What about having IMAP4 as a standard email protocol

25/02/2011 04:45

Introduction

Most email services, especially those offered by consumer ISPs, use the old POP3 /SMTP protocols as the backbone for their email services. This works properly when only one computer is working as an email client because there is an expectation for the email to be downloaded off the mail server to that one computer.

Now the reality has changed due to Moore's Law allowing for the ISP to offer email storage capacity to their customers in the order of gigabytes. As well, the computing paradigm has shifted towards people viewing their email from multiple devices. This has been brought about with small business owners having an office computer and a home computer, as well as the increasing popularity of smartphones, tablet computers and secondary-tier notebook computers like netbooks and 13"-14" ultraportables.

What does IMAP4 offer over POP3?

The IMAP4 technology requires email to be stored on the server and allows a copy of the mail to exist on the client devices. When the email client connects to the IMAP4 server, it simply synchronises all the email between the client and the server. This includes synchronising the client outbox to the server outbox in order to have emails being sent.

There is the ability for an IMAP4 setup to support "header-only" downloading, which would be of importance to people who use portable devices or low-bandwidth connections. As well, an IMAP4 setup can allow the user to operate in "offline" mode where synchronising is done when the user explicitly goes online so that users can prepare their email where Internet access is unavailable but synchronise when it is available.

Compared to POP3 /SMTP, this allows for increased flexibility when it comes to maintaining a mailbox from different email clients. Primarily, the contents of the same mailbox appear in all client devices that can access that mailbox. An example of this benefit would be that the Sent folder contains all messages that are sent from all of the clients rather than from that particular client. Similarly, one could "rough-out" an email using a smartphone or other portable device, then "finish it off" on the desktop because the email will be held in the Drafts mailbox folder.

It also supports the ability to create mailbox folders which will allow you to file the email in a manner that suits you, yet see the same filing arrangement across all your client devices.

It is also worth knowing that IMAP4 is the basic email protocol that OMTP have called as part of their standard for mobile "visual voicemail" services. These services allow a user to manage voicemail that they receive on their mobile phone in a similar manner to how they manage email on their computer or smartphone.

The status quo with IMAP4

IMAP4 is a free open-source technology that is independent of any licensing requirements; and nearly all email clients for desktop and mobile operating environments offer IMAP4 support as standard.

It is even though most of the consumer ISPs don't offer it as an email protocol to their customers. This is while an increasing number of these providers are now offering mailboxes with gigabyte file capacities to new customers and upsizing existing customers' mailboxes to these capacities. As well, the current range of data-centre equipment that works as mail servers can handle IMAP4 easily.

Some of these providers would rather offer a "hosted Exchange" service which would require the user to use Microsoft Outlook in Exchange mode. These services are more expensive to provide and may cost more for most personal and small-business users.

What could be done

An Internet service provider could offer IMAP4 mailboxes as a standard option for new customers or customers opening up new mailboxes. As well, they could offer it as a free upgrade option to existing customers, with information on how to convert from POP3 /SMTP to IMAP4.

This kind of setup that IMAP4 offers can allow telcos who offer Internet service and telephony as a bundle or triple-play services to provide a unified messaging environment where customers can manage their voicemail, fax and email from the same terminal. It also opens up ways for these companies to add value to their telephony and Internet services.

It also is a way of supporting the Internet-usage reality which is a reality driven by multiple-computer setups and portable computing.

At last a free iPhone app for controlling the UPnP AV /DLNA Home Media Network

24/02/2011 02:51

Links

Bergin-IT Gizmoot[1]

Direct link to iTunes App Store[2]

My comments

This happens to be the latest DLNA controller program for the iPhone or iPod Touch and is available for free from the iTunes App Store. This program also is ad-supported through the iAd network that exists for iOS software. At the moment, it isn't designed to work well with the iPad.

The functionality is basic in that it allows you to browse your media on a DLNA (UPnP AV) media server and have it play on a DLNA (UPnP AV) Media Renderer. This would be considered basic compared to the likes of PlugPlayer in that it wouldn't allow you to play the media from the Media Server through the iPhone, nor would it support downloading or uploading between the Media Server and the iPhone's local storage.

It can support playlists and slideshows so you can have your Samsung TV or WDTV Live run a sequence of media under the control of your iPhone.

I would still recommend this app for people who want to get going with UPnP AV /DLNA "three-box" setups and they have equipment that can be controlled through a UPnP AV /DLNA control point. This would be more so with network AV media adaptors which you want to press in to service for audio playback and you don't necessarily need to have the TV on so you can select music to listen to. You may even think of using this program with that iPod Touch or iPhone 3GS that you have set aside because you have moved to the ultra-cool iPhone 4, so that the old phone can be part of the DLNA Home Media Network.

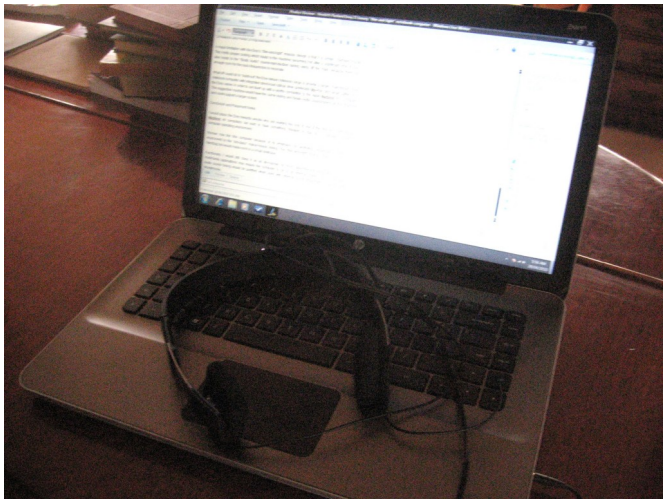
Links
[1] http://bergin-it.com/gizmoot.htm
[2] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/issdptester/id420482621?mt=8&ls=1

Product Review–Bang & Olufsen Form 2 headphones

21/02/2011 08:15

Introduction

I am reviewing the Bang & Olufsen Form 2 headphones which are a very stylish set of premium lightweight headphones that are suitable for use with your portable media player, smartphone, or laptop. Here, these headphones are designed and made by a company that is one of a few "names of respect" when it comes to audio-equipment and speaker design. I have even raised this name in this site in connection with their involvement in designing the sound system for some of the ASUS premium laptops.



[1]

HP Envy alongside some premium B&O headphones

Regular followers of this site may have noticed these headphones as a prop in a picture that I took of the HP Envy 15 laptop, where I was emphasising the "Black Label" positioning of this premium laptop.

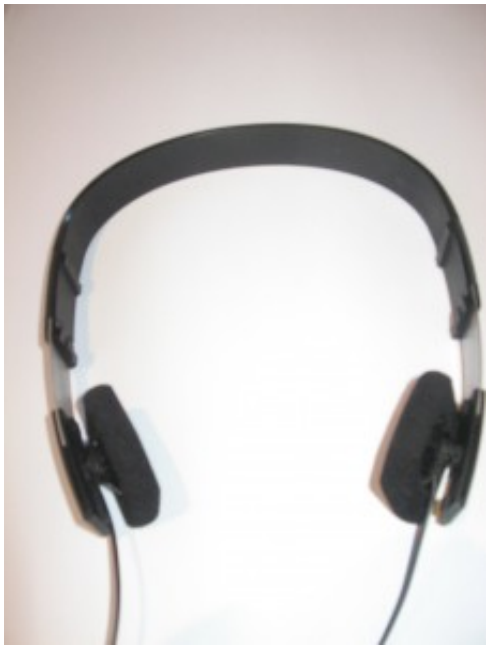
These "over-the-head" headphones sell at B&O stores for $199 and if the earpads wear out, you can replace them for $10 a pair but I had received this pair from some close friends as a 40th birthday present. As you will read further, you will find that they are a real treat to use.

Look

Like with all B&O products, the style of these headphones is a very strong point. Here, there is a large black aluminium headband with the square earpads anchored to the headband by bands that look as though they are part of an elegant watch's band.

Even the plug is designed to match the look and positioning of these headphones. Here, it is a small plug with gold-plated contacts which are known to provide the high-quality sound transfer.

Comfort



[2]

Bang & Olufsen Form 2 headphones

This has allowed for a snug comfortable fit on the user's head with the earpads pressing in on the user's ears. As well, they are not too heavy and will not fall off your head too readily unlike a lot of cheaper headphones.

Here, this allows for use of these headphones over a long time, yet you can still slide them aside if you need to talk to someone nearby while you are wearing them.

Sound quality

The real story with these headphones is in the sound quality, whether you are listening to music or audiobooks, watching movies, playing computer games or using them with a microphone adaptor for handling phone calls with your mobile phone, This has been based on B&O's reputation in designing speakers and headphones that go with their stylish and luxurious hi-fi systems.

It is very much what you would expect from true hi-fi headphones. Here the sound was clear and tight and not boomy and it didn't matter if the headphones were fed with music or sound effects from a movie or game. For voice applications, including telephone calls, the Form 2 excels on the voice clarity and could be suitable as part of a headset system for wideband telephony setups.

These headphones don't have any noise-cancellation circuitry and are of the kind that sit on your ears. These factors may be a limitation with using them in noisy environments like aeroplanes, buses or diesel railcars but their snug fit reduces the noise impact from these environments slightly.

[3]

Earpad and watchband-style bracket

Points of improvement

There aren't really any points of improvement except for B&O to make a derivative headset that has an integrated microphone for use with smartphones and other telecommunications applications. This would be of importance when it comes to designing a headset fit to be used with HD Audio and other wideband telephony setups.

As well, they could provide a "travel-kit" as an accessory for these headphones and other headphones in their range. This would consist of an elegant storage case, an active noise-cancellation module and a "jet-plug" adaptor to connect these headphones to inflight-entertainment systems.

Conclusion

I would recommend these headphones if you value good-quality sound, style and comfort from a set of "over-the-head" headphones. Even if you can't afford a set yourself, it may be worth wish-listing it as a gift for an upcoming major birthday or anniversary. As well, once you use them, your ears will certainly know the difference between good headphones and cheap headphones.

I would even say that these headphones are a good partner accessory for a premium laptop like the Acer Ferrari or the HP Envy laptops.

Links

[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/2010–04-28–001.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2011–02-21–002.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2011–02-21–003-Detail.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Moving towards inkjet technology for receipt printing–why couldn't this be done

19/02/2011 11:19

When most of us do business with banks or shops or simply run a business, we have to deal with paper receipts and journals. Typically this involves the use of a printer that prints on to a paper tape of some form, whether integrated in a cash-register, EFTPOS terminal or an automatic teller machine; or as a standalone device connected to a computer-based point-of-service system of some sort.

Similarly, this class of "tape printer" is also being put to use as a label printer in most business applications like travel or healthcare. But this label-printer application is becoming relevant in the general office space for addressing envelopes on an as-needed basis.

In the home, It may also be relevant as a coupon or receipt printer for interactive TV applications such as "claiming" special offers that are promoted alongside TV commercials or buying goods from TV shopping. It can also be relevant for "as-needed" label printing in the home office.

The main problem is that there are two main printing methods used with this class of printer. One is an impact printer that works like the old dot-matrix printers and uses a ribbon to print on to cheaper plain paper. The other is a direct-thermal printer which uses heat to print on to special paper, like the first-generation fax machines.

Usage problems

Both these technologies yield a fair share of problems with the useability of these dockets. The impact printer is based around a ribbon which can cause the print quality to deteriorate as the machine is being used. At worst, the docket or journal can end up being hard to read when the ribbon is nearly at the end of its life.

The thermal printer which relies on the special paper can cause problems of its own when it comes to handling the receipts or journals. For example, the paper is known to fade over time and this becomes worse with receipts that are kept in a wallet that rests in someone's hip pocket because of the contact with one's body heat. This can be an issue if you have to keep the receipts over a significant amount of time, which would be required of a business or individual in order to satisfy the taxman.

Another issue is that the paper can be very slippery and this can cause problems when writing on the receipt or journal with most ballpoint pens. This may be of importance if you have to sign a receipt at the point of sale when paying by credit card. As well, customers may have to sign or annotate the receipt after the sale for tax or reimbursement purposes.

It also makes it hard to use an automatic document feeder on a scanner, fax machine or copier with these documents if you have to copy, scan or fax them. In these situations, you are not likely to have consistent and reliable feed-through behaviour and at worst, you could have frequent paper jams.

Inkjet technology for this printer class

One improvement that I would like to see is for manufacturers to use inkjet technology for this class of printer. Here, the printer could use an integrated printhead cartridge like what most cheaper inkjet printers use or use technologies like the pipe-based ink-distribution technology used in Brother inkjet printers like the MFC-6490.

Previous designs

Canon has tried this idea previously with a few of its printing calculators by using a "BubbleJet" mechanism as the printhead but not many other manufacturers caught on to this idea.

What could it offer

A printer based on this technology would use cheaper plain-paper rolls for regular receipt and journal printing. If it were to print labels, it could use regular and cheaper plain-paper labels, rather than special thermal-paper labels.

The inkjet technology can also support colour printing in a cost-effective manner, whether as a basic two-colour setup or as a full-colour setup. This can open up application paths like colour emphasis or full brand preservation on customer-facing documents. In the home, it could appeal to personal "as-needed" labelling applications like "ownership" labels used for things like books and recorded music, or labels used on jars of homemade preserves where these labels convey full personal flair.

If the mechanism uses the pipe-based ink-distribution technology, it could use higher-capacity cartridges which would be useful for high-throughput applications like kiosks, gaming machines, high-turnover point-of-sale or ATMs.

Limitations

One limitation that may surface for this class of printer is the size of the inkjet print mechanism. The printhead for this technology may be larger than the common thermal printhead and this will impact on the design of the device that it is to be implemented in. This will put a limitation on designs that are intended to be low-profile like handheld payment-card terminals, printing calculators or peripheral printers, unless these machines use a pipe-based ink distribution mechanism.

It could be easy to "cheapen the design" by doing what has been commonly done with consumer and small-business inkjet printers. Here, a manufacturer could sell a low-end inkjet-based tape-printing device like a label printer, printing calculator or entry-level cash register for a loss-leading price but have the device work only with expensive ink cartridges. This can be exacerbated through the use of very small ink cartridges that need to be replaced frequently.

This may also require a cash register or POS printer to have two separate paper rolls placed side by side and the printhead moving across both rolls every time a sale is made. Some machines may be designed with dual printheads so they work as if they have two separate printers – one for the journal and one for the receipts.

Conclusion

The use of inkjet printing for “tape-based” printers could make life easier for most businesses and customers as well as allow for increased innovation in this class of device.

The arrival of 4G wireless broadband–what does it mean for Next Generation Broadband

19/02/2011 11:16

Article

Telstra super-fast 4G wireless sparks debate over NBN[1]

My comments

As many countries agressively build out fibre-optic-based “Next Generation Broadband”, there is also the reality that companies involved in wireless broadband will deploy LTE or WiMAX “4G” technologies for this service.

This issue has been raised recently as Telstra, Australia’s incumbent telephone and mobile carrier announced its intention to deploy LTE-based 4G wireless broadband. This is even though the Australian Federal Government were rolling out the National Broadband Network, which is the next-generation broadband service based primarily on “fibre-to-the-premises” technology.

A key issue that have been raised include the “all-wireless” household or small business, which doesn’t have a landline telephone or ADSL/cable-based broadband Internet for their telecommunications. This may be implemented by students and similar households where each user wants control over their communications costs as well as assuring proper service privacy.

Issues of comparison

Value of service as a primary Internet service

A common disadvantage with this kind of setup is that the bandwidth available to the user from a wireless broadband service is less than that for a wireline broadband service like ADSL, cable or fibre-optic. As well, the wireline service is typically able to offer better value service than the wireless service. This disadvantage may be eroded if the 4G wireless broadband services are priced aggressively against the Next-Generation-Broadband wireline services.

Reliability and Stability

Even so, the 4G wireless broadband setups won’t yield the same bandwidth as a next-generation broadband setup; and these systems are based on **radio** technology which can be affected by many factors such as the environment surrounding the radio equipment, the aerial (antenna) that is used as part of the equipment and the calibre of the equipment itself.

Examples of this include wireless-broadband modems used in double-brick /cinder-block buildings; equipment like USB modem sticks designed to be compact therefore not having adequate aerial systems; and simple weather conditions that affect wireless performance.

Here, this could lead to inconsistent performance for 4G wireless-broadband setups, with results like stuttering during VoIP telephony or multimedia playback.

Multiple device setups

No-one has yet raised the issue of a person operating multiple devices that connect to wireless broadband Internet. This is a common reality as people buy smartphones, tablets and netbooks that have integrated wireless-broadband connectivity. Here, these devices are operated on their own services and it requires users to keep track of the many accounts and bandwidth allowances that each device has.

As well, the wireless-broadband technologies discourage the idea of establishing local-area networks which could permit bandwidth sharing /pooling or sharing of resources like printers or file directories. Here, the users would end up not creating a local area network at all, and may just end up using technologies

Political issues peculiar to the Australian scenario

I also see certain political issues in the “next-generation-broadband vs 4G wireless broadhand” issue more so in Australia. Here, the Australian Labour Party see the National Broadband Network as a tool for nationalising or “claiming back” the wireline telephony infrastructure that they relinquished when Telstra was privatised. Here, Telstra, like British Telecom was originally part of the government-owned “Posts, Telegraphs, Telephones” department and became its own telephony entity as this department was separated.

There hadn’t been any mentions of intent to nationalise the Telstra-owned wireless infrastructure used for reselling their mobile telephony and wireless-broadband service. As well, Telstra were wanting to set up the aforementioned 4G LTE wireless-broadband technology on this infrastructure as a retail service and the Australian Labour Party were seeing this wireless-broadband service as a broadband service that competes with their National Broadband Network.

How I would see this argument is a way of seeking legal authority to require Telstra to do a “BT-style” sell-off of its mobile-telephony and wireless-broadband business. This is where they would be forced to divest themselves of the infrastructure and retail mobile-telephony /wireless-broadband business to another service

Conclusion

How I see the role of any wireless-broadband technology is that it is a **complementary** technology to a wireline technology rather than a competing technology. It exists primarily for mobile, portable and temporary computing applications.

PS. If I am appearing to write this article in a manner that supports Telstra, I have no pecuniary interests in this telecommunications company other than to be a regular customer of its telephony services.

Links
[1] http://www.theage.com.au/technology/technology-news/telstra-superfast-4g-wireless-sparks-debate-over-nbn-20110215-1au0i.html

Product Review–Pure One Flow portable Internet radio (Frontier Internet Radio platform)

17/02/2011 04:29

Introduction

I am reviewing the Pure One Flow portable Internet radio which is the younger brother of the Pure Evoke Flow radio that I have reviewed a while ago. This unit is designed along the same lines as the “old-style” portable radio that can be perched on a window sill or the top of a fridge.

Price

Recommended Retail Price: AUD$249

ChargePAK battery pack: AUD$99

[1]

Functions

Analogue Radio FM RDS stereo DAB+ Yes Internet Radio vTuner (Pure Lounge portal) Network Media DLNA media player

Connections

Input Count as for a device Audio Line input 1 x 3.5mm phone jack **Output** Headphone output 1 x 3.5mm phone jack **Network** Wi-Fi 802.11g WPA Ethernet Requires mini-USB Ethernet adaptor

Speakers

Output Power 2.5 Watts (RMS) 1 channel Speaker Layout 1 3.5” full-range

The Internet radio

The Pure One Flow is the same size as a midsized portable radio and is housed in a rubberised cabinet with knobs for volume and “select” function and buttons below LCD display. The rubberised casing is a marked difference from the glossy plastic that is used on some radios, which attracts fingerprints and is hard to keep clean. I also like the knobs, especially for the sound volume because it is an interface most of us are accustomed to, where you can just “flick” the knob downwards to turn it down.

Like the Evoke Flow radio that I previously reviewed, this unit can work on AC using a supplied “wall-wart” power adaptor or battery power using a “ChargePAK” rechargeable battery pack that is available as an extra-cost option.

[2]Audio connectivity is in the form of an auxiliary-in jack so you can use the radio as an amplified speaker for your MP3 player or other audio device. It also has a headphone jack which is a connection that I am noticing is becoming increasingly rare for Internet radios. The reason I find this connection important is that you could use an active-speaker system like a pair of computer speakers as better-sounding more-powerful speakers for the radio.

The set works well as a DAB-based digital radio, being able to pick up all of the multiplexes that are broadcast in our area.

For Internet-radio station selection, this unit uses a “Form style” user interface if you intend to select a smaller group of stations but will give you the complete list of stations if you are just browsing. This is in contrast to the “tree-based” approach that most Internet radios use for selecting stations.

There is also access to a “sounds” service where you can hear

sounds like sea wave; as well as access to the “FlowSongs” music download service.

This radio works properly as a DLNA-compliant media player, being able to play most audio file types that are held on UPnP AV media servers.

The sound quality for this set is very similar to an average mid-sized portable radio such as the archetypal transistor radio of the 1960s. It can still fill an average-sized room with music and the sound is focused around the middle frequencies.

Limitations and Points of Improvement

This unit could be improved with the telescopic aerial being used for the Wi-Fi wireless network as well as for FM and DAB radio. The Wi-Fi functionality could work well with keeping the details for up to five wireless networks, which can be useful if you take the radio between multiple locations, which is something you would be tempted to do more readily with this set.

Another limitation is that you can’t enable daylight-saving time on this set. Instead, when you determine the time zone, you only can set up for standard time. This could be rectified with a firmware update which exposes a “daylight-saving” on-off function or access to a table of “spring-forward /fall-back” times hosted on the manufacturer’s Website.

Another improvement that I would like to see would be to support regular AA, C or D batteries even with a battery cage so you don’t have to look for the hard-to-get ChargePAK battery packs.

Conclusion

This set may be considered as an option when you want to replace that old “transistor radio” with something that gives you access to “modern” radio sources like DAB or Internet radio. It could he very useful where you want a set of this class to be highly rugged and durable.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2011–02-17–001.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2011–02-17–003.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Fake “virus-infection” phone calls–be aware of them

11/02/2011 13:55

News Article

Phone scammers target computer owners | ABC News Australia [1]

Alert over scam phone calls about bogus computer virus | Wolverhampton City Council (United Kingdom)[2]

My Comments

Just today, a friend of mine who I live with received a phone call on our house phone saying that their computer is infected with a virus and she was being instructed to do certain procedures on the household computer. Luckily she told the caller to hang up and put the phone down and didn’t head towards the computer. This was very good for someone who hasn’t much familiarity with computer technology.

This is part of a scourge that is affecting home and small-business computer users and computer novices are more likely to be at risk of this fraud because they may not know the difference between a virus attack or a computer being very sluggish.

There has been some press coverage and coverage in government consumer-protection Websites and bulletins around the world concerning this topic, with a lot of weight placed on reference to the scammers claiming they represent Microsoft. But the scammers can pretend they represent other legitimate IT companies like antivirus software firms.

If you needed outside help regarding computer issues, you will most likely have initiated the contact yourself, whether through your computer-expert neighbour, relative, friend or acquaintance; your workplace’s IT support if your workplace has such a department or your computer supplier.

What these callers tend to do is to lead the user to download and install malware, usually in the form of spyware or fill in forms with email addresses and credit-card details in order to facilitate various forms of fraud against the user. This can be in the form of milking their bank account and credit-card of useable funds, inundating their email inbox with spam email or stealing other information that is confidential to them or their business operations.

So I would encourage all users to be careful of unfamiliar “call-centre” phone calls about computer viruses or similar issues and simply hang up when they receive these calls. As well, they should keep their desktop security programs on their computers up-to-date so as to protect against the various scams.

Links
[1] http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/13/3036945.htm
[2] http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/council/news/2010/november/241110c.htm

Foxtel–now to be offered in a manner similar to Canal+

11/02/2011 10:16

Article

Telstra to offer FOXTEL on T-Box in May 2011 – Media Announcement – About Telstra[1]

My comments

Most of the other countries in the world have at least one Internet service provider who provides IPTV or "triple-play" Internet service offering the TV channels that are expected in a multichannel pay-TV service as part of their TV deals. This is whether as a separate option or integrated in to the TV package.

For example, most of the French "triple-play" packages (Livebox, Freebox, Bbox, Box SFR, etc) offer the Canal+ pay-TV service as a "channel package". Similarly, the channels offered through US cable-TV services are being offered via AT&T's "FiOS" IPTV offerings.

Now this trend is coming to Australia with Foxtel, Australia's main pay-TV brand, offering their TV channels through the Telstra T-Box IPTV setup. This will be offered in the same manner as what is done in France, where the Foxtel packages are sold as a particular add-on rather than the channels being part of packages that Telstra BigPond determines.

Advantages

One main advantage I have often seen regarding delivery of the Foxtel brand via IPTV is that there isn't the need to run extra coaxial cable to each viewing location or fuss with a satellite dish in order to receive this content.

Some households that have highly-landscaped gardens can benefit because there isn't the need to dig up the garden to run new cable from the street (in the case of underground-cable setups). As well, people who live in forested areas of the cities

Another advantage with this particular setup is that you only need one set-top box to receive the IPTV services provided through BigPond as well as Foxtel. This is more important to those of use who value the idea of "all the eggs in one basket" but have had to worry about room on the TV cabinet for the T-Box and the Fox Box; or extra inputs on the TV in order to have both these services.

Outstanding Questions

There are still some outstanding questions and issues that need to be raised concerning this service. One is whether a user can set up concurrent recording of shows broadcast on Foxtel, BigPond TV and regular TV at the same time. It also includes handling of sequential recordings, especially where the user requires a certain amount of run-on to be recorded to cater for when channels finish their shows later.

This same problem can extend to capacity issues for T-Box and will eventually require measures like support for "offloading" to approved NAS devices, and the availability of larger-capacity PVRs that work with the BigPond IPTV service. This can also open up issues like true multi-room setups with scalable customer-premises hardware in the form of PVRs that have different capacities and functionalities as well as view-only set-top boxes Here this could allow for "follow-me" viewing, setting up recordings from other rooms and increased recording capacity and concurrency.

How this could affect the pay-TV landscape

It will also be interesting to see how long this deal will be exclusive to Telstra BigPond. This is especially real as some of the other ISPs in the Australian market like iiNet and TPG are offering IPTV service by "picking off" channels from various content providers. As well, Optus will want to get in to this new game by offering IPTV service and may want to run the Foxtel name in its lineup. Similarly, the Austar name, which covers the Foxtel lineup outside the capital cities will want to appear in any IPTV lineup in its market area.

It could then redetermine the role of the traditional multichannel pay-TV distributor like Foxtel or Austar, who used to rely on their infrastructure and their set-top boxes as being core to their operations, causing them to become a "content wholesaler" or "content franchise". Here, the customer views these services through hardware provided via their IPTV operators such as "triple-play" broadband providers and chooses the service as an option that is part of their broadband, "triple-play" or IPTV package.

Links
[1] http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/media-centre/announcements/telstra-to-offer-foxtel-on-t-box-in-may-2011.xml

Call this cheap in Germany –Kabel Deutschland offering 100Mbps broadband for 20 € per month!

09/02/2011 13:37

Articles – all in German language

Kabel Deutschland: Highspeed-Internet für knapp 20 Euro pro Monat – COMPUTER BILD[1]

From the horse's mouth

Information page on Kabel Deutschland's Website[2]

Translated facts and my comments

It certainly shows that the DOCSIS-based cable modem is being forgotten as a broadband technology. This is especially as people think of the "switched" DSL technologies (ADSL and VDSL) and the hot-shot fibre-to-the-door technologies as the preferred broadband setups for the home network.

In Germany, Kabel Deutschland who is the main cable-TV provider there, are offering 100Mb/s "headline-speed"

broadband and VoIP telephony for 20€ per month for the first 12 months (which is the minimum contract length). Then it will go to a month-by-month rate of 40€ per month for the same service. There is even the option of a 802.11n Wi-Fi router with 4 Gigabit Ethernet ports on the LAN side for €49.90.

Like all European telephony+broadband and "triple-play" contracts, this one offers the "all-you-can-talk" for landline telephones in the country and for a few euro extra per month, "all-you-can-talk" to the common destinations in Europe, North America and Australia.

This service will be offered where Kabel Deutschland are running DOCSIS 3.0 technology for cable broadband which is at the moment 40% of the country.

This is an example of what lively competition can offer for telephony and broadband Internet. It also shows what can happen if another technology becomes popular in a country and companies who are standing behind a particular technology like cable Internet need to put this on the "radar".

Links
[1] http://www.computerbild.de/artikel/cb-News-DSL-WLAN-Kabel-Deutschland-Highspeed-Internet-fuer-20-Euro-pro-Monat-5955963.html
[2] http://www.kabeldeutschland.de/internet-telefon/internet-und-telefon-100.html

Bringing Flintshire's broadband 'notspots' up to standard

09/02/2011 07:26

Articles

BBC News – Plan to tackle Flintshire's broadband 'notspots'[1] (VIDEO)

BBC News – Action to eliminate Flintshire broadband 'notspots' [2]

My Comments

Another area of Wales is being tackled when it comes to providing broadband Internet of a real standard. This area encompasses Caerwys communities, Talacre, Deeside industrial estate and Ysceiflog; which are in the Flintshire county. Here, local government, in the form of the Flintshire County Council, is behind the effort

This issue has been made real because of the business necessity of a proper broadband Internet service. An example that was cited in the articles was the Northop Hall Country House Hotel losing a GBP£70,000 conference contract because the broadband Internet service wasn't up to standard for overseas guests who were doing international business at a conference. Here, proper broadband Internet is becoming an expected service for hotels and similar venues, especially if the hotel wants to be valued as a place for business conferences.

I have always made readers aware of the common limitations that occur with ADSL broadband Internet deployments in regional and rural areas when I have commented on broadband in the country.

In these setups, the telephone exchange that services these areas is equipped with the DSLAM which is the necessary equipment for the broadband service, but the cabling infrastructure between the exchange and the customer's premises is long and commonly operating below par. The ADSL broadband Internet service works at its best when the consumer's ADSL modem receives a strong signal from the DSLAM installed in the exchange; and long or derelict telecommunications-wiring infrastructure between these devices works against this goal.

As well, in some cases, the telco has used pair-gain wiring – a cheap and lazy telecommunications wiring method – to connect an increased number of telephone services in an area with fewer wires. Such services wouldn't work well with machine-to-machine communications and are totally incompatible with ADSL.

These situations can work against the provisioning of real broadband Internet in rural areas and whenever Internet is provided to these areas, it isn't just putting the appropriate modems in the equipment rack in the exchange that needs to be considered. These deployments may have to include reassessing the wiring in the neighbourhood and, in some cases, doing necessary work on the wiring to enable people to subscribe to broadband Internet at a real bandwidth.

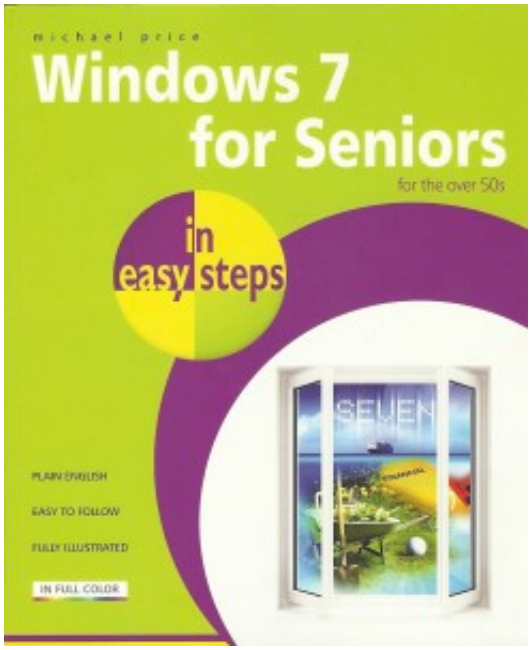
I just hope that telecommunications companies always keep tabs on the condition of the telephone wiring infrastructure in the country and do better research on providing a proper standard of broadband Internet service in the country.

Links
[1] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-12351544
[2] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-12342746

Book Review–"Windows 7 For Seniors" by Michael Price

07/02/2011 08:49

A lot of my computing-support work has been to help many friends of mine who haven't had much exposure to computers with many different computing skills. Typically, they would buy a Windows-based desktop or laptop or have their business buy one of these machines, but I often end up having to show them through various techniques associated with using this computer.



[1]

Publisher Easy Steps Limited ISBN 978−1−84078−386−5
Recommended Price US$14.99
GBP£10.99
CN$16.95

I had come across this book title and others in the “For Seniors” series at Belgrave Book Barn[2] in Melbourne and bought this one for AUD$29.95 tax inclusive. Amazon currently have this book online[3] for US$9.53.

This book is part of the “For Seniors” series of computer books that are pitched at older people who haven’t had much experience with computers. There is a similar book called “Laptops For Seniors” which focuses on the use of Windows-7 laptops rather than desktop computers which this book focuses on.

This book covers Windows 7, whether you install it yourself such as through an upgrade or have the operating system delivered with your new computer, which will be the most popular way to acquire it. Here, it will show what can and can’t be done on different versions of the operating system, especially with the user interface.

All techniques are covered complete with illustrations, easy to read typesetting and reduced jargon. If they need to use jargon, they explain it out properly. Even the pictures used to illustrate Web pages and digital-imaging techniques are based on landscapes and other similar imagery.

As far as Internet connection goes, this book talks about “dial-up” or PPPoE connections where the computer’s operating system manages the connection and pushes the now-common network-based Internet connections to the “Networking” chapter later on in the book. At least they tell users who use the network-based methods to head to that particular page.

When it talks of email use, it describes how to do email using Windows Live Mail or using the free webmail setups. The free webmail setup that is illustrated in this book is the ubiquitous GMail service and it explains how to work your existing account or set up a new account with GMail.

As far as anti-virus programs are concerned, it had suggested the use of free programs like the AVG Free antivirus program. This is even though the new Microsoft Security Essentials anti-malware program had come out recently, but has at least it has exposed a free program that can do the job.

What I have liked about this book is that it covers most computing tasks that can be done with Windows 7 and treats the older novice computer user with respect. Even the title comes across to the reader in a respectful manner. As well, it covers the common usage scenarios that the older people will encounter as they use their new Windows 7 computer.

So I would recommend this book, along with the “Laptops For Seniors” and other books in this series as a computer guidebook for older novice computer users.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Windows-7-For-Seniors-Cover.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://www.belgravebookbarn.com.au/
[3] http://www.amazon.com/Windows-Seniors-Easy-Steps-Over/dp/1840783869/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1297065431&sr=8–1

New changes coming ahead for the handheld PlayStation Experience

04/02/2011 07:23

Articles

Sony’s official NGP announcement video hits the web | Engadget [1]

PSP Reborn: The Quad-Core Next Generation Portable (NGP) | Sony Insider[2]

Your Guide To The Sony Next-Generation Portable | CNET Crave [3]

Sony annonce sa “3DS killer” | TF1.fr (France – French language) [4]

My Comments

Sony have implemented a few changes for the PlayStation Gaming Platform which will be affecting this platform as a handheld-gaming platform. What they have realised is that the PlayStation Portable or PSP has reached its peak and is facing competition from the iOS and Android mobile devices when it comes to handheld gaming.

NGP – Next-Generation Portable

This console, which is intended to be the successor to the PSP has also been rated as a a “Nintendo 3DS-killer” according to TF1 in France.

It has a 5” AMOLED touchscreen but there are still the control buttons that eager gameplayers can keep “mashing”; as well as two analogue joysticks for its control options. Like the iOS and Android devices, there will be support for sensors. These will be in the form of a GPS, gyroscope and accelerometer as well as a front camera and a back camera as well as rear touchpads.

All these sensors are there to permit “augmented reality” and other enhanced gaming experiences. Examples of this included looking around sports-type games in a first-person form such as looking around a pool table or golf tee before hitting off that shot.

The gaming performance has been improved over the PSP with use of a quad-core Cortex A9 processor, 512Mb RAM and PowerVR SGC 543 MP4+ graphics subsystem. This then can allow for some of the more heavier titles that will appeal to a lot of the players.

This console will have network connectivity in the form of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. But there will be versions that will come with 3G wireless-broadband technology, in a similar vein to the smartphones and tablet computers.

I often wonder whether this connectivity will allow for more than downloading of games and extras from the PlayStation Store or playing games via the the PlayStation Network. The applications that I am thinking of include peer-to-peer gaming; interaction with the DLNA Home Media Network or interoperability with the PS3 games console.

The storage in this console consists of an SDHC card slot for user-data storage as well as 16Gb on board/But Sony are also using a new flash-memory-based cartridge format for distributing pre-packaged games.

As far as games availability goes for the initial run, most of the games that are available for the PS3 are intended to be ported to this console. It will be interesting to see what games will take advantage of the touchscreen and the sensors that this handheld has.

I also wonder whether the games will make use of the relatively-large choice of user interfaces that this console offers such as the buttons and joysticks, the touchscreen or the sensors. This is whether as alternative interfaces or as interfaces that are particular to the game or part thereof.

PlayStation Experience for Android – PlayStation Suite

As well, Sony intend to bring out a “PlayStation Suite” app for certain Android phones so that these can be played like the PSP or the NGP. The big question that I have about this is which phones will be able to run this software and whether there will be the full range of games on this platform. This could certainly put Apple on notice when it comes to the smartphone as a gaming platform, because of the PlayStation platform’s prowess with the advanced games like the Final Fantasy series of adventure games.

At the moment, this PlayStation Experience will be limited to an emulator which will be used to play the games that existed for the original Sony PlayStation console.

Conclusion – What could happen to the PlayStation brand?

The introduction of sensors and touchscreens to the PlayStation Experience could allow Sony to add extra dimensions to the games available for this platform and use the PlayStation name as a reference point for console and mobile gaming. Who knows whether Sony will extend this brand to premium Windows and MacOS X games that are meant to be played on those “gaming rigs”?

Links

[1] http://www.engadget.com/2011/01/29/sonys-official-ngp-announcement-video-hits-the-web/
[2] http://www.sonyinsider.com/2011/01/27/psp-reborn-the-quad-core-next-generation-portable-ngp/
[3] http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-20029801–1.html?tag=nl.e404
[4] http://lci.tf1.fr/high-tech/2011–01/sony-annonce-sa-3ds-killer-6241313.html