

BVCC Newsletter - February 2014

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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

Windows 8.1, Better than Windows 8.
Presented by Len Nasman
February 10, 2014 7:30Pm Glenn Center

New Quick Index

You can now jump directly to articles in this newsletter. Just left click on the Index listing.

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Notes from Kent

The XP Saga Continues

In recent months, we've mentioned the looming **cessation of product support by Microsoft for Windows XP**. As earlier noted,, in December 2013 XP accounted for 30% of all Windows operating systems

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tems on PCs (and Windows operating systems accounted for 90%+ of all PC operating systems). In perspective, Microsoft's decision to cease support for XP is like all car makers announcing that you will have to buy a new engine for any car more than



five years old or it will cease to operate.

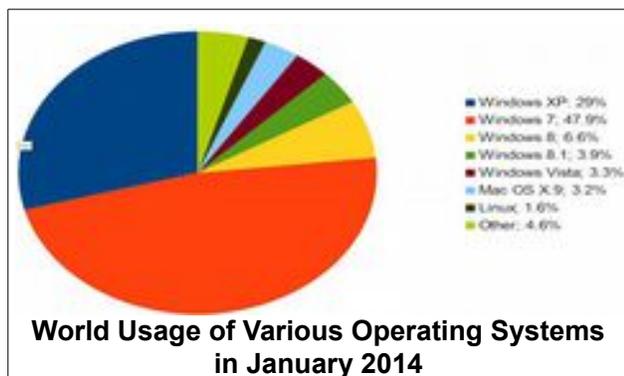
Understandably, Microsoft's decision has sparked protest and disillusion. It appears that Microsoft's decision is pushing some if not many users to look to other operating systems. Although Microsoft does not admit to any relationship, its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has announced that he is stepping down. And as the deadline for withdrawal of support nears, Microsoft has somewhat reversed its position that all support will end April 8th. After loudly maintaining that there would be no support for **Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE)** for Windows XP after that date, on January 15th Microsoft announced (<http://blogs.technet.com/b/mmpc/archive/2014/01/15/microsoft-antimalware-support-for-windows-xp.aspx>) that it would continue

to provide updates and related resources to MSE for XP and other Microsoft anti-malware programs until July of 2015. While details are lacking, the announcement may remove some of the urgency in replacing XP on your machines.

While attention has rightly focused on the impact of consumers (or in Microsoft's case, corporations) need to replace XP, an article in *Bloomberg Businessweek* (January 20-26, 2014:37-38) alerts us that XP is used for more than PCs. The article notes that ATMs are essentially cases around a computer and that computer probably runs on XP as do 95% of the ATMs in the U.S. and the world.

The good news is that some percentage of those are powered by **Windows XP Embedded**, and Microsoft has announced that these will be supported until early 2016. But that leaves the rest of the ATMs needing--like the rest of us--to upgrade (for ATMs, Windows 7 seems to be the preferred path).

To better appreciate how the PC operating system world operates, we offer the following chart from Net Applications reported by Cnet.



This can provide some fodder for your decision about with what or how you will replace your present Windows XP installation. Or **you can at-**

tend Len's presentation on February 10 to see if he can convince you that Windows 8.1 is the choice for you.

What the Club Has Done with the XP Dilemma

For the most part, the Club's decision to replace the old Windows XP machines in the Lab with Windows 7 Ultimates in July 2012 removed the urgency for the Club to address the XP issue. Except, back in July 2014, the Club offered one of the XPs removed in July 2012 to the Bristol Village Library to automate the processing and labeling of new books.

In calling the XP issues to your attentions, it became obvious that the question needed to be addressed for the Library. When the computer was given to the Library, there was no intention for it to be used on the Internet. But then, with the computer available, it seemed convenient for the Library to use it to order books on line and be available to Library staff [and possibly others] to answer questions or explore how other libraries have explored various issues that arise.

So there seemed numerous advantages to having the Internet available (and using the Internet meant finding an alternative to XP). It seemed that the cheapest approach would be to upgrade the old XP machines (from 2 GB to 4 GB Ram at a cost of \$40) and move them to Windows 7. Naively, I failed to account for the limitations of the machines being replaced (both in age and capacity). Initially, I acquired a 64-bit Windows 7 Professional disk (cost \$56) but the installation reminded me that the CPU (Central Processing Unit) was only 32 bits wide and thus could not use a 64-bit operating system.

Back to E-Bay, I was able to acquire a 32-bit Windows 7 Professional for \$59. We got it installed but then realized the effect of age. We were unable to find drivers for the hardware (which by now is about twelve years old. This led us to a solution that may be of interest to Club members.

Replacing Windows XP

As it became obvious that we had to replace the hardware as well as the software, I explored what our options were. Consistent with my miserly nature and success in purchasing refurbished computers in the past, I went to some major sources of refurbished Windows 7 computers (reflecting my prejudice against Windows 8). I identified 3 main suppliers as possibilities: Micro Center on Bethel Road in Columbus

(http://www.microcenter.com/category/4294967292_519/Desktops), Blair Technology Group (in Northern Kentucky <http://Blairtg.com/shop/desktops>; from which we bought the Windows XP computers used in the Computer Room between 2010 and 2012), and Tiger-Direct (http://www.tigerdirect.com/applications/category/category_slc.asp?CatId=5138&name=Refurbished-Windows-7-PCs&).

One of the realities of buying refurbished computers is that the available stock changes from day to day or even more often. For example, I was unable to locate an available computer that met my standards (Windows 7, preferably Professional; 4 GB RAM, 250 GB hard drive, and a capacity of 16GB RAM for later upgrades) at Micro Center (one model that I liked disappeared while I was debating the merits). Plus the Micro Center charges for sales tax (which the Club shouldn't have to pay as a creature of NCR) and shipping was quite high. On February 4th, Micro Center has at least 3 machines that meet my criteria for \$169 and \$30 for a two-year warranty.

Blair also sold out of a preferred machine while I was debating. They offer free shipping and also a one-year warranty (most refurbished computers come with a 90 days warranty). I ended up going with Tiger-Direct (having had good experiences buying from them in the past) for a machine that met my specifications for \$215; including a one-



year warranty. Looking again in February, I'd probably focus on the same companies and could probably match the price or get it even lower.

Kent

You All Talk Funny

By Kent

On December 21, 2013, the *New York Times* reported on a test that could locate your manner of speaking (dialect) in the United States (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/12/20/sunday-review/dialect-quiz-map.html?_r=2&page-wanted=all). It offers 25 questions that likely will do an amazing job in placing which part of the country contributed most to the way that you speak. Sample questions include things like 'how would you address a group of two or more people?' answers include [you all](#), [yous / youse](#), [you lot](#), [you guysh](#), [you 'uns](#), [yinz](#), [you](#), [y'all](#), or [other](#)) or 'what do you call the area of grass in the middle of some streets?' (answers include [boulevard](#), [midway](#), [traffic island](#), [island](#), [neutral ground](#), [I have no word for this](#), or [median](#) or other).

Each of the 25 questions asked (after you respond) will show you the geographical distribution for your response for each question). At the conclusion, the quiz will tell you which regions your answers most resemble and three of the most similar cities. It will also identify the question and response that is most typical for your region. I can't guarantee the accuracy of the quiz (which is based on findings from the Harvard Dialect Survey as adapted by the *New York Times*), but, if nothing else, this should amuse if not astound you.

Windows 8.1

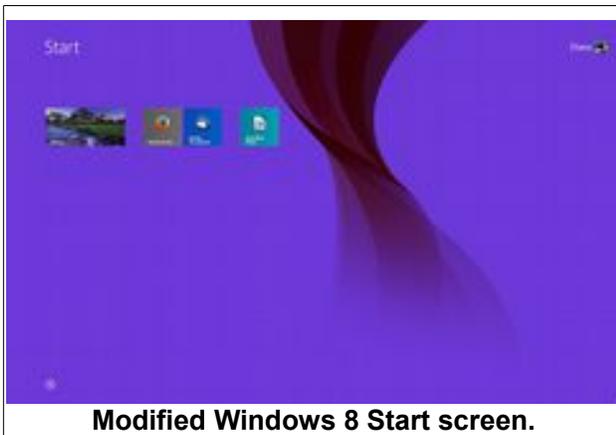
By Len

When Windows 8 came out, I spent enough time testing it to determine that it might be OK for new computer users who only wanted to do email and surf the internet. For experienced Windows users there were so many changes that it was very frustrating and required a significant investment in time

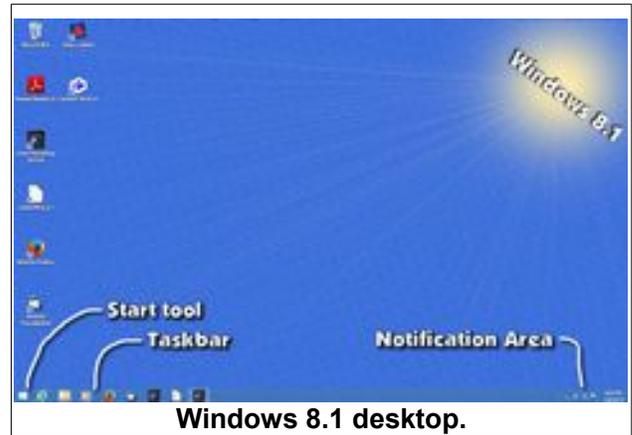
to learn new ways to do things. The Windows 8.1 release, however, has removed many of my initial objections.



Because Windows 8 was designed to work with tablet computers, the start display opens to show large finger-sized tiles that are touched to enter “Apps”, application programs. The start screen can be modified to contain a limited collection of tiles.



This can make it easier for entry level computer users. The Apps tile approach and an interface designed for touch screens however, is frustrating to experienced desktop users. Windows 8.1 now provides an option to start directly in the traditional desktop mode.



A major complaint about Windows 8 was the removal of the Windows Start button from the desktop. Windows 8.1 has brought the Start button back... sort of. **Right** clicking on the **Start** tool shown in the illustration opens a context menu that provides access to a number of Windows options.

The Start context menu provides easy access to features like the Control Panel, a necessary function for experienced users.



Right clicking on the Taskbar opens the Taskbar and Navigation properties dialog box. The Navigation tab on this dialog box enables the user to go directly to the desktop when the system is started.



One feature of Windows 8 that I do like, is changing the Windows Explorer to a ribbon toolbar called File

Explorer. I discussed this in a past BVCC Newsletter, and have also added a tutorial on File Explorer to the [BVCC Schoolhouse](#) web page.

There are other changes in Windows 8.1 that have removed most of my objections to this version of Windows. There are currently rumors that the next update to Windows 8 will have the system automatically start in desktop mode.

It seems that by trying to make an operating system that works well for both desktop computers and touch screen tablets Microsoft has created a lot of ill will. Many companies have avoided updating to Windows 8 because of the retraining costs involved. It appears that, like with the Windows Vista disaster, Microsoft is making revisions to satisfy Windows desktop users.

In buying a new computer, I would not hesitate to buy one with Windows 8.1 installed. ***I would avoid buying a computer with Windows 8 and the promise of a free update to 8.1.*** Although I have successfully updated several Windows 8 computers to 8.1 (a process that takes about 4 hours) I recently wasted the better part of a day trying to update a new Lenovo Windows 8 computer to 8.1. I finally discovered that even the Lenovo support site had no solution for the problem of the system freezing on a black screen during the 8.1 update process. This problem apparently exists with a number of computer brands.

Weather Maps Revisited

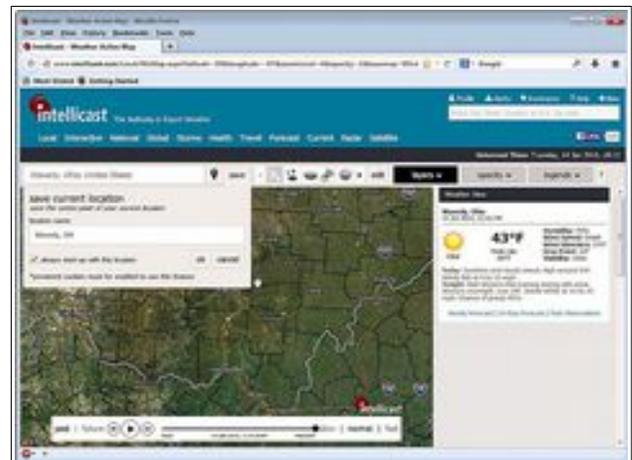
By Len

Here is another weather website to add to the collection listed in the January 2014 Newsletter.

<http://www.intellicast.com/Local/WxMap.aspx?latitude=39&longitude=-97&zoomLevel=4&opacity=1&basemap=0014&layers=0039>



The **Intellicast weather map** provides for mouse wheel scrolling. You can select from a variety of display maps and features. A quick click and the radar map can be animated to show storm progress.

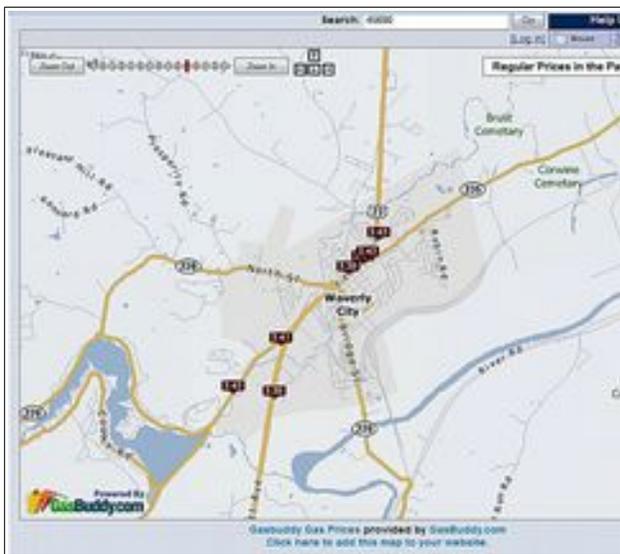


It is possible to save one or more locations to make it easy to check weather conditions at your favorite spots. Enter the desired location and select the Save option.

The Intellicast web site will allow you to explore a few things you might never have thought of. How about the current mood or bad hair day index? Perhaps the health maps might be of more interest.



There are useful features for drivers including road conditions and a 'gas buddy.'



The Intellicast web site may replace the wundermap as my favorite weather information source.

Backup Data Files

By Len

It seems that it is not possible to discuss backing up files too often. Most computer users learn the importance of keeping back up files a little too late.

If you have mostly word processing document files to worry about, a 4GB flash drive will probably be adequate. If you have a lot of pictures, music, or video files to protect, an external hard drive is a good way to go. There are alternative options for storing backup files on the "cloud: but I am too much of a control freak to use the cloud.

A 4GB flash drive can be purchased from places like the Micro Center for around \$5.00. Local retail stores charge more for the same size flash drive. One thing I like about the [Micro Center](#) brand flash drives is that they do not come with any bloatware. There is at least one brand of flash drive that includes a partition that cannot be formatted for personal use.

External hard drive prices have come down considerably. You can find 500GB drives for around \$50.00 and 1TB drives for under \$100.00. If you are storing a lot of video files, the bigger the drive the better.

OK, once again, how do you copy files to a flash drive or external hard drive. The answer is found in the [BVCC Schoolhouse](#).

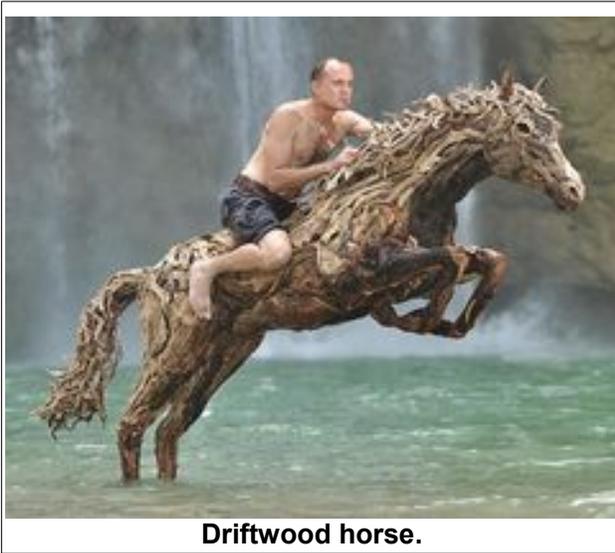
You will find tutorial versions for Windows XP, 7 and 8.1 that show how to copy files from drive to drive. Do it soon or you will end up with a blue bruise on your forehead when you lose files.



Fun Web Links

By Len

OK, so you were walking on the beach and saw a piece of driftwood that looked like part of a horse. You could pick it up and assemble a few more pieces of driftwood like this guy did.



Driftwood horse.

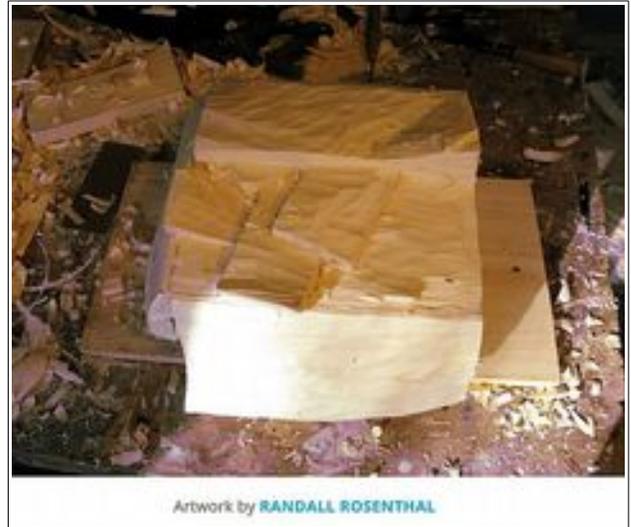
<http://www.boredpanda.com/driftwood-horse-sculptures-jame-doran-webb/>

If you are planning a trip you might want to know how do you say **Beer** in Spain or Poland. The maps on this link also show other words by country.



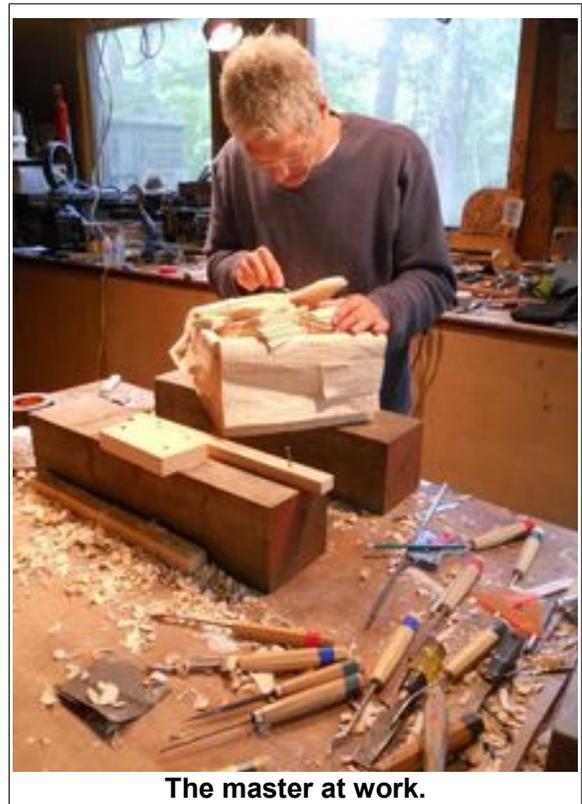
<http://www.boredpanda.com/driftwood-horse-sculptures-jame-doran-webb/>

Here is an amazing picture story about the process a wood carver used to turn a block of wood into a box of money.



Artwork by RANDALL ROSENTHAL

<http://twistedsifter.com/2014/01/randall-rosen-thal-carves-wood-block-into-box-of-money/>



The master at work.

Here is the final woodcarving... really! Go to the linked website to see how it was done.



A woodcarving!

I bet you can't guess what this is.



Fancy blown glass? Nope!

Click on the picture to find out. Be sure to scroll to the bottom of the page and play the videos.

And here is the [German version](#) web page of the creator. (You can use Google translate if you do not read German.)

WARNING: Do not visit the following link unless you want to read some very disgusting product reviews.

Amazon.com – [sugarless gummy bear reviews](#).



After the storm in St.Louis, Picture of the Day from TwistedSifter.



Three deer, Picture of the Day from TwistedSifter.



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