

TOGGLE

THE MICROCOMPUTER TURN (ON)

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR TACOMA-SEATTLE AREA MICROCOMPUTER USERS

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IMPORTANT NEWS

TOG To Stop Meeting Monthly After 31 Years

With attendance at monthly meetings down to a handful of faithful members, a lengthy discussion among the few present reached the tentative conclusions that 1) the Tacoma Open Group for Microcomputers (TOG) should stop meeting monthly and relinquish the meeting room reservation, and 2) the website will continue for the present and the newsletter may continue to be posted there but mailed copies will cease with the September 2013 issue.

There are several issues to be resolved by the membership. Among them are the disposition of assets owned by the club including a bank account holding between \$1,000 and \$2,000, our projector and sundry other items.

If you wish to have a say in what to do with these assets, and whatever future lies ahead for the website and newsletter, please attend the August 12th, 2013 meeting or otherwise advise the Acting President Carl Tenning by phone at (206) 824-3843 or e-mail at c10ing@hotmail.com.

Carl has outlined several possible outcomes in his resignation statement below although the feeling of those present at the July 2013 meeting was that the meetings should be terminated and the newsletter and website continued as long as those who maintain them are willing to continue with their on-line publication and operation. Even those activities depend on the stamina, dedication and patience of Carl Tenning and Bob Thomson --- which is not infinite.

TOG President Announces Retirement

Carl Tenning, TOG (acting) president, has announced that he will resign the post at the end of the September 9, 2013 TOG meeting. Carl has been TOG president since June 2006 and before that served as club Vice President/Program Chairman and TOG Librarian for a number of years.

As the club has operated the last two years without a Vice President/Program Chairman, there is not an immediate successor to step up to the position of President.

Board members will make a decision at the August 12, 2013 meeting as to whether the club will continue operations after September 2013.

Meeting attendance has steadily declined and there has been a lack of presenters. The options for continuing are:

1) Find replacement officers for President and VP/Program chair to continue the meetings.

If not:

2) Discontinue monthly meetings and continue operation web only plus a mailed newsletter to paid members.

3) Discontinue monthly meetings and continue operation web only with no mailed newsletter.

Or:

4) Shut down entirely, discontinuing the web site and newsletter.

5) Merge with another club that is still active.

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PERMISSIONS

Do you Have the Right Ones?

by Phil Sorrentino

Sarasota PCUG, Florida MAR '13 PC Monitor
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In the early days of computing, when we didn't have multi-users Operating Systems and networks, permissions were less necessary because the files and folders created were for the use of the one and only user. Files were shared using floppy disks and sneaker-net (run with the floppy from computer to computer) .But, as operating systems improved and allowed multiple users and our computers were connected by Ethernet networks, permissions became necessary to make sure only those intended could view or change your files and folders.

If you have ever tried to share a folder on one of your computers on your home network, you know how frustrating it can be to get things to work. Well, "permissions" is one of the things that has to be understood and setup properly. Of course, there are many other things that have to be set up first, but permissions, often times, is a stumbling block. If you are setup with a "Homegroup" (all machines are running Windows 7), then the job is a little easier than if you are setup with a "Workgroup" (machines can be running XP, Vista, Windows 7 or even be Apple computers). All the computers in a Workgroup must be setup with the same workgroup name (check in the System control panel for this setting, on the computers running Microsoft OSs).

Permissions may be a challenge because there are two types of permissions to be considered. There are "share permissions", and NTFS permissions. Share permissions are necessary when accessing folders across a Local Area Network (LAN), from another machine. NTFS permissions are necessary when accessing any file or folder that you do not own (i.e. created it yourself). So, both permissions must be set up when you are trying to share files and folders on a LAN .Share permissions are easily setup for a file or folder. Just right-click on the file or folder you want to share (in Windows Explorer) and choose "Share with" and then select those that you want to share with. (Selecting "Specific People" will open a window that will let you select those people you would like to share with. Pull down the arrow and select "Everyone" and then click "Add", if you would like to share with anyone on the network. But keep in mind that "Everyone" includes anyone you let onto the wireless portion of your network. Be especially aware if you do not have your network protected with at least WEP encryption.)

The NTFS permissions are the next things to consider. NTFS permissions is a core component of the Windows 7 security system. Using this feature, you can specify exactly which other users are allowed to open your files and folders, and how much they can do with the files and folders. Using Windows Explorer to setup the NTFS permissions for a file or folder, right-click the file or folder and select "Properties". In the Properties window, select the Security tab. Here you will see a list of Users and the Permissions for each User. Click a User in the "Group or user name" box and the permissions will be shown in the "Permissions for Authenticated Users" box. In this box you can Allow or Deny the following Permissions "Full control", "Modify", "Read & execute", List folder contents", "Read", "Write", and "Special Permissions", (You would think that Deny is just don't Allow, but there are further details that complicate this issue and it would take more than the length of the Monitor to completely explain, however there is a good description of these issues in the best seller "Windows 7 , the missing manual".) A brief explanation of these permissions is as follows:

1. List folder contents, which can only be set for folders allows a user to see the files and folders inside the folder.
2. Read, allows a user to examine the contents of the file or folder, but not make changes.
3. Read & execute, allows a user to examine the contents of the file or folder and also run any file that is in the folder.
4. Write, allows a user to read a file and make and save changes to it.
5. Modify, allows a user all the abilities of Write and Read & execute, and also allows the ability to delete the file or folder.
6. Full control allows a user to do anything to the file or folder, including changing its permissions, and even taking ownership of the file. (Ownership is normally given only to the user who created a file or folder.)
7. Special Permission, seems to be fairly extensive and best described by an article from Microsoft at:
<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/308419>.

This is a little to the side of the topic of permissions, but it is related. You will notice that there are two levels of Computer Users, Administrators and (Standard) Users. Administrators have permissions to create, delete, and manipulate files and folders. Administrators can also execute programs, install programs, create accounts and change permissions.

Some of these can be very dangerous in the hands of a malicious person or piece of malware. (There must be at least one Administrator for every computer.) (Standard)Users typically have lesser permissions but permissions can be

increased as previously discussed. Microsoft recommends, for security reasons, that there be only one Administrator, and all other Users be the (Standard) User type. This is probably good advice for most installations because of the extent to which an Administrator can manipulate files and folders. Should a virus or Trojan horse get control as an Administrator, the malware could easily wreak havoc. But with the lesser permissions of a Standard User, the malware may be thwarted and not be able to pull off its nasty job.

Setting the share permissions for different Users on a file or folder can be done if necessary, but if you are on a small LAN and all the Users are known to be trustworthy, then when it comes to sharing a file or folder, you might consider sharing with “everybody”. And set the NTFS permissions for each User to what that User needs, and no more. This will probably help make it easier to setup your network and share files and folders on that network, and if a problem occurs, it should make the troubleshooting less difficult.

Creating a Bootable USB from a Windows Installation DVD

by Jeff Dubois, Ottawa PC News, May 2013

Recently, I was faced with a technical challenge that I had neither encountered nor considered before. The challenge was the consequence of a finicky optical drive on a used laptop I had purchased and my desire to upgrade the OS from the resource-demanding Vista to the more streamlined Windows 7. At the risk of understating my disdain for Vista, suffice it to say that I do have an original copy of Vista on DVD which I use every day as a coaster for my coffee cup.

The first step in my upgrade process was to grab my GParted CD, a bootable Linux based partition manager, and delete all data and partitions from the drive creating, instead, a single NTFS partition. I removed the GParted CD and replaced it with an authentic Windows 7 installation DVD. I was able to boot to the Windows 7 DVD and, although the setup process did commence, it abruptly ended in an error reporting it was unable to read the disk. Two subsequent reboots garnered the same result.

Clearly, I'd have to install from a different optical drive or use a different installation media.

In an attempt to solve my problem, I checked the techie trunk to see what gadgets it might hold. Since I do not have an external DVD USB drive, perhaps I could make one. There was a USB 2.0 IDE interface but no IDE DVD to plug into it. There was a SATA DVD drive, but no USB interface for that. I surmised that since it was not possible to boot to the existing media, then the media had to be adapted to suit the existing hardware. I was now faced with a new challenge I had not previously encountered.

How do I create a bootable USB copy from my original Windows 7 DVD? My technical quest began, like all technical quests, by paying homage to Mr. Google. After wading through a plethora of how-to guides, what I discovered was that creating a bootable USB flash drive from a Windows 7 installation DVD could be accomplished in a number of different ways.

One method, certainly the most complex, required the use of PowerShell through which several command-line instructions were issued to partition, format, apply a boot sector and copy files to the flash drive. Not for the faint of heart but certainly a feasible option if a less arduous method could not be found.

The second method required the use of Microsoft's Windows 7 USB-DVD Download Tool. After reviewing the instructions on the product page, however, I suspected that an even simpler alternative must exist.

My search ended when I stumbled upon WinToFlash; a powerful utility which not only copies Windows installation files from DVD to a USB flash drive, SD Card, or external HDD, but also makes the external storage media bootable.

Unlike other Windows installation cloning solutions, WinToFlash comes with an extremely simple user interface: the user need only enter the drive letter for the respective source and destination media.

Finally, WinToFlash has an Advanced Mode for power users to customize the cloning process with a host of options including the ability to transfer the XP, Server 2003, Vista or Windows 7 operating systems to a USB drive and to create the Windows XP/2003 emergency bootloader, an MS-DOS USB drive and the Windows XP/2003 recovery console.

Available for download from <http://wintoflash.com>, the utility is free for noncommercial use.

HARDWARE NOTES & TIPS

Performance, Capacity, Ports... Tablet Discriminators

By Phil Sorrentino, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
<philso (at) yahoo.com> <<http://www.spcug.org>>. This article is from the December 2012 issue of the PC Monitor.

Performance, Capacity, and Ports... sounds like something you might think of when you are considering a Vacation Cruise. But Performance, Capacity, and Ports are the three technical things to consider when contemplating acquiring many new devices. These three things should be considered, especially when you are planning to buy a tablet, a computer,

or even a TV. TVs and computers have been around for quite a while, so let's take a look at these considerations for the new kid on the block, the tablet. Usually, when it comes to choosing a tablet, the first thing that meets the eye is the tablet size. Today's tablets seem to be roughly 7 or 10 inch. Once the size has been decided, then the Operating System becomes a choice: Apple's iOS (iOS5, iOS6), Google's Android (and all of its versions, like FroYo, Ice Cream Sandwich and Jelly Bean), or Microsoft's Windows 8 (Pro or RT). And then, with the number of tablets and Operating Systems, the choice can really get difficult. But another way to help you make the final choice may be just to look at Performance, Capacity, and Ports.

Performance is a measure of how fast the device is and how well it accomplishes the desired task. Capacity is a measure of how much you can do with this device. And Ports is a measure of how well the device will interact (interface) with the outside world.

Tablet performance is very hard to measure and quantify, but you really know when you don't have enough. When you do have plenty of performance, it is hard to ascribe the quality to any one thing, specifically. But, usually we look at the speed of the CPU. However, performance is very closely tied to the memory features, so performance may involve the memory speed as well as the CPU speed. Performance of the tablet CPU is measured in GHz, and currently good performance tablets clock in at around 1 GHz. Because tablets are typically touchscreen devices, the first thing we do, to ascertain performance, is to try to control the operation with our finger flicks and swipes. Objects should move when flicked and actions should take place when the screen is tapped. If there is any lag, it is immediately noticed.

There are many different CPU processors used in tablets. Some of the manufacturers are ARM, Nvidia, Apple, Intel, and AMD. Apple CPUs are found in the iPad and CPUs from the other manufacturers are found in the Android and Windows 8 tablets. There are at least two high performance CPU chips being used in the latest tablets: the Nvidia quad-core Tegra 3 in Android tablets and the Apple A5X in the latest iPad. The performance of both of these tablets is breathtaking. But keep in mind, not all tablets have the latest processors.

CPU performance can be determined by running benchmark tests. Benchmark test data is rarely available, but sometimes it can be found in reviews done by a magazine or other organization. Benchmark tests attempt to measure performance by running typically very lengthy and very complicated programs to see how long it takes to complete the task. There are many different benchmarks and when many different benchmark tests are run on a group of processors, the results may not always be conclusive. CPUs are sometimes fast in certain computational areas and not so fast in other areas, like data transfer. To really evaluate a CPU with a benchmark test, the benchmark test should be as close to the

eventual use of the processor as possible, but this is not always easy to specify. Benchmark tests that involve a user, such as testing a game on a tablet, are even more difficult to use, because playing and observing a game may be very subjective, especially if it involves the screen display and input from the game player. So, the best test for performance is to try out the tablet yourself, while doing some of the things that you intend for the tablet, like web surfing, displaying pictures and videos, or playing a game (try Angry Birds for fun). Many tablets can be taken for a "test drive" at the "big box" stores like Best Buy and Office Depot.

So much for Performance: now for Capacity. The Capacity of a tablet is typically the amount of solid state memory the tablet provides. It is basically the data storage component of the tablet, which currently ranges from about 1 GB to 64 GB. This storage is space that is available for your Apps (software programs), and data (used by the Apps). Today, capable tablets usually have from 8 GB to 32 GB of memory. Many Android tablets, and Microsoft's Surface, also include a microSD slot for extending the memory capacity. Currently, the SDHC standard has been implemented in the microSD hardware, allowing for up to 32 GB of added memory capacity. (At this time, Apple, unfortunately, has not included a memory expansion slot on any of its iPad devices, although they do sell a model with 64GB of memory.)

Ports: refers to the availability of interface connections provided by the tablet. This is the way your tablet interacts with your other devices. Some tablets include a micro, mini, or standard size USB connector. The USB interface allows the tablet to be connected to a computer (desktop or laptop) in order to move files to and from the tablet. This is one method of getting your entertainment media (pictures and videos) on to, or off of, the tablet. This is how you can get the pictures or videos that you captured with your tablet's camera into your picture collection on your computer. (Again, at this time, Apple, unfortunately, has not included a USB connection on any of its iPad devices, although they do provide a 30-pin dock connector that may be used to connect to a computer.)

Another valuable port found on some tablets is a micro-HDMI port. With this interface, the tablet can directly show video (picture and sound) on any TV with an HDMI input, which is found on almost every new flat panel TV. (Again, at this time, Apple, unfortunately, has not included a micro-HDMI port on any of its iPad devices, although they do provide a 30-pin dock connector that may be used to output video.)

Two other interface connections should be considered as ports although they are not obvious when you look at the hardware. These are Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, neither of which has a hardware connection because both of these are wireless interfaces. These interfaces allow the tablet to interact with other devices that subscribe to the Wi-Fi and Bluetooth wireless standards.

And finally, although few tablets incorporate this, let's not forget about NFC (Near Field Communications). This wireless interface has many uses, but may only end up on smartphones. NFC will allow easy transfer of files between closely situated (within a few centimeters) devices. This interface may be instrumental in allowing you to use your device as a wallet, in the future.

Once you've decided to buy a tablet, the next thing is to evaluate the Performance, Capacity, and Ports of the most interesting offerings in the market. Usually, there will be a few that meet most of your criteria. At that point it becomes a matter of value: capability for dollars. Good luck.

Moving From A HDD To A SSD

by Gene "Barlow, User Group Relations
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as seen in User Friendly. Los Angeles Computer Society
Newsletter

A couple of years ago, I bought a new laptop computer that I just love. It is a small Lenovo ThinkPad X120e computer, about the same size as a tablet, but it has a full keyboard and runs familiar Windows software. This lightweight unit does everything I want it to do in a portable design, and was fairly inexpensive (less than \$400) to purchase. As I said, I love this small laptop computer.

The only bad thing is that it is slightly slower than I wanted. At the price I paid, I expected this to be the case. Now, a couple of years later, I wish it were a bit faster. I looked at the newer ThinkPad models that were similar in size to this model. Yes, they are faster, but to buy one would cost me over \$900 today. I will live with the slower speed to avoid this major expense at this time.

Benefits of Upgrading to a SSD

As an alternative, I investigated replacing the Hard Disk Drive (HDD) inside the computer with a fast Solid State Drive (SSD). The costs of these new drives with no moving parts had dropped significantly the past year or so. Still, they were more expensive than a similar HDD. To replace my 250GB main hard drive would cost me over \$200. At that price, I might as well buy a new ThinkPad instead. However, 120GB SSD were priced under \$100, which was reasonable to my thinking.

So, I bought a 120GB Vertex 4 SSD as the replacement drive for my laptop. After doing some research, I decided on this model. This was a 4th generation SSD from Vertex, a reliable brand. It was faster and had a longer life than their older models. Going with the latest SSD made sense to me.

With the new SSD installed and running in my computer, I am very excited at the changes it made. It boots up and runs about 25% faster than my old HDD. It also runs cooler, which is important on laptop computers. Since the SSD is slightly lighter than the HDD it replaced, I have less weight to carry

around. Without moving parts, the SSD is more durable than a HDD. The SSD is also quieter than the HDD. Very importantly, I can expect my battery to last longer between charges.

To net it all out, I just upgraded my laptop computer for about \$100 and ended up with the performance of a similar computer costing \$900. That is a great savings in my mind.

How to upgrade to a SSD

Now, in case I have motivated you to consider upgrading your HDD to a SSD drive in your computer, let me tell you how easy it was to do this, using the right tools. Before starting this process, I decided to upgrade my BIOS to the latest release for my computer. I didn't want issues with the BIOS and my new SSD hard drive. This was a short process by going to my computer manufacturer's web site and downloading the latest BIOS for my computer model. I carefully followed their instructions to do this and in less than 5 minutes, my computer's BIOS was up to date.

The next issue I faced was going from a larger (250GB) HDD to a smaller (120GB) SSD. Fortunately, my hard drive was not very full and I had empty space to give up. If the used space on my hard drive was larger than the new SSD drive, I would have had to delete some of the files. That was not the case, so all I was faced with was to reduce the size of the five partitions on my HDD. I used *Acronis Disk Director II Home* to re-size each of the partitions on my old HDD. Then I moved each smaller partition towards the beginning of the drive, again using *Disk Director*. This organized all of my five partitions in the first 120GB of the HDD. The remainder of the HDD was just unallocated space on the drive.

With my old HDD prepared with smaller partitions, I was now ready to copy them to the new SSD. Since most laptops only have room for one hard drive inside the computer, I purchased a special cable to let me attach my new SSD to a USB port on my laptop. The *Notebook Drive Upgrade Kit* by Apricorn was less than \$40 at Best Buy. I attached my new SSD drive to one end of the cable and the other I plugged into the USB port on my laptop. The upgrade kit came with a CD containing software to clone my main drive to the SSD drive. but since I trusted my *Acronis True Image 2013 Home* backup utility, I used the clone function in True Image to duplicate the contents of my HDD onto the SSD drive. This took about 30 minutes to complete and all went very smoothly. When the cloning function was completed, I powered off my computer, removed the battery and then replaced the old HDD inside the laptop with the new SSD I had just finished cloning. When I powered up the computer, it ran without a hitch, only much faster, quieter, and taking less power. This was a very easy enhancement to my ThinkPad and it gave me tremendous improvements to my favorite laptop.

If you have questions about this article or the *True Image* or *Disk Director* products, send an email to support@ugr.com and I will try to help you with your questions.

Troubles with USB

by Chris Taylor

Ottawa PC News, May 2013

About 6 months ago, I started having problems with my Logitech wireless keyboard. Every now and then, it would stop responding. I could bang away at the keys and nothing would appear on-screen. Ten or fifteen seconds later, it would start responding. Sometimes, some of the keys I had typed while it wasn't responding would appear onscreen. Other times not.

It was very puzzling. I took to repeatedly hitting the Windows key and waiting until I saw the Start menu pop up and then I would continue working.

I tried lots of things. I changed the batteries. I moved the wireless transceiver from a rear USB port to the front, thinking it could be a distance problem or an interference problem. I tried newer drivers. Because the transceiver works at 2.4 GHz, I thought there might be interference from my wireless router, so I separated them more. I tried a wired keyboard.

The problem persisted. I started thinking a program I had installed was causing a conflict somehow or something was wrong deep in the bowels of Windows. Unfortunately, I could not pin-point exactly when the problem started. And it was starting to get worse; it was happening more frequently, often several times a day.

All of a sudden, I had this vague memory of support techs where I used to work having an occasional problem with USB-based storage devices. On computers that had had many external hard drives and flash drives attached over time, Windows started having a difficult time recognizing them when they got plugged in. My wireless keyboard transceiver was plugged into a USB port. Could this be the same problem?

The solution had been to remove references from Windows to old devices that were no longer used. I decided to try it. First, I should caution - your mileage may vary! This worked for me and there seemed to be no problems created. But please don't blame me if anything bad happens. Make sure you have a good backup before messing with things.

You must first start an elevated privileges command prompt. In Windows XP, you are probably running as admin already, so you can just click Start | Run, type in cmd.exe and hit enter. In Windows Vista or 7, click Start, type cmd.exe, rightclick the entry that appears in the start menu and choose Run as administrator. In Windows 8, from the Start screen, type cmd and when the Apps screen comes up listing the results, right click on Command Prompt. At the bottom of the screen, select Run as administrator.

In the command prompt window, type;
SETDEVMGR_SHOW_NONPRESENT_DEVICES=1

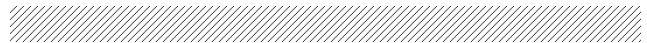
Then type;
devmgmt.msc

When Device Manager opens, click on View and select Show hidden devices. You can then hunt for USB devices that are not currently attached to your computer. Since I was having problems with my keyboard, I started there. When I expanded the Keyboards section, I found quite a few entries with icons that were greyed out, indicating they were not currently connected. I right-clicked on each and selected the option to Uninstall.

I rebooted, although I am not sure this is required. Since then I have not had any problems with the keyboard not responding.

I went back and removed most greyed out (non-present) devices that I could tell were USB devices from sections: Disk drives, Human Interface Devices, Imaging devices, Mice and other pointing devices, and Printers. I left devices I could recognize by name that I still have and expect to reconnect in the future.

If you have problems on your computer with USB devices that are not recognized properly or start acting strangely, you might want to try this to see if it solves your problems. The real beauty with most USB devices is, if you ever do reconnect a device you blew away in Device Manager, it should be recognized and automatically set up again on your system.



Some Worthwhile Utilities

by Bruce Preston. DACS.org Danbury Connecticut

At the May DACS General Meeting a member requested a list of 'useful' utilities. Here's my list, perhaps other members would like to contribute lists of things that they use. These are by no means the only programs I use, but are the ones that I use with some regularity.

Unless otherwise stated, these are freeware programs.

Apache OpenOffice - MS Office compatible for spreadsheets, documents, presentations, plus some other stuff. However the database is not at all like Microsoft Access. If you need a database this may not be for you.

Audacity - Very good for converting LPs to MP3s, can be used to clean up pops, hiss etc. as well.

Auslogic Disk Defragger - Does a better job than the one in Windows.

AusLogic Duplicate File Finder - true duplicates, i.e. same file but in different folders.

anti-virus software - Getting into a discussion as to what is the best anti-virus product, commercial or free is similar to discussing religion or politics. Having said that, here are

two very popular and well-respected freeware anti-virus packages.

avast! Home Free Edition
AVG Free Edition.

Awesome Duplicate Photo Finder - Very interesting in that it can find duplicates where they have been cropped or resized. Just be patient!

Calibre - An e-book reader and manager, RSS reader, etc. that also can convert between e-Book formats.

CCleaner - A well know utility for cleaning c*** from machines.

Colasoft MAC Address Scanner - Useful if you work with setting up networks, printers etc.

CPUID PCwizard 2012 - Generates more detail about your hardware and software than you can possibly ever use.

CutePDF Writer - A virtual printer that creates PDFs. If you can print it from an application, you can create a PDF.

DeepBurner - A free, no-frills CD/DVD burner.

Dropbox - A way to safely share files with others using cloud storage.

EASEUS Backup Workstation - (fee) This is more powerful than their consumer TO DO backup...

EASEUS Data Recovery - Has recovered data from a drive that Windows couldn't even 'see'. Free trial version has limit on how many files it will recover. Use it to see if you have a chance to recover full drive etc. with paid version...

EASEUS Partition Manager - This is very straight forward, easy to use.

EASEUS Partition Manager Pro - (fee) This has additional capabilities, such as various Linux formats...

EASEUS ToDo Backup - A very basic backup utility.

Filezilla - A very easy to use ftp file transfer protocol.

Firefox - many prefer it over Internet Explorer.

FotoSketcher - interesting effects such as pencil on canvas.

GhostScript - A processor that interprets the PostScript language - used for very elaborate text and graphics, this is the language behind PDF files.

GhostView - A PostScript processor which may be used to view PostScript files on your screen, or PDF files. It is very useful if you are interested in the PostScript language as it diagnoses errors. Requires GhostScript.

Google Drive - Used to automatically synchronize files between devices via intermediate cloud storage.

GParked Live CD - More powerful than the simple partition manager(s) found in most operating systems.

ImgBurn - Create an image file from individual files, or burn the ISO file to CD or DVD media.

Ipswitch WSftp PRO - (fee) This is a scriptable, schedulable, and intelligent ftp - it can synchronize local and remote site, or two remote sites, etc...

IrfanView - A very small, light-weight, and fast image viewer that lets you work on the image at a macro level, i.e. crop, resize, compress, convert between many image formats. Note that this is most definitely not an image editor program such as Photo Elements etc.

iTunes - if you have an Apple device, or are into playing music files, etc. you essentially must have this.

KillDisk Free - Use this to really clean a hard disk such as you might do before discarding or donating a computer. It makes multiple passes of rewriting binary 0s and 1s thus wiping out existing data.

Kindle for PC - Lets you read Amazon's e-books on a PC.

LogMeIn (Central) - This is remote control of machines, remote may be un-attended. The fee-based subscription version can handle more machines than LogMeIn Free.

Magic Jelly Bean Keyfinder - Use this to recover the product installation key for software.

Mailwasher Pro 2012 - (fee) This examines POP3 mailbox, identifies SPAM etc. before it gets to your desktop thus blocking spam before it gets to your computer. Free version has fewer features.

MalwareBytes anti-malware - Free edition - on demand malware identification and removal. Reach for this first if you think your computer has been compromised. The "Pro" version (fee) is a real-time scanner, recommended if you are exposed to many questionable or unsafe sources. (Example: You receive a lot of e-mail attachments as part of your business operations.)

Mikogo - Screencasting / webinar package - free for non-commercial use. DACS uses it for holding virtual meetings. Also useful if you assist others (family, friends etc.) with computer problems/training etc. The remote machine must be attended (unlike LogMeIn) and it does not stay resident. Once a session is established, anyone may be presenter, and anyone may take control, with permission of course!

MP3tag - Use this to edit the meta data (tags) in MP3 files.
Microsoft Management Studio Express - A great programming environment for working with Microsoft SQL Server databases, write queries, stored procedures, etc.

Microsoft SQL Server Express - This is the free implementation suitable for small installations, development etc.

Microsoft Visual Studio Express - This is the free development environment for various Microsoft supported languages: ANSIC, C++, C#, VB etc. Great if you want to learn some of the most powerful computer languages in use today.

NCHDebut Video Capture - capture/create .AVI files, convert format etc.

neo Free Hex Editor - This is a GUI to replace the old DOS DEBUG and then some.

Overdrive Media Console - Connecticut libraries that participate in Bibliomation use this for accessing downloadable books etc.

Recuva - A great file recovery (un-erase) program. It usually even works if you have emptied the recycle bin. Just be sure that you install it before you need it, as if you install it after you delete or damage a file, the installation may make use of space where your lost file previously resided. In that case you won't be able to restore the file.

RevoUninstaller - This really uninstalls an application, including the stuff that the package's uninstaller leaves behind. The left behind stuff can sometimes prevent re-installing properly, or cause bad side effects.

Serif PagePlus X6 - (fee) a desktop publishing application that is very powerful and intuitive to use. The "SE" edition is a subset and free - try before you buy. Note: If you upgrade from the SE edition, you get a discount on the paid version.

Skype - A very popular VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) that provides voice, video chat, etc. Skype-to-Skype calls are free, Skype to wired or cell phone calls have an associated fee that often costs less than other methods...

Soluto - This is a PC maintenance mechanism that senses available updates for products (such as non-Windows or Office update,) boot analysis with crowd sourced information etc. It provides centralized control of multiple machines. This is a very interesting free product for home use.

TweetDeck - Provides twitter client for PC.

VLC Video Player - This is capable of playing many video formats, stuff that MS Media Player or QuickTime etc. don't do.

VMware Player - Create a virtual machine (VM) that runs "inside" your current machine as a "guest". This lets you experiment with different operating systems. A classic use is to host an older version of an operating system so that you can run programs (such as games) that won't run on current platforms.

WinZIP Pro - (fee) This is an excellent full-feature data compaction/archiving/extracting utility.

A few last comments:

- When you install a freeware/shareware/open source application, be sure to use the CUSTOM install option, and read it carefully.

- Deselect everything other than the primary product. For example, never allow the installation of browser helper objects (also known as Toolbars) even though they claim to "enhance the web browsing experience."

- Be sure that you do not allow the package to change your browser's default home page.

- If the download requires that you make use of a 3rd party "download manager" it is recommended that you find another source, as they often install lots of unwanted stuff and/or what may very well be spyware.

Having said that, don't let me scare you off - there is a lot of really good freeware or inexpensive software out there. If in doubt - Ask DACS.



Organizing and Backing Up

by Diane Fahlbusch

President, ICON PC User Group, Long Island, NY
as seen in The Rochester Computer Society, I 16 nc.
Monitor / June 2013

We all have LOTS of files saved to our computers as well as on other hardware, such as MP3 players, camera cards, thumb drives and CDs/DVDs, and the cloud. The problem with having lots of hard drive space and cheap mass media storage is that, well, we use them-a LOT, and often store way too much. The first problem is finding the files you want quickly when you want them amidst all that you have. Think about this:

Why did I create and save this file? Wow! I have this?! I was just playing. It had a purpose once upon a time. It has nifty information. It saves me from looking it up again. It's a wonderful trip down memory lane. I really wanted it! I use it frequently. I need it for work. It's precious to ME. It's precious to me AND others. It's important stuff. I need it for work or a specific project. It's legally required. Only you can determine how important your files are, but start rethinking what you save in the first place.

The second problem is what happens if you lost this file. Here are some things to consider:

What will your reaction be? None because you forgot it was there. Say "So what." Pout for a few minutes. Cry for a few hours. Lose a night's sleep. Have a panic attack until I figure out how to rectify it. Curl up in a fetal position for numerous days. Take a sudden trip to the ICU ward of your local hospital.

What would I do if I lost it? Not even realize it's gone. Say "Oops" and forget about it. Recreate it easily. Spend a lot of

time recreating it. Spend more money to get another copy. Be unable to recreate it. Lose your job or spouse. Be in potential legal trouble.

If you are the beginning point in the scale, you REALLY need to clean out files. If you are on the later end of the scale, you REALLY need a Backup plan. But do you just want to duplicate that big messy ‘‘pile’’? So it’s time for:

Organization

Files are useless if you can’t find them when you need them. You first must get in the habit of using meaningful names for your files, and try to keep them short. Advanced search options do allow you to search for a word or phrase in the document and on your entire hard drive. But that can be time consuming. The programs we use want to save files where the programmers decided to set up as the default location. YOU need to take control of this by remembering to select the ‘‘Save’’ location or you are at their mercy. (Of course, it helps if you had initially set up some organization prior to doing this. However, you can still do it after the fact.)

It’s up to you how you want to organize your folders and files. One of the best ways to think about how to organize them is by considering how you would do it if they were all paper documents. Most people would get a filing cabinet and use some kind of system, such as tax returns in one sections, legal certificates in another but fairly close, other legal documents, banking, etc. Well, do that with your electronic files. Create folders and subfolders. If you use specific programs for your banking, you can create shortcuts to the programs within the folders. You may need to add even more layers, but don’t be excessive. If you maintain important documents such as tax records, I would suggest that you create folders for these that are separate from the remainder of your documents, or not even store them on your computer at all.

Most of your document files wind up in the ‘‘My Documents’’ folder on your Windows machine. Most programs will separate out your photos, music and videos into the ‘‘My’’ files of coordinating names, or in a subfolder within the specific program’s folders. The problem is that hackers and phishers know where to look for these files. You should get into the habit of creating your own folders, just as you did when everything was kept in file boxes or filing cabinets. Keep sensitive information encrypted and in folders OUTSIDE of the ‘‘My Documents’’ folder.

Once you have created your filing system, it’s time for the work of going through your files to make sure they still open--otherwise, why save it? Next, ascertain whether you still want or need them. One question you can ask yourself is, ‘‘Did I actually remember that I had this?’’ If the answer is ‘‘No,’’ then you might want to get rid of it. (That’s the problem with LOTS of hard drive space we don’t get rid of anything.) Another option is to consolidate related information onto one file. (I know I started numerous documents with tips about a specific program, which I eventually just put into one document.)

Depending upon how many you have, I suggest that you attack it a little at a time. You may find that you need to create more folders to accommodate the information you have accumulated.

While you are moving and checking your files, you might want to consider adding some ‘‘mouse over’’ information. RIGHT click the file, and then click on ‘‘Properties.’’ You can add comments, keywords, etc. Unfortunately, most of us do not do this. This can become very handy if you need to have the same file in multiple locations. Now you can note how many copies there are and where they are. Photos often require you to put this information in your metadata. There are programs that can help you do this, but most of the time the metadata is editable through your camera’s software. There are often batch renaming options included with this software, as well as other programs. Don’t forget to add notations about the people and places in those photos, especially if you want to share them with future generations. Now you understand what programmers mean by ‘‘document, document, document!’’

Additionally or as an alternative, you could use Microsoft’s One Note to create electronic loose leaf binders of information that can help pull information together. Or you could create links to your folders and use the program Fences to keep them grouped and hidden until you want them. Or you could actually create a database that can contain even more information and hyperlinks to your documents so they are but a click away. Use what works for YOU. But it still makes sense to create order and keep it that way.

So you have slogged through all of your files scattered throughout the universe, created order from chaos, and provided possible cross-references and information. Great! But what happens if that drive dies? That’s why you need a

Back up Plan

The first step is making sure you have a physical medium to back up to. CDs and DVDs are quick and cheap, and there are lots of free burning programs, but they are usually not recommended, even by their manufacturers, for long term archiving of data. Thumb drives are a better option, but are also known to go bad, and do have a limited number of times they can be rewritten. (Granted, it’s a huge number, so you may want to keep a drive just for backups.) Hard drives provide the greatest longevity, and the old fashioned magnetic discs are recommended for the long haul. Of course, they can lose the data if they cross paths with a magnet. That’s why you should have at least two sets. Yep, the ol’ duplicate backup motif.

However, the aftermath of Super-storm Sandy, and her kin in other areas, proves that even if you backed up to multiple drives, they would all be lost if they are saved in the same building. Back up physically to multiple sources, and at least one site away from where your main stockpile of data is stored. This includes the cloud, or another hard drive in a safe deposit box. Why a safe deposit box? Because of the way banks are

built, they will survive most natural disasters. Also consider keeping your backup drives in a refrigerator. If you can get your hands on one of those small ones that college kids use, even if it is not running. We don't want to keep the drives chilled; we just want to protect them from fire. (The insulation in your refrigerator, but especially the freezer, is so thick that items such as these would survive a fire that destroys the entire house.) You could use one of those locking fire proof boxes, except that most thieves just grab the whole box - but not the icebox.

Now it's time to back up. You can just simply copy files, especially those important, costly or irreplaceable ones, to another drive, and another. But please remember that certain files may only be opened with a specific program. Look into alternative programs that might be able to import the file. (The open source Open Office and Libre Office both have a word processing program that will open most forms of MS Word documents. You may lose some formatting, but the text will be there.) Consider saving files with formats that can be opened by other programs without imports or conversions (.odt, .pdf, or .txt). Of course, regular backups are a must.

Another alternative, especially if you have a lot of files that you want to save and are always editing them or adding new ones, but forget to back up our files is to build yourself a NAS (Network Attached Storage device). Yes, you can buy them but you can also take an old computer and build one with the cross platform open source FreeNAS. Your data will be backed up as you are working on it. This will also back up your entire system if you want it to.

Another choice is to use software specifically designed to use backups. Yes, all of the Windows operating systems from at least '98 had this. The problem is that you need to restore your backups with the same operating system. So if you backed up files in the Windows XP backup THAT is the OS you will need to be using to restore them.

Of course you can always look for third party software to backup your files and your system. Most offer the option for automatic backups. Some allow you to schedule specific times, but look for those that will do automatic backups at startup and shut down, especially if your computer is on at irregular intervals. Many of these are transferrable from one operating system to another, but make sure you check. Some come with bootable discs, so you can fully restore your system, programs and files to a new hard drive if your original one died. But still consider utilizing cloud storage as an additional backup, especially since many offer some free storage space.

Finally, remember to check your backups to make sure that they are working properly.

How to determine if an email attachment really is a PDF

by John J. O'Brien <jns45obrien@verizon.net>

Received two e-mail attachments from two different sources, purportedly in PDF format. Adobe Reader X unable to open. Message states either they are in an unsupported format or they were sent as an e-mail attachment and were not decoded properly.

Where is this decoding done, in Adobe Reader or via the e-mail client? Any suggestions on how to open? Note that the attachments do not show any file extension whatsoever.

John Stampfel <jstampfel@gmail.com> replied: First, unless you can verify from the sender that they in fact sent you emails with PDF attachments, go no further. If you trust the sender and know somehow that they sent you PDFs, you could first ask that they resend, assuring that the attachment has a filename with a .pdf extension.

Now, if you are simply curious, you could use a program such as FileAlyzer (freeware available at the SpyBot website [<http://www.safer-networking.org/dl/>]) which allows you to see the binary or text contents of a file. A PDF file that I checked started with %PDF and ended with %%EOF in the text display.

If you actually have a PDF file but the extension is missing, Windows won't know how to open it. Save the file, do a virus scan and then rename it to add a .pdf to the end of the filename and then double click the file and Adobe Reader should open it.



"The computer expert is here."

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

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[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 MEETING

When: **Mon 12 Aug 2013 -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

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

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How To get To The Meeting

For those readers still unfamiliar with
how to find our meeting place we have
reproduced the map showing its rela-
tionship 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 pre-
fer to take Portland southbound to 99th.
At 99th turn west over the tracks and
there you are!



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

Change Service Requested

PROGRAMS

This Month's Meeting

The principal topic at this month's
meeting will be the decision to cancel all
future meetings of Tacoma Open Group
for Microcomputers, and to decide what
to do with the remaining club assets.

The proposed last meeting of the
group will be the September 2013 meet-
ing.