



“WHAT IS A NETWORK?”

It is two or more devices communicating with each other. If you have a computer connected to the web via a router or Home Hub, you have a network. It is becoming more common for a household to have more than one computer and to have other devices such as external hard disks for storage and a printer and scanner – and so the home network grows.

At some point during the growth you should have a go at planning ahead for your needs: what devices will you be using and where should they be placed around the house?

Chris advised that the communications can be by wireless or cable or, perhaps best, a mix of both. Cabled links are faster and more stable and generally used for fixed items such as desktop computers. Wireless links are not as fast, but are far more convenient for mobile items such as laptop or notebook computers.

A large network, known as a Domain, will have several servers handling many computers. Our modest home networks will probably have no one computer in control; they will be peer machines, i.e. of equal authority.

Whether using Windows XP or Windows 7 a network can produce similar benefits:

- Peripherals such as printers can be shared. With two printers on your network you can have one for colour and a monotone laser printer for high quality, but less costly black and white.
- File-sharing between computers can be organised to suit your wishes. A Network Attached Storage (NAS) device such as an external hard disk can assist with general access to files as well as provide a store for back-ups.
- Several computers can share the same access point for the Internet.
- Gaming across several computers and across the internet.
- VOIP (Voice Over the Internet Protocol) enables free internet voice calls to any computer in the world.
- Home entertainment in its several forms (Films, Videos and Music.)

Chris then demonstrated how to use the wizards to set up the networks.

The router is used to act as the traffic policeman, making sure that all the instructions are sent to the correct device, whether it is a computer or a peripheral device.

The computers are individually told that they are on the network and then they are told which folders they can access and which peripherals they can use. They can also control permissions meaning that users can be authorised to do some things, but not others. For example, a user might be able to read or edit a file, but not delete it.

...Clearly the whole setting up process means some work and cost, but the message is that all this is greatly outweighed by the benefits.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 23rd November at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth 7.30 for 8.00pm. Chris will talk about the benefits of using a free virtual computer. Visitors welcome. For more information ring Howard on 029 20708439.

In Brief

Computer Club

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