

## Windows® 7 - *The Mystery Unveiled* A Simple Non-Technical Evaluation

by Marlo E. Schuldt



### First Impressions of **Windows® '7'**

Three months ago I downloaded the evaluation (beta) version of Windows 7. I decided to try and keep an open mind and just install it as I had installed previous versions of 98, 98 Second Edition, Millennium, XP and Vista.

I couldn't dismiss one bias that been reinforced by all the previous versions I had installed – *this was going to take a very long time.*

I remember starting to install early in the evening around 6:00 PM. I was trying to be optimistic by thinking I'd be happy if the new system was up and running by 9:00 PM. However, I was thinking 11:30 PM would be more realistic *if I was lucky.* Past install experiences always ended with a long struggle to gain access to the internet.

## Report Card / Quick Review

Here's a quick summary of my three month experience with the beta evaluation version of Windows 7.

**My review of Windows 7 was not exhaustive, detailed or scientific.**

I installed Windows 7 on a new computer. I installed my old programs and a printer and a scanner to start with. I have continued to use the system on a daily basis like I would any new computer.

I cannot guarantee you will have the same results since your computer will not be the same as my computer.

You may also have a different experience if you are upgrading from Vista or XP.

I would give Windows 7 an overall grade of a strong A to A- . The minus is for the difficulty I've had with my network and all the "Administrator" junk. With all the security stuff you'd think I was managing a million dollar company with hundreds of computers!

*My computer specs for you computer geeks.*

REPORT CARD	
NAME	<u>WINDOWS 7</u>
DATE	<u>October 8, 2009</u>
SUBJECT	GRADE
Easy to Install	A+
Installs Quickly	A+
Takes Less Disk Space	A
Works With OLD hardware	A+
Compatible With OLD Software	A+
Runs Faster	A+
Easier Networking - except admin.	C+
Starts and Closes Quickly	A
Has a "Shut Down" Button	A
Offers Solutions to Problems	B
'Old' Clock <i>With Hands</i>	A
Warm / Friendly Look and Feel	A
Taskbar Options	A++
Easy Backup System	B+
Snipping Tool (screen capture)	A+
Signature	<u>Marlo Schuldt</u>
Date Signed	<u>October 12, 2009</u>

Processor:	Intel(R) Core(TM)2 Duo CPU E7400 @ 2.80GHz 2.79 GHz
Installed memory (RAM):	4.00 GB
System type:	64-bit Operating System

## First Impressions of Windows 7”



### Blowing Up My Computer

This would be a clean install since I was using a new computer my son had built for me after my last computer “*blew up.*” Well, it didn’t really blow up, that’s what us computer geeks like to say to more clearly echo our feelings when a computer fails or “Burns Up.”

I had been testing the RAM in my wife’s computer and somehow I did not get the RAM correctly seated back into my old (beloved) computer. I had the wonderful experience of smelling burning plastic, or silica to be more exact. It’s a smell we all know and hope never to smell again because it means doom, or an expensive fix if we are lucky enough to be able to replace the overheated part.

### Installing Windows 7

The install started much like all the other versions of Windows. Entering that wonderful, easy to read (take your glasses off and squint), 97 character install code, and changing the time and date. It seemed to be moving through each installation step faster than the previous versions of Windows. I thought I was just being hopeful that Windows 7 would be faster.

I’m a Type One personality and I’m happiest if I’m doing about three things simultaneously to maximize my expenditure of time. So I was not

paying a lot of attention or accurately timing how long the install was actually taking to complete.

### An Installation Mental Time Warp?

It seemed like it took about 45 minutes to install and it only rebooted a couple of times. I had to stop for a minute and mentally do a little reality check to see if I had lost my mind or maybe I had entered another time warp. I



*Old fashioned clock in Windows 7.*

kept thinking there must be several other things I’ll have to do after Windows 7 reboots.

It was only about 45 minutes for the whole install. That was impressive even for a new computer.

### Where’s All the Bloatware?

So you are asking, “What’s bloatware?” A geek term used to define all the junk and unnecessary software that comes with Windows. If you envision your computer as a person (*Admit it - you talk to it*) your PC would be about 200 lbs overweight from all the bloatware. Many of us spend a lot of time trying to uninstall most of this useless stuff.

Windows 7 wins again with a very streamlined install without a bunch of software you don’t need. This is one of the reasons it installs so fast. *Thank you Microsoft!*

### The First Acid Test - or will it be First Aid?

One of the things that really frustrated me with Vista was some of my older software and hardware would not work. *I’m not made of money so buying new hardware and software was not part of the plan.* I also had to download several software patches before the software and hardware would work with Vista. I grumbled each time I had to invest the time and energy to find, download and install the Vista version of the software. I remember how upset I had been

after I purchased a new HP notebook computer and scanner. The new HP scanner would not work with the HP Vista notebook. How dumb is that? IT REALLY MADE ME UNHAPPY (Yes, I'm yelling). I remember waiting for about two months before HP had a Vista patch so I could use the new scanner and computer together.

I decided to test Windows 7 by throwing it the worst possible scenario I could think of – I'd install my old 2400 Epson scanner. In fact, I decided to pull out all the stops and use the old XP scanner install CD instead of my Vista patch. I remember smiling and feeling a little *devious* at that moment. My turn to punish the new system.

To my shock and disbelief the old Epson scanner fired right up and scanned the first photo.



Unbelievable – it worked the first time. OK – that was too easy. So I rescanned, only this time I scanned a color 8" X 10" photo at 400 DPI. *That ought to slow things down.* WOW! That had to be the fastest scan I had ever seen. I thought something must be wrong so I displayed the image. It was beautiful. To be fair I have to admit I have a faster computer and more RAM but it should have not made that kind of a difference.

Windows 7 successfully hit a home run off my first curve ball and passed all the bases with flying colors that really made the old Epson hum!

### Second Test – Heritage Collector

I remember the night I installed Heritage Collector on my Vista system. All the demo collections worked perfectly. It seemed faster than my XP system. I had pleasant dreams that night thinking our software was going to work with Vista without any modifications. Way Cool!

The next morning things were different. I discovered the Bermuda Triangle had invaded my Vista computer during the night. The photos I imported to new collections just disappeared. I attempted to make sense of the contents of my C drive hoping to find where the collections were submerged. I spent several hours and ended up discouraged and completely lost.

I cautiously installed Heritage Collector with visions of all that bad Vista history swirling around in the dark recesses of my mind. I hoped for the best but feared the worst.

To my surprise nothing disappeared and all the processes worked as expected. HERITAGE COLLECTOR worked flawlessly. I haven't tested every function but all the major processes function and work as expected. WHEW!



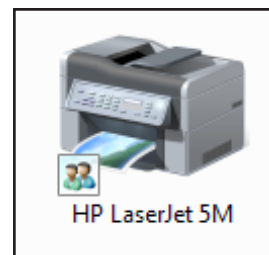
### Third Test – The OLD Printer

Recently we upgraded to an HP Officejet Pro L7590 printer. Running it under the XP system via a wireless network has been a real challenge. Enough said.

I was able to install the Officejet on Windows 7 on the wireless network in a matter of minutes. I didn't need to use the install CD. That was a real treat.

Now for the miraculous. I have an old HP 5M printer. That thing must be made out of stainless steel. It has worked faithfully for years until Vista arrived on the scene. I remember thinking its time had come to go to printer heaven.

Again Windows 7 found the printer and installed it WITHOUT the install CD. I'm not sure I would have been able to find the install CDs. A+ grade.

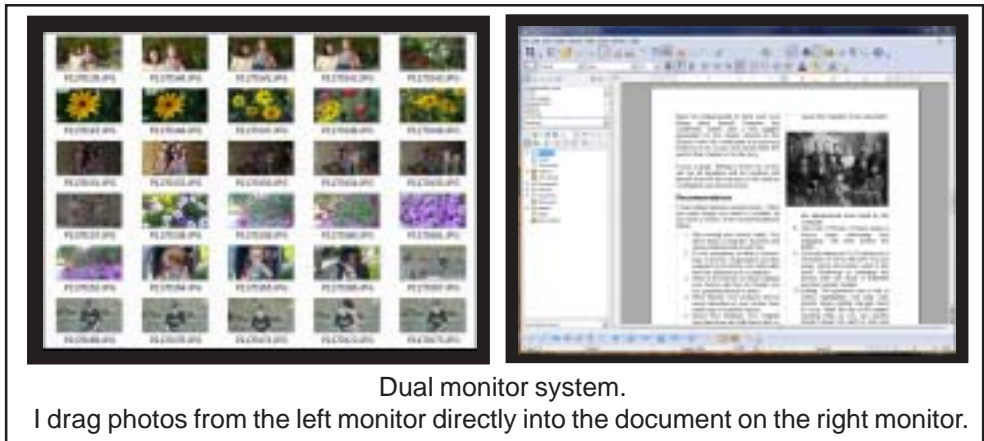


My skeptical nature was beginning to weaken. Windows 7 was doing the impossible – *and it was easy!* It was installing my OLD hardware and software - AND IT WORKED!

I was now thinking, *“This is too good to be true! Something is going to bomb.”* All this works and it is still in beta – now that’s impressive!

#### Fourth Test – Wireless Home Network

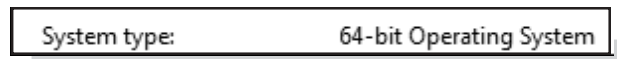
Once again it all worked “out of the box.” However, there are some administrator things and permissions that are driving me nuts. I can see my XP system and share it just fine. However, not so with Vista or trying to see the Windows 7 system from XP or Vista. I’ll have to give this a C grade since I haven’t had time or courage to try and figure it all out.



I have discovered a “Public” folder on the other computers I can access from the network. That’s still a pain! Upgrade to C+ .

#### Fifth Test – Using Other Software

My son thought I should have the best computer so he purchased and installed a 64 bit system.



Don’t worry about understanding what a 64 bit system is or does. It’s just a little more toward the top of the line in computers systems.

Most of my old software programs worked great. There were a couple of old programs that would not work but not because of Windows 7.

The problem is a 64 bit system may not work with some older programs which is not the fault of Windows 7 but the limitation of the older software not being able to run on a 64 bit system.

This is another reason to keep your old XP system around for a while so you can still use your older software programs and very old hardware. *Sorry grandkids.*

#### Favorite New Feature

I like to use many photos and graphics in the documents, manuals and family histories I create. I prefer to drag the photo directly into the document from another folder. I have facilitated this process by using a dual monitor system for many years.

Typically I have a folder or a Heritage Collector collection open containing the images I want to use on the left monitor. The right monitor contains the document I’m writing and working with as shown above. It is very quick and easy to drag (external drag in Heritage Collector or use a right click and select Copy to Clipboard) a photo from the left display and drop it into the document on the right display exactly where I want it placed.

This works well with my XP and Vista systems. I just have to remember what icon to click on the taskbar since I may have several folders or programs at the same time open as I work on a document.

Windows 7 allows me to accomplish this same trick more easily and in different ways.



1. Click the Libraries icon on the taskbar and browse out to the folder containing the images. Set the View properties so you can see thumbnails for all the images. Clicking this icon allows you to easily select other folders.



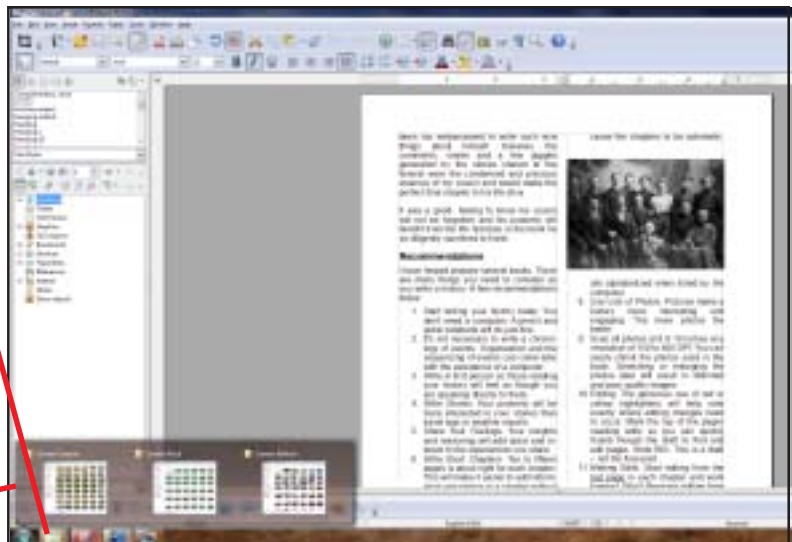
2. Open two or three different folders containing photos and place them on the taskbar.

3. Click on the Libraries icon (bottom left of the display) to instantly see thumbnails in the folders previously selected. This action will cause a thumbnail view of all the folders you previously selected.

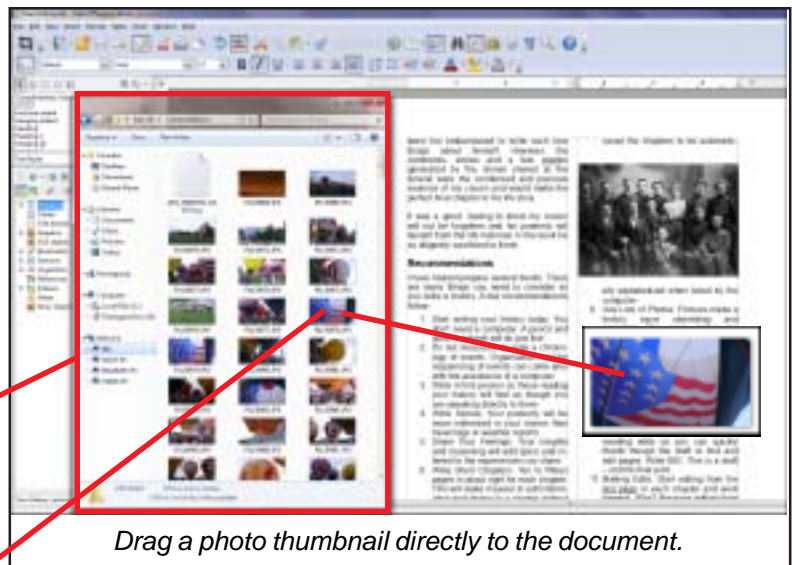
4. Click one of the folders to expand the view of the folder and to place the folder on the active document display.



5. Drag one of the images from the photo thumbnail display to the document.



*Clicking the Library icon on the taskbar causes thumbnails to appear representing the photo files previously selected.*



*Drag a photo thumbnail directly to the document.*

## Questionable Tests and Evaluations

I recently purchased a beautiful 24 inch monitor to use for presentations. The extra width of the display and Windows 7's new Library function is like having a dual monitor system for half the price!

I may add a second monitor to my system but for now the large display and the Windows 7 Library function make a winning combination.

The monitor's increased screen size and Library feature allows you some extra space making it easy to view / swap folders and to drag images into a document.

I've always struggled making a purchase decision based on consumer tests and specifications. Often the specifications and tests are not relevant to me and what I'm trying to achieve. Spec sheets help sell expensive things such as cars, washers, dryers and stoves. How many of the new features (that drive up the price) will you or your spouse actually use when you get the new purchase home?

As a speech and hearing specialist I've always had a problem studying and comparing the technical specs of sound systems. The problem

- many of the specifications listed for sound frequencies cannot be heard by the human ear. When I voiced this objection to a salesperson I was told, "You are correct. You can't hear the lower frequencies but you can "FEEL them." That's great - when I have my system cranked way up to the "feeling" sound level I'm sure my neighbors will be able to "feel" the base response of the lower frequencies in their homes. I decided to save my money and purchase something I could hear instead of paying more so I could "feel" the sound.

I've seen this same problem of biased testing and reviews on hardware and software. Any evaluation can be influenced by the features being tested. Disregard these reviews if the features evaluated are not relevant to you.

The best reviews are provided by someone you know and trust who is using the same hardware or software for the same applications you are interested in pursuing.

Word of mouth and time always provide the most accurate reviews. Take your time if you don't need new software or hardware. Ask friends and other professionals for their options regarding the best strategy to help you accomplish your goal.

### **A Comparison of XP, Vista and Windows 7**

This morning I spent a couple hours finding and reading evaluations about Windows 7. Studying the incomprehensible "Bench" tests on several different internet sites was not helpful when related to family history applications.

One of the biggest problems with the evaluations was the date. Most of the tests were conducted in January, 2009. That was many months ago when the Windows 7 beta version was first released for testing.

Microsoft has released updates to Windows 7 during the previous months making older evaluations inaccurate and only good for general information.

I was able to find a few newer evaluations. The problem was the reviewers were not in agreement with their conclusions about the speed of XP vs Windows 7. One reviewer maintained that XP was a tiny bit faster than Windows 7. The other reviewer felt Windows 7 was "Snappier" than XP.

The problem with relying on other reviews is the reviewers almost always use the latest hardware and software. The only real way to know is by testing Windows 7 with the actual software and hardware you are using.

All the reviewers agreed that Windows 7 was a definite improvement over Vista.

Some reviewers asserted that the latest version of XP was slightly faster than Windows 7. In my opinion, the difference in speed between XP and Windows 7 will probably not be noticed by most of us. However, it's important to note the following differences between Windows 7, XP and Vista:

- \* In my opinion, Microsoft will not be adding features or continue to invest resources into XP with the exception of security issues.
- \* We may continue to see some limited improvements in Vista for a short time.
- \* Windows 7 is now the flagship operating system for Microsoft and will be released on all new computers. Therefore Microsoft will be investing most of its resources to improve and add enhancements to Windows 7 to make it more popular and competitive.
- \* New software programs will probably utilize features only found in Windows 7.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

I'm definitely impressed with Windows 7 operating system. From my limited experience and testing I have no reservations about using it as my main computer system. However, I'm still using my Vista and XP systems.

I will continue to maintain my XP system so I can use my older programs that require a 32 bit system. I will share the files on the other computer via my network.

Windows 7 is a definite improvement over Vista. In many ways Vista reminds me of its cousin Millennium and all the problems that older system caused me personally. However Vista is a much better system than Millennium was.

I would not hesitate to recommend upgrading from Vista to Windows 7 if you have programs or hardware that will not work with Vista. It may be less expensive for you to upgrade than to buy new software or hardware to work with Vista which will probably have a short life like Millennium had.

Would I upgrade from XP to Windows 7? No. There is no need to upgrade If you are happy with your XP computer system and it meets all your needs. However, if your trusted old XP friend is getting up there in years it might be time to retire the old workhorse to greener pastures before it dies unexpectedly.

Purchasing a new computer? I'd definitely want to have Windows 7 on the new computer since it's always better to have a clean software install instead of upgrading. Vista's days will soon be numbered.

## Other Considerations

If you purchase a new computer you will not have any way to objectively compare it with your older computer since the new computer will run faster and probably have more RAM.

Your use of Windows 7 may be different than my experience since I'm using the prereleased Evaluation beta version of Windows 7 and a 64 bit operating system.

Your computer, hardware and software are probably different than the computer system I used for this evaluation.

I have no experience or recommendations for upgrading from XP or Vista to Windows 7.

Be sure to refer to the hardware requirements Microsoft's recommends BEFORE you purchase or install Windows 7.

## Windows 7 Requirements

Microsoft recommends the following:

1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64 bit (x64) processor

1 gigabyte (GB) RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)

16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)

DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

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