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Alternatives to Windows 8

Contents

GIMP 2.8 Freeware Alternative to Photoshop	Ira Wilsker	1
Review: Google+: The Missing Manual	Kevin Purdy	4
"And the Oscar Goes to . . ." Making a Good Video	Greg Skalka	5
Tablet Computers	Phil Sorrentino	8
Light Housekeeping for a Safe and Healthy Computer	Cal Esneault	12
What Do You Mean There Are Other Search Engines	Linda Gonse	15
Windows Q & A	Mary Phillips	17
Mr. Modem		20
Help's Half Hour		22
Society News		23
The Lighter Side		23



GIMP 2.8 - Freeware Alternative to Photoshop

by Ira Wilsker

There are many excellent and free image editors available that are fully capable of easily performing most simple image editing tasks. My personal favorite simple image editor is the free IrfanView (irfanview.com) which is totally capable of the common imaging editing tasks such as cropping, removing red-eye, and performing color corrections and related enhancements. Sometimes it is useful



to be able to do much more than simple photo editing, such as producing creative enhancements and other artistic effects. The granddaddy of high end sophisticated image editing and enhancement software is Adobe's popular Photoshop, which just introduced a new version, Photoshop CS6, which is now available (Amazon) for \$699. The previous version, the two year old Photoshop CS5, is available "marked down" to about \$550. Many of us would like much of the power of Photoshop without the expense, and that is where GIMP comes in.

In early May, 2012, a stable version 2.8 of GIMP was released. According to Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GIMP), "GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program) is a free and open source software image retouching and editing tool and is freely available in versions tailored for most popular operating systems including Microsoft Windows, Apple Mac OS X, and Linux. "According to the GIMP website (www.gimp.org), "(GIMP) is a freely distributed program for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring. It has many capabilities. It can be used as a simple paint program, an expert quality photo retouching program, an online batch processing system, a mass production image renderer, an image format converter, etc. GIMP is expandable and extensible. It is designed to be augmented with plug-ins and extensions to do just about anything. The advanced scripting interface allows everything from the simplest task to the most complex image manipulation procedures to be easily scripted." For those interested in making animations, such as animated GIF files, GIMP has that ability when used with one of the many free plug-ins that can expand its capabilities. GIMP is available for free for most operating systems including GNU/Linux, Mac OS X, Microsoft Windows, FreeBSD, Solaris, and AmigaOS 4, with documentation and desktops in 52 languages.

Since GIMP is considered as an advanced photo and imaging program, it is not as intuitive and user friendly as the more basic programs, such as IrfanView, but with a little practice and following some of the online tutorials (www.gimp.org/tutorials), it is not difficult to master many of the features of GIMP. Not being graphically gifted, I decided to try GIMP and downloaded the new GIMP 2.8 for Windows which was a large 72.7mb download. There are also several hundred GIMP plug-ins, all of which are free, that can add additional features and enhancements to GIMP; these plug-ins are available at registry.gimp.org/node.

After I downloaded the GIMP installer for Windows (requires XP SP3 or higher), I installed the program, which other than selecting a language, had no other configuration items to select. There were no add-on toolbars, search engines, or other "revenue enhancements" offered during the install process; it was a clean install, free of any forms of advertising. After the install, which took about a minute, I opened the program which opened three windows; two of the windows are referred to as "Docks" and included a Toolbox, and a Brushes & Layers dock, with the third window being the program window. In total, there are about two dozen "docks" which provide hundreds of image editing and creation tools. On the menu bar of the main program is a standard menu arrangement with 11 common menus such as File, Edit, Select, and View. Each of the menus offers a relevant selection of choices, which offer hundreds more image options.

As an experiment for my first use of GIMP 2.8, I opened a recent JPG image of my youngest granddaughter. The first item that I noticed was that the

window has a grid displaying the image size in pixels. Just to get some experience in manipulating images in GIMP, I selected the Colors choice on the menu, and changed the hue, saturation, color balance, posterize, and other options. I then selected Colors - Auto - Color Enhance and in a few seconds the image was modified with richer colors. I selected Tools - Text and was able to select fonts and size, and was able to add text to the image. I tried several of the special effects under the Filters - Artistic menu, including Cartoon and was able to modify the image. One function that I was able to master was Red Eye Removal, found under the Filters - Enhance - Red Eye Removal menu. I selected the location of the eyes, which had a moderate case of red-eye, and GIMP changed the colors of the pupil such that the red-eye disappeared from the image. I am well aware that I am artistically challenged, but I found that GIMP has dramatically greater functionality than I have artistic ability.

Since GIMP offers much more than just photo and image editing, I decided to attempt to create my own artistic creation; I clicked on File - Create - Patterns and selected a camouflage pattern. While the colors in the patterns could be individually selected, I tried my hand at some other creations and patterns, including "Land" which created a topographical map-like pattern, and a variety of other interesting patterns. I tried File - New - Template and created CD labels, web banners of various sizes, and images in standard screen sizes and paper sizes.

GIMP is a very powerful and comprehensive image creation and editing utility, requiring that the user has creative abilities in order to use any but the most basic functions. I found the tutorials to be a tremendous help in learning how to use GIMP, as well as some of the other GIMP free tutorials and lessons available from "Make Use Of" at www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-websites-learn-gimp-photo-editor-online and www.makeuseof.com/tags/gimp. A free "cheat sheet" with the basic GIMP commands and shortcuts can be downloaded from www.makeuseof.com/pages/gimp-shortcuts-pdf.

For those who would like to try a free sophisticated image editor and creator that can also make web banners and animated GIFs, GIMP would be an excellent choice.

Websites:

<http://www.gimp.org>

<http://www.gimp.org/about/introduction.html>

<http://www.gimp.org/tutorials>

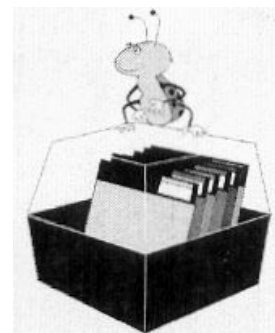
<http://registry.gimp.org/node>

<http://www.makeuseof.com/pages/gimp-shortcuts-pdf>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GIMP>

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-websites-learn-gimp-photo-editor-online>

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tags/gimp>



Google+: The Missing Manual

by Kevin Purdy

The book that should have come with the site

Reviewed by Steve Costello

President/Editor Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc.

I enjoy Kevin's posts at <http://lifehacker.com/>, and have been using Google+ since late July 2011.

When I saw this listed on the O'Reilly site, I immediately requested it for review.

About the Book

This book consists of an introduction and nine chapters. The following list will give you an idea what each contains:

Introduction:

How Google+ works, what you can do with it, a little about this book, the very basics, online resources, and Safari Books Online

Chapter 1—Getting Started:

Signing in, Joining up, and fleshing out your profile

Chapter 2—Managing Contacts with Circles:

How circles work, adding, creating, editing, organizing, & sharing circles

Chapter 3—Streams, Sharing and Privacy:

About streams; writing Google+ posts; choosing who sees your posts; sharing, interacting, editing, deleting, and controlling posts

Chapter 4—Notifications:

Where you get them, and controlling them

Chapter 5—Sharing Photos and Videos:

Viewing, sharing, tagging, editing, and more

Chapter 6—Hanging Out:

What they are, and how to use them

Chapter 7—Searching and Sparks:

How to search Google+, and tips for better searching

Chapter 8—Google+ Mobile:

Accessing and using Google+ on your mobile phone

Chapter 9—Playing Games:

Getting into, starting, and joining games.

The book can be read in any order. However, I suggest reading the Introduction and first four chapters in order, particularly if you are brand new to Google+.

Conclusion

I got a lot out of this book, even though I have been using Google+ for a while. Of particular interest to me was Chapter 8, as I have just moved into the 21st century by getting a smartphone.

If you are just getting started with Google+, or interested in learning more about it, I highly recommend you read this book.

Disclosure



This book was received through the O'Reilly User Group Program, at no cost, in exchange for this review, which in no way influenced the above review.

Publisher: O'Reilly Media

Price: Ebook \$11.99, Print \$16.49

<http://shop.oreilly.com/product/0636920021919.do>

"And the Oscar Goes To . . ."

Making a Good Video

by Greg Skalka

President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA

I've discovered it is a lot harder to make a good video than it is to take a good photograph. It is definitely a lot more work.

For the most part, the majority of the effort involved in taking a good photograph occurs before the picture is taken. While some augmentation and enhancement can occur after the exposure, through the marvels of digital photo editing, much of the merit of a photo comes from basics like subject, composition, focus and lighting. While photo editing software can enhance a photo, perhaps making a good picture great, it can only go so far in fixing a poor photograph.

In making a great video, once you have captured the action, your work typically has only begun. In spite of all the star-centric hoopla surrounding the Academy Awards, have you ever noticed that the majority of the awards don't go to performers, but to creators.

There are only a few categories of awards given to actors and actresses. The majority go to writers, directors, film editors, cinematographers and designers of sound, sets, costumes and effects. In a lot of movies made today, most of the work is done after the filming is over. The difference between raw footage and polished final product is much greater for video than for still photography, indicative of the amount of post processing work usually required. As with photography, however, it is still hard to turn poor exposures into a good final product.

I got my first still camera in 3rd grade, taking black and white film photos. In the 40-something years since, I learned to take decent photos (at least by my standards) using mostly slide film, where there was no chance for corrections after the exposure. I've had a digital camera for eleven years, but still don't typically edit or enhance my pictures after taking them. I've spent more time making digital corrections on the slides I have digitized, to fix the effects of film aging and imperfections, than on any of my recent digital photos.

Growing up, my family never had a movie camera. A neighbor friend my age got access to their family's old 8 mm movie camera, and he and I made a two-reel epic titled "The History of Aviation." Through careful planning and filming, we came up with a pretty impressive movie for a couple of grade school kids, though we probably destroyed most of our collections of model airplanes in the process (in addition to scorching the underside of his family's metal patio cover during our "reenactment" of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima). I'd love to see that film again, if it still exists.

When my wife and I had kids of our own, my in-laws gave us one of the early shoulder-mounted video cameras (it was so big and heavy, you had to rest it on your shoulder), which recorded directly on VHS tape cartridges.

It recorded some of the early moments in our children's lives, but being

analog tape, the results were of mixed quality and could not be edited. We still have some of those 20-year-old tapes around (we should digitize them), but unfortunately I think a few were taped over at some time in the past. Later, we bought a smaller handheld camcorder, which used the smaller VHS-C tapes and was more convenient to take on family outings. These too would not be editable unless digitized.

My very first digital camera had a primitive video capture capability of 320 x 240 with no audio, which was about half the 704 x 480 equivalent resolution of the camcorder NTSC video, but was much more convenient to carry. It still resulted in only video snippets of our lives being captured. Even after graduating in 2007 to a new digital camera with 640 x 480 video and sound, I only shot occasional video clips, and never tried to find a way to edit and combine them into a coherent video feature.

For my birthday late last year, my wife surprised me with a Panasonic SD40 HD video camcorder. It records HD video (1920 x 1080) in the AVCHD (Advanced Video Coding High Definition) file format. Depending on the card size, it can store hours of video on an internal SDHC memory card.

One of the first things I learned about shooting HD video with this camcorder is that I'm going to need more hard drives. I think I shoot a lot of digital photos, sometimes hundreds per month. Using my 12 Megapixel camera, this averages 5 MB per photo,

I'm generating around 0.5 GB of new photos per month (assuming 100 photos), or 6 GB per year. I first used my new camcorder in earnest during family festivities on Christmas Day, and managed to fill up the 8 GB SD card that came with the camcorder that day.

If I hold my filming down to 16 GB of video per month, that means I'll generate nearly 200 GB of video data every year. How am I going to store it all?

The second thing I learned about shooting HD video is that not every computer can easily play it. I normally use my XP laptop PC to copy my still photos from memory cards to hard drive and to view them, so I plugged in the SDHC card from the camcorder. Unfortunately, I could not view the .MTS AVCHD video files with any program on that computer. When I put the SD card in my wife's new Windows 7 laptop, I was able to play the files with Media Player. Score another one for Windows 7.

To make the 45 minute video on computer upgrading that was shown at our meeting last month, I started by shooting 51 video segments, totaling 5.7 GB. These included the introductions and descriptions I gave, the scenes of disassembly and modification of the computer, and the screen shots of the computer showing the results. A tripod proved essential in filming the scenes where I was talking, as I had to work with a film crew of only one (me). The camcorder's display can be flipped around to allow the subject of the video to see how they look onscreen. The tripod was also used in most of the shots where I was working on the computer, since it usually took two hands to do the work. I would set up the tripod and camcorder to give a good view of the hardware, and then start filming. I was not watching what was being filmed, but just made sure my activities stayed within what I understood was the field of view.

One of the filming mistakes I made was in sometimes not allowing enough "lead in" and "lead out" time at the beginning and end of the scenes. Excess

footage can be trimmed, but you can't easily make more footage after filming is done.

I started shooting scenes before determining what program I would be using to edit the video, so I was not sure what editing capabilities I could count on. I was not sure the program I would use could add titles, so I printed titles on paper and held them up in front of the camcorder. I later found titles could be added using software, but not with the flexibility of my paper signs.

Although I had a couple of commercial video editing software packages available to install, I decided to initially try the editing software that came with the camcorder, Panasonic's HD Writer LE 1.0. I installed it on my wife's laptop to make sure I'd have enough horsepower to do the video editing quickly.

I found the software would not recognize the raw video files I had copied from the SD memory card to the computer's hard drive. To use the captured video with this program, I had to connect the camcorder to the PC with the provided USB adapter cable and download the files from the camcorder through the program. The program had all the basic features I had seen in other video editing software. It allowed clips to be combined on a timeline, with a number of choices for transitions between scenes. Scenes could be edited for length, and basic titles could be added.

I chose the least flashy transitions and put the video segments together one by one. Because of the brief lead-ins I had shot, I could not add much in the way of additional titles, but fortunately the signs I had filmed worked well. I was concerned that 45 minutes might be too long without a break, so I split the video into two 22 minute segments, allowing an intermission in between.

The program could convert the finished video to several different resolutions on DVD or Blu-Ray discs for playing on home players or computers.

I'll try using one of my fancier video editing programs with this camcorder one day, but I found the Panasonic-provided software could turn out a good video.

Since making a coherent video out of the filmed segments I made was not too difficult, I'll probably try to make similar edited videos for all the events I film.

From the April 2012 issue of Drive Light, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA.

Tablet Computers Great for Accessing the Internet

by Phil Sorrentino

Past President, Sarasota PCUG, FL

Tablets are all the rage. You might think it started with the iPad, but the iPad is just the latest and greatest implementation of what started out as pen computing with a stylus on a Personal Digital Assistant, circa 1992. (I bet many of you had a Palm Pilot, or something similar. I know I did.) Microsoft even introduced a tablet or slate computer using a pen (rather than a keyboard) around 2002. (The term Tablet PC was coined by Microsoft, as a pen-enabled computer conforming to Microsoft's hardware specifications, and

running a licensed copy of the “Windows XP Tablet PC Edition” OS. Things have really changed from then.) The Apple iPod-Touch, in 2008, was the forerunner of the eventual iPad in 2010. Since the iPad introduction, many similar featured tablets have shown up for sale in stores and on-line retailers. Tablets, in use, are even showing up on popular TV shows. I bet you’ve seen them used on shows where technology plays an important part of the plot, like NCIS and NCIS Los Angeles.



Samsung Galaxy 5.1

Tablets are basically computers, but they are built for mobility, even more-so than laptops. They are light (under 1 ½ lbs.) and there are no moving parts, so they should be fairly rugged. (There are no hard drives or optical (CD/DVD) drives.) The Operating System and Applications (Apps) are stored in semi-conductor memory so they are readily available; the boot-up time is really quick. All tablets have a touch sensitive screen which acts as both the keyboard and mouse. All interactions are done by finger movements on the screen, called gestures. Most gestures are done by one finger, like a “flick” which moves an object in the direction you flick your finger, but some gestures require two fingers such as zoom, which is a outward pinching-like movement of the thumb and pointer fingers. Most popular tablets are either 7 or 10 inches (diagonally measured), although I’ve seen some smaller and some other sizes. Most Tablets do not have cell phone capabilities, but I have seen some smaller ones that included phone features.

Besides the hardware manufacturer, one of the main distinguishing features of a tablet is the Operating System (OS). Currently, there are three major OSs, Apple’s iOS, Google’s Android, and Microsoft’s Windows Phone7. Apple has a line of tablets that use iOS, the iPad and iPad2. Many tablet hardware manufacturers, such as Motorola, LG, Lenovo, HTC, Samsung, Toshiba, ASUS, etc. make use of Android OS. And Microsoft has stated that many manufacturers will use Phone7, among them Samsung and Nokia. The User Interfaces (UI) that ride on top of the OSs are fairly similar in functionality, but have some very different features. Apple iPads are tightly tied to Apple iTunes. (What would you expect?) Google tablets are loosely tied to Google’s applications such as Gmail and Google+. I haven’t seen much of Phone7, but I would guess it will be tied to Microsoft products and websites. Because the current tablet universe seems to be populated by Apple iPad products and those running Google’s OS, I will leave Phone7 out of some of the comparisons. As of this writing Apple has about 60% of the market, and Android has around 30% (the Amazon Kindle Fire uses Android). One of the major software differences is that Android runs the Adobe Flash software that is used on many websites to support videos. Apple does not allow Adobe Flash to run. Another hardware difference seems to be that Google supports more interfaces to get data onto, and off, the tablet. Some Android tablets provide micro-SD slots for added storage, micro-HDMI output connectors, USB ports for file transfers, as well as the ability to replace batteries.

The tablet is a great computing device for using (or consuming) data. You probably would not want to create any large amount of data with a tablet

(maybe only if you have a unit with a docking or wireless keyboard). Because of its light weight, the tablet is very convenient to use for accessing the internet when you're not at a desk or table. It fits right into your lap or can be easily held with one hand while the other hand controls its operations. It is great for checking your email, surfing the internet, reading a newspaper or magazine, reading a book, watching a video or movie, reviewing your collection of home photos, playing a game (have you tried Angry Birds?), all while listening to music from your own personal playlist.

So if you think you might like a Tablet, what should you look for? The first decision is really, What OS? If you like the Apple environment, then go with an iPad or iPad2, and you're done. There are very few decisions to make, except for how much memory; 16GB, 32GB or 64GB. If you prefer the more open environment of the Android OS, then there are a few more decisions to be made. The first one is size, 7" or 10". Some manufacturers have models in both sizes, and some make only one size. The seven inch size is good if you expect to carry it around and use it in many places; it probably fits into a handbag, but probably not a pocket. The ten inch size is easier on the eyes and typically will display more of a webpage. This larger size is nice for viewing, but is not as portable.

The next thing to consider is battery life. The current range seems to be roughly between 7 and 10 hours. Some models make it easy to replace the battery, some do not. (With the iPads, you are instructed to return the unit to the manufacturer.) Internal memory and an external memory slot are another area to consider. Internal memory is typically 8GB, 16GB, 32GB and possibly 64GB. External memory may be provided by an SD slot or a mini or micro-SD slot. The external memory is dependent on the size of the chip you put into the slot, currently up to 32GB. With external memory, you can use many memory chips, one at a time, which allows you to keep different things on different memory chips. (Another memory number you may see is RAM memory. This is typically 1GB (possibly as much as 2 GB) and is similar to the RAM in a PC. More RAM usually means increased speed and better multi-tasking.)

All models provide Wi-Fi connectivity to the internet. Some also provide 3G or 4G connectivity, via the cell phone network. Cell phone network connectivity will probably require a data plan which can cost from \$30 to \$60 a month depending on your data needs. If you only connect via Wi-Fi, there is no additional expense. Most models provide a USB port for connection with a PC. When connected to a PC, data files such as pictures, videos, and documents can be transferred between the devices. Many models also include a micro-HDMI interface for connecting to a digital TV. When connected to a TV, videos can be played on the tablet and viewed on the large screen digital TV. Bluetooth connectivity is also typically included.

Most of the popular models have processors that are quite adequate. Some of these are made by nVidia, Qualcomm, Arm, Texas Instruments, Samsung, and of course, Apple. (Where are Intel and AMD, you might ask. Low power consumption is the main requirement for tablet processors, and Intel and AMD have not been players in this arena in the past, but I think you will see some new processors from them show up in tablets in the near future.)

Tablets are now all the rage. Once you have one the real job begins; that of trying to decide what you are going to do with it. The thing that makes the

tablet so useful is, like the PC, the fact that you can put Applications (Apps) on it. Many, which are becoming standard, Apps usually come with the tablet. Other Apps are easily downloaded from either iTunes or the Android Market. But the whole discussion of Apps will have to be the subject of a future article. Stay connected.

From the April 2012 issue of the Sarasota Monitor, newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, FL.

Light Housekeeping for a Safe and Healthy Computer

by Mike Morris

Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, Fort Collins, CO.

The Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG) provides free computer help to the community and to several other local non-profit organizations. As a result of these efforts, we have concluded that there are two tasks and several free and reliable utilities that help to maintain a safe and healthy computer.

Without a doubt, the two most important safety and security tasks for every Windows computer user are:

1. Keep the Operating System up to date
2. Keep the security software up to date

In addition to those two tasks, there is some computer “housekeeping” required to keep your computer healthy (for those of you who consider yourselves not knowledgeable enough to “maintain” your computer, think of these utilities as cleaning tools, not maintenance tools).

For housekeeping, these utilities are recommended:

1. Revo Uninstaller

This free utility does an excellent job of uninstalling unwanted software—even better than the Windows utility. You can use the default settings of Revo.

It is important to note that Revo first runs the uninstaller program provided with the program you want to remove. At the end of that process, you are asked if you want to restart your computer. At this point, **DO NOT RESTART YOUR COMPUTER**. Click on “No” or “Restart later” (or whatever similar message is displayed). That will allow the rest of Revo to run. It will check for left-over files in the Windows Registry and the directories. Whatever files or file remnants it finds, select everything it finds and delete them.

You can download Revo from http://www.revouninstaller.com/revo_uninstaller_free_download.html. The free version is the one in the left column.

When installing this (or any program), proceed carefully, because very likely there is additional software “bundled” with what you want—that additional software is usually unnecessary. Examine each screen as it is displayed and uncheck or refuse any of the extra unwanted software.

Sometimes, even Revo needs some help. When combined with a registry cleaner, unwanted software can be effectively removed. The registry cleaner we recommend is:

2. CCleaner

This is another free, excellent utility. There is much debate in the computer world about registry cleaners. Since the Windows Registry is so crucial to correct

operation, one viewpoint is that no one but an expert should use them. It is true that modifying the Windows Registry has the potential to create problems. However, those of us in FRPCUG have used CCleaner on many computers without problems. When using the registry cleaner option of CCleaner, you will be asked if you want to backup your registry. It's a safety factor that is up to you.

There are two parts to cleaning your computer of unwanted/left-over junk using CCleaner: Cleaner and Registry. Use both, once a week is recommended, but at least once a month.

There are cases where, after running Revo, it may be necessary to run CCleaner 3 or 4 times before all of the junk is removed. For example, if you have Norton security software installed on your computer and want to remove it, it will take Revo and possibly 3 or 4 passes of CCleaner (restarting your computer after each CCleaner run) to completely remove the Norton software (more on Norton in a moment).

You can download CCleaner from http://www.filehippo.com/download_ccleaner/. Use the “Download Latest Version” button with the green background at the right side of the page.

For computer security:

Virtually all new Windows computers are delivered with a trial version of one brand or another of security software installed, usually good for up to 90 days. Once that trial is over, you need to pay for an annual subscription for updates.

In today's world, there is no need to pay for security software. There are a number of excellent, free security software programs available. And, there are cases where the free software might actually be better than security software that you buy. For example, in the past, Norton security software acquired a reputation for slowing down the computers on which it was installed (my own experience with Norton software — at least the older versions, based on helping other computer users, is that it is not as good at catching malicious software (malware) as other programs).

Of the many free security software applications available, FRPCUG members have used these four, and found them to be reliable and effective (just because the software is free does not mean it is less capable):

One is Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE). You can download MSE from <http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=5201>. Note that there are two versions available, depending on whether your computer has an AMD or an Intel processor.

Another is Avira Free. This application received excellent reviews from the independent security software testing organization, AV-Comparatives — Independent Tests of Anti-Virus Software, <http://www.av-comparatives.org/>

A third choice is Avast Free, and a fourth choice is AVG Free. We suggest you read the reviews on these products (enter: review of — and the application name — into a Google search, or use the AV Comparitives website mentioned above). If you decide to use one these applications, download it from <http://www.filehippo.com>. You are less likely to encounter excess, unnecessary additional software (sometimes called “bloatware” or “sneakware”). Once you connect to the filehippo website, just enter the name of the application into the search box.

Another area of debate regarding security software is the number of different security software applications that should be installed and running on one computer. With one exception, described below, you are probably going to be better off with only one. Since these applications are always running (in the background), it is very likely that two or more security applications running simultaneously will cause conflicts (and/or slow down your computer). It is possible, with a lot of experimentation, to find multiple security applications that do not conflict (one FRPCUG member has done so), but for most computer users, one application is sufficient.

The best way to change security software is to download, but don't install, the new security software. Then use Revo (and if necessary, CCleaner) to remove the old security software. Finally, install the new security software.

A supplementary security software program that works extremely well is Malwarebytes. You can download this program from <http://www.filehippo.com/search?q=malwarebytes>. The free version does not run continuously in the background, as do other security software applications. That means Malwarebytes does not conflict with any other security software. The only disadvantage to this program is that you have to remember to run a manual scan (say once a week). It's worth it — Malwarebytes finds problems other security software does not.

The best way to keep your computer secure, as mentioned above, is to keep the operating system and security software up to date. You can set Windows computers for automatic operating system updates. Virtually all security software programs, including the free ones can be set up for automatic updates.

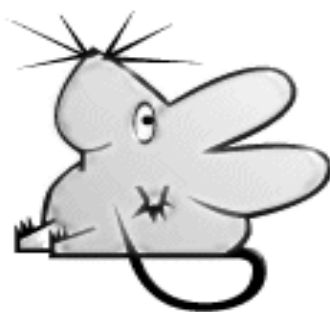
For more information on this topic, connect to http://frpcug.org/presentations/BB_Present04.pdf and http://frpcug.org/presentations/comp_maint_security.pdf.

One other suggestion:

Another free, useful utility is Belarc Advisor. The program provides a detailed list of the hardware installed in your computer. You can download Belarc Advisor from http://www.belarc.com/free_download.html. While not crucial, like security software and maintenance utilities, Belarc is a helpful program to have on your computer.

We have installed and run these programs on many computers without any problems. There is, however, always the chance that some unusual combination of hardware and software may result in a problem. So you should backup at the very least your important data, even if it is just copying that data temporarily to a flash drive. Please read our disclaimer at <http://www.frpcug.org/k-byte/current.pdf> (page 19).

Happy Computing!



What Do You Mean There Are Other Search Engines?

by Linda Gonse

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It will come as a surprise to some people that there are more choices than Google or Bing for Internet search engines. Two newer and smaller search engines that do not have a large market share of users or the reach of the major search engines actually can be unique and helpful secondary Internet search tools. One of these is a general purpose search engine with the catchy name of DuckDuckGo which claims it will give users “way more instant answers, way less spam, and real privacy.”

Billing itself as “the search engine you’ve never heard of,” it surpassed 1,000,000 searches in one day for the first time on February 14, 2012. Similar to Google’s one click “I’m feeling lucky” search, DuckDuckGo has its own one click “I’m feeling ducky” button for searches.

But, perhaps the most innovative search feature are DuckDuckGo’s !bangs commands that allow you to designate a major site/category on which to base the search. On the search page, click the down arrow and select one of the popular target sites. It will appear in the search box with an exclamation point and its letter code. Next to it, type in your search term and press enter. Bang! It takes you directly to that website where the results of your search term are displayed. For instance, choose Amazon – !a – from the drop down list of Bangs. Then, type “bestseller books” and press enter. A list of best-selling books at the Amazon site appears instantly.

Perhaps, just as importantly to some, DuckDuckGo’s company philosophy is that “DuckDuckGo does not collect or share personal information. That is our privacy policy in a nutshell.” An enthusiastic blogger at programmableweb.com said, “The search engine provides clean, uncluttered results and is very easy to use.” Check out duckduckgo.com.

Gibiru is a free, uncensored anonymous internet search engine and year-old Silicon Valley startup that reached 10,000 daily searches in January 2012. Besides the limits placed by the National Security Agency, services such as America OnLine, Microsoft, Yahoo, and others are slowly turning the Internet into an information superhighway dominated by barricades, toll booths, and tracking codes. They use geolocation filtering which restricts or modifies web content based on the geographical region of the user.

Such filtering can now be implemented for countries, states, cities, and even individual IP addresses. Also, due to tracking and filtering, search results are now tailored to the individual IP addresses which are conducting a search; so their “personalized” search results will be skewed and vary from one user’s results to another user’s results.

Gibiru provides the basic Google search results most people are familiar with, but when searching the web through Gibiru, the system does not utilize the searcher’s IP address or cookie data when it returns the search results; providing a non-personalized, all-inclusive, private search experience. Gibiru gathers no personal information on its users.

However, due to some Google code needed for results, “Gibiru may use aggregated statistics to manage bandwidth and site performance. Gibiru makes

nor implies any guarantee that a site or sites visited after leaving the Gibiru search results will not be tracking the user independently or storing data the user.”

You can try Gibiru out at gibiru.com

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Windows Q & A

by Mary Phillips

Secretary, Icon Users Group, MO

Q1. What are the differences between Data Backup, System Restore, Disk Image, System Recovery Disc and System Repair Disk?

A1. Data Backup – Making copies of personal data files that may be used to restore the originals in case of data loss or simply to restore data from an earlier time. Backed up folders/files may include Documents, Pictures, Music, Videos, and/or Downloads – files it could be difficult or impossible to replace.

Options for backing up your data depends on the hardware you have available and the amount of information you need to back up – DVD’s, flash drives, external hard drives or online storage in the “cloud.” An external hard drive may provide the most flexibility because they are relatively inexpensive and can hold large amounts of information.

In Windows 7, in the Control Panel, click on Backup and Restore. In this window, you have four main options: Backup, Restore from the Backup, Create a System Image and Create a System Repair Disc.

1. Choose Set up Backup and click on the Backup Destination. In the picture below there are two choices: DVD RW Drive (D:) and My Book (K:). Click Next.
2. What do you want to back up? If you choose Let Windows choose, Windows will back up data files saved in Libraries, on the desktop, and in default Windows folders.

It will also create a system image (described later) which can be used to restore your operating system AND data files in the case that your computer quits working.

Backup for my computer took approximately 2530 minutes, was 49 GB and was saved in a folder automatically Mary-PC. (See below)

Backups are created in sets; the folder “set” in Mary-PC folder, is named Backup Files 2012-03-20 110818. It contains 8 compressed folders that can be opened and individual Files retrieved.

System Restore involves Windows system files, programs, registry settings, and most drivers. It does nothing with personal files, such as e-mail, documents, or photos.

Windows creates what are called Restore Points or “date and time specific snapshots” automatically unless for some specific reason the feature has been turned off. Users can also create restore points manually. The benefit of a Restore point is that it allows the user to “roll back” the system settings and installed programs to a date before a problem existed. Sometimes an update will create a problem or a piece of malware makes things go haywire. Those are good times to use System Restore. A system restore can also be undone if it doesn’t fix a problem.

System Restore automatically recommends the most recent restore point

created before a significant change, such as installing a program. However, you can and choose from a list of restore points if you check in the box beside Show more restore points (Win 7).

In Windows 7, go to the Control Panel, click on Backup and Restore, click on the link recover system settings to select a restore point. Then you'll see the window below.

To create a restore point manually in Windows 7, do the following:

1. In the Control Panel, click on System—System Protection. At the bottom of the window, click on the Create button.
2. Type a description, like “Before Sample program installation”. Click Create and System Protection creates the restore point.

In Windows XP follow this path: All Programs—Accessories—System Tools—System Restore.

1. Choose whether you want to 1) Restore the computer to an earlier time, or 2) Create a restore point. Click Next.
2. If you chose Restore a computer to an earlier date, on the calendar, the dates in bold are the dates that restore points were created. Click on the preferred date. Click Next.
3. If you chose Create a Restore Point, you then will need to give it a description. Click Next and the restore point will be created.

System Image -- A system image is an exact copy of a drive. By default, a system image includes the drives required for Windows to run. It also includes Windows and your system settings, programs, and files. You can use a system image to restore the contents of your computer if your hard disk or computer ever stops working. When you restore your computer from a system image, it's a complete restoration — you can't choose individual items to restore, and all of your current programs, system settings, and files are returned to the condition it was in when the System Image was created.

Although this type of backup includes your personal files, it is recommended that you back up your files regularly using Windows Backup so that you can restore individual files and folders as needed. When you set up Windows Backup, you can let Windows choose what to back up, which will include a system image, or you can select the items that you want to back up and whether you want to include a system image.

You will need to create the System Repair Disc to use with the System Image disks.

System Recovery Discs – Return your computer to its original purchased condition. The manufacturer most often provides an option to create these disks the first time you turn on your computer. When you click on Create System Recovery Discs, you need to have CDs or DVDs ready.

You will end up with a series of CDs (a bunch!) or several DVDs (mine took two DVDs.) These disks are created from a special partition on the hard drive and usually can be created only once. However, the manufacturers are happy to sell you a set of Recovery disks or the technology store where you buy your computer will offer to create the recovery disks for you.

On the good side, System Recovery Discs come in handy in an emergency. Just feed your PC the System Recovery Discs, and your PC regresses into the same machine you originally brought home from the store.

On the bad side, however, you'll lose every program, photo, and file you've

stored on that PC since you bought it. System Recovery Discs only care about returning your PC to its original, first purchased, condition. Everything else is swept away. So you'd need to reinstall and get updates for every program added since you bought the computer.

System Repair Disc – In the Backup and Restore window of Windows 7, Microsoft built a System Repair Disc option that works quite differently from the PC manufacturer's System Recovery Discs. (Creating the System Repair Disc takes only a few minutes and it only takes up 142MB of space so a CD will work fine. Label the CD as Repair Disc Windows 7 32 or 64 bit.)

When your PC no longer runs properly, insert Windows 7's System Repair Disc into your PC, and press the On switch. Instead of returning your PC to its original condition, the System Repair Disc offers several menu options: Startup Repair. This examines Windows 7's most integral files, then repairs any missing or damaged files that may be keeping Windows 7 from starting.

System Restore. Just like the normal System Restore option, this restores your PC's system files to an earlier point in time, hopefully fixing any recently developed problems. It doesn't affect your personal files, like e-mail, documents, or photos. There's one key difference between this version of System Restore, though: When run from the System Repair Disc menu, System Restore doesn't have an undo option. (However, you can run System Restore again and choose a different restore point, if one exists.)

System Image Recovery. If you've created a "System Image" in Windows 7's backup options, this option returns your PC to the condition it was in when you made the System Image backup. It's truly a lifesaver, but only if you create System Image disks regularly.

Windows Memory Diagnostic Tool. Designed to ferret out hardware problems, this examines your PC's memory for errors.

Command Prompt. This lets techies dig deep into Windows' internal crevices. It's designed for people comfortable typing in commands, not moving around a mouse.

In short, the System Recovery discs return your PC to the state it was when first purchased, scrapping all your data while along the way. The System Repair disc, by contrast, offers tools to help bring your ailing PC back to life, keeping all your valuable files safe.

When in major trouble first try your System Repair, as it may solve your problem. Only use the System Recovery Discs as a last resort, as they wipe out everything you've created since buying your PC.

What should I do about System Restore if I get a virus? If you know that your system is infected by a virus, you should temporarily turn off System Restore. Otherwise, the virus could be saved along with other system files in a restore point and reintroduced to your system during a restore operation at a later date.

To turn off System Restore in both Windows 7 and XP, press and hold the Windows key and press the Break key to bring up the System Properties dialog box. Then, click on the System Restore tab, select the Turn Off System Restore check box, and click OK. In Win 7, as soon as you do, you'll see a confirmation dialog box warning you that turning off System Restore will delete all existing restore points. Click Yes to continue.



Ink Cartridge Shelf Life

Q. What is the shelf life for unopened ink cartridges? I have two in my office that have been sitting there for about a year. Are they still good?

A. Generally speaking, the industry-estimated shelf life for an unopened printer cartridge is two years. "Unopened," within this context, refers to remaining factory sealed in its air-tight wrap.

Even though that is the estimated shelf life, I have used cartridges that were five years old and they were fine. A lot depends on the conditions within which they are stored. It's one thing to store a cartridge in a room-temperature office; it's quite another to leave it in the trunk of a car, in an unheated, uncooled garage, or on the porch if you happen to live in a rain forest.

Q. I have the opportunity to purchase a used Mac laptop, sight unseen and of an uncertain age, at a very low price. I would like your opinion as to whether it is practical to purchase it, have it gutted and reinstalled with the appropriate programs. I have a repairman who charges a flat \$50 to do whatever needs to be done to fix a computer, plus parts. What do you think?

A. First, do you want a Mac? They're great computers, but so are Linux systems. If you have always wanted something other than a Windows PC, this might be a chance for you to obtain one. On the other hand, are you only interested because this particular computer came to your attention?

If your answer to my initial query is yes, that you always wanted an Apple system, the next question is, What are you really purchasing? I would not purchase any computer sight unseen or without knowledge as to its age and condition, and the specifics of any warranty. (It does have a warranty, doesn't it?) I also would not consider purchasing it without having it checked out by a reputable Apple-certified technician.

If you have confidence in your repair person – and it is unusual for any reputable technician to provide a flat-fee service without regard to the amount of time any repair will require – the other issue is the cost of parts. Apple parts are not inexpensive. If the system you're contemplating purchasing ultimately needs several hundred dollars worth of new parts, why bother? If it's what we in the biz refer to as an old beater, and you invest in all kinds of new components, it's still going to be an old beater that you then have far too much money invested in.

Personally, I would not consider it an "opportunity" to buy somebody's old computer without knowing a LOT more about it. Keep in mind that one person's opportunity is another person having found a sucker to unload something on. Bottom line: Caution is advised.

Q. Is there any way I can organize my iPad apps into folders? Thanks, Mr. M.

A. If you have oodles of apps on your Home screen(s), you can tidy things up by using folders to group similar apps. To create a folder, press and hold an app icon until it starts to jiggle. Using your finger, drag it on top of another app. Voila! Both apps are now in the same new folder. You can drag additional apps

into any folder to create a nice collection of similar apps. You will need iOS 4.2 or higher (the operating system) to use this function. For additional life-altering iPad tips, check out <http://amzn.to/nw7pjf>.

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

Astronomy Picture of the Day

Each day a different image or photograph of our fascinating universe is featured, along with a brief explanation written by a professional astronomer – as opposed to an amateur astronomer using an empty toilet-paper roll as a telescope.

<http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

Cleveland Clinic 90th Anniversary

This world-class medical facility opened in 1921 and commemorates its longevity with this celebratory site. Start by clicking the arrows on the main image and scrolling through photos representing the various decades. Select one of the navigation tabs which include Welcome, Our Story, Historical Timeline, Cleveland Clinic Today, and Wellness Events to begin your journey. I particularly enjoyed the historical time line which documents some interesting facts about the Clinic that have long been lost to history. For example, in 1929 an x-ray machine exploded and nearly destroyed the clinic. Who knew?

<http://bit.ly/gssSjd>

The Black Sea: Can You Dig It?

If you ever wanted to make like Jacques Cousteau, but all that spooky, slimy underwater stuff gives you the heebie-jeebies, you can now become part of a team of divers that explored the depths of the Black Sea. Visit this interactive archeology exploration of the wreck of the Pisa, a ship sunk in a 1277 battle. Okay, maybe it was 1278. Here you can track the progress of this expedition by viewing pictures, journal entries and historical data.

<http://bit.ly/IGPzLh>

For more information about Mr. Modem's technology-tips eBooks and award-winning weekly computer-help newsletter, featuring his personal answers to your questions by email, visit www.MrModem.com

Rochester Computer Society

Help's Half Hour Notes

June 12, 2012

by Jan Rothfuss

Q: What can we do to get more members to come?

A: When we had door prizes, we had more people coming. Is it the type of programs? We need to get better ones and promote them earlier. Is it location? Some will not come to the east side. Steve will be checking again with the Barnes and Noble at RIT. We might be able to reserve that space for a year starting in September.

Q: Has anyone used virtual machine setup?

A: Virtual box works well. One member used it for Windows 8. Most had a good experience when trying it out. You can switch between processes easily.

Q: Once the virtual box is running, how can you share files on other drives?

A: One member was successful seeing things between machines. There may be an issue with older versions of an OS.

Society News

This has been a special year for the Rochester Computer Society. Not many clubs can boast they have lasted so long. Over the years we have seen many changes in computing.

In August we have had a picnic but this year we have decided to celebrate our anniversary year with a party. On August 14th we will celebrate at the Lodge on the Green, 2888 Ridgeway Avenue. Cocktails (cash bar) with cheese and crackers at 6 pm followed at 7 by a buffet and our annual silent auction.

The cost is \$16.50 per person and the deadline to get in your check is August 7th.

The buffet menu consists of choice round of beef, baked chicken, Italian sausage with peppers and onions, au gratin potatoes, macaroni with meat sauce, green beans with almonds, seasonal fruit, three bean salad, jello, assorted relishes, chef's salad, rolls with butter, after dinner mints, coffee, tea, or milk.

There will also be a memento of the 30 years of RCSi for everyone.

The Lighter Side

