May 2012

If you are reading this on your computer display, remember that **Acrobat Reader** has a *zoom* feature (under "**View**" in your top tool bar) for enlarging or reducing text and graphics.

Next Computer Club (BVCC) Meeting, by Fred Schneiter; May 14, 2012, 7:30 PM in the Glenn Center.

Notes from Kent

Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow

As May is our last meeting month until September, a brief summation is in order. Our April meeting, featuring Abby Stokes on social media (Facebook, Twitter, & LinkedIn) was very well received by the membership. We have invited Abby back for a different program in the Fall (so that is our look-ahead). As mentioned at that meeting, Abby's presentation(s) are the frosting that comes with the Club's membership in APCUG (Association of Personal Computer Users Groups). An example of the cake is Part 3 of the article by Phil Sorrentino (past President of the Sarasota [Florida] PC Users Group on things to consider in buying a new computer. Parts 1 & 2 appeared in our April newsletter.

Our May meeting will feature a presentation by our President Emeritus, Fred Schneiter, who will introduce the full breadth of the program. Among his duties, Fred is Chair of the Nominating Committee, and elections are due at the May meeting for terms running July1, 2012 – June 30, 2013. It is also time to renew expiring memberships. Dues remain at $3 for one year or $5 for two years—still the biggest

bargain in Bristol Village. If you are unable to attend, dues may be paid to the Club Secretary or Treasurer (see box in upper right).

New Shredder for Members

After long teetering along in decrepitude, the Club's document shredder has been replaced. The new Fellowes shredder is much more powerful and durable that its predecessor, although not an industrial-strength model. It can handle 8-10 pages at a time and is kept in the same place as the old shredder (under the table on the left by the file cabinets.

Cooper Woods on Youtube

Len has posted a beautiful four minutes 14 seconds video of the Mary Cooper Wildflower Woods on Youtube. It is scheduled to eventually be available on the Club site but, in the interim, enjoy.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8URY1tgEUlQ

[This is a revised URL from the original version. As of May 4, 2012, this URL effectively connects to the Cooper Woods video.]

Recycling Opportunity

Our user-group cousins in Newark host a twice annual recycling fair. As our back room is becoming overrun (and Newark may be closer than Ohio Mulch in Columbus), I plan a run to Newark on the

Saturday before the Memorial Day weekend (May 19th). If you have outdated computer equipment that you'd like to be rid of, please deliver it to the Computer Room in the Glenn Center before May 18th (or call if you need assistance).

Latest Deadly Virus Threat

In November 2011, the FBI discovered a virus identified as "**DNS Changer**." DNS stands for Domain Name System and represents the "map" that a network relies on in trying to make a connection that you have requested. When you ask your web browser (such as Internet Explorer or Firefox) to go to a specific URL (Universal Resource Locator—e.g., the Club's URL is http://www.bvres.org which means that the domain [subnetwork] "bvres" is athe grouping of non-profit organizations, "org").

To find out where that URL/address is, the browser contacts a domain name server. As evident in its name, the "DNS Changer" virus will interject itself between your browser and the actual DNS to point your browser to a phony location. When the FBI discovered this virus, they realized that they could not simply shut down the phony system as that would strand a big part of internet communications. So they created a substitute phony DNS to redirect browsers back to authentic locations.

The solution spared us all a lot of grief but, unless the FBI were to continue to maintain its substitute network, it was only temporary. Giving us all ample warning and in conjunction with other internet bodies, the FBI has announced that it will close its phony network on July 9, 2012. To avoid being stranded by this change, you need to assure that your computer has not been affected. This can be accomplished by pointing your browser to http://www.dcwg.org/detect/ . This site will immediately inform you if your computer has been infected and, if so, what to do about it. As a modicum of relief, we have yet to identify a computer in the village that has been infected (should yours be the exception, please let one of the Club officers know).

# Fancy Thunderbird Email Signatures with HTML

by Len

Here is something for those who are using ***Thunderbird*** as their email program. (If you are using Gmail or Yahoo Mail, there are some notes for you at the end of the article.)

You can personalize Thunderbird to automatically add a signature to the bottom of your email messages. Here is how.

✔ From the Thunderbird **Menubar**, select **Tools, Account Settings**.

✔ When the Account Settings dialog box opens, select your email address in the left column.
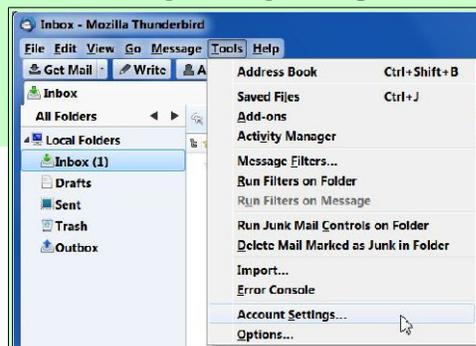
This dialog box allows you to adjust account information. Observe that there is a text box where you can add a signature to your messages.

There is a check box near the top of the signature text box for turning HTML code on or off.

First, let's create a signature with plain text.
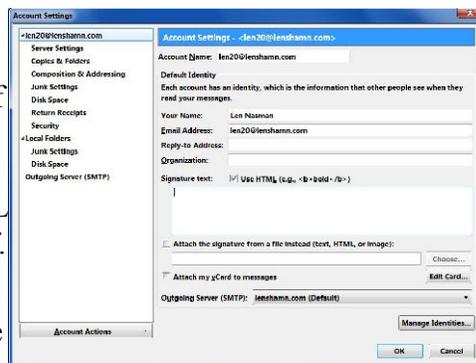
✔ Type ***Email from Me*** in the **Signature** text box. Then select the **OK** button.

✔ Select the **Write** button to start a new message and observe the signature.

That added a simple signature, but it is more fun to dress it up a bit. You can do this with just a little knowledge of HTML code.

HTML (**H**yper**t**ext **M**arkup **L**anguage) is a way to change the appearance of text and things so that they look similar no matter what kind of computer or device they appear on. With just a couple of additions, HTML can improve the plain appearance of your Thunderbird signature.

✔ Cancel the **Write** dialog box when you are through looking.

The way HTML codes are used is that code symbols are inserted at the beginning and ending points of a section. For example, the following code will make the word **bold** appear **bold**. Let's see how this can be applied to the signature.

✔ From the Thunderbird **Menubar**, select **Tools, Account Settings**.

✔ When the Account Settings dialog box opens, select your email address in the left column.

✔ Make sure the *Use HTML* box is checked.

✔ Copy and paste the following in the *Signature* text box.

> You can of course edit the text in the following examples to suit yourself.

This Email is from Me.

✔ Test your signature in a new *Write* window, then return to the *Account settings* dialog box.

You can see how the starts the bold function and the stops it. Here is another code to try.

✔ Copy and paste this in the Signature text box.

<h1>This signature uses the heading one code.</h1>

HTML code includes several standard heading styles. These heading styles are commonly used by web site developers, since web sites have HTML code at their core.

Let's add some color to the text. Font colors are changed by entering <font color="#nnnnnn">

where nnnnnn is a 6 digit hexadecimal color number. (You can find color numbers and code samples by opening an Internet Browser and setting the web address to http://html-color-codes.info/.)

✔ Copy and paste this in the *Signature* text box.

<h2><font color="#000000">Email from <font color="#0000FF"> My Name</h2>

Your signature should now have a mixture of bold, black, and blue.

Here is how to add horizontal lines above and below the signature.

✔ Copy and paste these three signature lines in the *Signature* text box.

<hr>

<h2><font color="#000000">Email from <font color="#0000FF"> My Name</h2>

<hr>

One last thing. If you have ever wanted to express yourself in your email signature, you can simply add your favorite saying. For example, here is another sample signature.

<hr>

<h3><font color="#FF0000">Email from <font color="#0000FF"> My Name</h3>

<hr>

"The more you know, the more you know you don't know."

With just a little research on HTML codes on the Internet, you can find many ways to enhance your Thunderbird email signature. I have placed a slightly expanded version of this article on the BVCC website. Look in the Little Red Schoolhouse. Have fun!

Gmail Users

Gmail users can create enhanced signatures without using HTML code. Select the *Gmail Settings tool*, select the *Set-*
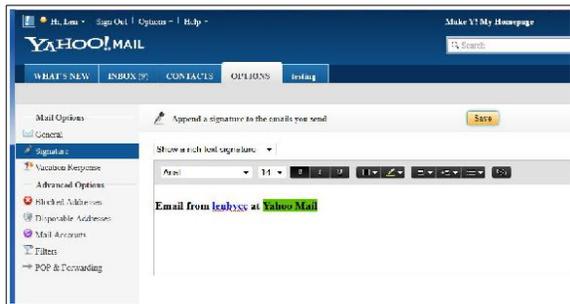
tings entry, and scroll down the page until you find the *signature text box*. This area includes some typical text editing options.
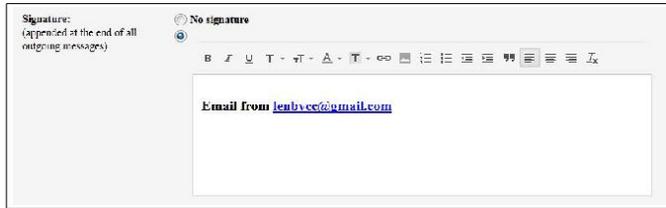
Yahoo Mail Users

Yahoo Mail users can create enhanced signatures without using HTML code. Select *Options, Mail Options, Signature*. This will open an area that includes some typical text editing options.

Len

Buying a New Computer – Things to think about (Part 3 of 3)

By Phil Sorrentino,
Past President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
March 2012 issue, *Sarasota PCUG Monitor*
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Last month [for BVCC, the April 2012 issue] we discussed manufacturers, laptop vs. desktop, and looked at the CPU as well as looking in depth at the things to be considered when buying a laptop. Now it's time to think about considerations for a desktop. A desktop usually is comprised of a tower, a display, a keyboard, and a mouse. But because a desktop usually has plenty of space, it can often be found in the company of a printer, an **uninterruptable**

power supply (UPS), external hard drives, and special purpose peripherals like a slide scanner, or a VHS to DVD converter.

A desktop minimally consists of a Tower, a display, a keyboard and a mouse. The keyboard and mouse could be wired or wireless. The tower is the heart of the desktop computer. It houses a **motherboard** which is a large printed-circuit board that includes all the basic computer functions, as well as expansion slots for adding features. The boards that are plugged into these expansion slots are called d**aughter boards** (get it?). These daughter boards can provide other interfaces and capabilities. The tower also houses all the Hard Drives and Optical Drive**s** (and a Floppy drive if you need that kind of backward-looking compatibility).

RAM, or Random Access Memory, is located on the mother board, so on the motherboard you will find a number of memory slots. These memory slots are usually there to hold a specific type of memory like DDR2 or DDR3, although the amount of memory may vary. For a Windows 7 computer, the minimum RAM is really 2 GB, although Microsoft indicates it will run fine with 1 GB (on a 32-bit CPU). (As was stated last month, the CPU type, 32-bit or 64-bit, along with the Windows OS version and the motherboard, will determine the maximum RAM for a given computer.) When deciding on a desktop, the only thing that is usually advertised is the amount of RAM, so the amount of RAM is the deciding consideration; the more RAM, the better. (The memory types may differ among different computers, and that may be why the costs differ.) [Ed. Note: Rather than the more RAM the better, I would suggest the more RAM capacity the better as the RAM you buy next year will cost about one-half of what it does at present.]

The motherboard also contains other miscellaneous electronics for audio, USB ports, internet connection, and boot Programmable Read-Only Memories that control the bootstrap process. The motherboard is never a decision consideration because very little is advertised about the motherboard, but it is a crucial part of the tower.

Because the desktop usually has plenty of space, the display can be as large as you like, and you may even want more than one. A second display can expand the desktop size or be a copy of the first display. The copy of the first display might really be an HD large screen TV, which might be good for viewing those episodes of shows you missed when they were broadcast. Usually you can find those episodes on hulu.com or abc.com, nbc.com and abc.com. Very good displays in the 22 to 24 inch category can be found from all of the large display manufacturers like HP, Samsung, Dell, Viewsonic, and Sony. With a display, "size counts", so try to get the largest display that will fit into the space available.

The display is driven by a **Graphics Adapter** which is either on the motherboard or is provided by a Graphics Adapter daughter board. Today, most desktop computers are configured to use the on-board graphics adapter, which usually does a pretty good basic job. If you are looking for improved graphics, like multiple display support, better resolution, or faster performance for gaming, it is up to you to add a daughter board graphics adapter to the motherboard. Graphics Adapters are available from ATI, nVidia, and Matrox, as well as others.

Now for the **Hard Disk Drive (HDD)**. This is where the desktop really starts to show its value. (As we stated last month, for a Windows 7 computer, it is suggested that the HDD size be at least 200 GB, but because we are talking about a desktop, consider much larger drives.) Most desktops will come with one large HDD, but there is usually enough room in the tower to add typically up to 3 more drives. Adding just one other drive gives you the ability to backup your data within the tower, making the backup process so easy that you might actually do it regularly. Once you commit to more than one HDD, there are a lot of ways you could use the drives. If the drives are large, say greater than 500 GB, you can partition the first drive so you have a C: drive of about 100 GB for the OS

and applications, and then use the rest, the D: drive, for data (documents, pictures, videos, music). Then the second drive, the E: drive, could be for backup.

Almost all computers are called upon to access the Internet. Because the desktop is usually in one place, and usually near the router, this can be easily accomplished by a wired connection to an Internet Service Provider (ISP). (Wired connections are faster and more secure than wireless connections.) All of today's desktops provide this type of connection by an RJ-45 plug somewhere on the back of the tower.

Desktops again, because of their size, can accommodate multiple **optical drives.** Having two CD/DVD Drives can make the process of copying CDs or DVD easier. One drive can be read-only, which will keep the cost down, and the other can be read/write. With two drives, you don't have to interrupt the copying process to exchange the disks; the software just copies from the read-only to the read/write and lets you know when it is done. So, if a second optical drive is available, that may become a good decision consideration. Most towers include a CD/DVD drive, but some of the newer, more expensive towers are including newer, more expensive, Blue-ray drives. (As stated last month, CDs hold 700 MB. DVDs hold 4.7 GB, and BDs hold about 25 GB.) The optical drive is only a decision point if you are specifically interested in reading and/or writing BD disks, otherwise there is little difference between manufacturers' optical drive products.

As discussed last month, all computers have audio capabilities, usually a microphone input, provided by a 1/8th inch mono mini-jack, and a stereo output provided by a 1/8th inch stereo mini-jack. The microphone input can be used for audio/video telecommunications like Skype and Google Talk. If you want to enjoy audio from a desktop, you'll have to add a set of computer speakers, which are easily connected to the stereo output, and fairly inexpensive.

All desktops have USB 2.0 interface ports. The number of ports may be a decision point. And the newer USB 3.0 may show up on some newer, more expensive towers. Other types of interface ports such as **Firewire** or **eSATA**, can be added to a tower's motherboard, using an expansion slot, so that the interface connector is available on the rear of the tower. This is definitely a decision point if these types of interfaces are needed.

The desktop tower's **power supply** is not usually a decision point, but a desktop's power supply can be easily replaced. If one adds a lot of expansion slot capabilities, the power requirement may increase beyond the original capacity. Replacement power supplies are fairly inexpensive and available from many sources.

A desktop is usually cheaper than a laptop of similar capabilities, and the desktop capabilities can be expanded to provide many more capabilities. These capabilities are only limited by your imagination and sometime your wallet. Good luck with your next computer purchase.

You might think we're finished because we've covered most of the technical aspects of the computer purchase. But there is still one thing to be considered: What if things don't work the way you expected after you open all the boxes, remove all the parts and put it all together (even with a laptop you typically have to install the battery). Now it may be a matter of where you bought your equipment. It seems there are at least three choices: the "big box" stores (Best Buy, Office Depot, Office Max, Staples, etc.); on-line retail websites (Amazon, Buy.com, Newegg, etc.); and local computer stores . The concern here is support after the purchase. With all of these options, there is typically 15 to 30 days where you can return your equipment for a refund or at least store credit. If you bought from a website you'll have to package it all up and get an RMA (return material authorization) or something similar. Returning it to a "big-box" or local store is probably

a little easier. After the initial "return period" comes the time of ownership. I can't speak from a position of great authority here, because I have not used either "big-box" or local help, but support is readily available from both "big-box" stores and local computer stores. (I have been told of some excellent experiences friends have had with local stores.) Local computer stores might have an edge in follow-on support because of the smaller number of people involved, but I'm sure there are many success stories using both alternatives. (Personally, I like the ability to call someone I know, and have a relationship with, to discuss the problem.) Local stores may even include a number of hours of training with the purchase.

No matter where you purchased the computer, sometime in the future you will have a problem (I'm intentionally using the word "will" rather than "may"). Where you purchased the computer may then play a very important role in getting the computer back up and running. The problem may be hardware (disk drive, or CPU chip), or software (virus effects or simply slowed down operations), so one of the last things to think about would be to add backup. Now that you've got all bases covered, go out and buy that computer and look forward to many years of happy, successful computer use. [Ed. Note: Of course, your computer club is an excellent beginning source of support.]

[Foregoing article slightly edited for BVCC usage.]