

MONITOR

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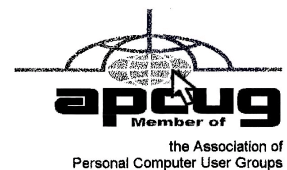
August 2011

Next Meeting
Tuesday, August 9

Picnic and Silent Auction

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Microsoft Offers Free "Health Vault" for Personal Medical Records

by Ira Wilsker

For the past few years I have been using two primary methods for recording personal medical information. One method I have been using to keep track of my personal medical information and records is an 8 gig flash drive attached to my car key chain along with a large, red, aluminum, engraved medic alert logo. This flash drive has three redundant files in different formats (Word doc, RTF, and PDF) containing my medical history,

medical imagery, prescription list, emergency contact information, a copy of my health insurance card, allergy information, and other relevant important information that may be useful in a medical emergency.



The reason for the triple redundancy using the different file formats is that regardless of the type of computer or operating system used by emergency medical personnel or a hospital emergency room, at least one of the formats will be readable when needed. The other method I have been using for a few years is the much vaunted Google Health (health.google.com), which I had previously written about in this column.

I had been very satisfied with this free service offered by Google, where I tracked my vital signs, prescriptions, office visits, medical history, lab results, and other medical information. While Google securely stored my information, I did set it up such that my family could access it in the event of an emergency and share the information with appropriate health care professionals.

When recently updating my Google Health information, I was chagrined to find that Google is discontinuing this service. A large red banner on the Google Health website announced “An important update about Google Health,” followed by, “Google Health will be discontinued as a service. The product will continue service through January 1, 2012. After this date, you will no longer be able to view, enter or edit data stored in Google Health. You will be able to download the data you stored in Google Health, in a number of useful formats, through January 1, 2013.”

Since I have been using Google Health, like the idea of secure online access to personal medical health records, and had a lot of information stored there, I felt that it would be necessary to find an alternative resource, and found Microsoft’s competing product, Microsoft Health Vault. Microsoft is promoting its free Health Vault service (www.healthvault.com) as “A trusted place for people to organize, store, and share health information online.” Microsoft is also explicitly targeting Google Health users with the statement, “As Google Health retires their service, you can transfer your information to Microsoft Health Vault.”

Microsoft has pledged to keep the information secure, and not to use the information for the purposes of creating personalized ads or the marketing of services without the explicit permission of the user. For those using smart phones and other mobile devices, a mobile version of Health Vault is accessible, enhancing access to the system.

Many of us consider our health history and records as highly personal, and may have totally valid concerns about the security of our online medical records. Microsoft Health Vault says, “It’s your Health Vault record. You decide what goes into it, who can see, use, and share your info, and which health tools have access to it.”

Some may wonder why secured online medical records are necessary, or even useful. As federal mandates for electronic medical records become more widely implemented, paper records will become somewhat obsolete. If anyone has ever gone to a new doctor or specialist, you are well aware of the often lengthy medical questionnaire that the new patient is required to fill out.

While there may be a medical necessity for the physician to have that information, our personal memories are often inadequate and inaccurate when trying to recall complete and detailed information. Recently, in my primary care physician's office, the nurse asked me when I had my most recent tetanus shot and some other vaccines, as I have used some other resources for periodic vaccines, now that flu shots and other vaccines are given in a multitude of convenient and non-traditional locations. I had a flu shot in the college gym, and another immunization at my local supermarket pharmacy!

I had dutifully recorded the injections in my Google Health records, and could rapidly produce accurate information using my smart phone to access my records. Microsoft Health Vault offers a variety of free services to the consumer, as well as commercial services to health care providers. Using Health Vault my prescription information, refills, and changes can be automatically tracked, as several of the major drug store chains (CVS Caremark, CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens) are interconnected with Health Vault. Since many of us may obtain prescriptions from multiple sources, Health Vault can help identify potentially dangerous drug interactions and side effects, as well as make your prescription information available to those of your choice.

Health Vault offers a convenient method to share data about chronic conditions, such as blood pressure, blood sugar, weight, and other information with your doctor. It is important to remember that the individual has complete control over who can access the information, and what specific information each can access. It is easy and free for an individual to open a Health Vault account.

If you already have a Windows Live, Hotmail, Xbox or MSN account, you have immediate access to a Health Vault account, as they use the same username and password. Facebook users also have instant access, as Health Vault can be accessed via the users' existing Facebook username and password by clicking on the Facebook icon in Health Vault. For users with none of these existing accounts, creating a new account is a simple process.

Once connected, and some personal questions answered, the user is greeted with the main page where a variety of options are displayed. Across the top of the page are five links that lead the user to additional categories of personal information. The "About You" link is where the user can enter and update information on medications (prescription and non-prescription, including vitamins, herbs, supplements, etc.), allergies, and current health conditions.

Family medical histories, documents, immunizations, lab test results, blood sugar, blood pressure, weight, emergency contacts, provider listings, and other information can be added or amended through this link. The "Health Tools" link opens a comprehensive listing of health information resources and agencies that participate in the Health Vault service, as well as medical devices that can upload data into the Health Vault.

Among the participants in the "Health Tools" are the American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association, Aetna, Epilepsy Diary, H1N1 Response Center, American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, iGuard (drug interaction service), Quest

Diagnostics (import lab results into Health Vault), Mayo Clinic, CVS, Caremark, Minute Clinic, Walgreens, and dozens of other resources. Medical devices, some of which may be interconnected with Health Vault, include AND (blood pressure machines and other devices), Bayer blood glucose meters, LifeScan (Johnson & Johnson) blood sugar monitoring devices, MicroLife asthma and blood pressure devices, Omron blood pressure devices, and many other devices.

The “Family” link can be used to add family members to Health Vault; it is important to note that each family member’s information is contained in his own personal record. The “Contact List” can be used to add or edit emergency contacts and health care provider information. “Stories” is where the user can read stories about how others have used Health Vault. On the right margin of the main page is an icon for “Sharing”. This icon leads to a page where, “You control access to your health information.

Use Sharing to decide which people or online health tools can access selected types of information in your Health Vault record.” Under the heading “Authorized people” is where the user can, “Let family mem-bers or others you trust view or update information in your Health Vault record.” This is where I have my wife and my adult children listed as approved family members, such that they can access my information in an emergency situation.

The link to share information with your health care provider allows the user to print selected information from Health Vault, utilize the online tools to prepare for an upcoming office visit or hospitalization, or to connect to the users’ physician’s electronic medical records if his system is compatible with Health Vault. There is a commercial side to Health Vault as Microsoft is actively marketing compatible software and utilities to physicians, hospitals, and other healthcare providers. For hospitals and clinics, Microsoft states,”

Using Health Vault, patients can share their health history and information with your organization or specific physicians. This serves to improve the patient/provider relationship and can also streamline the admissions and discharge processes.” For individual physicians,” Microsoft Health Vault means easier access to a broader range of information from patients that can help you provide better service and more efficient, informed care.

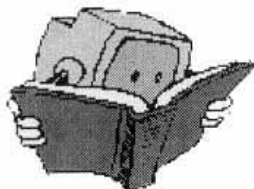
You can also share information more easily with your patients, enabling patients to make more informed health decisions every day.” Other Microsoft applications are available to medical device manufacturers, and other healthcare companies and organizations in order to seamlessly integrate with Health Vault. While there are a variety of lesser known companies trying to take up the slack in personal medical record keeping, especially with the upcoming demise of Google Health, Microsoft, with its scale and reputation, may become the primary provider of such services.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.healthvault.com>

<http://health.google.com>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_HealthVault

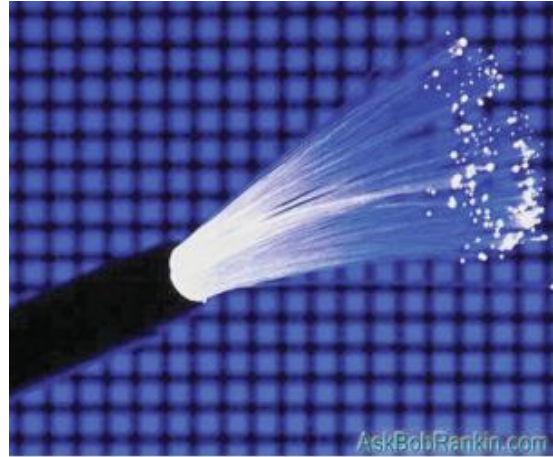


Which is Fastest? DSL, Cable or Fiber?

by Bob Rankin

DSL is the original “broadband” consumer Internet technology. It operates over the same copper wires that bring telephone service into your home. Those wires are connected to a “central office” facility. The maximum speed you can get on a DSL connection is highly dependent on how far your home is from the central office (CO). The theoretical maximum download speed of DSL is about 40 Mbps.

Cable modem technology runs over coaxial cable, the thicker, shielded wire that brings cable TV into your home. Coaxial cable may be connected to cable service provider facilities up to 100 miles from your home. The theoretical maximum speed of a cable Internet connection is 400 Mbps - ten times faster than DSL.



But you won't see anywhere near the maximums from either cable or DSL. Service providers throttle download speed to each home in order to serve more customers. Additionally, the number of users in your service area will affect how much bandwidth is available to each user. You may have noticed that your Internet connection is slowest in the late afternoon and early evening, when all of your neighbors are online.

Generally speaking, cable service providers deliver significantly faster download speed compared to DSL providers. Typical cable modem download speeds average around 10 Mbps, while DSL is likely to be in the 3 to 6 Mbps range. In most cases, you can pay a higher monthly subscription rate to get a faster connection.

If you live in a very rural area, you might not be able to get DSL, cable or fiber optic internet access. So for completeness, I'll point you to my related article on Satellite Internet Service. Download speeds for satellite internet are even slower than DSL (ranging from 1-5 Mbps), and they can be impacted by the weather, so consider this option as a last resort.

Fiber is Faster!

Fiber optic technology replaces copper wires with glass fibers, and use light instead of electricity to carry Internet signals to the home. Fiber requires the build-out of an all-fiber network to every residence in a service area, whereas cable and DSL networks are already in place. Thus, fiber is only slowly spreading across the country. But when fiber reaches your home, it will make a big difference in your Internet experience. Because fiber is an end-to-end connection, your internet service isn't shared with all your neighbors, and won't bog down at peak usage time periods.

Verizon's FIOS is a fiber optic internet offering, available in a limited but rapidly expanding number of coverage areas. Download speeds range from 15 to 150 Mbps. I'm fortunate to live in an area where FIOS has been available for several years, and I can say that it's blazing fast, all day long. AT&T's U-Verse is a competing fiber optic product, but they max out at 24Mbps. See the coverage maps for Verizon FIOS and AT&T U-Verse.

EPB Telecom, a city-owned ISP in Chattanooga, TN, recently rolled out the first residential gigabit fiber-optic network in the U. S. That's right, a Gigabit per second (1000 Mbps) of bandwidth in your home! The public utility has quickly snapped up over 27,000 residential users, many of whom switched from Comcast Cable and AT&T DSL.

In the long run, fiber optic will likely replace copper-based cable and DSL for residential and business Internet access. But we shouldn't overlook wireless Internet. Standards are being developed for wireless mobile networks that will hit 100 Mbps and beyond. Check with the telephone company and cable operators in your area to see what they currently offer, and if they will be offering fiber optic service in the near future.

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/what_is_the_fastest_internet_connection.html#ixzz1Sgh0FUJI

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New Google+ Takes on Facebook

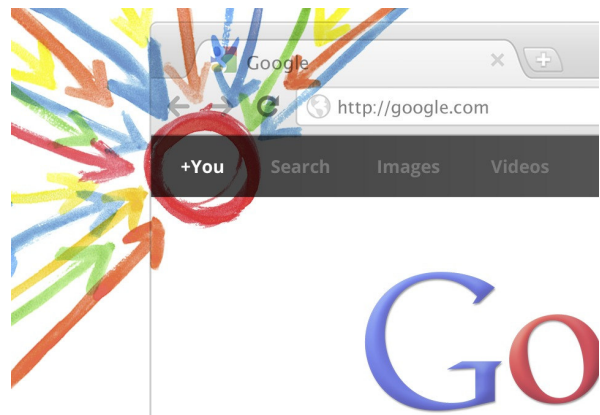
by Ira Wilsker

Over the past few weeks, Google has been quietly rolling out what may become a killer app that is clearly intended to compete with Facebook and other social networking services. This new Google service goes under the moniker "Google+," and is still in "beta" (pre-release version).

Currently (as I type this) Google+ is not yet ready for unlimited membership (as it is still in beta), and only allows registration (free) via a system of "invites," which can be extended only by current Google+ members. Just because someone is lucky enough to currently have Google+ access, and can send invites to others, the potential new members may not automatically be able to join, as Google+ only periodically "opens the gate" (Google's term). I was fortunate to receive an invite a few days ago

when the gate was opened for a limited time, which allowed me to join Google+. Once a member of Google+, I immediately sent invites to all of my extended family, some of whom were allowed to sign up (the gate was still open), and most were told to wait (gate closed). According to some Google blog postings, it is alleged that "millions" signed up for Google+ during some of the limited openings of the membership gate.

Google+ is organized somewhat differently from the way that Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites are organized, and utilizes a series of user defined "circles". Circles are defined by Google+ as, "... groups of people you share content with. The names of your circles and who you add to them are visible only to you, though you can set whether the list of people in all of your circles is visible in your public profile." The default circles are Friends, Family, Acquaintances, and Following, but the user is free to create his own customized circles; some of the circles that I have seen include Co-Workers, Students (set up by a teacher for her class),



Computer Club (set up to exchange information among club members), political circles, hobby circles, sports circles, businesses, and any other topic that one can imagine.

When a user posts on Google+, he chooses which circle or circles he wants his message to appear in. Likewise, the user can decide which circles he wants to view at any given time. It is easy to add other users to your circle by either clicking on their names and selecting circles off of a menu, or the user can simply drag and drop a user into a circle. Whenever a member of the circle posts a message to that circle, the post appears on the main Google+ page under the heading “Stream.”

“Sparks” enables user to collect information on topics of interest. To add a “Spark”, the user can enter a search term in the box on the top of the Spark page, and select the term from the pull-down menu, and click the blue “Add Interest” button. The topics selected will appear on the left margin of the Google+ page, and clicking on the topic will display the latest information on that subject, as found on the Google search engine. Sparks may evolve into a quasi-commercial feature, in that it may in the future have the ability for users to “like” a product, service, blog, or other item, and have that item included on the Sparks list for future reference.

On the right side of the Google+ page is a green button “Start a Hangout.” Clicking on that button will enable up to 10 users to participate in a video chat, using the computer’s webcam. Each “Hangout” session creates a unique URL (web address), and anyone with web access can participate in the group video chat, even if he is not a Google+ member.

At the top of the Google+ page are a series of icons for Home, Photos, Profiles, and Circles, as well as a “Find people” search box. The Home icon opens the main personal Google+ page with the streams, and other features. The Photos icon opens a page which by default displays photos uploaded by members of your circles. Once opened, the photo page can selectively display photos uploaded from the user’s phone, photos of the user, and a personal photo album. A prominent icon “Upload New Photos” allows the user to create new albums, drag and drop existing photos into selected albums, or upload photos from the user’s computer to the selected photo album. The Profiles icon displays the user’s profile, while the Circles icon allows the user to manage and create his circles, as well as view who has added you to their circles.

Since Google is very heavily in the portable and mobile device market, it is appropriate that Google+ would be available for the mobile market (google.com/mobile/+/). Google+ has a free app currently available for Android powered devices, with an iPhone app “coming soon” according to Google. For those with other smart phones and other mobile devices, Google+ has a mobile compatible version accessible by entering google.com/+ in the mobile browser. The Android (and soon the iPhone) app has some additional features not currently available on the full web version of Google+. One such feature is “Huddle” which, “... lets you turn multiple conversations into one simple group chat.” The Android app also allows the user to quickly upload photos to Google+, and then edit and share them as desired. The other major features, such as Stream and Circles are available on the mobile versions.

According to a recent article in the online version of PC Magazine (PCMag.com), there are several features available in Google+ that are not (yet) available in Facebook, which may give Google+ an edge in this highly competitive field. Since Google+ has circles under the control of the user, the user can choose to share posts, photos, links, or other content with only selected people, a feature not currently available on Facebook. The Google+ feature Hangout,

with nothing comparable on Facebook, allows the users to have a live video chat with other selected users, regardless if they are registered on Google+. Parallel to this, considering that Google owns YouTube, Hangout can be used to play a YouTube video over the Hangout connection, such that it can be viewed simultaneously by the Hangout participants, with a mechanism for the viewers to comment while the video is playing. Since the mobile apps support the ability to instantly upload images to the Google+ “cloud”, Google+, unlike Facebook, gives the user the opportunity to edit images prior to posting, and to decide who (if anyone) can view each image. Obviously since Google+ is in its infancy (still in beta), and Facebook is highly evolved, Facebook has features that are not (yet) available in Google+.

One concern expressed by privacy advocates is the Google+ privacy statement, which gives Google non-exclusive rights to any posts, images, photos, or other uploaded content. Be sure to read the privacy statement before registering for the service, and if you are not satisfied with it, do not complete the registration process.

While Google+ is in its infancy, some helpful third party apps and features are already becoming popular. One that I quickly utilized is a web service that allows the user to create a unique vanity URL to display his Google+ pages. By connecting to gplus.to, the user can instantly create his vanity address in the form of “<http://gplus.to/<vanity name>>.” Another very helpful third party app is a wiki (community created posting) titled “Google+: A Collaborative Document,” which contains hints, tips, tricks, and instructions about how to use Google+ and its features. This document was created in “Google Docs” and has a mechanism where users can contribute tips, input, and edit the content. This “Collaborative Document”, which is arguably the most comprehensive set of instructions currently available for Google+ is accessible at <http://goo.gl/qKh72>.

Understanding that it is still in beta, and that it only has a tiny fraction of users compared to Facebook, Google+ will be the future power to reckon with when it comes to social networking. Watch for future announcements of Google+ becoming open for general memberships, or ask your friends who are already on Google+ for an invite to join. Once it becomes more available, Facebook will have a very worthy competitor, and with the clout (and finances) of Google, Facebook may have something to worry about.

WEBSITES:

<http://plus.google.com>

<http://goo.gl/qKh72> - Wiki of user created Google+ Tips and Tricks

<http://www.google.com/mobile/+/> Google+ Mobile

<http://gplus.to> - Create free vanity Google+ address google.com/+ - Mobile Web Access

<http://www.pcmag.com/slideshow/story/266334/6-things-google-can-do-that-facebook-can-t/1>

Good Fences Make Good Desktops

(Apologies to Robert Frost)

by Joe Asling

Monterey Bay Users Group – PC, CA

I like a neat desktop. In XP, I would right-click on the desktop to get a context menu, then click New/Folder and name it “Internet” or “Utilities” or whatever. I would open it and fill it with shortcuts to all the applicable programs. This way, any program (or other file) I

needed was two double-clicks away. But in Windows 7, when you create a new folder, it is a nasty double-columned Windows Explorer folder, and if you accidentally click in the left column, you lose all your nice shortcuts (you can get them back with the left arrow in the upper corner, but...). So I needed another way to organize icons.

Now, the Start Menu in W7 is an improvement. You can right-click on any program icon and select “pin to Start Menu” or “pin to toolbar.”

The programs you use all the time (Internet browser, mail client) can sit on the toolbar and be up in one click, and programs you use frequently are a click of the Start button (the circle with the windows flag in the lower left-hand corner) away. You can customize how the Start menu and the toolbar look by right clicking on the toolbar or Start button and clicking on “Properties.”

The best thing about the W7 Start Menu is that each program you have used has a little right-pointing arrow at the right side; hover the mouse arrow over it and you will see, and can open, the files you have recently opened with that program – admirable!

OK, now to the fences. There are files I don’t use all the time (backup program, scanner software, manuals for hardware I haven’t played with a lot yet) but don’t want to go digging for in Windows Explorer. Star-dock makes a free program called “Fences” <http://www.stardock.com/products/fences/>.

Essentially, it creates shaded areas on the desktop into which you can drag shortcuts, just like with XP’s folders. When you first install it, there are some wizards you can use to configure your fenced areas, or you can just go freeform. You can name them, resize them, and move them. You cannot minimize them as you could folders in XP, but – almost as good – just double-click on the desktop, and voilà, they disappear. Double-click again and, voilà, they come back. (Curiously, other desktop icons, such as the Recycle Bin, disappear also, but you can right-click on the icon and select “Exclude this Item from Fences’ quick-hide.”) You can do a lot of other stuff, like resize icons, from the context menu when you right-click on the desktop. So, happy fencing in Windows 7!

From the June 2011 issue, mbug-pc newsletter.

IObit Releases New Malware Fighter

by Ira Wilsker

I was recently using someone’s older computer which had IObit Security 360 installed as its anti-spyware program. As is typical, I always check and update, if necessary, the installed security software. I noticed that the IObit Security 360, a popular anti-spyware utility with millions of downloads had not been updated for several weeks, and clicked on the button to manually update it. As the software was checking for updates, a pop-up window appeared stating that IObit Security 360 had been discontinued and would not be updated, but a free replacement security utility was offered, IObit Malware Fighter Free. I okayed the download (from CNet), and downloaded the free version of IObit Malware Fighter.

Upon commencing the install process, the IObit Malware Fighter found that IObit Security 360 was currently installed and loaded, and asked permission to uninstall the 360, and then install the Malware Fighter. The process went quickly and smoothly. IObit Security 360 had been out for several years, had been a subject of this column previously, and earned a loyal

following of millions of users. While generally regarded as a decent anti-malware program with some of the highest malware detection and removal rates in the industry, IObit Security 360 had a checkered reputation after a competing program, Malwarebytes, alleged in 2009 that IObit had stolen proprietary digital malware signature files from Malwarebytes for use in IObit Security 360 (source: news.cnet.com/8301-27080_3-10389650-245.html). This alleged use of purloined signature files caused some of the popular security blogs and rating websites to withdraw their recommendations of IObit Security 360, one (Gizmo) even put 360 in its virtual “jail,” asking its readers not to use 360 due to the alleged data theft (source: dottech.org/tipsntricks/keeping-them-honest/11662). IObit removed all of the questioned digital signatures, and continued to develop and update 360 until recently, but its tarnished reputation always followed it.

As technology and cyber security are rapidly changing fields, it was inevitable that IObit have a major overhaul of 360 in order to restore its reputation as a leader in the anti-malware industry. It appears that IObit may have accomplished the feat by releasing its comprehensive new anti-malware utility, IObit Malware Fighter Free, and its big brother, the commercial IObit Malware Fighter Pro. The free version is available for personal non-commercial use, and the Pro version (\$20 - \$30) can be used by individuals or in a business environment. According to the IObit website, IObit Malware Fighter 1.0 incorporates several new features including, “... Improved Engine for Smart Scan, Full Scan and Custom Scan; Brand new & easy-to-use interface; Enhanced real-time protection; and Creative Cloud Computing Technology.” As with several of its competitors, this new software offers real time protection, frequent updates, and is explicitly designed to run in addition to anti-virus software as an additional layer of protection. The commercial Pro version (\$20 - \$30) has all of the features of the Free version, plus, “... Enhanced MMalware Protection; Automated Scan when PC is Idle; Scheduled Scan; Automatic Update with High Priority; Free 24x7 Customer Support; Enhanced Real-time Protection; and Consent for Commercial Use.” IObit Malware Fighter will run on most versions of Windows, including the 32 and 64 bit builds of Windows 2000, XP, Vista, and Windows 7.

After downloading and installing IObit Malware Fighter Free, version 1.0, I noticed the word “Expired” on the top edge of the screen; a short inquiry disclosed that this old computer had the Pro version of IObit Security 360 installed previously, but the annual subscription had expired. The newly installed (and updated) IObit Malware Fighter detected that the Pro version of 360 had been installed previously, and if the annual license had still been valid, it would have automatically enabled the Pro features of Malware Fighter.

The first screen of Malware Fighter is the “Overview” screen, which displays the security status of the computer. One noteworthy feature of this Overview screen is the “DOG Detection” feature which is checked in the top right corner of the screen. ‘DOG’ in this context, is a new term for me, but IObit explains it as, “Using DOG (Digital Original Gene), a novel heuristic malware detection method, while IObit Mal-ware Fighter can find the most complex threats.”

The next screen, as selected on the left margin of the window, is the “Scan” screen. This is where the user can select the type of scan desired, such as a “Smart Scan” (“Quickly scan the most critical sections of your system”); a “Full Scan” (complete hard drive scan); or a “Custom Scan” where the user selects what directories to scan.

The “Protect” screen displays the real-time protection features implemented by IObit Malware Fighter. The Free version provides real-time protection of the startup files, the browser, the network, critical system files, and questionable internet cookies. The paid Pro version provides additional real-time protection of the system processes, con-nected USB drives (including USB transmitted malware), and malicious actions against the computer.

Cloud computing, which is the current fad in cyberspace, is represented by the fourth screen, and Malware Fighter uses, ... Cloud computing technology to analyze the behavior of security risks in an automated way. – While not explicitly stated in the program, a review of the credits (click MORE – ABOUT) shows that the very popular and well respected security service Panda Cloud is somehow involved in this cloud protection.

Based on the tradition and reputation (tarnish excluded) of its direct predecessor being one of the top-rated malware detection and removal utilities, I am willing to give the newly released IObit Malware Fighter Free a chance, and will follow its performance on this older computer. If it can perform as well as its predecessor, and protect this machine from the endemic threats present in cyberspace, than this would have been a good choice.

WEBSITE: <http://www.iobit.com>



Delete Old Gmail Auto-Fill Addresses

Q. When I start to type an address in the To: field of Gmail, a drop-down list of old recipients appears. How can I delete the addresses I no longer use?

A. They can be deleted from All Contacts. To do that, click Contacts > All Contacts. Click to select an address that you would like to remove, then click the Delete Contact button.

Q. My computer displays invalid or expired security certificate alerts when I visit some sites. What I can do to resolve this problem? I look forward to your newsletter each week. Keep up the good work.

A. Thank you. The most common cause of the invalid or expired security certificate alerts you are receiving is an inaccurate date setting on your computer. Right-click the date display in the lower right-hand corner of your screen. You will see where you can adjust the date and time.

If you frequently need to adjust the date and/or time, chances are the battery that maintains that date, which is located on the motherboard, needs to be replaced. It is not expensive and any reputable computer repair person or service can do that for you. If you had any work performed on your computer recently, it is also possible that battery was disabled or removed and not reset thereafter, which would cause it to display its default year of 1980. In either case, if an older date is being used, your computer will think that any Web site security certificates it encounters have expired and display the alerts you have been receiving.

Q. How do I create a Desktop shortcut for the Device Manager? I have two computers, one running XP and one running Vista.

A. The executable or launch file for the Device Manager is named devmgmt.msc, so in Windows XP, click Start > Search > File and Folders and search for that file by name. When the file is located, usually in the C:\WINDOWS\System32 folder, right-click it and select Send to > Desktop (create Shortcut). You can then rename the shortcut by pressing F2.

In Vista and Windows 7 – or if you cannot locate the devmgmt.msc file as described above – you can manually create a shortcut by right-clicking the Desktop and selecting New > Shortcut. Use the Browse button to navigate to the Device Manager folder and locate the file, or simply type in devmgmt.msc and click Next. Provide a name (“Device Mgr” will work nicely), then click Finish.

Q. It seems to me that my iPad is running slower than it used to run. Can there be programs running in the background like there are on my computer that are affecting its performance?

A. Yes, indeed. It’s not the identical situation that we encounter with computers, but it is similar. Unlike a computer in which you click the X in the upper right-hand corner to close a program, when you move from app to app to app on your iPad, each application remains open and effectively running in the background. Because of this, it is a good idea to periodically close all apps to free up memory.

Either daily or several times a week, depending how much you use your iPad, double-tap the Home button, which will cause a bar to appear at the bottom of the screen that displays all running or open apps. Press and hold the first app icon until it starts to jiggle and a little red circle with a white line appears. Tap each circle to quickly close each app, one at a time.

Bonus Tip: If your iPad ever completely freezes, after you regain consciousness hold down both the Sleep/Wake button and the Home button until the device reboots. iPads are designed to remain on all the time and hibernate (sleep) when not being used, so if you do need to reboot in this manner, be patient. It may require a couple of minutes.

Mr. Modem’s DME (Don’t Miss ‘Em) Sites of the Month

20 Questions

Test your skills and try to outsmart this site in a match of traditional 20 Questions, or choose one of the uniquely themed games such as Harry Potter, The Simpsons or 20-Q Sports. www.20q.net

The Body Explained

Hosted by Baylor College of Medicine, here you will find short videos created to answer common questions about the human body. Browse the site’s list of delightfully light-hearted yet informative answers to such life-altering questions as, “What causes an ice cream headache?” “Why do our ears pop?” and “What causes goosebumps?” (It gives me chills just thinking about it.)

www.bioedonline.org/body-explained

Episode Guides

As its name implies, the focus here is television episode titles and air dates for more than 5,500 TV shows, with links to additional information. Type the name of a show, use the Current Shows link, or the alphabetical listing.

For plain-English answers to your questions by email, plus great computing tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's award-winning WEEKLY newsletter. Subscribe using Promo Code 1640 and receive two free months (eight weekly issues!) with your 12-month subscription. To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

The On-Ramp to the Internet

by Phil Sorrentino

Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, FL

The Internet is the highway to many wonderful places. Places where you can engage in conversation with friends and family members, and even see them, with the right setup (ala Skype). Places where you can see things you may never get close enough to see in person. Places where you can correspond with companies and/or individuals. Places where you can buy items not available in your local shops and stores. Places where you can store your favorite pictures, videos and documents. All these places are on the internet and you can get to them using a computer and your own On-Ramp. The On-Ramp to the Internet is simply an Internet Service Provider (ISP), and a Modem (typically, a router is included to provide Local Area Networking {LAN} capability). With these items, you can get on to the Internet with any of your desktop or laptop computers.

So, now that we know why you might want to get on to the internet, let's see how we build an On-Ramp. First, and maybe the easiest, is to find an ISP. In this geographic area there are many providers, but the major players are Verizon, Comcast, and Brighthouse. Verizon provides FIOS, a digital connection; or DSL, a copper wire connection. Comcast and Brighthouse are cable providers so they provide a cable connection. (Long-time users will remember that there is also a dial-up connection that could be had using the telephone wiring in your house, but this provides an On-Ramp with such a speed limit that it is almost un-useable.)

Each provider will provide a modem that is capable of connecting to its specific network, which in turn connects to the Internet. For the technically, or etymologically, interested, the word modem is a combination of the two functions that it provides, MOdulation and DEModulation. The signals going to the Internet must be Modulated, and the signals coming from the Internet must be DEModulated. If you use only a modem (no Local Area Network) then the modem connects directly to your computer. But, more typically a router is used so that many computers can use the On-Ramp simultaneously. (The router can be a separate enclosure or included in the Modem enclosure.) So, the signals from the ISP first go to the Modem, then to the Router and finally to the computer(s).

In terms of wiring, the ISP connector (Cable, FIOS, or DSL) goes to the Modem, if a router is in the same enclosure, an Ethernet cable goes from the Modem/Router to the Computer Ethernet port. If an external Router is used, an Ethernet cable goes from the Modem to the WAN (Wide Area Network) input of the Router, and another Ethernet cable goes from a LAN port of the Router (usually one of four) to the computer Ethernet port. The Ethernet connector is called an RJ-45 connector and looks like an oversized telephone connector (for those of you who have looked at a telephone connector).

Now that the Modem and Router are wired, we're ready to go. Well, yes, but there is a Power-On sequence to keep in mind whenever the Modem, Router, and Computer(s) are to be powered up. Start with all the equipment turned off, and power up the modem first. After about a minute or so, the blinking lights on it will stop blinking, mostly. Next, if the router is a separate enclosure, power up the router, and wait for a minute or two, till its lights stabilize. (If the Router is part of the Modem, the electronics in the Modem/Router will take care of the sequencing.)

Next, the computer(s) can be powered up. (Note that if you ever have a power failure, or turn all this equipment off intentionally, or you experience very strange networking problems, you should go through this power-on sequence once again.)

Your On-Ramp requires very little maintenance. Once everything is up and running well, the Modem and Router can be left on 24/7 (unless you are leaving your home for an extended period of time). The only things you might want to shut down at the end of the day are the computers, if you so desire. Following the above few guidelines will help keep your On-Ramp in good repair and allow you to get on, and stay on, the Internet, and enjoy all those places you intend to visit.

Once the On-Ramp is in place and useable, your browser, on your wired computers, should be able to get you onto the Internet. If things don't connect right away, there may be a few networking windows that may need to be visited to get the network connection up and running, such as the "Network and Sharing" window, which is part of the Control Panel. (The networking windows are slightly different for each of the Operating Systems, XP, Vista and 7.) Also, if the Router is not part of the Modem enclosure, the router may have to be setup, although most routers right out of the box will probably get your wired computers on to the Internet with their default settings. The wireless computers may take some additional setup, which will have to be part of a future "wireless networking" article. Or, you could get all of the information needed to setup a wireless network by attending one of our wireless networking educational classes. Hope to see you there, some day.

From the May 2011 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor.

Wireless Range Expansion

by Sandy Shapiro

Under the Computer Hood UG, CA

At our last meeting we discussed how to expand the range of a wireless router. We talked about bridges and repeaters, but we didn't discuss expanders.

My wireless router sits on the second floor of my house in a back room. My office is in a small building behind my house, where the wireless signal is very low – only one bar is lit. Some of my patients are on the east coast and meet with me via Skype. The poor connection has been a major frustration.

After our meeting I did some research and found something called a Wireless-G Range Expander made by Linksys. Because I already have a Linksys wireless-G router, I thought it would be worth a try. I bought a refurbished model from Amazon.com for \$23.99. I don't see why it shouldn't also work with other brands of Wireless routers.

The setup was complicated, but once accomplished, my connection went from "very low" to "excellent" and all bars were now lit. Here is how I set up the expander:

1. First, I plugged the power cord into an outlet, and two lights went on. I plugged a cat5 cable from the expander directly to my router
2. I opened a browser and looked up: <http://192.168.1.240>
3. I left the user name blank and typed “admin” for the password
4. I went to the Help menu and opened the utility for changing the firmware. I had already downloaded the new firmware from the Linksys web site. After changing the firmware from V. 3.01.01 to V. 3.04.01 and rebooting the expander, I performed the following steps:
 1. I set Gateway to 192.168.1.1, the address of my router.
 2. I left Mode as mixed, and I changed the SSID to match the one in my router.
 3. I selected Wireless Security Enable. A pop up window opened and I changed security from WEP to WPA Personal. I entered the pass phrase I used in my router settings and clicked on Save Settings.
 4. After a reboot, I rechecked all the settings, unplugged the expander, removed the Cat 5 cable, and took the expander out to my office.
 5. There I plugged it into a wall plug and turned on my computer.
 6. Connection strength was now excellent and all bars were lit.

The only problem was that I now lacked “connectivity.” No matter how I configured the system, I could not access the internet – even though all the bars were lit. I disabled security and was finally able to get a network connection, but the Skype connection was all but impossible to use.

I sent the expander back for a refund.

Tomato Firmware, <http://www.polarcloud.com/tomato>

One advantage of the Linux program is that I could increase the power of the wireless signal, which I did from 42 mW to 70 mW. That allowed for a somewhat better connection in my office, but it was still very low.

Another advantage of this firmware is that you can use your router as an Ethernet Bridge or as an Ethernet Client, in addition to the normal use as an Access Point. It only cost \$55.94 to get another Linksys WRT54GL – about the same as some of the other repeaters on the market.

I found an excellent tutorial on using Tomato to set the firmware for Wireless Client Modes. <http://bit.ly/ik2BPw>

I first tried to use the Ethernet Bridge mode where the router is placed half way between the access point and the laptop out in the office. I couldn't get it to work. I then used the Wireless Client Mode where the router is in my office and connects to my laptop via a cat 5 cable. At first I had trouble, but then I realized I had to disable the wireless radio in the laptop, and everything worked fine. To the computer, it looks like a hard wired, or cabled connection.

The steps to set it up are as follows:

1. I checked the IP address of the extender router and saw that it was the same as that on the access point, 192.168.1.1. I then changed the client router to 192.168.0.1 as per the instructions. DHCP server was enabled. I then made sure the SSID and the channel were the same on both units.

2. I disabled security on both routers for testing. When I saw good internet connections and excellent Skype connections, I tried re-enabling security. I had been using WPA2 with TKIP – it didn't work. I then tried WEP and AES and, bingo, I was in business.

I have now successfully extended my internet connection, and I have a spare router should the first one ever burn out.

From the June 2011 issue of Drive LI

Gizmos's Picks

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

New Top Pick for Best Free Media Player

We have a new Top Pick for the Best Free Media Player. Many of you will never have heard of the product we now recommend but I can assure you it is outstanding. Of course media players are like web browsers – everyone has their own favorite. Even so you owe it to yourself to check this one out.

<http://www.videohelp.com/tools/PotPlayer>

Best Free Antivirus Software - New Top Pick

Well this is a surprise. For the first time in years, Avira AV has been bumped from the top spot in our list of the best free antivirus products. It's not because of its detection – that remains excellent- but rather because the company has been adopting some doubtful promotional techniques. And our new top pick is ... Avast!

Free Antivirus is my new top pick for the best free antivirus software in light of recent developments. Avast has steadily been improving its detection rates over the past few years and now ranks with the some of the best.

<http://www.avast.com/en-us/index>

Cut Your PC's Energy Usage By Up To 35%

If you think your PC costs virtually nothing to run then think again. With today's powerful PCs and the high costs of electricity the running cost is significant particularly where you have multiple machines.

Which is where a clever new piece of software comes in. It's an intelligent power-saving program, which continually adjusts the power requirements of your computer to balance your need for speed against the PC's need to save energy. Simply put, if you're doing something that doesn't require your CPU to run at full power, then the software will slow it down where possible. It's free for private use on a single machine.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/cut-your-pcs-energy-usage-35.htm>

Best Free Portable Applications

Our huge list of portable apps gives our top selections in dozens of different software categories. I use this list a lot as these days I avoid installing specialist utilities so if I want something like a secure file eraser I head straight for this list and download the recommended program and run it straight from the .exe file. This saves cluttering up your Windows registry and helps keep your system zippy and stable.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-portable-programs.htm>

How to Find Out if Your Laptop Battery is About to Fail

It's a bad feeling; you are away from the office and your laptop battery decides to fade out or even fail. This tiny, free, portable utility will give a full report on your battery condition.
<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/how-keep-eye-health-your-laptop-battery.htm>

391 Places for Free Books Online

When we first started this list of free legal downloadable books and audio files a couple of years back it had around 50 items. Today it has 391! The range of stuff you can get for free that's on this list is simply staggering; a lifetime or more of reading and listening.
<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/50-places-free-books-online.htm>

Dick's Clicks

by Dick Ramette

Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ

I'm still gob smacked by *Time Magazine's* Feb. 21 cover article, "2045 - The Year Man Becomes Immortal." Since these ideas have been around for a few years I'm surprised to be thus surprised.

Just imagine – according to this vision, in a few decades ultracomputers and human brains will be at one with each other. Our descendants will be able to live free of disease, in regenerated bodies of any desired condition, until they're ready to "log out." All this will follow explosive advances in GNR (genetics, nanotechnology and robotics).

If you missed this, you can, read it online at:

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2048138,00.html>

Unfortunately, this online version omits a truly exciting graphical summary of computer evolution since 1900 and projections to 2045, which you can find at:

<http://www.time.com/time/interactive/0,31813,2048601,00.html>

The recognized guru for this prognostication is Ray Kurzweil who, at age five had the idea he would become an inventor. He holds 39 patents and 19 honorary doctorates. He received the National Medal of Technology in 1999 from President Clinton, and is called by Bill Gates "the best person I know at predicting the future of artificial intelligence."

Singularitarianism is a matter of understanding, not of faith. However, its "bible" is Kurzweil's 2005 book, "The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology (Amazon, paper, \$13.78) the title invoking both curiosity and apprehension. By "Singularity" Kurzweil means the achievement of highly advanced human capabilities through interfaces between the human brain and supercomputers that exceed today's capabilities by factors of billions. We will "reverse engineer" the brain. On p. 127: "Ultimately, we will be able to port our mental processes to a more suitable computational substrate. Then our minds won't have to stay so small."

Bloodstreams will be suffused with swarming nanobots that fix all sorts of ills, receiving wireless instructions to eradicate diseases, including the disease of aging. By "Near," he means within our grown children's lifetimes. "Immortal" includes the possibility that human brains and minds will be uploaded and stored digitally, as well as living indefinitely in perfect health.

In early chapters Kurzweil summarizes the evidence that all the key factors in technology are racing toward the future at a steadily increasing rate. Human beings have evolved to think linearly, and therefore greatly underestimate the power of exponential changes that will affect us profoundly, naively dismissing them as “Not anytime soon!” IMHO, those who have not read the book should be reticent about expressing opinions.

I think CCGV members will find *The Singularity is Near* fascinating, even though most of us will miss the predicted excitement. You can find a Wikipedia article on *Singularitarianism*, here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singularitarianism>

But, oh, what big questions come to mind. If one’s life ends only by accident, murder or suicide, what will that mean for retirement, birth rate, and population? In a world that offers perfect virtual reality will anyone bother with movies, restaurants, cruise ships, football games, or recreational sex?”

Will nations accept world government by artificial intelligence, or will there be international cyberwars? Will the new benefits be shared only by the rich and elite? Will it be possible to download, say, Yo-Yo Ma’s cello genius into, say, Sarah P’s brain? What will the word “education” come to mean if knowledge can be downloaded?

If nearly everything is perfectly run by Ultra-AI, where will biological humans find ambition and personal inspiration? Might biological humans be forced into robot roles, subservient to vastly greater machine intelligences?

Quote of the Month:

“Let an ultraintelligent machine be defined as a machine that can far surpass all the intellectual activities of any [person] however clever. Since the design of machines is one of these intellectual activities, an ultraintelligent machine could design even better machines; there would then unquestionably be an ‘intelligence explosion,’ and the intelligence of [humans] would be left far behind. Thus, the first ultraintelligent machine is the last invention that [humans] need ever make.” Irving John Good, 1965

From the Summer 2011 issue of Green Bytes, newsletter of the Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ.

Society News

We are glad to have our first ad in our newsletter. It's from a computer store in the town of Gates. Here some information about TSC. TSC Tuner Service and Computers is not a new store. It opened in Rochester in 1975 as a electronic parts distributor. When they added computer parts and accessories it caught my eye. They now are a computer parts, supply, and recycling store. They will do repairs in store or come to your place. They are a small business IT Management firm as well.

They are located just off I531 on Elmgrove Rd. At the Elmgrove Rd exit of 531 go north one block, turn left and then right into their parking lot. Their hours are Mon 9-5, Tues. to Fri. 9 to 6 and Sat 9 to 2. Please tell Dreg you're from the computer club, I know he will be glad to help you get what you need.

The club sends its sympathy to the family of Bernice Blake. Bernice was a long-time member of our club and she passed away this past week.

There's still time to make a reservation for our club picnic. It's the second Tuesday (August 9) and it's in the newest cabin in Buckland Park in Brighton. For reservations or more information call Steve at 429-9877 or email srstaub@rochester.rr.com before August 1st deadline.