



By Joe Huber

WHAT IS A FARADAY CAGE?

Q *We are looking at installing Wi-Fi wireless networking in our school. We have had three different companies come out and look at our building and all have told us that our rooms are like Faraday's Cages. What do they mean?*

A A Faraday's Cage is a room made out of copper screen that is designed to block out all radio signals. Unfortunately most schools built before the year 2000 were constructed in such a way that Wi-Fi was never a consideration. Other things like fireproofing, and being able to withstand a tornado or hurricane, took priority over whether or not you could get a radio signal between classrooms. So now installing Wi-Fi becomes a very expensive project because we have to place multiple access points in each classroom and in the hallways just outside the classrooms plus the data and electrical infrastructure to connect the access points. To give you an example, it will cost \$300,000 to retrofit one of our schools with 30 classrooms to make it completely wireless.

VAMPIRE ELECTRONICS?

Q *Recently I have been hearing a lot about "vampire" electronics. What are "vampire" electronics?*

A Vampire electronics are devices that use power even when they are turned off. Some of the biggest culprits are laser printers, LCD displays, DVD players, DVR, satellite receivers, cable boxes, and computers. All of these devices appear to be turned off when they are really in a sleep or stand-by mode. In this mode, even when they appear to be off, the device still consumes power. The purpose for this mode is that it will take less time for the device to fully power up. In the case of a computer, sleep or stand-by mode is the perfect time for it to be attacked by a virus. This is just another reason that when not using a computer you should turn the power to it completely off. Today they even make remote controlled power switches that let you cut the power to all of your computing devices at the touch of one button.

XIRRUS WI-FI MONITOR

Q *There are times when you will need to know information about the wireless networks in your school. Finding good tools to this are not always easy; can you recommend some?*

A One of the best tools for information in wireless networks is Xirrus Wi-Fi Monitor. You can download it for free at www.xirrus.com/library/wifitools.php. This application will display the signal strength, SSID, and IP address of all wireless networks in the area.

WIRELESS HOTSPOTS

Q *Is there an application that will let me find hotspots when I am at a conference?*

A WeFi, available at www.wefi.com, is a free download and shows the most available hotspots. Remember that when connecting to a hotspot you are always open to viruses and identity theft.

DISPLAYING TRUE TV ON COMPUTERS

Q *We want to display true TV on our computers. What type of hardware do we need to install?*

A You will need a minimum of 128MB of video memory and 1GB of RAM, a monitor with at least 1300 by 770 resolution, and a connection of 2 mbps or more.

HIDING FILES AND FOLDERS

Q *I have files and folders that I want to hide on my computer. Is there an easy application I can use to do this?*

A Yes you can download Free Hide Folder at www.cleansoft.com/hiddenfolder/free_hide_folder.htm. It is a menu driven program that will let you accomplish this.

HITTING THE WRONG KEYS

Q *I am forever hitting the Insert Key by accident then wondering why the computer does not work correctly. Is there a simple application I can install to let me know when I have hit the insert key?*

A You can download DK: Keyboard Status for Free at www.dkpcode.com/html/downloads.html#DKCapsLock-Status. This will display the status of Insert, Caps Lock, and Num Lock keys.

PHOTO EDITING SOFTWARE

Q *We are looking for some good photo and graphic editing software like PhotoShop, but like many schools, we cannot afford PhotoShop. Do you know of a program like PhotoShop that we could use?*

A I would suggest you look at Paint.Net. It is available for free to download at www.getpaint.net/download.html and has many of the same features that PhotoShop has and at the right price.

TIRED OF POWERPOINT

Q *Every time I go someplace someone does a presentation with a PowerPoint. Everyone I know is so sick and tired of PowerPoint. Is there anything that is new and more exciting?*

A You might take a look at a Flowgram, a free application available at www.flowgram.com. Flowgram is a web 2.0 application that lets you combine live Web pages, photos, documents, RSS feeds, and videos into online presentations that you narrate. The viewer can click on links in the presentation to view videos like those in YouTube from within the presentation. The Flowgram presentation will pause and wait for the video to finish before going on.

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