

MONITOR

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 10

Seniors Online Around Rochester

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Your Computer's Health - The "Oh Oh" Moment

by Art Gresham

Editor, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA

Oops. Darn, What the....? You know the feeling. Yesterday everything was fine. Today you are wondering what happened overnight. What can you do if your computer seems to have suddenly gotten sick? Perhaps it was caused by that neat new application, or game, you installed yesterday, or maybe something got installed when you visited that website that promised to speed your computer's internet access, but when you the page opened it ran a moment and then seemed to hang up with no sense that it really did what was expected. Maybe you should not have installed that app/game/utility



u13706572 fotosearch.com

because it was some kind of rogue or worthless program, or worse, and you are now stuck with a sick system.

Don't you wish you could go back in time to last weekend when everything seemed to be running fine? Well, you can. Probably.

If you are running a Microsoft Windows ME, XP, Vista or 7 then the System Restore is available to offer you protection for many of these kinds of illness, and might be worth checking to see if you can regain your computer's health.

System Restore allows you to roll back most system files, registry keys, and installed programs, the DLL Cache folder, local user profiles, and more. When installed, and not disabled (more about that later) you may manually create a restore point, or use one of the automatically created points. And it does this without affecting your personal files, or data such as e-mail, documents, or photos. We will discuss full backups that include your data in a future article.

Also note that in Vista and later versions it has been improved and now uses "Shadow Copy" Technology with even more backup capabilities.

So where do you look to see if you have any restore points? You should do this today to be sure it is not disabled. Open System Restore by clicking the Start button, clicking All Programs, clicking Accessories, clicking System Tools, and then clicking System Restore. Be sure to select "Restore my computer to an earlier time," then click Next.

You will see a calendar of the current month, and several of the dates should be marked in Bold. These dates have restore points available, and some may have more than one as shown below. You may have multiple restore points for several reasons.

Wikipedia lists the Restore points that are created:

1. When software is installed using the Windows Installer, Package Installer, or other installers which are aware of System Restore.
2. When Windows Update installs new updates to Windows.
3. When the user installs a driver that is not digitally signed by Windows Hardware Quality Labs.
4. Every 24 hours of computer use (10 hours in Windows Me), or every 24 hours of calendar time, whichever happens first. This setting is configurable through the registry or using the deployment tools. Such a restore point is known as a system checkpoint. System Restore requires Task Scheduler to create system checkpoints. Moreover, system checkpoints are only created if the system is idle for a certain amount of time.
5. When the operating system starts after being off for more than 24 hours.
6. When the user requests it. On Windows Vista, shadow copies created during File Backup and Complete PC Backup can also be used as restore points.

Older restore points are deleted as per the configured space constraint on a First In, First Out basis. [Wikipedia] To begin a restore simply click on the date you want, and then click Next a couple times. Your system will restart and hopefully you have healed the patient.

Older restore points are deleted as per the configured space constraint on a First In, First Out basis. [Wikipedia] To begin a restore simply click on the date you want, and then click Next a couple times. Your system will restart and hopefully you have healed the patient.

If you do not see any restore points, you might want to check that the process is not disabled. To do this in XP you can right click My Computer, open the Properties, and click on the System Restore Tab. There you will see a check box where you can "Turn of System Restore on all drives. Be sure that is un-checked. For Win 7 see the FAQ How do I turn System Restore on or off?"

References:

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

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/What-is-System-Restore>

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/What-types-of-files-does-System-Restore-change>

From the February 2011 issue, UCHUG Drive Light.

E-mail Hacked? An Ounce of Prevention....

by Lee Seidman

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Recently, some unsuspecting e-mail users may have experienced dismaying and shocking notifications suggesting that his or her e-mail has been hacked and used to send spam (or worse), even if the e-mail system is web-based rather than downloaded directly to one's computer via a local application like Microsoft Mail, Outlook, Outlook Express, MacMail, Entourage, Thunderbird, etc. (and hence, susceptible to operating system-level vulnerabilities). The primary suspect is the password used to access the account.

People tend to try to keep things simple by using the same password to access a variety of sites, but at the risk of security. People's e-mail account password should never be used for any other account or web site. Generally, e-mail can be compared to a postcard; although the message is destined for a particular recipient, it has the potential to be read by anyone as it traverses the Internet. Additionally, if one joins a web site that requests a password to subscribe, a confirmation e-mail is often generated clearly presenting the username (often an e-mail address) and the proper password. The postcard analogy applies to that non-encrypted e-mail – it is open for anyone to read. A typical malicious-minded hacker (the “Black Hat”) who either intercepts that e-mail or accesses that web site's consumer database would first attempt to use that password associated with that e-mail address to access the e-mail account. For example, if someone is whom-ever@aol.com registers to join community web site or message board site-whatever.com, generally he or she is asked to use his or her e-mail address as the user name. Site-whatever.com will ask the person to generate a password and often will send a confirmation e-mail identifying the username and password in clear text (meaning it is not obscured). The first thing a third-party (in other words, someone who is not the subscriber or a representative of the web site) may try to do is use the password contained in that e-mail to access homever@aol.com itself.



Once a hacker with bad intentions gets into the e-mail, he or she may start slowly to not get noticed, however, it does not require much effort for the “Black Hat” to change the password AND security questions (for password resets) to effectively lock the account owner out of his or her own e-mail. If nefarious activity is suspected to take place with one's e-mail account:

1. Inform those in your contact list of the circumstances, preferably by voice or an alternate e-mail account and make sure they understand not to engage the questionable content (usually seeking money in one form or another – especially via embedded hyperlinks); get as much help to act as quickly as possible as time is of the essence and everyone in that

contact list is potentially at risk since they trust the e-mail is coming from you when in actuality it does not.

2. Change the password to access the e-mail account (and make it complex and very difficult to guess).
3. Change the security questions to change the password.
4. Notify the e-mail provider.
5. If this is a commonly used password for online financial transactions (banking, purchasing, etc.), change the password for those e-commerce sites.
6. Keep all correspondence between the “Black Hat” and any contacts as evidence.
7. If money is involved, contact local and federal authorities at the Internet Crime Complaint Center (<http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>), especially if the “Black Hat” actually defrauded someone out of money.

In general, it is a good idea to have an e-mail account for personal correspondence and a separate one for web-based subscriptions (or use a temporary/disposable e-mail address offered by the majority of providers). The key is to use distinct passwords; the online world can be a dangerous place in which to operate, but one’s own behavior usually determines the level of jeopardy one will risk in such an environment. A little forethought can prevent a whole lot of hind-sight consternation.

From the February 2011 issue, The Help Key.

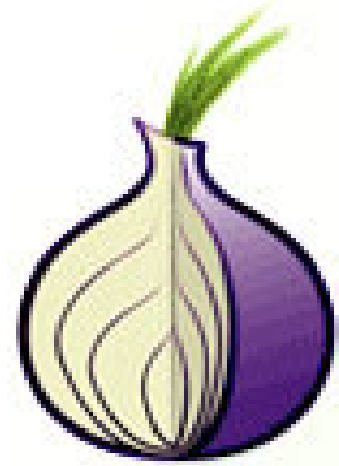
Tor, Anonymity On-line

by Dick Maybach

Tor protects your privacy when you are on-line in two ways: (1) it prevents other users of the network you use to reach the Internet (for example a public Wi-Fi hotspot) from seeing the data you exchange and with whom you communicate and (2) it hides your identity from those with whom you communicate. For most of us, item (1) is more important. For example, when we use a Wi-Fi hotspot to access the Internet, every byte we send and every one we receive is accessible to all its other users. One defense would be to add a separate defensive tool for every offensive one, which is the approach taken to foil Windows viruses.

The result will surely be the same – an ever-increasing kit of defensive programs to counter the never-ending supply of offensive programs. A much sounder approach is to run *Tor*, which defends against all such attacks; as a result you need install only one tool. Item (2) is probably less important to you; it prevents sites you visit from knowing who you are or what other sites you’ve visited. We are seeing ever more intrusions into our privacy by governments and businesses, and Tor was developed to help us preserve our privacy, safety, and dignity in the face of this. Although Tor is legal in all countries, you can do illegal things using it. In this way, it’s similar to the gas pedal on your car, which is essential if you want to go someplace, but must be used with restraint to avoid awkward and expensive discussions with the law.

Tor hides not only what you say, but also who you say it to. You could use it to communicate back home from a location where disclosing your country of origin or religion might expose you to unpleasantness or risk. This feature also allows you to circumvent restrictions that your ISP has placed on the Web sites you visit.



It's used by individuals, businesses, activists, reporters, the military, and law enforcement for investigations and to protect themselves, their organizations, and those with whom they communicate. Using it, you can surf the Web, exchange e-mail, use instant messaging, and transfer files. However, please don't just install it and assume you're safe. You need to change some of your habits, and reconfigure your software. Tor by itself is *NOT* all you need to maintain your anonymity.

Tor consists of two parts – a public, secure virtual private network (VPN) and the software to access it. The software is free and available for Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, and some smart phones at <http://www.torproject.org/>. Most PC and Mac users will want the *Tor Browser Bundle*, which includes the Firefox browser. (For reasons you can read on the Tor Web site, neither Internet Explorer nor Safari is suitable for secure browsing.) The Tor VPN is distributed and accessible worldwide, is free, and is provided and maintained by volunteers. Because the network consists of thousands of independent Web sites, it's quite robust; there is no single point of failure.

How does Tor work?

When you access the Internet with it, you first communicate with a *Tor Directory Server* over an encrypted link (one with a URL beginning <https://>). Here, you obtain a list of available *Tor Nodes*. The Tor software on your computer selects at least three of these; call them Node 1, Node 2, and Node 3. It then sets up a secure link to Node 1, which forwards your traffic to Node 2, which forwards it to Node 3. All these links are secure, and only Node 3 can decrypt your packets.

Finally Node 3 sends your packets to your desired end site. Note that if the end site is secure (indicated by a URL beginning with <https://>), even Node 3 can't read your data. Packets coming to you follow the reverse path, Node 3 encrypts them in such a way that only you can do the decryption. As far as the end site knows, it is communicating with Node 3; it has no way of finding your computer's URL. An observer on your local network knows only the URL of the Tor Directory Server and Node 1; he can't find the location of the end site or read any of your packets. Only Node 1 knows your location, and only Node 3 knows that of the end site. Note that Node 3 can also see the data you exchange, unless you're using end-to-end encryption, i.e., talking to a site with a URL beginning <https://>.

When you install Tor, you will also install the Torbutton add-on for Firefox, which allows you to turn Tor anonymous browsing on and off. Turning Tor on changes some of Firefox's operation.

1. None of the cookies you acquired during normal browsing will be available. This is because cookies can tell the site you are communicating with a lot about you and which sites you've visited. As a result, you will have to reenter passwords where they are required. These cookies will return when you toggle Tor off.
2. Some sites will be displayed in a foreign language. Since they don't know where you are, they assume you are located in the same country as Node 3. See the Tor site for work-arounds.
3. You will see moderate delays while surfing the Web. There are at least three intermediate sites on the path to your final destination, and several layers of encryption are involved. While the delays are noticeable, I haven't found them to be obnoxious, and I consider it a good trade-off to achieve better security.

Many users need only browser access to the Internet when away from home, since through it they can also exchange e-mail and transfer files. (I've found that the FireFTP add-on is convenient for the latter, but see the Tor site for instructions on how to configure it and follow

these exactly.) If you want to use secure instant messaging, use *Pidgin*, which Windows and OS X users can obtain by installing the *Tor IM Bundle*, available on the Web site. (Pidgin is in most Linux repositories.) You can't use Tor for file sharing, i.e., using BitTorrent; instead use the I2P network, <http://www.i2p2.de/>. See the Tor site for how to configure other Internet access programs, including some that provide access to your home computer. However, if you really need access to files on your home computer, it would be better to transfer them to your laptop or to a cloud service before you go. Otherwise, a power transient or other failure could disable your computer until you return home to restore it.

Accessing the Internet away from home without Tor is like driving without insurance, you can *almost* always get away with it. That doesn't mean it's a smart thing to do.



Stubborn Magnifier Creates Oversized Problem

Q: I was excited to try the Windows Magnifier to help me read small print, but now I can't get rid of it. I've tried everything I can think of, but it won't disappear. How can I close it once and for all?

A: For those who aren't familiar with the Magnifier, Microsoft's somewhat verbose description is, "a display utility that makes the computer screen more readable by creating a separate window that displays a magnified portion of the screen." Succinctly stated: It makes things larger.

To launch the Magnifier in XP, click Start > All Programs > Accessories > Accessibility > Magnifier. In Vista and Windows 7, click Start and in the Search field, type "Magnifier."

To close the Magnifier, look for its icon on the Taskbar, at the bottom of your screen. Right-click that icon and select Close.

Q: I have a belt clip for my iPod that has a little flap cover that is held shut with a magnet. Could this magnet destroy all the songs I have in my iPod? Am I heading for a data disaster?

A: It's highly unlikely that it will cause any problems. There are never any guarantees, of course, but magnets capable of wiping out data are very powerful, not the type that would be associated with a magnetic closure of the type you describe. I wouldn't have any qualms about wearing a stylish iPod belt clip (from the spring Nerdwear collection, I'm guessing), and if you haven't had any problems thus far, you're not likely to have any in the future.

Q: I have a Word document that was typed in ALL CAPS. I know that to get lower case I can click Insert and re-type the letters to change each word, but is there some way I can change the entire document at once? I tried the Find/Replace command, but that did not work. Thanks in advance for any suggestions you may have. I love your weekly newsletter.

A: Select (highlight) the text you want to change, then press SHIFT + F3 and keep pressing it to toggle between ALL CAPS, lower case, and Initial Caps.

Q: I had to install a new ink cartridge today, but I wanted to skip the print-testing pages because it wastes paper and ink. Nothing I tried worked. Is there any way to avoid that or am I caught in the ugly grasp of my printer?

A: Unless the ability to bypass that function exists with your particular make and model printer, which you did not identify, in most cases there is no way to avoid that. Generally speaking, that type of print-and-align function is truly not a waste of paper and ink in the long run. This function enables your printer to continue to provide the best print quality possible.

I have several printers here and when I replace ink cartridges, it is accompanied by a symphony of beeps, boops, clanks, clunks and printing pages. As a card-carrying geek, I am of course obligated to examine the test-print sheets to confirm that everything is printing correctly. Not one to waste anything, I then use the test sheets as scrap paper to record my pithy thoughts or compose ransom notes, as needed. I would suggest going with the ink flow and be happy your printer is monitoring itself and maintaining its print quality.

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

Abandoned Rails

Railroad lines have a unique and fascinating history. For better or worse, thousands of miles of track have been abandoned in the U.S. during the last 30 years. This site is dedicated to the preservation of the history of former railroad lines through interesting facts, pictures and articles. All-abooooaarrrrrd! www.abandonedrails.com

Nation History

Geography buffs and world travelers will enjoy this site's concise histories of every country and non-sovereign territory on the planet. You can search for a specific nation by name or just browse its six regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America. www.historyofnations.net

Universcale

If you have ever been to a planetarium, studied astronomy, or looked at the sky on a cloudless night, you know that the size of the universe is impossible to comprehend. In fact, if you think about it too intensely it can cause your head to explode. Universcale is a site that serves as an "infinite yardstick," placing objects into a scale that provides a better idea of the true vastness of the cosmos. It is an interesting online experience to watch the ever-expanding scale bring some perspective to the extremities of space, where the outer limits of the universe are an equally incomprehensible 100 billion light years away. Sit back, relax, and allow plenty of time for this Nikon-sponsored moving scale to display. <http://tinyurl.com/592jkh>

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Find Travel Bargains Online

by Ira Wilsker

Sometimes it seems like you cannot watch more than a few minutes of TV without seeing some form of commercial for travel bargains. William Shatner, now known as the "Priceline Negotiator," insults people trying to book hotels, intimidating them to "go lower!" The Travelocity Gnome suffers international abuse while attempting to resolve problems at hotels and resorts. The babe from the TV show NCIS explains how hotels have unsold rooms, and she can help you find a deal, only to peek into a hotel room occupied by a

shocked Asian tourist wrapped in a bath towel, with the apology “My bad.” While the heavily advertised travel websites, including Priceline, Hotwire, Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz can find the traveler a substantial number of travel deals, there are some other lesser known websites that may offer better deals and bargains than the well known websites.

Better known for its electronics bargains, the website dealnews.com also has travel bargains listed; from the dealnews.com website, click on the “Travel” link on the menu bar at the top of the page, and the current travel deals will be posted. Dealnews.com constantly compiles the best deals from many different travel websites, including hotel promotions, cruise deals, rental car bargains, airline promotions, and other travel bargains. The list is dynamic, in that new travel deals are added frequently, and deals no longer available are deleted. As I type this, there are 61 current travel deals posted, including a highly rated “bed and breakfast” in the New Orleans French Quarter for \$59 a night with free parking (normally \$139 + \$20 parking); Hawaiian all-inclusive vacations, Caribbean resort deals, condos in the mountains of Colorado, cruises, international destinations, and other daily deals. Special events, including Las Vegas and New York shows are sometimes listed on dealnews.com, typically at prices below those available at the “half price box offices” located on the streets in those cities; these are not leftover last minute tickets, but tickets that can be purchased in advance.

One recent example of a show ticket deal is the 58% off of advance purchase tickets for “Cirque du Soleil’s The Beatles LOVE” at the Mirage in Las Vegas. Many of these deals are only available for a limited time, as displayed in the listing, and sometimes sell out quickly. Recently, using listings from dealnews.com, I stayed in a property of one of the major hotel chains for half-off the lowest rate on the chain’s website using a dealnews coupon code; stayed in a four-star Gulf coast resort property for \$39 per night; and had a Dallas area hotel suite, including full breakfast and manager’s reception for \$42 a night. Since dealnews.com only shows a few new travel bargains a day, it is not a comprehensive travel website, but the bargains listed are often excellent, especially if they are available at a time and destination of interest to the traveler.

Another source of often spectacular travel bargains, including hotels, airfares, cruises, resorts, and entertainment deals is TravelZoo, at travelzoo.com. TravelZoo offers a free periodic email announcement, often weekly, that lists several dozen travel and entertainment bargains. One recent such bargain I found on TravelZoo was Las Vegas show tickets and other entertainment for up to 80% off. Examples of this deal include \$10 for \$60 tickets to comedy shows, musicals, and magic shows (mostly at off-Strip locations); \$15 for \$55 comedy tickets; \$20 for \$45 to \$60 tickets to comedy, music, and hypnosis shows; \$30 for \$60 variety shows; and \$40 for \$85 to \$95 Las Vegas Review and musical shows. TravelZoo also has a weekly “Top 20” (available online and included in the weekly email), where it lists the top 20 travel deals that it finds.

These “Top 20” deals often include international travel including air (\$899 for a trip to Ireland, including air, and nights in premium hotels including the Four Seasons, Ritz, and a castle), \$45 for a suite in an Atlantic City resort (including weekends), and \$1899 for 12 nights in Australia including air and a five-star hotel. Other currently listed international deals, including air and hotel, are to such diverse places as Ecuador, Hawaii, Italy (Rome, Venice, and Florence), Thailand, and Jamaica. Sometimes cruises are listed on the top 20 list, but cruise deals are listed at travelzoo.com/cruises. One interesting cruise listed was a 7 night Alaskan cruise on Celebrity (with prepaid gratuities) for \$669. Other bargains listed on TravelZoo include Airfare, Hotels, Vacations, Car Rentals, and Last Minute deals. The “Last Minute Deals” (travelzoo.com/last-minute) include an assortment of short term offers that

must be used in the next few days at deeply discounted prices, including theater tickets, airfares (mostly international), resorts, golf, hotels, cruises and other travel and entertainment events. As is common for many travel websites, these deals are often available for only a limited time, and have specific dates of availability.

There are many websites that offer last minute cruise deals, but my favorite is VacationsToGo at vacationstogo.com. This website includes a count-down ticker that runs for up to 90 days in advance, that shows decreasing prices as selected cruises approach their embarkation; of course, as the clock ticks down, and cabins are booked, the selection often drops along with the prices. According to a posting on the website, many of the cabins are booked within 7 days as the prices drop, sometimes as much as 75% of the original advertised price.

What is also interesting about VacationsToGo is they have a comprehensive listing of cruises and cruise line that offer special additional discounts to specific groups of people including senior citizens (55 and over), EMTs, Firefighter, Military (active duty and retired), "Past-Guest Discounts," Police, Singles, and Teachers.

There are many other excellent travel websites, including many of the widely advertised mega-travel websites. The user who wants to check them all at one time, without having to manually check each one, may find Kayak (kayak.com), whose slogan is "Search one and you are done" a most useful website, as it can check, compare, and display results from over 200 travel sites with a single search, often uncovering otherwise unknown travel deals.

Travel for enjoyment is to many, one of life's greatest pleasures. With access to some of the "deal" travel websites, travel may be accomplished more economically, possibly freeing up the capital for even more leisure travel. Enjoy yourself, and have fun; we only go around once.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.travelzoo.com>

<http://dealnews.com/Everything-Else/Travel-Entertainment-Deals-206.html>

<http://www.travelocity.com>

<http://www.tripadvisor.com>

<http://www.hotwire.com>

<http://www.expedia.com>

<http://www.getaroom.com>

<http://www.kayak.com>

<http://www.priceline.com>

<http://vacationstogo.com>

<http://www.smartertravel.com>

<http://www.hotels.com>

<http://www.orbitz.com>

Scammed on Craigslist!

Be Aware of Common Craigslist Scams

by Bob Rankin

Craigslist, the free local classified ads service, is a popular way to buy, sell, and trade goods or services. It's also used as a dating service, a job-hunting and recruiting tool, and much more. But if you're not careful, you could end up scammed by someone you meet on Craigslist.

Craigslist itself warns users that they're entirely on their own when it comes to vetting their trading partners. Craigslist makes no attempt to screen advertisers. Instead, it relies on "flagging" of unsavory listings by the user community. If a listing receives too many flags from

other users, it is taken down automatically. But this self-policing does not catch many scams. And of course it can't catch the creeps and crooks who respond to the ads.

The number one thing you can do to protect yourself is "deal locally with people you can meet in person," advises the Craigslist FAQ about scams. If you send money or goods to someone far away, there is very little you can do if you get nothing in return.

Unlike eBay, Craigslist offers no verification of sellers' and buyers' identities; no "buyer protection" in case the goods are not delivered; no escrow service; and no guarantees of any transaction. It's 100% buyer beware. Craigslist advertisers who ask you to send money in advance via Western Union or bank wire transfer should be avoided, and flagged. There is no way to get your money back when you pay via these methods, and in most cases you will not get anything in return.

If you're selling on Craigslist, it may seem safe to accept cashier's checks or money orders through the mail. But counterfeit cashier's checks and money orders can come back to bite you weeks after your bank told you the funds had cleared. Sometimes it can cost you a lot more than the face amount of the check.

My Personal Craigslist Scam Story

Recently, I posted several items for sale on Craigslist. Within minutes, I started getting emails from people with strange sounding names, asking if the item was still available. One person's name was (I kid you not) "Schmeckpeper Ayuso." I responded to one person, and got this in reply:

"i would have love to come and see it, but my scheduled is very tight. I will mail out yor payment once you provide your full name, phone number and addresse. I can only pay via money order as am on a business trip now, pls let me know where to send your payment to because i wouldn't want to lose it to some else. I don't mind adding (\$50) dollars so you can keep it in my favor. i will appreciate if you can get the ad off craigslist so i can be sure you are keeping it in my favor. Please let me know as soon as you receive it so i can start making arrangement for the pick-up."

Turns out the wording of this reply is almost identical to other messages commonly sent by overseas scammers. Here's how the scam often plays out:

One Craigslist seller received a check for \$2,500 from a foreign buyer, instead of the \$250 they had agreed upon. The buyer said there had been a "terrible mistake" made by her bookkeeper, and asked the seller to wire back the excess funds. She even told the seller to keep an extra \$100 for the trouble. The check, of course, was counterfeit, and the seller would have been scammed out of \$2,150 if they had wired funds to the crook. I'm sure the same would have happened to me.

Beware of any seller who requests personal financial information such as a bank account number, credit card number, or Paypal email address. Identity theft is often one of the objects of Craigslist scams.

Likewise, if you are applying for a job listed on Craigslist, do not cooperate in any background or credit check until you have had a face-to-face interview and verified that the employer is legitimate. The information you provide to enable a background check may be used to steal your identity.

Housing rentals are a favorite Craigslist scam. It's amazing how many people hand over hundreds or thousands of dollars in deposits and rent without ever seeing the inside of a rental property. People have rented homes from scammers who didn't even have the right to rent the properties!

A friend of mine warned about a Craigslist scam where the “buyer” emails the seller a link to view a web page or watch a video “to make sure it’s the item I want to buy.” Don’t click... or you’ll wind up a victim of some nasty virus that will wreak havoc on your computer.

Poor spelling, confused grammar, and long rambling replies are a hallmark of Craigslist scammers. Beware of anyone who wants to pay with a money order or a check, even a certified check, as they can be easily forged. If they offer to pay MORE than the asking price, or ask for any personal details, run away fast. And if you’re buying or selling something that costs a significant amount of money, always have a friend with you when meeting the other party.

From the Internet TOURBUS, Vol 15, Number 57, 12 Apr 2011. To subscribe go to: <<http://internet.tourbus.com/tickets.html>>.

Dump Norton and McAfee Anti-Virus?

By Bob Rankin

I got a new computer and my friend is telling me that the first thing I should do is remove the Norton antivirus software that came with it. He calls it ‘bloatware’ and recommends some free program instead. I’ve always used Norton or McAfee for security, so I’m nervous about switching. What is your opinion?”

Uninstall Norton AntiVirus Norton Antivirus and McAfee Antivirus are the two leading names in consumer antivirus software. But Norton has been losing market share in recent years, slipping from 57 per cent in 2007 to 46 per cent in 2010. McAfee has been struggling in the consumer realm, too. Should you consider ditching McAfee or Norton in favor of a free antivirus solution?

There are problems associated with being Number One in your industry. Norton, and to a lesser extent McAfee, have been on top of the antivirus heap for so long that they’ve lost touch with their users, argue some critics. Instead of being concerned with the end-user, the two companies have focused on making deals with computer makers to preinstall their software on virtually every Windows PC shipped. McAfee went so far as to sell itself to Intel Corp. in 2010, for an estimated \$7.7 billion.

Then there’s “feature bloat,” a common complaint levied against market-leading software including Microsoft Windows. Norton Antivirus and McAfee Antivirus spent years adding new levels of protection to their products, even when users complained that they didn’t know what the features did or how to turn them on or off. Both antivirus programs suffered withering criticisms that they slowed down other computer operations intolerably. In some cases, an excess of zeal to snare every suspected malware program caused Norton and McAfee to disable legitimate programs, sometimes causing thousands of computers to lock up.

Another complaint about Norton, in particular, is the difficulty of uninstalling its products completely. The Windows Add/Remove Programs feature leaves behind many registry settings and files which can interfere with the operation of other antivirus programs and regular applications. Some users find that they cannot get rid of Norton or McAfee without reformatting their hard drives and re-installing Windows.

Bigger Is Not Always Better

Customer service also tends to suffer with success. There are innumerable complaints of long hold times with Norton and McAfee customer support; lengthy sessions with overseas customer service reps that did not fix problems; and even charges for extended support that did nothing.

Hackers write their malware with the biggest targets in mind. Many malware payloads specifically look for Norton and McAfee products, seeking to disable them or exploit known

vulnerabilities in obsolete versions. The latter tactic works because many end users don't bother to keep their antivirus software up to date.

You should know there are several software vendors that provide Internet security tools for free. Avira, AVG and Microsoft all have effective anti-virus and anti-spyware offerings that can be downloaded at no charge. My article *Free Anti-Virus Programs* lists several more than you can check out.

Norton and McAfee charge \$30 to \$60 per year for updates of their programs and antivirus definition databases. Their products score highly in effectiveness, and provide protection to millions of PCs. If money is not a factor, and you're not experiencing any of the problems that many people have with Norton and McAfee, there may not be much incentive to switch.

But in my opinion, the free anti-virus programs provide excellent protection. I dumped Norton 7 years ago and have never regretted it. Tens of millions of users worldwide use free anti-virus programs to protect their computers, so why pay good money for something you can get for free?

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Drop it in the Box:

Dropbox, What it Is, How it Works

by Jo Grazide

Brookdale Computer Users Group, NJ

What is Dropbox?

Suppose you were able to save work without using a flash drive, a disk (CD or DVD-R or RW), or an external drive, or even email, and move files between your laptop and desktop? For many years, I, like so many of us, had developed methods and procedures to upload, download, and save documents, music and pictures to a storage device, only to have to rely on memory to locate it afterwards. Another irritating problem for me, especially when I was working, was to identify the "latest" version, so that an older file would not overwrite my work during a "Save As."

Enter Dropbox, a useful application that eliminates lots of work and uncertainty.

Dropbox is a free download that offers protection and convenience and is easy to use. There is basically no learning involved. You should, however, be familiar with Drag & Drop and Move vs. Copy. Why not give Dropbox a try and see whether this is for you.

I first heard of Dropbox during a meeting of my camera club. Some members seemed happy with it; there were no negative comments, leading me to investigate. Having a way to store photography files without worrying about loss or corruption seemed an ideal solution to the problem of travel pictures. I got to test this, when I maxed out the Dropbox folder at around 2 GB during a vacation in Boston. There are two ways to increase your storage capacity – you can purchase the program on a monthly or yearly basis, or you can have friends join the service and be rewarded a few more MB's up to a whopping 8 GB.

Get the App

To acquire Dropbox, you need to go to the website at www.dropbox.com. The download is quick and easy. Just run it, and follow the instructions. There are six initial steps:

1. Take the tour,
2. Install Dropbox,
3. Put files in your Dropbox folder,
4. Install Dropbox on other computers,

5. Share a folder with friends or colleagues,
6. Invite friends to join.

It is necessary to install the program on all computers that you will be using. The setup is done on the website, and the instructions are easy.

In my case, this is my laptop and my desktop. As I move around with the laptop, to meetings or anywhere I use it, I'm able to save files as they are created, directly into the Dropbox folder, which sits in the system tray area. By clicking on its icon, Dropbox will provide easy and helpful commands.

In addition, I know that once I reach home, altered files will be available and updated on my desktop machine. They can be dragged into their proper locations on the storage drives. This has been extremely useful. Instead of dealing with two documents, a newer version and an older version, there is only one synchronized version.

Another nice aspect is that I don't have to worry about misplacing storage disks or flash drives, which does happen. I also would think that it lessens stress, as there is nothing to lose!

On the Website

There is plenty of information on the Dropbox website. There are videos and explanations of the synching process. Basically, anything that is put into the local folder is also recorded on the Internet. You can also access your files and upload them directly onto the Dropbox server.

It can be compared to using GoogleDocs or Windows Live Mesh. Collaboration, by the way, is possible. I haven't delved into this, because I simply need a way to move data between computers. If you want to learn more, you need to visit the Dropbox website and study this feature.

The Dropbox website has five tabs:

1. "Get Started" walks you through several chores before you can earn some extra space. This is simple and easy to understand.
2. "Files" is the online list of your current Dropbox inhabitants, their sizes, and the dates they were modified. You can sort each column by clicking on its heading. There are buttons here that let you do even more. A basic knowledge of file management is all you need to comprehend this part of the application.
3. "Events" is a listing of various edits, deletions, and other information about your files.
4. "Sharing" allows you to create a new folder to share, or share an existing folder. By following the prompts, you can identify who you want to share the folder with. In my case, I began typing my husband's email address, and it was prefilled for me. This would make it easier for multiple shares in a business or committee setting. Perhaps our next Board meeting minutes will appear in a Dropbox folder! I also found that once the shared folder appeared in my local Dropbox folder, I could rename it and manage it locally. A refresh caused the change to appear on the website immediately. I like this type of efficiency. There is no lag time, and information can be relayed quickly between computers.
5. Finally, "Help" is all the rest. It seems that the Dropbox website is complete; you can spend much time learning about it. I would suggest that you jump in and try out the program; you can learn by doing as well.

There are a couple of things I would warn you about as a new user. If you simply drag and drop the file back and forth, it copies the file. You may want to right-drag and choose move to ensure you have the latest version of your work or photograph. Also, having a comfort level with storage online to some extent, and not adding things like your Social Security number or banking information, goes without saying. Aside from that, there are no problems I can see with using this reliably.

One Last Thing

I do have one favor to ask you if you do join Dropbox; please use the link! It will enable both of us to get some extra space, a great reward and well deserved!

The link to join on my behalf is <http://db.tt/sHvgWQp>. I promise I will not waste that space!

System Requirements

Hardware: At least 512MB of RAM; free space on your computer equal to your Dropbox storage quota.

Software: Windows: Windows 2003, Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7 (32 and 64-bit).

Mac OS X: Tiger (10.4) or later.

Linux: Ubuntu 7.10+ and Fedora Core 9+.

Also: iPhone iOS 3.1, Android 1.5 and Blackberry 4.5.

Pricing: Up to 2 gigabytes of free storage space; DropBox 50, up to 50GB storage for \$9.99/month or \$99/year; Dropbox 100, up to 100GB storage for 19.95/month or \$199/year.

For more information: <https://www.dropbox.com/plansproducts/desktop>

From the February 2011 Issue, Bug Bytes.

Dick's Clicks

by Dick Ramette

President, Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ

Sam likes being technophobic. He grew up happily without PCs, cell phones, and credit cards, and is amused by those who flaunt their myriad electronic devices. He quotes Clifford Stoll: "Why is it drug addicts and computer aficionados are both called users?" But, in reality, there is no such thing as a "nonuser," because of how computers permeate most aspects of modern society.

Sam's not impressed with how stores use computers to scan price codes, manage inventories, and arrange for shipping. He's uninformed about how modern medicine is highly digitized, from storing personal records to advanced diagnostic tools, as are all bank accounts, newspapers, magazine subscriptions, telephones and public library accounts. Travel relies on the computers of hotels, restaurants, cruise ships and airlines, and all newer cars are governed by built-in computers. The USPS and the phone system could not function well without computers, nor could law enforcement and fire fighters. Even the aerobics machines in GVR fitness rooms are computerized.

At the other extreme from Sam are the true technophiles, like the few elites in CCGV, whose computer expertise dwarfs that of the typical user. Nothing will do except the latest version of hardware and software. Some golfers are even using GPS devices to plot strategy during a round.

I'm more in the common mainstream, I guess. My two computers do enrich my life on a daily basis. My son in Wisconsin sent me an email with a video of wild turkeys near his property, and I was able to inform him, thanks to Google, that a group of turkeys is called a gang, a posse, or a rafter. See: <http://www.thealmightyguru.com/Pointless/AnimalGroups.html>.

I enjoy the Astronomy Picture of the Day, my favorite comics (those not included in the AZ Star, like Judge Parker), opinions on NYTimes and Huffington Post, and I sample the thousands of reader comments. I play Wordscraper with a daughter and a grandson, but do nothing else with Facebook. I download the NYT crossword, check movie reviews on <http://www.imdb.com>, look at political cartoons on <http://www.washing tonpost.com>, and note

obituaries on <http://www.gvnews.com>. All my Pima Library reserves are by computer. I have links to the menus of my favorite restaurants.

I use Open Office spreadsheet to keep statistics for the GVR Shuffleboard Club, and I manage my photo collection with Windows Explorer and Photoshop Elements. I'd hate to do without email.

I'm content with Wordpad for writing things, including this column.

I still write useful little programs using the antiquated QBasic. I measure my walks by GPS. But I ignore Skype, Picasa, Windows 7, and online banking, though I do order stuff from <http://www.amazon.com>.

With my new BFF, the iPod touch, I play the Scramble word game, listen to music, take photos and go online. I marvel that such technology can be bundled in such a small package: it holds my lifetime music collection and my lifetime photo collection. And, as we heard at the CCGV meeting in January, the Apple iPad is even more amazing, now with 300,000 apps.

This month I bought a Blu-Ray DVD player and a 50" plasma TV, and I'm astonished by all the functions that were not available on my 22-year-old Sony, including wireless access to all the photos on my computer, and free streaming of Netflix movies. The old Sony still works, so make an offer.

And yet – and yet – I know that many among us, like Sam, are living happy and rich, productive lives at a more leisurely pace, without the comfort of a personal computer. Recently an AP story told of a NY mother who “unplugged” her kids for six months, with clearly beneficial effects on grades and use of spare time. Kinda like the way we all were three or four decades ago. I imagine them having coffee with friends, hanging out at the library, reading books, writing hand-written letters, enjoying family phone calls, pursuing all sorts of personal hobbies, blissfully unaware of all the richness of living in a computer-dominated world. And they don't send \$600/year to an ISP. Should I pity them in their technical austerity? Or should they pity me, for embracing the Church of Google?

Quotes of the month:

“Computers make it easier to do a lot of things, but most of the things they make it easier to do don't need to be done.” –Andy Rooney

“There is a computer disease that anybody who works with computers knows about. It's a very serious disease and it interferes completely with the work. The trouble with computers is that you ‘play’ with them!” –Richard P. Feynman

“No one ever said on their deathbed, ‘Gee, I wish I had spent more time alone with my computer’.” –Danielle Berry

From the February 2011 issue of Green Bytes.

An App - What it Is and What it Does

by Sandy Berger
Compu-KISS

An app can be found on the iPhone and the iPad as well as many other smart phones and tablet PCs. In fact, Apple's introduction of the idea of apps in 2008 is what made smart phones and tablet PCs so popular. Up until that time, we were all used to full-blown programs like those that run on a computer. Most of these programs contain millions of lines of code, have numerous functions, and have menus that open up to reveal a multitude of choices.

In contrast, an app is a little mini program that has one basic function. It is an expression in simplicity. A good app does only one thing and it does it very quickly and easily. There are no nested menus and there are very few choices to make. One similarity between a fullblown

program and an app is that both can be started by an icon that you choose by using a mouse or by pressing your finger on the screen.

One of the best things about apps are that they are easy to use. The true beauty of the apps, however lies in their variety. There are hundreds of thousands of apps, but you don't have to use them all. You can choose only the ones you want. A computer program may be able to handle 100 different functions. Even if you only want to use one of those functions, you still have to install the entire program. Apps are different. You only install the ones you need.

However, like computer programs, apps are specific to an operating system. For example, a program that is created for the Mac will not run on a PC. An app that was created for the iPhone will not work on an Android phone. Each operating system has their own App Store or Marketplace where you can download apps. Many apps are free. Many are under \$2.

Right now there is a large selection of apps for the Apple iPhone and iPad at the iTunes App Store. BlackBerry, Google (Android), Microsoft, Nokia, and Samsung all offer apps through their own app storefronts.

If you have never used a smart phone or a tablet PC that uses apps, you will be amazed by the sheer number and variety of apps. Apple has over 300,000 apps in their App Store. Google has more than 200,000 in their marketplace.

Because of the wide variety of apps, it is difficult to talk about them all, but let me give you a quick idea of what an app can do. Using an app, you can you express your artist abilities, play the piano, or visit with your Facebook friends. You can turn your phone into a level to get that picture straight, or turn it into a light saber and become a savior of the universe. There are apps to let you play games, find recipes, read news, get stock quotes, follow sports, shop, and compare prices. There are apps that help you relax, time the seeping of your tea, identify any song, tune your guitar, and even match the color of any object to a paint color.

Yes, there is an app that will help you do almost anything. And people are using these apps in numbers that seem almost unimaginable. The Apple app store opened on July 10, 2008 and they have already had over 10,000,000,000 downloads. The wild popularity of apps will entrench that word in the technical dictionaries for many years to come.

Gizmo's Freeware

An Excellent Free Tool to Shrink Your Digital Images

Most full featured image viewers like Xn View and IrfanView will resize your photos but there are many users who have no need for such products but still need to resize their photos to send via email. Here's a free dedicated resizer that not only does the job well but is simple to use as well.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/excellent-free-tool-shrink-your-digital-images.htm>

This \$49 Excel Add-On is Free For Home Users

I use this myself and can confidently say it is indispensable for frequent Excel users. Take my word for it; just go grab it.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/49-excel-add-free-homeusers.htm>

How to Turn An Old PC Into a Webserver

Like to host you own website? What about having your own VPN or private mail server? All this is possible if you have your own web server and creating one is much easier than you think. Just download this free guide written by our Hot Finds Editor Robert Schifreen.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/turn-old-pc-webserver.htm>

How to Speed Up Your BitTorrent Downloads

Editor mr6n8 has written detailed speed-up guides for more than 10 different BitTorrent programs including Vuze, uTorrent, BitComet and more. If you want your BitTorrent downloads to fly then don't miss these practical how-to guides.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/optimizing-bittorrent-clients-speed.htm>

Society News

Penfield Library
Help's Half Hour
by Jan Rothfuss

Q: Has anyone used Windows 7 Starter Edition? When it runs a Microsoft Office application, the whole right third of the screen is ads. Is there any way to see more of the space?

A: Anyone?

Q: My wife is running XP. Can she install Office 2010?

A: Yes, it should work. It may run a bit slow.

Q: A question about USB ports. Everything else seems to run fine but the USBs are now running very slow.

A: Go into device manager and click Show All. It will list the drivers that may still be lingering from earlier installations. By removing those that you do not use, it may help. You may have to restart once all have been deleted/uninstalled.

Q: What antivirus programs are used with Windows 7?

A: One member uses Microsoft Security Essentials. It is highly recommended. He usually updates the software a couple of times a day. When installed a small green castle appears.

Q: One member uses Gmail and cannot find how to forward an email.

A: The 'Forward' option appears on the drop down next to the "Reply" button on the right.

The Lighter Side

I have both a laptop and cell phone that are bluetooth compatible. I tried to show my mother how I could connect the two pieces of equipment.

Me: "See? I confirm the request, and they're connected."

Mom: "Don't do that! I don't want my voice on the internet!"

