

## Email report – meeting 12/10/2011 at Stowupland School

We had 18 members present at October's meeting, welcoming John Last and Margaret Page for the first time. Apologies were received from John Haseltine, Andrea Burton, Sheila Dobey and Harold & Irene Turner.

### Web Site:

I have analysed the number and type of 'hits' to the Stowmarket U3A web site, [www.u3astowmarket.org.uk](http://www.u3astowmarket.org.uk) for the last month and over the last year. Whilst over the year the total looks good, 7,903 hits, the analysis is less than encouraging since the most popular page is the 'Scrabble Group' (29% on the year, 49% on the month) and people have arrived there searching on the likes of Google for 'Scrabble' rather than Stowmarket U3A. Other than this, yearly hits for our Computer Group are just 2.5%, just beaten by 'Country Strolls' at 2.7%. This, of course, makes me wonder how useful our U3A members are finding the site? Please see the detail in the attached pdf.

### Agony Corner:

1) At the last meeting I drew your attention to the comprehensive list at <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/shopping/free-office-software> . Hopefully you followed the link and found it useful. However.....

- It often arises that you may want to use a particular programme when visiting friends or relations but they may not have the one you want or, perhaps you are using a computer that does not allow you to download software, eg in an internet cafe or indeed on the Stowupland High School network.
- The way around this is to install the programme onto a stand alone memory (USB) stick. There are many 'Open Source' (free) programmes available to do this and the best comprehensive list I've been able to find is the Portable Apps Directory....
- Find it here at <http://portableapps.com/apps> and I'm sure you will find something of interest. One of my favourites, as I've mentioned many times before, is the Irfanview photo programme, but there is almost no limit to the range of programmes you can carry around on USB. Moreover, installing onto a USB stick allows you to experiment with a new programme without installing onto your PC and thus without creating unforeseen problems which, as we've discussed before, can be difficult to overcome.
- As 'homework' prior to the next meeting, I'd like you to have a go, explore the options and pick one or two to install, then at the meeting we can have a look at what's been achieved and, as we are short of agreed topics for next year, perhaps plan to go into one or more in some detail at a future meeting. (As an example, on a 2Gb USB I have installed the portable versions of the browser 'Mozilla Firefox', the photo programme 'Gimp', and the media player VLC which together occupy much less than 1Gb).

2) 'I've had a phone call from somebody saying that there is a problem on my computer and that they can fix it.....'

- Worth repeating as this is an issue discussed at the last and several previous meetings. The idea is that they scare you into switching on your PC and, using their software, to look for a non existing problem which of course they find.
- They then say they can fix it for you - at a price. By this method they get hold of your credit card details and hence take money as they wish.
- **Never, ever**, respond to a cold call like this. Just put the phone down.

3) 'Is there still a Learn Direct' centre in Stowmarket?'

- I've done a search which suggests that the nearest 'Learn Direct' centre is now in Ipswich.
- However, there are several options open to adult learners from West Suffolk College, contact details....
- Stowmarket Learning Shop 10a Wilkes Way Meadow Centre Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 1DE 01449 613903 [stowmarket@wsc.ac.uk](mailto:stowmarket@wsc.ac.uk) , [www.westsuffolk.ac.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.ac.uk)

4) 'Can I put data, pictures etc onto the same DVD as a DVD film?'

- This is possible and quite straight forward. The important thing is to start with a copy of your prepared DVD film on the hard drive of your PC.
- This will be in the form of a folder named 'Video\_TS' which contains all the necessary files to play the movie.
- Put a blank DVD in the slot

- Next open your DVD burner programme and select prepare new DVD. This will give you the 'add data' pane.
- In the folder where you've saved the Video\_TS folder, click this and drag to the pane.
- Follow the same procedure for pictures and other data you wish to include.
- Press 'next' or 'finish' and the burner will write the DVD.
- The resulting DVD will play the movie on your computer or on your TV through a normal DVD player, whilst the other files can be accessed as normal on your PC.

5) Following on..'where is the best place to store my pictures?'

- If you have a lot of precious pictures on your PC it is always wise to have at least one back-up copy
- Copies can be on DVD, USB stick, external hard drive or even in the 'cloud' with online storage.
- Cheapest and most resilient of these is probably the USB stick (at least one of these has been known to survive a full cycle in the washing machine!).

6) 'If I receive a file e.g. via email and click the 'save' option I then can't find where it's been saved'.

- Click on 'Save Attachments'. A box opens - at the bottom there will be a 'Save to' button. Browse to the directory and folder you want then click 'save'.
- There seems to be a demand for more information on saving, moving and general manipulation of files and folders so I suggest that at future meeting there could be a 'back to basics' session on such matters.

7) Tablet computers. What are they? How useful are they? What are the options?

- This has also been suggested as a future topic
- If you've had any personal experience, please let me know.

### **Making a Christmas card in Photoshop Elements:**

Thanks very much to Roy Fidler for a very interesting tutorial today.

Using Photoshop Elements 8 installed on the school network, Roy took us through the various stages of making a simple Christmas card.

To save time, he'd prepared a set of psd (Photoshop) files which we were able to work through.

We learned about layers (background, border, picture etc) and how to merge and flatten them.

We eventually finished up with a landscape A5 card set up x2 on a portrait A4; main picture (front of the card) on RHS, and rear of the card on LHS.

We then prepared text for the inside. Some of us managed to finish up with our own personalised card and were able to take copies away on USB as jpg files.

If you have access to Photoshop or Photoshop Elements 8 (on) and would like to try for yourself, please follow the links below to get copies of Roy's sample files (all are too big to attach to the email):-

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/1-Back%20ground.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/2-%20Madonna%20%26%20Child.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/3-Border.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/4-Text.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/5%20Logo.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/6-Background.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/7-%20Window.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/8-Text.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/9-Landscape%20blank.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/10-Landscape%20Greeting.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/11-Portrait%20blank.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/12-Portrait%20Greeting.psd>  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/40667066/inner%20text%20generic.psd>

### **Next Meeting:**

Will be on **Wednesday 9th November**, 1.30pm at Stowupland School.

**John Haseltine** will be leading a session on '**Windows 7**' and demonstrate some of the differences and improvements over previous versions of Windows. If you have a laptop with Windows 7 installed (as I know several members do), please bring it along so you can follow John's directions.

For the rest of us (XP and Vista users) this session will show us what's in store for the future.