

Spaces Highlights April 2022

Dennis Parsons

Google Spaces, a replacement for Yammer

With Melb PC moving away from using Microsoft services for the general membership we'll shortly be closing down Yammer as the host for our Online SIG. It was recently announced after a period of testing, that Google Spaces will be the replacement for Yammer due to "economy and ease of use" - it's part of our existing Google based services. Even though Spaces is in relatively early development it provides enough functionality to be a usable replacement and should mature into a more sophisticated platform. The announcement here:

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1750364370067456>>

Greg Eden, our resident Google enthusiast, decided to set up various spaces to emulate Yammer as a test and this quickly demonstrated it was a viable replacement. Of course being a different product it's not going to just be a duplicate, so differences are to be expected. Setting up the spaces has been a bit of a learning experience as once created they can't be reconfigured with different parameters, but with a bit of experimenting Greg has worked out a suitable configuration and our spaces.

So far we have about 80 members signed up as part of the testing process and the traffic has gradually been picking up. We currently sign everyone up to all the spaces, from there they can leave any spaces they aren't interested in, but we're moving to a system where people are signed up to "All Company" and the "List of Club's Spaces" space containing links to join other spaces as desired.

If you'd like to participate in our Spaces before the cut-over simply add a request to the following thread in Yammer and you'll be joined up to Spaces:

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1737428980408320>>

On your computer Spaces is accessed either via the Gmail web interface or via the Chat app which you open using the Google apps "nine dots", just make sure you're signed into Google using your Melb PC account and not another Google account. Personally I prefer to use the separate Chat app.

Spaces is similarly accessible on your phone via either the Gmail app or the separate Chat app, again making sure you're logged into your Melb PC account.

Several usage tips:

You can't reply to a specific message in a conversation so use the "@" symbol followed by the name of the person you're responding to, e.g. @Fred Dagg.

On your computer pressing the Enter key sends your message. If you're want a new line use Shift+Enter. On your phone the Enter key functions as expected to give a new line.

Only one image can be posted at a time, i.e. you can't select a group of images to upload, but if you aren't too slow when you post them individually they will appear sequentially provided no-one responds in the meantime.

If you wish to send a private message to another member use the Chat function - it's available in both the Gmail and Chat apps.



In browser Chat app showing Chat Spaces and Meet. Note this is the dark theme

In browser Gmail app showing Mail, Chat, Spaces and Meet.



Chat app on Android phone showing Chat and Spaces.

Gmail app on Android phone showing Mail, Chat, Spaces and Meet.

Posting a message is very easy so please give it a go. There's a dedicated Test space for just this purpose so join up there and feel free to make use of it to get comfortable with the ins and outs of Spaces. It won't take you long to feel comfortable.

We have a "Using Google Spaces" group on Yammer and "Spaces Help" on Spaces where you can ask questions or find useful tips.

<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=105054347264>

Security, Scams and Phishing

Cedric related the following cautionary tale - a timely reminder for all of us:

ATO Phishing SMS

My daughter, who doesn't understand many digital concepts, received the SMS below. Don't know the phone number it came from, but that's probably irrelevant. The message below is probably the second SMS, as she deleted the first one. But with this one she went to the site, believed that all the ATO icons and so forth were genuine, and entered at least some of the data they asked for. It's hard to get her to understand URLs.

PS: I have modified the URL to neutralise it. I assume you can spot the change.

"ATO: You are required to confirm their data, non-compliance with this obligation may result in penalties
<https://ato-verify.net/data>"

I am told that this SMS is circulating quite widely in Victoria. The ATO, VicPol and probably others are well aware of it.

They have just got some ID. Probably not enough to be of much use unless they have other ID from other sources, which of course quite likely they do have. We now just have to change things like drivers license (apparently takes quite a while), and disable some types of financial transactions.

For anyone using an Android phone it is well worth investigating installing the Google Messages app to handle SMSs as it's very effective at filtering dodgy messages. It's also worth noting if you're a Telstra mobile user they've recently turned on SMS filtering to remove malicious text messages.

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1745869690716160>>

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1497838213455872>>

Linux Chat

Frank treated us to another of his requests for help that resulted in an epic 130+ post thread, which while well short of the longest we've had, was still a worthy effort. The beauty of these threads is they cover a lot of basic ground so are a great learning experience for everyone.

It all started off with him being unhappy with using the MATE desktop (on Ubuntu as it turned out) and wanting to switch to using the Cinnamon desktop he was more familiar with from his usual Linux Mint. Things were a little confused to start with due to misunderstandings about desktops and distros but once we got that sorted we could proceed with installing Cinnamon so Frank could log in using that instead of MATE.

Sounds simple? It should have been but unfortunately it was anything but due to various tools not being installed. He started on Ubuntu 20.04 so we got him upgraded to 22.04 and got Cinnamon installed. Then Gnome system tools was missing so that got installed which would allow him to disable auto-login. Finally after a bit more faffing about he was able to select Cinnamon from the login screen and successfully logged in with it. It was a bit of a journey but everyone persisted and Frank got there in the end.

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1738778856235008>>

NBN Questions and Comments

Kev has been keeping us updated on the saga he's been involved with getting the NBN connected at a club he belongs to - something that took two months to resolve. Fortunately for his club Kev is a registered cabler who worked for Telstra in a past life so knows his way around telephone networks and is more than a little persistent and patient to boot.

It all started out with failure of the phone line that went unnoticed for several months, possibly caused by Telstra works. The street address of the club rooms wasn't known to the NBN and the line comes in from another street and that wasn't known to the NBN either. They might have lost their phone number due to inactivity and the 18 month grace period for switching over to NBN has probably expired.

After a great deal of rigmarole the day came for the NBN appointment to activate the connection. When Kev indicated the location of the lead in and where the conduit ran to the NBN tech his response was that's not what his work order showed. Fortunately the tech was able to talk to the back office and gain their agreement to proceed and shortly after that the service was active, which I'm sure felt somewhat miraculous!

It's still not known whether the phone number can be retrieved for use with the NBN service.

<<https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/#/Threads/show?threadId=1640041656631296>>