

The

Computer Link

August 2010

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

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Send newsletter
submissions to Editor
→**DEADLINE**←
for NEXT ISSUE,
One week after meeting

Home Networking

Robert Headley, owner of the “**Computer Wizard**” in Kilmarnock, VA, was our guest speaker at our July 17 General Meeting. He gave a presentation on **Home Networking**. Robert has his roots in the area, having attended Lancaster High School and Rappahannock Community College. He has over twelve years experience in computer networking and repair, and his business provides computer repair and networking services.

Prior to his formal presentation, Robert addressed some of the difficulties in Internet reception discussed during the Q and A time. Robert indicated that there are many possible reasons why Internet reception can be subject to intermittent periods of down-time. If

one's Internet Service Provider uses wireless equipment based on a 900 MHz frequency, pine trees can be a problem for reception. On the other hand, if the ISP utilizes 2.4GHz equipment, oak trees may cause reception difficulties. As we all know, there are plenty of pine and oak trees in the Northern Neck! In addition, he has seen people lose Internet service due to interference between a 2.4

GHz router and a wireless phone at the same frequency.

Home networking may be as simple as a printer shared by multiple computers, or the network may link several computers, printers other devices, and the Internet. Most people make a network for sharing printers and access to the Internet.

Wireless networking offers the advantage of simplicity and potentially lower cost for installation. There are no wires to install or maintain. Most present day computers are capable of wireless networking, or may be readily adapted to connect to the network. To set up a wireless network, one must have an Internet connection, a wireless router/access point (that

may also accept wired cable connections), and a network interface card (NIC) for each computer. The NIC and router use radio waves for communication. Installation software that comes with router/access points and components for computers can automatically handle most connection details. However, the



Robert Headley

Photo by Alan Christensen

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How Do You Connect to the Internet?

By Constance Brown

CAMUG President
www.camug.com

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Do you use dial-up, DSL, cable, satellite, mobile broadband, wireless or a combination of the above? Your answer likely reflects the availability of services in the area where you live and whether you use a laptop, personal computer, netbook or smart phone for email and Internet access. Let's take a look at some of these services.

Dial up service has been around for a long time. If you are running equipment using a 56K modem, theoretically you could have a download speed of 56K (56000 bits per second). Rarely do you achieve this speed. Many of the dial-up services are low-cost and overwhelmed with clients, resulting in slow connection speeds and dropped connections with no warning. Also the transfer rates usually are much below the theoretical speeds. I have often seen 24K connections. Anyone using dial-up also has the frustration of not being able to take calls while on the Internet or checking email.

A few things can be done to maximize the connection speeds for dial-up. If you are using Windows 98, updating your software may help. Call your phone company and ask them to test for interference on your line. If it is within acceptable limits, you can request them to turn up the gain on your line. This is similar to turning up the volume on your CD player in the car when the noise of the rain striking the windshield makes it difficult to hear the music. You can also trouble shoot the devices plugged

into your phone line. First, unplug all the devices—all your phones, fax machines and satellite TV. Then check your connection speed. If it has increased, you know that some device was interfering. Re-plug the devices one at a time and re-test your connection speed. When you find the troublesome device, leave it unplugged until you need to use it. You can also try adjusting flow settings using your modem software.

In some areas the telephone company offers **DSL**, a plan that splits your phone line in such a way that voice and data packets flow separately. This allows a person to be on the phone while surfing the Internet and checking email. The speed is usually much faster than dial-up. In fact, it can outperform cable speeds if you are close to a repeating station. If you are distant, the speeds may not be significantly higher than dial-up. The costs are reasonable, considering the benefits.

Cable access is very popular. It does not in any way interfere with telephone use. In fact, speeds are high enough that many people have fired the phone company and now use voice over internet protocol (VOIP) to make phone calls. In many cases, this saves a significant amount of money each month. Cable speeds can slow dramatically, however, if all the neighbors decide to get it! When the youngsters get home from school, the information flow backs up and access slows down. It is almost like trying to flush a large amount of debris through a small pipe. The pipe doesn't change size. The person flushing the debris has to slow to a speed that the pipe can handle. When this problem becomes significant and enough people complain, the cable company may add additional lines to service the needs of the community.

Satellite access is costly and used in areas where no other high speed access is available. HughesNet and Wild Blue are two large providers and are available in this part of Ohio. Smaller companies retail the HughesNet service in the Akron Canton area. There may be providers available as well as these two. Costs can be hefty for installation and may run significantly higher than \$80 per month depending on the bandwidth you desire.

Wireless Internet and Hotspot services are ways the traveler can connect. Here in Canton, wireless is provided at no charge at all the public libraries and many business locations including Panera Bread, Starbucks, some of the McDonalds and the airport. If you live in downtown Canton, you can often connect to the Internet through wireless access provided by the city and businesses. Often the connection is limited unless you are near a business that has decided to increase the signal for the area surrounding it. You will want to safeguard your private information when using public Wi-Fi. Some businesses provide secure Wi-Fi to their customers. In order to use their service, you have to be provided with a password. Commercial Hotspots may direct the user to a login screen where access for a specific amount of time may be purchased for a fee.

Mobile broadband wireless is gaining in popularity and we will see more and more people moving in that direction as standards are adopted between companies and networks expand. Cell phones with Internet and email access use this service. So do netbooks. You can also access mobile broadband through a USB device that

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Never Lose a Manual Again

By Linda Gonse

ORCOPUG

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I just found my old Sharp PDA, discovered it was still working, and decided to put it to use again. The downside was the manual was gone. An Internet search showed the original manual available, but prices ranged from \$20 to \$39! The Sharp device began to look obsolete to me. Then, I discovered [retrevo.com](http://www.retrevo.com). It boasts a library of more than 100,000 downloadable manuals from more than 1,000 brands of consumer electronics for consumer electronics searchable by category and brand at <http://www.retrevo.com/samples/index.html>. My manual was there and it was free. In seconds, I downloaded it. There are more than 100 categories to search for manuals:

There are more than 100 categories you can search for manuals:

<i>2-way Radio</i>	<i>Air Conditioner</i>
<i>Amp</i>	<i>Binocular</i>
<i>Blender</i>	<i>Boombbox</i>
<i>Bread Maker</i>	<i>CD Player</i>
<i>CRT TV</i>	<i>Calculator</i>
<i>Camcorders</i>	<i>Car Amplifier</i>
<i>Car Receiver</i>	<i>Car Video</i>
<i>Cell Phone</i>	<i>Clock Radio</i>
<i>Coffee Maker</i>	<i>Controller</i>
<i>Copier</i>	<i>DVD Drive</i>
<i>DVD Players</i>	<i>DVR</i>
<i>Desktop</i>	<i>Digital Camera</i>
<i>Digital Photo Frame</i>	
<i>Dishwasher</i>	<i>Dreamcast Game-</i>
<i>Dryer</i>	<i>Fax Machine</i>
<i>Film Camera</i>	<i>Food Processor</i>
<i>Freezer</i>	<i>GPS</i>
<i>GPS Accessory</i>	<i>Game Boy</i>
<i>Game Console</i>	<i>Game Cube Game</i>
<i>Gaming Accessory</i>	
<i>Graphics & Publishing</i>	
<i>Grill</i>	<i>Guitar</i>

<i>Headphone</i>	<i>Headset</i>
<i>Heating Cooling/Air</i>	
<i>Home Theater Hub</i>	
<i>Karaoke System</i>	<i>Keyboard</i>
<i>LCD TV</i>	<i>Labeling System</i>
<i>Laptop</i>	<i>MP3 Accessor</i>
<i>MP3 Player</i>	<i>Microwave</i>
<i>Mini Audio System</i>	
<i>Monitor</i>	<i>Mouse</i>
<i>Multifunction Printer</i>	
<i>Music Keyboard</i>	<i>NIC</i>
<i>Network Adapter</i>	
<i>Nintendo DS Lite</i>	<i>Oven</i>
<i>PBX</i>	<i>PDA</i>
<i>PDA Accessory</i>	<i>PS2 Game</i>
<i>Plasma TV</i>	
<i>Portable DVD Player</i>	
<i>Portable TV</i>	<i>Printer</i>
<i>Projection TV</i>	<i>Projector</i>
<i>Radar Detector</i>	<i>Radio</i>

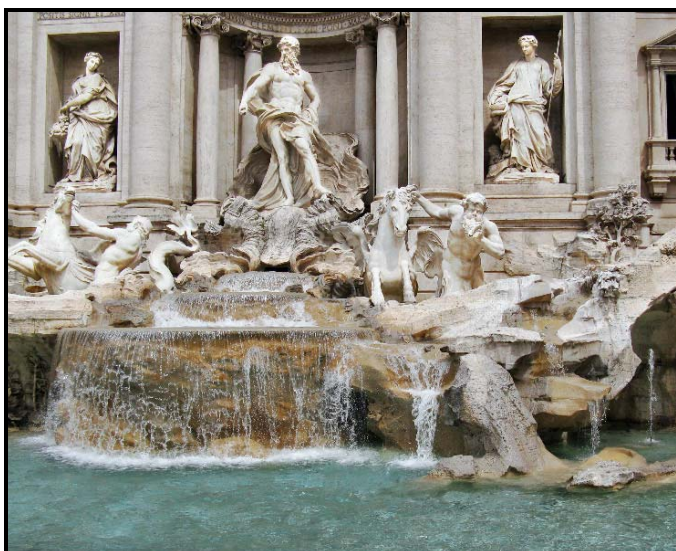
<i>Range</i>	<i>Receiver</i>
<i>Refrigerator</i>	<i>Remote Control</i>
<i>Router</i>	<i>Satellite Radio</i>
<i>Satellite Receiver</i>	<i>Scanner</i>
<i>Security Camera</i>	<i>Speaker</i>
<i>Speaker System</i>	<i>Storage</i>
<i>Subwoofer</i>	<i>Switch</i>
<i>TV</i>	<i>Tablet</i>
<i>Tape Deck</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
<i>Telescope</i>	<i>Turntable</i>
<i>VCR</i>	<i>Vacuum</i>
<i>Voice Recorder</i>	<i>Washer</i>
<i>Watch</i>	<i>Wii Game</i>
<i>Wireless Router</i>	<i>Xbox Game</i>

Another benefit of the site is that it also will store your manuals for you. Is that great or what?

July Photograph of the Month

Trevie

By Marilyn Jurkops



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Home Networking

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installer of the network may have to use the supplied software to set network security features. Connections are made up to a theoretical distance of 300 feet. A more realistic range is 100 to 150 feet, particularly with the newer routers. There are four commonly used standards for routers, with the more modern standards generally resulting in faster speeds and a longer distance for coverage. The “802.11g” router transmits at up to 54 megabits (Mbps) per second, and is now the most commonly used one. The latest standard, the draft “802.11n” router, can transmit up to 300 Mbps. Robert noted that these fast speeds are usually obtained only within the house where the network is located. The speed from the house out to the antenna of the wireless service provider is lower, and may only be 10 Mbps. Some sources of interference, which can cause a drop in transmission speed, are metal roofs, aluminum siding, even concrete containing embedded metal.

Wired networking, once installed, is inexpensive, reliable and easy to maintain. Technical support is readily available. The disadvantage of a wired system is the need and cost to install wiring within walls and jacks to the location of each device on the network. If there are more than two computers on the system then one needs additional equipment including additional NICs, routers and Internet connections.

Whereas, in the past, the owner had to manually set up addresses within the network, current routers come with an automatic address function – a decided improvement. An Ethernet system is the most common. Speeds of transmission within the network can be 10,100, and 1000 Mbps. These days, 10 Mbps system equipment is

rarely seen; 1,000 Mbps data rates within the network are the latest development and ideal.

Robert offered pertinent pieces of information to be aware of when setting up a home computer network. If using a Verizon wireless router, your location should be able to achieve a three bar signal on your cell phone. And on the recurring theme of what causes interference – it is true, the drones from Patuxent Naval Air Station cause interference. Finally, about the concerns of the group for good wireless service in the Northern Neck – Middle Peninsula area, do contact the Federal Communications Commission, your Senators, and your Congressional Representative.

In a lively question and answer session, Robert addressed the issues of linking computers of varying ages and the need for security on networks. He indicated that one could include computers of varying ages in a network, if they are not too “old”. His suggestion is not to try to network computers with Windows operating systems older than Win XP. Regarding security, Robert indicated that it only applies to wireless networks – wired networks do not have the same concerns. There are two major classes of security on wireless networks: WEP encryption and varieties of WPA encryption. Robert indicated that the older WEP encryption system is not as much of a security risk as it is made out to be, and that the WPA encryption – while claimed to be more secure – may also be more difficult to set up.

Robert, thank you very much for a great presentation. We really appreciate it!

Anne Moss and **Ed**.

Connect to Internet

From Page 2

connects your laptop to the Internet. Some of these combine wireless hotspot services with broadband wireless. Plans run in the \$50-\$60 range monthly with limitations on the amount of usage. You do not want to use mobile broadband service to play games or watch videos.

Mobile broadband wireless is gaining in popularity as standards between companies and networks are adopted. “At this point Verizon has the largest network....” However for us in the Northern Neck, all options should be examined.

T-mobile’s device allows you to monitor your use and to determine whether a hotspot is available that doesn’t count against your mobile data flow allowance or whether mobile broadband is your only choice. Most likely other companies provide similar monitoring software. Mobile broadband is not available in every place where your cell phone works, but coverage is available in all heavily populated areas and is growing. At this point Verizon has the largest network based on my personal research and that conducted by Encyclopedia Britannica when they selected a carrier for their sales and training teams.

We have many more choices of services than used to be available to us. Periodically it is wise to review all of your communication services and see whether something is available that can save you money while decreasing frustration.

July 17 Meeting Notes

MEMBERS ATTENDING: 27 and 1 guest.

TREASURER'S REPORT:
101 active members.

SIG REPORTS:

PHOTO: Jim Sapione invited all who are interested to attend. **The SIG meets the first Tuesday of the month at 09:30 a.m.** at the Lancaster County library in Kilmarnock. The group is moving from a camera club format to working with Photoshop Elements, currently Version 7, on laptops members bring to the meeting. **B.J. McMillan** suggested that if one has an unused older version of Photoshop Elements (not used to upgrade from), consider donating it to the Photo SIG for use by members who don't own PSE. To add your e-mail to the Photo SIG mailing list, contact BJ at bjthomm@kaballero.com.

GENEALOGY: Ann Thompson noted that she presented information from the American Genealogical

Society conference in Salt Lake City at the July 8 SIG meeting. **The group meets the second Thursday of odd numbered months (next meeting on September 9th), at 1:00 p.m., at RW-C.** Future topics will be: September - Family photo preservation; November - military pension records; January - Google your ancestors; and March - DNA and its uses in research (rescheduled from September 2010). If you would like to be on the Genealogy SIG mailing list, contact Ann at athompson@kaballero.com.

WEBSITE: Betty Lehman would like to train a new Webmaster. She will be happy to go over all the information with anyone interested.

Q AND A TIME: Several members asked about interruptions in Internet service provided by a local Internet Service Provider. Factors such as a nearby remote reading electricity meter or over-utilization of a transmitting tower were discussed as possible causes.

Some are having problems

with reading email attachments that may be in a different version of Microsoft word processing software. Solutions offered were: go to the Microsoft web site, and download conversion software; also one can minimize the email attachment and drag and drop it into a WORD document.

How to dispose of, or find, old computers, software, etc.? **Norm Farley** said that Grace Episcopal Church has a computer section at their annual May yard sale, and he will be happy to accept contributions (that he personally tests). Old DOS software can be found for sale on eBay at surprisingly solid prices.

SPEAKER: Robert Headley owner of the **Computer Wizard** in Kilmarnock gave a presentation on Home Networking. He has over twelve years experience in computer networking and repair. Prior to his formal presentation he addressed some of the difficulties with Internet reception that had been discussed during Q and A time.

RAFFLE WINNERS: George Cadmus - an Igloo Max 60 quart rolling cooler; **Carol Hallet** - mini flash drive set; and **Betty Lehman** - 4GB flash drive.

Anne Moss, Secretary

Membership Report - July 2010

Welcome - Ann Williams, Margaret Welch
(Welcome Back)

**RENEW August 2010 - George Cadmus,
Carol Hammer, Jim Sapione, Blanche Stevens,
Loreta Stover, Vicki White**

RENEW July 2010 - No Renewals

Membership dues are \$20 annually. Please send to:
George Cadmus, Treasurer, NNCUG, 150 Pine Drive,

Impact of Computers and the Internet on the Banking Business

August Meeting

Mr. Eric Malmgren, Information Systems Officer, Bank of Lancaster will be our guest speaker at the August 21 NNCUG General Meeting.

Ed.

The Computer Link

Northern Neck
Computer
Users' Group
150 Pine Drive
White Stone, VA 22578

NNCUG Meeting Dates

NNCUG GENERAL MEETING

Third Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room

BEGINNERS SIG

*Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666*

GENEALOGY SIG

*Meets bi-monthly, 2nd Thursday, 1:00 p.m.—RW-C
Contact Ann Thompson at athompson@kaballero.com
to get on the mail list for announcements.*

PHOTOSHOP SIG

*First Tuesday every month, 9:30 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831
or message Bird@kaballero.com*

For a photo treat visit
www.rapptapp.homestead.com

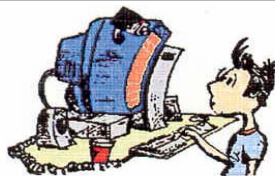


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chris@emxry.com

Computer Help available by appointment. Call Betty Lehman 435-2011 or B.J. McMillan 580-8666

Coming Attractions

*Membership— August 21st, 10:00 am - Eric Malmgren
Genealogy- September 9th, 1:00 pm, Preserve Family Photos
Photo SIG— August 3rd, 09:30 am, Kilmarnock Library*