COMPUTER NEWS

Volume 28, No. 7   **July 2011**

Inside This Issue

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, July 20th, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

At the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California

The meeting begins with Random Access, an open-floor question-and-answer period during which attendees can ask questions about computers and computer-related problems and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. Questions may be submitted before the meeting by emailing them to Random Access moderator **Jerry Brown** at **Questions@nvpcug.org**.

July 20th, 2011 Computer Tutor topic member **Jeff Solomon** again will be talking about **"Google Docs"**? **Google Docs** is a **FREE** Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, slide show, form, and data storage service offered by Google. If you have an idea or question that the Computer Tutor **Jeff Solomon** at **tutor@nvpcug.org**.

This month **Gene Barlow** will be live on the video screen, talking about using Acronis and the value of backup of your computer. If you have a suggestion on which feature and topics should discusses in the future, please contact **Susy Ball** at **susyball@aol.com**. See ya all at the meeting. ✻

Could you use some practical information that would help you make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are always welcome. Admission is always free.

Interested in becoming a member? See page 28 for application information.

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, **www.nvpcug.org**, or contact the SIG leaders.

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
        5:30 to 7:30 p.m
        Jerry Brown's home,
        23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

Leader: Jerry Brown
        (707) 254-9607
        **bqandjbb
            @sbcglobal.net**

Napa Valley Mac User Group

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday
        6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
        Napa Senior Activity Center
        1500 Jefferson St., Napa

Leader: Ron Rogers
        (707) 226-5352
        **ronrogersnapamug
            @gmail.com**

Sonoma Computer Group

Meets: Monthly, fourth Saturday,
            except Mar 2011
        10:00 - 11:30 a.m..
        DeLong room
        Sonoma Library, Sonoma, CA

Leader: Beth Pickering
        bethpick@emailx.net

Annual Members
Potluck Picnic:
August 20, 2011, 12:00 PM

Thank you to Dick and Sandy Peterson for again hosting our August Members Potluck Picnic. The location is in the redwood grove by the pond at Peterson's Family Christmas Tree Farm, 1120 Darms Lane, Napa. There will be games and prizes. The group will provide meat, nonalcoholic beverages & ice, paper plates, cups, plasticware, & napkins.

Please signup by our August 17th meeting by e-mailing Dianne Prior at **prior_di@ hotmail.com** with "NVPCUG Picnic" in the subject. Include the following information: member's name, guests attending with you, what you are bringing for potluck (we need appetizers and desserts), and if you can help with setup at 11:30 or cleanup after. The potluck picnic is always a lot of fun. We hope to see you all there.

Coordinator Dianne Prior (252-1506), **prior_di@hotmail.com**. ■.

Go Biometric

One way to physically secure your laptop is with a biometric fingerprint reader, which lets you require a valid fingerprint swipe to start Windows or access individual files and folders on the computer. Some laptops, such as Lenovo's T61 line, integrate a fingerprint reader into the case, but you can also purchase an add-on fingerprint reader that attaches to a free USB port.

An Overzealous Antivirus

Although we highly recommend having an antivirus program installed, updated, and running on your computer, especially when using email, some antivirus programs will stop you from opening certain types of attachments. When you can't open a legitimate file, check your antivirus' security settings. You may have to go as far as disabling the program temporarily. When you're finished viewing the attachment, make sure you re-enable the antivirus program and restore any security settings you may have changed.

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Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Contact Information
Officers for 2011
Board of Directors

President	Jim Gray	unlisted	**President@nvpcug.org**
Vice President	Ron Dack	unlisted	**VicePresident@nvpcug.org**
Secretary	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	**Secretary@nvpcug.org**
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	**Treasurer@nvpcug.org**

Other Directors: Susy Ball, Julie Jerome, Bernhard Krevet , Dick Peterson, Bob Simmerman, Raylene Thompson, Tom Uboldi and Dean Unruh

Appointed Officers

Computer Tutor Coordinator

	Jeff Solomon	553-2114	**Tutor@nvpcug.org**

Facility Arrangements Coordinator

	Dianne Prior	252-1506	**Facility@nvpcug.org**

Greeter Coordinator

	Raylene Thompson	unlisted	**Greeter@nvpcug.org**

Greeter Coordinator

	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	**Greeter2@nvpcug.org**

Librarian

	Dean Unruh	226-9164	**Librarian@nvpcug.org**

Membership Director

	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	**Membership@nvpcug.org**

Newsletter Editor

	Susy Ball	337-3998	**Editor@nvpcug.org**

Product Review CoCoordinator

	Susy Ball	337-3998	**Reviews@nvpcug.org**
	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	**Reviews2@nvpcug.org**

Co-Programs Director

	Bernhard Krevet	unlisted	**Programs@nvpcug.org**
	Susy Ball	337-3998	**Programs@nvpcug.org**

Publicity Director

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Random Access Moderator

	Jerry Brown	254-9607	**Questions@nvpcug.org**

Webmaster

	Ron Dack	unlisted	**Webmaster@nvpcug.org**

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

NVPCUG General Meetings

Held the third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Napa Senior Activity Center,
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa**

Windows Lab

By Randy N. Ridge, member of the Tech Team, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, Louisiana, February 2011 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News, www.clickers.org, ccnewsletter@cox.net

Déjà vu All Over Again

Yes, I'm writing the same article again. Why you ask? It's because we don't seem to learn from our past mistakes. I'm writing with six computers around me infected with various forms of Viruses, Trojans, and Malware. If your computer is running really slow, or suddenly you can't connect to the Internet, or you get popups saying you have viruses which can be removed if you send money, then you need to read this article. With the expansion of social networking, web surfing, malicious emails, and free music download sites, there are any number of places for the attacks to take place. So what can you do? Well here is what you need:

Security Software- no matter what you do online, you need protection. Most commercial security software covers antivirus, firewall, parental controls, and antispyware. These programs can usually be installed on up to 3 computers, and have a small fee to add additional licenses. You can also go the free route. Many Internet Providers such as AT&T, Cox, and Eatel provide free security software. Go to your provider's webpage and any free software should be listed. There are also free antivirus programs such as AntiVir, Avast, and AVG. My favorite place to get these programs is at: **www.filehippo.com**

Filehippo offers the latest versions which are easy to find. If you try to get the free version from the company's website, it's usually buried deep and hard to find.

Antispyware- the security suites and Antivirus programs now have built in antispyware.

One program is not enough; you need to be proactive. My favorite program is MalwareBytes which is one of the best spyware and malware cleaners I have used. You can download it at Filehippo. I suggest that you install it, update it, and run it every couple of days. Other good programs are Spybot Search and Destroy, Ad-Aware, and SuperAntiSpyware.

Remember one rule though; you can install multiple antiSpyware programs but you can only have one antivirus program running.

Firewalls — these programs protect you from being attacked via your Internet connection. From Windows XP on, there has been a firewall built into the operating system, but it was weak at best. Newer versions of Windows are better, but there are still weaknesses. You can also get firewalls at Filehippo. You will have to train a good Firewall to let it know what you want it to allow in and out. This can tell you if there is some malware on your computer that wants to phone home.

The main thing you need to do is get adequate protection and make sure you keep it up-to-date. If your security software is out of date, it won't protect you. You must be suspicious of any email, and careful about what links you click on the Internet. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. ✳

NVPCUG Calendar

Date	Time	Event
Jul 20	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, +A
Jul 23	10:00-11:30 a.m..	Sonoma Computer Group + E
Aug 6	10:00-11:30 am.	Board of Directors meeting + D
Aug 8	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Aug 11	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Aug 17	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, + A
Aug 27	10:00-11:30 a.m..	Sonoma Computer Group + E
Sept 8	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Sept 12	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Sept 21	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, + A
Sept 24	10:00-11:30 a.m..	Sonoma Computer Group + E
Oct 10	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Oct 13	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Oct 19	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, + A
Oct 22	10:00-11:30 a.m..	Sonoma Computer Group + E

Meeting Locations

A - Napa Senior Activity Center,
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

B - Piner's Nursing Home,
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa

C - Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

D - Peterson's Family Christmas Tree Farm,
1120 Darms Lane, Napa.

E - DeLong Room
Sonoma Library, Sonoma, CA

"The technician set up my laptop, now what do I do?"

By Gregory West, Member of the Computer Operators of Marysville and Port Huron, MI, and Sarnia Computer User Group, Canada, **http://gregorywest.wordpress.com/**, **prospector16@gmail.com**

Ah, the wonderment of getting a new computer. No more having to watch others show off their computer skills as they demonstrate their new digital slide show, or listen about how they talk with relatives across three oceans for hours at no cost. With your new computer you are ready to join the online communities around the globe.

Three gigabytes of random access memory, 500 gigs of hard drive, a one year subscription to some antivirus / malware protection software utility and you are "good to go," says the clerk in the computer store.

"But does it come with a manual," you ask?

"The manual is in the OS software," the clerk says as he gets you to sign his copy of the credit card slip. "Have a nice day," he hollers as you lug the computer through the doors towards home.

"Ya right," you mutter under your breath

So many choices, too many decisions, but at least you finally got it home. Once you open the lid and go to turn on the new computer you realize that you have no idea what you are doing. In fact, you don't know a gigabyte from a Tyrannosaurus Rex, and you couldn't care less. All you want is to go on the Internet and check your email, surf some websites and maybe learn how to get those 265 photos from your digital camera.

"So now what," you say aloud to yourself? "Where do I begin," you ask your dog in desperation as she gives you that puzzled look.

There is an easy way to learn the various computer functions you need to catch up with your computer geek of a neighbour. First, you can take a formal course at your local college. These courses usually range from beginner to advanced. You can also take online courses (courses offered over the Internet), but this takes a special skill, as many people are not used to working alone and need to get out into a classroom set up with real humans. You can also join a local computer group. Here you will find people with similar interests who provide various seminars on tech-related issues.

I have been on a computer since 1972 where an IBM System/360 Operating System was the popular system in data processing centres. Over the years I have received computer training from all methods mentioned about. In fact, today I am taking two computer courses from books that came with DVD training programs

However, if you simply need to know one certain function on the computer, learn a software program, or how to troubleshoot a problem in your computer, I suggest Google's YouTube videos. Computer instructors, tech companies, libraries, schools and many knowledgable individuals upload training videos to YouTube. Here you not only get free training, but targeted training. For instance, if you need to know how to install a USB flash drive in Windows 7, you simply go to youtube.com on the Internet and there will be many videos to help you through this process.

One tip for searching within YouTube for help, try using the term: "tutorials" with your search. Sometimes this will give you a full training course on the particular subject you are interested in learning. I use YouTube all the time when I need help with a particular computer program. But it doesn't stop there either. I wanted to learn how to winterize my RV and save the hundred dollar fee, so I searched for videos on YouTube and have winterized my own trailer ever since for only the cost of antifreeze

Gregory West is a Mac Instructor for Lambton College. He is also Webmaster at Central United Church, the home of Sarnia's new Community Computer Training Centre at: http://goo.gl/76H15. This is free and open to the public as a community service. Learn at your own speed. ✱

Choosing An MP3 Player

MP3 players come in two storage formats: hard drive and flash. Which format you choose should depend on how you will use your player. Gym rats will appreciate flash-based devices, as their lack of moving parts will prevent the music from skipping or stopping during a jog on the treadmill, and their smaller capacities (generally up to 8GB) are ideal for those who don't need to carry their whole music library with them. Die-hard audiophiles looking to store more than several gigabytes' of songs, however, should opt instead for a hard drive-based player, which can offer much larger capacities—Apple offers an iPod classic with 160GB ($349; **www.apple.com**) of storage, for example. Keep in mind, though, that the player's hard drive contains fragile parts that may be damaged by jostling or jarring.

Oracle and the Future of OpenOffice.org

By Geof Goodrum, President, Washington Area Computer User Group, VA, December 2010 issue, The Cursor, www.wacug.org, president@wacug.org

Oracle Corporation, a technology company best known for its flagship commercial relational database management software, is alienating the Open Source community it once embraced. In 2008, Sun Microsystems acquired MySQL AB, the company that developed and provided commercial support for the highly popular relational database management system (RDBMS) software, MySQL, which is available in both Open Source and commercial license versions. MySQL is very popular (estimated at over eleven million installations) as backend software used by web sites world-wide, comprising part of the "LAMP" (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PERL/PHP/Python) software stack.

Sun Microsystems is perhaps best known for the Java programming language used to develop software that can run on a wide variety of computer platforms. The Open Source community has been pushing for the release of control over the Java language specification to the community since at least 2004. In 2006, Sun released Java software components under the GNU General Public License, but continued to release "non-free" executable versions.

Sun Microsystems also sponsored the OpenOffice.org community project, which developed and distributed a free, Open Source productivity suite comparable to Microsoft Office and built upon code from the commercial StarOffice product, previously acquired by Sun.

In 2010, Oracle Corporation completed acquisition of Sun Microsystems, including MySQL, Java, and OpenOffice.org. During the acquisition, the MySQL community expressed concerns that Oracle would discontinue support for MySQL as it competed with Oracle's commercial RDBMS products. While this has not happened, Oracle recently doubled MySQL support service costs.

In August 2010, Oracle sued Google over its implementation of Java in the Linux-based Android operating system, claiming infringement on seven patents. This move alienated the Java developer community.

In September, a core group of over 30 leading contributors to the OpenOffice.org project formed The Document Foundation with support from organizations including Red Hat, Novell, Google, Open Source Initiative, Canonical, and the Free Software Foundation. The Document Foundation's primary purpose is to support the community development of LibreOffice, a productivity suite built upon the OpenOffice.org source code. This move was in response to ongoing concerns about Oracle's governance and development process for the OpenOffice.org project, including Oracle's reluctance to accept patches to the software. The Document Foundation's stated mission is to facilitate the evolution of the OpenOffice.org Community into a new open, independent, and meritocratic organizational structure within the next few months. An independent Foundation is a better match to the values of our contributors, users, and supporters, and will enable a more effective, efficient, transparent, and inclusive Community. We will protect past investments by building on the solid achievements of our first decade, encourage wide participation in the Community, and co-ordinate activity across the Community.

Oracle responded to the formation of The Document Foundation by insisting that members step down from their positions on the OpenOffice.org project as it created a conflict of interest. As a result, it appears that community developers are migrating from OpenOffice.org to work on LibreOffice.

At this point, it appears that Oracle has squandered whatever credibility it had with the Open Source (MySQL, Java, OpenOffice.org) developer community, and the future of the original OpenOffice.org project is very questionable.

However, expect to see rapid development and improved software quality for LibreOffice under The Document Foundation. ✳

Alphabetize Your IE Favorites Folders & Links

If you're running Windows 98SE/Me/2000/XP and Internet Explorer 5 or up, your solution is simple. Open the Favorites menu (in the top Menu bar) and right-click any item located underneath the Organize Favorites line. Then, choose Sort By Name. Keep in mind this will alphabetize the items you see in the Favorites menu, not items within folders in the Favorites menu. To alphabetize the contents of a folder in Favorites, open the folder, right-click an item, and choose Sort By Name from the pop-up menu. Common mistake: DO NOT try these right-click steps in the Favorites shortcut window at the left side of your browser. These steps will only work within the drop-down menu that appears when you click "Favorites" in the top menu bar. When you add an item to your Favorites menu, you'll need to select Sort By Name again to get that item in alphabetical order.

Linux Software of the Month: April 2011

By Geof Goodrum, President, Washington Area Computer User Group, VA, April 2011 issue, The Cursor, http://www.wacug.org/, linux@wacug.org

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

Free Pascal–v2.4.2. http://www.freepascal.org/. Modified GNU Library General Public License source code and packages for Debian and RPM-based GNU/Linux distributions by the Free Pascal Development Team. Originally named FPK-Pascal, Free Pascal is a 32 and 64 bit Turbo Pascal and Delphi compatible Pascal programming language compiler for DOS, Linux, Win32, OS/2, FreeBSD, AmigaOS, Mac OS X, Mac OS classic and several other platforms (the number of supported targets grows all the time, although not all of them are on the same level as the main ones). The Free Pascal compiler is available for several architectures, x86, Sparc (v8,v9), ARM, x86_64 (AMD64/Opteron) and Powerpc. An older version (the 1.0 series) also supports m68k.

The compiler is itself written in Pascal and is able to compile its own sources.

Hedgewars–v0.9.15. http://www.hedgewars.org/. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian, Ubuntu, Fedora, ArchLinux, and openSuSE Linux by Andrey Korotaev et al. Hedgewars is a turn-based strategy, artillery, action and comedy game, featuring the antics of pink hedgehogs with attitude as they battle from the depths of hell to the depths of space. As commander, it's your job to assemble your crack team of hedgehog soldiers and bring the war to your enemy.

Features: Hilarious and devastating turn based combat for up to 6 players; Both local and network multiplayer, with optional AI opponents; Battle on an infinite number of randomly generated maps, with over 20 environments; Utilize 47 (and counting) devastating weapons including the piano strike and explosive robotic cake; Play the game your way, with 18 different game modifiers, tweak almost every aspect of the match; Customize your team, with over 120 costumes, 30 graves, 12 forts, 100s of flags and unique voice packs; Huge battles with up to 48 hogs; Play both singleplayer and multiplayer minigames; plugin your own custom maps, costumes, and other artwork.

Requires Qt >= 4.5, FreePascal >= 2.2.4, SDL >= 1.2.5, SDL_net >= 1.2.5, SDL_mixer >= 1.2, SDL_image >= 1.2, SDL_ttf >= 2.0, CMake >= 2.6.0, lua = 5.1.

Linphone – v3.4.3. http://www.linphone.org/ Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian and Ubuntu Linux by Simon Morlat. Linphone is an audio and video Internet phone with GTK+ and console interfaces. It uses the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), and is compatible with most SIP clients and gateways.

It can use various audio and video codecs such as Speex, GSM, G711, ilbc, amr, Theora, H263-1998, MPEG4, H264, and snow. This version improves Mac OS X integration with desktop menus, better sound system handling, and binary bundle generation for ease of installation. It also improves memory usage and fixes a few SIP bugs.

WordPress–v3.1. http://wordpress.org/. Free GNU General Public License scripts by the WordPress Development Team. WordPress is a software script that, together with PHP v4.3 or greater, MySQL v4.1.2 or greater, and a web server (e.g. Apache; Nginx), provides a point and click menu-driven framework for a standards-compliant, professional looking web site that is easy to maintain with no knowledge of web programming required. WordPress is the most widely used framework for self-hosted blogging web sites, and is highly customizable with thousands of widgets, themes and plug-ins, both free and commercial. New features include the admin bar, which provides easy access to common administrative tasks from the front-end for logged in users; internal linking, which lets you easily search for and link to existing content within your site from within the WYSIWYG editor; a standard set of post formats, enabling the creation of tumblelog-type sites; archive pages for custom post types; advanced taxonomy; and custom field queries.

Kernel Source–v2.6.38. http://www.kernel.org/. Free GNU Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community. ✱

PC Cooling - Keep it Cool!

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL, February 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, president@spcug.org

Just like your car, your computer has to be cooled because it generates a lot of heat. Some of the computer's components produce large amounts of heat during operation, and this heat must be **removed** in order to keep these components within their safe operating temperatures. PC Cooling, then, is the process of removing the **heat** from the **computer's components**. Components which produce heat and are susceptible to performance loss and/or damage due to that heat include **integrated circuits**, such as the Central Processing Unit (CPU), **graphics** processors, **chipset**s, and memory. Hard drives also produce heat but typical air flow is usually adequate to keep them within their operating temperature. (Although some of the very fast drives (10,000 rpm), may need additional cooling.)

Most of the heat produced in a computer is generated by the power supply, the CPU and possibly the graphics processor. That's probably where you'll find the additional fans (beyond the normal chassis cooling fans). You might not think such a small electronic chip, the CPU, could generate so much heat, but many modern CPUs need a separate fan mounted on a heat-sink to remove all of the heat generated. Overheated parts generally exhibit a shorter maximum life-span and may give sporadic problems resulting in system freezes or crashes. PC Cooling is mainly done using **heat sinks** to increase the surface area which dissipates heat, **fans** to speed up the exchange of air heated by the computer parts for cooler ambient air, and in some cases soft cooling, or the throttling of the speed of some computer parts in order to decrease heat generation.

First a little thermodynamics review. A heat-sink is an object that moves heat from an object that it is trying to cool, to a lesser hot area or object. It absorbs heat from an object, and transfers that heat to another object or the surrounding air. In the computer, a heat-sink, usually made of aluminum, is placed in direct contact with the CPU chip. A thermal grease is used to help the heat transfer from the CPU chip to the heat-sink. The heat is then typically transferred to the ambient air (the lesser hot area). The heat sink helps cool the CPU by transferring heat from the CPU, at a relatively high temperature, to the ambient air, at a relatively lower temperature. This transfer of heat keeps the CPU from overheating and possibly shutting down. The most common design for a heat-sink is a piece of metal with many fins. The large surface area due to the fins results in the rapid transfer of heat to the surrounding, cooler air. A fan improves the transfer of heat from the heat-sink to the air by moving cooler air between the fins. This is how the combined heat-sink and fan work to cool down the CPU chip.

Now all that may seem a bit academic, but the point is that the components inside the PC must be cooled. You know how good you feel when you turn on a fan on a hot day. The heat-sinks and the fans are necessary for your computer to continue operating. So, if your fans stop or your heat-sinks stop being effective, your computer will eventually stop operating. If a fan stops it is usually easily noticed either by seeing it stopped when the computer is on or the lack of air flowing or the lack of the sound of the fan motor. It's the heat-sinks operation that is hard to determine. The best way to discern the operation of the heat-sink is to look at it. (Yes, that means removing the cover.) It should be nice and shiny and new looking, and not covered with dust or animal hair. Dust covering the heat-sink will impede its ability to transfer heat to the air, even if the fan is moving the air over the dust laden heat-sink.

A visual check of the cleanliness of the heat-sinks every 3 to 6 months is advisable. (Maybe even more often if your computer is in a dusty environment, {like in the corner of a room on a rug}, and/or you have furry pets in the area.) Make sure you unplug the computer before you do this. While you are in there checking, take a can of "dust remover", which is like compressed air, and blow out all of the dust you can see, especially around the CPU heat-sink. Also, make sure all of the inlets and exhaust holes in the case are free from dust and debris so that the normal air flow will not be disturbed. That can of "dust remover" is your best defense against dust buildup both on the heat-sink surfaces, and around the air holes. (Keep a can of dust remover close at hand and give a package of them to your computer owning friends during the holiday season.) Follow the directions on the can. Be especially careful not us hold the can on an angle or upside down, as doing so may force out a flammable freezing liquid. (Note that it is normal to feel the bottom of the can getting cold while the can is blowing air.) If you blow out the dust every 3 to 6 months, your computer should run nice and cool for many years, and you'll be spared some very strange and possibly aggravating problems.

Windows Lab

Use Windows 7 Backup?

By Barney Babin, Cajun Clickers Computer Club (LA) member and instructor for XP, Vista
Workshop and Windows 7, April 2010 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News,
www.clickers.org, ccnewsletter@cox.net

As those of you that have taken my classes know, I am paranoid when it comes to the subject of backup. Windows 7 includes a good backup program that can either take an image of your hard drive or backup selections made by you. I'm assuming here that you understand that you NEVER backup either your image or your individual files and folders to the same hard drive that your Windows operating system is installed upon, which is normally drive of concern during backup. I'm also assuming that all of your programs and data reside in the same partition, normally C Drive.

So, what is an image? An image is an exact copy, think of it as a camera snapshot, of the hard drive, which includes all the programs, the operating system and all your data that you have generated and saved on your hard drive. If your computer ever stops working you can use this system image, which does not allow you to select individual items, to completely restore your system to the state it was in when the image was made, including your programs, operating system, and your created data.

If you're into video tutorials go to the below URLs to view a tutorial on how to create a system image or to view a tutorial on how to backup files and folders of your choice.

http://tinyurl.com/4w94999
http://tinyurl.com/4gjlouq

If you want a step-by-step procedure for a system image, go to the below URLs for the files step-by-step procedure.

http://tinyurl.com/ybfgx7o
http://tinyurl.com/yg46n9u

I strongly recommend, that no matter which procedure you choose, try to save more than one backup. This procedure is normally called generational backups. What this means is that you always have the option of retrieving information from more than one backup. There are times that you do not recognize that your "masterpiece" item, be it document, image, graphic, etc., was modified incorrectly and you do not have the original item saved on your hard drive, only the modified version. That is when a generational backup becomes just as precious as gold. You can browse the backup in the backup and restore window to navigate to the item in question, and retrieve it in its original state, provided that you have retained enough generational backups to be able to do so.

By now you should be asking the question, how often and where? The "how often" depends totally upon your usage patterns, the importance of your documents, such as sentimental value, business associated irreplaceable, etc. which may be daily, biweekly, weekly, etc., but don't extend the time too long because if your system "dies" you only have data from your last backup period and anything from that date to the present instant will be lost, thus frequency of backups can become extremely important.

In my case I backup files and folders as they're created, via a mirroring program, to other hard drives at my house and offsite on the web. I also just copy and paste some items onto flash drives for convenience, fast simple transport, etc. I perform a full image of my drive at least once a day, but remember, I do more things on a computer than you do in my volunteer positions, so your pattern will be totally different than mine.

If you're performing full images, I recommend using external drives, additional internal hard drives, network drives, etc. that will have ample room for multiple backups. If you are backing up certain items only, the Documents folder is usually where everything is saved and will normally be able to be conveniently saved to flash drives, DVD, offsite on the web, or if your total backup size is small a CD.

Never keep these backup devices in close proximity to your computer that generated the backup. Remove them from your house, if possible, store them in a bank vault, store them at work, or store them offsite on the web.

If you are going to use one of the procedures described above, I also recommend that you create a system repair disk, as described at http://tinyurl.com/2c4o4qo. As part of the repair procedure your backups will be recognized on external drives, other hard drives in your computer etc., and will illicit questions on whether you want to restore from these items or not.

Want to know more? Do a Google search on Windows 7 backup tutorials or attend any of my classes where I address the subject of backup in week four of my sessions. ✳

Discovering Windows 7 – Part 14

By Neil Stahfest, Vice President, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington, April 2011 issue, the Data Line, NCStahfest@msn.com, www.tapcug.org

Do you have trouble seeing the text on your computer's display? New computer displays come in a wide range of sizes. Twenty years ago an 800 pixel by 600 pixel display was considered to be pretty high resolution. Modern LCD displays are available in a number of sizes that can range from 1024 by 600 pixels to 1920 by 1080 pixels. By default Windows attempts to match your computer's display setting to the number of pixels in the display to give you the sharpest image possible. Sometimes, particularly if you have a very large display, the text may look to small.

Sometimes, however, your display settings may get changed. If you attach a different display or a projector to your computer may change your settings. When you change back to your original display things may look "different" (icons in new locations and bigger or smaller, text larger or smaller).


Windows 7 makes it easy to check and change your display settings. Just click on the Windows Start button and then the Control Panel. Under Appearance and Personalization, click on Adjust screen resolution. This will produce a window like the one shown here which lets you change the appearance of your display. What we want to look at is the button next to Resolution. As shown, when you click on it a small window with slider appears which shows you the range of settings available to you.

Now that we've" conquered" the subject of video settings, let's talk about file extensions. File extensions are a group of letters at the end of a file name that identifies the type of file for the programs in your computer. For example, if I had a picture on my computer it might be named cat.jpg. The name of the file is cat and the extension .jpg identifies it as a picture file for the Windows Photo Viewer program, as well as other programs that I might have for viewing pictures. Through the magic of Windows, you don't have to specify a particular program to open or view a file. In our example, just double-clicking on cat.jpg will start the right program so I can see the picture of a cat.

I have a new laptop computer. It came with Microsoft Word 2010 on it. My old computer has Word 2003 on it. When you create a document with Word 2010, Word places a file extension of .docx on it. If you create a document using Word 2003 it has a file extension of .doc. Why? Because Microsoft changed something in the way it formats document file with Word 2010. Word 2010 can read .doc files created by Word 2003 but Word 2003 cannot read Word 2010 documents with a .docx file extension. For people like me that use Word 2003 on one computer and Word 2010 on another computer, it means that I can't read documents created on the new computer on my old computer. Fortunately Microsoft has provided a solution. It lets me save documents created with Word 2010 with the format used by Word 2003 (with a .doc file extension) so I work with the same document on both computers.
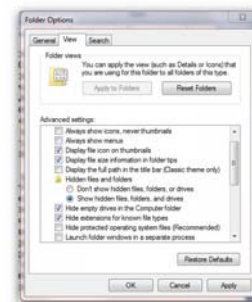
Now we get to Part 2 of my problem. By default Windows 7, as well as other versions of Windows, hides file extensions. This means that by just looking at the name of a document, I can't tell if it was saved as a .doc or .docx file. In older versions of Windows there was a way to unhide file extensions. I did that years ago on my old computer, it was something to do with "folder options" nut I no longer remember how I did it. It doesn't matter. I want to unhide file extensions on my computer with Windows 7. As it turns out, this is very easy.

Start by clicking on the Windows 7 Start Button. In the Search Box that appears above it, type "folder options." In the window that appears above the Search Box we'll see "Folder Options." We can also see that it is located in the Control Panel, but that isn't important right now. Just by double-clicking on "Folder Options" gets us to the Folder Options window. Which is what we want? If we click on the view tab (as shown in the illustration) we see a list of Advanced settings, including one that says "Hide extensions for known file types." Notice the check mark in the box next to it. Click on the box to uncheck it and click "OK" to unhide file extensions.

While we're here in the Folder Options window, notice that there are a lot of other options. I'll leave it to you to explore them. Just remember, if you mess things up, just click on the "Reset Folders" button to restore everything to the default settings. ✳

Microsoft program stores all types of data

By John Weigle, Editor, Channel Islands PCUG, California,January 2011 issue, The Outer Edge, www.cipcug.org, jweigle@vcnet.com

Microsoft's OneNote was one of the subjects discussed by Toby Scott, Channel Islands PCUG Technical Advisor, at their December 2010 program in December.

OneNote has been compared to a three-ring binder as a place to store all types of information in a searchable form. But it's far more useful than just a binder full of paper, as Scott showed in the demonstration.

OneNote first appeared in the Microsoft Office suite in 2003, but not in all versions, he said. It was in most of the versions of Office 2007 and is in all of the 2010 versions, including Home and Student. It is also available as a stand-alone purchase for about $75.

OneNote is the perfect place to store "a tremendous amount of random stuff" in notebooks that can all be examined with a single search, Scott said. Each notebook can have tabs to further divide the information.

Notebooks are listed on the left, and the tabs for a notebook run across the top of the program. Pages can also have sub-pages.

"I probably have 10,000 notes of one kind or another I'd like to be able to get to and some of them I can't find anymore," Scott said. OneNote becomes a central depository for this kind of information, he said.

A notebook could cover plans for a trip, he said. When the trip is over and you don't need it anymore, you can delete it with a right click.

The program is quite flexible, he said, because "you can enter data into OneNote almost any way you can get information into a computer." You can cut and paste information, import Word and Excel documents and copy and paste text from an image (for example, a screen shot). Text in an image is searchable.

OneNote wants to tie into SkyDrive, Microsoft's "to the clouds," he said. It gives you 25 Gig of storage but you cannot store files larger than 50 Meg. Stored items can be personal (private) or shared. Users who put information in a shared folder are immediately asked if they want to send e-mails to notify people that the information is there. Anyone can see the shared files, but they can be password-protected to limit access, he said.

It's also possible to copy entire Web sites, and, while the format of the page does not remain, all links remain live. Those who put data in a shared file can give users permission to edit it, but they, not those who visit the shared folder, have the power to limit and grant access permissions.

The cloud version of Office, which includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, can be used from SkyDrive.

Information entered in OneNote is saved immediately so users don't have to remember to save before closing the program.

A search in OneNote looks through all notebooks, lists where the term is found and highlights it in the opened notebook.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of templates are available for OneNote users, including ones for home, school and business. But, Scott noted, "Not all free template downloads are useful."

Text can be saved from many pictures, such as a screen shot of a DOS box, and copied to another spot in OneNote. A search will find the information in the image whether you've copied it out to text or not (the highlight was hard to see on the DOS screen shot, however). This does not work on heavily artistic graphics, like the CIPCUG logo on the society's Web page, however. "There are limits on what you can pick up," he said.

OneNote also defeats attempts to make copying a Web page impossible, Scott noted. In Vista and Windows 7, you can use the clipping tool to mark the portion of the Web page you want and paste it into OneNote, where it's instantly searchable.

Scott also showed a notebook for work where he stores information on problems that are repetitive but don't come up often enough so fixing them becomes automatic. He stores fix-it information in the notebook and can then search for words matching the problem. He can store registry fixes and similar information, keeping the links live all the time.

Another use, he said, is to gather pricing information from a variety of websites for airline tickets and so on, paste it into OneNote and compare all the data in one place. OneNote also adds a "Pasted from …" tag with information you paste from a website.

OneNote does not pick up CSS formatting and the background images on a Web page so it won't display the information the way you see it on the Web page. Information can also be copied from a PDF file, he said.

Spreadsheets imported from websites are readable, but they don't necessarily import in a spreadsheet format. Scott said that if he wants material from a spreadsheet to be imported into a different spreadsheet, he copies the material into Note Tab Pro. He then does a search for two spaces and replaces them with a tab. He then pastes that material into a spreadsheet, and Excel uses the tabs to create new columns. ✱

You've got them. Why Not Use Them?

**By Vinny La Bash, Regular Columnist of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.,
Sarasota PC Monitor, May 2010 Issue, www.spcug.org, vlabash@comcast.net**

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

People configure their desktops in different ways for an all encompassing assortment of reasons. Most use the Windows defaults which are quite reasonable, but operate from a false assumption that "factory specifications" are enough. Windows has lots of useful features not included in the default settings which could have great benefits, but if one doesn't know the features are there, one can never enjoy these prospective benefits.

Let's start by opening the **Control Panel** and clicking on **Programs**. In the **Programs and Features** section click the Turn **Windows Features on or off**. A dialog box appears which will enable you to turn features on or off. (See illustration).

There's probably much more here than you want, so let's examine several features that you are more likely to use rather than the ones which require professional technical knowledge to be useful.

The Indexing Service

The Indexing Service got a bad reputation in Vista because it was annoyingly slow. There is no doubt that Vista was a resource hog so any service or utility that had additional requirements tended to bog down the system even further. Microsoft resolved the problem in Windows 7 by turning the Indexing Service off by default. That's too bad because the utility can actually be very helpful in locating files and other content through flexible inquiries. Try it, you just may like it.

Internet Information Services (IIS) and Internet Information Services Hostable Web Core

You will not be held accountable if you don't know what these tools do or if you choose to ignore them. **IIS** is mostly regarded as a major component of a server while the **Hostable Web Core** performs fewer functions and needs fewer resources. If you write web based applications or wish to experiment hosting a web site on your desktop, these tools may be essential.

Microsoft Message Queue Server

This utility has been around for years and most application developers have come to ignore it because it's not new. If you send and receive messages on a regular basis with people who are in remote locations on the planet, and have "iffy" connections, you now have a tool to build a message queue, store a message within it, and send it when the connection to the recipient is up and running. You can also create a similar structure for receiving messages. Using this tool effectively requires basic programming skills.

Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP)

Everyone who uses a computer on a regular basis should be concerned about unauthorized access to personal information or attempts to trick people into revealing information which should remain private. If you have a home network, wireless or not, SNMP gives you better control over devices on the network. You can configure hardware, troubleshoot more effectively, and in many cases even track down attempts to crack into your network. This tool requires a working knowledge of how a network operates.

Telnet Client

This is a great diagnostic tool if your email client is acting strangely and normal diagnostics cannot resolve the problem. Turn it on when you need it, and turn it off when you're not using it as there are security issues with it.

These tools are not for everyone, especially those with little computing experience, but your level of knowledge shouldn't remain at the novice stage. Challenge yourself and you won't be like the guy who thinks he has twenty years of experience when in reality all he has is one year of experience twenty times. ✻

Wireless Speakers

If you're an audiophile, listen to wireless speakers before adding them to your entertainment setup to make sure you're comfortable with the sound quality. Some listeners prefer wired audio because it consistently delivers audio to the speakers. Keep in mind that although you can buy wireless speakers at any point, you can't easily wire your home for whole-house audio after construction completes.

Save Money On A PC Purchase

Factor in future expansion options with a new computer. Don't overspend on components you won't use. For example, if you'll primarily use your home-office system to compose Word documents, exchange email, and balance budgets, don't spend hundreds of dollars more for a high-end graphics card, TV tuner, seven-speaker audio system, and pricey Blu-ray Disc drive aimed at gaming and entertainment applications.

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Updates! Updates! Updates!

By Penny Cano, Member and Instructor for the Dumb & Dumber Workshops – Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA, March 2011 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News, www.clickers.org, ccnewsletter@cox.net

"Something popped up on my computer saying I needed an update. I didn't know if it was OK, so I didn't do it." Does this sound familiar? Updates are one of the most important things you can do for your computer. So what needs updating? The answer is almost all the software on your computer. Updates patch security holes that allow access to your computer from outside and correct defects in software programs.

First and foremost is Windows itself. Patches fix security vulnerabilities and program flaws in the Operating System. Most people choose Automatic Updates, which downloads and installs these "fixes" for Windows without them having to worry about it. But Windows is not the only Microsoft program that needs updating. An option you can choose in Microsoft Update allows it to also take care of Microsoft Office suite, Microsoft Works, Windows Live, Silverlight, and a whole host of other Microsoft products installed on your computer that also need updating.
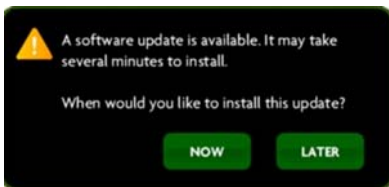
Of equal importance are updates for your Virus/Spyware program or Internet Security suite.

Don't know which one you're using? It's time you found out!! Double click on the icon in the lower right hand corner of the screen and when the program opens look for the date of the latest definition/update. It should be no later than yesterday. The virus program can only remove the "bad stuff" if it can recognize it, and it gets those descriptions in the definitions downloaded from the Internet.

Now what else needs updating? Java, Flashplayer, and Shockwave are three programs that deal with animation on websites. Adobe Reader occasionally has newer versions, but there are updates for the older versions if you prefer to keep them instead of upgrading. Do you have RealPlayer, Quick Time, or iTunes on your computer? Yes, they need updating too. Alternative browsers like Firefox, Chrome, and Safari are on the list. Add e-mail programs like Mozilla Thunderbird and Incredimail. Printer software, Support software from your computer manufacturer like HP Advisor and Dell Support Center, graphics programs like Photoshop….the list is endless.

So how do you determine which update requests to allow? One way is to open the Control Panel and choose "Add Remove Programs" in XP or "Programs and Features" in Vista and Windows 7. Become familiar with the list of programs installed on the computer. (If you can't remember all of them, at least you have a preference.) If one of these programs requests an update (a popup or notification in the lower right hand corner of the screen), the answer is "Yes, thank you for keeping me current."

Some of the programs aren't so accommodating. Many can be manually updated by choosing "Check for Updates" under "Help" on the program's menu. There may also be a choice under "Options" (Settings, Properties, or some such wording) to automate the process.

There is a website that can help you decide. **Http://secunia.com** has an online scanner (use "Scan now" in the upper right corner, "Start Scanner" on the next page, and check "Enable thorough system inspection" on the next page before you hit "Start") that will look at your system and list insecure programs. You can also download Secunia Personal Software Inspector (PSI) free for home users.
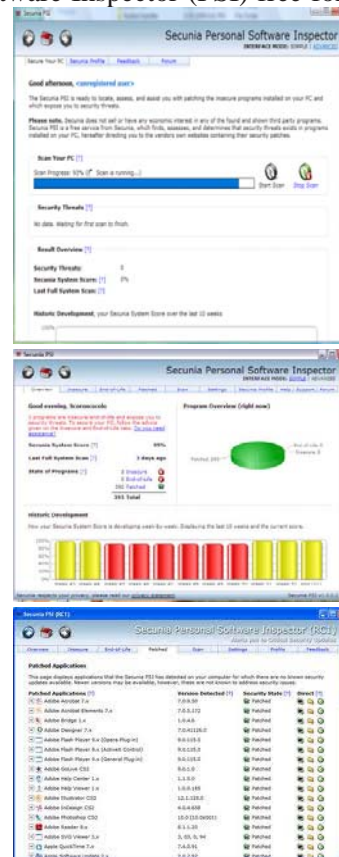
http://filehippo.com is a source for many of the freeware and shareware programs we use (Adobe Reader, iTunes, Firefox, Open Office, AVG Antivirus, etc). You can download their free Update Checker which will also help keep you up to date with the latest versions of that type of software. ✻

Are you Secure?

By Constance Brown, President, Canton/Alliance/Massillon User Group, Ohio, January 2011 issue, The Memory Map, www.camug.org, president@camug.org

Security is one of the most common concerns with today's computer based communications and transactions. How can I secure my personal computer? Should I do banking online or is it safer to write checks and mail them? Is it safe to purchase products online? How much can people learn about me through online access? These questions are some of the most common I hear expressed by my students. Let's look at some of these concerns.

First of all, we need to secure our personal computers. Most of us have high speed access in today's world. If you leave your computer turned on and internet access turned on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, you are more vulnerable than someone who has dial-up access and has to get offline in order to place phone calls. Dial-up is so slow that hackers don't usually want to fool with it and users with that type of service are usually online only short periods of time. Those with high speed connections through DSL or cable can shut off their modems or turn off their computers. I have high speed access and VOIP phone service. So shutting off my modem is not an option for me.

That is one reason I turn off my computer if I am not going to use it for several hours. I also prefer to place my documents on an external drive that I disconnect if I choose to leave the computer running while I go to town.

Your personal computer needs to be protected with anti-virus and anti-spyware programs. It should also be protected with a firewall. One is included with Windows. A router provides an additional level of protection. It plugs into the modem and your computer plugs into it. When some would-be hacker tries to get to your computer, it finds the address of the router instead. Most routers come with programs to protect you. It is often necessary to update the router software to keep the protections as up-to-date as possible.

If you are using a wireless router in order to send signal to other wireless devices, you will want to secure your wireless network with strong encryption and a strong password. When you choose passwords for your network or for your bank accounts and online stores, be sure to choose a strong password with meaning to you but not to others. A word that is not in the dictionary is best.

You will want to mix upper and lower case letters, include numbers, and a special letter if the site allows it. Let's look at a couple of passwords. Here are examples of two commonly chosen passwords that are dreadfully insecure: 123456; abcdefg. Here is an example of a strong password: E4g$jwQy. Normally passwords should be 8 characters or more.

Is online banking secure? Many people pay their bills and monitor accounts regularly online. Banks require the use of a browser with specific standards of security. For example, if you are still using Internet Explorer 6, your bank most likely will not allow you to set up online banking. If anyone uses your computer other than yourself or your spouse, you will most likely NOT want to allow the site to remember your login information. Over the past two years, banks have added levels of security including a picture id of your selection from choices they provide in addition to the login name and password. The only time I would not be comfortable doing banking or providing credit card information for other types of transactions would be in places providing free public Wi-Fi.

Is it safe to make purchases online? Buyer be informed! All major retail companies have online stores. These have securities in place. After all, these corporations have much to lose if their names were soiled by identity theft.

There are quality "Mom and Pop" stores online. And there are thieves, just as in the real world. If you have questions, check with someone more experienced than you before placing your credit card or bank card information with a company online. There are multiple, wonderful companies. There are some frauds.

Beware of emails that pretend to be from the FBI, PayPal, and Amazon, Chase bank or other well-known financial institutions claiming that there may have been fraudulent activity on your account and telling you to click on a link provided in the email to verify your account information. DO NOT DO THIS! If you have questions regarding your account, open a separate browser, type in the address yourself, and then login and check on things. Be sure to forward the email to the fraud division of the company it claims to represent. That is the best way to track down these identity thieves.

How much can people learn about you online? More than you think! Public information has always been available. You used to look up addresses in telephone books. And you could go to the auditor's office to look up information about someone's property. You could look up addresses on maps. Now all that information is readily available through the online white pages and the auditor's web sites. Of course there are many map services. A GPS can guide you precisely to the locations you program into the system. Try "Googling" your name and the city in which you live. You will find references to your comments in the local paper, information about you that is included in online publications and anything else that is public. ✳

Cell Phone Lingo

By Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, CA, March 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes,
The Official Electronic Newsletter of the Seniors Computer Group,
www.SCGsd.org, wilw@adnc.com

When it's time to buy or upgrade to a new cell phone, are you as confused as I am with all the fancy terms and acronyms in the sales pitch? They make my head spin. Some of the terms you will encounter refer to the technology generation of the phone, as in G0 to G5. About every 10 years the next larger G (generation) number appears denoting a major improvement in cell phone technology. Each generation improves the speed, security, power usage, range and reliability of cell phones.

G0 refers to the original mobile telephone, a large unit stored in the car trunk with a hand-set between the driver and passenger seat. Remember those? Essentially it was a souped-up short-wave radio. These first made the scene via Motorola and Bell Telephone in the 50's.

Next came G1 using GMS tech (see below) which also was analog, first introduced in Japan in 1979 and later in the USA in 1983. In 1992, G2 was a major improvement using digital technology vs. analog that was used in G1. So what's the difference? Analog is a continuous smooth signal like whistling a tune. Digital rapidly samples the song and converts each small time segment into a series of ones and zeros, or digits. Through some clever complex calculations, these digits are converted back to the original sound tone and volume. The advantages of digital are that the data can be compressed and encoded for security and no information is lost as long as the 1/0 signal can be detected, even from a lot of accompanying noise.

In 2001, 3G was introduced using a new technology called CDMA (code division multiple access) developed by our local Qualcomm company. This is a very complex encoding that allows many more users on the same channel at the same time. G3 is probably the most common system in use today.

G4 arrived in 2006 and allows 1 Gbt/s (one gigabit per second) downloads from a fixed location or 100 mbt/s (megabits per second) from a moving vehicle. These high speeds allow streaming high-definition video (HD movies) on your cell phone. Also, connections to the Internet are faster and better. G5 is still in the lab and promises even more features, but may not arrive before 2020.

The cell phone field is rampant with 3, 4, and 5 letter acronyms. Here are a few that a salesman may try to impress you with:

- GMS (global mobile system): still widely used in older phones.
- TDMA (time domain multiple access): sharing the airwave in small time slots.
- FDMA (frequency domain multiple access): sharing the airwave in different frequencies.
- CDMA (see above).
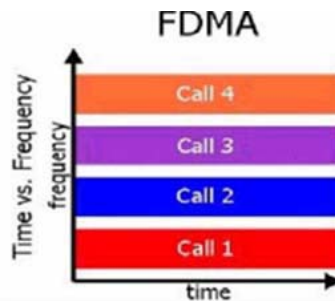
An analogy to the problem of multiple access is a room (channel) in which people wish to talk to each other simultaneously. To avoid confusion, people could take turns speaking (time division), speak at different pitches (frequency division), or speak in different languages (code division). Other terms you may encounter are LTE (long term evolution), OTDMA (orthogonal TDMA) and WiMax (similar to WiFi). These are fancy names for some of the latest improvements in the field. So the best strategy for buying a new cell phone is to read the reviews and then find a salesman you can trust. Some of the above information may help you understand his pitch and also impress him with your knowledge. ✳

Keyboards and Stuff

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., FL, April 2011 issue, Bits of Blue, www.tpcug.org, merle@merlenicholson.com

I've modified and programmed keyboards, trying my best to optimize my time at the computer. Not that I don't enjoy my computer and the things I can accomplish, but, First, I'm a lousy typist, despite having practiced continuously since 1976, and, second, I hate messing with things that are obviously flawed. Keyboards are all flawed, that's a given. Here's how I'm coping.

I pretty much settled, a couple of years ago, on a Logitech Gaming Keyboard model G11. It's been succeeded by a model G510 ($106 at NewEgg), which is only slightly improved from the G11. I'm always on the lookout for new keyboards, but so far I haven't found anything else to excite me. The G11 is distinguished by 18 programmable keys, key backlighting and multimedia controls. The G510 is the same except the backlighting is probably better and it has a small multipurpose LCD screen. It's the backlighting and programmable keys that make it worth it to me. The picture below is the left side, showing the key arrangement and my labels.

You can use these 18 keys in 18 times three ways (54) because there are three buttons at the top of the array – M1, M2 and M3 – that will switch the whole bank of 18 to three sets. So far I haven't found a use for switching the banks. Eighteen seems to be enough, so it stays on M1. Programming is pretty versatile. It accepts macros, shortcuts, functions, text and a scripting language, so I'd guess that you'd be hard pressed to find anything you couldn't program.

The bottom three keys in the picture are pretty obvious: They're a replacement for Ctl+X, C and V. I use these three constantly, since I'm a real believer in cut, copy and paste because I make a lot of mistakes and need to avoid typing as much as possible. The next set up is new for me, marked 1 2 3. They (and cut, copy, paste) don't need labels; I marked them for this article. 1 2 3 run a little program I wrote in VB.NET that will pop the mouse cursor to the center of my monitors 1, 2 and 3 and blip some eye-catching circles. The only disadvantage in using three monitors is finding the mouse and how to get it where you want it. Problem solved: The buttons "Computer", "F:", "G:", "C:" and "D:" all just open Windows Explorer to those drive letters. "UP" moves Windows Explorer up one level in the directory tree, "close" closes the current window (it's really Alt+F4, and a bit hazardous to use). "KP", "outlook", "IE" and "WAtracker" all launch programs and are used perhaps once a day. I'll ditch any of these if I find any other use for the keys. "Date" runs another program I wrote to push the time and date into the clipboard ready for pasting. I use this, well,...sometimes.

There are several other ways to alter keyboards. I've disabled the "Caps Lock" key. It has no effect when pressed. It takes a complicated little registry change to do that, but just think about it; the only time I EVER use the Caps Lock is to switch it off after accidently switching it on. What a waste of keyboard space. Likewise "Scroll Lock." I'll bet not one in ten thousand keyboard users know what Scroll Lock is, and it's on every keyboard waiting for an accidental bump. How about the "Ins" key? Although I probably would not disable it as I did Caps Lock, I'd like to at least disable it from an accidental bump almost all the time.

Now that I'm started on this – let's look at Num Lock. Ok, I'll concede that some people use it. But I do own three keyboards (two on notebooks) that have no numeric keypad. But Num Lock switches an array of character keys to numbers if you don't have a keypad. More than once I've gone crazy knowing that I know the logon password on a computer that wouldn't take. Guess what. The num lock was on, the password used characters U,I,O,J,K,L or M, and being a password wouldn't show up on the screen. Man, I hate that.

What I really want is a 100% fully programmable keyboard program built into Windows. How hard could it be?

There are programmable keyboards. One or two really are 100% programmable. Even some that you just place the key switches wherever you want on a slate. But I don't want it bad enough to pay them $1500!

Pictured above: Logitech G510, NewEgg Item#: N82E16823126100 $106.

Also nice in my living room (think NetFlix): Logitech diNovo Mini Black 63 Normal Keys Bluetooth Wireless Mini keyboard Item#: N82E16823126039 $120. **✳**

The Seventh Son of Windows

The Windows 7 Control Panel

By Lee Reynolds, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL, January 2011 issue, Boca Bits, www.brcs.org, leetutor@exploringwindows.com

Introduction

The overall look of Control Panel in Windows 7 hasn't changed that much from Vista if you look at the two screenshots below:

Window 7 Control Panel

Vista Control Panel

But there are a number of under-the-hood differences.

First, there is no "Classic View" link in the left pane of Control, as there was in Windows XP and Vista. Instead, you click on the "View by" dropdown listbox and select "Large icons" or "Small icons."

Now as you compare all the items in Vista and Windows 7, you will see that there are a number of missing applets, a number of new applets, and a number of modified applets.

Missing Or Replaced Applets Some of the missing applets in Windows 7 are: Add Hardware, People Near Me, and Windows Sidebar Properties. The Welcome Center applet of Vista has been replaced in Windows 7 by one called Getting Started.

Since there are still Gadgets in Windows 7, but no Sidebar to mount them on, the Windows Sidebar Properties applet of Vista has been replaced by Desktop Gadgets. The Printers applet of Vista has been replaced by one called Devices and Printers. Besides printers, this new applet can also handle devices that are connected externally to the computer, including devices connected wirelessly or over the network, through USB cables, Bluetooth, Wireless USB, Wi-Fi or other wireless connections.

System Restore in Vista was one of the tasks in the left pane of the window for the System applet. Under Windows 7, it has its own applet called Recovery.

Windows Security Center is another applet in Vista that has been redistributed differently in Windows 7. Security Center enabled you to handle the Firewall,

Automatic Updating, use of an Anti-virus program and the handling of malware by Windows Defender. It also allowed you to turn on User Account Control if it was disabled.

Vista also had an applet called Problem Reports and Solutions which allowed you to research and report problems in your computer. In Windows 7, most of this is handled in the new applet called Action Center.

New In Windows 7

There are a number of other new applets in Windows 7 with no counterpart in Vista, including:

- ClearType Text Tuner, which helps make the text on the screen easier to read
- Credential Manager, which helps manage user names and passwords and other credentials used to log on to websites, other computers, etc.
- Default Location, which can be used to store your zip code, country/region, and latitude and longitude for use when there is no location sensor such as a GPS receiver attached to the computer
- Display, which allows a choice between Smaller, Medium, and Larger sizes for text and other items to make the screen easier to read
- HomeGroup, which is the new way of sharing data and other resources in a home network environment
- Notification Area Icons, which allows control of which icons and notification messages appear in the Notification Area of the Taskbar
- RemoteApp and Desktop Connections, which allows you to connect to desktops and programs at your workplace; this takes the place of the Remote Desktop and Remote Assistance capabilities of Windows Vista and XP
- System Icons, which allows control of the following icons and notifications in the
- Notification Area of the Taskbar: Clock, Volume, Network, Power, and Action Center
- Troubleshooting, which allows access to various troubleshooting wizards on computer problems under the following general categories: Programs, Hardware and Sound, Network and Internet, Appearance and Personalization, System and Security

Most of the other applets that Vista and Windows 7 have in common have either not changed at all, or have relatively minor differences. ✳

Digital Asset Management Software

By Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, CO, February 2011 issue, k-Byte™newsletter, http://www.frpcug.org, twriterext@gmail.com

What is interesting to me is that many of today's digital imaging software applications offer both image editing and what is called "Digital Asset Management" (DAM) capabilities.

In the not-so-distant past, the only image software choice was what image editor to use (Photoshop or something else). But with the "explosion" of digital camera use, keeping track of all the images (and protecting intellectual property rights) has clearly become a significant issue. While this is certainly an issue especially for professional photographers, with digital cameras, even the most casual photographer will soon find hundreds, if not thousands of photos on their computer.

Perhaps you are thinking, as you read this, that you don't need image management of any kind, because your digital camera provides all the necessary information.

Actually, that is NOT the case. The camera provides information about camera settings (including date and time of the photo). But not included in that data is information such as the event (e.g., parent's 50th wedding anniversary), or the names of the people in the photo. Yes, you may have an excellent memory, but your children and grandchildren probably won't remember or know the names of all the people in the photos of those special events (I can verify that from personal experience).

That is why image management software is so helpful—it allows you to capture that information. You have a wide range of software choices for this application:

1. DigiKam (**http://www.digikam.org/**), an image management application claimed to be designed by photographers, and is open source and therefore free. This application offers both DAM and image editing capabilities (which are significant, although not equivalent to the editing features of Photoshop or GIMP). For Windows users, you can download the Windows version from download (**http://bit.ly/hWfFrt**).

2. DigitalPro (**http://bit.ly/faHwgJ**), also claimed to be designed by photographers, and is proprietary ($179). This application is primarily for image management (and primarily for professional or advanced amateur photographers), not image editing.

3. Bibble Labs (**http://bibblelabs.com/**) Pro (and Lite). This proprietary application ($199.95) offers both editing and DAM features.

One major claim on their website is that this application is faster than any other. For a list of editing tools this application provides, connect to features (**http://bit.ly/82JzsV**).

4. Adobe CS3 (and later) applications. The Adobe Bridge program is bundled with the CSx (the latest release is CS5) series of Adobe products. In my case, I received it when I purchased Adobe InDesign CS3. Adobe Bridge brings DAM features to the Adobe products, all of which, as I am sure you know, are very expensive applications (full retail price for Photoshop CS5 is $699). They are, however, designed for professional/business use, originally commercial printing, but now expanded into electronic publishing as well. The Adobe products (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign among others), despite the many competitors, are still considered industry "standards." For more information on these products, connect to Adobe (**http://www.adobe.com**).

5. Adobe Lightroom. From Wikipedia (**http://bit.ly/3wnGqF**) is this description: Lightroom is an application "...designed to assist professional photographers in managing thousands of digital images and doing post production work. It is not a file browser like Adobe Bridge, but rather an image management application database which helps in viewing, editing, and managing digital photos, the same way photographers used to do in the non-digital world." Connect to Lightroom (**http://adobe.ly/6dBIz**) for a list of features. Full retail price is $299.

6. For the casual computer user/casual photographer, there is Google Picasa (**http://picasa.google.com/**). It offers simple image organizing features and a few simple editing features. It is free, and "automatic." After you download and install the program, it will, when you first launch it, catalog virtually all the images (with a few minor exceptions) on your computer.

7. Most, if not all major camera makers provide some software with their cameras that include some basic image organization and image editing features.

There are many other choices, some of which you can find in the Wikipedia comparisons at: image viewers

(`http://bit.ly/asWUi`), image organizers (`http://bit.ly/CNnwr`), and graphics editors (`http://bit.ly/10xtOU`).

I ended up with Adobe Bridge "by default." Since I make no claim to being a professional photographer, or even (yet) a knowledgeable amateur, I would very probably have picked a free application (such as DigiKam) for "Digital Asset Management" if I didn't already have Bridge.

For me, Picasa does not have enough features. However, I expect it will be sufficient for many digital camera users.

I have not tried to compare in detail either editing features or DAM capabilities of these programs. I have, however, scanned through the DigiKam manual (http://bit.ly/hZaFX9). My conclusion is that if you download and install DigiKam and GIMP, you will have a very powerful, very feature-rich set of image editing and image management tools. ✻

Thanks to FRPCUG member Bert Broekstra for his comments on DigiKam, and for finding the DigiKam PDF manual link.

Service Packs Explained (and needed)

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy@compukiss.com

Although most of us still think of Windows 7 as a brand new operating system, it is, in fact, starting to show its age. Windows 7 made its debut on October 22, 2009. Is one and one-half really old? Well, in the computer world, it is not old, but it is certainly full-grown. One sign of this is that Microsoft has just released the first Service Pack for Windows 7.

A service pack is a collection of updates, bug fixes, and enhancements for a software program. As you know, Microsoft routinely offers updates for their Windows operating systems. These updates come out weekly and they patch or, you might say, repair the operating system so that they remain safe from hackers. They can also include improvements or enhancements to the operating system. At a certain point in time, Microsoft gathers all of those updates, adds any other updates and enhancements they have and issues this batch of updates as a service pack. It is also important to note, that when Microsoft issues a service pack, this service pack also makes sure that all of the updates and enhancements work well together and offer good stability for the operating system.

The question that I am most often asked is this, "If I have installed every update that Microsoft has released, do I still need to install the service pack?" The answer is "yes." Often the service pack contains additional updates and/or enhancements that were not included in the weekly updates. Also, a service pack makes sure that all of the updates are put together properly to make your system run well.

In fact, Microsoft thinks that this is so important that they only support the operating system when it has the proper service packs installed. Each service pack should be installed when it is released. If for some reason, they are installed all at the same time, each is installed sequentially.

So, for Windows XP you should have Service Pack 3 installed. Windows Vista should have Service Pack 2, and Windows 7 should have Service Pack 1. To learn what service pack you have installed, just click on the Start button, right-click on Computer or My Computer, and then click Properties. You will see the service pack listed under the Windows edition.

You can go to the Microsoft website and install a service pack from there, if you happen to be missing one. All service packs from Microsoft are free. If you are using Window 7, the new service pack will be offered to you through Microsoft's automatic update service. This Windows 7 service pack can take up to 30 minutes and will re-boot your computer. I have installed Window 7, Service Pack 1 on several computers without a problem, but you should be aware that installing a service pack is a big update. Microsoft recommends that you back up your computer before installing a service pack. And to be honest, you should be backing up your computer anyway. So if you don't have a backup strategy in place, this is a good time to implement one.

The newest version of Internet Explorer - IE 9 is now in testing and it is already available for free download in a beta version. This is by far, the best version of Internet Explorer that Microsoft has ever released. IE 9 won't run on Windows XP; it requires Windows Vista or Windows 7. Although Microsoft is not requiring Windows 7 Service Release 1 to install IE 9, it is advisable to install this Service Release before you install IE 9.

Service Packs are a fact of life for Windows users. Installing them may be a bit of a pain, but you really need them to make sure that your Windows system is secure and stable and that it performs well. ✻

The Other Side of the Street

By Bill Hart, Member, The PCUG of Connecticut, March 2011 issue, The Program,
www.tpcug-ct.org, adrabinowitzieee.org

When IBM and Microsoft first released OS/2 in the late 1980s I was keen to try it, and even signed up as a Beta tester. I really wanted to be able to run more than one application at a time, and this seemed to offer a chance.

OS/2 could be described as a GUI-based system supporting any number of virtual machines. Open an application and you opened a virtual machine to run it. It accepted both DOS and Windows 3.0 applications. At last I could run more than one application at a time on one machine; I could run long-running simulation runs in one virtual machine while sending and receiving messages and writing documents in two others, Fantastic!

And then Microsoft, who had left the project, struck in their inimitable way. Windows 3.1 subtly changed the interfaces needed for applications to talk to Windows, so when OS/2 users tried to run the new Windows apps they failed – until IBM was able to catch up. Redmond is still doing this; they have not accepted internationally-agreed document formats, but have invented their own, ignoring the rest of the world. Windows Office apps like Excel or Word will still not accept those formats, and Windows does not recognize any other disk format than those developed by TBOR (The Beast Of Redmond).

So I just LOVE Micros**t (supply your own two letters). When OS/2 faded I looked around for a substitute that was not from Redmond – and chose Linux.

Linux is also fantastic, though, being derived from UNIX (so to speak), it has a somewhat different philosophy from OS/2 or DOS. But I can run many applications at once, as I did with OS/2. AND it has a feature that the miser in me loves – it is free. You can download applications without charge; you can, if you are Guru enough, download the source code for applications and modify them to fit your own needs.

Another nice thing: Linux applications used on the Internet are safer than Windows ones. Steve Gibson of Gibson Research Corporation, makers of SpinRite **http://www.grc.com** — take a look) many years ago fell afoul of a hacker who didn't like something he had said and retaliated by putting a "Denial of Service" attack on his site. (That's when you visit a site with an invalid request which takes time to analyze, but you do it so often so quickly that the site is overwhelmed.) During his (successful) exploration to find the perpetrator he discovered that Windows leaves all the ports on the computer CPU open by default — which is why you need something like ZoneAlarm or some other firewall-type product to keep you safe. When he told Redmond about it they just shrugged their shoulders and said they knew, but it didn't matter.

Linux only opens to the outside world those ports on the CPU which are absolutely essential. So I rarely use Windows to surf the Web any more. I said "so far" because I suppose hackers would be more likely to work at attacking Linux if more people were using it. It's much easier to go after Windows users, who are the vast majority.

There are many varieties of Linux. I usually run OpenSuSE on my desktop. A lot of people like Ubuntu. I have tried it more than once, but it has yet to recognize the Wi-Fi equipment built into my laptop. I finally settled on a variety called PCLinuxOS. (**http://www.pclinuxos.com/**). Go to download it, and you are immediately faced with another decision: there are many varieties of desktop available.

Like, say, Windows 95, Linux runs a GUI on top of a basic DOS-type machine. And this means that a number of people, having different ideas of what constitutes a really nice GUI, have made, and offer, their own designs. The two most used are probably KDE and Gnome, but there are, as you can see on the PCLinux site, several others, and you can read a description of each before you choose. But if you want to start somewhere familiar, probably the best to start with is the KDE desktop. It is most like Windows in its appearance and behavior. Its descriptive page on the website says of it:

Features:

- Kernel 2.6.33.7bfs kernel for maximum desktop performance
- Full KDE 4.5.4 Desktop
- Nvidia and ATI fglrx driver support
- Multimedia playback support for many popular formats
- Wireless support for many network devices
- Printer support for many local and networked printer devices
- Addlocale allows you to convert PCLinuxOS into over 60 languages
- GetOpenOffice can install Open Office supporting over 100 languages

- MyLiveCD allows you to take a snapshot of your installation and burn it to a LiveCD/DVD
- PCLinuxOS-liveusb – allows you to install PCLinuxOS on a USB key disk

Sounds a pretty good deal, despite some of the Version Number flack. "Kernel" is the basic Linux system on which this version of PCLinuxOS is founded, "KDE", of course, are supplying the GUI portion and GetOpenOffice will add the free Office Suite to your system. Well worth the price! Anyway, you can experiment if you wish. Download more than one. But make sure they are described as 'LIVE CD'. Those will run entirely from the CD without disturbing your hard disks at all.

Each will come as an ISO file — a CD image which you can burn with Nero or Roxio or whatever you have. You will end with a bootable CD. Insert it in your drive and reboot the computer. It will provide you with a menu of choices of which the top one is usually the one to pick and the bottom is probably 'boot from the hard disk", which will allow you to chicken out if you wish.

And now you are running Linux, without having disturbed anything on your present computer. Reboot and remove the CD, or choose the "Hard Disk" option, and you are back to Redmond's product. But I hope that you will have found, if you explore a bit before doing that, that you have a wide range of applications — an Office Suite, Multimedia players, editors, a few games, and Internet applications like Firefox. Try Firefox and you should find that your Web connection has been recognized and you are able to surf — without bothering about special software to keep you safe from Hacker Harm.   ✳

Add Text on a Photo in Word 2007

By Lynn Page, Editor, Crystal River Users Group, Florida, December 2010 issue, CRUG newsletter, www.crug.com, newsletter@crug.com

When creating a document it may be useful to place text with or on top of a photo. You could create a new photo with the text in a digital photo editing application and then save it for use. But if you will just use that image once why go to the bother. Within Word 2007 you can add the text on top of your photo using either WordArt or a text box. Which method to use depends on the effect desired. For text that is short and an interesting stylized look is what you want WordArt is a good option. For plain and simple text a text box can match the text to that in the rest of the document.

Text Box on Top of a Photo

Placing a text box on a photo can be as easy as inserting the photo, creating a text box and dragging the text box onto the photo.

To add a photo to a document place the insertion point in the document where the photo is to be located and click the Picture icon in the Illustrations group on the Insert tab. Browse to the photo in the Insert Picture dialog box, select it and click the Insert button.

To place a text box on the photo first create the text box. Place the insertion point on a line below the photo. Then in the Text group on the Insert tab, click text box and then click to select Simple Text Box. In the inserted Text Box type the text. To change the font or style of the text, highlight the text and then select the desired text formatting as with any other text. Drag the text box sizing handles to resize it as necessary. Finally click the outside edge of the text box and drag it to the proper location on top of the photo.

The default Text Box will have white fill and a black border. For use over a photo you will probably want no fill color or border. With the Text Box still selected click Text Box Tools and on the Format tab, in the Text Box Styles group, click Shape Fill and select No Fill. Then click Shape Outline and select No Outline.

With the Text Box you can add text on top of a photo and move the text to position it over the photo, but you can't rotate it. To be able to rotate the text or use text that is more stylized use WordArt.

WordArt on Top of a Photo

To place WordArt on the photo first create a Drawing Canvas. Place the insertion point in the document and then in the Illustrations group on the Insert tab open the Shapes drop down menu and click New Drawing Canvas.

With the new drawing canvas still selected on the Insert tab, in the Illustrations group, click Picture. In the dialog box browse to and select the photo to use and click the Insert button. Again on the Insert tab, but in the Text group, click WordArt, select the style desired, and type the text. Select either piece of art and use the sizing handles to resize as desired. Click the outside edge of the WordArt to select it and drag it over the photo. Use the rotation handle to rotate the text to the angle that works best for the photo.

Once the graphics are correctly formatted and positioned group them. That creates a single graphic that can be moved or resized. The text stays with the photo. To create a group click the outside edge of the photo, press and hold the CTRL key, and click the edge of the WordArt so both items are selected. Under Drawing Tools, on the Format tab, in the Arrange group, click the arrow next to Group, and then click Group.   ✳

The Running of the Nerds

By Lou Torraca, President, The TUG MOAA Computer User Group, Hawaii,
www.the-tug.org, Af06hi@gmail.com

No, I wasn't in Spain at the Running of the Bulls...I was in Las Vegas to attend the annual Consumer Electronics Show and yes, I was one of the thundering herd going from press event to press event, starting on Tuesday, January 4.

Those of you who remember my last years review will recall that there are a number of events designed to get the media (and now, also, bloggers) together with selected vendors as well as individual press conferences by vendors, some of which began on Tuesday. The big day for press conferences is Wednesday, beginning at 7AM and continuing all day for 45 minutes each, allowing the running to commence before each new conference. The somewhat smaller, but not much, are the Tuesday afternoon, CES Unveiled, Wednesday evening Digital Experience, Thursday and Friday Lunch at Pieros and Thursday evening Showstoppers. The lunches at Pieros are probably the most productive as the number of invitees and vendors is more practical allowing time to find out more from the vendors. This years CES reportedly attracted 140,000 people to browse 2,700 or so booths. BTW, if you are a tablet fan or an iPod owner you had 85 clones to view and evaluate. And it you wanted anything to use with your iPad, there were iPad cases, iPad holders, iPad keyboards, iPad chargers, iPad alarm clocks, and who knows, what all, but of course, no iPad!

Two things that were widely hyped were 3D TV and linking everything! I'm honestly not much of a fan of 3D TV...who wants to buy a box full of glasses so you can invite your 20 buddies to watch the Super Bowl? And no glasses 3D is a loser...you have to sit perfectly in the middle of the screen for it to work. I also don't care for using a 75" screen to do computer stuff...but maybe that's just me {:-) Just to put some of this in perspective, there was a press conference by a company that makes high-end 3D glasses that do all sorts of things (and cost $1K or more!)

I attended all of the above, so I'll give you a quick list of some interesting things I saw and continue with more, the next couple times.

First is in the health category, a big one this year concentrating on linking to many different media and allowing a lot of freedom for those who are getting on and live alone.

Withings is back with another health tracking product. This time, instead of tracking your weight and body fat, it tracks your blood pressure. They call it the Smart Blood Pressure Monitor.

Instant Measurement

Simply connect the Withings monitor to your iOS Device. The Withings application runs automatically and makes the measurement available with a single action.

Clear results

Detailed results are displayed, and the application will indicate the recommended values, using all the display qualities of the iOS Device.

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Clear results

Detailed results are displayed, and the application will indicate the recommended values, using all the display qualities of the iOS Device.

Automatic Saving

All results are saved for a precise monitoring of your health. There's no need to note down results, calculate averages and transmit them. The Withings monitor does all this for you.

Health monitored from your pocket

Automatically traced curves facilitate the detection of trends in the blink of an eye. Morning/evening values and subsequent average values are clearly displayed for effective monitoring.

Lenovo was showing off a full range of notebooks but the most impressive was the Lenovo U1 notebook/tablet hybrid. Presented was an i5 laptop running Windows 7 with a screen/tablet running Android. The tablet could be removed and replaced in under 5 seconds and without powering off. Currently available overseas, the U1 should be coming to the USA in the coming months.

Kingston Digital, Inc., the Flash memory affiliate of Kingston Technology Company, Inc., the independent world leader in memory products, announced the SDHC UHS-I UltimateXX memory cards. The highest speed class available today, the UltimateXX meets standards set by the Secure Digital Association for next level performance in SD card technology.

Shipping later this month, Kingston's UltimateXX memory cards are ideal for the serious photographer or videographer. Photographers will appreciate the ability to easily capture sequential shots that were once a challenge due to the speed limitations of memory. The UltimateXX also makes it easy to capture HD video. The performance of SDHC UHS-I memory card is optimized when paired with a UHS-I device, although the card is backwards compatible with Class 4, 6 and 10 equipment. "Kingston is pleased to be one of the first manufacturers to offer SDHC UHS-I memory cards to our customers," said Mike Kuppinger, Flash card product manager, Kingston®. "Being a member of the SD Association enhances our ability to bring new technology to market. As the devices that support SDHC UHS-I become prevalent, our UtilimateXX cards are at the ready." Kingston's UltimateXX line meets the SD Association standards for the UHS-1 speed class with speeds up to 60MB/sec. read and 35MB/sec. Write. At this performance level, the write speed of SDHC UHS-I memory cards is more than three times as fast as SDHC Class 10 cards. The UltimateXX product line will offer capabilities of GB, 16GB and 32GB.

Now here is one you weren't expecting. Laundry pre-treaters will collect dust thanks to the new Maytag® Maxima™ washer. Its Power Wash™ System takes out tough stains and provides better overall

cleaning performance while using less detergent. The system's features include Optimal Dispense which injects detergent intermittently throughout the washer's fill time and industry-first, Power-Spray, to provide enhanced cleaning by spraying the detergent solution evenly on the washer's contents.

I have LoJack on my laptop, but since I use the netbook on all my trips, it seemed the smart thing to do to add it to the netbook as well, after my talk with the Absolute Software folks at Lunch at Pieros.

What's Your Digital Net Worth?

Think about it. How many songs have you downloaded onto your laptop? How many movies? Combined with the initial cost of your computer, most people have a digital net worth that could easily run into thousands of dollars. Not to mention the priceless value of photos, personal information, correspondence, coursework and other irreplaceable items. So what are you doing to protect your investment?

When your laptop is stolen, you can feel powerless. But you don't have to. LoJack® for Laptops by Absolute Software is a computer theft recovery service with remote device and data security features. If your laptop is stolen or missing, you've got the power to remotely block access to it and the personal data it contains, while their dedicated Theft Recovery Team works to recover it for you.

Now for you 4G fans...Motorola has a really neat combo. The Atrix...a phone and a laptop, except it's not really a laptop. You have to snap the phone into this really good looking, sleek, thin and light (2.4 lbs) laptop/dock. The phone provides the processor, memory, Internet connection and, all your photos, videos, music and files. Whatever was on the phone's screen is now on the laptop, plus you gain a trackpad and full keyboard. No synch is necessary, it's all on the phone.

As a user of an ASUS Netbook, I was pleased to receive an invitation to the ASUS press conference on Jan 4. The following are my best picks:

ASUS Eee Pad Slider

Mobile users who want the best of both tablet and traditional notebook worlds will be well served by the Eee Pad Slider. This pad computer not only features a 10.1" IPS touch-screen for finger-friendly use, but also a slide-out QWERTY keyboard for comfortable, use-anywhere typing. It is powered by the NVIDIA® Tegra™ 2, the world's most advanced mobile processor with a dual-core CPU and NVIDIA® GeForce® GPU for never-before-seen experiences on a mobile device. Built-in digital cameras on the front (1.2MP) and rear (5MP) of the Slider allow for easy video chat and digital photography while the Android® 3.0 operating system makes sharing photos by internet, email and social media sites a breeze. The intuitive interface provides user-friendly control via the capacitive touch-screen and optional onboard 3G allows for go-anywhere internet access, making the Slider the ideal device for mobile professionals with work-oriented needs.

ASUS Eee Pad Transformer

With a slim lightweight design and 10.1" capacitive touch-screen, the versatile Eee Pad Transformer is the perfect pad computer for people who want to enjoy multimedia on the move, but still wish to have easy access to the web, email and other productivity applications. A custom user interface provides easy access to the many features of the Android® 3.0 operating system, while the NVIDIA®

Tegra™ 2 chipset provides full support for Adobe Flash, smooth HD video conferencing and playback, a lightning fast web experience and incredible mobile gaming performance. An optional docking station turns the Transformer into a full-fledged notebook with a QWERTY keyboard for desktop use, while extending battery life up to 16 hours. As with the Slider, front (1.2MP) and rear (5MP) digital cameras make for easy video chat and digital photography, while a built-in mini-HDMI port makes for easy connections to external displays showing off full 1080p HD video playback.

ASUS Eee Pad MeMO

The Eee Pad MeMO provides the ultimate in mobile flexibility. Its 7.1" capacitive touch-screen makes it small enough to slip into a jacket pocket, yet still perfect for taking handwritten notes using the supplied stylus pen. The Android® 3.0 operating system offers a wide range of productivity and entertainment software, while a Micro HDMI port means the MeMO can even connect to an external display for full 1080p HD video playback.

ASUS Eee Slate EP121

The Eee Slate EP121 is designed for users who require a highly portable handheld device that can also run standard office software while multitasking with other applications. Powered with an Intel® Core™ i5 dual-core processor, the Eee Slate features a 12.1" LED-backlit display with a 1280 x 800 resolution and a wide 178° viewing angle, making it perfectly suited for both productivity applications and multimedia entertainment. Windows® 7 Home Premium ensures full compatibility with a wide range of popular applications controlled by flexible input options thanks to the Eee Slate.

The capacitive touch-screen responds instantly to fingertip control for day-to-day use, while the capacitive stylus offers fine precision input and control. An on-screen keyboard is also complimented by support for an external Bluetooth keyboard for traditional desktop use. The Eee Slate is available with 32GB or 64GB of SSD storage (expandable via SDXC), and up to 4GB of DDR3 RAM. All models have 802.11n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 3.0, a 2-megapixel camera, plus two USB 2.0 ports that provide full support for a wide range of standard PC peripherals, along with a mini-HDMI port that is ideal for connecting to external displays.

Finally, my fav…and in the interest of full disclosure, I have to tell u I now own a 2011 Ford Fiesta that looks just like the one above and I do really enjoy it and am still learning all the details of my Sync. Ford showed off the newest update for Sync at CES 2011. The update adds a new feature called AppLink to sync. Installing AppLink to your Fiesta is done just like applying any update. You log into Syncmyride, download the file with the update to a flash drive and then plug the flash drive into your car's USB port.

Once the update is done, you can hit the voice button, say "Mobile applications", and then tell sync what app to launch. The AppLink update will work with the iPhone, Android devices, and Blackberry smartphones. No apps for the iPhone are offered right now, but there will be support in early 2011 according to Ford. The first apps for the iPhone and the other two devices are Pandora, Stitcher, and OpenBeak for Blackberry devices only.

With Pandora, the driver will be able to launch the app with their voice, tune to specific stations using their voice and rate songs using their voice and more. This is a really cool new feature and Ford will be rolling the app out to other Sync cars in 2011.

So there u have a few things to ponder…stay tuned for more in my next columns. Be safe out there in the www and remember to be careful.   *

Aloha, Lou

You can read Lou's monthly column at **http://www.aroundhawaii.com/technology_in_plain_english.html/http://bit.ly/f3TQ5t**

Software Review – UbuntuOne

By Drew Kwashnak, Director, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, January 2011 issue, DACS.doc, a Computer and Technology Newsletter, www.dacs.org, akwashnak@dacs.org

Computers are great, aren't they? What else can help you lose so many files, pictures and home videos so easily? When you have more than one computer, then you have double the chance of losing anything (plus your sanity)!

That's where the Internet comes to help. The folks who bring you the Ubuntu Linux distribution have made a great product that helps organize and keep your files where you can find them. They call it …

Despite the "One" in its name, UbuntuOne is two components; the installed application that comes installed on each Ubuntu Linux release since 8.04 LTS, and the site located on Canonical servers on the Internet. The real magic, though, is where these two components meet.

Typically, online file storage requires you to install their application and set a single directory to synchronize with your account. UbuntuOne, on the other hand, is already installed on Ubuntu. Instead of selecting a single directory to synchronize with your online space, you can select a number of existing or new directories to synchronize. In this way, you can keep your documents in your Documents directory, pictures in your Pictures directory and anything you want in any directory. When a file is added, deleted or updated, the system automatically synchronizes the changes with your online location, depending on Internet access.

The beauty of this stands out when you have more than one Ubuntu system connected to your UbuntuOne account. First, when you point Ubuntu to your UbuntuOne account, whatever directories you had set to synchronize before will be automatically set to synchronize on your new system as well. No need to remember which directories are set and which ones are not.

Afterward, whichever system modifies a file in a flagged directory, that change will automatically be updated in all other systems connecting to your account. So you can make a slide show presentation on your desktop and have it automatically updated on the laptop the next time it logs in to UbuntuOne over the Internet, and vice versa. If you don't have Internet access then, then it will synchronize the next time it is able to connect.

All the while, you still have a web interface available that allows you to upload files, add directories and delete files from any computer with a browser, and have it automatically update your Ubuntu systems the next time they synchronize. You can even download or publish files from your UbuntuOne account through this interface. Published files are accessible to other people, without having to grant them access to all of your files.

This is where UbuntuOne pulls ahead of the other sites with features they just don't have. Ubuntu synchronizes more than just files.

If your monitor is outlined by sticky notes like a lion's mane, you will be happy to learn that Ubuntu includes a note taking application, Tomboy. Tomboy notes, combined with UbuntuOne, synchronize just as easily as your files. For those times you are not in front of your Ubuntu Linux machines, you can use the web interface to add, update and delete your notes, which will be updated on your systems the next time they are synchronized.

Have you ever wanted to send an email and find you have it on your other machine? Just as Notes can be synchronized with UbuntuOne and edited through a web browser, so are your contacts stored in Ubuntu's default email client, Evolution. Evolution is an email, calendar, task and contacts application similar to Microsoft's Outlook, except the address book can be automatically synchronized with UbuntuOne.

Even better, UbuntuOne now offers UbuntuOne Mobile that allows you to synchronize your contacts with your iPhone, Android, Blackberry or any of the 1,000 of phones supported. One address book to rule them all!

With a Firefox Add On called Bindwood, your bookmarks can be synchronized with your UbuntuOne account. So by signing into one simple account you can get your files, notes, contacts and bookmarks automatically synchronized across multiple machines, or all of your information put back onto a fresh installation or upgrade. Yet UbuntuOne does more than just file storage and synchronization.

With version 10.04 LTS, Lucid Lynx, the people from UbuntuOne introduced the UbuntuOne Music Store. This

combines the default music player Rythmbox with an online music store so you can browse, buy and play your music, through the same application. Songs bought are high quality 256 kbps or higher DRM-free MP3s and are placed in your UbuntuOne account. It is then accessible and downloadable by all of your Ubuntu Linux systems. Don't worry about running out of space either, there is no storage limit to the music you purchase.

Not only can you buy, store and access your music from any of your Ubuntu Linux systems, UbuntuOne Mobile allows you to stream your own music from your account, uploaded and purchased, to your iPhone or Android phone. So now your music can be stored in one location, and accessed by your computers and your phone.

Don't think they are done adding features, either. Currently the UbuntuOne team is working on a beta version that runs on Microsoft Windows as well as adding to UbuntuOne Mobile the ability to automatically synchronize pictures taken with your smart phone.

I know what you are thinking, how much does all of this cost? The free basic account gives you 2 GB of space free. This allows you to synchronize your files, contacts, bookmarks and tasks between all of your Ubuntu Linux systems and to use the web interface. More space can be purchased as a 20-pack; 20 GB blocks of additional storage space for $2.99 per month or $29.99 per year. Purchased music synchronizes with all accounts, and if the combination of music and files puts you over your limit, it doesn't stop you from buying more music. You are not able to add any more files to your UbuntuOne account until either your combined files and music are removed to fit within your storage space, or your storage space is increased to more than the combined files. UbuntuOne Mobile includes the Contact synchronization as well as music streaming capabilities for $3.99 per month or $39.99 per year.

Support for Windows is still in the early stages of Beta, but if you are interested in getting involved, more information is available at `https://wiki.ubuntu.com/UbuntuOne/Windows`.

It's very early, and only allows synchronizing the Ubuntu One folder manually unless you make it a scheduled task. The ability to synchronize other folders, contacts, bookmarks and notes are on the project's To Do list.

If nothing else, UbuntuOne makes it easy to backup and store files, music and pictures while at the same time making it so simple to restore these to a replacement, new or updated system. On a personal note, I have been using UbuntuOne to keeps files on my desktop and laptop in sync and it has been doing a wonderful job. This and other articles have been saved in a synchronized folder and I have had no problems accessing and updating the files from one system to the other. With the basic version and Ubuntu Linux free of charge, why not give it a spin and try it out for yourself?

For more information, go to `https://one.ubuntu.com/` ✻

Drew Kwashnak has been using Ubuntu off-and-on for over 5 years now, and with the way UbuntuOne is helping keep his files accessible and in check, it looks like he may be sticking with Ubuntu for a while now.
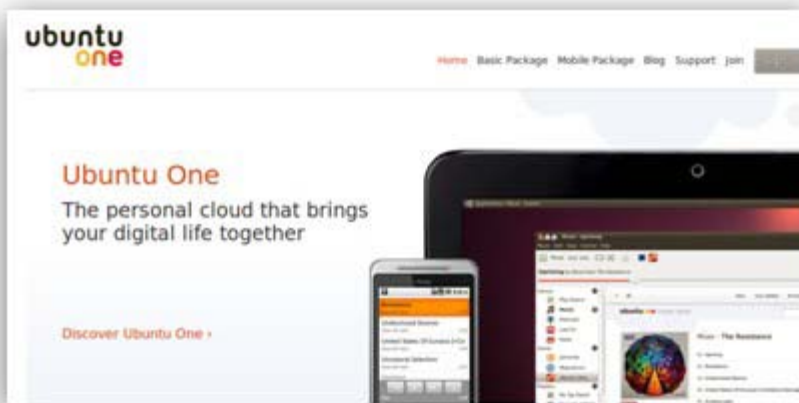
Remember to attend the User Group Picnic,
see page 2 for details

Acronis True Image Home 2011

A software review by Herb Goldstein, Editor, Sarasota PCUG, Florida,November 2010 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, pcugedit@Verizon.net

Nightmares can come in abundant varieties, but the day you turn on your computer and nothing happens you are in for a whole new meaning of the word. As your heart sinks somewhere around the level of your shoes, visions of years of accumulated files, data, and software flash before your eyes as the sudden realization that maybe it's all gone nauseatingly sinks in. Are we talking about a rare occurrence? Unfortunately, it's a lot more common than you might think. Computers and their component hard drives are, after all, man-made electronic devices that are subject to an enormous variety of glitches. Preparing yourself for the inevitable day they visit you is the name of the game called *BACKUP!*

Yes, decent backup software used regularly needs to be the very first thing installed on your computer after its operation system! To do otherwise is an invitation to the disaster than time along will inevitably visit upon you!

Backup software comes in a variety of types but it is commonly recognized that "imaging" is the most complete and accurate. Only imaging produces a byte-for-byte true reproduction of the contents of your original hard drive. Leading popularity in the world of imaging backup software today is Acronis True Imagine Home 2011. My True Image backups have, on at least 5 occasions for me over the years, restored dead computer/hard drives to full functionality from an otherwise total loss. A veritable electronic lifesaver!

Acronis True Image Home 2011 is currently available for free trial download at Acronis.com. You are urged to try it and put it through its paces before purchasing. Some careful reading and using is necessary to employ it properly. In addition, it comes with a "Swiss-army knife" of extra utilities that greatly increase its functionality when properly used. Acronis offers enough trial time for you to familiarize yourself with the software.

To use True Image Home 2011 most effectively you should setup a regular schedule of automatic backups. Personally, I have elected to perform a full backup every 14 days implemented with a regular differential backup daily. Regular scheduled differential or incremental backups take hardly any time at all and can keep your backups current on a daily (or whatever interval you elect) basis. It is essentially a simple "set it and forget" automatic procedure. Once your backups have been created, you can easily restore any part or all of it as necessary. Although you can elect to backup only your email or other specific data files, it is highly recommended that you backup your entire hard drive which allows you to restore its entirety or individual files as necessary.

Your backups should be placed on an external USB-connected hard drive of more than adequate size to accommodate them. Such drives are readily available today at relatively modest expense. For safety's sake, you can also easily disconnect and store them at a different location from your computer if you so desire.

If you were to use True Image Home 2011 only for routine backups and restores it would be worth its entire cost, but its passel of new and improved utilities make it an easily worthwhile investment.

Predefined backup schemes designed for specific user needs – from a disk space-efficient scheme suitable for users with limited backup storage capabilities to a scheme for those users who need higher security for their data and system. The program offers different backup schemes for disk and file type backups. You just select a scheme and the program automatically manages your backups. In addition, you can create a custom backup scheme which will exactly suit your needs.

Check points – The Acronis Backup Explorer timeline shows Windows and software installation and update dates. Moving your mouse over a check point opens a balloon with information about the update or software. With check points you can check the changes to your system and recover the system to a specific backed up state.

A Non-Stop Backup feature automatically creates incremental backups every five minutes, allowing users to roll back their system, files, and folders to any point in time. In addition, you can now use the Acronis Secure zone as Nonstop Backup storage. This may be desirable for notebook users with a single hard drive; however, it defeats the purpose of keeping your backup separate and apart from your current hard drive in case it fails.

A Try-And-Decide feature allows temporary trial installation of new software which permits you to consequently completely eliminate it before any system changes are made.

Acronis Online Backup permits offsite continuous backup online to an Internet location.

A new and attractive graphical interface makes for easier program manipulation. Windows 7 is sully supported in all program aspects. A Plus Pack option, which allows you to restore your PC to dissimilar hardware regardless of make, model, or installed components, or to a virtual machine.

While the software contains a "cloning" feature to copy your hard drive contents to a new drive, you are advised instead to restore a backup image of your old drive to a new

one. The cloning feature can get somewhat "sticky" and is best avoided.

An Erase feature allows to completely and permanently erase the contents of your hard drive. This is a must for safety sake before disposing of a hard drive.

Automatic update notification. By default, True Image Home 2011 will automatically inquire about the availability of a program update at every program start. When an update is available, Acronis True Image 2011 will offer to download and install it. You can also check for availability of updates manually through the Help menu. This current, highly useful feature makes updating a much easier and more convenient process.

New backup Explorer. Now you can use the Acronis Backup explorer's time line for exploring not only Acronis Nonstop Backup and Acronis Online Backup contents, but contents of all other backups as well. Clicking My backups in the main window will show all your backups on the time line. In addition, you can start recovery of disks and partitions right from the time line.

Enhanced scheduler. The completely redesigned scheduler makes scheduling much easier. In addition, it now allows you to wake up the sleeping/hibernating computer to perform a backup. The "At system shutdown" and "At user logoff" options are now available to users of Windows Vista and Windows 7.

Drag & Drop functionality. You can recover backup up files by dragging them from Acronis Time Explorer to your Desktop or a folder on your choice. In addition, you can create shortcuts for backups by dragging their boxes from the My backups area on the main screen to your Desktop. This will allow you to run a backup by simply double-clicking on its shortcut. You can also create shortcuts for frequently used Acronis tools by dragging their icons from the Start menu to the Desktop.

Integration with windows 7 Control Panel. True Image Home 2011 replaces Windows Backup in the Backup and restore item. The Backup and restore window will show the Nonstop Backup and your oldest disk or partition backup. You will be able to recover the backed up date, refresh the backups, and pause/start Nonstop Backup directly from the Control Panel.

Over a period of many years, SPCUG has been served by our backup guru and Acronis representative, Gene Barlow and his wife Linda. They have provided us with backup presentations, advice and assistance and Acronis software at a substantial discount. You can purchase this excellent product from Gene for about half the normal list price by going to his secure web site at **www.ugr.com**.
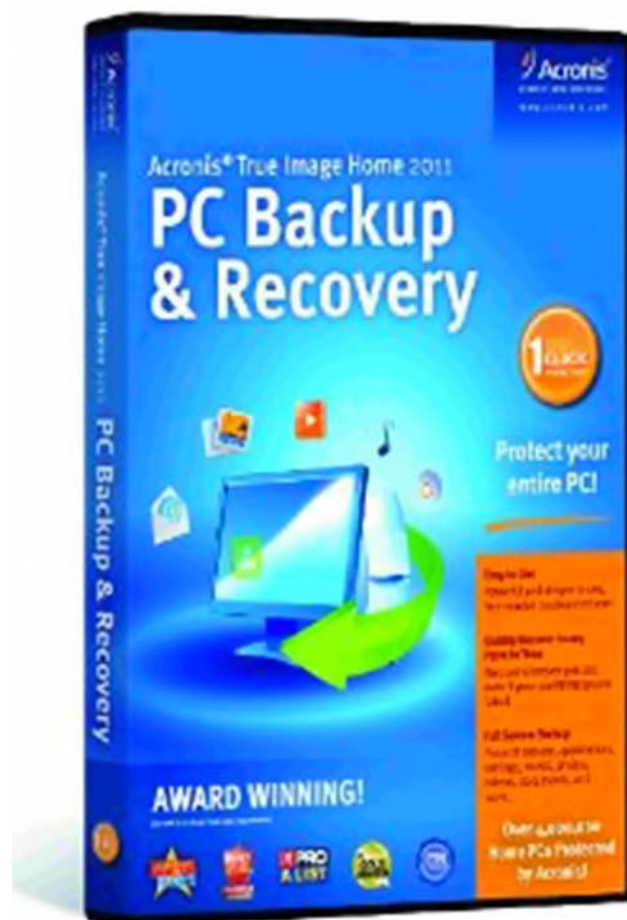
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