



# NANAIMO COMPUTER CLUB NEWS

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### With NASA, Google Expands Its Realm to the Moon and Mars

By MIGUEL HELFT – *New York Times*

The NASA Ames Research Center and Google announced recently that they had signed a formal agreement to collaborate on a broad set of projects that could include virtual flyovers of the Moon and Mars, and other initiatives that will make NASA's vast trove of space and weather data widely available on the Internet.

"This is going to bring the excitement of space travel" to a wider audience, said S. Pete Worden, director of the Ames Research Center, near Google's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif.

Mr. Worden said that as the space agency pursued new manned space missions, the technology-sharing agreement might enable people everywhere to feel the crunch of an astronaut's step as he walked on the surface of the Moon or even Mars.



The collaboration may also allow the public to track space shuttle flights or the International Space Station in real time.

The signing of a Space Act Agreement formalizes a planned collaboration announced in September 2005. Still, Google and NASA spoke of possible joint projects only in broad outlines.

Among them was the possibility that, using data from NASA, Google will develop products that work like Google Earth for the Moon and other planets. Google Earth is a software program allowing users to view a three-dimensional image of the world and then zoom in to specific areas for close-up views.

Currently Google offers limited two-dimensional views of the moon and Mars.

NASA is already known for offering compelling images from space on its Web site, said Chris C. Kemp, director of business development at

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All that glitters has a high refractive index.



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Ames. The agreement with Google will allow a great expansion of the agency's offerings.

Mr. Kemp said the agency had already worked with several private-sector companies and was eager to work with more. "Part of the message here is that we are open for business," he said.

Neither Google nor NASA would comment on specific terms of the agreement. But Mr. Worden said NASA had funds to make some data and images available to the public.

Google may finance specific projects to make additional data broadly accessible and integrated into its services, he said.

When Google and NASA first announced their planned collaboration, Google said it planned to build as much as a million square feet of space at Ames Research Center. A Google executive said that project was still in preliminary planning stages.

*Submitted by: Y. Bulger*



## An Office better left at the office!

*Reproduced from the Globe & Mail*

For years, Microsoft Corp has blithely dismissed criticisms of its Office suite as a victim of the Pareto principle – that 80 percent of its owners only use 20 percent of its features. That's just the way people use their tools, they'd say.

It's now obvious that the software giant has been stung by that criticism. Almost everything that's new about Office 2007 has been designed to emphasize as many of its features, new and old, as it can.

The big change is the menu. Gone are the drop-down menus in Word, Outlook, Access, Excel and PowerPoint; they have been replaced by a tabbed ribbon running across the top of the screen. Get used to saying it – the "ribbon" – because you're going to use it a lot. The ribbon always shows options that you

couldn't see in previous versions unless you clicked on a drop-down menu. Essentially, the ribbon is like one of those old drop-down menus, but always dropped – sideways.

Hover your cursor over a specific item in the ribbon, and a larger-than-before window pops up to explain what the item does, along with a keyboard shortcut.

What's more, each ribbon is contextual. If you insert a pie chart, for instance, the ribbon automatically changes to chart tools, and if you insert a table you get table tools. If you jump out of the inserted item, the ribbon will return to its "home" setting and when you go back into the item, the ribbon will change back.

Another significant feature across most of the applications is SmartArt, the cute name for inserting fast visual aids into documents. Its great strength is its ability to turn information into graphics, and offer you quick previews of how it could look in different formats – turn a list of bulleted items into a flow chart, for instance.



**It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education. *Albert Einstein***



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A much more important change, however, is Microsoft's move toward open-standard file formats, which is the way Office stores work. The new format is based on the industry standard, which means several significant changes. First, by dropping its proprietary format standards, Microsoft is allowing other software manufacturers to write programs that can handle files created by Office applications. And, the new format is not as friendly to malware attacks as Microsoft's own standards were.

But there are a couple of problems with this move. First, though Office 2007 can work with documents and files created by previous versions of Office, the reverse is not true. Older versions will need an add-on before it can open Office 2007 files. However, the new suite has the ability to save files in the earlier Office formats.

And oh, yes, one very important change. That annoying Office assistant, the wretched paperclip whose only redeeming feature was its clever name. Clipit, has been tossed. Now there is a tiny blue button at the top left of the screen with a question mark in it. Click on it and you get the help menu. Now how difficult was it to do that??

## **OUTLOOK 2007**

One of the worst features of previous versions of Outlook was the inability to find things quickly. One had to go to third party tools such as Google Desktop, Copernic Desktop or a free but crash-prone add-in called Lookout. Now, thanks to the XML document standard,

searches are fast and cut across e-mail folders, contacts, tasks and calendar entries, a feature that has been too long in coming.



The main window in Outlook now manages to shoehorn in a to-do bar, which imports stuff from Access, Project and OneNote. The calendar function can now be available to everyone on the office team, including those outside the office. A new scheduling assistant (it's no longer called a wizard, have you noticed?) helps automatic calendaring tasks. Outlook also is more easily integrated with the SharePoint Server for others to see. The information handled by Outlook can also be colour coded as well.

One truly welcome feature is the installation of improved junk-mail filtering, as well as filtering of websites that specialize in "phishing" attacks.

## **POWERPOINT 2007**

PowerPoint 2007 has the lion's share of the "wow factor" in changes. It now picks up the SmartArt feature put into Word, and you can easily create themes (colours for a table, fonts, bullet styles) to give a presentation more coherence.

Select a theme, click one button and the entire presentation changes. You wonder why you never had that ability before. Files can be saved not only as PPTs, but as XPS and PDF so they can be handled by people working on other platforms. You can also add a digital signature to prevent others from changing it.

PowerPoint also has better integration with the

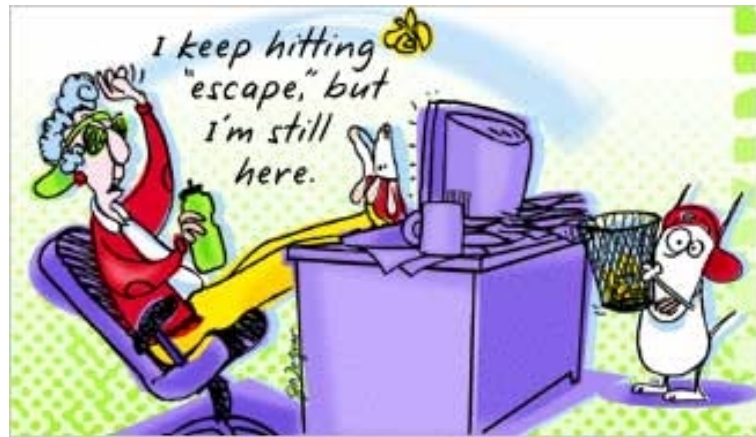
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**Frustration is trying to find your glasses, without your glasses.**



## Humour



The irony of life is that, by the time you're old enough to know your way around, you're not going anywhere.



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SharePoint server, allowing it to have dynamic content that changes as the database changes, and allowing other team members to make changes.

## WORD 2007

About the only difference between Word 2007 and its predecessors is the menu ribbon: much of everything else works as before, with some smaller changes. And all the major differences are directed at offices and workflows, meaning there is little new in Office 2007 to give home users an excuse to buy it.

Word has a greater ability to insert illustrations, a feature more suited to professionals; 3-D shapes, flow charts, pie charts and such. It has also taken the clipboard, fed it some steroids and turned it into a "building blocks" set for boiler plate or predefined content that you might want to put in a document; disclaimer text, pull quote, cover pages and sidebars.

Word can now save documents in Portable

Document Format (PDF) as well as the XML Paper Specification (XPS) Microsoft's document format that allows digital signatures and digital rights to be applied to the documents, and even reduces file sizes.

Beware however, that once Word saves a document in another format, it loses all its ability to undo changes. Sad, but true.

## EXCEL 2007

The Excel 2007 spreadsheet has one really perplexing improvement. It now displays more than one million rows and 16,000 columns a worksheet.

Excel now allows conditional formatting to colour the backgrounds of cells based on their value, and inserts a colour bar in the cell with a length proportional to the value of the cell. It can also publish the results as HTML so it can be viewed as a Web page.



Submitted by: Alan Forrest



## Beavers And Their Dams May Help Amphibians—

EDMONTON, AB, Canada (UPI)

The dam-building beaver may be an ally in conserving wetland habitat for declining amphibian populations, a University of Alberta study said.

The study identifies the beaver as a valuable 'surrogate species' for frog and toad populations, said University of Alberta researchers Cam Stevens and Cindy Paszkowski in the

January issue of Biological Conservation.

Surrogate species can indicate changes to the environment or can protect a large number of naturally co-occurring species.

'The concept of surrogate species in conservation planning offers simple, ecologically-based solutions to help conserve and manage ecosystems,' said Paszkowski, a biological sciences professor at the university.

Beaver ponds appear to offer suitable breed-

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It's not hard to meet expenses, they're everywhere.



# NANAIMO COMPUTER CLUB NEWS

## Microsoft to make Vista available online

By Brian Bergstein, Associated Press

Microsoft (MSFT) will make its new Windows Vista operating system available for sale and download online, marking a new step for the software company, which has previously sold Windows only on packaged discs or pre-loaded on computers.

A relatively low number of computer users are likely to get Vista by downloading it from the Internet. But the mere availability indicates that Microsoft is fiddling with distribution methods for the extremely profitable franchise at the core of its business.

The download program, being announced late Wednesday by the Redmond, Wash.-based software maker, will also include the Office 2007 line of software when both are released for consumers Jan. 30. At least initially, the huge downloads will be available in North America only.

Far more commonly, consumers will get Vista already installed on new PCs bought after Jan. 30. The download process is targeted at people who are running the prior operating system, Windows XP, and want to get Vista without having to buy a new PC. However, Vista imposes hardware requirements that not all Windows XP machines can meet.

For those who do buy Vista the normal way, Microsoft is launching a new program that makes it easier to upgrade from one edition of the operating system to another.

Here's how that will work.

For consumers, Vista will come in four flavors, Home Basic, which retails for \$199, Home Premium (\$239) Business (\$299) and Ultimate (\$399). Though consumers will pick one version when they buy a computer, higher versions will be embedded on the machine's hard drive or packaged on discs that come with it.

Anyone who wants to move up the chain — from Home Basic to Home Premium for another \$79, Home Basic to Ultimate (\$199), Home Premium to Ultimate (\$159), or Business to Ultimate (\$139) — will be able to click a new "Windows Anytime Upgrade" function, pay for the upgrade online and then receive a coded license "key" that will unlock the more expensive edition.

Microsoft also plans a promotion that will let buyers of Vista Ultimate get \$50 copies of Home Premium for two other PCs.

Bill Mannion, director of consumer marketing for Windows, called these three steps part of an overall effort "to give more flexibility to end users."

Matt Rosoff, an analyst with Directions on Microsoft, said the company likely was hoping to increase the incentives for consumers to buy costlier versions of Vista. Indeed, much of the marketing surrounding Vista will highlight features available only in higher-end versions, such as the new three-dimensional user interface and encryption functions.

Submitted By: Gord Bulger



Mediocrity thrives on standardization.



# NANAIMO COMPUTER CLUB NEWS



## Complexity & Change = Conflict

*Smart Computing*

Had Benjamin Franklin lived today, he might have expanded his list of life's certainties to include death, taxes, and computer problems. The fact is that such issues are as inevitable as Mondays. Although you can minimize the likelihood of an occurrence, there's not much you can do to stop them altogether.

### Conflict Resolution

PCs are susceptible to incidental damage and occasional malfunctions. A miniscule jolt of static electricity, a splash of coffee, even dust can cause serious problems. Regular maintenance and prudent behavior can minimize the effects of age and usage on a computer.

But a PC isn't just another tool; it's quite complex. A properly functioning computer is an intricate system of precision-designed devices, each of which relies on countless micro-sized transistors, resistors, diodes, and capacitors working together to perform a specific function. And that's just the hardware. Software is equally complex, consisting of billions of electronic bits that spell out in meticulous detail exactly what all of that hardware is supposed to do.

Such complexity exposes computers to something more harmful than the effects of daily

wear and tear: conflicts. System conflicts occur when two or more components fail to recognize each other.

*Smart Computing*



**Moral of the story "Take your PC in for a regular Cleanup" your computer expert should be offering the following as part of that service:**

- 1 Spyware, Malware, Adware Removal
- 2 Windows Updates
- 3 RAM & Hardware checkup
- 4 Defrag
- 5 "Dust" Removal
- 6 Independent Anti-Virus check
- 7 Trojan Removal
- 8 "Startup" items cleanup
- 9 Updating of Anti-Virus & Spyware software (things change with the times)
- 10 Advice on what is new out there
- 11 A service that lets you know when it's time to clean up your system again.

All of the above keeps your machine fast, and will ensure a long life for your computer.

*Yvonne Bulger*



**Blessed are those who can give without remembering, and take without forgetting.**



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ing habitats for amphibians because of their warm, well-oxygenated water, which enhances development and growth rates of frog and toad larvae, she said. The ponds may be less inviting to predators because dams usually are on small streams where winterkill conditions are common.

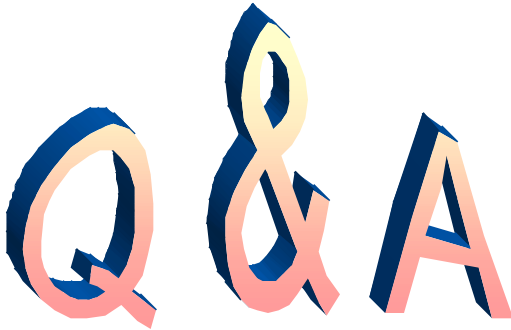
Beavers may be useful as a surrogate species in helping to conserve frogs and toads in remote parts of western North America.

'The challenge will be to promote modest levels of beaver activity even where conflicts with human interests might occur,' Stevens noted.

Submitted by: Y. Bulger



**Not a computer story .... Just a Canadian story**  
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## Internet Explorer 7

**QUESTION: How Can I Display the Menu Bar in IE 7?**

**ANSWER:** To show it continuously, right click one of the toolbars that is displayed, and click to check "Menu Bar." Or you can display the menu bar temporarily by hitting the ALT key.

**QUESTION: If I install Internet Explorer 7 what will happen to my Favorites?**

**ANSWER:** When you install Internet Explorer 7 your current list of favorites in Internet Explorer 6 will migrate into the new browser so you won't have to redo your favorite websites when you begin surfing the Web.

**QUESTION: Can I add other search providers to the Search dropdown menu?**

**ANSWER:** The Toolbar Search Box makes it quick and easy for you to search the web directly from the upper-right corner of the browser using your favorite search providers. Just enter your search words and choose a search provider from the drop-down list. To add more providers, just click the drop-down arrow and click Find More Providers... to easily add more providers to your list.

Submitted by: Greg Wilson



The End ...