

# MONITOR

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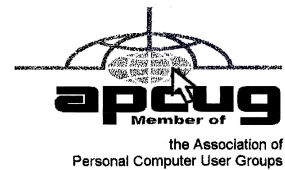
October 2011

Next Meeting  
Tuesday, October 11

## Gifts and Gadgets

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## Buying a New Windows PC

by Dick Maybach

*BCUG Bytes, Brookdale Computer Users Group, NJ*

Sooner or later, you'll be looking for a replacement for your PC. What requirements must the hardware satisfy? This article will assume you will be using the Windows 7 operating system, although almost any PC that supports Win 7 will also support any Linux distribution. If you purchase your PC from a well-established vendor, it will arrive with Windows already installed and well checked-out. However, most of us keep our PCs for several years, which means that their performance should exceed what is needed today. Software vendors know that to sell new versions of their products, they must

add new features, and these require more from the hardware. Moore's Law, which says that integrated circuit performance doubles every 18 months, has been true for 30 years and shows no signs of changing in the near future. As a consequence, six years from now, PCs will be eight times as powerful as today's models, and software designers know and depend on this. Buying a barely adequate PC means that it may not adequately run any software on it that it wasn't delivered with.

Let's begin by looking at what hardware Microsoft recommends as a minimum for Win 7.

- 1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit processor
- 1 gigabyte (GB) RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)
- 16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
- DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

We see that the first choice is between a 32-bit and a 64-bit processor. At present, most home applications are available only in 32-bit form, and while these will run in a 64-bit environment, doing so provides little advantage, except that 64-bit CPUs can handle more RAM. (See the RAM discussion below.) This will probably change, perhaps as early as the next release or so of Windows. You might be tempted to go for a 64-bit processor, thinking that you will be able to upgrade to Win 8 or 9; however, don't forget Moore's law. When the time comes to upgrade, you will certainly find that your PC is hopelessly under-powered. A 32-bit processor is the correct choice, unless you have special requirements.

Processor clock speeds can now exceed 3 GHz, but processor architecture also greatly affects its computing rate, with the result that clock speed is not as good an indication of computing power as in the past. Indeed, AMD has stopped using clock speed to characterize its processors. Manufacturers achieve higher performance by putting multiple processors (called *cores*) on a single chip. Get at least a 2-core processor and preferably a 4-core one. You may not see much advantage initially, but Windows slows down as the number of updates increase, and you probably will add new applications, which become more resource-hungry with each release. Note the important difference between multi-core processors and multiple processors. The former are single packages with more than one computing component; the latter are multiple packages, each with its own stacks, cache memory, and input/output. Only the Professional, Enterprise, and Ultimate versions of WIN 7 can make use of more than one processor, although all 32-bit versions of WIN 7 can use up to 32 cores.

Finally, consider getting a CPU with a Intel-VT or AMD-V supported and enabled. Without this, you can't run Windows Virtual PC, <https://www.microsoft.com/windows/virtual-pc/default.aspx>.

RAM is cheap, which means you should get as much as you can use. However, a 32-bit processor, can access a maximum 4 gigabytes of memory, and memory includes not only RAM, but also video RAM. If you have a high-end graphics controller with 1 GB of video RAM, your processor can use only up to

3 GB or RAM. Remember though, that many people use just a video controller on their motherboard, and such units use regular RAM for video storage. Once your system fills RAM with data, it begins to use swap space on your disk, and this drastically slows performance. I recommend you install as much RAM as your processor can address, 4 GB if you use an integrated video controller, perhaps somewhat less if you have a separate one. You can see a problem developing here; because the recommended RAM is at the limit of what the processor can see. To use more RAM, you have to use a 64-bit CPU and operating system, which is why I think that we will soon see a move to this configuration.

I recommend at least a 2000-GB (2-TB) hard disk. You do not want to run out of disk space and have to port all your software and data to a new one. Faced with this, most home PC users would decide to purchase a new PC. A competent PC shop can do this for you, and while the cost is reasonable, it will certainly exceed any savings you realized by skimping on the original disk size.

Most home PC users will find that the minimum video controller specified by Microsoft is adequate, but if you play action games or have specialized needs, such as photo editing or computer-aided design (CAD) you probably need a separate high performance video card, perhaps one compatible with DirectX 10 or 11. Graphics cards have faster processors than those mounted on motherboards and their video RAM is separate from that on the mother-board. You will have to do some research into the recommendations of your software vendors, not just for what you now use, but also for what you may soon install. However, replacing your video controller is much easier than changing disks, so you can upgrade later if needed. Pay attention to the connector for the display; although VGA is still common, many high-performance controllers use Digital Visual Interface (DVI), High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI), or Display Port.

Besides the basics above, you also need some peripherals, and the most important of these is the display. You will probably follow the recommendations of the PC vendor, but consider getting a larger one than standard. As we age, our vision dims and blurs, and more visual real-estate allows us to magnify images, which makes computer time more comfortable. Be a little careful here, and be sure the display interface is compatible with your video controller. Of course, you need a read-write DVD drive, and you may want to get one that handles Blue-Ray. If you have a pile of diskettes, you may also want a floppy drive, but the need for these is fading fast. Get as many USB ports as you can (version 2.0 or later), and at least two should be on the front panel. If you run out of ports, you can add USB hubs, but the result is a tangle of cables, power cords, and power supplies. (This will happen anyway, but try to avoid making it worse.) Keyboards and mice are cheap commodities and are easily upgraded. Current PCs use USB ports to communicate with keyboards and mice, so you may not be able to transfer these from your old system.

# Free Online Computer Tutorials from "InPictures"

by Ira Wilsker

I get a lot of requests from individuals on how to accomplish a myriad of tasks using popular software. I also get requests from individuals asking for help creating web pages, or writing computer programs in a variety of computer languages. Now there is an unusual free resource that can give everyone detailed instructions on how to complete his selected tasks.

While there are many free online help and tutorial services, what makes this one unusual is that it is mostly based on still images (screen captures), with only a small amount of text explaining each image. This interesting service is freely available to anyone online from "InPictures" at [inpics.net](http://inpics.net), and only requires an internet browser; all internet browsers should work equally well. There is nothing to buy, download, or install in order to use the tutorials. There are no animations, movies, videos, or music, only a logical sequence of sharp black and white images, along with some text, that explains and demonstrates how to accomplish each desired task with the listed software.

According to the website's creator, whose name is not listed on the website, "In Pictures tutorials began as part of a research study we conducted for the U.S. Department of Education. The goal: to make it easier for people with learning disabilities to learn computer subjects. As part of the study, we created simple, illustration-based tutorials. Everyone who tested them — not just people with learning disabilities — said the new tutorials enabled them to learn faster and easier than conventional text-heavy books." Since all of the images are situated on individual web pages, the user can easily control the size of the images by utilizing the native zoom feature incorporated on most browsers. To zoom in with your browser, simply use the Ctrl+ or Ctrl- features (press the Ctrl key and the "+" plus key simultaneously to enlarge the screen; Ctrl and "-" minus zooms out).

The list of software and programming is not extensive, but covers some of the most widely used titles, including Microsoft Office, Open Office (this will also substantially apply to Libre Office, an Open Office clone), HTML and CSS for webpage creators, and the programming languages MySQL, PHP, and Perl. The Microsoft Office tutorials cover both the 2003 and 2007 versions of Office, and include Word, Publisher, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. While Office 2010 is not yet listed, a user needing help with Office 2010 tasks will likely find that most of the tutorials for 2007 will pretty much apply to 2010, although there may be some cosmetic and functional differences. Open Office users (as well as Libre Office users) will find the tutorials for Base, Calc, Impress, and Writer are comprehensive and easy to follow.

For those who would like to learn how to create web pages using HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), InPictures covers HTML basics, site navigation and layout, online forms, uploading to a server, and advanced layout tech-

niques. For anyone who would like to learn programming, the tutorials for MySQL, PHP, and Perl are clear, concise, and easy to follow, and are easy to comprehend because they avoid “geek speak,” and incorporate a series of screen captures that clearly display the appropriate operations and functions.

Since I am typing this column using Word 2007, I decided to use the Word 2007 tutorial to demonstrate to myself the usefulness of the InPictures service. Clicking on the Word 2007 link on the left margin of the start page. When the Word 2007 main page opened, the user is presented with a simple choice; either follow a sequential tutorial covering all of the material operations and functions of Word, or to manually select individual topics as a quick tutorial or to refresh the users’ knowledge about how to perform a specific task.

The novice user would be wise to use the complete tutorial, as it is comprehensive and provides a complete series of instructions on how to use Word. If the user selects individual Word tutorials, he can select from Word Basics, Long Documents, Special Features, and Advanced Word. The same four categories of tutorials can be selected from the top of any of the Word tutorial pages. Word (2007) Basics is just what it says, and includes the most basic Word functions used, and includes new document creation, copy and paste, formatting words and paragraphs, bullets and numbering, page settings, spell checking, and page viewing.

The Long Documents selections include guidance on how to format text with styles, find and replace functions, the use of tabs, and the creation of headers and footers. Many users of Word like to use some of the “Special Features” shown in the in Word tutorial, including columns, drop caps, the insertion and management of photos and other images, drawing and painting in Word, and the use of tables. The final section of the Word 2007 tutorial, “Advanced Word,” explains how to do a mail merge (create a series of personalized letters from a mail list), create and use templates, print envelopes and labels, count words, and create and insert a table of contents. A similar series of tutorials is available for other Office components (Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Publisher), both the 2003 and 2007 versions.

Likewise, similar tutorials cover Open Office (and Libre Office). For anyone who needs basic training or some occasional help with office software, the creation of web pages, or common programming tools, the InPictures website at [inpics.net](http://inpics.net) may be a valuable, and free, resource.

WEBSITE: <http://inpics.net>

## Software Review

### Collectorz.com *Book Collector Pro*

by Tanya and Mark Mattson

*Computer Users of Erie, PA*

I am going to start off with an *Excellent* rating for not only the Book Collector software, but for the content and design of the <http://www.collectorz.com/> site all together.

I had searched for (and found) a book cataloging software application that would do what I needed. Loved it, but it was obsolete and no longer being supported or developed by the author. So I started on the hunt for a new one.

I came across the Colletorz.com Book Collector. It had what I wanted and so much more. I was looking for an easy way to catalog not only the CUE library but ours at home as well. And with simply typing in the ISBN or *scanning* the bar code, it is good to go. Yes you do need a barcode scanner to make that feature work, but it is an extra way of inputting your books ... *not* the only way.

The first thing one notices is that they offer so much more. Music, movie, book, comic, game, mp3, and photo collector applications. All their programs are Windows friendly, and several – Music, Movie, Book and Comic Collector – are also Mac compatible. This is always a big plus for me; I get annoyed at the software companies that cater to one system or

the other. Just adds so much confusion. And since I know our members have PC and Mac systems all around, it is great to be able to do a software review that can benefit everyone.

So how does it work? Well there is a free trial, and once downloaded and installed it is easy to begin. You can just type (or scan) the ISBNs of your books. Or you can enter the author and title – either way it will *auto-download* book details *and the cover art*, and load all this information into the program's database fields for you.

This is not just a catalog of files. Once entered you can sort and search, you can browse the database (your book inventory – or collection) by Author, Title, Publisher, etc. Grouping books by Genres or Author into folders is another handy feature built in to the program.

Export your data in various formats, including to you iPad, iPhone, and Android devices. Won't be at the book store rummaging around for that scrap of paper that in some weird shorthand I made up to tell me what I have and don't have in my library. Printing is also an option.

What I found to be one of the nicest features was their trial. Not a 15 day limit, but 100 book entries. Try it out for a spin, and see that it is a win. Be aware, however, that the TRIAL version is actually the PRO version ... all features are available for you to try out. If you purchase only the Standard edition license, those features listed as being in the PRO version will no longer function. Please remember this when purchasing.

Catalog customization options are available in either Edition. One can edit a books' details. There is a collection status field; is a title on your wish-list, for



They also sell barcode scanners.

sale, already owned, or out on loan. You can flag any number of titles with such custom information tags.

## Installation and System Requirements

Book Collector is available direct from the publisher's website at [www.collectorz.com](http://www.collectorz.com). Click on the Book Collector tab at the top to go to the proper page. There you will find the link to download a trial version, or to go to their online store to purchase a license.

The program is delivered via direct download. You are emailed a link to the download location, where you save the file to your system. It is a small download, only 5.5 MB in size...so it will download fairly quickly.

There is also the option to have it delivered via physical shipment of a CD for an extra \$9.95. If you wish the CD to be shipped, be sure to select this option during purchase.

The disc comes in a DVD-style case, with the program logo on the cover.

For those downloading the program, the file is a self-extractor; double-click on it to start the installation procedure. Installation is simple and straightforward; select the default options, and you're ready to go in a matter of about a minute.

As this review was based on a download version, we can only assume that the CD will auto-run when inserted in your computer drive, starting the installer automatically. However, we could not test this out. But as that is the way modern programs are set up, it is likely to be the case.

The program appears to use very little of your system resources. In fact, I couldn't find any listed system requirements on their website, other than the operating systems supported. For Windows, it needs Windows 2000, XP, Vista, or Windows 7. For Mac users, you need at least OS-X v10.4 or higher, up to and including Lion.

Please note that you will also need an active Internet connection, to enable auto-downloading of your book details and cover images.

There are several localized translations for the Windows platform besides English, but the Mac version is English-only. Also, when you go to the store page to purchase, if you are buying a Mac license, be sure to use the link at the top right of the store page to go to the Mac order area...otherwise, you'll be getting a Windows license.

Book Collector can be purchased in two versions: a Standard Edition for \$29.95, and a Pro Edition for larger collections priced at \$49.95. Remember that the trial version is actually the full Pro version. Many Pro-only features will NOT be available if you only purchase the Standard edition.

As indicated before, there are a *ton* of options available for you to work with your book data. You can sort your database by any field, do custom searches, and more. You even have the ability to save custom searches as presets for future use - saving you time in recreating them later.

The default view of the program can be changed, either to one of several available presets, or you can go all out and create custom templates, to change the look of the interface to fit your taste.

One feature that is available is the ability to use a barcode scanner to input the ISBN numbers on your books. This will vastly speed up the process of cataloging your collection, especially those with hundreds or thousands of titles.

Collectorz.com sells several barcode scanners that they've tested to work with the software. They are listed on the store page for your convenience. One such unit is the Cuecat scanner. It lists for \$19.95 in their store. BUT, if you're like me and like to haunt Radio Shack stores, about 10 years ago or so they gave away these units with their yearly catalog. I still have mine, and will be hooking it up to try out in the near future. The only thing is, I think it's an RS-232 model, and I'll need an RS232-to-USB adapter to connect it to my system.

Are you one that lets others borrow your books? Then this program will also benefit you. The PRO version also has a Lending system built-in, giving you the ability to track the titles you lend to friends and family. You can enter names, dates, and other information such as notes, to help ensure you get your treasured books back.

You even have options for printing and exporting lists of your collection, to such formats as HTML and XML. Allowing you to publish to your website for all to see. But exporting is only in the PRO version.

The only area that *may* bother you to some extent, is the way that the dimensions of the book are shown. As this is a European company that designed Book Collector, they use the metric system for measurements. Thus, the length and width are shown in millimeters, not inches. There also is no option available to switch it to the inch system we in the States use.

However, this really shouldn't be a deal breaker for you when considering the program as a whole. It actually is more accurate, as some books published here use some weird measurements ... I've seen books listed as 9.6" on a side. Measuring something like that on your inches ruler will give you fits. Metric measurements are more precise for this. If you really need inch measurements, be patient; the developer has indicated that an option to select inch measurements is on their *To-Do* list for a future revision, so it *WILL* be an available option at some point.

Currency fields use the OS default location to set the currency field to match your location. Thus, for US users, it uses the \$ as we are all used to. If it shows something different, better check your system settings!

There is a LOT more that can be published here on this program. However, it would most likely fill up the rest of the available space doing so. If you want some really in-depth information and looks at Book Collector, be sure to go to the website and look at all related pages.

There is an online manual there, giving you details on all functions and features. Many topics also have short video tutorials or demos embedded in them, to give you a better grasp of a certain concept. A really well done and



designed document. Unfortunately, there is no way it can be printed at this time...but it is always online, ready and waiting if you need it.

There is also a Help / FAQ page, with many standard questions and answers set forth. There are many there that you may not think of when first checking out the program...but the questions I was thinking of were there, and answered to my satisfaction (such as ‘What if my book doesn’t have an ISBN number?’).

It’s obvious that the majority of this review has concentrated on print books being cataloged. But never fear, if you’re moving to eBooks or audio books, they too can be added to the database, to ensure you have a complete listing of all your reading materials. Adding these types of media is as easy as scanning the folders they reside in on your hard drives. Once the basic catalog information is imported from the scan, you can use the Update function to retrieve the full information from the online Collectorz.com database.

If books are not the collection manager that is being looked for - Check out their site [www.collectorz.com](http://www.collectorz.com) – tabs on the top will direct you to Music, Movie, Book, Comic, Game, Mp3 and Photo Collector applications.

This program is not just for “collections” which one associates with first editions and rare books, it is an inventory, a database, a cataloging system, that is easy and fun to use.

So check them out – we all know the holidays are right around the corner, this would make a nice gift for yourself, or someone that has a collection, be it books, games, or movies. And organization goes along way – to make less hectic lives. And less stress. (I hate it when I buy two, [and yes once, but only once three] of the same book or even movie).

For as simple as it is designed to use, this is an amazingly powerful piece of software. It already holds promise of organizing our home book collection, helping us avoid duplications of titles, and to plan which ones we’d like to add. For the price, it is a bargain. But it is worth a lot more just for the time and effort savings it brings to your life.

Two thumbs up from both of us.



### Save Image with iPad

Q. When I’m visiting Web sites with my iPad, is there any way I can save an image? I’m trying to use my iPad more in hopes of ultimately replacing my computer with it. Thanks, Mr. M.

A. You’re in good company: Many people have been dabbling a toe or two in the iPad pond ([www.apple.com/ipad](http://www.apple.com/ipad)) with an eye towards replacing their desktop or notebook computer. While that may be appropriate for some users, not everyone who uses a computer will find the iPad a suitable replacement.

If you primarily use your computer for email and visiting Web sites, viewing videos, maintaining a calendar, and other similar functions, the iPad fits the bill quite nicely. I have an iPad 2 and use it daily, but it will not be taking the place of my primary computer. Mrs. Modem, however, did replace her PC with an iPad, so it very much depends on the individual user's needs.

To answer your specific question, when viewing a Web site with your iPad, if you find an image you would like to save, tap and continue pressing (called "tap and hold") the image. You will be prompted to save the image to your iPad where it will then be found in the Photos app.

Q. I'm not happy with Microsoft Word 2010, but I don't have an older version I can return to. Do I have any options or am I stuck?

A. After several months using MS Office 2010, I removed it from my system and bid a fond farewell to my hard-earned dollars in the process. Instead, I switched to the free OpenOffice ([www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)) office suite. OpenOffice has all the component applications of Microsoft Office: Instead of Word, OpenOffice uses Writer; instead of Excel, it has Calc; instead of PowerPoint, it features Impress, and instead of Access, it has Base. Excellent, free OpenOffice tutorials are available at [www.tutorialsforopenoffice.org](http://www.tutorialsforopenoffice.org).

Q. I am using Windows 7 and Vista and I would like to know where the Scan Disk and the Defragment options are? Can you help, Mr. M?

A. Click Start > Computer, then right-click the drive you want to check and select Properties. Click the Tools tab, then the Check Now button under Error Checking, which is the new name for Scan Disk. That will bring up the Check Disk window where you can then select whatever options you prefer, and run it.

Q. I am looking for a program that I can use to zip and unzip files. I installed a free version of something that I can use to unzip files, but I need a program to zip them. Do you have any suggestions? I'm using Windows 7.

A. Windows itself can zip and unzip (compress and uncompress) files, so you really don't need any third-party software. There are a couple of ways to unzip or zip a file or folder:

The first and quickest way is to double-click the zipped file. You can then browse its contents or extract it and drag it to your Desktop.

A second way to unzip a file or folder in Windows 7 is with the Unzip Wizard. To do this, right-click the zipped file and select Extract All. Then go to the location where you want to save the unzipped file by clicking Browse. Click Extract to unzip the file.

To zip or compress, right-click the file or folder, select Send To > Compressed (Zipped) Folder. A zipped file will be created in the same location, with the same name as the original file or folder, but with a .ZIP file extension.

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

### Graveyard of the Pacific

The coastline along the Pacific side of Vancouver Island is known as some of the deadliest in the world for ships. While it sounds a bit on the morbid side, this site is actually a lot of fun. You'll find an interactive time line, a section dedicated to real-life tales of courage in the face of tragedy, and an online newspaper called the Shipwreck Times.

[www.pacificshipwrecks.ca/english](http://www.pacificshipwrecks.ca/english)

### Ingenious

An educational site that combines images and viewpoints to create insights into science and culture. It features thought-provoking connections between people, innovations, and ideas. Drawing on the resources of the UK's National Museum of Science and Industry, the site contains more than 30,000 images.

[www.ingenious.org.uk](http://www.ingenious.org.uk)

### NationMaster

If you like numbers, you will enjoy this site which hosts statistics from the CIA's World Factbook (<http://tinyurl.com/2h2e3k>), the United Nations, and OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). Enter a topic in the text box at the top of the page and click Search to view a list of statistics and encyclopedia entries. The default font is fairly small, so with most browsers, press CTRL and the + sign to increase font size, or View > Zoom.

[www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com)

*"Mr. Modem's Top 50 Computing Tips," a brand new five-ebook series, is just a download away on amazon.com! Each volume (only \$2.99!) features 50 of Mr. M.'s greatest computing tips, all easy to understand, all written in Mr. Modem's warm, fuzzy, and occasionally entertaining style.*

## File Types: What are they?

### And why should we care?

by Phil Sorrentino

*Sarasota PCUG, FL*

**U**nderstanding File Types is the key to successfully organizing and using your computer files and folders. The File Type is the extension to the file name (the characters after the period). Unfortunately, File Types are hidden when you first startup your computer Operating System. I've always thought this was odd because knowing the type of a file can help explain what is going on, or at least what can be done with that particular file. (Because the file type can be changed using the Rename option, I suspect this was done to prevent a user from renaming the file type and possibly making that file un-useable.) Without the file type, confusion can arise.

Hiding the file type leads to the appearance that there are multiple files in a folder with the same file name. While actually, the file names are different because they have different file types. It is only the file type that shows them

as two distinctly different files. File Types can be shown along with the first part of the file name. In XP and Windows 7, this is accomplished in the View tab of the Control Panel's Folder Options Applet. Just uncheck "Hide extensions for known file types."

Let's start with some very basic File Management concepts. Every file in a folder has to have a unique name. (Two files may have the same name, but they must reside in different folders.) The name has two parts, separated by a period. The part after the period is called the file type or file extension. Typically the file type is three or four characters, but it can be longer. The limit is tied into the overall size of the path of the file in question, but practically you will see file types of around three or four or five characters. If you Google "file types," you will be amazed at how many file types have been defined and you will also see some pretty long file types, like the following 8 character file type, ".debuglog." In these lists you will see all the familiar file types like .doc, .docx, .txt, .rtf, .xls, .jpg, .bmp, .gif, .mp3, .wav, .m3u, .wma, .avi, .mov, .mp4, .wmv, and so on.

A few sentences ago I mentioned "path." The path is a unique description of where the file in question is located. Typically we think of a file's location as being in a particular folder, but the path is more general. The path starts out with the computer followed by the drive, then the folders in hierarchical order, leading down to the particular file. So the path to a picture of a group of cousins taken on July 4th, 2009, might look like: \\Desktop2\D:Photos\Family\2009\FourthOfJulyPicnic\Cousins.jpg where "Cousins.jpg" is a picture (or at least a .jpg file) in the "FourthOfJulyPicnic" folder, which is in the "2009" folder, which is in the "Family" folder, which is in the "Photos" folder on the "D:" drive of the "Desktop2" computer. (Note that the "\" is used to separate components of the path. Similar to the way "/" is used to separate the components of an address on the internet.) So you see the path to every file must be unique, so that the file can be unambiguously found. This also explains why we can have two files, with the same name and extension, exist in different folders. The path would be different, not by the file name and extension, but by one of the folder components. So, when all is said and done, the file type is part of a file's name that makes that file unique.

But that is only part of the story. The file type is really a definition of all of the data that is held within the file. (It defines in great detail just what every bit and byte in the file means.) And this is where Files and Applications come together, or where they become "associated". File Association links a file type with an Application. An Application knows how to handle a particular file type because of the file type definition. Fortunately, we, the users, don't have to know anything about the details of the file type, only that a particular file type can be used with a particular Application. So if a correct association is made, the Application will handle the file in the expected fashion. If an incorrect association is made, the results will be undetermined.

Many applications can handle many different file types. For example, Windows Media Player can use a whole host of audio and video file types, such as wma, mp3, m3u, aiff, wmv, avi, mpg, mpeg, mpv2. Sometimes when you install a new application, the application will automatically associate with the file types that it knows how to use. This may not be the associations that you originally wanted. Some Applications are much more polite, and ask if you want them to associate with certain file types. If associations happen automatically, you can end up with different applications being used to handle a particular file type. For example, you could end up with “Real Player” playing your music that you originally had Windows Media Player associated with.

The Operating System provides a capability to review and establish the associations. Each operating System is a little different. In XP it is provided in the File Types tab of the Folder Options, Control Panel, as shown in the graphic example that follows. (The example shows the .mp3 file type chosen for a change (on the left) and the Recommended and Other Programs (Applications) selections (on the right.) In Windows 7 (and Vista) it is part of the Default Files Control Panel (Associate a file type or protocol with a program).

Associations can easily be changed, but be very careful. Only use the Recommended Programs. If another program is used, the results may be undetermined and may even damage the file in question. But this is the way you can get things back to the way you want. You can get your music back to being played by your player of choice, or your videos back to being played by Windows Media Player, or your .bmp graphics files back to being displayed with the Paint application.

So, we care about File Types because they help to uniquely define a file’s name and location, and their definitions enable applications to determine how to handle the contents of the file. These are two very big jobs for a seemingly very small (and often hidden) aspect of the Windows Operating System.

*From the August 2011 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor, Sarasota, FL.*

## Radio Tray: a Minimalist Internet Radio Player

by Bill Wayson

*Channel Islands PCUG, CA*

I enjoy listening to music and am in the midst of a project to build a home music system that will allow me to play any music I own anywhere in the house using a hand-held computer as a remote control. Thus I ran across Radio Tray, a great little music player. If you use Linux and would like to listen to a wide variety of music while you work on your computer, then you should give Radio Tray a test drive.

Linux provides you a number of excellent music players to choose from. Most of them suffer from one big downside: They tend to be do-it-all media players. They can handle music, both locally stored as well as Internet audio, and video. Some even support displaying still photographs. While these players have their place, they can slow your PC down and are overkill in some instances. Radio

Tray takes the opposite approach. It does only one thing, and that is to play Internet radio stations. While it is playing, Radio Tray stays out of your way. It inserts an icon in your stem tray and is controlled through its drop-down menu.

Radio Tray is available through the default Ubuntu repositories, but right now only version 0.6.1 is available there. I could not make this version work properly, so I got the latest version, 0.6.4, from the project website at <http://radiotray.sourceforge.net>, which I recommend you do. Download the DEB file, right-click the downloaded file, and install it through the Ubuntu Software Center.

Once it's installed, start Radio Tray by double-clicking the icon. On first start, you'll be asked if you want Radio Tray to run in the system tray or as an application indicator. I can see no difference between either choice as they both result in an icon in the system tray. Click the icon to raise a menu, which includes preconfigured radio stations and a preferences dialog.

The radio stations are grouped bookmark style by genre (Jazz, Latin, etc.). Peruse the menu, click on a station, and shortly the icon turns blue and you should be hearing music on your PC.

Adding new stations is pretty simple. lick on the icon, select Preferences, Configure Radios.... If you want to add your station to a new group, create it first by clicking the Add Group button. Hierarchies of groups under other groups are supported. Add your new station by clicking the Add button. Name it whatever you want, enter the station URL, and select the group the station ought to appear under.

Groups and stations can be rearranged by selecting the group or station and pressing the Move Group button.

What is missing that would be really nice is some way of selecting some station you've found, such as through your Web browser, and adding it to Radio Tray either through a menu item or a select-and drag operation.

Finding Internet radio stations is also simple. Internet radio stations are simply Internet-accessible URLs that stream audio in a specific format. You point a player to a station URL just as you would point your browser to a Web page. Radio ray supports PLS (Shoutcast/Icecast), M3U, ASX, WAX and WVX playlist formats. Just search the Web using the phrase "internet radio stations," and you'll be presented with many hits to choose from. When you find a station that looks interesting, right click the station URL and copy the link. You can paste the URL into Radio Tray's add a station dialog as described above.

If you would like to manually add groups and stations to Radio Tray's menu, or just see how the bookmarks are implemented, you can open the file `<your_home>/.Local/share/radiotray/bookmarks.xml` using any text editor. The file follows standard XML formatting with parts of the file being surrounded by opening and closing tags. The outermost tag is bookmarks. Below this is group, and in each group are the stations identified by bookmark tags. Study the file, noting the tags and their contents, and the structure should become clear to

you. Before editing the file, you should first close Radio Tray to avoid conflicts with its use of the file and save a copy of the existing bookmarks.xml file to revert to in case you make a mistake. If your file gets completely corrupted, just delete it. A new file will be created the next time you start Radio Tray.

Radio Tray is a great way to save the location of Internet music, news, and such that you enjoy and to play them while you plug away on your PC. It does this while staying in the background and not presenting you with a lot of extraneous information that you are not interested in at the moment.

Radio Tray shows that in many situations, less is more. Enjoy discovering Internet radio.

*From the August 2011 issue of The Outer Edge, newsletter of the Channel Islands PCUG, CA.*

## Right Click Surprises - Windows XP

by Warner Mach

*SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization*

I have recently become familiar with some handy uses of the mouse right-click that are worth mentioning.

1. Right click on “Start” brings up a menu that lets you select Microsoft “explorer” and “search.” This can be a quick way to get at those utilities.
2. If you want to use a program other than the default in conjunction with a file, then right click on the file and go to “open with.” I sometimes use this with .pdf files. My default for .pdf files is “Nitro” but it does not have a search function, so I will sometimes switch to “Adobe Reader” if I want to use the search.
3. In the tray at the bottom of the screen is an icon that looks like a screen with radiation coming from it. Left click tells the status of your Wi-Fi connection. Right click gives options of disable /status/repair. I was at a location where I appeared to be connected properly, but all of my browsers were unable to reach any URL. Someone assisted me by clicking on “repair” and I could watch the system rework my connection and make it better. I was dazzled.
4. The most important time-saver of all: If you are playing solitaire and you reach the point where you have won the game and it is just a matter of moving all the cards to the top row, then right-click on one of the cards in the bottom row and the system will do the remaining work for you.

*From the August 2011 issue of Semco Data Bus, the newsletter of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization.*



Review:

## RoboForm Program Stores Websites Login Information

by Jim Thornton

*Channel Islands PCUG, CA*

**R**oboForm is one of my favorite software programs as it helps me very quickly log into secured websites. My listings of these websites include airlines, email, financial, medical, stores, travel, etc., and I currently have more than 50 of these secured websites listed.

The program is very easy to use. For example, first open Internet Explorer, and then click on one of its little toolbars titled RoboForm and a list of several choices appear titled Logins, Identities, and Soft Notes. While I mentioned Internet Explorer, RoboForm also works equally as well with Firefox, Safari, Chrome, and many more browsers. Next, I click on Logins and then click again on the listed secured website that I want to enter. Next, RoboForm automatically redirects Internet Explorer to the website that I selected and when the login website appears, RoboForm automatically fills in my name and password, and I'm immediately logged into the secured website with unrestricted abilities.

Once you have the program installed, when you go to a new secured website and fill in your user name and password and click on Enter, RoboForm will automatically add the information. Including the website address, to your list of Logins.

If you need a new password, RoboForm will generate a highly secure password. On the Login list in RoboForm, the secured websites are listed alphabetically and you can easily rename any listing.

Other RoboForm features include SafeNotes, which securely stores other information of your choice. For example, some banks will frequently ask you for your wife's favorite color, your first dog's name, etc., to ensure that you are the secured party attempting to access your bank account, etc. You can securely store this information in SafeNotes.

RoboForm's options under Logins include Edit, New, and Print List. Under Identities are Edit, New, and Fill Empty Fields Only. SafeNotes includes Edit, New, Print to New, and Print Last. Numerous other choices include Fill Forms, Save Forms, Fields – Reset, Sat, and Clear, Profiles – Default, New, Date, Name, Refresh Fields, Explorer, Tools – Edit Identify, Edit Password, Edit SafeNotes, Search Fields, Taskbar Icon, Generate Password, and Sign RoboForm data, and Options – Help.

I've used RoboForm for numerous years in Windows XP, Windows Me, Windows 2000, Windows Vista, and now Windows 7. RoboForm's website is [www.roboform.com](http://www.roboform.com), and there are three versions of RoboForm available: Desktop, Everywhere, and 2Go.



Desktop provides high security and restricts the access to RoboForm from only one computer.

Everywhere allows you to access RoboForm from numerous computers.

2Go works using a portable USB drive, so that you can take your RoboForm information and use it on many computers while traveling on business or on vacation.

RoboForm runs in numerous versions of Internet Explorer, including versions 6, 7, 8, and 9 but only on 32-bit versions and not the 64-bit versions. There is a free version of RoboForm that is limited to only 10 logins. For more than 10 logins, the Everywhere version is available for \$20 per year, and the Desktop version is \$30. The current version, which is version 6.10.2.0, was introduced earlier this year.

When you install RoboForm for the first time, you will be asked to create a master password, which protects all of your secured data in your Logins, Identities, and SafeNotes. This prevents anyone else who has access to your computer from seeing or copying this information. If you prefer, you can eliminate this protection and allow anyone to access all of your important information.

*From the August 2011 issue of The Outer Edge, newsletter of the Channel Islands PCUG, CA.*

## SugarSync - Sweet Synchronization Solution

by Vinny LaBash

*Sarasota PCUG, FL*

There was once a time when having a rotary telephone put you in the front lines of innovation. That was long ago and modern communications technology is as far advanced from that day as communicating by smoke signal. If you have any combination of desktop computer, laptop, smart phone, tablet, and whatever, you need some way to coordinate information so that every device you own has the same up-to-date information.

One way to make sure all your files are equally up-to-date is using a popular cloud based utility known as Dropbox. However, there is another lesser known tool that gives you more for less. We're talking about SugarSync which is constantly evolving into a service similar to Dropbox, but with better mobile support, advanced file control, and superior price performance.

When you open your account at [www.sugarsync.com](http://www.sugarsync.com), you supply a user name and password and then install the application. As long as you're connected to the Internet, the files you drag into your local Sugarsync folder magically appear on all PCs, laptops, phones, and iPads that also have Sugarsync installed and are attached to the same Sugarsync account. The files also appear online when you sign into the Sugarsync site and specify the same user name and password.

SugarSync sets up your system to start backing up your data as soon as you initiate the program. Don't worry, it won't do anything without your permission, and there is no need to be concerned about your information getting out of control. The interface is clunky compared to the more intuitive IE browser

window which is one of few downsides to SugarSync. The developers are probably still concerned about legacy issues, a fear that will probably disappear over time, but may cost them customers before it's eliminated.

Support for mobile devices is nothing less than outstanding. It supports more mobile devices than any other product. If you're using Windows 7 or Symbian, SugarSync is there for you. These platforms may be relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of things today, but if you happen to use one of them SugarSync should be of interest.

SugarSync has a unique design feature for your Pictures folder. Of course synchronizing and viewing pictures from mobile devices is supported, but the process is treated as much more than a casual concession to photo buffs. It does more than backup your pictures. It creates online galleries to share with colleagues and friends. You don't have to back up your photographs to one location and upload them. If you take a picture with your mobile device it's automatically sent to SugarSync and downloaded to your computer. The gallery layout is superb for a web-based product, and the photo viewers are excellent.

Music lovers will appreciate their MP3 files following them like puppy dogs. The computer does not have to be turned on because music files are being streamed from SugarSync. Audiophiles can listen to music no matter where they are.

SugarSync continuously backs up your files in real time, not just once or twice a day. So if you edit a document in the morning, and accidentally delete it in the afternoon you can restore it quickly with no hassles. The program stores the five latest versions of any backed up file so it's not a quandary if you need an earlier version. The downside to this is that five versions of multiple files can take up a lot of storage. The upside is that only the most recent version of a file is counted toward your storage quota.

If you are having trouble thinking of some uses for SugarSync here are some suggestions:

- Inadvertently overwriting a file is no longer a potential disaster a SugarSync keeps a copy of the older file making restoration easy and painless.
- Many people treasure their old photographs. Keeping pictures safely backed up in digital format means storing them as long as necessary with no deterioration in quality.
- Roboform users can synchronize passwords safely and securely.
- You can retrieve files no matter where you are or what device you happen to be using.
- Share folders with family members. Any great vacation pictures, new additions to the family, celebrations, and other memorable events are instantly available.
- Listen to music anywhere.
- Synchronize documents such invoices across multiple devices. Accountants will love it.

- SugarSync can act as an insurance policy against losing important information. Backups are no longer a hassle or a nuisance.

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## Society News

September 13, 2011

### Help's Half Hour

notes by Jan Rothfuss

Q: When running MS Essentials and running a scan, one member gets a reference that there are two files that should be removed. However there is no way to get rid of them.

A: Be sure to highlight the files. There should be a button to press. These may be 'false positive' results. You may want to try running when in safe mode as this will result with fewer conflicts. You can also Google the file that is shown and it may tell you what the file does and it may identify it as a malware source.

Q: How can I get my computer to recognize a second drive?

A: Be sure that the connections are solid. You may need to check the Disk Manager to make sure that it has been found. You may also need to check your bios to make sure that a secondary controller one is allowed – turn on that feature. There may be a firmware upgrade needed by going to the hardware's website of the motherboard. If the port is bad, you may want to try another one.

Q: Do any of the members have experience with a solid state drive?

A: Yes. You will need to redirect the user profiles. It works the best if you set it up during an operating system installation.

## The Lighter Side

### Service Call Not Included

You've heard about the Mars Pathfinder probe. Once it landed on the Red Planet, Pathfinder released the Sojourner Rover, a little laboratory on wheels. Sojourner is cruising about the Martian surface performing experiments. Sojourner and Pathfinder communicate using two standard, off-the-shelf, 9600 baud radio modems.

According to Jet Propulsion Laboratory program manager Donna Shirley, the modem manufacturer warned JPL that sending the modems to Mars would void the warranty.

