

DATA LINE



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Membership Benefits

6:00 Member2Member session. Mozilla is building a better Internet and Bill Rose will show us what's new with **Firefox**. Mozilla is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote openness, innovation and opportunity on the Web.

Awesome Bar - Get to your favorite sites quickly even if you don't remember the URL.

Improved Interface to make your browsing easier and more efficient.

Simplified Reload/Stop Button - Your Awesome Bar now features one easy button to stop loading pages or reload pages.

Home Button has been moved to the right side of the search-field.

Tabs - Browse multiple sites at once, simply and easily. Each new site appears as a new tab (not a new window) and can be accessed in one click.

7:00 pm – Is your computer running slowly? Speed up your PC and keep your files protected – automatically!

Diskeeper Corporation makes it easy for you to get maximum speed out of every PC in your household — every minute of every day. Get optimum system performance, real-time data protection and fast, easy recovery of lost files, photos, videos and more in seconds.

Judy Taylour will show us Diskeeper's PowerPoint Presentation they have provided us as well as show us how it works on her computer.

All attendees will receive a trial version that can be used for 30 days. Try before you buy. If you find your computer is running faster, Diskeeper Home 2011 is well worth \$39.99.

Diskeeper 2011

Why You Need a Webcam

Written by **Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS**

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Would you like to talk on the telephone where you could see the other party? Even better, would you like to talk to 3 or 4 people at once and see them all? Want to do videoconferencing for business? How about setting up a camera to monitor your home?

All these things are possible with a simple little inexpensive device called a webcam. A webcam is simply a camera attached to your computer to transmit video over the Internet. Many of the current crop of laptop computers have webcams built right into the computer. All you see is a small "eye" above the screen. The software comes pre-installed on the computer so you can start using it immediately.



If you don't have a laptop with a built-in webcam, don't dismay. You can easily add a webcam to your current computer. You can purchase a webcam fairly inexpensively. Logitech, one of the major webcam manufacturers, has webcams that retail from \$30 to \$130. Of course, you get what you pay for. The cheaper cams have basic capabilities and minimal picture quality. Logitech's top-of the-line model has motorized tracking, autofocus, and Carl Zeiss optics. That said, I will tell you that even the cheapest webcam can open a whole new world and can really be fun.

Once you purchase the webcam, you simply install the software and plug the webcam into your computer. Most webcams use the USB port on your computer and come with the necessary cable. Almost all webcams have a built-in microphone, so they handle the audio as well as the video.

Once installed, you can start to use the webcam immediately. If you are already chatting with friends on Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, or AOL Instant Messenger, you can immediately use your webcam to show your friends live video of yourself while you chat.

You can also use your computer with its webcam for calling other friends and relatives through their computers. The most popular software for doing this is a free program called Skype. You simply download their free program. Have your friends and/or relatives do the same. Each party gets a Skype user name when they install the program. Then you get simply use the Skype software to call your friend's computer, using their Skype user name. The whole process is pretty simple. I use Skype to call my daughter and her family in Sweden. Not only do I get to see the grandkids, but since we are using the Internet, there are no long distance telephone charges.

If you have a large family or a big network of friends, you can also check out the ooVoo software at www.oovoo.com. Oovoo lets you talk to and see up to six people at once. The software for video calls between two people is free, but you must pay to be able to conference in more than two. Skype also has a paid service that will let you place video calls between several people.

Webcams are fun to use. One example is a recent "webcam" conversation that I had while I was talking to my daughter and her family. My 4-year-old granddaughter lifted up her dress and stuck her rear end into the camera so that I could see her new Mickey Mouse underpants....it was truly a priceless moment. The first time that you see the person you are talking to smile at one of your lame jokes, you will be as hooked on webcams as I am.

You can have some fun with webcams by personalizing yourself with fun effects. You can put a crown on your head, add funny glasses, give yourself facial hair, or even turn yourself into a talking animal. Just about anything is possible. Whether you want to entertain the kids or surprise a friend, you can really have some fun with these special effects. Many of today's webcams come with this type of video effects software and it can also be purchased separately.

Webcams are often used for videoconferencing for businesses and telemedicine where doctors can access and see patients in hard-to-reach rural areas. If you travel for business, webcams are the perfect way to keep in touch with family and friends when you are on the road.

There are many other uses for webcams, as well. You can use them to take still pictures and videos that you can save to your hard disk and/or email to your friends. You can set up a webcam and stream your video over the Internet with a free service like Stickam or USTREAM. You would be amazed by the number of people who set up their webcams and use one of these services to be "on camera" all day long! With additional software, you can use your webcam to monitor your home. Some even have built-in motion detection.

If you haven't yet entered the world of webcams, take the plunge. You'll be glad you did!

Make Your Computer Either Stupid, Useless or a Zombie

By Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

September 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

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There are many ways to make your computer useful and reliable: add memory, buy more storage, and be sure to purchase gear and peripherals from reliable vendors. Some people nevertheless, seem determined to find ways to get into trouble. As a TV ad once proclaimed, "We all do dumb things from time to time," but making your computer useless doesn't have to be one of them.

Inadvertently choosing a wrong key combination, clicking OK in an online dialog box designed to deceive you into unknowingly downloading malware or unthinkingly doing something genuinely dumb are all preventable. They are easily avoided if only a small amount of premeditated thought and common sense are applied.

Are you a "Nervous Newbie?" People new to computers are often fearful of damaging their equipment. Don't worry! No matter what crazy combination of keystrokes you activate, the computer will not explode. Short of throwing the thing off a rooftop or beating it with a blunt instrument, it's highly unlikely you could do anything to seriously affect your hardware.



Instead, ask yourself, "What would happen if I lost all my data?" The answer will determine what kind of backup plan you should implement. If all you do is surf the internet, fool around playing games, and spend time on a social network site, you don't need much of a backup plan. If you run a business that depends on data that must be constantly updated, losing it all may mean you will retire much earlier than you anticipated at a reduced standard of living. Your personal situation is probably somewhere between these two examples.

Most people are at least vaguely aware that they should back up their system, but never get around to it because it's too much trouble. System crashes and data loss occur for many reasons. Power surges, lightning strikes, hardware failures, software glitches, and user error are among the common causes of losing information.

Your data is the most important part of your system. You can always reinstall a program, but there is nowhere you can go to buy a copy of your precious data. You must make a copy of your information, and have a recovery plan in place before disaster strikes. You don't have to buy a backup program. Windows 7 has a perfectly good one built-in. You can quickly find it in Control Panel. Use it. You won't be sorry.

Store your backups on a removable disk or flash drive. An increasingly popular alternative is to store data online. Whatever you do, it's important to keep your backups at a location away from your computer to protect against theft of your system or natural disasters. To find the best method for your personal needs there is no better place than your local computer user group. You will find centuries of experience at your disposal.

Losing your data is no fun, but losing your entire system can be much worse. No computer should operate unprotected from electrical surges. The best form of protection is with an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). It is internally powered by a battery that ensures a smooth flow of power even if an outage occurs. This gives you sufficient time for an orderly shutdown to avoid not only loss of information, but physical damage to the computer. Most surge suppressors are worse than useless because they give you a false sense of security.



A surge suppressor can protect a system from a voltage spike usually at a cost of severe internal damage to the surge suppressor. There is seldom any visible sign of harm so it's easy to assume you are still protected when you are not. A high quality UPS provides far more safety.

Most of us like a genuine bargain, and a great temptation is to believe free is always better than merely inexpensive. There are many high quality freeware programs, and many of dubious value. Some freeware programs are so sloppily written they can cause your computer to behave erratically or come to a screeching halt. Even if you take care to research and install only the best of the best, too many installs and uninstalls create useless entries in the registry. If not properly removed, these registry orphans can create their own problems such as system slowdowns and strange behavior. For good system performance, install only the programs you really need, and keep your installs and uninstalls to a minimum.

Terabyte sized hard drives have made fragmentation less of an issue than with smaller capacity disks, but it can still be a problem if you neglect it too long. Fragmentation will become a non-issue when solid state drives eventually replace standard hard disks. Until that happy day arrives it makes sense to keep your files neatly arranged so the mechanical parts of your drive can take less time accessing programs and information. Files become fragmented through editing documents and other normal usage of computers including surfing the web. Excessive fragmentation forces your hard drive to perform extra work that eventually noticeably slows down your computer.

Windows 7 has an excellent built in defrag tool that you can access through the Systems Tools folder. The tool runs on a schedule, but you can run it manually anytime. The tool will defrag your system drive, removable storage devices such as USB flash drives, and almost any external storage device where you can store and delete files. Disk Defragmenter runs on an automated schedule, but you can also analyze and defrag your disks and drives manually.

Even if you own a solid state drive that never needs to be defragged, you can still run into trouble by letting it get too full. If you find yourself with a drive that's using more than 90% of its capacity, applications can suddenly exhibit very abnormal behavior. The system has no place to put temporary files, and if a drive runs out of room, it can simply stop leaving you wondering what happened. An easy preventive is to use the Disk Cleanup Tool once or twice a month.

Are you guilty of indiscriminate link clicking? We all know about the danger of downloading attachments that could cause havoc with our systems, but do you click on hyperlinks embedded in emails? This could take you to web sites having implanted ActiveX controls designed to either damage your equipment, spy on you to collect passwords or track your activities to target you for personalized advertising among other nefarious reasons.

Some hackers are eager to install back-door or Trojan horses designed to allow them to control your computer without you being aware of it. Your computer could end up being a remotely controlled Zombie soldier in an army of similar machines to launch Distributed Denial of Service attacks.

Carelessly clicking on links could get you to very inappropriate sites that feature pornography, pirated videos, music or other kinds of software which could cause you personal embarrass-

ment and even your job. People have been known to get in trouble with the law when a simple mouse click brought them to a child pornography site.

Think before you click. Bring your mouse pointer over the link. Often this simple act will reveal the real URL the link may be trying to disguise. If you aren't sure the link isn't going to take you to www.yourpcistoast.com don't do it.

We've covered a fair amount of territory here, but there is more danger lurking on the web than is dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio. Choosing weak passwords, surfing the web without a firewall, failing to update anti-virus programs, and creating shared folders that the wrong people can access are among many additional dangers there simply isn't room for in this article.

Don't conclude that the web is too dangerous a place for you. The cautions mentioned here is the web equivalent of telling people to stay away from crime-ridden neighborhoods, and don't step off the curb into oncoming traffic without looking to see if it's safe first. As always, common sense is your first and best defense.

Review: Universal Mini Mount

By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ
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When you're in your car (or motorcycle or boat), what do you do with your mobile device? Put it on the seat - slips down so you can't find it; put it on the dash - always slips off; put it in your pocket - hard to get to when you need it? Try the Mini Mount. It's a simple device that attaches to any flat surface and holds just about any mobile device smaller than a tablet.

You make sure the flat surface is clean, then place the base on that surface, push down the clamp lock and you are set to put your mobile phone in it. There is a sticky surface on the mount that holds your device securely and can be swivelled or tilted to suit your need.

The sticky surface on the mount is covered by a plastic film which you peel off. If you want to put the mount on another surface, you need to save the plastic film for transport. The sticky surface is refreshable with glass cleaner. And best of all, the adhesive doesn't leave any residue behind!

I tried it out in my car. My dash is all curved surfaces so I mounted it on the windshield. It adhered quite well, especially with the vacuum attachment that makes it so easy to fasten it to just about any surface.

The device mounting area was accessible by rotating it properly. I was not able to affix my iPhone to the mounting area in a vertical position, but setting it sideways worked fine. The

vertical position would have partially blocked the speakers on the iPhone, but the sideways

position did not. I listened to my music in a hands-free method.

This is an inexpensive, easy way to use your mobile device while in your car. There are other mounts available for different devices, even an iPad. One even attaches to the auxiliary power outlet!

About: Universal Mini Mount

Vendor: Cobra

www.cobrahandsfree.com

Price: about \$25

Browser Wars Intensify with Release of Firefox 5

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX;

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WEBSITES:

<http://www.firefox.com>

<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/features>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/?browse=featured>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/themes>

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/collections>

I have made it no secret in this column that Firefox has been my primary browser of choice. I have other browsers on my main computer (IE 9, Safari, Opera, Chrome 12), but by my choice, I use Firefox for almost all of my internet browsing. I was somewhat chagrined when I saw that Firefox 5 was released, considering that Firefox 4 was released only about three months earlier. Being a loyal Firefox user, I downloaded and installed Firefox 5. While my first impression was "it looks the same," I quickly found that version 5 incorporated many improvements over version 4. As with previous versions of Firefox, the new version 5 will run on PC's with Windows XP, Vista, or XP, as well as on computers with MAC OS X or Linux. There is also a mobile version of Firefox that will run on Android phones (2.0 and above) and the Nokia N900, as well as iPhones. For those who may use Firefox on different platforms, Firefox offers the ability to seamlessly and securely synchronize (sync) bookmarks and other features between the different devices. As with almost all other browsers, Firefox 5 is free, and may be used by anyone without restriction or any fees.

One of the primary concerns of computer users is speed, and Firefox 5 is among the fastest loading, and at rendering (displaying) web pages. Without getting too technical, Firefox 5 has implemented some substantial performance improvements over version 4, as well as many of

its competitors. With much of the web utilizing some form of Java and Java scripting, Firefox 5 has implemented a new JägerMonkey JavaScript engine, which is possibly the fastest Java engine in the industry, and this speed is reflected in the rapidity of loading and displaying web pages. Most computers of recent vintage offer some form of hardware acceleration to speed the display of images, video, and other web content, and Firefox 5 can explicitly take advantage of these latest graphics systems.

One of the frustrations that many internet users encounter is browser crashes, when the browser suddenly locks up, shuts down, or displays other undesired bizarre behavior. One of the most common causes of browser crashes is due to problems with common plug-ins, such as Adobe Flash, Apple QuickTime, or Microsoft Silverlight. With Firefox 5, if a plug-in crashes or freezes, it is only that open tab that crashes, the other tabs in the browser will be unaffected, and Firefox 5 will continue to operate smoothly. If the user reloads the crashed page, it will likely load quickly, and probably run.

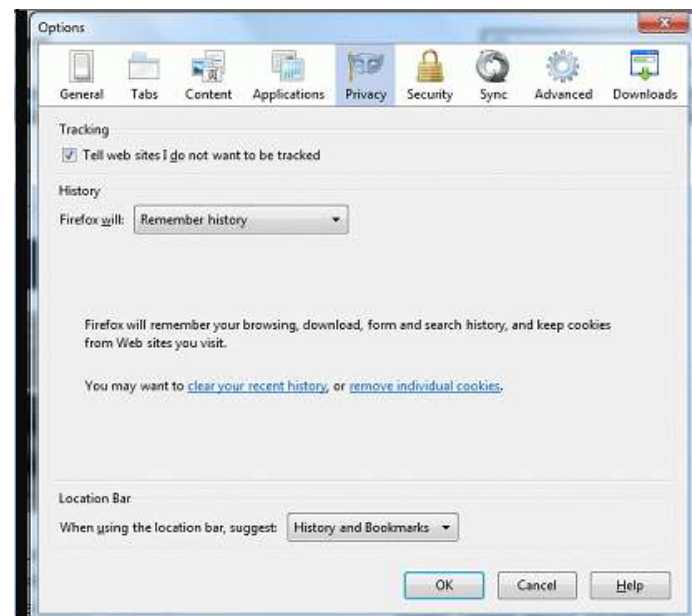
The graphic features the word "Firefox" in a script font at the top left, followed by "FEATURES" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this is the tagline "Bringing together all kinds of awesomeness to make browsing better for you." A horizontal line of six blue shield-shaped icons is connected by a dotted line. Each icon represents a feature: a magnifying glass, a clock, a key, a pencil, four arrows pointing outwards, and a rocket. Below each icon is a descriptive label: "Browsing Made Easy", "High Performance", "Advanced Security", "Powerful Personalization", "The Cutting Edge", and "Universal Access".

Ease of use has been a competitive feature among browsers as they have evolved, and Firefox 5 obliges with the latest version of its "Awesome Bar," also commonly called the address bar or location bar; this is where the user types the URL (internet address) of the desired web page. In Firefox 5, the Awesome Bar is intelligent as it learns the users' preferences over time. By using the data in the browsing history, bookmarks, and other tabs, the Awesome Bar auto-completes the address as it is being typed, displaying likely matches. If a displayed match is desired, it can be clicked to load the web page, without the need to continue typing the URL. The user has complete control over the contents of the Awesome Bar using the privacy and security settings. Unless explicitly selected, new pages are displayed in a tab, rather than a new window, which speeds the rendering process, and saves on system resources because multiple copies of the browser need not be loaded, unlike some older browsers which always open new windows. Another performance improvement is "App Tabs", where frequently accessed websites, such as web mail, can be kept open and instantly accessed by an "App Tab" (icon), without taking up all of the space on the normal tab bar. An App Tab can be created by simply right clicking on a

desired tab, and selecting the "Pin as App Tab" from the menu. Right clicking an App Tab will give the user the option to unpin the App Tab, and convert it to a normal tab.

Since web browsers have become a primary target of hackers, browser security may be a paramount concern for internet users. Many of the types of malware, rogue antivirus, and other forms of spyware are loaded onto the computer through the browser, so the browser needs to be hardened against attack, and Firefox 5 excels at this function. One innovative security feature is "Instant Web Site ID" which displays information on the website by clicking on the "favicon" (website icon) displayed to the left of the URL on the Awesome Bar. If the website has posted information about the site, it is posted here; a second click on "More Information" will display extensive additional information about the website, your previous visits to that website, and an option to display any passwords and cookies. This "Instant Web Site ID" can be useful to verify a suspicious website that may be "phishing", spoofing a legitimate website for the purpose of identity theft.

Many of us jealously guard our privacy, and Firefox 5 offers a "Private Browsing" feature. This feature, when selected before visiting sensitive websites by clicking on Tools-Start Private Browsing (or the shortcut CTRL-Shift P), instructs Firefox 5 to delete any records on the computer about the web sites that were visited, removing any cookies and browsing history from that session. This aspect of Firefox 5 is especially useful when browsing from a shared computer in a hotel business center, internet cafe, computer lab, or some other place where private information can be illicitly accessed and misused. This "Private Browsing" function is especially important if banking, finance, web mail, or any proprietary information is accessed from a shared



computer. One of my favorite features is the "Do Not Track" function which tells websites to stop tracking your online behavior. Many websites track your online behavior and sell the data to advertisers, and this utility may prevent much of that tracking. "Do Not Track" is implemented by clicking on Tools - Options - Privacy and checking "Tell websites that I do not want to be tracked".

Phishing has become a major tool used by identity thieves, and Firefox 5 provides substantial protection from identity theft. Firefox is updated 48 times a day with a directory of known phishing forgery websites (coordinated with Google), and any subsequent attempts to connect to one of those websites will display a stern warning that the site visited is a suspected forgery. Among the most commonly forged websites are online banking, online payment services such as PayPal, retail sites like eBay or BestBuy, and government websites such as the IRS. If the user finds a suspicious website that he believes may be a phishing site, this suspicious website can be reported by clicking on Help - Report Web Forgery, and following the on-screen instructions. Similar to the phishing websites, Firefox has integral protection from purloined or hijacked websites that may transmit viruses, worms, trojans, spyware, and other forms of

malware. Similarly to the phishing warning, Firefox 5 will warn the user about suspected websites harboring malware, and explain why Firefox believes the site is dangerous to access.

While many users prefer to use the software as it is installed, Firefox 5 has an extensive collection of plug-ins, add-ons, themes, and collections that can be installed. As I type this, Firefox is reporting that over 2.5 billion add-ons have been downloaded. Most add-ons provide enhanced functionality or security to the browser, while themes modify the appearance of the browser. Over 5000 functional add-ons are available to add content and security features to the browser, such as automated price comparisons, security and privacy enhancements, games, social networking utilities, real-time news and weather feeds, and dozens of other categories. Presently, there are



473 themes available, any of which can be quickly downloaded to customize the browser. The add-ons page says, "Collections are groups of related add-ons that anyone can create and share." Some of the most popular collections, where a variety of related add-ons can be installed, cover such topics as "Reference Desk (Make the librarian jealous with add-ons that help students, researchers or anyone with a tough question find and document all the answers)", and "Traveler's Pack (When the travel bug bites, these add-ons make it easy to plan, book and document your trip -- without getting lost along the way)". Over 60 thousand other collections are freely available.

With the combination of speed, compatibility, safety, security, and the ability to synchronize between devices, Firefox 5 has well earned my choice as my primary browser.

Ira Wilsker is the Director of the Management Development Program at Lamar Institute of Technology, in Beaumont, TX. He also hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVJ News Talk AM560, and writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <www.theexaminer.com>. Ira is also a police officer who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.

Google launched a new flight search service on September 13, putting it in direct competition with Orbitz, Kayak and other travel search services.

Starting 9/13, when a user searches for flight information -- like "flights from New York to Chicago" -- a "Flights" link will appear on the left side of Google's search page. Google Flight Search can also be accessed directly at google.com/flights.

Microsoft FixIt

By Ted Wirtz, Member, ORCOPUG (Orange County PCUG), CA
July 2011 issue, nibbles & bits
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My home computer is an HP Pavilion running Vista SP2. It has a memory card reader built into the top faceplate on the front of the computer that is capable of reading many of the common memory cards used in a digital camera. I commonly use it to transfer images from my digital camera which happens to use either SD or SDHC memory cards. (SD cards come in capacities up to 2 GB per card. SDHC cards come in capacities greater than 2 GB.)



Recently I inserted an SDHC card, and instead of seeing pictures, Vista saw it as a blank card and wanted to format it. Not good. Obviously I didn't want to format the card because I knew there were images on it. I ejected it and inserted a SD card. Vista saw images. Reinserted the SDHC card. No images.

I put the SDHC card back in my camera fearing the worst. All the images were there. Whew!

Okay, the card is good, but for some reason, now my system would not recognize SDHC cards. Bummer. Why SD but not SDHC? I didn't have time to mess with it then. I needed to get to my pictures. I connected the camera via a USB port and transferred the images that way. Clumsy but effective.

A couple of weeks ago I decided to attempt a fix for my reader. I opened up Device Manager and looked at the readers. No exclamation marks. Windows doesn't see any problem with the devices. Okay, maybe I need to update the drivers. I asked the system to check, and it reported later drivers were available. I installed the updated drivers and tested the reader. No joy. I still could not read SDHC. Tried an SD card. Oh great, now Vista can't read either type!

I went back to Device Manager, and selected "Roll Back Driver." Vista reported the driver was successfully rolled back. Time to test. Uh Oh. I still can't see any images on either type of card. I've gone from the frying pan into the fire!

Time to Google my problem. Google found something that sounded a lot like my problem. Solution: use Device Manager, delete the devices, reboot, let Vista re-discover the devices and all should be well. Only it didn't solve the problem.

Device Manager found the devices, reinstalled them, no exclamation marks, but they still can't read any of my cards.

Time to search the Microsoft site. I found a somewhat similar problem listed, where somebody was having a Firewire problem. Recommended solution: Use the Microsoft Fix It program.

I downloaded and installed the program. The program opened up showing a series of problems that it could check. I scrolled down until I found "Hardware devices not detected or not working (Figure 1).

I clicked the Run button and crossed my fingers. The program reported it had found



hardware changes might not have been detected, and had successfully updated. It also checked that Windows Update was configured to install drivers (Figure 2).

I can now read both types of SD cards just like when the machine was new. Problem solved.

I don't know if the Fixit program can solve other problems as easily, but I'm definitely going to keep this program installed on my computer. It's a keeper.

The Lighter Side



Disks - What would our computers be without them?

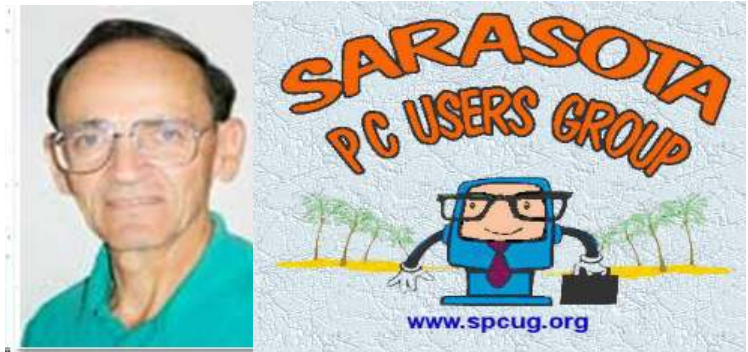
By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, FL

September issue, Sarasota PCUG Monitor

www.spcug.org / president (at) verizon.net

Well, they'd be

Tablets, or Smartphones, neither of which have disks as integral parts of the hardware. The Disk or Disk Drive usually refers to the component of the computer that typically stores large amounts of data. Storage can be, only readable, or readable and writable (or recordable). There are two types of Disk Drives that are usually part of a Personal Computer, Magnetic



and Optical. Magnetic drives are typically readable and writable. Now-a-days, magnetic drives store in the hundreds of Gigabytes (1 Gigabyte = 1,000 Megabytes). Optical drives are either readable (ROM) or recordable (RAM). Optical drives come in three different storage sizes, CDs (Compact Disks) which hold 700 Megabytes, DVDs (Digital Versatile Disks) which hold 4.7 Gigabytes, and BDs (Blu-ray Disks) which hold 25 Gigabytes.

Magnetic Disks or Magnetic Disk Drives, or Hard Drives, (can any of you remember the term, Winchester Drive), are at the very core of the personal computer. For those of you who remembered "Winchester", the original IBM PC didn't even have a hard drive. It only had one or possibly two 5 ¼ inch floppy disks. Remember the a: drive? And I bet there are only a few of you who ever had a b: drive (the second floppy).

The hard drive came along around 1983, with the IBM PC/XT, and was assigned as the c: drive. Then came Optical drives, the CD ROM (around 1985), and the recordable version, the CD RAM (around 1990). These were typically assigned as the d: drive. Finally, The DVD came on the scene with backward compatibility with CDs. The DVD ROM appeared around 1995 and the DVD RAM around 1998. DVD equipment is backward compatible meaning they can use DVD or CD media (the actual disk). BDs are relatively new, coming on the scene around 2009. The BDs come in BD R which is recordable only once, and BD RE which is recordable and re-recordable. BD equipment is backward compatible meaning they can use BD, DVD or CD media.

Specifying a magnetic disk drive is pretty straightforward. The only variables are the storage capacity and the speed. Today, typically, the speed is 7200 rpm. Although there are some older units around that rotate at 5400 rpm, and there are some fast drives that are running at 10,000 rpm, but they are the exception. So, the defining item is the storage capacity, which today runs from 100 Gigabytes to a few Terabytes (1 Terabyte = 1,000 Gigabytes). Once the manufacturer is chosen and the speed and storage is picked, the job is about done. The only other factor is

the interface. SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment), today, is the preferred interface, but only if your computer has the hardware to support it. The older interface is called IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics), and sometimes called PATA (Parallel Advanced Technology Attachment).

Specifying Optical Disks is somewhat more involved. The first decision is the storage capacity. Today, DVD drives are probably the most cost effective (the best storage per dollar). Because DVD drives are backwards compatible they can be used with DVDs or CDs. BD drives are currently quite expensive and will probably not be found on most personal computers. BD drives will probably be around \$100 in contrast to about \$35 for a DVD drive. If you have only one DVD drive on your computer, it should probably be a drive that is capable of writing disks as well as reading them. If you have the luxury of two optical drives (probably on a desktop), one can be just readable, which will keep the cost of the pair to a minimum. Optical Drives that are capable of writing are sometimes called "Burners" because the writing operation uses a laser to "burn" data spots on to the disk media.

The round 120 millimeter (4.7 inch) disk that you insert into the Optical Disk drive is called the disk media. The media type should match the Disk Drive type, meaning that you typically use CD media in a CD Drive, DVD media in a DVD drive, and BD media in a BD drive, although there is backward compatibility. For Optical disk media, readable means that the disk can be written only once and then read many times; read/writable means that the disk is readable and can be written and re-written many times. CD disk media comes in two types, CD-R (readable), and CD-RW (read/writable). Unfortunately, DVD disk media comes in two disk varieties DVD- (the dash variety), and DVD+ (the plus variety), as well as being readable or read/writable. The good news is that, now-a-days, all drives can use either of these varieties. (Although, I have heard that some people prefer the DVD- for movies. They have reported better results with that variety for movies that were created on the computer DVD disk drive and then played on their living room DVD player.) So, typically, DVD Drives can accommodate DVD-R (read only), DVD-RW (read/writable), DVD+R (read only), or DVD+RW (read/writeable) media. This is usually indicated by stating that the drive can be used with DVD±R disk media (readable), or DVD±RW (read/writable) media. Fortunately, BD disk media does not have the same problem. There is only one variety for BD disks, BD-: BD-R (readable), and BD-RE (read/writable).

Now that we have chosen an optical disk drive based on storage capacity, and we now know what media we can use with the drive, the last thing to look at is the speed of the drive. For Drives that only read, this is not really an issue because the read speed is typically faster than any of the writing speeds. An Optical Drive writing speed is specified as #X. Currently, for DVDs, # is a number between 1 and 52. This number indicates the speed relative to the original disk writing speed. So an Optical Disk capable of writing at 12X would write a disk 12 times faster than the original writing speed. The original writing speeds for the different Optical Drive types are: CD=.15Mbps; DVD=1.35Mbps; BD=4.5Mbps. So a 12X DVD Drive would write data at 12 times 1.35Mbps, or 16.2Mbps. Optical Disk media is also rated for writing speed in the same way. When you buy Optical Disk media it is always good to buy media that is at least as fast as your drive so that you take advantage of your drive's maximum speed. If it is not at a great expense, faster media will probably give you better, although not faster results.

Disk drives, magnetic and optical, give the computer the ability to store and access enormous amounts of data. Without these devices we might be confined to only using the "cloud" for our

storage (do any of you remember "mainframe" computing?). But, even with these devices, they may be the direction personal computing is taking, anyway.

This and That - Return of 6°

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City
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Using the 6° of Separation rule to apply to computer glitches, here are 6 steps to follow when in trouble. Remember, only four steps lie between you and your goal.

Going on the theory that all programs are written by people who can't remember a time when they didn't know how computers work, their output tends to become difficult for the rest of us to comprehend. But if you apply the 6° rule, then whatever stumps you should be within reach of a solution. But the problem is, where to start? I am not addressing hardware problems here, only software. Hardware is best left to the techs if you really need help. But for your ordinary day-to-day use of your software, there are some steps to follow when things go awry.

Before you do anything, set your software to do an automatic backup every 10 minutes or so. If you are working with numbers and can use a number pad efficiently, then you might want to set the backup for every 5 minutes. You won't be interfering with your work to have this important asset working for you.

Now to the six steps to help you through a problem:

1. Stop where you are. Has something inexplicably changed on the screen or have you for some reason reached a brick wall?
2. Do your best to remember exactly which steps got you into your predicament. It's possible you won't remember, but give it a try.
3. Write down on a piece of paper the nature of the change from what you were expecting to happen to what appears on the screen. Use the exact wording of any error messages that might show up.
4. Save the work if possible, even though it is flawed, so you can get back to it if some trial and error attempts to fix it only make matters worse.
5. "How to" books are only helpful if you have read them beforehand. They nearly all are written to tell you what a program will do, but not how it does it. In other words, it won't tell you what you have done wrong. But if you get lucky, there will be something in the book that might trigger a possible solution.

6. Finally, for the short term, get help from anyone you know who uses the same software. No good asking someone who uses a different program for the same type of work. If no one can help you, try starting the project over again from scratch, re-enter your data (text, spreadsheet numbers, etc.) being careful not to hit any stray keys, and see if you can get past the problem area in this new document. If the problem persists then it probably is time to get serious about taking a class to learn the ins and outs of the program.

All of us need help from time to time. Don't be afraid to ask for it. Also don't call yourself a "dummy." Think of yourself as an expert in training.



Smart Computing Tips

www.smartcomputing.com

Create Program Shortcuts

It may only take a few seconds to drag your mouse pointer across the screen and click (or double-click) the appropriate icon to open a program, but with keyboard shortcuts, you can save the time it takes to move your hands back and forth on the keyboard, which may also help to maintain your train of thought. To create keyboard shortcuts for the programs you regularly use, right-click the Desktop shortcut for the application you want and click Properties. Click the Shortcut tab and then select the Shortcut key box. Press the key on your keyboard you want to use in combination with CTRL and ALT and then click OK.

Excel Date & Time Shortcuts

To enter the date or time based on your PC's current clock setting into an Excel spreadsheet cell, you can use keyboard shortcuts and avoid that embarrassing typo. After you click on the cell you want, press CTRL+; to insert the date or CTRL+: to enter the time.

Highlight All Occurrences In Word

In addition to finding and replacing a word, Microsoft's Word 2007 allows you to highlight all matching incidents of a search. To use the highlighting feature in Word 2007, hold down the CTRL and F keys on your keyboard, and under the Find What Text box, type the text you want to search for. Next, click More and select the Reading Highlight option. Choose Highlight All to highlight all the matching occurrences in yellow. When you're done using the Highlight function, go back to the Reading Highlight option and select Clear Highlighting to return the text to a normal view.

The Arrow Keys

Using a mouse to move elements of a PowerPoint slide around can be an aggravating when your mouse isn't sensitive enough to make slight adjustments. Instead of clicking and dragging elements around a slide, select it and use your keyboard's arrow keys to make very slight changes to its position.

Field Trips to the Microsoft Store



At the August meeting we talked about taking a field trip to the Microsoft Store in Century City; we ended up taking two trips. I had suggested to Jamie Grace Davis, Community Development Specialist, that they might want to have their senior computer sessions one day a week from 12-2pm and call them brown bag sessions with Microsoft providing the drinks. This was in late-July when I was taking my grandson, Tyler, to their video game programming summer camp. When I saw their August calendar, the sessions had been scheduled. I had been to

the store four times for Tyler's sessions (during morning traffic :- (but thought I should go down again and support the first session. Of course, I was the only one there so we brainstormed on what they could offer seniors and I got some personal training with Steven. I mentioned at our meeting that I'd be happy to arrange a field trip to the store for a 2-hour training session and tour. Richard Beekman said that he would also drive. He and his wife and Bonnie Hood as well as Gigi Broom and I went for our first session on August 16. Here are their comments (our trainer was Zach):

Zach's presentation at the Microsoft Store reflected both knowledge and insight into Microsoft's products, focusing primarily on the features of Windows 7. He answered numerous questions both verbally and by demonstrating on the enormous touch screen how the Windows 7 OS could be utilized. He also led us on a tour of the store, pointing out the latest hardware and software available to the consumer. He is an excellent representative of Microsoft in his efforts to educate the public about what Microsoft has to offer.

Richard Beekman

The Microsoft Store trip was better than I expected. Windows 7 is fairly new to me since I came directly from Window XP. Zach, the young and knowledgeable teacher was interesting and demonstrated new features to me and I loved the large touch screen that he used to show us with. I went home and tried some of his tips and they were fun to work on. I am looking forward to our next class there. Thanks, Judy, for arranging this.

Bonnie Hood

I thoroughly enjoyed our field trip to Microsoft in Century City. I have had Win 7 for over a year and did not realize it's full potential until our class. In addition it was an eye opener to see all the technology out there, how it works and what's in the works for the future. Looking forward to our next session.

Gigi Broom

Session 1 featured Windows 7 training (got a lot of great ideas for my Introduction to Computers and Windows class now that we have up-to-date computers with Win 7). Session 2 covered various topics that we brought up. All of the trainers I've interfaced with (Steven, Zach and

Robin) have been extremely knowledgeable and able to answer any questions thrown at them. The employees are always helpful and willing to answer questions. You can schedule a free 15-minute tech session to find out about a problem you are having with your computer. Many times, the problem is fixed without you having to pay \$\$\$. One hour personal training sessions are \$49 and can be scheduled for whatever topic you want to learn and whenever you can be at the store. I know it's a long drive for many from the SCV but it's well worth your time to visit the store and experience everything they have. There is free parking for 3 hours; enter off Santa Monica Blvd. and park by the first escalator. We all received a bag of goodies along with a card for 10% off software and 5% off everything else. They have a green footprint at the store when it comes to software. They keep very little on hand but have a system where you can request what you want (even 3rd party) and they will burn a CD/DVD for you, package it (no box), etc. and off you go.

Three of us (Bonnie Hood, Gigi Broom and me) completed our training with another trip the following Tuesday; Robin Bowles was our trainer. Thank you for taking us on 8-23-11 to the Microsoft Store in Century City. Robin was very informative. He was very helpful answering and helping correct several problems I had with IE 9. His demonstration of the Photo Gallery program was easy to follow and I have since downloaded it and will be using it instead of Adobe Photoshop Elements. I enjoyed seeing the new equipment in use, specifically the touch screen monitor and the monitor with the CPU in the screen.

Gigi Broom

After a fast trip down the 405 freeway in the car pool lane in record time, we arrived at Microsoft's new store in the Century City Shopping Mall for our second training session. Judy was a great driver (as Dick Beekman was on my first trip). After a short mixup by Microsoft in having the teacher ready, we quickly started our session with Robin as our teacher. Our main subject was Microsoft's free Windows Live Essentials and all of its features. I had always planned to buy Photoshop's Elements when I was ready to start working on photos but after seeing all the great features of Microsoft's free program (Photo Gallery), I have decided that it has all the features I would need. He showed us Photo Fuse, the Retouch tool and how to make rotating desktop pictures. He also demonstrated Windows Live Movie Maker and a few other subjects. We also talked about I.E. 9's new features, Microsoft Security Essentials (free) and pinning. It was worth the trip for me.

Bonnie Hood



August Meeting Recap

During the 6:00 pm session we had the opportunity to take a “first look at the Windows 8 interface.” The video has had almost 5 million views. John Metcalf and Judy also finished the July presentation on scanners by showing us some of the scanners featured in the PPT presentation.



At the 7:00 session we saw a Corel Webinar on the *Introduction to video editing with their VideoStudio Pro X4*. As photography has skyrocketed in the digital age, so has digital video. Video cameras are everywhere. Your cell phone has a camera and most likely can also capture video. One of the top sites on the Internet is YouTube.com, which gets 24 hours of video uploaded to its site every minute. *(We need to get better speakers.)*

And, the winners were..... Gigi Groom - Corel's VideoStudio Pro X4 and Expressive Photography by Focal Press; Dave Podsadecki - Shiraz wine; Agnes Chaney - 100 sheets of Kodak Hi Gloss photo paper



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