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Tuesday, July 9

Windows 8  
with Arpad Kovacs and Art Trimble

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## Web Browsing Privacy in the News Privacy Policies of Major Providers

by Ira Wilsker

If you have listened to the news recently, you are well aware that there is a major controversy about at least nine major internet and phone companies turning over a massive number of records to the National Security Agency (NSA). In this column, there will be no attempt to politicize or judge what has occurred regarding our browsing and search history on the internet; instead, in this column there will be a review of the privacy policies of some of the major players in cyberspace.

Whatever our personal feelings, Microsoft is unarguably one of the giants in the personal computer and smart device industry. Microsoft authors and manufacturers operating

systems (all of the builds and varieties of Windows), a major search engine (Bing), email services (Hotmail and Outlook), and a host of other products and services. As is the general rule in the industry, Microsoft claims to take our personal privacy seriously. In its “full privacy statement” ([privacy.microsoft.com](http://privacy.microsoft.com)), Microsoft discloses what personal information is gathered, how it is gathered, how it is secured, and what can be done with our personal information. People may not be totally aware that Microsoft, as well as all of the other major search providers, track search requests, scan email content (note that Microsoft claims that its new Outlook email service is more private than Google’s Gmail), and gather other information about its users. Under the heading, “Sharing of Your Personal Information,” Microsoft states, “Except as described in this statement, we will not disclose your personal information outside of Microsoft and its controlled subsidiaries and affiliates without your consent.” The statement goes on to explain how the user can choose to share personal information with Microsoft or “select Microsoft partners so that they can contact you about their products, services or offers.” Later in its privacy statement, Microsoft says, “We may access or disclose information about you, including the content of your communications, in order to: (a) comply with the law or respond to lawful requests or legal process; (b) protect the rights or property of Microsoft or our customers, including the enforcement of our agreements or policies governing your use of the services; or (c) act on a good faith belief that such access or disclosure is necessary to protect the personal safety of Microsoft employees, customers or the public.” The section of the privacy statement that applies to the data mining controversy that has been in the news recently is the section “(a)” about complying with the law or lawful requests. It is not the purview of this column to debate the concept of “lawful requests.”

Google, which needs no introduction, has made billions of dollars by utilizing our personal data within its stated privacy policies. Google’s primary privacy statement can be found at [google.com/policies/privacy](http://google.com/policies/privacy). At the top of its privacy statement, Google says, “When you share information with us, for example by creating a Google Account, we can make those services even better to show you more relevant search results and ads, ... we want you to be clear how we’re using information and the ways in which you can protect your privacy. We collect information to provide better services to all of our users from figuring out basic stuff like which language you speak, to more complex things like which ads you’ll find most useful or the people who matter most to you online.” Google compiles our personal information in several ways; when registering for a Google account (including Gmail, Google+, and other services), Google utilizes the personal information provided by the user; this information can include the user’s name, email address, phone numbers, credit card information, and other personal data. Another way that Google gathers personal information is whenever a user accesses any of the Google services (such as search), Google can utilize web beacons (1 pixel image files), cookies, and other devices. Whenever a web surfer visits a website containing any of the many Google advertising services and interacts with that information, Google collects, “... details of how you used our service, such as your search queries, telephony log information like your phone number, calling-party number, forwarding numbers, time and date of calls, duration of calls, Sams routing information and types of calls, Internet protocol (IP) address, device event information such as crashes, system activity, hardware settings, browser type, browser language, the date and time of your request and referral URL, (and) cookies that may uniquely identify your browser or your Google Account.” Now that location technology has improved via a variety of methods (including Google’s infamous cars driving down every street in the country capturing street level photos and Wi-Fi network locations), Google says, “... we may collect and process information about your actual location, like GPS signals sent by a mobile device. We

may also use various technologies to determine location, such as sensor data from your device that may, for example, provide information on nearby Wi-Fi access points and cell towers.”

Google can also store a variety of cookies, flash objects, and other information on the user’s computer, which Google calls “Local storage.” “We may collect and store information (including personal information) locally on your device using mechanisms such as browser web storage (including HTML 5) and application data caches. ... We use various technologies to collect and store information when you visit a Google service, and this may include sending one or more cookies or anonymous identifiers to your device. We also use cookies and anonymous identifiers when you interact with services we offer to our partners, such as advertising services or Google features that may appear on other sites.” Since Google wants to protect some of our most sensitive personal information, “When showing you tailored ads, we will not associate a cookie or anonymous identifier with sensitive categories, such as those based on race, religion, sexual orientation or health.” Google does allow users to have access and control the usage and distribution of personal information through its Dashboard service at [google.com/dashboard](http://google.com/dashboard).

In its privacy statement, Google states that it does not share personal information about its users with accompanied organizations, and individuals unless certain circumstances apply. Obviously, a user may voluntarily consent to share data if desired, but can control what information is shared. As has been on the news recently, there has been massive sharing of web data with federal government agencies; this may be in compliance with Google’s privacy statement under the heading “For legal reasons.” While several apparently legitimate legal reasons are listed in the privacy policy, the section that has drawn media scrutiny indicates that Google will share to, “... meet any applicable law, regulation, legal process or enforceable governmental request.”

In terms of privacy, Yahoo! is not much different from the other major web services. Yahoo! gathers personal information through much the same means and methods as the others, also primarily for the purpose of generating revenue which is no different than its competitors. According to the Yahoo! privacy site at [info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/details.html](http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/details.html), “By bringing content and advertising to you that is relevant and tailored to your interests, Yahoo! provides a more compelling online experience. Our customized “smart” services save you time and cut through the clutter. To help make your experiences with Yahoo! more relevant, we employ interest-based ads. Manage your interest-based categories, or opt-out of all categories, from the Yahoo! Ad Interest Manager.” Yahoo! users can control the way Yahoo! uses personal information for advertising purposes by opening the Ad Interest Manager at [info.yahoo.com](http://info.yahoo.com)

[privacy/us/yahoo/opt\\_out/targeting/details.html](http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/opt_out/targeting/details.html). Yahoo!’s Ad Interest Manager can also be set to turn off so called “web beacons” (often gif images that are 1 pixel in size) that are used for tracking purposes; instructions for opting out of other sites’ web beacons is available on one of Yahoo!’s privacy pages at [info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/webbeacons/details.html](http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/webbeacons/details.html). While I have personally utilized Yahoo!’s Ad Interest manager to opt-out of tracking, and it shows no tracking history of web searches, web pages visited, and other browsing information, it does disclose

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

other personal information about me. It shows my location (city and state), IP address, computer operating system, the browser that I am using, my screen resolution, the color depth setting of my video card, my age range, and my gender. Yahoo! says that the purpose of this is, “We may customize some ads based on information sent to us by your computer and cookies. These ads are not interest-based.”

Just as the other services do, Yahoo! collects personal information when users register for services, promotions, sweepstakes, and other events. Yahoo! also obtains information about its users from business partners and other companies. Similar to its competitors, Yahoo! collects information at the time of registration that may include the user’s name, email address, birth date, gender, ZIP code, occupation, industry, and personal interests. “Yahoo! automatically receives and records information from your computer and browser, including your IP address, Yahoo! cookie information, software and hardware attributes, and the page you request.” Under the privacy policy heading “Information Sharing and Disclosure” the policy says, “We respond to subpoenas, court orders, or legal process, or to establish or exercise our legal rights or defend against legal claims.”

Since we all apparently consent to the privacy terms when we register and utilize the major web services, it is obvious that they collect information on us for commercial purposes; these commercial purposes, primarily forms of advertising, are used to pay for the “free” services that we utilize, such as free email accounts (Gmail, Hotmail, Outlook, Yahoo! email), search engines (Google, Bing, etc.), video services such as Google’s YouTube, and many other beneficial “free” services. Without passing legal judgment, based solely on what is published in all of their privacy statements, the major web services will share information with government agencies if, in the web services’ opinion, the requests comply with the legal process.

Read the privacy statements of all of your web service providers such that you will be better aware of how much privacy, or lack thereof, you really have when using the major web based services.

Websites:

<http://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/default.aspx>

<http://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/fullnotice.aspx>

<https://www.microsoft.com/privacy/default.aspx>

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/resources.aspx>

<http://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google\\_and\\_privacy\\_issues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_and_privacy_issues)

<https://www.google.com/dashboard/>

<http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/details.html>

[http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/opt\\_out/targeting/details.html](http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/opt_out/targeting/details.html)

## Keep Your Computer Running Fast and Reliably

by Bob Rankin

*askbobrankin.com*

**J**ust like a car, your computer needs regular maintenance to continue performing at its best. Waiting until accumulated minor problems make your computer run intolerably slow is bad for it. A neglected PC works harder than it should and then hardware can start to fail. You may experience a sudden catastrophic crash similar to a car engine seizing up because you never changed the oil.

All-in-one PC maintenance tools make it a breeze to keep your system in top shape. Their functions generally include registry cleaning; disk defragmentation; optimization of system settings; and deletion of unnecessary temporary files. Some free PC maintenance tools include

scheduling of maintenance, cleanup of malware, and system-tweaking options for advanced users.

Smart users perform PC cleanup and tune-up operations at least once a month. Here's what I recommend, and some free computer maintenance tools to help you do the job. Unless otherwise mentioned, all of them work with Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 computers.

**Advanced System Care** by IObit has been downloaded over 150 million times since 2006. It takes only one click to launch this popular program's comprehensive maintenance scan. It does an excellent job of registry cleaning, disk defragmentation, junk files cleanup, and system optimization. It also clears out spyware and adjusts your system settings to protect your privacy and security.

**The Glary Utilities** is another PC maintenance suite. It, too, does registry, privacy, defrag and junk files cleanup. It includes an application uninstaller that is more sophisticated than Windows Add/Remove app; for example, you can tag multiple applications to be uninstalled in one operation. It also includes a startup programs manager, a memory manager, and a nifty utility to remove unwanted context menu items. Cleanup can include a sweep for duplicate files, empty file folders, and broken shortcuts.

**Ashampoo WinOptimizer** also provides one-click ease for disk, privacy, and registry cleaning tasks. It will analyze your hard disk and alert you to any possible hardware problems, and the "Proactive Defrag" runs automatically when the computer is idle, constantly optimizing your disk. Its full scan provides helpful suggestions of unnecessary processes and services that may be shut down to improve performance. It works very fast, perhaps at the expense of thoroughness in its registry cleaning. You do have to register this program, but it's free.

**CCleaner** by Piriform is a popular PC cleaner/optimizer/privacy tool that's developed a sterling reputation over many years. CCleaner zaps temp files, web browser history, cookies, and form inputs, to remove all traces of your online activities. It also mops up after Windows, cleaning out your Recycle Bin, removing unneeded log files, deleting memory dumps, and pruning obsolete registry entries. CCleaner does not include a defrag module, but Piriform also offers the free Defraggler, which does the job quite well.

**Comodo System Cleaner** is a relatively new entry from the developer of Comodo Antivirus and other online security products. The "Active Clean" registry cleaner runs behind the scenes, to detect and fix registry errors as they occur. System Utilities also deletes temporary files, duplicate files, and obsolete programs. The file shredder will permanently erase files, and a startup programs manager helps you choose which programs and services are loaded at Windows startup. However, disk defragmentation is missing.

Here's one quick note about defragmenting your hard drive. Traditional magnetic hard drives installed in most computers do benefit from defragmenting, as it speeds up disk access. However, SSD (solid state) hard drives do not require defragmenting, and some people believe that you can shorten the life span of an SSD by defragging. I don't think that's true of newer SSD's, but it's still a best practice to use defrag only on magnetic drives.

## **Don't Forget About Security**

Finally, it should go without saying that you need to be vigilant about computer security. Here are the two most important pieces of advice I can give on that subject:

1. **Keep Your Software Updated** – See my related article [Computer Security: The Missing Link](#) to learn how to scan your computer for software vulnerabilities, and how to make sure you have the latest versions and security patches.

2. Use Anti-Malware Protection – See my list of Free AntiVirus Programs to learn how to get excellent security software for free.

Each of these free PC maintenance programs has additional bells and whistles for advanced users or troubleshooting. Some have premium versions that you can purchase, to get additional features. Read the product features lists carefully if you have a particular issue that you want to resolve. In my opinion, all of these freebies will do a good job of tuning up your computer for top performance.

Do you have a favorite computer maintenance program I didn't mention? Post your comment or question below...

Read more: [http://askbobrankin.com/five\\_free\\_pc\\_maintenance\\_tools.html#ixzz2VIj6jIpI](http://askbobrankin.com/five_free_pc_maintenance_tools.html#ixzz2VIj6jIpI)

## Free Backup Software and Services

by Bob Rankin  
*askbobrankin.com*

If you run a business on your computer, or just use it to store your personal documents, photos and music, a hard drive failure can be devastating. Failure to backup up your data on a regular basis can lead to data loss, heartbreak and costly recovery fees. If you're not convinced, see my personal story in *How I Got Hacked... and Why You MUST Have a Backup!* [[http://askbobrankin.com/how\\_i\\_got\\_hacked\\_and\\_why\\_you\\_must\\_have\\_a\\_backup.html](http://askbobrankin.com/how_i_got_hacked_and_why_you_must_have_a_backup.html)] I've heard plenty of excuses for not backing up, but fortunately “backup software is too expensive” no longer applies.

There are several free backup software tools and even free online backup services that you can use to backup and restore your files. There is a free backup utility that comes with Windows XP and Vista. I don't generally recommend it, because the feature set is pretty basic, and not all features are available in all versions of Windows. However, Windows 7 has a much improved backup feature. See my article *Windows 7 Backup and Restore* for the pros and cons.



If you have a Mac, Time Machine is an excellent automatic backup tool that's built into Mac OS X Leopard and higher. Backups are automatic, and if you lose a file, or need to see how it looked in the past, you can recover it with a few clicks. Speaking of Time Machine, Windows 8 has a new feature called File History that offers similar features.

The free backup software that comes with Mac and Windows computers will do the job, but other 3rd-party backup products offer more features and flexibility. So let's look at a handful of free downloadable backup solutions.

### Free Downloadable Backup Software

**Easeus Todo Backup Free** is widely touted as top choice for free backup software. Aimed at Windows home users, and designed for ease of use, Todo Backup Free offers “one-click backup and restore” to protect your files and help you recover in the event of a data disaster. The software backs up your entire hard drive including the operating system and installed software. You can schedule your complete backups to run automatically, or backup only selected files and folders on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Savvy users will appreciate advanced features such as networked backups, disk cloning and data wiping.

**CrashPlan** started as a commercial backup service, but the software is now available for free (PC/Mac/Linux). You can use the free version of CrashPlan to backup to an external hard drive, but it also has one unique feature I really like. If you have more than one computer, you can install CrashPlan on each, and they'll backup each others' files. You can even back up your data to a friend's computer, over the Internet. CrashPlan encourages users to have redundant backups -- multiple copies of your backup -- for maximum protection. See my article describing CrashPlan, and how I use it to "backup my backup."

Another option is **FileFort Backup Software**. This program works with on Windows and Mac computers. FileFort is fully functional, safe and completely free. It is also very easy to use as it walks you through the set up process via a set up wizard. FileFort allows you to automatically backup your data to a file on your hard drive, network, an FTP site or to a portable media storage device like a CD or DVD. It can also save your data in the cloud, using free Google Drive, Amazon S3, or Dropbox services.

Another good choice is **Comodo Backup**. If you are familiar with the Comodo name then you know that this software manufacturer has a good reputation. Comodo Backup works with Windows XP, Vista and 2000. It requires a 233 MHz or faster processor, 128 MB of RAM and at least 12MB of free hard drive space. It will allow you to backup your files and store them in a file on your hard drive, a portable storage device or on an FTP site. This program also allows you to schedule your backups and compress your ZIP files to save disk space.

### Free Online Backup Services

There are still a few companies that offer free online backup services. One of the most well known online backup services that still offers free accounts is **Mozy**. Mozy's Free Backup Service offers 2 GB of storage space for Windows and Mac users. Your backup files will be encrypted and stored in a secure, remote location that's only accessible to you. This service is compatible with Windows 2000, Windows XP, and Windows Vista, as well as Mac OS X 10.4 and higher.

You might also check into **IDrive's** free account, which offers you 5 GB of storage space.

### Selecting a Free Backup Option

Obviously you have many backup options to choose from, and I've only mentioned a few of the choices in each category. So which is better, local backup, or an online backup service? Some people are nervous about the security and privacy of online backups. But if you do backups locally, there's always the chance that your backup media could be lost or corrupted.

I recommend a combination approach, with copies of your backup files stored in more than one location. A good start would be a full backup on an external hard drive, and your critical files stored online.

Read more: [http://askbobrankin.com/free\\_backup\\_software\\_options.html#ixzz2WD7b1qEI](http://askbobrankin.com/free_backup_software_options.html#ixzz2WD7b1qEI)

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"I started to get suspicious when I was playing a game online and my score was the same as my Social Security number."



## APP-ropriate Permissions

Q. I am concerned about the permission requests I get when I install apps on my Android phone. Some of them make me wonder if the apps are safe. Should I be concerned?

A. Your concern is justified. Most Android app installations require some special-access permissions, so you have to decide whether a given app is worth allowing them. Many are necessary, while the need for others is questionable. For example, there are some wallpaper apps that require access to your Contacts. Before granting permission, stop and ask yourself, "Why would a wallpaper app require access to my Contacts?" To me, that's reason enough to move to another app.

Permissions required for the Facebook for Android app include access to your personal information, services that cost you money, your messages, your location, your Internet provider, your accounts, what you're wearing, phone calls (phone state and identity) and others. That's a LOT of required permissions for one app.

When using the phone to download apps from the Android Market (<https://play.google.com/store/apps>), a list of permissions appears below the Accept & Download button. Click an item on the list for more information, including (gulp!) potential consequences.

To review an app's permissions, in Android 4.0 tap Apps > Settings > Apps > tap to select an app and scroll down to Permissions. Even if an app isn't overly intrusive, it is always prudent to review required permissions before installing an app.

Q. I have a fantasy football league PDF form that I have to fill in weekly. Is there an easy way to do it? Thanks, Mr. M.

A. FillAnyPDF ([www.fillanypdf.com](http://www.fillanypdf.com)) is an online PDF form filler-outer and is an easy way to crack open a PDF file. There is a video on the site that will demonstrate and explain how it works. Good luck with your team!

Q. What do you think about letting other people take remote control of your computer to analyze and fix problems?

A. I would be inclined to use something like that right after I have a microchip implanted in my body so my cat knows where I am if I wander off. In short, I wouldn't.

To give anyone that level of access, in my opinion, is – I believe the correct psychiatric term is "nutso." That type of access is not limited or restricted; it is full, 100-percent, wide-open, help-yourself-to-my-data access.

Most remote repair outfits require you to install their software so they can take control. You, of course, are then relying on the integrity of people you don't know, you have no idea where in the world they are even located -- and you're saying, "Hey, unknown people, I give you permission to poke around inside my computer and fix whatever you think needs fixing. Oh, and I'll even pay you for that." What a deal!

If you have engaged in that type of potentially risky behavior and had a computer problem resolved, congratulations! But while you're basking in the glow of problem resolution, keep in mind that there are a lot of people who also wind up with compromised computers and new problems where none previously existed -- sometimes days or even weeks later. Cynically



minded individuals even suggest that new problems are created in order to generate additional business for the remote repair service. Eek!

My negative perspective notwithstanding, there certainly are people who sign up for these remote-access services and have a good experience. More power to them. Would I grant access to my computers in a similar manner? Not in a million-jillion years.

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

### Einstein's Big Idea

Filled with fascinating facts about the legendary  $E=MC^2$  genius and his life's work, you will also find interesting articles about Einstein's personal life, as well as some interactive features that make the science behind the famous equation more comprehensible to my knuckle-dragging, mouth-breathing brethren and cistern. (I would have never guessed that Einstein was a huge fan of The Three Stooges. Go figure.)

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/einstein](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/einstein)

### Newspaper Map

This is an unusual Web site in that it has indexed newspapers from 199 countries. If you are interested in obtaining a local perspective on global news, use the site filters (at the top) to locate a newspaper in any location, in your language of choice and start reading.

<http://newspapermap.com>

### Phone Arena

If you get woozy trying to sort through the various features in an attempt to figure out which mobile phone is best for you, at the Phone Arena you will find phone reviews by actual users who aren't trying to sell you anything. You can also review side-by-side comparisons, editor picks and get the latest news about phones, including when the next version of your phone will be released, thus rendering your new phone obsolete. (Hint: Obsolescence generally occurs within 30 minutes of purchase.)

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

### Addendum:

Life is full of surprises and I was the recipient of a delightful surprise this past Sunday when email started arriving from friends and readers throughout the country, congratulating me for "the puzzle."

I was clueless, of course (my natural state) but in this instance, the clueless became the clue. Oh, the irony.

You can now call me "Mr. 93 Across" (or "93" for short) because "Mr. Modem" has ascended to the rarefied atmosphere of "clue status" and appeared in this past Sunday's LA Times crossword puzzle, 5-26-13:

**93 Across: "Syndicated computer adviser Mr. \_\_\_\_\_" (ANSWER: MODEM)**

<http://www.laxcrossword.com/2013/05/la-times-crossword-answers-26-may-13.html>

I know what you're thinking: "Can a Pulitzer be far behind?"

The answer is "Yes, it certainly can," but thanks for the thought just the same.

I just wanted to share this tidbit of fortuitous (albeit goofy) news with a few friends and colleagues, so thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. M. (aka "Richard," aka "93 Across")

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

*Use Promo Code SUNSET when entering your 6-month subscription to Mr. Modem's award-winning, weekly computer-help newsletter and receive a 7th month for free! Visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com).*

# Hurricane Season Has Started Keep Track and Stay Safe Using Your Computer

by Ira Wilsker

June 1 started our official annual hurricane season, which will continue until it officially ends on November 30. Last year on the upper Texas Gulf coast, we were fairly lucky in that our region was not struck directly by a major storm, but the memories of Rita, Ike, Katrina, Isaac, and other disastrous storms are still fresh in the minds of many of us. As computing power and information has been exponentially increasing, and computer model forecasting has greatly improved, hurricane warnings and projected tracks have become more accurate with greater advanced warning. Major providers of hurricane information have increased both the quality and availability of online information, allowing us users of computers and smart devices to have immediate access to the latest storm projections enabling us to better prepare for severe tropical weather; this information may be a literal life saver.

There is a plethora of public (government) and private organizations and websites that provide comprehensive current hurricane and tropical weather information. Arguably, the premier source of hurricane and tropical storm information is the National Hurricane Center ([nhc.noaa.gov](http://nhc.noaa.gov)), a Miami based division of the National Weather Service. With the fiscal and material resources available as a federal agency, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) offers the most comprehensive information and data available. For those using mobile devices with web access, such as smart phones or tablets, the NHC offers a mobile version of its website at [nhc.noaa.gov/mobile](http://nhc.noaa.gov/mobile). Alerts and updates are also available in text format, by email, and RSS (news) feeds, as well on the major social media networks. The NHC is obviously making this information available as quickly as possible to the widest audience.

On the front page of the NHC website is an abundance of easy to follow information that is usually updated at least every six hours, but more frequently as conditions warrant. Typically at the top of the page is a composite image that shows potential storms that may form within the next 48 hours, as well as the odds of each suspicious area becoming a tropical storm or hurricane during that time period. Clicking on the “Graphical Tropical Outlook,” “Active Storms,” or “Marine Forecast” links at the bottom of the “Atlantic Tropical Cyclone Activity” image will open another page with that particular information clearly displayed both as a graphical image, and as a text file explaining what is shown. For those interested in the details of what is going on in the tropics, that Atlantic Marine Forecasts page offers an interactive selection offering detailed information on tropical weather in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and on the Atlantic High Seas. When an area of suspicious or threatening tropical weather exists, additional images are displayed below the Atlantic Marine Forecasts display. As I am typing this, there is an area of disturbed weather in the central Gulf which is displayed in a colorful chart showing land boundaries, color enhanced cloud tops, wind flow, and the projected short term boundaries of the shower and thunderstorm area.

When a tropical depression, tropical storm, or hurricane occurs, the NHC provides a massive amount of additional data to the public and the media. On the main NHC webpage there will be a thumbnail summary of a variety of charts and graphs covering three and five day projected tracks, predicted wind field and wind strength, watches and warnings, and other important information. It is this graphical and text information that is displayed by most of the media, and studied by local forecasters and emergency management officials.

For those individuals who prefer independently compiled storm information, there are several major commercial weather services and web pages that prepare their own charts, graphs, and predictions; sometimes these independent tropical projections differ or contradict

what the official government agency (the NHC) announces. Probably the best known of these private weather services is the Weather Channel, and its companion website [weather.com](http://weather.com). The Weather Channel has a dedicated “Hurricane Central” webpage at [weather.com/weather/hurricanecentral](http://weather.com/weather/hurricanecentral) which typically has videos, stories, maps, charts, and other helpful information. The Weather Channel, being a commercial operation, offers what may be the most comprehensive support for smart devices. On its mobile page at [weather.com/services/mobilesplash.html](http://weather.com/services/mobilesplash.html), the Weather Channel lists free smart phone apps for iPhone, Android, Blackberry, and Windows Phone devices. For those using mobile browsers with any operating system, the Weather Channel offers a webpage optimized for the mobile web at [weather.com/services/mobile-web.html](http://weather.com/services/mobile-web.html). With the popularity of tablet devices, there are also apps for iPads and Kindle Fire tablets. With countless people massively communicating via text messaging, the Weather Channel offers a free sign up for weather related text messages, localized by city or zip; the signup link for these free text messages is at the bottom of the mobile page.

A private, independent weather service widely used by many in the media and corporate world is AccuWeather, which offers its own proprietary graphics and predictions on its hurricane page at [accuweather.com/en/hurricane](http://accuweather.com/en/hurricane). AccuWeather is a feisty company, with an excellent reputation, and a very loyal following. AccuWeather also has free apps for almost all smart devices, including BlackBerry, Windows Phone, Windows 8, iPad, Android, iPhone, and other devices. The links for these apps can be found at the bottom right of the AccuWeather webpage. iPhone users might especially appreciate the AccuWeather iPhone app; according to the listing on iTunes, the app was, Voted “Best iPhone App” by the 2012 Mobie awards, AccuWeather for iPhone now has popular features from our AccuWeather for iPad app, current conditions that refresh every five minutes, and more! Users tell us it is their “Go-to weather app.” From what to wear to how to travel, they say they, “Can’t live without it,” and it is, “Better than any other.”

Since many people are now using smart devices, such as smart phones, as their primary data and communications devices, it is inevitable that a large selection of dedicated hurricane apps would be developed for those smart devices. As stated above, the Weather Channel and AccuWeather have apps for just about all smart devices, they are not the only apps available. For most devices there are several highly rated free apps specifically for hurricane tracking. My personal favorites for my Android phone are “Hurricane - American Red Cross” and “Hurricane Software.” The Red Cross hurricane app is one of an integrated series of free Red Cross apps that cover a variety of emergency issues, including first aid, tornado, earthquake, and wildfire events. The Red Cross hurricane app is among the most acclaimed and awarded emergency apps: “One of the top 6 hurricane tracking apps”- CNN; Readers’ Pick: “Most innovative and useful hurricane app” – FastCompany; “One of 5 apps to get you through a natural disaster” – Fox News; “Top Apps of the Week” (11/3/12) – ABC News. In addition to providing hurricane information, this Red Cross app provides information on open emergency shelters, can send “I’m safe” alerts to family and friends, provides the ability to use a phone as a flashlight and emergency strobe, and other benefits.

Another specialized free hurricane app I have on my Android phone is “Hurricane Software,” which is a highly rated, free, comprehensive storm information app. According to its website, this “...hurricane tracking application give(s) you the most up to-date and reliable hurricane coordinates data and high resolution maps, satellite Images, warning information, storm tracks and more.”

In the infancy of the internet, in March, 1994, I created my own comprehensive, localized weather page, [beaumontweather.com](http://beaumontweather.com). I believe that my non-commercial weather page is the

longest, continuously running Beaumont based website. During hurricane season, beaumontweather.com displays storm projections, spaghetti charts (projected tracks from multiple sources), wind maps, storm surge predictions, satellite images, and other storm information, much of it in real-time. My page also displays current local and regional weather conditions, radar animations, emergency information, evacuation maps, and massive amounts of other information. Since this is a non-commercial website, there are no paid ads or other irritants displayed.

With all of the contemporary weather and tropical information available online, the old fashioned paper tracking charts are somewhat obsolete as a prediction tool. With all of this information readily available on a host of devices, we all have access to current information that may literally be lifesaving.

## What Does That Icon Mean?

by Veronica Valero

*Golden Gate Computer Society, CA*

**W**hen I took a recent airline trip to attend a family wedding, I planned to rely on mass transit during our visit to Seattle. But I almost didn't get out of the airport because I didn't correctly interpret airport icons on signs leading to the light rail transport.

I recognized familiar symbols for men's and women's restrooms, followed light rail symbols down several corridors and two escalators, and boarded the rail train. But it never left the airport. Turns out I boarded an internal rail system, not the Seattle light rail, as pointed out by kind passengers when we asked how to pay.

This situation is no different for computer users. These last few years the computer software industry has removed or hidden text-driven drop-down menus and replaced them with a plethora of icons that, somehow magically, users are supposed to interpret. Hovering over an icon may reveal the answer, but this method wastes time.

A little computer history In 1983, Apple Computers Inc. launched Lisa, the first personal computer with a graphic interface and its famous mouse, the point-and-click device that revolutionized the computer industry. At that time, commands were generated by keystrokes and our memories.

For example, to bold text using the PC WordStar word-processor, you pressed the Command (Ctrl) key, then P, and then B to tell the computer to begin bolding when printing. Next, you /typed the text. To stop bolding, you repeated the above keystrokes. If you forgot to stop bolding, you wouldn't know until you printed the document because computers were not yet WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) until Apple entered the scene.

Apple Computer changed the command-driven way of computing that required you to memorize many exact commands. We can still use these key-based commands; common ones for Macs (Apple) and PCs include: To save a document = Press and hold the Ctrl key then press the S key and release (for the Mac, press the Command key in place of the Ctrl key). To print = Ctrl + P. To copy = Ctrl + C. To paste = Ctrl + V. To cut = Ctrl + X. To undo = Ctrl + Z. Unfortunately, the current computer trend toward turning all text into symbols has gone too far.

Keeping up with all the new imagery is counter-productive and frustrating to many. This move toward iconography has moved to our phones, smart phones, iPads, tablets, readers, and many electronic gadgets.

My experience at the airport demonstrates how this trend is infiltrating our world. To help you survive the next stage of the computer symbolic evolution, below are common cross-platform cross-application symbols. Memorize these icons and you may just survive the dawning of this new era. Note: These instructions below are all one-click/touch actions.

**Power Button:** Turns on/off your electronics. Note: Rather than pressing the power button to turn off, some computers require a Shut Down process by clicking a menu or icon.

**Close a window or application:** Windows PC: Click the X (top right corner) to close an application or a window. Mac: Click the red button (top left corner) to close an application or window. This action usually does not quit the application.

**Arrow (black or white):** When you move the mouse or move your finger around the track pad, the arrow tracks your movements. When you want to select something or press a button, left click once.

**I-beam:** The arrow becomes an I-beam when the arrow enters a text box or area where you can type. To activate the typing feature in the text box or area, you may need to click once to see the blinking line that indicates where text will appear when you type.

**Hand:** When the arrow hovers over text (often underlined or in color), when you click once it will take you to a different webpage or website, or a different part of the document. When the arrow hovers over an image and it becomes a hand, when you click the image once, it can open a new website, webpage, or window showing you the image in a larger format or give you more information.

**Triangles (& Vs) Down or Up:** (1) click to scroll down or up, or (2) click to see a dropdown menu and make a selection.

**Doubles Triangles (& double-Vs )—Down or Up:** (1) Page up or page down, or (2) next window or view, or (3) previous window or view.

**Triangles (& Vs)—Left or Right:** Can mean: (1) Play audio or video, (2) Click to scroll left or right, (3) click to go backward or forward, or (4) click to see more options, etc.

**Doubles Triangles (& double-Vs)—Left or Right:** (1) Takes you to the beginning or the end, (2) Fast-back or Fast-forward, or (3) Previous or next section, selection, or song, etc.

**Back button and forward buttons:** When pointing left, click it to go to the previous webpage(s) or window. When pointing to the right, click it to take you back where you were. It's like flipping back and forth through a book or magazine: It remembers where you've been.

**Microsoft Windows "Start" button (four square icon):** Click to see Microsoft's Start Menu (XP, Vista, Windows 7) or Start Page (Windows 8). Note: Some keyboards have a Windows Start key to the side of the Spacebar: press once to open the Start Menu or Start Page.

**Apple's "Finder" (Square Smile) Icon on a Mac:** Found on the left side of the Dock, this icon is your virtual filing system (like Window's Library/My Documents). Click it to access your storage folders: Documents, Pictures, Music, Movies, Downloads, applications, etc.

**Delete/Trash/Recycle:** Select your document, email, item, or text, and then click this icon to delete it. Sometimes to permanently delete the item, such as documents and emails, you need to empty the Delete, Trash, or Recycling folder. Note: In some applications, the X and Don't images (circle with line through) also means Cancel.

**Search Magnifying Glass:** Found in Internet browsers, at websites, in your computer, in applications, etc. Click once in the text box and type key word(s), and then click the magnifying glass icon or the Go, Search, or Find text to locate word(s) or topics, etc.

**Zoom Magnifying Glass (in +, out -):** Looks like a search but usually has the word Zoom, 100%, or plus and minus signs. Click to enlarge or reduce. Clicking this icon generally increases or decreases the font and image size.

**New Browser Tab:** To open a new window while keeping the current window accessible, click the Tab, the icon with the plus sign, or the blank tab to the right of an existing tab. This action lets you have your webmail in one tab, your Google.com webpage in another, while you open another tab to do shopping, researching, or watching Youtube.com, etc. To delete a Tab:

Without closing the browser, hover the mouse over the tab and click the X to close just that tab.

House/Home: In your Internet browser, clicking this icon once takes you back to your home website (the website/page that first appears when you open your Internet browser).

Cogwheel or Tool image = Tools, Settings, Preferences, or Options: Click to customize or adjust the settings/features of the application (Word, Outlook, Mac Mail, iTunes, Apps, etc.) or services (Online email such as Gmail, Comcast, DropBox, Skype, Pandora, online banking, etc.).

Menu: Click to see a dropdown menu of options. This icon is replacing the menu bars on several browsers, webmail applications, and tablet and smartphone apps.

Undo: My favorite button! It un-does the last thing you did: (1) Brings back what you accidentally deleted or lost. (2) Deletes what you just typed. (3) Removes formatting that you decided not to do (bold, font style, color, etc.). (4) Removes any changes you just made (resized a picture, added color, added borders, etc.). Note: On some applications, when you keep clicking it, you will sequentially remove previous actions.

Redo: It puts back what the Undo button removed.

Refresh: Usually found in Internet browsers and other applications. This icon lets you update changes on webpages where content is constantly changing such as stock market prices, news items, weather updates, etc.; click the Refresh icon to update. Caution: Refresh looks similar to the Redo icon.

Checkmark: (1) Click to accept changes. (2) Click box to insert or remove a checkmark to agree to a setting, option, service, etc. Caution: When downloading, installing, or updating software, etc., pay attention to any boxes with checkmarks. Read the text to make sure you're not signing up (subscribing) to receive email advertisements or to download a free and possibly a problematic application or unsuspected viruses.

Editing Tools: Cut = scissors, Copy two pages, Paste = paper on clipboard.

Font (text) Color: Change text/font color. How: First select the text, and then click the dropdown triangle (bottom right) once to see color swatches, select your color by moving the mouse arrow down, and click once on your color selection. When done, deselect (unselect) the text by clicking the text box area once.

Email—Reply: A single arrow to the left. Click it to reply to the sender of the email you received. It will insert email address, subject, and include the original message. Next, type your reply message. Email—Reply All: A double arrow to the left. Same as Reply but it sends your message to all those who also received the original message from the sender (all emails listed in the To: and CC: sections). If you only want the sender to see your response, make sure you select Reply not Reply All. Note: If you received an attachment in the original email, Reply will not resend the attachment.

Email—Forward: Click to forward the email to one or more people. It will insert the subject and include original message. You will need to enter the email addresses and then type your reply message. Note: If you received an attachment in the original email, Forward will include the attachment unless you changed the default.

*From the March 2013 Issue, GGCS newsletter. She does one-on-one computer tutoring through her business, Computer Tutor of Marin.*

## Overbooked

by Greg Skalka

*President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA*

**C**ompanies are continuing to develop new and more advanced computer technologies, finding ways to innovate on the personal computing platform first released over thirty

years ago. Their marketing departments have not been as great at innovation, however, often using derivative and less than imaginative terminology to name and describe these new products and services. These marketing terms are often meaningless fluff, but we users are frequently forced to adopt them into our technical language.

One company that you all know has taken to slapping a lower case “i” on the front of the names of whatever products or services they are offering. It does not seem terribly imaginative to me, but I’m sure they do it to distinguish their products from those of other manufactures (at least legally).

Another overused term for new technology is “smart.” There are smart phones, smart homes, the smart card, smart cars, smart trains, smart TV, the smart grid, smart meters and smart growth. My head is smarting from thinking about how many things are now referred to as smart. While it is hard to argue against a product when it has “smart” as part of its name, the term alone is not enough to ensure acceptance. For instance, Smart Computing was once a popular print and web magazine that explained new computer technology to the common user. They couldn’t make money long term in that market, so they turned it into a free online business-oriented publication that looks to be mostly advertising.

The latest overused technology term I’ve noticed is “book”. I’ve created the following list of book-related items and their descriptions for instructional purposes, and to see just how long a list I could make.

Book – The original item; a set of flat cellulose sheets with information printed on one or both sides that are fastened together at one edge, forming a hinge. Originating around the 5th century, they were hand written and hand copied until printing methods were developed centuries later. Guttenberg’s movable type in 1450, later industrial printing methods and Amazon’s online marketing ultimately made books inexpensive and accessible to everyone.

eBook – An electronic version of a printed book (or even one that has never been physically printed). An eBook can be read using e-readers like Amazon’s Kindle and Barnes & Noble’s Nook (which surprisingly don’t have “book” in their names), as well as computers, tablets and smart phones. Amazon.com started out as an online seller of books, and now in conjunction with their reader is a main source of eBooks. The existence of many eBook formats does not appear to have diminished eBook popularity.

Notebook – This term refers to a notebook computer, also commonly known as a laptop. The notebook was the first truly mobile version of the personal computer (let’s not count the Osborne, with a case the size of a sewing machine, as mobile).The notebook’s hinged design (like a book) consisted of a computer mainboard / keyboard as one half, with a screen (from 14" up to 17" diagonal) on the other half (facing the key-board).

These were initially more expensive than desktop computers due to the higher cost of miniaturization, but their popularity brought their volumes up to the point that economies of scale have made their cost the same or lower than desktops of similar performance (at least for all but the most powerful PCs). Notebook computers first came out in the early 1980s, five to ten years after the first PCs. They typically have all the features and capabilities of desktop PCs, including hard drive mass storage, optical drives, interfaces for wired/wireless networking, pointing devices and some limited expansion capabilities. Notebooks now far outsell the desktop computer.

Netbook – A smaller and less capable version of the notebook, the netbook was popularized in 2007 by manufacturer Asus, but the format was soon copied by others. Netbooks were meant to be even more portable, with smaller screens (5" to 12" diagonal) and lower weight (optical drives were omitted). With a less powerful processor than notebooks, they were much less expensive, and were intended primarily for use on the Internet (through wired and

wireless connections). They competed well against notebooks for a while on their cost and size, but recent improvements in notebooks (reductions in cost and weight and increases in performance), as well as the introduction of the tablet computer, have diminished netbook sales greatly. It is likely this category will disappear from the marketplace soon.

**PowerBook** – A line of Apple Macintosh laptop computers sold between 1991 and 2006, featuring PowerPC processors running an Apple Mac OS. They were targeted at the professional market and were replaced by the MacBook computer line.

**iBook** – A brand of Apple laptop computers sold between 1999 and 2006, featuring PowerPC processors running an Apple Mac OS. They were targeted at the consumer and educational markets, with lower performance and cost compared to the PowerBooks, and were replaced by the MacBook computers.

**MacBook** – A brand of Macintosh laptop computers made by Apple from 2006 to the present (includes MacBook Pro and MacBook Air models currently offered), running the Mac OS. These laptops had screens ranging from 11" to 17", Intel processors and either a polycarbonate / fiberglass or aluminum case. The MacBook Pro features 13" to 17" screens, optical drives and mechanical hard drives (with an SSD, or solid state drive, as an option). The MacBook Air is an ultraportable laptop released in 2008 that is extremely light and thin, with a machined aluminum case, Intel processor, 11.6" or 13.3" diagonal display and SSD for main storage.

**Ultrabook** – A high-end type of notebook computer defined by Intel in 2011 to compete with the MacBook Air. Like the MacBook Air, the Ultrabook is lightweight and thin (0.8"), with SSD storage, Intel processor (no surprise), long battery life and typically no optical drive or Ethernet ports. It is intended to use the Microsoft Windows operating system, with some models sporting a touchscreen display to work better with Windows 8.

Various manufacturers, including Asus, Acer, Dell, Lenovo, HP, Samsung and Fujitsu have already released Ultrabook models, with diagonal screen sizes ranging from 11.6" to 15.6". Their higher cost (typically \$1000) as compared to conventional notebook computers has limited their acceptance in the marketplace so far.

**Zenbook** – An Asus family of Ultrabook computers, ranging from a model with an 11.6" diagonal screen and limited connectivity to a 15" screen model with an optical drive. First released in 2011, their design was said to follow “zen philosophy.”

**Chromebook** – A notebook computer running the Google Chrome OS (which is Linux-based). Intended to be used while connected to the Internet, it features a lower performance processor, SSD storage, no optical drive and typically smaller size (somewhat similar in functional philosophy to the netbook). It is designed to run applications from the web, rather than from internal storage. Acer and Samsung introduced Chromebooks in 2011, with HP and Lenovo introducing models in 2013. Screen sizes range from 12" to 14" diagonal. Additional features include quick boot up, long battery life and low cost (\$200 to \$450). They are sold primarily over the Internet. Google itself is producing a Chromebook Pixel model with premium features and price (\$1300 to \$1450).

**Facebook** – a social networking service started in 2004 on the Internet, with currently over 1 billion active users.

**Bookmaker** – An organization or a person that takes bets on events at specified odds.

I wouldn't bet that these are going to be the only book-related terms for us to deal with in the future, but that's all I have for now.

Book'em, Danno!

*From the March 2013 issue of DriveLight, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood User Group in California.*



The Rochester Computer Society, Inc. welcomes the following board members. Arpad Kovacs is now member at large for the next 3 years and Art Trimble will be our recording secretary for next year. Gentlemen thanks for volunteering for these positions. The following members were reelected, Steve Staub, President; Dan Rothfuss, Vice President; and Dennis MacMahon, Treasurer. Sally Springett and Tony Dellelo remain as members at large.

Types of memberships: There has been some concern on associate membership. The following are eligible for associate membership: those living more than 50 miles from Rochester, and high school and college students who can not make our meetings and any other person who would like to be a member but cannot make our meetings. Associate membership is \$25.

Active membership is for those who can make our monthly meetings. The active membership is \$35.00 and can be paid for by either check, cash at a meeting, or by Pay Pal. If you use Paypal please let us know. Paypal doesn't tell us when they receive money so you might get a reminder notice.

Our August meeting, Tuesday August 13th, will be our annual picnic. This year our picnic will be at the Brighton Town Park. The cabin by the pond. We will be eating at 6 pm. The club will supply the meats (red or white hots, cheeseburgers, and spicy Italian Sausage), coffee, tea, and soda. Reservation is a must so we know how much food to buy. Deadline for reservations is August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Reservations can be made by contacting me at srstaub1@rochester.rr.com or by calling me at 585-429-9877 and tell me the first names of everyone attending and what type of food each person wants. I will collect \$5 per person on arrival or at a club meeting. We ask everyone to bring a dish to pass. If your last name begins with the letters A - I Munchies, J - R salads and s - z deserts. Please let us know what your bringing.

We will have our fun silent auction, on either computer or non computer related items. To pick up your auction item either cash or check must accompany your bid. The proceeds from the auction will help us cover some of the cost of the picnic and strengthen our bank account.

## The Lighter Side



**"The computer says I need to upgrade my brain to be compatible with the new software."**