

SENIORNET COG MEETING, 13th SEPTEMBER, 2017

(NOTES ON SOME TOPICS RAISED AT THIS MEETING - Prepared by Ricky Berg)

These Notes have been prepared and distributed in the hope that they will be useful for all Seniornet members.

Wifi reception in the home: Many people find that their home wifi network usually works perfectly well, but on occasion seems to experience poor reception when moving about the house, or even loss of signal altogether.

There are a number of reasons for poor wifi reception around a house, but here are some things to try –

1: Ensure that your wifi router is placed as high as possible ... this ensures that the signal is above immediate obstacles and in 'clear air'. Home use wifi router antenna are omni-directional, meaning that the signal spreads out from the antenna in every direction ... so if, for example, located hard up against a wall or behind a desktop computer, then obviously a lot of the signal is squandered. Remember that iron/steel work, bricks, and concrete will have an effect, as will nearby appliances such as microwaves and cordless telephones.

Some routers have an external antenna, which can be tilted a few degrees to increase wifi coverage, and in two-story homes lying the antenna flat/horizontal may help increase the signal between floors. Many wifi routers have an internal antenna, so even rotating the wifi router a few degrees often helps. The latest wifi routers contain 'beamforming' technology, which essentially means that the internal antenna is made up of 'independent sections'. The router then detects the direction of a connecting device, and concentrates the signal in that direction ... and this can happen for many individual devices connected to the wifi network even if they are in opposite directions to each other.

2: One of the most common causes of poor wifi these days is 'overcrowding' of the air waves. Most wifi routers operate on a set wave band (2.4GHz), which is split into 13 separate but overlapping 'channels'. If your neighbours are using the same or immediately adjacent channels as you, then the signal is significantly degraded. There are many good wifi signal detection applications and programs available, and can be installed on a mobile 'phone, tablet, laptop or desktop to ascertain what channels in your area are being used. A portable device is best to test what the reception strength in other parts of your home

are like. If you find that your currently used channel is overcrowded, then it is a simple matter to access the user-interface of your router, and change to a channel that is less crowded.

3: Remember also that wifi is a two-way form of communication, meaning that not only does your wifi router need to be up to par, but the device you are using on the network also has to have good wifi network hardware built into it. It is not uncommon for two wifi devices, say a laptop and a tablet, to be used alongside each other in the same room, yet one gets a better wifi signal than the other, and in some cases one may not get a connection at all. Some devices with poor built-in wifi work better if an external wifi network dongle is used.

4: If all else fails, a common means of getting better wifi coverage is by using wifi repeaters or extenders. These devices simply plug into a mains power point, pick up the wifi router signal, and then 'pass it on' with a bit of additional boost.

“WinMerge” program for file handling: If you are regularly handling multiple files, then this free 'compare/synchronization' program may be just what you are looking for. Easily perform file comparisons, folder comparisons, merging, tree views etc, and all within a two-pane Window.

Features

- Visual differencing and merging of text files
- Flexible editor with syntax highlighting, line numbers and word-wrap
- Highlights differences inside lines
- Difference pane shows current difference in two vertical panes
- Location pane shows map of files compared
- Moved lines detection
- Compare folders in one level or recursive
- Can show folder compare results flat or in a tree-style view
- Regular Expression based file filters allow excluding and including items
- Compares binary files in folder compare as well as text files
- Shell Integration (supports 64-bit Windows versions)
- Archive file support using 7-Zip
- Fast compare using file sizes and dates
- Creates patch files (Normal-, Context- and Unified formats)

Download is about 6.5MB, and available from several sites.
(Thanks to member Lindsay Rollo for the pointer).

Vodafone NZ closing all email services: As many members may now know, Vodafone NZ Ltd is closing all its associated email services as of November 30th 2017.

This has been reported widely in the media over the past few days, and many Vodafone customers will have received personalised emails from Vodafone advising as to what to do next.

Further information and assistance is available on Vodafone's website at <https://www.vodafone.co.nz/email/>

Although Vodafone are recommending Google's Gmail and Microsoft's Outlook as suitable alternative email services, remember that there are literally hundreds of email solutions available it is recommended that you check out several options, and maybe talk to other people, before making your decision as to what is best for you.

Upgrading your internet access: For a number of years now, fixed-line broadband access to the internet has been either over telephone lines or some sort of cable. Various upgrades to speed and pricing have also taken place, so now that the Ultra Fast Broadband initiative has been significantly rolled-out around the country, it may be time for you to reconsider your internet services. The early DSL service has pretty much now gone the way of dial-up, and the faster VDSL taken its place. In addition, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can offer VDSL, fibre cable, and hybrid fibre-coaxial cable connections, and the pricing is very volatile and competitive. Download speeds can now achieve 200mbps, and many ISPs offer unlimited usage, viz. no data caps. Another option for some people is mobile broadband, where no wires at all are involved, and the internet is accessed over the same mobile networks as mobile 'phones. Others have extended this option, and use their mobile 'phones as a wifi 'hot spot', or by using a cable between phone and device (tablet, laptop), ... this is called tethering.

Regularly check what your current ISP is offering new customers because often they are better deals than you have now, and a 12-month contract passes very quickly. If your ISP doesn't want to play ball, there are around 115 others out

there ready to take your business! A brilliant site to make comparisons is
<https://www.broadbandcompare.co.nz/>