TOGGLE

THE MICROCOMPUTER TURN (ON)

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR TACOMA-SEATTLE AREA MICROCOMPUTERUSERS

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

TOG Sunset?

by Carl Tenning, TOG President

The ''Tacoma Open Group For Microcomputers'' is now over 31 years old. It started out in June 1981 as the Tacoma Osborne Group. After the IBM PC and others emerged, the name of the club was changed to ''Tacoma Open Group For Microcomputers''. In the last few years membership and meeting attendance have been declining. Meeting attendance was only eight in both July and August of this year and only six at the September 2012 meeting.

An election of officers was supposed to be held at the May meeting of this year, but no one stepped forward to offer their services. Thus, we continue operating with the previously elected officers, President, Treasurer, Librarian, and Newsletter Editor. No one has filled the position of Vice President/Program Chairman for at least two years now. So, the question arises, should we continue on?

The club, however, is on firm financial ground with sufficient funds to continue operation as we are now for about three years even if we were to discontinue collecting yearly dues. Thus, the proposal was made by the Treasurer at the September 2012 meeting to discontinue collecting membership dues beginning in January 2013. However, until funds are depleted, we will continue to publish and distribute our newsletter, the TOGGLE, both in hard copy to presently paid up members and online on our website: *www. toggle.org*.

A vote on this proposal will be taken at the November 2012 meeting.

In the event that this proposal is approved, (1) membership dues will be terminated without penalty as of January 2013 for all active members; (2) we will continue publishing the printed newsletter and it will continue to be mailed out to members existing at that time; (3) new members will not receive a printed newsletter through the mail, but may elect to receive one at the monthly meeting; (4) the club will continue the TOG web site and will post the newsletter on that site, as it is now.

Please come to November 12, 2012 meeting to express your views and vote on this proposal.

COMMUNICATIONS NOTES & TIPS

Make Hard to Break, Yet Easy to Remember Passwords

By Doris Collins, (Computer Club of Oklahoma City)
May 2012 eMonitor www. ccokc. org DJCollins1122 (at) aol.com

We all know that simple passwords are dangerous. If you're using any of the following for passwords (or forms thereof), you probably aren't as secure as you think:

1. Names of Pets
2. Birth date
3. Last 4 digits of your SS#
4. Kid's Names
5. Grandkid's Names
6. Parent's Names
7. Addresses
8. Phone Numbers
9. The word Password

Did I catch you? Well, it gets even worse!

Even if you're not using any of the above, but are still using simple words (like car, bike, etc.) for your passwords, you're accounts are still pretty easy to break into. Now, a better password looks more like this: ks86jwO3ts92ctbO2

Although some would argue that it's not better than what most people have been using thus far. Yeah, yeah, I know what you're thinking, ''How the heck am I supposed to remember that thing? It's 17 random letters and numbers! '' Read on. That password is as easy to remember as any other -if you understand how it was constructed:

It's based on a fictitious Smith family with a daughter named Kelly and a son named Tyler. They have a 2003 Jeep Wrangler and an 02 Chevy Trail Blazer. Now, let's take those facts and look at the password again:

* ks -Kelly Smith, born in 1986
* jw03 -Jeep Wrangler, 2003 model
* ts92 -Tyler Smith, born in1992
* ctb02 -You guessed it, Chevy Trail Blazer 2002 model year

I simply took the first initials of everyone and everything involved, then the year they were born (or built). It's a lot tougher to guess a password like that, but still very easy to remember.

How to remember your passwords with eWallett by iLium Software

Reviewed by Hewie Poplock, APCUG Director
Hewie's Views & Reviews,
httQ://www.hewie.net

I am a password nut. I try to have almost every program, website, email address, etc., use a unique password. That makes it difficult to remember them. Way back in 2000, I found a program to keep track of all of my passwords and account numbers in an encrypted file. I carried a Palm PDA in those days. The program was e Wallet by iLium Software, with a version for both my Palm and my PC. I could sync the information as well.

Once the Palm PDA and its successor were finally put to rest, I continued to use the program between my desktop, laptop, and netbook. The encrypted file containing the data was easily copied between them.

I purchased the original iPhone and one of the fIrst apps that I added was the iOS version of e Wallet. I could sync it with my PC version via Wi-Fi. So once again I was now able to carry a program with me to access my passwords anytime. I was comfortable knowing that it had an encrypted file with a rather long password to access the file. I have since added an iPad2 to the equation and upgraded to the iPhone 4s, using e Wallet on both.

There are many password manager programs available. Obviously, the main reason that I use the e Wallet is that I have been using it for 12 years. However, there are other reasons. The biggest is that I can have it on all of my devices, especially on my iPhone & my iPad, which I have with me at all times. The data is protected with 256-bit AES (FIPS-197) encryption.

e Wallet is currently available for PCs running Windows 7, Vista, or XP. If you are an Mac user, you need OS x. There are versions for the Apple iPhone, iPad and iPod touch, RIM BlackBerry, Android phones, the Kindle Fire tablet, and Windows Mobile. You need to check the version number to be sure it works on your device. The PC version is $20 & the others are $10 each. Only one license is needed for both the iPad & iPhone. You can try the PC version free for 30 days & then it stops working unless you buy it.

Although the program manages your passwords well, it has other features that may not be included in other programs in the same category. They include Live Fields, which enables you to jump to websites or dial phone numbers with just a tap. Auto Pass brings up the webpage and fills in the usemame and password for you. There is Smart Copy to quickly grab info for on-line forms and PassBuilder that generates passwords for you if you want real security using unique passwords. You can import data from some other programs using the Import Wizard.

e Wallet stores your info in a file called a wallet. You can have more than one wallet. Each wallet contains categories and stores your information using cards in which you designate its category. Cards can be printed as well as the entire wallet. I use the search ability a lot. It searches the entire wallet for the letters that you type wherever they appear so fmding an item is easy and quick.

Whether you use e Wallet or another password management program, do not automatically open the program at boot up. This would allow anyone to be able to see or use your passwords. Once you have found the password that you need, either close or lock the program so that you must type the password to retrieve another. Otherwise, why encrypt or protect your passwords?

e Wallet is available for download or purchase at httQ:/ / www.iliumsoft.com/ewallet , the iTunes App Store, or the Android Market.

GoGo -- Surf the Internet at 10,000 Feet

by George Hardingm Tucson Computer Society, AZ
www.aztcs.org georgehardingsbd at earthlink.net

When you fly, whether commercial or private, you are prohibited from using your laptop, tablet or mobile phone to access the Internet. No longer! GoGo has available technology that allows you to surf the Internet once your aircraft has reached 10,000 feet. This means you can access cloudbased documents, use email, sign into websites and access VPNs while aloft.

GoGo has the system operational in over 1,000 commercial aircraft, such as Air Tran, Delta, Virgin America and select Air Canada flights, and 5,000 private aircraft.

What does it cost? Pretty reasonable at $4.95 per session, $12.95 per 24 hour period or $39.95 per month for unlimited use. You are connected to GoGo's portal where you sign in, then can surf to your heart's content. The aircraft has three antennas, two underneath and one on top. Installation is quick.

For those who need access to the Internet while in flight, this is a service well worth having.

About: GoGo
Vendor: GoGo Service:<***www.gogoair.com***>

Prepaid Cellphones Are Cheaper. Why Aren't They Popular?

Big Bear Computer Club Bearly Bytes September, 2012

Prepaid phone plans, where you pay the full price for a cellphone and then pay lower monthly rates without a contract, seem to offer what most budget-conscious people want. So why haven't they really caught on?

Contract-free phone plans account for only 23 percent of the wireless customers in the United States phone market, according to the research firm Ovum. The rest are subscribers locked into contracts and paying high-er monthly fees.

That's despite the fact that prepaid phone plans are generally a better deal for most people, who can save hundreds of dollars over the course of two years compared to a contract plan.

The iPhone with a two-year contract on AT&T, for example, costs $200 for the handset and then upward of $90 a month for the plan; over two years, including the cost of the phone, customers pay at least $2,360. With a prepaid plan on Virgin Mobile, which is owned by Sprint, the iPhone costs $650 for the handset, and then $30 a month, including unlimited data (the type of data plan that people are happier with, according to J.D. Power). Over two years, that would cost about $1,370.

So why aren't more people going prepaid?

The bait that reels most people into more expensive contracts is the subsidized price of a phone, said Tero Kuittinen, an independent analyst and a vice president of Alekstra, a company that helps customers manage their cellphone bills.

''Right now, consumers don't do the math, and they have a lot of resistance to paying $500 to $600 upfront, and they'd rather pay $100 upfront and then overspend,'' he said. ''That psychology has worked for hundreds of years, and it's still working.''

There are less obvious reasons, too. Another factor is that carriers aren't marketing prepaid plans as heavily because they want more customers on contract plans.

''They deliberately don't market their prepaid plans,'' said Jan Dawson, an Ovum analyst. ''They want you on postpaid plans that deliver higher revenue per user, on contracts that are going to lock you in.''

Sprint, for instance, hasn't begun marketing the iPhone on Virgin Mobile's prepaid plans, even though that offering was introduced in June, (though it says it does plan to eventually).

Mr. Dawson added that smaller carriers that offer prepaid plans, like Leap Wireless or MetroPCS, have tiny marketing budgets compared to the big carriers like AT&T and Verizon Wireless, so their cheaper phone plans simply aren't as well known.

Finally, until recently, prepaid phone companies haven't offered handsets that are as compelling as the ones you can get with a contract. Only in the last few months did the iPhone and some big Android phones become available through prepaid phone companies.

Prepaid plans don't seem as cool now, but because phones on prepaid plans are generally getting better, and because people are always looking for ways to cut costs in a bad economy, Ovum says it expects American prepaid customers to increase to 29 percent of overall wireless subscribers by the year 2016.

http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/02/prepaid-phone-plans/

The Problem: Muffled Sound

Big Bear Computer Club Bearly Bytes September, 2012

Lately when I'm with groups of friends there is an increasing chance that some subset of people will complain to me about how bad TV and DVD sound is getting, and how hard it is to at times to understand the dialog. I have been noticing this myself and decided to try to understand what is happening. There are several things going on, all of which conspire against us.

1. As we get older our ears become less able, especially at higher frequencies. This is called Presbycusis, and there is good information on it on the web. Coming from Bell Labs, I learned about this almost 50 years ago, but I never thought it would apply to me!
2. Many of the newer flat-screen TV's have very small bezels, and hence have small speakers or worse, put them at the sides or rear. When we put these sets in cabinets, or bookcases, the sound especially the high frequencies, gets absorbed in the cabinets.
3. Many DVDs have a very large dynamic range, the difference between the softest and loudest parts. Hence, in order to avoid being blown away during a car chase or explosions, we lower the volume overall. Then at the dialog passages, the sound is too low for our older ears.
4. Many new DVDs are encoded with multi-channel sound. When you play the DVD, you probably have seen the setup menu where the multi-channel options are labeled with terms such as: 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, DTS, THX, etc. This refers to the number of channels of sound that are in the film, if you have the equipment to decode and the right number of speakers. (The .1 represents the sub-woofer channel.) One of these channels is the cen-ter channel that usually carries most of the dialog.

If you have made an incorrect selection on the DVD setup menu or an external amplifier, and are trying to play back multichannel sound through a system without all the multi-channel speakers, you will miss a lot of the audio. If you are watching a movie through an ordinary TV without multi-channel sound capability, be sure to pick the appropriate audio option on the movie setup menu.

Some Solutions

There are some ways around these problems:

1. Many people use a product such as ''TV Ears'' which wirelessly puts the sound into stethoscope type ear-phones that they wear. I have tried these, and they work extremely well. However, they are expensive and I have found them to be mechanically fragile. I have already had to repair two sets for friends - both failing in the same way. (Perhaps newer models are better made.) Two people would also require two sets. Be sure that you understand where the base station will plug in to your system in order to broadcast the audio to the stethoscope part.
2. Several of my friends have supplemented the flimsy and poorly aimed speakers in their TVs with sound bars such as shown in the figure below. This is a Vizio model available from Wal-Mart for about $100. This does not solve the multi-channel problem, but for one or two channel sound, with the speakers facing the lis-tener, they work amazingly well.

   In my experience, good one or two channel sound is far superior to poor multi-channel sound. I heard this particular sound bar unit a few nights ago and I was amazed at the clarity. It is an active speaker, meaning that it has its own small amplifier built in. It can receive audio input from your DVD player or your TV set via red (right) and white (left) type of standard RCA cables. Some sound bars also have digital inputs for more complex setups.
3. If you use an amplifier to drive a multi-channel speaker system, make sure that the center channel speaker is aimed, directly firing at the listener. Also raise the treble to make up for your possible high frequency loss from Presbycusis.

Finally, many amplifiers will have a compression setting that minimizes the differences between loud and soft passages. Make sure that you engage that feature. I recently did these three things in my system, providing a large improvement in intelligibility.

What Do You Mean There Are Other Search Engines?

Linda Gonse, Editor/Webmaster, Orange County PCUG, California April 2012 issue, Nibbles and Bits
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It will come as a surprise to some people that there are more choices than Google or Bing for Internet search engines. Two newer and smaller search engines that do not have a large market share of users or the reach of the major search engines actually can be unique and helpful secondary Internet search tools.

One of these is a general purpose search engine with the catchy name of DuckDuckGo which claims it will give users ''way more instant answers, way less spam and real privacy.''

Billing itself as ''the search engine you've never heard of,''

it surpassed 1,000,000 searches in one day for the first time on February 14, 2012. Similar to Google's one click ''I'm feeling lucky'' search, DuckDuckGo has its own one click ''I'm feeling ducky'' button for searches.

But, perhaps the most innovative search feature are DuckDuckGo's !bangs commands that allow you to designate a major site/category on which to base the search. On the search page, click the down arrow and select one of the popular target sites. It will appear in the search box with an exclamation point and its letter code. Next to it, type in your search term and press enter. Bang! It takes you directly to that website where the results of your search term are displayed. For instance, choose Amazon !a from the dropdown list of Bangs. Then, type ''bestseller books'' and press enter. A list of bestselling books at the Amazon site appears instantly.

Perhaps, just as importantly to some, DuckDuckGo's company philosophy is that ''DuckDuckGo does not collect or share personal information. That is our privacy policy in a nutshell.''

An enthusiastic blogger at programmableweb.com said, ''The search engine provides clean, uncluttered results and is very easy to use.'' Check out ***<www.duckduckgo.com>***.

Gibiru is a free, uncensored anonymous internet search engine and year-old Silicon Valley startup that reached 10,000 daily searches in January 2012.

Besides the limits placed by the National Security Agency, services such as America OnLine, Microsoft, Yahoo and others are slowly turning the Internet into an information superhighway dominated by barricades, toll booths, and tracking codes. They use geolocation filtering which restricts or modifys web content based on the geographical region of the user.

Such filtering can now be implemented for countries, states, cities, and even individual IP addresses. Also, due to tracking and filtering, search results are now tailored to the individual IP addresses which are conducting a search; so their ''personalized'' search results will be skewed and vary from one user's results to another user's results.

Gibiru provides the basic Google search results most people are familiar with, but when searching the web through Gibiru, the system does not utilize the searcher's IP address or cookie data when it returns the search results; providing a non-personalized, all-inclusive, private search experience. Gibiru gathers no personal information on its users.

However, due to some Google code needed for results, ''Gibiru may use aggregated statistics to manage bandwidth and site performance. Gibiru makes nor implies any guarantee that a site or sites visited after leaving the Gibiru search results will not be tracking the user independently or storing data the user.''

You can try Gibiru out at ***<www.gibiru.com>***

OPERATING SYSTEM NOTES & TIPS

Making a Bootable USB Flash Drive for Installing Windows 7

as seen in October 2012 QBits, Quad Cities Computer Society
submitted by James Mardis
glowingbluelight@yahoo.com

The instructions for making this happen can be found at this URL link. goo.gl/Xa28j

The WinUSB Maker program can be found on this link. www .joshcellsoftwares.com/, but a direct download link is goo.gl/ 2r8wT

And just in case you do not have a ready to use ISG copy of Windows (Retail, not GEM) you can download valid copies at; goo.gl/2RF6d

Just download either the x32 or x64 bit version you want to install. For ease of instructions just pick the Ultimate with SP 1 and you follow the instructions for installing the ISO to the flash drive even if you want to install a different version like Pro or Home.

Yes Microsoft has a similar program but it does not work on all flash drives. This program seems to work on more flash drives than the Microsoft version.

All versions of Windows 7 install ISO's, Pro, Ultimate, Home, ETC are the same exact image with one file difference. That file is the ei.cfg which as the instructions advise should be deleted from the flash.

Once you do that the flash install will then ask you which version you want to install rather than use the stored values that used to be in the ei.cfg file. As in the past your retail license must match the version you tell order the flash to install but the same flash installer will install any version. Only the activation license for the version you install will actually activate the new install.

The above assumes the PC you are installing Windows 7 on is capable of booting from the Flash drive but most modern PC's have a method of doing that once you figure out either the BIOS or the boot keystrokes.

HARDWARE NOTES & TIPS

Agloves

By George Harding, Treasurer,
Tucson Computer Society, AZ April 2012 , eJournal
www.aztcs.org georgehardingsbd (at)earthlink.net

Many of today's mobile devices are operated by hand or finger gestures made by touching the screen.

Smartphones have icons on the screen that must by pressed to operate. Multiple screens are accessed by swiping left or right. Tabular data is accessed by swiping or dragging up, down, left or right.

The screens that allow this type of action are almost all capacitive in nature. The bioelectricity in your hands and fingers are what make the screens move in the desired direction. Body heat is not involved in ''moving,'' just the small electric charge your body accumulates.

One problem with this method is that moisture on your fingers tends to leave a deposit on the screen, so that repeated operation may result in some portions of the screen being slightly marred. The deposits can be removed with a clean moist cloth or other methods.

I watched a fellow typing on his tablet on the pseudo keyboard presented on the screen. I noticed that his screen was marked by fingermarks at the keys on which he was typing.

Agloves allow you to operate normally without leaving any deposits behind. If you try working with your tablet using regular gloves, they don't work because the bioelectric charge cannot be passed through the fabric of ordinary gloves. Agloves, on the other hand, do work normally because of the silver woven into the glove fabric.

These gloves are functional not just with one or two fingers, but all ten. F or those of us who are touch typists, using all ten fingers is essential.

One other benefit of Agloves is their ability to operate touch-screen devices when the temperature is cold. Your fingers tend to lose their moisture when cold. The gloves aren't affected by cold and conduct your bioelectric charge even in the cold.

The gloves only come in one color, black. They are not solid black, but instead black with white interlacing. The white comes from the silver woven into the whole glove. They also keep your hands warm!

About: Agloves
Vendor: Agloves
www.agloves.com
Price: $24, $18 @ Amazon

A Tablet Love Affair

By Roger Carlyle, Cajun Clickers Computer News
May 2012 issue,www.clickers.org ccnewsletter (at) cox.net

Last year, like many folks, I thought Tablets were just a passing fad - used mostly by people who liked to play games, get recipes, or do online shopping. I was from the old school and staunchly declared that nothing could replace the desktop or laptop computer.

Any other form of computers were mere toys. Then it happened ever so subtly. I was slowly exposed to the Tablets. First seeing news media use them on national news shows and then an occasional Apple geek using them at local coffee shops. Curiosity got the best of me and I found myself reading more and more about Tablets. First on the internet and then seeing advertisements in local newspapers and on websites such as CNET, ZDNET, Newegg, etc. As a user of an iPod I soon realized the power and versatility of the Tablet. ... and I fell in love and I wanted one.

After reading numerous tablet reviews and talking to several different tablet brand owners, I settled on getting an iPad 2 (lousy timing on my part --the New iPad was released three weeks after I purchased my iPad 2). Mostly because at the time Apple was the clear leader in Tablet technology and the number of Apps available for the iPad.

Another reason for choosing the iPad was for its 10" screen size. I wanted the larger screen for viewing videos and typing with the onscreen keyboard is much easier than on the smaller Tablet screens. Right out of the box it was love at fIrst sight. I turned it on and found the initial setup to be very easy to use. Even a very novice computer user would find the setup and initial operation easy to follow.

I soon found myself settling into my plush reclining easy chair where I began exploring all the Apps available at the App Store. A large variety of Apps are free or .99 cents at the App Stor-e. I was soon exploring the Internet, using email, taking pictures and making movies all with my new found tablet. I literally could not find anything that I could not do on my new Tablet that I did on my desktop computer.

As a matter of fact there were things I could do on the Tablet that I could not do with my desktop. The only thing I go back to my desktop PC for is where heavy keyboard usage is required, such as Producing the Cajun Clickers newsletter or doing intensive input into an Excel spreadsheet, etc.

Has owning a Tablet changed my life? Yes! I rarely get out of my plush recliner to go to my desktop PC. I do online shopping, check bank accounts, send videos to my distant friends and relatives, view live radar weather reports, read newspapers such as the Advocate, find recipes for my wife, read iBooks, and much, much more with my new iPad Tablet. And I can take it with me anywhere I go.

Based on personal experience and from the reviews I've read recently, my choice for a Tablet would be either the New iPad or the Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1. Both are top performers and get five star reviews.

CDs Are Not Forever; The Truth about CDs

by Tina Sieber Big Bear Computer Club Bearly Bytes
August, 2012

The digital age has revolutIonized the way we handle information. Never before could humankind record and store so much information and In such diversity .While the amount of data has increased exponentially, the predicted life span of the storage media hardly exceeds the lifetime of a human. For humans who love to collect and leave a legacy to their descendants, as well as human kind who so much depends on information, this poses a huge challenge.

Optical discs have been commercially available since the 1980s. After merely 30 years, a solId amount of information has been collected on what causes CDs and DVDs to break and much progress has been made in the development of material that will last longer. While estimations predict a life time of up to 200 years for optical discs, we can never be sure when they are really going to break. However, by being aware of what determines the life span of optical discs and what causes them to break, you can make choices and significantly increase the survival time of your stored data

What Determines The LIfe Span Of DIfferent Optical Discs?

To understand what lImits the life span of optical discs, let's look at how they are bullt-up. What all optical discs have in common is the presence of three key layers:

- coating layer that protects the reflective layer.
- shiny layer that reflects the laser.
- polycarbonate disc layer that stores the data.

In addition, a label is applied above the coating layer and re-writable discs contain a dye layer between the reflective and protective layers.

One factor that determines the maximum life span of an optical disc is the type of reflective layer. Other factors Include the overall quality of the raw material and manufacturing and most importantly the way the medium is treated by the user. The handling of an optical disc probably has the most significant impact on its longevity , hence we wIll re-visit this theme in a moment.

It is hard to predict exactly how long an optical dlsc will last since it depends on so many different factors. Nevertheless, estimations are floating around that predict a life span of up to 200 years for recorded CD-Rs and Blu-Ray discs. The shortest life span with 5-10 years is predicted for unrecorded CD-Rs and CD-RWs, followed by recorded DVD-RWs with up to 30 years. Recorded CD-RWs and DVD-Rs have a predicted lifetime of 20-100 years. In other words, you should not rely on any of these media for lifelong storage of your precious data, as they are likely to fall sooner rather than later.

How Do CD. or DVDs Rot?

As mentioned above, different types of optical discs contain different layers and particularly the reflective layer is susceptible to damage. Standard compact discs typically have a reflective layer made from aluminum. When exposed to air, aluminum oxidizes, which naturally happens around the edges of the CD. However, degradation of the reflective layer is not the only cause of disc rot.

The causes of disc rot are manifold and can include one of the following:

- oxidation or corrosion of reflective layer
- physical damage to disc surfaces or edges
- galvanic reaction between layers and coatings
- chemical reactions with contaminants
- ultra-violet light damage
- breaking down of disc materials, e.g. de-bonding of adhesives between layers

Interestingly, while most types of disc rot are caused by inappropriate use and/or storage, there is one in particular, i.e. CD bronzing, which is caused by a fault in manufacturing.

How Can I Increase The LIfetime Of My CDs & DVDs?

There are many ways you can increase the likelihood that your CDs and DVDs will last you a long time. Here is a selection of the most important ones:

- Choose a high quality medium from a good brand.
- If you want to maximize CD longevity, go for gold as a reflective layer.
- Treat your CDs and DVDs with care, i.e. hold them by the outer edges or the hole in the center, don't touch the surface, avoid scratches, and keep dirt from the disc.
- Keep them in a dry, dark, and cool place since humidity, sunlight, high temperatures, and pollutants can damage the different layers.
- Store them in jewel cases rather than paper slips.
- Use non solvent-based felt-tip permanent markers, suitable for writing on CD or DVD labels.
- Rewrite your rewritable discs as little as possible.

Choose slow writing speeds to reduce errors and increase quality.

What Can I Do When My Disc Won't Read?

A disc that can no longer be read by your player or shows errors is not necessarily a lost case. Here area few tips for what you can do to:

- Make sure you didn't accidentally insert the CD or DVD upside down.
- Carefully clean the bottom layer with alcohol to remove grease from fingerprints and dust.

Try to read the CD or DVD in a different player. Chances are that the laser in your player is faulty or that a different player can still read your CD or DVD.

Conclusion

Always have a backup of your data and check all our backups regularly to make sure none of the copies have broken in the meantime, regardless of whether you store your data on aCD, DVD, or hard drive. Tina Sieber

The Tip Corner

By Bill Sheff nsheff@aol.com
Lehigh Valley Computer Group (LVCG) LVCG Journal,
September 2012

Battery Life

We covered this tip in the Feb 2012 issue, but I have been speaking to some members who wanted to buy batteries at a reasonable price (go to ebay.com) so thought I would repeat it again.

If you notice that your laptop is starting to run sluggishly and pages load slower, along with other general slowness it could be the battery. So before you run out and replace your laptop battery try this trick first.

First, charge your laptop's battery all the way to 100%. After being fully charged, unplug it and let the battery drain. Using the laptop during this period will help it drain more quickly. Once you see that the battery is almost empty, save your work and close any open pages. Then let the laptop shut itself off. Let the dead battery sit for about 5 or 6 hours, or overnight. This will help eliminate any leftover charge the battery may have, and lets the battery start over from zero. After you've let your laptop sit, plug it back in and let it charge all the way to 100% before using it again. This can extend battery life and possibly postpone purchasing a new battery

Energy Consumption

Since we started with the battery lets continue with some energy consumption hints for both laptops and PCs.

Conserving laptop battery power or simply managing the energy consumption of any PC can easily be accomplished by making adjustments in Windows Power Options. To access the Power Options you can use Run and type in powercfg.cpt. However in Vista and Win7 run can be skipped by just typing in power options in the Start search.

In the Power Options dialog box, the three choices are; Balanced, Power saver, and High performance. Power saver offers the most conservative use of energy; Balanced combines the Power saver plan and High performance. High performance is the gas guzzler of the three. Other settings options are available at the left. Clicking the Change plan settings link opens the Edit Plan Settings dialog box for the selected plan. There, settings can be tweaked to provide the desired mix of effectiveness and efficiency. In Power Options, you can also control what happens when the lid on a laptop is closed. Just click the Choose what closing the lid does link.

Settings can be individually adjusted for when the laptop is running on battery, or for when it's plugged in. The choices are Do nothing, Sleep, Hibernate, or Shut down. (We discussed these choices in our July 2012 Tip Column) Clicking the ''Change settings that are currently unavailable'' link offers the opportunity to change what happens when the computer wakes up.

It is also possible to make more advanced power settings. Be a little cautious here since it is for the more advanced user. Any changes made, can be undone by clicking the Restore default settings for this plan link.

What does a smart phone replace?

I am going to end this month's Tip Corner with a small list. Since tablets are now appearing like rabbits in a hutch, ready to replace laptops and smart phones with a plethora of apps and lots of battery life, let's take a nostalgic look back at the many things smart phones have replaced.

- **MP3 Players** - When was the last time you carried a digital music player that couldn't do a dozen other things, too?

- **Portable Game Consoles** Nintendo 3DS and DS as well as the Sony PSP are still selling, but these portable game gadgets seem like relics from an era when people used cell phones strictly to make and receive calls. Today's smartphone, of course, is a gaming juggernaut: App stores for Apple and Android handsets offer tens of thousands of games.

- **Point-and-Shoot Cameras** - The pictures in your smartphone are positioned to match or surpass the photographic prowess of the point-and-shoot cameras.

- **Personal Video Players** -Remember the lineup of portable media players? This capability has also migrated to the jack-of-all-trades smartphone.

- **Voice Recorders** -''Note to self: Buy jacket with extra pockets to hold voice recorder, PDA, cell phone...'' That's a voice memo from a digital recorder, circa 2001. Okay, not really--but the point is that stand-alone voice recorders were yet another digital device to carry around. No wonder they've gone the way of the PDA (see below). Some dirt-cheap recorders still persist, but a smartphone with an app like the free RecForge Free (for Android) or the $2 Voice Record (for iPhone) is the sensible choice for any pocketchallenged gadget lover.

- **Portable GPS Navigation Devices** - Why buy a separate GPS device for your car when your smartphone can perform the same tasks? Portable navigation hardware from major GPS players such as Garmin, Magellan, and TomTom are have grown more powerful and more affordable, but GPS-enabled smartphones deliver similar functionality. Interestingly, GPS vendors may be contributing to the demise of their portable devices by offering apps like Garmin's StreetPilot, which provides turn-by-turn directions for smartphone users. Hey, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

- **Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)** - A now-classic PalmPilot PDA. It manages your contacts! It has a todo list! It tracks expenses! Yes, the PDA was a handy contrivance back in the day when a 25-pound desktop PC and a 50-pound CRT monitor seemed welded to every workstation. But as cellphones began to acquire PDA capabilities in 2001, it became obvious

that the phoneless digital assistant's days were numbered. Today, the term ''PDA'' sounds as anachronistic as ''Pocket PC.'' Then again, today's smartphones are pocket PCs, aren't they?

- **Wristwatch** -Is a wristwatch a necessity or a fashion accessory? The smartphone has become the 21st Century pocket watch, while the wristwatch has become, well, your father's timepiece. This may change, since new tech-savvy watchmakers have now put the time on the wristband. But the truth is the smart phone gives great time, and dates.

- **Paper Maps** -When's the last time you bought a paper map? Do you still use them? A smartphone devotee may unfold a map every now and then, but only as a navigational tool of last resort. Mobile map apps from Google, MapQuest, and Bing provide directions, satellite images, and search tools that paper can't match. But it's wise to keep a paper map on hand as a backup, especially if you're driving in an area where wireless signals are weak. And GPS mapping tools have been known to give bad directions every once in a while.

- **411 Directory Assistance** - Google Mobile's Voice Search. A Newspaper article once lamented the lost art of the phone call, but what about the 411 call? A savvy smartphone user is more likely to access free online tools such as Google's voice search than to make a traditional directory-assistance call. But old habits die hard, however. According to Snopes.com from October 2010, U.S. consumers were still placing about 6 billion calls to 411 services per year, even though phone companies had switched to charging $1 or more per call. Nevertheless, the directory assistance of the future seems likely to be automated, online, and (maybe) free. And the prologue: All of this will be included in the tablets coming out today. Will we have to widen our pockets or start carrying man-purses?

But one more thing you might want to carry with your smart phone. A spare battery. I have just finished testing how long my extra battery lasts since last charging. Well, it has been over a two weeks now and the battery is still over 60% charged.

So if you listen to a lot of music on your smart phone, it might not be a bad idea to have a charged battery in your pocket just in case. And yes they are very cheap on ebay.com. Play a lot of music, make a lot of calls and then switch. A really good assist when you are on the road and can't plug in to a charger.

And the Oscar Goes To . . . - Making a Good Video

by Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA April 2012 issue, Drive Light www.uchug.org
president (at) uchug.org

I've discovered it is a lot harder to make a good video than it is to take a good photograph. It is definitely a lot more work.

For the most part, the majority of the effort involved in taking a good photograph occurs before the picture is taken. While some augmentation and enhancement can occur after the exposure, through the marvels of digital photo editing, much of the merit of a photo comes from basics like subject, composition, focus and lighting. While photo editing software can enhance a photo, perhaps making a good picture great, it can only go so far in fixing a poor photograph.

In making a great video, once you have captured the action, your work typically has only begun. In spite of all the star-centric hoopla surrounding the Academy Awards, have you ever noticed that the majority of the awards don't go to performers, but to creators.

There are only a few categories of awards given to actors and actresses. The majority go to writers, directors, film editors, cinematographers and designers of sound, sets, costumes and effects. In a lot of movies made today, most of the work is done after the filming is over. The difference between raw footage and polished final product is much greater for video than for still photography, indicative of the amount of post processing work usually required. As with photography, however, it is still hard to turn poor exposures into a good final product.

I got my first still camera in 3rd grade, taking black and white film photos. In the 40-something years since, I learned to take decent photos (at least by my standards) using mostly slide film, where there was no chance for corrections after the exposure. I've had a digital camera for eleven years, but still don't typically edit or enhance my pictures after taking them. I've spent more time making digital corrections on the slides I have digitized, to fix the effects of film aging and imperfections, than on any of my recent digital photos.

Growing up, my family never had a movie camera. A neighbor friend my age got access to their family's old 8 mm movie camera, and he and I made a two-reel epic titled The History of Aviation. Through careful planning and filming, we came up with a pretty impressive movie for a couple of grade school kids, though we probably destroyed most of our collections of model airplanes in the process (in addition to scorching the underside of his family's metal patio cover during our reenactment of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima). I'd love to see that film again, if it still exists.

When my wife and I had kids of our own, my in-laws gave us one of the early shoulder-mounted video cameras (it was so big and heavy, you had to rest it on your shoulder), which recorded directly on VHS tape cartridges.

It recorded some of the early moments in our children's lives, but being analog tape, the results were of mixed quality and could not be edited. We still have some of those 20-year-old tapes around (we should digitize them), but unfortunately I think a few were taped over at some time in the past. Later,

we bought a smaller handheld camcorder, which used the smaller VHS-C tapes and was more convenient to take on family outings. These too would not be editable unless digitized.

My very first digital camera had a primitive video capture capability of 320 x 240 with no audio, which was about half the 704 x 480 equivalent resolution of the camcorder NTSC video, but was much more convenient to carry. It still resulted in only video snippets of our lives being captured. Even after graduating in 2007 to a new digital camera with 640 x 480 video and sound, I only shot occasional video clips, and never tried to find a way to edit and combine them into a coherent video feature.

For my birthday late last year, my wife surprised me with a Panasonic SD40 HD video camcorder. It records HD video (1920 x 1080) in the AVCHD (Advanced Video Coding High Definition) file format. Depending on the card size, it can store hours of video on an internal SDHC memory card.

One of the first things I learned about shooting HD video with this camcorder is that I'm going to need more hard drives. I think I shoot a lot of digital photos, sometimes hundreds per month. Using my 12 Megapixel camera, this averages 5 MB per photo, I'm generating around 0.5 GB of new photos per month (assuming 100 photos), or 6 GB per year. I first used my new camcorder in earnest during family festivities on Christmas Day, and managed to fill up the 8 GB SD card that came with the camcorder that day.

If I hold my filming down to 16 GB of video per month, that means I'll generate nearly 200 GB of video data every year. How am I going to store it all?

The second thing I learned about shooting HD video is that not every computer can easily play it. I normally use my XP laptop PC to copy my still photos from memory cards to hard drive and to view them, so I plugged in the SDHC card from the camcorder. Unfortunately, I could not view the .MTS AVCHD video files with any program on that computer. When I put the SD card in my wife's new Windows 7 laptop, I was able to play the files with Media Player. Score another one for Windows 7.

To make the 45 minute video on computer upgrading that was shown at our meeting last month, I started by shooting 51 video segments, totaling 5.7 GB. These included the introductions and descriptions I gave, the scenes of dis-assembly and modification of the computer, and the screen shots of the computer showing the results. A tripod proved essential in filming the scenes where I was talking, as I had to work with a film crew of only one (me). The camcorder's display can be flipped around to allow the subject of the video to see how they look onscreen. The tripod was also used in most of the shots where I was working on the computer, since it usually took two hands to do the work. I would set up the tripod and camcorder to give a good view of the hardware, and then start filming. I was not watching what was being filmed, but just made sure my activities stayed within what I understood was the field of view.

One of the filming mistakes I made was in sometimes not allowing enough lead in and lead out time at the beginning and end of the scenes. Excess footage can be trimmed, but you can't easily make more footage after filming is done.

I started shooting scenes before determining what program I would be using to edit the video, so I was not sure what editing capabilities I could count on. I was not sure the program I would use could add titles, so I printed titles on paper and held them up in front of the camcorder. I later found titles could be added using software, but not with the flexibility of my paper signs.

Although I had a couple of commercial video editing software packages available to install, I decided to initially try the editing software that came with the camcorder, Panasonic's HD Writer LE 1.0. I installed it on my wife's laptop to make sure I'd have enough horsepower to do the video editing quickly.

I found the software would not recognize the raw video files I had copied from the SD memory card to the computer's hard drive. To use the captured video with this program, I had to connect the camcorder to the PC with the provided USB adapter cable and download the files from the camcorder through the program. The program had all the basic features I had seen in other video editing software. It allowed clips to be combined on a timeline, with a number of choices for transitions between scenes. Scenes could be edited for length, and basic titles could be added.

I chose the least flashy transitions and put the video segments together one by one. Because of the brief lead-ins I had shot, I could not add much in the way of additional titles, but fortunately the signs I had filmed worked well. I was concerned that 45 minutes might be too long without a break, so I split the video into two 22 minute segments, allowing an intermission in between.

The program could convert the finished video to several different resolutions on DVD or Blu-Ray discs for playing on home players or computers.

I'll try using one of my fancier video editing programs with this camcorder one day, but I found the Panasonic-provided software could turn out a good video.

Since making a coherent video out of the filmed segments I made was not too difficult, I'll probably try to make similar edited videos for all the events I film.

Help Lines

HARDWAREHELP	Advisor No.
Reformat Hard Disk, FDISK	2,4,5
Install Hard Drive, CD-ROM/RW	2,4,5
Install Video Card	7
Partitioning Hard Drives	2
Internet/Intranet	6,7
Audio Cards	4
MPs Files, WMA Files, WAV Files	3,4
Burning CD's	3,5
Homesite	7
Net Objects	7

SOFTWAREHELP	Advisor No.
Win 95/98/ME/2K/NT/XP	2,3,4,7
Win 7	4,7
Microsoft Word	2,7
Microsoft Excel	4
Microsoft PowerPoint	4
WordPerfect	1,7
Norton/Symantec AntiVirus	2,3,6,7
Norton System Works	2,7
CompuPic / CompuPic Pro	3,7
Winzip, WinRAR	6
Ccleaner	3,4
Outlook, Outlook Express	2
Internet Explorer	2,7
RegSeeker	3,5
Instant Messaging	2
Installing Software after Reformatting	5
Deleting Files; Wiping	6

ADVISORS

Name	Phone	Hours
[1] Fred Shelton	(253)752-0120	Variable
[2] Bob Henkel	(253)537-6732	8A-8P any day
[3] Tom Stepanek	(253)922-7939	7-9P Mon-Fri
[4] Carl Tenning	(206)824-3843	6-9P Mon-Fri
[5] Oclad Wesley	(253)212-0352	6-9P
[6] Bob Thomson	(253)752-5582	Variable
[7] Ray Mills	(360)692-7568	6-9P Mon-Sat

Tacoma Open Group for Microcomputers (TOG)
New Member Application/Existing Member Change of Address Form

For **Tacoma Open Group** annual membership, send form (if needed) & **$25** to Bob Henkel., 10613 25th Avenue E., Tacoma, WA 98445.
Make checks payable to TOG

Please print or type. Date:_____ Sponsored by:_____

Member's Name:_____

Address: _____

City:_____ State:_____ Zipcode:_____Plus Four _____ Country: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Work phone: (____) _____ E-Mail Address _____

TACOMA MEETING

When: **Mon 8 Oct 2012 -7:00 PM**
Where: SE Tacoma Community Centre
1614 99th Street E.
Tacoma, Washington

From I-5 take Exit 127 (Hwy 512) to Portland Ave., north on Portland to 99th, left over tracks. Building is on south side.

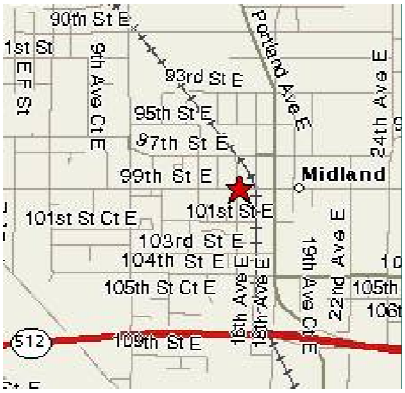
Future Dates: 2nd Monday of Month

TOG BOARD MEMBERS

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

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

Tacoma OPEN Group for Micros
1808 Lenore Drive
Tacoma, WA 98406-1920

Change Service Requested

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.

Program Presentation

TOG member Dave Chapman will give a brief presentation on the upcoming release of Windows 8 gleaned from a demo program that he downloaded from a Microsoft site. Based on the ten minute peek he gave to those present at the September meeting and with a month to study it further it should make for a very interesting presentation.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In case you missed it, see the notice on the front page about our future as a computer user group. If you wish to have a say in the matter please attend the November meeting.