

TOGGLE

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Membership Speaks! No Dues!

By a show of hands by those present at the November meeting the proposal to suspend membership dues for the existing membership was approved by a unanimous vote for the following:

- 1) Membership dues will be terminated as of January 2013.
- 2) Publication of the monthly newsletter, the TOGGLE will continue and will be mailed to active membership.
- 3) New members will not receive the newsletter by mail but may obtain one at monthly meetings.
- 4) the club will continue to sponsor the TOG website and will post the newsletter on that site, as it does now.

UPDATE

Don't Forget To Come and enjoy Our Annual Goodies at the December Meeting

Communications

In *Memo To Software Developers: LEAVE ME ALONE!* the author complains of updates and "improvements" that change the configuration that he has set up and is used to.

In *Merge PDFs the Easy Way* the author gives us a helpful web site.

In *Wi-Fi On The Road* the author tells you which fast food restaurants have the best WiFi connections.

In *How to Share Your List of Apps for your iPhone and iPad* the author figure out a way to do it using old DOS commands.

Spreadsheet

In *PowerPoint Isn't Just For the Business World* the author shows and discusses several ways to use the power of a spreadsheet.

General Interest

In *Back To Basics - Using Menus* the author goes into some detail on building useful menus.

In *Dynamic Pricing Gives Different Pricing to Different People* the author tells us about cookie tracking techniques used by online retailers to track what their customers are doing. She discovered that they are using a technique called dynamic pricing. Read. Learn.

In *Copyrights, Internet create a difficult conflict* the author says:
"Now that the Stop Online Piracy Act and Protect IP Act (SOPA/PIPA) have been defeated, it is time to look at the dynamics of the conflict between copyright holders and Internet hosts."

In *Follow These Points Before Calling Support* the author suggests:
"Today, it is possible to contact companies in numerous different ways. However, when planning to call or e-mail a computer company, keep the below recommendations in mind. If you are calling for support on a particular product make sure you have all applicable numbers written down. For example, the Serial Number and Model number of the particular device or computer."

In *The Problem: Muffled Sound* the author basically deals with the reality of loss of hearing range and acuity with age and makes several suggestions.

- In *Search Engine Overload* the author discusses the problem of getting wa-a-a-y-y more responses than he needs or expects when using a search engine like Google. Oh sure you can refine the search but that isn't always as easy as they make it sound.

In *Crime and Conflict Over the Internet* the author goes into considerable detail in discussing this problem.

Don't Forget To Come And Enjoy Our Annual Goodies At The December Meeting

COMMUNICATIONS NOTES & TIPS

Memo To Software Developers: LEAVE ME ALONE!

Walt Graham, President, Connecticut PC Users Group
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It seems no matter how carefully I configure my computers and other devices to work the way I want, there's always some programmer just one step ahead of me. Just when I think everything is perfect, he or she manages to break it!

Example: after a couple of years of automatic updating, my browser of choice, Google Chrome, became sluggish. A Google search turned up a number of such complaints, but no solutions. Unable to find an answer, I switched to Firefox but noticed that some features I used all the time in Chrome (Duplicate Tab, for example) were missing. So I found and installed an addon called "Tab Utilities Lite" that brought those features back. Problem solved - until this morning (Groundhog Day) when Firefox automatically updated itself to v10.0, thereby breaking Tab Utilities Lite!

Yes, I suspect the developer of Tab Utilities Lite will update his utility to work with Firefox 10, but why couldn't Firefox have pointed out the incompatibility before delivering the update, instead of afterward, and let me choose to keep using v9 for awhile longer?

Thirteen months ago my otherwise excellent online broker, E*Trade, updated an online application called MarketCaster that I use for obtaining realtime quotes. It hasn't worked correctly since - it now shows totals in the "gains/losses" column as "minus 100%" in all my watch lists. Their IT folks have acknowledged and apologized for the problem but for over a year now they have either been unable to fix it, or perhaps it's not a priority - maybe other users don't bother totaling their watch lists. Immediately after the update I asked, "Can I return to the previous version that worked?" "No, there's no way we can do that," they replied.

A few months ago my wife complained that Yahoo! had updated her online calendar requiring more clicks to get things done.

Recently my TomTom GPS started nagging me to update its maps. Thinking that could do no harm, I downloaded and installed the new maps. Before the update, I was able to drive for miles on the highway in peaceful silence. As I neared my exit, she (why is her name 'Tom?') would tell me to prepare to exit. But ever since the update, she chimes in at every exit along the way reminding me not to exit but to instead stay on the highway! So I can't live with her anymore but I can't live

without her either. The workaround, of course, is to mute the sound - and risk missing the exit.

Intuit has now begun warning me that I need to update Quicken in order to keep downloading data from my financial institutions. What will the new version break? I can hardly wait.

Facebook users can likely look forward to some nasty surprises when the company goes public and updates the user interface to better monetize the site for its shareholders.

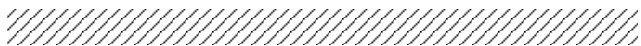
Videographers who rely on Apple's "Final Cut Pro" months ago Apple made sweeping changes to the program that severely disrupt their workflow. For the first time in over a decade I won't be upgrading to the latest version of Samplitude, the wonderful audio software I use to make a living, because the latest version introduces new annoyances without addressing old ones.

With installable software such as Samplitude and FCP, vs. "the cloud," at least the user can choose to not upgrade but, unless you stay current, you lose a level of support and inevitable changes in the OS and hardware environment will eventually render the old version useless.

So, all I ask is to be LEFT ALONE! When it's time to upgrade, bill me if you must, but let me keep working the way I want without spending needless hours trying to outsmart the programmers.

I realize we need to keep moving forward - the Firefox update, for example, may well contain some important improvements in security. But enough is enough! It's not that each individual change is a crisis - although some are - it's that we use so many different pieces of software these days, much of it embedded in various devices, that the totality of change can seem overwhelming.

Software developers might want to take a deep breath and ask themselves, "Is this change really necessary and what possible damage could it do?" - before adding another bell or whistle that might only cause more trouble.



Merge PDFs the Easy Way

Big Bear Computer Club Newsletter, November 2012

You've got several separate PDF documents saved on your hard drive, and you want to email them together, as one file. PDFBINDER makes it simple take any number of PDF files and bind them into one. Just install the program, select the files and click Bind! Cost: Free System: Windows XP, Vista, 7

Link: Merge PDFs the Easy Way <http://howto.cnet.com/8301-11310_39-57344712-285/how-to-combine-multiple-pdfs-into-one-document/>

Wi-Fi On The Road

Hewie Poplock, APCUG Director,
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In the past, finding free Wi-Fi away from home was difficult, if not impossible. However, most of the fast food restaurants and many other locations now make Wi-Fi available. If that is true, and it is, that should be the end of my article.

However, in a recent column by a local newspaper, there is a growing issue of quality of that Wi-Fi. I have found McDonalds' connections consistently good. It has the AT&T name and their hotspots seem to be maintained.

I recently stopped at a Burger King, which had a sign advertising Free Wi-Fi. After I ordered my food and sat down, I could not find their hotspot. When I approached the employees, including the shift manager, my response was, "Oh, it doesn't always work." I guess this was one of those times.

While I was there, I noticed a man who was bringing in his laptop and a printer to use the Wi-Fi to send a report to his boss. He set up on the floor as there was not a table near the electrical outlet.

Once he was set up, he also approached the employees about getting on line, without any more help than I had received. I told him where the nearest McDonalds' was located.

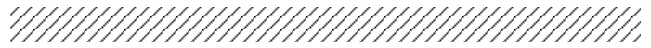
That brings me to my point. While many of these restaurants have Wi-Fi, the quality or the consistency of it working is not always reliable. To compound that, one of my friends pointed out that he recently stopped at a McDonalds, only to discover that his laptop battery was dead, and that particular location had no electrical outlets. The manager stated that they may be doing a remodel of the location and hopefully they will add some outlets.

Our computer user group has some meetings at a couple of local Denny's Restaurants, which also advertise inside & out that they have free Wi-Fi. One of our special interest groups meets at one Denny's every month and has been doing so for several years. For several months we could no longer use their Wi-Fi, if were available at all. The manager kept telling us that a third party took care of it and she reported it. A district manager from the franchise happened to be in the building the same night as one of our meetings. He promised it would get fixed. A few months later, when it was not, we contacted him again. He actually fired the 3rd party and hired someone else. We now have Wi-Fi and he has happy customers, who were about to go elsewhere.

Merely offering free Wi-Fi to customers is not enough. Having it work consistently gets you repeat and happy

customers. At a minimum, every shift manager should know how to reset a router, if they receive complaints. Certainly they should show the customer a concern and see that it get repaired by doing a follow up. It's called training.

I also carry an extension cord and strip in my car, in case there is but one outlet and it needs to be shared, or it is not near an open table.



How to Share Your List of Apps for your iPhone and iPad

Hewie Poplock, APCUG Director; VP, Central Florida
Computer Society, Hewie's Views & Reviews, <http://www.hewie.net>

I want to share a list of the Apps I have downloaded and installed on my iPhone and iPad. I can find such a list in iTunes under Library/Apps. However, there is no way to save or print that list. I can also see my apps on the iPad by going to the Apps Store app and looking at "Purchased," but again, there is no way to have a list to share.

I did some searching and did not find any help. Someone should write an app for that. I still use iTunes to sync, so iTunes does maintain a folder with all of the apps that I use. It is stored in C:\Users\[your Windows User Name]\Music\iTunes\Mobile Applications. I had to go to a dark, well hidden area in my brain to recall some old DOS commands to quickly create a list.

Here is how I did it. Click the Windows Start Button and type in "cmd" and hit Enter. This opens a DOS window. At the command prompt, type the following line, but substitute your Window's user name where indicated. `cd C:\Users\[your Windows User Name]\Music\iTunes\Mobile Applications` Note the space immediately after "cd". This will change the folder. If you type "dir," you should get a directory listing, which includes all of your apps. Once you know that you have the information, at the command line, type "dirapp.txt" and a file will be created with your list. You can now copy that file, "app.txt" anywhere to print, share, or edit.

I went one step farther. I made a copy of the file and then edited out everything but the list. I then opened Excel and told it to open the edited text file. It placed all of the info in columns. I deleted all of the columns except the file names and saved it. I now have a file with a list of just the app names that I have downloaded for my iPhone and iPad.

It sounds more complicated than it actually is. I am not sure how this would work if you are using the cloud for your syncing. *

SPREADSHEET NOTES & TIPS

PowerPoint Isn't Just for the Business World

By Nancy DeMarte, Sarasota PCUG, Inc., Florida
August 2011, Sarasota PC Monitor
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In recent years, people who purchased PC's often bought the Home and Student version of the Microsoft Office suite as a way to get the powerful Word program. Besides Word, this suite contains Excel, a sophisticated spreadsheet program; OneNote, a fancy organizational program; and PowerPoint, a presentation program. If you find that you have never moved beyond Word, perhaps it's time to explore a program which has many uses for the home user: PowerPoint.

PowerPoint has been around for many years. Originally called Presenter, this program was created for the Apple Macintosh computer by a company called Foresight. In 1987 Microsoft purchased Foresight, added features to Presenter, and renamed it PowerPoint. Traditionally, it was designed to enhance corporate meetings or training sessions. Over the years, special effects and other improvements have been made to PowerPoint. As a home computer user, you will find this program easy to use in a variety of special and everyday situations.

Personal Uses of PowerPoint:

The most common personal use is slide show creation related to an event. Let's say you have a family wedding approaching. PowerPoint can help you put together a slide show of still photos and videos of the bride and groom from babyhood to the present, complete with captions, narration, a musical background, and transition effects like fade-ins. You can copy photos to each slide from anywhere on your computer or the web. Although PowerPoint is not as sophisticated as some expensive presentation software, it can produce a professional-looking slide show.

Other home uses for PowerPoint include a personal resume or visual memoir, which can list biographical history interspersed with photos of the subject in all aspects of life. Cooks might use PowerPoint to create an electronic cookbook of recipes, including photos of preparation techniques and finished creations. Artists often use PowerPoint to create portfolios of their work as a lure for potential buyers.

Members of book discussion groups might create an overview of a book's plot or author's life using a few PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint can also design electronic family photo albums, considered superior by some since they can be stored and shared more readily than the old hard bound albums. Finally, any type of training program can be enhanced by a well-designed presentation.

Creating and Editing a Presentation:

One easy way to create a professional-looking presentation is by using a template. PowerPoint has built-in "themes" which give each slide a similar background color, font color and design. As part of its Office website, Microsoft has many free, downloadable PowerPoint templates for occasions, holidays, and other purposes; many more are available at third party websites. For example, wedding templates exist for invitations, programs, thematic backgrounds for slides, borders, and clip art. All you have to do is fill in the information and add the photos. Other template types which might interest a home user include family tree charts, special occasions, seasons, religious, travel, and holidays. Go to www.office.microsoft.com or search the web for 'PowerPoint templates'.

One powerful feature of PowerPoint is that almost anything visual can be put onto a slide. Slides can include text, photos, charts, spreadsheets, tables, and drawings. For example, you can create a short spreadsheet in Excel, display it as a graph or chart, and copy it onto a PowerPoint slide. By using a theme from the PowerPoint gallery or a template, various types of slide content can blend smoothly.

Editing slides is easy. The new versions of PowerPoint use a spell checker much like that in Word, which corrects not only spelling, but grammar and, in the 2007 and 2010 versions, contextual confusions, like "two" and "too." It also provides access to a global dictionary. Slides can be rearranged simply by dragging them to a new location in the list or the slide sorter, which resembles a storyboard. Transitions between slides can be added or removed easily.

Sharing the Presentation:

Besides showing the finished presentation on a screen with a projector or on a laptop at a table, PowerPoint 2007 allows you to send the show as an attachment to an email. It can be saved in .pdf or .xps format, which are universal file types. The 2007/10 version compresses the file size for sending. If you prefer, you can upload your presentation to your website and send the link to friends and family. A slide show can also be printed. Besides the slides themselves, PowerPoint allows printing of handouts, which contain slide thumbnails; note pages, which display each slide with room for notes; and a text outline of the presentation.

Tips on Creating a Good Presentation:

PowerPoint has developed a bad reputation among some people, not because it's a poor program, but because of the many boring presentations the people were forced to view in their corporate workplaces. When designing any kind of presentation, you must think carefully when selecting the content -- ideas, facts or opinions -- and how you want it to appear. Taking time to develop an outline of your presentation before creating any slides will result in a much stronger final product.

When you actually do begin to create slides, here are some tips for success:

1. Use a theme or style to tie the visuals together, and then add a few surprise visuals or quotes.
2. Minimize the use of clip art, especially that which is built into PowerPoint. Everyone has seen it. Instead, search Google images for something fresh.
3. Consider alternating text slides with photos or video to add interest.
4. Studies have shown that dark text on a light background is easier to read, as is sans serif text and words aligned left, rather than in the center.
5. Too many different types of transitions from one slide to the next look unprofessional and distracting. Select no more than two or three for a moderate length presentation.
6. Put very few words on each slide. Keep it simple.
7. If doing a training presentation, don't read to the audience. Instead, explain more about what's on the screen. But don't bring in other topics which will cause audience confusion.
8. Find a way to engage the audience. For example, put a question on a slide and take a few minutes for the audience to discuss it.
9. Keep the presentation moving. (1 - 3 slides per minute)
10. Make the presentation only as long as it needs to be to get your ideas across.

You paid a lot of money for your Office Home and Student suite. It's time to benefit by learning to use PowerPoint.

GENERAL INTEREST

Back To Basics - Using Menus

Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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You walk into McDonald's or Burger King and up there on their nice flat-panel displays are their menus. Their choices are limited so their menus are short. But if you go to the Ritz and ask for the wine list wow, what a list of choices! And their choices are grouped into categories too. Each restaurant has its own menu of choices. So do computer programs.

Menus, toolbars, and ribbons are the tools we use to do what we want in a program. They provide us with specific commands (or actions) or options we can change. Whether you are playing a game, creating a document, are on the internet, or doing email, every program has options (or commands) and these options can be changed by you. Toolbars and ribbons have symbols (icons) which are intended to give you a visual clue as to what that tool or option does. If you don't want to guess, just "hover" your mouse (that is, move

your mouse so the arrow is pointing to a tool symbol) and a small box will appear with the name of that tool. This is a good way to learn the tools or icons you want to use.

Menus, however, use words to tell us what the option or command is. Clicking on (use the left mouse button please) the word of a menu, such as "File", or "Edit", or "Help" will open a menu of options for you. (Ribbons are another form of a tool bar of options). Sometimes you will not see the full and complete menu right away, just wait or click on the arrow at the bottom of that short list to get the complete menu. (The shorter list that first appears shows menu commands that you have recently used.) Menus have no "X" in the upper right corner to close the menu unless the menu opens in a window. Sometimes a menu will appear because your fingers hit some wrong keys. So how do you get rid of a menu without doing anything? Just click OFF of the menu and the menu will go away (and no option is selected). If you do want to select one of the menu options, just click on it. What happens next is either the command or option will be put into effect, or you may get another menu or window with more options. Microsoft and most other software (programs) have generally agreed on some conventions for menus. Although these may not always apply, try looking at some menus in the programs you use to see if these work:

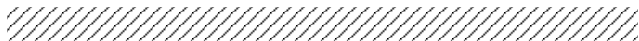
- ♦ If a menu has a letter underlined try holding down the "Alt" key on your keyboard and then hitting that letter. The menu should appear without you using the mouse to click on it.
- ♦ If a menu item has three periods after it "" it means that selecting that item will open another menu or window of options.
- ♦ If a menu item has a keystroke code next to it, such as "Ctrl + P" or "Ctrl + C" it means that this command or option can also be made by hitting that key combination on your keyboard without having to open the menu at all. To do "Ctrl + C" for example, you hold down the control key on your keyboard and then hit the letter "c" key.
- ♦ If a menu item has an arrow next to it pointing to the right, it will show you more options under that menu when you pause your mouse there.
- ♦ You can use the arrow keys (up and down) to move to the menu option you want, then hit the "Enter" key to do it. If a menu item has a right-arrow, hit the right-arrow key to see that list.
- ♦ If a menu item is in gray (i.e. not black) it means that you cannot use that menu option now.

For example, you cannot use the "copy" menu option until you have first highlighted or selected something to copy. So, that command will be gray in the menu until you have selected something, then it will be black and usable.

- Some menu options will have boxes or circles for you to click on to put a dot or a checkmark in them. Round buttons are usually called "radio" buttons because they may allow

only ONE of the items on the list to be selected. Like car radios you can only push one of the buttons at a time. You can't listen to two stations at once, can you? Boxes, however, can be checked or unchecked in any combination. After making your selections, click on "ok" or "apply" at the bottom.

The bigger and better the program the more options there are available for you. Try playing with some menus in a game program or the Paint program just for fun. What you learn will apply to many programs and you will enjoy using your computer even more. Once you master how to use menus, go to the Ritz and ask for their wine list!



Dynamic Pricing Gives Different Pricing to Different People

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

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If you walked into WalMart to purchase a camera and the sales person told you the camera you were interested in was \$300 and then he offered it to the next person in line for \$200, you would probably be aggravated. If the clerk explained that your higher price was based on the fact that he thought you were a very interested buyer who was ready to make a purchase, while the other person was not a serious buyer, you might be even more outraged.

Yet, that is exactly what is happening with online shopping. Online retailers are using cookies to track your moves. Although cookies are relatively harmless and unobtrusive, they show the retailer exactly which items you have looked at and how often you have view them. Retailers can also use click loggers, ad sites, and computergenerated statistics to track your shopping. If you look at the same item several days in a row, the retailer might decide that you will soon be ready to buy and raise the price.

This happened to me recently, when looking for a bird feeder for my husband for father's day. After several days a looking at the item and mulling the purchase, the price of the bird feeder suddenly went from \$42 to \$51.

This is what is commonly referred to as dynamic pricing which is, in effect, changing the price of a good based on what the retailer thinks a buyer is willing to pay. If you think about it, you realize that dynamic pricing has been around for eons. In a street market hundreds of years ago, a person who was a better haggler may have paid less for the same item as someone who simply agreed to the first price given.

Today's online dynamic pricing is the practice of charging consumers different amounts based, not on their haggling ability, but on their characteristics as consumers. Evidently, as long as this does not include discriminatory criteria, like charging someone with blue eyes more than someone with green eyes, this is perfectly legal.

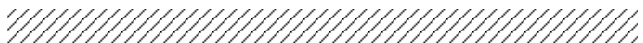
After all, airlines have been doing it for years. They typically charge more for flights that are popular with business travelers and they also have complex pricing schemes to fill unused seats. This year the St. Louis Cardinals introduced dynamic pricing for tickets to their ball park. This allows the Cardinals to charge more for "hot" games on popular days. A recent look at ticket prices showed that an infield pavilion seat for a Saturday night game was selling for \$42. The same seat on a weeknight might be a little as \$13.50. It was said that a few years ago, Coca Cola did a test with their vending machines that charged more for soft drinks when the outside temperature rose.

Dynamic pricing doesn't always go against you. For instance, it might be advantageous if you are booking a last minute flight or looking for a cheap ticket to the Cardinal's game. When dealing with dynamic pricing online, however, the instances that I saw in my recent shopping have all been leading toward higher pricing. There is, however, something that you can do to counteract this when it goes against you.

When they raised the price on my bird feeder, I decided to check out the price of the feeder using another web browser that didn't have a cookie identifying me. Sure enough, the price was back to \$42. I was able to see the two different prices at the same website side by side when using two different web browsers.

You can do the same thing, just download a new web browser like Firefox (www.firefox.com), Chrome (www.google.com/chrome), or Opera (www.opera.com). These are all free. Then visit the website in question and look at their prices without logging in or giving any personal information. If you have been using one of these alternative browsers and want to use them for a price comparison, you should clear your cookies before you start your price search. A setting for doing that is usually found in the browser's Tools menu.

Dynamic pricing is not going away anytime soon. It looks like it will be a vital part of both offline and online commerce for years to come. So get used to it, but don't get taken in by it.



Copyrights, Internet create a difficult conflict

by Toby Scott, Tech Advisor, Channel Islands PCUG, CA
Newsletter: The Outer Edge

(www.cipcug.org) tscott (at) scotts.net

Now that the Stop Online Piracy Act and Protect IP Act (SOPA/PIPA) have been defeated, it is time to look at the dynamics of the conflict between copyright holders and Internet hosts.

If a publisher creates a book, you can do pretty much whatever you want to with it. You cannot, however, photo-

copy it and then sell the copies. This isn't much of a restriction as it is time consuming and expensive in paper and ink to make the copies and in almost all cases it is far easier to just buy another copy from the copyright holder. This has long been a precept of U.S. law.

Things changed with the advent of the Internet. Now, you can copy nearly anything and distribute it for nothing.

Copyright holders are justifiably irked that the sale of one copy of a work can result in the work being distributed to hundreds, thousands or even millions. What makes it even worse is that in most cases the people making the clones are kids. They have no money, criminal prosecution makes the copyright holders look like ogres and the public thinks the copyright holders are just a bunch of greedy slobs who want to deprive the public of what is rightfully theirs.

So, the copyright holders are attempting to force those who have deep pockets and control some layer of the Internet into being their enforcement arm. This flies in the face of current legal precedents originating with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. The DMCA essentially provides a safe harbor for online service providers as long as they don't deliberately shelter copyrighted information.

SOPA/PITA was essentially an attempt to repeal the safe harbor provisions of the DMCA. Doing so would have made life much easier for the copyright holders. They could go after companies with deep pockets and force them to take steps to remove copyrighted material or even prevent it from being uploaded in the first place.

The problem with this solution, at least as far as the online service providers are concerned, is that they would become (at least theoretically) liable for the publication of copyrighted material. Can you imagine Facebook trying to vet every post of every user before the rest of the public could see it? Could Google possibly know whether the content it indexes is copyrighted by the owner of the site? I host about 100 websites on my server. In most cases, I have no idea what my customers put up on their sites. Had SOPA/PIPA passed, we would have had to go out of the webhosting business. We don't have the resources to examine the content, nor the deep pockets necessary to fight if someone protests. And you can't just remove the material as soon as someone claims to be the owners and threaten you with legal action if you don't remove it. People have already started making the accusation that their work has been pirated simply to shut up viewpoints they disagree with.

It is ironic that just about the time SOPA/PIPA died, the Justice Department closed down Megaupload, one of the largest file download sites. Megaupload allowed users to create accounts, upload files and share with friends. Certainly, lots of the material on the site was copyrighted by others, but

a considerable amount was also family pictures, company material for sharing with employees and other perfectly legal material.

As it stands, no one who uploaded can access their data, so someone who thought the data was safe "in the cloud" is without it now. It is possible some may be able to retrieve their data, but appears unlikely at this point.

The key here is that a lot of data at Megaupload was perfectly legal. Undoubtedly the majority of it was stolen copyrighted material. Not only is the founder in jail, but several employees are as well. It will be interesting to read the details of the criminal trial, assuming it happens in the U.S.

The fact that authorities were able to coordinate an international investigation has some believing that SOPA/PITA were unnecessary. Others claim that given that Megaupload was making hundreds of millions of dollars, mainly from people distributing copyrighted material, it is evidence that more needs to be done.

It is one thing to go after Megaupload, where it is certain that the bulk of the income comes from illegal activities, but it is vastly different for Facebook, where clearly the vast majority of the material is not copyrighted. How far should online service providers go to prevent copyrighted material from being distributed through their servers?

Perhaps more chilling is the thought that should the U.S. force online service providers to create software to screen content, foreign governments could then require them to screen content offensive to the government. Governments already require that they have a backdoor so they can listen to cell phone conversations, and they restrict search engines from indexing certain sites, so coercing online service providers to toe the line could be child's play. Software that screened for copyright would be more than powerful enough to screen for material critical of a government. That is, of course, if such software could be written in the first place. It's not clear that it could be.

At some point, the whole concept of copyright and fair use will have to be revisited to take into account the technological advances that are rapidly outdated laws that were created 150 years ago. That's going to be exceedingly difficult. And it can't happen until all sides have a reasonable understanding of the issues the other sides face.

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Follow These Points Before Calling Support

By Tom Allen, Publisher / Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, Georgia; June 2012 issue, Mountain Bits & Bites www.mcug.org bunkerhilltom@yahoo.com

Today, it is possible to contact companies in numerous different ways. However, when planning to call or e-mail a computer company, keep the below recommendations in mind. If you are calling for support on a particular product make sure you have all applicable numbers written down. For example, the Serial Number and Model number of the particular device or computer.

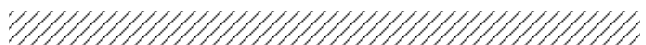
If you are calling for support for a computer product, make sure you're next to the product in case you need to follow directions.

Have a piece of paper and pencil prepared in case instructions are given or additional contact information is given. If you have Internet access, try finding the answer to your question online before calling or e-mailing support. Many questions can be found online by using a search engine such as Google.

Make sure you have at least 30 minutes of available time, not only for the wait but the time likely required to troubleshoot the issue.

If you believe the product in question is bad or needs to be replaced, have all purchase information available. If you are planning on purchasing or the support call is feebased, have more than one credit card ready to be given over the phone.

Finally, once you've connected with support make sure to write down the support representatives' name in case you need to get back in touch with him or her.



The Problem: Muffled Sound

by Steve Baer, Feature Writer,

Hilton Head Island Computer Club, SC, May 2012 issue,
Island Computing, www.hhicc.org, [Baer \(at\) ieee.org](mailto:Baer(at)ieee.org)

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 center 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 earphones 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 listener, 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.

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Search Engine Overload

By Tanya L Mattson, Librarian, Computer Users of Erie

So I will admit it, I love Google Search. But I have found it to be frustrating when I am searching for something and get 250,000+ results that are not only not relevant to my search, but are so off-the-wall it is - well, frustrating. So I did a search on searching. I knew there were 'tips', 'tricks' to limit or narrow a search field. Here are some tips to help with what I term the Search Engine Overload. I have tried these with Google - maybe these work with others.

I read a bunch of 'technical' jargon about basic operators / OR operators (What??) But this is for the non-techies out there.

Google has in it the ability to have special characters (i.e. +, - etc) or words that modify the search query.

For some general background: when I search with multiple keywords, all the keywords are looked for - so for example - blue dog will have results of blue dog, blue, dog and all known variations. Words can have multiple meanings and one ends up with all these results that include pages that have absolutely nothing to do with what I was interested in. And to be honest - sometimes steers me off track checking out something that popped up and made me curious.

Now for an exact phrase search - use the "" (double quotation marks) around the phrase: "blue dog" (i.e. words within the quotes are called a phrase)

This cuts down on the variations of the words and the results to be sifted through. It can be done with one word, "human" This is going to sound like a double negative - bear with me. Now to omit part of the search field, you can use the "+" sign. (yes the plus sign) This is called a special character. Google will only show pages that have a certain word (or phrase) in it. For example you search for image. Everything that has a reference to image - including other search engines - pops up. But image+cow will narrow the field considerably.

Another good example you are looking for alice in wonderland but you were only interested in the 1951 version. So the search would look like alice in wonderland+1951. (Knocking out lots of results including the 2010 version). The plus + can add and subtract from the search. It depends on what you are searching for. [Please note there are NO space before or after the +]

Now the minus - is another way to omit from searches. Take the image+cow search - change it to cow image -clipart and it will omit clipart from the images of the cows.

Then you have searching with the asterisk "*". The asterisk "*" is sort of a space for a single word. So wherever there is an asterisk, the search will accept any word.

This is great if you know a phrase/quote/title - but forgot one of the words. So looking for mary had a * lamb, Google will fill in the space (the asterisk) with any word. And of course you can use more than one asterisk. *now*cow (searching for How now brown cow)

Lastly, just a quick note: there are many other options, including the order of the words. This just scratches the surface but hopefully with help some with Search Engine Overload.

Which by the way is not what SEO stands for (Search Engine Optimization) - someone else will have to figure out that.

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Crime and Conflict Over the Internet

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

Recently my family and I were in Las Vegas and while we were there, another hacking incident hit the news. Zappos.com, an online shoe and clothing retailer, announced that they had been the victim of a cyberattack.

Being based in nearby Henderson, the reports on this company that I was previously unaware of (you can imagine how much online shoe buying I do) dominated the Las Vegas local news. Customer address, phone and email information had been stolen, but fortunately credit card info and account passwords remained secure.

This was just one more incident in an increasing trend of crime and conflict conducted over the Internet.

Reports of hacked computers and stolen commercial data have become commonplace. The Internet appears to be a prime medium for crime, with organized crime elements taking advantage of the easy access and anonymity. I've so far avoided being part of one of these data thefts from a major company that I've entrusted with some of my personal information, but it is probably just a matter of time until I'm a victim too. I'm also under siege on a smaller scale, receiving several scam emails every day. Most are such obvious scams that I

almost have to laugh. Is the head of the FBI or Secretary of State Hillary Clinton really going to email me about claiming foreign funds I previously knew nothing about? I have seen some pretty realistic emails from banks (mostly ones I don't do business with, but a few that I do), advising me to click on a link to avoid a loss of account access. A little restraint and outside research show even the most polished of these to be fakes intended to trick you out of personal information or plant malware on your computer.

The worst of these online scams try to use your own friends and family to trick you into lowering your guard. I recently received an unsolicited email from my sister, which was also addressed to a number of other family members. It contained only a vague greeting and a link. I recognized it as a scam, but my wife did not.

Fortunately, it appears the link only led to a Viagra peddling website, as repeated cleanings of her computer turned up no malware. It appears that someone gained access to my sister's email account and used it to send this message to everyone in her email address book. After receiving this sham email herself at work, she changed her email account password and sent a warning out to all her contacts. That showed good web etiquette. I receive similar emails periodically from a friend's account, but he never responds to my warnings about his email account being hijacked. If you lose control of an email account in this way, at least let the provider know so the account can be closed. If you simply abandon the compromised account, you'll likely leave a zombie account out there to continue pestering your friends.

In addition to the criminal element, the political conflicts of our world are starting to creep into the Internet. While electronic personal communications can play a positive role in exposing repression around the world, and can be a tool for change towards more open and free political systems, the access to information can also be a weapon. Enemies of our country and way of life hack our government and commercial web sites to steal information and deny legitimate access. Our businesses and institutions may be under attack through the Internet by factions related to or agents of China, Russia or our middle eastern adversaries. Our own government has formed cyber warfare elements and acknowledges that future battles may include skirmishes in cyberspace. It is speculated that the Stuxnet worm, which appears to have targeted uranium processing facilities in Iran, may have been the product of U.S. or Israeli intelligence agencies. Palestinian hackers steal and release account information from banks and institutions in Israel, leading some in Israel to do the same with information on Palestinians.

Where will all this lead? I'd hate to see the "Information Superhighway" that was supposed to be our free and open Internet turned into the electronic equivalent of the highways in "Mad Max", where danger lurks everywhere and lawlessness abounds.

And speaking of laws on the Internet, we have recently witnessed online protests over U.S. Internet piracy legislation. A number of prominent web sites, including Google and Wikipedia, conducted partial shutdowns or redirections to protest pending legislation and solicit support from their users. The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA) are bills under consideration by the U.S. Congress to protect intellectual property. Opponents claim the proposed legislation would harm free speech and reduce technical innovation on the web. I acknowledge online piracy is a problem, but also don't want a solution at the expense of an open Internet. Hopefully our own government won't soon be in the censoring business. We all have an interest in how this issue is resolved.

With all this conflict on and over the web, it makes me wonder if I'm taking all the reasonable measures I can to protect myself and my assets as I use the Internet. It is sometimes difficult to determine where "reasonable" fits in between "it won't happen to me" and a bunker mentality. As I've moved my finances and shopping online, I've realized I've become more dependent on the Internet. By conducting all my banking activities, including bill payment and monitoring of accounts, on the web, I hope I've not made myself more vulnerable in the process. Am I safer not having bank statements mailed to me, or am I now more open to theft by hacking or scams? How would I access my money in a web only bank account if the Internet should for some reason go down? It is great to be able to surf where I want, but does that surfing potentially expose me to malware that could capture my account information when I bank with the same computer? Is it paranoid to consider using a separate computer for banking and another for other web access?

It is exciting to think that the whole world can be accessed through that little RJ45 Ethernet jack on your cable or DSL modem. It should also be sobering to consider that the whole world could be there in that connection.

Tablets of Clay

The crooks are not only after us on the Internet, but also in our electronics stores. Over this last Christmas, a number of iPad purchasers got the wrong kind of tablet. In Canada, a number of customers that purchased iPads at reputable stores like Best Buy and Walmart later found the box contained not a tablet PC but a slab of modeling clay. In perhaps more than a dozen reported cases, it appears crooks purchased iPads at these stores with cash, replaced the items in the box with the same weight in clay and expertly resealed the boxes. The boxes were returned to the stores for refunds, and since they appeared to be unopened, they were replaced on the shelves to be purchased by unsuspecting customers. The first customer discovering this switch was thought to be a scammer by the store, but after additional cases were discovered, he was reimbursed and given an iPad.

Help Lines

HARDWAREHELP

	AdvisorNo.
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

	AdvisorNo.
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

TOG Membership

As of November 2012, Tacoma Open Group For Microcomputers is no longer accepting membership dues. New members after this date may attend the meetings and obtain a copy of the printed newsletter at the meeting. Henceforth, the printed newsletter will only be mailed to paid-up members as of November 2012.

November Meeting Short Presentation by Carl Tenning

You've heard from me at one or more meetings, that I occasionally look at the viewer report from our club website. I also have three personal web pages that I check the viewer reports on. The viewer report tells me the page that a viewer has accessed and in some cases the site that they found the link from to my site. I don't publish this data anymore because the porn sites have apparently discovered that this is a way they can get their links on the web. So, in most cases, I don't go checking out the links in case they might be malicious. But one showed up this week that sounded like a legitimate site, so I wanted to see just how they referenced my site. Sometimes you might find out what they are saying about my web site. I checked one today and it was from <http://www.script-tutorials.com/> and looked pretty good, but nowhere on their site could I find a link to mine. At the bottom of their web site was a "Contact me" link, so I did and got a reply. His name is Andrew and he does script development. I explained to him how I found his web site and we discussed the usefulness of viewing visitor logs. To test my viewer log he gave me part of his IP address and promised that the next day he would access my website. Sure enough the viewer log showed his access to my page, giving me his full IP address and other information. From that I did a "Reverse IP Address" search and determined him to be in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. It also gave me the type of computer he was using to access the internet as Windows "NT 6.1; WOW64; rv:15.0" which he confirmed was a Windows 7 operating system. It also reported the browser he was using as Firefox/15.0.1 with the AlexaToolbar/alxf-2.17, which he also confirmed. So, just for a moment, consider the technology at work here. I was readily communicating with a person half way around the planet (we traded several short e-mail's). Not only that, but I did a search for airfares between Seattle and Bishkek and found that it's possible to get a one-week advance purchase round trip airfare for under \$1400. That one was via Moscow, Russia (it takes two days). A slightly higher airfare of under \$1800 transited via Istanbul (also two days, but with less layover time). Isn't technology amazing!

