recently viewed web pages.

I currently have all of the Big 3 browsers installed on my computer, and I would recommend that you have at least one browser (in addition to IE) on your computer. This will allow you to decide which you prefer to use, and in some instances may allow you to open web pages that refuse to load in IE for some reason or another.

Common components of Browsers

The things that are common to any browser program are:

- Address input
- Search input
- “Back” button
- Refresh button
- Home Page
- Favourites

Address input field

This input field allows you to enter the web address of the web page, or web site that you want to view. In “geek speak”, a web address is known as a “URL - Universal Resource Locator”. Generally it looks like this:

<http://www.somewebsite.com>

In the early days of browsing you had to type in the “http://” part, (which stands for Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol), but these days any browser worth it’s salt will automatically append that part for you. For secure web sites (such as a bank or other financial institution) you will see this as “https”, the ‘s’ standing for ‘secure’.

The other part of the address is divided into three parts by the two periods (or “dots” in geek-speak). **www**, of course, stands for “World Wide Web”, and used to be common to ALL web addresses. Times are changing, however, and you can see almost anything there now. The company (or web-site) part, (“**somewebsite**” in my example) identifies the specific place on the web that you want to go to. The final part of the the address tells you something about the nature of the organization you are trying to access, with “.com” typically being reserved for commercial operations. Other common extensions you will see are “.org” for a non-profit organization, “.net” for a network, and “.gov” for government web sites. There are also two letter extensions for every country, such as “.ca” for Canada.

Most websites are made up of dozens, if not hundreds of web pages, and the primary address will simply get you to the site’s “home page”, from which you will be able to navigate to various other pages by clicking on links in the home page. As you move from page to page, each page’s address will show up in the primary address field. For example, the web address for the Web Cam page of the Grand Bend Yacht Club is: **<http://www.gbyc.ca/WebCam/index.shtml>**

If such a page is one you might wish to view frequently, you can save it as a Favourite or Bookmark (the terminology depending on the browser you are using) so that you don’t have to remember it, or waste time navigating your way to it each time. See “Favourites” below.

Tabs

The development of “Tabs” has been one of the most significant improvements in browser technology over the last decade. Early browsers could only deal with one web-page at a time, so if you wanted to be able to quickly switch back and forth between two or more web-pages, your only option was to run multiple copies of the browser program at the same time. Since these early browsers tended to be “resource hogs”, they would quickly sap the capabilities of most computers, and your system would grind to a halt. Internet Explorer was notorious for this.

Tabs allow you to open literally dozens of web-pages at the same time, and switch back and forth between them at will, simply by clicking on the appropriate “tab” at the top of the content pane of the browser. This is particularly helpful when you are attempting to compare items, or gather information on one subject from a variety of sources.

If you are in your e-mail program and want to find out some information to include in the letter you are composing, don’t just go to the browser’s address field and enter google.com. Doing so will terminate your e-mail session and open the Google search in the same tab. Always open a New tab for your new activity, then you will be able to return to what you were doing without having to re-start that process.

Search input field

There are so many web sites (millions upon millions), with such complicated addresses, that if we were left to our own devices to have to figure them out, very few of us would ever bother, and the Internet would not be the rip roaring success it is today. Lucky for us, there were people who were quick to recognize this fact, and do something about it. My very first introduction to the Internet was in a computer store circa. 1990 when a salesman was trying to impress me with the wonders of being able to search for information on the net. The most successful search engine has been one created by a couple of young computer nerds, and the fact that “Google” has become a very successful, multi-billion dollar company is sufficient testament to what a crucial function ‘searching’ for web content is. There are many other search programs

available, as other companies try to out-do Google and get a slice of the search revenue pie. Microsoft has produced “Bing” which it claims does a more intelligent search in order to save you having to search through the thousands of results that a Google search may have generated. Yahoo, AOL, and other big names in the Internet world have also produced similar programs, and you can install “tool bars” on your browser that include search fields for these. It is not unusual to have two or three search fields available at any time.

Search Hints & Tips

You can enter anything you want to search for in the search field, but usually it helps to enter just key words, and in some cases you need to enter things in a specific manner. As you start typing into the search field you will see a list of suggested search options appear...as you type more letters the suggestions will change accordingly. If you spot a suggestion that is appropriate, you can click on it. Typically, the search programs will return a list of web pages that contain one or more of the words you entered, so it is possible to get huge lists of results that don't have much to do with what you are looking for. For example, if you were looking for the You-Tube video titled “Deck the Halls” into the search field, you might obtain results about how to build a deck, or rent a hall. To have the search look for the specific phrase, you need to enter the double quotes around it. Similarly, if you are looking for theatres in Yuma, you should enter Theatre + Yuma. This will confine the results to just those pages containing both the words Theatre AND Yuma. You can also exclude items by using a minus sign (hyphen). For example, Theatre + Arizona - Yuma should yield a list of theatres in Arizona other than those in Yuma.

“Back” button

The “Back” button is an absolute necessity when it comes to navigating your way around the Internet. Very often, getting to the exact page you want to view can be a hit-and-miss affair, and in many cases you would be hard-pressed to find a link on any given web-page that would return you to the last page you were on so that you could try another option. The back button solves that problem, because it will do exactly that: it keeps track of each web address you have accessed, and will take you back to the one you last visited. Press it again, and it will go to the page before that, etc. etc. (A ‘Forward’ button will move you in the opposite direction, should you overshoot.)

“Refresh” button

The Refresh Button serves a very useful purpose...it obliges the browser to re-load the current web page. Browsers typically save your current page in memory so that the next time you access it, the contents can be quickly pulled from your hard-drive, rather than having to be re-loaded from the Internet. If there have been any changes made to the web-page, however, you will not see them. A classic example of this was with the Sun Vista Computer Club home page...Darel had added a button for the Beginners course, but when most people selected the club's home page they could not find the new button...they were looking at the old page that had been saved for them. Clicking on the “Refresh” button (or pressing the “f5” key on the top row of your keyboard) will force the browser to re-read the web-page from its Internet source.

Home Page

Any browser will allow you to establish a “Home” page, a web page that will be loaded any time you open your browser. All you have to do is get connected to the web site you want to set as ‘home’ and then click on the “Home” icon (which oddly enough resembles a small home).

Favourites

The Home Page is not the only web-page you can store in memory. All browsers have a way for you to save your favourite sites so that you can get back to them with just a couple of mouse clicks, rather than having to memorize their full addresses. Firefox refers to them as “Bookmarks”, and Internet Explorer labels them “Favorites” (using American spelling).

To Bookmark a web page (i.e. to add it to your favourites list), navigate to the page, then simply click on Bookmarks or Favorites, and click on the “Bookmark this page” or “Add to Favorites” option. The program will allow you to edit the name of the page...often that is a good idea to make it shorter and more explicit.

Tool bars

Tool bars are 'optional extras' that can be installed in your browser, designed to provide you with rapid access to web pages that you might find useful. Be careful when installing any new software, particularly free software you download from the Internet...these often come bundled with browser Tool Bars that will be installed if you do not specifically decline them. While having one or two Tool Bars can be helpful, you can quickly get too much of a good thing and discover that there is no space left on your screen for the things your REALLY want to see.

In most browsers, you can control which tool bars are displayed by clicking on the "View" Menu, then selecting "Toolbars" and choosing which ones you actually want to have active.

Another alternative is to make use of the "Full Screen" display option that comes with most browsers...pressing the F11 key on the top row of your keyboard will remove all of the Tool bars and Menus, and have the current web-page fill the entire screen. Moving the mouse close to the top of the screen will cause the tool bars to re-appear, or you can simply press the F11 key again to toggle the tool bars back on.

Clickable Fields

A "clickable" field is one that is linked to some other web page to which the browser will be directed when you click on it. These fields are generally identified by being underlined, highlighted, or in a different colour than the rest of the type. When you move the mouse/pointer over such a field the pointer arrow will change to a pointing hand, the field may be highlighted or change colour, additional text may appear, and the linked web-address will appear along the bottom of the browser window. If none of these things happen, then the field (or text) is not linked to anything, and clicking on it will have no effect.

E-Mail programs

There are a couple of distinctly different types of e-mail program: those which run as a separate program on your computer and typically require that you be connected to the mail server of your Internet Service Provider (ISP) in order to work, and those which are web-based and function within your browser. In the early days of the Internet, only the first kind were available, and if you traveled away from home you would be unable to get your mail unless you made a long-distance dial-up call to your home ISP. This was not very satisfactory in today's mobile world, so it was not long before web-based e-mail programs were created by companies such as Microsoft (Hotmail), Google (g-mail), and Yahoo (yahoo-mail). The beauty of these programs is that they can be accessed from anywhere in the world that you can get an Internet connection. Furthermore, all of the mail you send and receive resides on the host computers, not your own hard-drive, so as the years go by you are not bogging down your hard-drive with more and more mail. These web-based programs are free, and there is no harm in having multiple accounts. Try them out, and stick with whichever you prefer. My particular favourite is g-mail. It is easy to use, permits very little spam, and offers a lot of "fringe" benefits like free telephone service that we will talk about later.

Any e-mail program you choose will have the following components:

- An Inbox - This is where the mail sent to you shows up. Unread mail is usually highlighted so that you can easily distinguish between mail that you have opened, and mail you haven't looked at yet.
- A folder for "Sent" mail - This is where the mail that you have sent out is stored so that you can go back and look at what you wrote.
- The ability to sort received mail into various customizable folders, and
- A contacts list - a way to record the names of your friends, relatives, acquaintances, etc. and their e-mail addresses.
- A way to compose new mail that you want to send out.

When you create a new g-mail account (which is free), Google will immediately send you a couple of welcoming letters that tell you about g-mail's features, so the moment you log into your account for the first time you will have new mail to look at. Once you have read your mail you can delete it, if you are so inclined, although you really don't have to unless it is something you are certain you will never want to look at again. All of your mail will be stored on Google's servers somewhere and they allow a huge amount of storage space for free, so you do not have to spend much time on clearing your mailbox.

To create a new letter, click on the "Compose" button. This will open up a blank letter form with space for addresses, a subject line, and then the all-important content frame.

Hint: When composing a new letter, leave the address and subjects lines blank until you are ready to send your letter. G-mail will not send a letter until you have at least one address, and it will always ask you if you really intended to leave the

subject line blank before it sends a letter, and this provides you with some sort of security against accidentally sending off a letter before you have had a chance to complete it or proof read it properly.

To write a letter, just click in the content field and start typing. You do not need to press Enter for a carriage return at the end of each line... the program will automatically wrap text on to the next line when you reach the end. In fact, unless you **do** want to start a new paragraph, it is a bad idea to use carriage returns... the person who is opening your letter probably won't have their page set to the same width as you, so it won't look very good on their screen.

As you go along, the program will alert you if you make a typo by putting a wavy red line under any words it doesn't recognize. When this happens, you can move the mouse pointer over the word in question, and then right-click. A small dialogue box will appear with alternative spelling choices.

You can change the font (style of type), the size, and the colour of your text simply by highlighting it with the mouse and then selecting the appropriate options along the top of the content pane. Similarly, you can highlight words, phrases, or paragraphs in any of a wide variety of colours.

Addresses

When you first start using g-mail (or other similar e-mail programs) you will have to type in the entire e-mail address of your intended recipient. As you build up your contacts list, however, you will need to enter just a few characters, and then select from the list of choices the program will display. If you wish to send your letter to more than one address, they need to be separated by a comma, although the e-mail program should do this for you automatically.

If you often send letters to a particular group of addresses (such as those folks attending the Beginners Course), you can create a group name so that all of the addresses will be associated with a unique group name. Then, instead of typing in each address, all you have to do is type in the name of the group, and the program will import all the appropriate addresses.

Subject Line

Many people don't see the need for subject lines... you never needed one when you wrote a letter with pen and paper. However, they do serve a very useful purpose, particularly when using g-mail. One of the special features of g-mail is that it will keep letters on a similar subject together. For instance, if you send off a letter with the title, "Planning for Fred's 80th", if your recipients reply without changing the subject, all of the correspondence on that subject will be grouped together, making it very easy for you to be able to review all that has been said on the matter. Hence, even if your subject is nothing more than "Update from Yuma", I urge you to use subject lines. It can be very useful when trying to find a particular letter out of the hundreds you will eventually accumulate.

Creating your own g-mail account

Creating a new G-mail account is pretty straight forward. Just follow these steps:

- Go to www.google.com (with your browser)
- Select “G-mail”
- Click on “Create an account”
- Enter your first and last names
- Enter your preferred e-mail address
- Click on “check availability”
- Enter your password
- Re-enter your password
- Select a security question
- Enter your security question answer
- Enter your other e-mail address for recovery*
- Enter your location (USA)
- Enter your birth date in MM/DD/YYYY format
- Type in the “Word verification”**
- Click on the “I accept” button

* This is so that Google has some way to get in touch with you should you ever forget your g-mail password.

** These wiggly letters are not machine readable, so this step keeps spam mailers from automatically creating hundreds of new addresses to bombard you with junk mail.

Digital Photo Management

- Being able to find the photos you want when you want them.

This is really the whole gist of Digital Photo management. Before digital cameras came along, it was unusual to shoot a lot of photographs on a single day. It would take a wedding, graduation, or family reunion to get us to shoot more than one roll of 36 photos for any given event, and if you didn't put them in an album, they were often kept in those envelopes you got them in when you picked them up from the drug store, so they were relatively easy to keep track of. The advent of digital photography, circa 2000, changed all that. Now you could take dozens, even hundreds of photos at a time. You no longer had to buy the film in advance, or worry about the cost of processing. About the only limitation on how many photos you took was the size of your camera's memory chip (which admittedly wasn't very big in those early days). One other significant difference that digital photography brought about was that you could now take pictures of things you would never have wasted film on before, such as taking shots of the wiring on the back of your TV or sound system before you moved it so that you would know how to reconnect it after you'd moved it. It's like having a Polaroid camera without all the muss and expense.

With digital cameras, people have gradually become accustomed to shooting photos of anything and everything on a continual basis. It took me about 5 years to take my first 10,000 digital shots, but little

more than a year to shoot the next 10,000! This huge proliferation of photos is what makes it so important to devise a system to deal with your photos, or you will soon get bogged down just trying to find the ones you want.

•Setting up a file system

There are numerous different ways in which you can organize your pictures: by number, by date, by who is in them, by event, etc. The software that comes with some cameras to help move the photos from your camera to your computer will ask you to enter a subject name and will then create a folder by that name, and apply that name with a suffix number to all the photos you transfer to the computer that time. In my opinion that creates a multitude of folders that just makes it that much harder to find what you are looking for. Similarly, having a folder for “Daves Birthday” isn’t too helpful once you have accumulated more than one year’s worth of pictures, or if there is more than one Dave in the family.

I have devised a chronological method that seems to work for me, It certainly is not the only way to do things, it may not even be the best possible way, so if you already have a system you are happy with, that’s OK. But for those of you who have no idea what to do, the method I am going to teach is my way.

•“My System” – Chronological

It has been my experience that our lives are arranged, by and large, in chronological order. Things happen in a time-ordered sequence. Each stage of our lives - childhood, teenage, adulthood, retirement;

school, college, work; dating, marriage, children; the houses we live in, the cars we drive, the jobs we work at ... all of these things happen in a chronological sequence, and so it is usually possible for us to associate a particular event with an approximate date. This makes a chronological system work pretty well.

- **Create a folder for each year**

The first step is to create a folder for each year. For example, if it were December 2011, we might start by creating a folder labeled “2011”. Ever since the advent of Windows XP, computers with Windows operating systems have come with folders labeled either “My Photos” or “Pictures”. You can access this folder by first, clicking on the “Start” button, and then on “My Photos” or “Pictures” in the right hand side of the Start menu. The folder will open in it’s own window, and will display all of the photos and sub-folders that are in it. To create a new folder, you need to do the following:

Windows 7: Click on “New Folder” along the top of the window.

Windows Vista or earlier: Click on “Organize” in the upper-left part of the window, then click on “New Folder” in the drop-down menu that appears.

A new, empty, folder will be created, it will be highlighted in blue, and the folder name, “New Folder” will be highlighted in dark-blue. You can just start typing (2011) and whatever is highlighted will immediately change to whatever you type, i.e.

When you type the digit ‘2’, the name of the folder will change from “New Folder” to “2”, and will allow you to add whatever other numerals you enter. When you are done, press the “Enter” key. Don’t worry about making a mistake. If you didn’t get it right, just left-click on the folder to highlight it, then press the F2 key. That will highlight the folder name and allow you to edit it. If you want to change the whole thing, just start typing. If you need to just change part of it, clicking on the highlighted text will put you into text-edit mode, allowing you to modify the name using the backspace, delete, and other keys as necessary.

- Within the year folder, create folders for each month.

Once you have created a folder for the year, you need to create sub-folders for each month within that year. To do this, double click on the 2011 folder you just created so that it opens and shows you its contents (the folder should be empty at this point ... if it is not, check to make sure you actually opened the new folder.)

Repeat the process you followed in the previous step to create a new folder, and name this one “2011 - 01”.

Repeat the process to create new folders for each month of the year (2011-01, 2011-02, etc.).

NOTE: After you have created & named the first sub-folder, make sure that you click somewhere blank within the 2011

window so that the folder you just made is no longer highlighted. If you don't do this, then you will wind up with the next new folder nested in the last (e.g. the February folder will wind up inside the January folder, which is NOT what you want. If this happens, just delete the errant folder [click on it to highlight it, then press 'Delete'], and try again. You want all 12 monthly sub-folders to be visible when you open the year folder.

- File naming method is important

You might wonder why we don't just name the month folders January, February, etc. The problem with that is that the computer loves to sort things into alphabetical order, and unfortunately the months are not so inclined. Using numbers keeps things in the right order. For the same sort of reason you need to use -01, -02, etc. and not just -1, -2, -3. If you do the latter, you will find October - December will wind up in between January and February because -10, -11, and -12 will sort ahead of -2!

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