

TOGGLE

THE MICROCOMPUTER TURN (ON)

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UPDATE

Club Dues Reduced to \$24

by Carl Tenning

In order to simplify the record keeping it has been suggested that the club dues be renewed in January for all members. This would eliminate the need to check through the mailing list each month to highlight those who are 'DUE' or 'OVERDUE' and also eliminate the need for the newsletter editor to wait for the emailing of an updated list each month, except in the case of a new member added to the list.

In order to facilitate this, the Board has approved reducing the yearly dues to \$24.

Payment in January would cover the 12 months February through the following January. Thus, a member who now renews in November is already paid through November and would pay \$4 for renewal through January 2012, then in January, would renew again for \$24. Alternatively they could pay \$28 in November to renew through January 2013. It is recommended that members currently renewing in December pay \$26 for renewal through January 2013. Members who would normally renew February through September 2012 would pay as follows through January 2013:

Renewal Month	Amount
February 2012	\$22
March 2012	\$20
April 2012	\$18
May 2012	\$16
June 2012	\$14
July 2012	\$12
August 2012	\$10
September 2012	\$8

Thereafter, all renewals would be \$24 in January each year.

There is not enough room in this month's newsletter to summarize the articles in the newsletter so we will forgo that feature this month.



BEGINNER'S NOTES & TIPS

When Disaster Strikes, Smile! ...because you will be OK.

By Gregory West, October 2011 QBITS,

For more tips visit his Blog: gregorywest.wordpress.com
Gregory@alternatecloud.com

Have you ever deleted photos from a camera or computer by mistake? A friend of mine called me recently after going through a "catastrophe," as he called his situation.

It happened about midway over the Atlantic Ocean, thirty-seven thousand feet up. He was sitting in his seat with not much to do so he decided to check the photos on his digital camera. All these photos were from this trip to Portugal, a trip that involved hiking in the wilderness and visiting old buildings. You can only imagine some of his prized photos.

I think you know where I am going with this... Yes, while looking at the photos, clicking from one to the next, he inadvertently deleted not just a couple of photos, every photo from his trip was gone in one simple click. After checking and double checking he knew it was fruitless to look further; the photos vanished.

When he got home he called and told me about this situation.

"That's no problem," I tried to reassure him, I explained that there is a software recovery program that people use in such cases with much success. The voice at the other end of the line was silent. I knew he didn't think this process was possible. After he recovered every single photo from his vacation he couldn't thank me enough.

However, my tale doesn't end there. I had a similar problem where a new SD (photo storage card in camera) failed to produce 250 pictures and some video clips.

After taking a deep breath I remembered the advice I had doled out and quickly downloaded a copy of *Recuva*, a recovery program that is free and works. Within no time I had all my pictures and video clips stored on my computer, thanks to *Recuva*.

The moral of this story is when you delete photos, music from an MP3 player, or data from your computer, remember that it is possible to recover the data. Don't say it will never happen because you are careful, I am sure it has happened to the best of us.

To avoid a similar "catastrophe" you need to have a recovery software program installed on your computer. One of the best recovery programs around is called: *Recuva*. As an added bonus this program is free and it comes "highly" recommended.

You can read the reviews here: cnet.co/filehelp How does it work? *Recuva* scans your drives for the files you need and "recovers them in a flash" (www.piriform.com). Even if the files are partially damaged "Recuva will show you a list of files it has found on the drive, and give you an estimate of the likelihood of success of recovering them." You can't ask for much more.

Let's not forget when we delete those important emails. Yes you can recover them too, *Recuva* says that, "The email program doesn't delete the email or emails to the Windows Recycle Bin, but rather empties its own internal trash or Recycle Bin.

I use word processing software every day. And yes I have lost documents that I have spent hours, working on, and never got them back. That is until I discovered *Recuva*, They assure us that their software "can intelligently rebuild Word documents from their temporary files.

We all can agree for the most part that weddings, graduations, and other such special events are best remembered with lots of photos. Music downloaded to your MP3 player is a treasure chest to cherish, While those word documents on the hard drive on your computer are from hours of work, you dare not lose them any more.

To find out more and to get your free copy of *Recuva*, go to this website: www.piriform.com/download.

Here's a comment Greg received on his blog, "*Recuva* is an excellent program, like most of the software from Piriform. However, there is a caveat. Once you realize that you may have inadvertently deleted data, whether it is on your computer, thumb drive, or flash card, it is imperative NOT to use the device! Recovery is possible, but if your operating system writes over what has been deleted, you may not be able to "recuva" what's been deleted." - 2 PC Geeks Computer Repair, Virginia

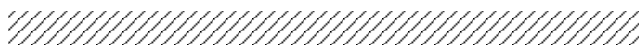


Photo Stitch

Submitted by George Holloway, ACGNJ News, Sept 2011

Daves Computer Tips (<http://www.davescomputertips.com/>) provides free tips, help, and tricks for computer users, along with a free newsletter for computer users.

<http://www.myphotostitch.com/>

With this site it's easy and free to convert any photo, sketch, drawing, or other image into a cross stitch pattern. Photo cross stitches make fun projects, impressive gifts, and unique keep-sakes. Make cross stitches based on children's drawings, vacation photos, famous works of art, and more. Best of all, this service is completely free! You can make as many cross stitch patterns as you'd like, and stitch them yourself or send them to friends and family.

COMMUNICATIONS NOTES & TIPS

Tracking the Latest Information on Anything

by John Weigle, Channel Islands PCUG, CA
The Outer Edge, August 2001
www.cipug.org jweigle@vcnet.com

If you want to keep track of the latest news and Web postings on specific subjects, give Google Alerts a try.

I've been using the feature for some time to track three subjects I'm interested in: UFOs, Annette Funicello and Sally Field. I've been interested in UFOs since the early 1950's, a fan of Annette since the Mickey Mouse Club Days and a fan of Field since her first TV appearance as Gidget. So now you know three of my not-very-secret "secrets."

Google explains its alerts this way at <http://www.google.com/alerts>: "Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic."

"Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- monitoring a developing news story.
- keeping current on a competitor or industry
- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams."

When you create an alert you'll be asked to choose the topic for it, the type of information you want (everything, news, blogs, videos, discussions); how often you want alerts (as-it-happens, once a day, once a week); volume (only the best results, all results); and your email address so you can get the alerts. The fault choices are everything, once a day and only the best results. Consider starting with the defaults and then tweaking them if the results you get aren't what you expected.

You might also have to tweak your selected topic. My search for Annette is "Annette Funicello" (in the quotes). That limits results to items with her full name. On the other hand, my Sally Field search is just that (no quotes around the name), so I get everything with Sally and Field, which results in a few unexpected results. My UFO search results in news about unidentified flying objects, my intent, and the musical group UFO.

I haven't set up searches for computer-related items because I get several electronic newsletters that keep me informed about most of the technical subjects I'm interested in, but it's easy to establish queries for any subject you're interested in. For instance, you could use "Linux, Ubuntu," Microsoft, "Steve Jobs," "Bill Gates."

Or you could try your own name or the name of your business if you wanted to know what people are saying about you or your business.

And if you're a sports fan, you might want to track everything said about your favorite team(s). You'd need to set up a separate alert for each team name.

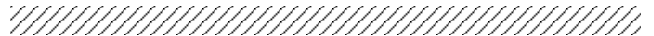
The site lets you set up an alert and then shows sample results for it. Just for kicks, I tried my first and last name (in quotes) and got references to my Facebook page, an obituary for a John Weigle of Augusta, Ga. (I still get spam about real estate deals in Augusta), and the Weigle Music Ministries, which I had never heard of.

A search for CIPCUG showed only the CIPCUG Web site.

Not surprisingly, a search for "Los Angeles Dodgers" resulted in more hits than any of my other test searches. Topics that get lots of news coverage, such as the Dodgers, are obviously going to have more results than people or topics that are seldom in the news.

All the results have live links to whatever the alert finds.

The alerts tool isn't for everyone, but it's useful if you have any interests you want to track regularly.



SugarSync - Sweet Synchronization Solution

Vinny LaBash (labash (at) spcug.org), Sarasota PCUG FL
(www.spcug.org)

There was once a time when having a rotary telephone put you in the front lines of innovation. That was long ago and modern communications technology is as far advanced from that day as communicating by smoke signal. If you have any combination of desktop computer, laptop, smart phone, tablet, and whatever, you need some way to coordinate information so that every device you own has the same up-to-date information.

One way to make sure all your files are equally up-to-date is using a popular cloud based utility known as Dropbox. However, there is another lesser known tool that gives you more for less. We're talking about SugarSync which is constantly evolving into a service similar to Dropbox, but with better mobile support, advanced file control, and superior price performance.

When you open your account at www.sugarsync.com, you supply a user name and password and then install the application. As long as you're connected to the Internet, the files you drag into your local Sugarsync folder magically appear on all PCs, laptops, phones, and iPads that also have Sugarsync installed and are attached to the same Sugarsync account. The files also appear online when you sign into the Sugarsync site and specify the same user name and password.

SugarSync sets up your system to start backing up your data as soon as you initiate the program. Don't worry, it won't do anything without your permission, and there is no need to be concerned about your information getting out of control. The interface is clunky compared to the more intuitive IE browser window which is one of few downsides to SugarSync.

The developers are probably still concerned about legacy issues, a fear that will probably disappear over time, but may cost them customers before it's eliminated.

Support for mobile devices is nothing less than outstanding. It supports more mobile devices than any other product. If you're using Windows 7 or Symbian, SugarSync is there for you. These platforms may be relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of things today, but if you happen to use one of them SugarSync should be of interest.

SugarSync has a unique design feature for your Pictures folder. Of course synchronizing and viewing pictures from mobile devices is supported, but the process is treated as much more than a casual concession to photo buffs. It does more than backup your pictures. It creates online galleries to share with colleagues and friends. You don't have to back up your photographs to one location and upload them. If you take a picture with your mobile device it's automatically sent to SugarSync and downloaded to your computer. The gallery layout is superb for a web-based product, and the photo viewers are excellent.

Music lovers will appreciate their MP3 files following them like puppy dogs. The computer does not have to be turned on because music files are being streamed from SugarSync. Audiophiles can listen to music no matter where they are. SugarSync continuously backs up your files in real time, not just once or twice a day. So if you edit a document in the morning, and accidentally delete it in the afternoon you can restore it quickly with no hassles. The program stores the five latest versions of any backed up file so it's not a quandary if you need an earlier version. The downside to this is that five versions of multiple files can take up a lot of storage. The upside is that only the most recent version of a file is counted toward your storage quota.

If you are having trouble thinking of some uses for SugarSync here are some suggestions:

- ♦ Inadvertently overwriting a file is no longer a potential disaster a SugarSync keeps a copy of the older file making restoration easy and painless.
- ♦ Many people treasure their old photographs. Keeping pictures safely backed up in digital format means storing them as long as necessary with no deterioration in quality.
- ♦ Roboform users can synchronize passwords safely and securely.
- ♦ You can retrieve files no matter where you are or what device you happen to be using.
- ♦ Share folders with family members. Any great vacation pictures, new additions to the family, celebrations, and other memorable events are instantly available.
- ♦ Listen to music anywhere.
- ♦ Synchronize documents such invoices across multiple devices. Accountants will love it.
- ♦ SugarSync can act as an insurance policy against losing important information. Backups are no longer a hassle or a nuisance.

Are you Secure?

Constance Brown (president (at) camug.org), Canton/
Alliance/Massillon User Group (www.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.

HARDWARE NOTES & TIPS

Testing Memory

By Vinny LaBash, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

July 2011 issue, Sarasota Monitor

<http://www.spcug.org> labash (at) spcug.org

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.

From a strictly technical perspective, memory is any form of electronic storage. You probably know the computer you use every day has memory. Other everyday devices also use similar types of electronic memory. Your TV, car radio, washing machine, wrist watch, and cell phone are a few examples. Physical memory is both a necessary and useful component of modern computers. If your computer’s CPU were compelled to access the hard drive for every piece of data it wanted, its speed would be glacial. Memory is so useful that when something happens to affect it we notice it immediately. It’s a little like atmospheric oxygen, unobtrusive and invisible. Take it away and we know instantly that something has gone horribly wrong.

Memory failures can be among the most difficult hardware problems to diagnose because so many other things can act like memory malfunctions. If your system was put together with a motherboard populated with less than first-class components like low quality liquid fueled capacitors, they might swell and burst even under normal usage. Lockups, USB ports which refuse to work for no apparent reason, blue screens of death, and error messages pointing to memory failures are among some of the breakdowns that can occur. Video pauses and application crashes are additional symptoms that can afflict your PC, and their cause may not have anything to do with a memory crash.

Excess heat can cause the CPU to malfunction in ways that generate error messages flatly stating that memory is the culprit. The CPU will inexplicably drop pages from memory after the CPU just asked for those pages. The CPU gets confused and produces an error message accusing the memory chips of causing a ‘‘Fatal Exception.’’ If that’s not misleading enough, messages stating that certain memory pages were never received can appear on the screen.

Strange behavior alone is not proof of a memory problem, but don’t be hasty to dismiss the possibility. Memory problems do cause lockups and blue screens of death for no apparent reason. How can one differentiate between a memory crash and something doing a plausible imitation?

Sometimes the BIOS can help. Your BIOS should tell you how much memory you have installed. Many memory failures show up in the BIOS as a loss of installed memory. A high quality motherboard will have a BIOS that will report the amount of memory in each slot. With some careful sleuthing

you can easily calculate how much memory should be in each slot, and use that information to find the memory module that's causing the problem.

There is a free advanced memory test available based on the original Memtest86. Download it from <http://www.memtest86.org>. This is probably the best memory testing tool you could hope to find, free or otherwise, but with all things that seem too good to be true, there are trade-offs. Some of your computer's memory must be accessed by the utility while the tool is running and that range of memory can't be tested. Another downside is that the tool requires you to shut down the computer and run the test from a boot disk. Don't let that stop you from using Memtest86. Use it according to directions and you will resolve problems that would otherwise be beyond the capabilities of ordinary mortals.

Memory failures can prevent the system from starting up completely. Your machine may attempt to help you by issuing a series of diagnostic beeps on attempted startup. There is no standard for diagnostic beeps so they vary with each manufacturer. You will have to access the manufacturer's web site to translate the series of beeps to meaningful information. It's essential to read the documentation for the motherboard and the BIOS. Some machines don't beep at all; with others a single beep indicates a memory refresh failure.

In a surprising number of cases a memory module has merely worked its way loose over time and is no longer seated properly in its slot. It takes only a few minutes to reseat the memory. If that doesn't help, remove one of the memory modules and turn the machine back on. If the problem persists, replace the module, remove a different module, and repeat until the system starts again. The module most recently removed is the guilty party. You may not be able to use this method if your machine insists that the modules be installed in pairs.

Lastly, don't over-clock your PC without proper ventilation or a reliable method to keep your vital components cool.

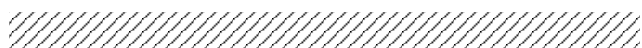


Image Retention on an LCD Monitor

Linda Gonse (editor (at) orcopug.org), Orange County
PCUGCA (www.orcopug.org)

I just bought a brand new HP ZR22w LCD flat screen monitor. My understanding always has been that burn-in (also called image retention or image persistence) does not occur on LCD screens. But, an HP help file that came with my monitor dispelled that notion.

“Image retention occurs when the monitor is left ON while displaying the same image for an extended period of time, leaving a shadow of this image on the screen.”

I researched the burn-in problem further and About.com,

<http://bit.ly/k05cID>, said “Image retention can be corrected in most cases and is easily prevented.” That statement was a relief!

The article went on to list methods that could be used to prevent image retention/persistence.

1. “Set the screen to turn off after a few minutes of screen idle time under the Power functions in Windows. Turning the monitor display off will prevent an image from being displayed on the screen for extended periods of time. Of course, this could be annoying to some people as the screen may go off more than they wish.”
2. “Use a screen saver that either rotates, has moving graphic images or is blank. This also prevents an image for being displayed in screen for too long.”
3. “Rotate any background images on the desktop. Background images are one of the most common causes for image persistence. By switching backgrounds every day or few days, it should reduce the change of persistence.”
4. “Turn off the monitor when the system is not in use. This will prevent any problems where the screen saver or power function fails to turn off the screen and result in an image sitting on the screen for long times.”

The bottom line is not to be too worried about image burn-in, but keep it in mind when using your LCD monitor and you can easily prevent it from happening. If somehow it does happen, see <http://bit.ly/k05cID> for instructions on how to correct existing image retention on LCD monitors.

Finally, the HP text helpfully revealed another problem not known to all LCD monitor users, “the fluorescent lights inside the display have a limited lifetime and will gradually degrade.” This is reason enough not to leave a monitor on 24/7, even with a screensaver enabled. Use the timed Energy/Power setting to automatically turn the monitor off when your system is idle for a while.

TOGGLE Editor's Recollection:

During the first years of Tacoma Open Group's meetings, one of our members, Jim Enright, acquired a 30 inch or so green screen monitor to display to the group what a presenter was doing. We hooked it to an Osborne computer because that was the computer-de-jour at the time and it mimicked the Osborne display so that all could see it. Jim brought it to the Parkland Library basement meeting room where we held our meetings. (We stored it at the library between meetings because it was too bulky and heavy to lug to meetings.) The large monitor, had been used at the airport to list arrivals and departures and, because it had been used to list airline schedules and was “on” 24-7, much of the schedule info was permanently burned into the screen.

SOFTWARE NOTES AND TIPS

An App - What It Is and What It Does

by Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS www.compukiss.com
Sandy@compukiss.com via 6 <http://gsbug.apcug.org> June 2011

An app can be found on the iPhone and the iPad as well as many other smart phones and tablet PCs. In fact, Apple's introduction of the idea of apps in 2008 is what made smart phones and tablet PCs so popular. Up until that time, we were all used to full-blown programs like those that run on a computer. Most of these pro-grams contain millions of lines of code, have numerous functions, and have menus that open up to reveal a multitude of choices.

In contrast, an app is a little mini program that has one basic function. It is an expression in sim-plicity. A good app does only one thing and it does it very quickly and easily. There are no nested menus and there are very few choices to make. One similarity between a full-blown program and an app is that both can be started by an icon that you choose by using a mouse or by pressing your finger on the screen.

One of the best things about apps are that they are easy to use. The true beauty of the apps, however lies in their variety. There are hundreds of thousands of apps, but you don't have to use them all. You can choose only the ones you want. A computer program may be able to handle 100 different functions. Even if you only want to use one of those functions, you still have to install the entire program. Apps are different. You only install the ones you need.

However, like computer pro-grams, apps are specific to an operating system. For example, a program that is created for the Mac will not run on a PC. An app that was created for the iPhone will not work on an An-droid phone. Each operating sys-tem has their own App Store or Marketplace where you can download apps. Many apps are free. Many are under \$2.

Right now there is a large selection of apps for the Apple iPhone and iPad at the iTunes App Store. BlackBerry, Google (Android), Microsoft, Nokia, and Samsung all offer apps through their own app storefronts.

If you have never used a smart phone or a tablet PC that uses apps, you will be amazed by the sheer number and variety of apps. Apple has over 300,000 apps in their App Store. Google has more than 200,000 in their marketplace.

Because of the wide variety of apps, it is difficult to talk about them all, but let me give you a quick idea of what an app can do. Using an app, you can you express your artist abilities, play the piano, or visit with your Facebook friends. You can turn your phone into a level to get that picture straight, or turn it into a light saber and become a savior of the universe.

There are apps to let you play games, find recipes, read news, get stock quotes, follow sports, shop, and compare prices. There are apps that help you re-lax, time the steeping of your tea, identify any song, tune your guitar, and even match the color of any object to a paint color.

Yes, there is an app that will help you do almost anything. And people are using these apps in numbers that seem almost un-imaginable. The Apple app store opened on July 10, 2008, and it has already had over 10,000,000,000 downloads. The wild popularity of apps will entrench that word in the technical dictionaries for many years to come.

WORD PROCESSING NOTES & TIPS

Best 6 Freebies That Deal With PDF Files

by Kim Kommando

The Portable Document Format is a great idea. It's one standard file format that holds any information you need. Plus, you can open it on any computer with little hassle.

Unfortunately, PDF files don't always live up to your expectations. They can be hard to create and modify. Well, look no further than these excellent and free PDF programs.

Convert a PDF to Word document (www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=69)- Editing PDF files isn't always easy. Buying Adobe's editing software can cost you hundreds of dollars. It would be nice if there were a free way.

That's why I recommend the free PDF to Word. It will convert your PDF files to .DOC or .RTF formats. You can then edit the files in Word or another word processor.

Convert a PDF to Excel file (www.komando.com/cool/sites/index.aspx?id=11326) - Converting documents is all well and good. However, many financial PDFs would work better in a spreadsheet. How can you get them into Microsoft Excel?

Just visit the site PDF to Excel. Upload your PDF file and you'll get an Excel file back in a snap. It's fast and free.

Merge, delete pages, watermark and other tools for PDF files (www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=11)- Editing PDF files directly can take some doing. Most editing programs are expensive. Not this program though.

It has three separate programs: PDF Tools, PDF Writer and PDF Editor. PDF Tools gives you 15 options for modifying PDF files. You can merge multiple files, split a single file or reorder pages. It lets you add water-marks and much more.

PDF Writer allows you to create PDF files. It works like a printer. Just select it when you're printing a document. It creates a new PDF with minimal hassle.

PDF Editor is what it claims to be: a full-fledged PDF editor. You can edit text, add and remove content and more. The free version of PDF Editor will add a PDFFill watermark to your saved documents. There is a paid version that removes the watermark.

Edit a PDF (www.komando.com/downloads/category.aspx?id=9467) - What if you want to edit a PDF in a word processor? You could convert it to a Word document using an online service. Then you could open it in Word and, next, find a way to recreate the PDF. But why not do it all with one program?

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PC Problems You Can Fix

Tips from the Cajun Clickers (www.clickers.org)

Ever notice how your PC has multiple personalities? In the course of a week, your computer may act friendly, moody, and sometimes downright mean. However, don't take a hammer to your PC just yet. The following is a list of common symptoms and treatments to help even the most troublesome PCs. You don't even have to be a psychologist (at least not yet) to deal with your PC's neuroses. Windows 7 and Windows Vista usually manage this automatically, but overall you'll find that these tips work for all versions of Windows, from Windows 95 to Windows 7: <http://tinyurl.com/y8m8en6>

Music -- Capture it, Organize it and Enjoy it - Part 1

by Phil Sorrentino, Sarasota Personal Computer User Group, (<http://www.spcug.org/>)

Music in the past was captured and made available on analog sources and played back on analog devices. Those analog sources were tubes (in Thomas Edison's times), record disks (78s, 45s and 33 1/3 vinyl), and finally tapes (reel-to-reel, 8 track, and cassette). And they were played on a phonograph (circa late 1870s), a turntable (spanning the 20th century) or a tape machine (spanning the late 20th century). All those devices were engineered to convert the analog music on the source media to sound that eventually hit our ears. Analog music was the capture of some sort of wiggle, like the wiggle of a turntable needle or stylus, or the wiggle of a magnetic field on a magnetic tape. The quality of the music we experienced improved all along the time that analog music was available, finally culminating in High Fidelity, Stereophonic Sound. Stereophonic because there are two tracks, one for the right and one for the left, to match the hearing mechanisms on our head, one on the right and one on the left. High Fidelity is the property of reproducing all of the music frequencies that were originally produced by the original source, like a singer's voice, or a rock and roll band, or a symphony orchestra. The frequency response of the human ear is about 20 Hz to around 16,000 Hz (although sometimes it is stated as 20 to 20k). These are general ranges and as we age, the lower limit tends to rise and the upper limit tends to be lowered. (By the way, if someone is exposed to very high intensity sounds or noises {measured in decibels}, their hearing range could be affected. In fact, sounds greater than somewhere around 100 decibels {db} can produce permanent damage to ones hearing range.) So, High Fidelity Stereo was developed to deliver two channels, each with about a 20 to 16,000 Hz frequency range. What more could you ask for. (Well, actually now with digital reproduction you can have much more, like 5.1 surround sound, but that is a subject for another time.)

Enough of the past, now on to the digital music age. One of the differences between analog and digital sources of music is the fact that with an analog source, the music quality deteriorates with each play. Each time a record or tape is played, some of the range of the music is lost. But with digital sources (digital files), the quality always remains the same. Go ahead and play away. The reason for this is that the digital representation for music is just a series of ones and zeros (which is reproduced exactly with every Copy). As long as that series is reproduced (and the process that interprets the ones and zeros doesn't change), then the results, the music, will always be the same. So, once we get the music, we have it at that quality, for good. But how is digital music created? What is the source? And what devices are used to reproduce it.

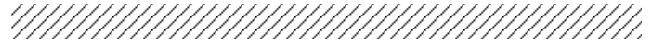
The recording process starts with (analog) microphones which produce a small analog signal. This signal is amplified and then digitized. From this point on everything is digital,

therefore perfectly reproducible. Digitization produces a file that has been engineered to contain the complete audible frequency range. This is the .wav file that is on the CD that is purchased. The CD becomes the source for the music. (Today, most music is distributed on CDs, although more and more music is being downloaded to computers for eventual listening.) Typically there are about 15 songs on a CD, but with the capacity of a CD (700 MB) and the average size of a song (35MB), you might get as many as 20 or 21 songs on a CD. So, if CDs are the source of the music, a CD player is the device that is used to reproduce the music. CD players come in two basic varieties, stereo cabinet type to be used with a stereo system maybe in the family room, and portables for use on the go. Some larger stereo cabinet models can hold as many as 400 CDs and provide a place to store all the CDs (without their cases). Now that's how the digital music is produced, distributed, and played, but what about MP3s? Well, an MP3 file is the result of processing a WAV file with an MP3 conversion program, the product of which is much smaller than the original. (WMA is another file type similar to MP3 that has been introduced and used by Microsoft.) MP3 files are typically one tenth the size of the corresponding WAV file. The resultant file size can vary because there are settings used by the MP3 conversion program. The MP3 conversion process is a Lossy conversion, that is, some of the quality can be lost in the conversion. The quality is selected by choosing a bit rate for the conversion. For music this rate typically goes from 128 kbps (considered near CD quality) up to around 320 kbps (for those audiophiles that have very good hearing and reproduction systems). There are also lower qualities for low frequency range (voice only), files which are 32 kbps and 64 kbps. The lower the quality, the smaller the size of the MP3 file, and similarly, the higher the quality, the larger the file size. Some people might be able to detect the difference between a 128 kbps quality and a 320 kbps quality, but if you cannot then the smaller file would be a better choice. (If you're not sure if you can detect the difference, create an MP3 of one of your favorite CDs at two different bit rates and then play each one and see if you can tell the difference. If you can tell the difference, use the higher bit rate as your quality setting.)

So, with that bit of background, we are able to discuss the process of converting songs on a CD to MP3 files. This process is called Ripping a CD. (Don't blame me, I didn't name it.) The process does nothing like its name implies, it simply converts the WAV file on the CD to an MP3 file on the computer, at the chosen quality. Ripping can be done with many programs like Windows Media Player, Musicmatch Jukebox, Audacity, and Winamp. (Windows Media Player (WMP) which comes with all Windows Operating Systems will be used here in examples.) To Rip a CD, place the CD in the CD/DVD reader/writer tray, start WMP, and click Rip on the top Selection Bar. It's that easy. A list of the files on the CD will be shown with a checked check box for each. If you don't want one of the songs, uncheck the box. When the conversion is finished you will have an MP3 file for each of the checked

songs. Typically, the MP3 files will be in a Folder with the name of the CD Album, within a Folder for the Artist within the folder that was setup as the Rip Folder. From this folder, you can move or copy the songs to a library folder. Most people will probably use the Music (or My Music) folder that is part of Windows for this.

Next month we'll discuss organizing the Library to take advantage of the fruits of your (possibly) considerable labor in creating the music files. And don't forget: backup all that music regularly, so you don't have to go through that process again.



Music - Capture it, Organize it and Enjoy it - Part 2

Phil Sorrentino, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc. (<http://www.spcug.org/>)

Last month we discussed the History of digital music and how it is created. Now it's time to organize that Music and create a Music Folder so that it can be the repository of all the music you Rip, purchase, or convert from analog sources; basically your Music Library. There are many ways of organizing the Music folder with sub folders. Before we do that it is probably worth a review of the data that is kept with each music file to see if it can be of any use in determining the organization of these folders. What data? you say. Well along with the actual music, in each music file, there is data that describes the music part of the file. This type of data is called metadata.

So, metadata is data that describes other data (in this case the music). The music metadata is called ID3 Tag Data and is defined by the ID3v2 specification. ID3 Tag Data includes descriptive items such as: title, artist, album, track number, genre, year, copyright, stereo, length, composer, rating, etc., as well as album cover art graphics. ID3 Tag Data is created when the original MP3 data file is created. The ID3 Tag Data is not easily modified unless you use an ID3 Tag Editor like MP3Tag, which was discussed in the March 2010 issue of the Monitor. (In short, MP3Tag allows the user to modify the ID3 Tag Data that is created along with the MP3 file when a tune is initially created, or ripped from a CD.) The reason that ID3 Tag Data is important is because Music players, like Windows Media Player (WMP) and iTunes use the ID3 Tag Data to organize and present your music library. A music tune will show up according to the ID3 Tag Data, which may not be where you think it should show up if you are only looking at the file name. This will probably not be a problem if all of your tunes come from CDs or are downloaded, but if you convert any from vinyl or tape to MP3, the ID3 Tag Data may not be what you think it should be. Also, if you want to change where particular artists show up, you might have to change the ID3 Tag Data for that artist. Some CD compilations of tunes have the artist as "Various Artists", which will put that tune under "V", probably not where you would expect to find it. So, it's

good to have an ID3 Tag Editor so you can make any changes to the ID Tag Data to put the tunes in the places you want them. Once the tunes that need changes to the ID3 Tag Data are changed, the library will be presented as you expected, typically artists or songs alphabetically arranged, although, you can also view the library based on other items such as Genre, Album, Year, or even Rating. Rating is a number that you give to a tune, typically one to five. The Rating can then help you find a tune or present a specific view of your music library. (For example, you could show all the tunes with a rating of 4 or better.)

So the ID3 Tag Data determines how the music library will be presented, but we still may want to organize the underlying folders for convenience. This is not necessary, but it might allow the music to be viewed easily (using Windows Explorer), without using a Music Player. When CDs are Ripped, they are put into folders for the Artist, with the Album being a sub-folder. You might continue this and just put all the Artist folders into a Music folder. Then, it would be easy to find any tune with just the Artist and Album names. This is in general a very good way to organize your Music Folder. The only difficulties that might arise are those associated with converted tapes and disks, but you will just have to see how best they can each fit into your overall scheme. A simpler, but less desirable scheme might be just one Music Folder with every tune included. The tunes would then be alphabetically arranged by the file name. This can lead to one very big file, but for small Music Libraries, this may be acceptable. You could even create separate music Folders for specific music genres, like Music-Big Band, Music-Country, Music-Pop; it's really your choice.

Playlists are next. Now that we have a Folder organization for our Music Folder, we can take advantage of that organization to find tunes to include in Playlists. Playlists are just as you would expect, they are lists of tunes to Play, without any manual intervention. Playlists can include as many tunes as you would like, only limited by the number of tunes in your library. You could easily create a playlist that would last all day. Playlist files are another file type. The original playlist file type is M3U. WMP can be set to use M3U but prefers another Microsoft file type, WPL. M3U has a very simple file structure which is just a text list of files. WPL is a little more complex and probably a little more capable and written in HTML. Both work fine and it is impossible to tell which is being used without looking at the file types. If you have no reason to prefer one over the other, use your Music Player's default type. (Either file can be modified using Notepad, not Wordpad or Word, if necessary. Notepad is a simple text editor that does not include any formatting information.) This should not be undertaken lightly. Modifying a file with a text editor should only be done with great caution, and only by a person who is confident of the file structure. An error in the file structure may make the file non-useable, so do this only if absolutely necessary. Once you have decided on the Playlist file type, or just accepted to use the default, you can start to create Playlists. Just think of

a theme and then find all the tunes that support that theme. Using WMP, playlists are easily created by showing the Library in any view, such as by Artist, and then dragging-and-dropping the tunes for the Playlist over to the Playlist pane on the right side of the screen. After you have all the tunes in the list, give it a name and save it and that's all there is to it. While you're at it you might want to create a Playlist for each Artist so that you can review all of the tunes for that specific artist. In this case, the artist is the theme. You might even like this playlist for "an evening with a Sinatra, or Elvis, or the Beatles".

Now you're ready to take advantage of all that music entertainment, laboriously stored in the Music Folders. One last item to consider is using your music on other machines on your network. If you don't have a home network now, you probably will in the future. For simplicity and convenience it makes sense to have only one Music Folder, kept on your main computer (acting as a Music Server), and to use it on every other machine on your network. This way there is only one Music Folder to be backed-up. WMP can easily be set up for Sharing Media. Select Tools-Library-Configure Sharing, and check the Share Media check box. Then choose the devices, on the network, to Allow sharing of music. This will allow other machines to use the media in the Server's Music Library. By the way, all of the music in your Music Library can also be used on any of the portable MP3 music players, like Apple's iPod or SanDisk's Clip. WMP provides the ability to "Sync" your music to a portable device. Briefly, to share a Playlist, plug your device into a USB port and choose Sync on the Selection Bar, choose the playlist and select Sync. (Obviously, the memory in the portable device must be large enough to hold all the tuned in the playlist.)

Recorded music is only about 133 years old if we consider Edison's invention in 1877 as its practical beginning.

(There were earlier patents on devices that could record but not playback the recording.) Recorded music has come a long way from Edison's time to the present when almost any recorded music can be obtained and stored indefinitely on our personal computers, and then played and shared almost effortlessly. The computer, besides all of its other jobs, can be a great music entertainment center. If you haven't started yet, what are you waiting for? Get started creating your own Music Library so you and your family can enjoy the fruits of the past 133 years and your current efforts.

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TACOMA MEETING

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Where: SE Tacoma Community Centre
1614 99th Street E.
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From I-5 take Exit 127 (Hwy 512) to Portland Ave., north on Portland to 99th, left over tracks. Building is on south side.

Future Dates: 2nd Monday of Month

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Deadline: 15th of this month to appear in next months' issue, if room

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How To get To The Meeting

For those readers still unfamiliar with how to find our meeting place we have reproduced the map showing its relationship in Tacoma to Portland Ave S. and the 512 Freeway. The 512 Freeway can be entered from I-5 in Tacoma on the west or from Hwy 167 in Puyallup on the east. Proceed to Portland off-ramp and turn north to 99th Street. Some folks in the middle of Tacoma may prefer to take Portland southbound to 99th. At 99th turn west over the tracks and there you are!



TOGGLE

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PROGRAMS

This Month's Meeting

This will be a regular monthly meeting. Meeting discussions are always interesting and the ever-popular Q&A (Question & Answer) period is sure to pique your interest, come up to your expectations and tickle your fancy. Come and share your own experiences, problems and discoveries.

This month's program has not been announced at press time however the change in dues month will certainly be discussed and explained further if needed. Other topics are sure to be discussed.