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Cloud Computing: The Foggy Details

Contents

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Social Media Scams Based on Current Events

used with permission from Norton Protection Blog
by Nadia Kovacs

We are sure you've seen them lurking in your news feeds-breaking news reporting a celebrity's death, photos of natural disasters striking major cities, video footage of riots and outrage over an accidental shooting- all seemingly legitimate news stories. However, this "news" may not be what it seems.

As of March 31, 2014, Facebook has reported that it has 665 million daily active users. Twitter has 271 million monthly active users. With so many active users, popular social sites are a scammer's paradise. Scammers will try to entice you into clicking by posting sensational or emotional breaking news stories; sometimes capitalizing on a recent news event, or making up a fake, shocking news story. The

motives are the same; scammers try to exploit these stories for any kind of financial gain possible.

There are several different types of tactics scammers will use to try to lure you into taking the bait: impersonating victims or family members of a tragic event; selling souvenirs or memorabilia while claiming the proceeds go to charity; or by posting photos and videos of the event.

Click With Caution

Most recently, you may have seen a fake Robin Williams "Goodbye" video circulating on social media sites. The post states that you need to share the video before viewing. After sharing the video, users are taken to a page asking the user to fill out a survey before viewing. Seems harmless enough, right? Hardly. The survey will gather sensitive personal information that can be used in phishing attacks. In addition to collecting sensitive data, the scammers will also earn money per completed survey and in turn, will sell that information to other scammers.

There are many variations of these types of videos, and it is not always a survey. Users will try to view the video, and are taken to a page stating that they need to download a plug-in in order to view the video correctly. This "plug-in" is malware in disguise, usually a form of spyware that is then installed on the user's computer that will track and collect information such as bank accounts, Social Security numbers and anything else that can be used in attempting identity theft.

In addition to trying to install malware on your computer, there are other objectives. Sometimes these links will redirect you to adult websites or spam sites in an attempt to boost web traffic, or to install malicious Facebook applications that can steal your personal data.

Ways to Spot a Fake

Be skeptical. Just because you see it on your feed doesn't necessarily mean it is true. Sometimes, your friends may have fallen victim to the scam and are not aware of it; scammers using Clickjacking (link is external) could have hijacked their account.

Always check the link before clicking. You can do that by either hovering over the link or looking directly below the link itself on the Facebook post, which shows the referring website's URL. Only visit known and trusted websites.

Be very suspicious when there is a call to action before being able to view the content. Moreover, actions such as having to share the media before viewing, requests to take a survey or download additional software are all huge red flags.

If you need to know if the event happened, use a search engine to verify the validity of the headline. If you were to type in "Robin Williams Goodbye Video," you would see stories about how it is a fake. If it were a real story, there would be several news articles listed about the event.

You can also visit trusted news sites(link is external) such as CNN.com or AP.org to verify the story. Another great site for busting hoaxes is Snopes.com.

What to Do If You Fall for the Scam

In the event that you fall prey to one of these scams, here are a few steps you can take to clean up the damage and minimize it from spreading.

Remove the spam from your feed, so no other people fall victim to the scam.

Change your password immediately. Even if you do not think the scammers have access to it, it is better to be safe than sorry.

If you were tricked into installing a rogue app, remove it(link is external).

Run a virus scan! You may not always be aware that malware has been installed on your machine. Norton 360 will scan your computer for viruses, and warn you about potential social media scams using Safe Web for Facebook.

Create a post on your feed notifying friends of the scam, informing them not to click on anything strange or unusual coming from your page.

Report the scam to Facebook(link is external) or Twitter(link is external), depending on where the content is hosted.

Courtesy of APCUG.

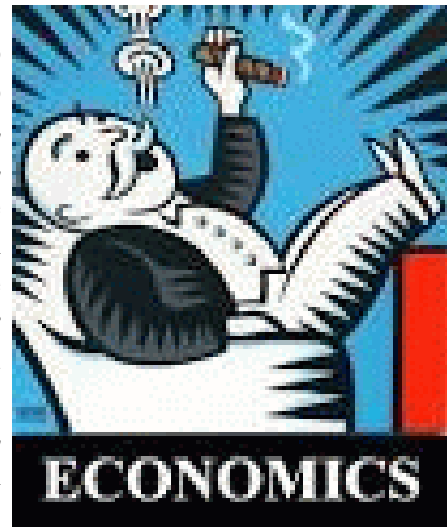## The Economics of XP Conversion

by Russ Merritt
The Computer Club, Inc., Sun City Center, FL

With the Microsoft decision to drop all support for their XP Operating System, those still using XP now face the decision of what to do. Do nothing? Convert to Windows 7? Or to Windows 8? Or buy a new computer.

To do nothing invites some risks to be considered. If all you do is play some computer games like solitaire and maybe prepare private correspondence that you print and mail — then the only risk is computer failure, and that has always existed. If, however, you use email or do any transaction on the Web, then there is the unknown risk of virus attacks. The risk is unknown because the vulnerability of the current XP system is unknown. It is assumed that there are yet unknown ways that XP is open to virus attack. What is known is that Microsoft will make no further changes to XP to fix those problems when they do occur.

So then perhaps you should consider converting to Windows 7 or Windows 8. Step one is to turn to Microsoft for advice. They have two free programs that can evaluate your computer. To find this support ——from your search engine enter Windows 8 Upgrade Assistant or Windows 7 Upgrade Adviser. This will lead you to the free upload site for either test. Use the one that addresses your choice of the Operating System. Or run them both, if you are thinking about making a choice based on the capability of your current computer. Don"t be too disappointed if you find that you cannot convert to either system. Your PC is a little old, and technology has advanced at a rather rapid pace.

Assume your equipment can handle an upgrade. At Amazon on April 16, 2014, the following prices were quoted:

Windows 7, Home Edition: 64 bit — $99.99; 32 bit — 89.99; Professional Edition: 64 bit — $139.99; 32 bit$129.99; Ultimate Edition: 64 bit — $189.99.

Windows 8.1, full version — $133.28; Windows 8.1 Pro, full version — $173.35

One thing is known about upgrades from XP — any upgrade must be a clean install. That means the hard drive will be erased. To prepare for this, an external copy of all data must be made before the upgrade is started. Once the upgrade is complete, the data can then be copied back into the computer, but all programs will have to be re-installed. There is an unknown risk here. The older programs may not run on the

newer Operating System. The other factor is — do you still have the installation disks for all your programs? Some unknown costs are at play here.

Also unknown is the impact of a new operating system on external equipment such as printers. Will they still work? If not, can you download new drivers so that the equipment will be operational?

Next Question. Can you do all this or are you going to have to hire some help?

The other option is buy a new computer. If your needs a basic and simple, a new computer could cost as little as $300 and there's been some on sale recently for under that figure. In my opinion, you will need 4 gigabytes of RAM. Storage (hard drive size) that comes with your new PC will be big enough for your immediate needs (maybe even big enough forever). You may not get a CD/DVD drive, and if you need one with what you do, buying an external CD/DVD drive would be the answer — maybe $30 or so. There might be some compatibility issues with old CRT monitors, but with the newer flat screen monitors, they should work with any new PC (check on the monitor's cable connections, just to be sure).

As with the update plan above, the data from your old PC still has to be transferred and the programs installed on the new PC. How much help you will need with this step is determined by you.

So there you have the basics — buy and install a new Operating System or buy and set up a new Computer. There are extra costs you have to add as appropriate for which ever method you choose to solve the lack of support for Windows XP.

While the various electronic parts of a computer rarely fail, hard drives always do — it's only a matter of time. So, which solution appeals to you, investing in a new computer or updating an old one. This is an individual choice that only you can make.

From the June 2014 issue of The Journal*, newsletter of The Computer Club, Inc., Sun City Center, FL. Courtesy of APCUG.*

The Tip Corner
by Bill Sheff
Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA

IE Script errors

While opening a web page, did you ever get a note saying that there was an error while running the script? Ever wonder what that meant? IE's script errors occur when the web page maker's programming contains an error; an antivirus program or adware removal program detects spyware or adware, which causes the page to stop loading that component of the webpage; or a pop-up on a web page does not load because of the computer's security settings. The average computer user cannot fix these Internet script errors, but you can avert script errors by changing your Browser's settings. And it's not hard to do.

Double click on Internet Explorer and click on "Tools" and the "Internet Options" in the top left menu. Then click on the "Advanced" tab. Next, click the box next to "Disable Script Debugging" to turn it on. Finally, click the box next to "Display a notification about every script error" to turn it off, click the "OK" button in the bottom right of that menu and you are done. No more pesky script error panes.

If errors still persist it could be Adware and viruses causing the problem. Run your removal software. Additionally make sure you are updating your Windows programs from Microsoft.

Disk Imaging, File Based Backup, or Synchronization. Which one should I use?

All backups are not created equal! That said, let's explain the differences. The confusion arises because most of these programs overlap in function and usability. But any backup is better than none. That said; let's look at the three types.

Disk Imaging

Like the name says this type of backup prepares a true disk image or clone and is an exact copy of your hard drive or partition. It creates a bit by bit (or byte by byte) identical copy. Today"s disk imaging programs can interpret the data being copied and remove or compress the empty blocks on a disk which leads to much smaller image files. Most of these programs create compressed image formats that can be read with a built-in Windows explorer type program making it possible to retrieve individual files.

'Additionally, the program can create successive incremental or differential backups, which tends to reduce storage requirements. Some even offer the ability to exclude the large and non-essential pagefile.sys and hiberfil.sys from the image, and the ability to image a drive or partition while it is currently in use as well as backing up a disk even if it contains a foreign file system, an unknown operating system, or an encrypted partition. These programs are fast, easily restorable on other drives and do not require as much space as the original drive. They can also be put on a bootable drive when a drive crashes and you have to replace the drive.

File Based Data Backup

Many type of File based backup programs exist. This type of backup is what most people are familiar with. While these programs seem to just copy files from one location to another, they do a lot more than just simply copying files. File backup programs are designed to automate the process of duplicating files in multiple locations and on numerous types of storage media, locally or across networks or even to remote severs such as online storage (Cloud). They can add additional files to compressed volumes called archives and at the same time can apply encryption for added security. After performing a full backup of selected data, most backup programs can perform cumulative backups of new or changed files using different types of backup methodology. Some specialized file backup systems provide continuous (real-time) data protection (i.e., immediately backup up a file as soon as it is created), and others

provide versioning systems that will make a new copy of a file each time it is changed. This allows the user to go back and retrieve a previous edition of the file.

File based backup are very flexible containing many functions and options. Some of this flexibility permits copying or moving certain files to specific locations (i.e. .jpgs to one specific drive or .docs to another locations not only on your system but to the cloud as well where they can be accessed by another computer. These programs also allow you to work with smaller sets of files and defrag files while saving.

File Synchronization

While not a true backup, in the sense of the word, the result is basically the same. Sync programs can replicate or mirror working files and or folders in two or more locations where both sets of files will still be put into service. I use synctoy to copy my document folder in one machine onto an external drive which I take with me to Florida so the same files are available to me on my two desktops as well as my laptop. Another way is to put folders onto cloud storage, such as Dropbox or Google cloud which can be accessed from any other computer. The basic difference between synchronization and backup is that backup copies files in one direction while synchronization copies files (or changes) in two directions. In backup you have a "source" and a "destination." In true synchronization you really have two sources. Files which are changed on any one of the computers will be reflected on the other.

Files that are renamed, moved or deleted in one location 'may' be renamed, moved or deleted in the other, based upon the user's choice. This is called the ability to "propagate" renames or deletions. By use of a "database" these programs can keep track of files and file operations differentiating between newly created files and old files that only exist in one location, because they have been deleted in the other.

Synchronization can replicates changes in both locations or only one way. Sync programs may provide some sort of data encryption to transmit, they don't provide compression and packing of files into archives like backup programs. There are some backup and sync programs that sometimes perform both file archiving and synchronization.

Some Programs to Consider

EaseUS Todo Backup Free: Simple-to-use, can back up system, photos, music, videos, documents, and applications. Can provide clone only, or clone with incremental backups Supports Windows 8, 7, Vista, XP in many languages.

FBackupFree: Simple interface guides you through the process of defining a backup job using a friendly wizard that asks you: Where do you want to store the backup (the destination).

What do you want to backup (the sources)? How do you want to run the backup (using full backup that zips the files, or mirror backup that doesn't zip them)? When do you want to run the backup (you can schedule it to run automatically or run it manually)?

Just Google 'backup' for many more programs.

Backing Up Information

Okay, we now know how. So let's look at where. The secret to good backing up is redundancy.

You can clone your hard drive onto an external hard drive, a partition on your hard drive, a CD (if you have a teeny hard drive) a USB external hard drive, a USB flash drive and a SSID (a solid state drive) and even a RAID system which are a few hard

drives hooked together to copy data onto both. Remember what you want to copy. If you have all your program disks and the operating system disks perhaps all you need to copy is your document folder and your public folders. This greatly minimizes the space you need to copy as well as the time it takes to copy. Regardless of the medium two things should be considered. At some time some formats become obsolete — remember Betamax? So you have to do more than just copy and forget. Additionally, there is an old saying It's not if something crashes it's when. So Step one is to plan for redundancy. Today cloud storage offers a cheap — sometimes free alternative to your local physical storage. In case of a flood or some other calamity, having some of your important and unreplaceable files up in the cloud can be a god send.

OK, but let's look at some local methods. Today we have the ability to burn data onto CDs and DVDs, and in the near future Blu-ray disks will be available at a reasonable price. Something to look for in backing up to cd/DVD disks is how long they can last. Some people claim ten years for disks, but I have disks much older than that that still work, but better safe than sorry. For archiving data it is felt that you should use a gold DVD. These disks are rated for 15 years. There are programs that help you span large drives over many DVDs. Disks should be stored in a dry temperature controlled location. Sleeves for DVDs could help list the data on the DVDs but are not completely necessary.

Memory cards have much larger capacity than DVDs, some flash drives now contain 128 GB of storage. Keep them also in a temperature-controlled environment in their original plastic containers.
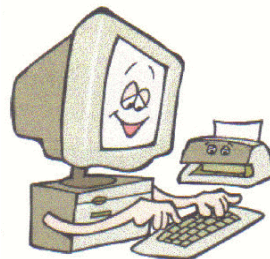
'External hard drives come in USB2 and USB3 as well as SATA, firewire and other methods of hooking up to your computer. And I believe Bluetooth technology is gaining acceptance. Today 1, 2 and more TB drives are available, and prices continue to drop on a dollar per megabyte basis. Again, they should be stored in a temperature-controlled, dry environment. You should consider storing the drive in its original container.

SSIDs are solid state drives which theoretically will never wear out. Not true. Constant erasing and rewriting can shorten their life span. They will have a long life span, but as of now they are very expensive. I would suggest sticking to external drives.

But remember: *all of these options can and probably will fail. All of them.*

But don't panic. Redundancy is the answer. Have it on a DVD? Save another copy onto an external drive. Have it on one drive. Clone, copy or sync the data to another drive. I purchased a 120GB drive many years ago. Today you can get terabytes for that kind of money. Also keep the backups separate from each other. If they are both in a box in the basement that flash flood can ruin both. Finally, it is a good idea to periodically check your archived material to make sure that it's okay. If the data has become corrupted for whatever reason, no problem…you have the backup to make a new archive. The chances of your archived material and backup archive material both failing at the same time are slim to none.

Courtesy of APCUG.

Explore Gmail Settings

Q. How can I explore the various settings in Gmail without messing up what I currently have? Is there any place I can see demonstrations of what the various Gmail features and options do? Thanks, Mr. M.

A. Any changes you make to Gmail through its user settings are easily reversible by returning to the setting in question and changing it back to the way it was. As an alternative, since Gmail is free, you can create a test email account for yourself, then experiment until your head explodes. If you test settings in this manner and find something you particularly like, you can then apply it to your primary account.

Q. In using Excel spreadsheets on my Windows 7 computer, I cannot establish a uniform procedure to enter dates. If I enter 8/2/2014 it may appear as 8.2.14 or 8-2-14. How can I format my dates so they appear the same every time? If I could not rely on your help, Mr. M., this old goat would hang it up, so thanks for being there.

A. By default, the short date display format for Windows (and thus Excel) is M/d/yyyy, so August 2, 2014 would be displayed as 8/2/2014.

For various reasons, you may want to zero-fill your dates and have August 2, 2014 appear as 08/02/2014. Doing this actually involves a Windows setting, not an Excel setting. I only mention that because if you change this format, it will affect how dates appear throughout Windows and other programs running under Windows. It is not just confined to Excel, so caution is advised. I would suggest jotting down any changes you decide to make in case you aren't enamored with the result, so you can then change things back to what you had originally.

To change the default date format in Windows, go to your Control Panel and select Regional Settings or Region and Language. In the Short Date format list, select whatever format you prefer, then click OK when you're done.

From this point forward, unless the dates in Excel were formatted using Excel's Format menu for a given spreadsheet, they will display as you have defined them.

Q. At work we just converted to Linux Ubuntu for our computer operating system and I will attend training next week. One thing I've been wondering about: If I send clients an attachment using a word processing or spreadsheet program, will they be able to open it?\

A. As long as you save it in a file format your client's computer can accommodate, there should be no problem. If you use a program such as OpenOffice or LibreOffice (comparable to MS Office, but free and frequently used with Linux) to create a document or spreadsheet, you will be able to save it in a format that Windows or Apple systems can read. I use LibreOffice and I work with a large number of publication editors who require .DOC-formatted articles. It is not a problem to simply select the .DOC format when saving my document as opposed to the native LibreOffice .ODT format.

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

Chordify

Chordify transforms music from YouTube, SoundCloud or your private music collection and converts it into chords that you can play along with on a guitar, ukulele, or piano. Its a freemium service, meaning it is available in free and paid versions. The free version allows you to keep three songs in music storage, a maximum song duration of 10 minutes, a maximum file size of 10 MB, and .PDFs of the chord diagrams. Visit http://chordify.net/premium to compare the freebie to the Premium version. In the center of the page is the field were you can either upload a song from your collection or the field below it where you can paste in a URL to the song you want to convert. The page created displays the chords to your selected song and a Play button. When you click or tap Play, it starts the song and the chord field begins scrolling. Very cool!
http://chordify.net

Greatist

Not just another health-oriented Web site, the focus here is not to tell you what healthy means, but rather to help you define what healthy means to you. It takes all the typical fat-shaming/skinny-shaming, fad preaching and tosses it out the window. The link below will take you to the site's About page so you can read more about its mission. After reading it, click the Menu icon at the top and select one of the three main topical areas: Fitness, Health, Happiness. If you prefer tropical areas, check out The Seychelles, Maldives, or Bali.
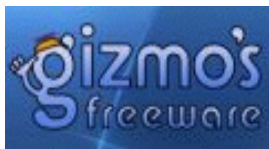http://greatist.com/about

Great Language Game

When you begin, you will hear a short recording of a language being spoken. You are then given multiple choices from which to select your answer. You can make three incorrect guesses before the game terminates. If you have an ear for languages, give it a try. If it all sounds like Greek to you, better skip this one.
http://greatlanguagegame.com

Use Promo Code TURKEY when entering your six-month subscription to Mr. Modem's award-winning weekly computer-help newsletter and receive one month for free! Visit www.MrModem.com. Courtesy of Mr. Modem.

Control Your Music Players with Hand Gestures
(Android only)

Similar to great ideas of controlling smart TVs with hand gestures, this smart app BrainWave works with hand gestures too in a way to control music players without touching the screen of your smart phones or tablets.

Three simple hand gestures are currently recognized by this app—Hold your open palm above the screen to play or pause a song, swipe right to advance to the next song, or swipe left to go back to the beginning of a playing song or a previous track.

When you first run this app, it shows you an interactive tutorial where you can practice the three gestures with the front facing camera of a mobile device. Once that's done, select a music player then control it with only hand gestures.

It has a long list of music players supported by this app. To name a few, there are Google Play Music, Pandora, Spotify, MusiXMatch, Songza, JetAudio, PowerAmp, iHeart Radio, Samsung Galaxy stock music player and many more.
http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/control-your-music-players-hand-gestures.htm

Nokia Releases Beta of Its
HERE Road Routing App for Android

by Ira Wilsker

About a year ago in this column, I wrote about my then new favorite real-time smart phone road routing program Waze. At that time, Google had recently purchased Waze from its Israeli developer for over a billion dollars, a princely sum that the developer generously shared with his handful of employees. I liked Waze better than my previous favorite, the ubiquitous Google Maps, as it utilized community input to display and warn about road hazards, traffic jams, gas station prices, and other real-time driving information. All of the road routing programs display current traffic conditions, color coded green (moving smoothly), yellow (moving, but slowed due to congestion, construction, or accident), and red (barely moving or stopped). Waze went a step farther by clearly indicating the location and types of delays, as well as displaying the actual real-time speeds of other drivers on that particular stretch of road.

In recent days Nokia, traditionally known as the Finland based manufacturer of cell phones with strong ties to Microsoft, released a free, beta (pre-release) of its HERE routing and driving program for any devices running Android 4.1 or later. Previous to this release, HERE would only run on a few specific Samsung Galaxy smart phones and devices. Always willing to try something new, I downloaded the beta of HERE and installed it on my 6.1" screen Huawei Ascend Mate 2, running Android 4.3. For those interested in downloading the beta of HERE, it is (as of this writing) not currently available in the Google Play Store, but must be downloaded directly from the HERE website at HERE.com/beta/android. Once the beta testing is completed, HERE will be available in the Play Store.

With Google Maps having a huge installed user base measured in the billions, and Waze (owned by Google), Yahoo Maps, and Bing Maps (Microsoft) each having millions of users of each app, one might wonder what HERE can bring to the foray and earn market share from its other well established competitors. Unlike its larger competitors, HERE is fully functional without an internet connection. According to one of the HERE webpages (here.com/beta/android), "HERE offers fast, accurate maps that are always ready to use, with or without an internet connection. Search for places, find routes and get turn-by-turn voice guidance wherever you are. Underground, on holiday, or even in the middle of nowhere: HERE just works, always." While a live internet connection is useful while using this, or any major competitive app, in order to get the latest traffic conditions and other real-time information, most of us have used road routing apps in dead spots, where no decent internet data connection is available. For example, when driving to visit family in the Dallas area, we take the back roads through the Piney Woods in order to avoid much of the traffic on I-45; the problem is that there is no usable data signal in much of the area which prevents Google Maps from displaying any useable information (including its network based maps), and Waze from displaying its detailed real-time infor-mation, but the maps mostly display ok from Waze's cached information if been at that location recently. When in these data dead spots, we rely on the GPS system on the dashboard. HERE does not have the problem of not being functional in data dead spots because the user has the dynamic option of using the network based maps available on the data feed (when there is an adequate data signal), or downloading complete and detailed maps which can be stored on the

phone or other connected smart device. HERE is multinational, and has free, fully detailed road maps for over 100 countries available for download.

While fully functional without pre-downloading any maps as long as there is a data connection, HERE offers a single huge download (about 6.8 gigs) of all roads in North America (including the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Central America, Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean islands and Cuba), or the user can choose to download national map sets (Canada is about 2 gigs, and the U.S. is about 4.7 gigs), or individual states and provinces. My choice was to download only those states that I travel in the most, including Texas (484mb), Louisiana (222mb), Mississippi (220mb) and Oklahoma (253mb). If I travel elsewhere, I will download those maps in advance. Other states and countries can be freely downloaded as needed, keeping in mind that downloading maps in advance and storing them on the device (mine were automatically saved to my micro-SDHC card) provides two benefits when HERE is being used: First, it saves on online data usage and improves performance, as saved maps do not have to be continuously downloaded while being accessed on the road; Second, HERE retains full functionality (like an autonomous GPS) without any data connection, which both can save on data or roaming feeds, but also continues to work in data dead spots, or if cell towers are out due to storms or other reasons. As a quick test, I tried HERE in "Airplane Mode" which shuts off the phone's external communication, and it continued to show my current location utilizing the phone's GPS and the previously downloaded maps. This may be useful when flying as a passenger, and satisfy the curiosity of the rhetorical "Where are we now and how far do we still have to go?"

HERE is very full featured containing the functionality of its major competitors, as well as some additional features. One distinct advantage of HERE over its major competitors is the functionality mentioned above when there is no internet connection. Even without an internet connection, HERE's maps are interactive, and turn-by-turn voice guidance is fully functional. In terms of the voices used by HERE, the user can optionally download for free, male or female voices, in dozens of languages, either in regular fidelity, or a much more distinct "Hi-fi" quality voice. The user may select a traditional color road map, or a full color, high resolution, satellite view, useful when looking for a particular building or landmark. Another feature available online or offline using HERE is public transportation maps and detailed directions for over 800 cities in 40 countries around the world. Live, real-time traffic information is available for over 40 countries via data connection, a benefit for both domestic and inter-national travelers. Similar to some of its major competitors, routes can be planned in advance on a desktop or laptop computer, or the smart device itself on the HERE website on beta.HERE.com, and then seamlessly loaded into the phone.

Many of us have found interesting places while traveling, such as restaurants, parks, historical locations, or other spots which we would like to catalogue; HERE allows the user to personalize maps using the integral "Collections" feature. Similar to a popular feature in the competitor Waze, HERE offers users the choice to share real-time location and routing information (when online) with selected family or friends through a private, safe, and secure feature "Glympse."

HERE does require a free registration in order to access all of the app's functionality; this allows HERE to automatically contact users when there are available updates to the downloaded maps, or the app itself. When updates are available, a tap on the screen will auto-matically download and install the selected updates.

Unless the user truly has an unlimited data plan on their phone, it may be better to download the large map files through an external Wi-Fi or USB connection, rather than directly from the carrier's network, as large down-loads can easily consume monthly carrier data limits, and possibly result in huge "over limit" fees and charges from the carrier. Likewise, as mentioned above, using previously downloaded maps rather than a data connection while on the road, can also save on data usage fees as the maps are already on the device and do not need to be continuously downloaded from the carrier.

Likewise, since the downloaded maps maybe large, check the available capacity of the optional memory card (commonly a micro- or mini- SDHC card) installed on the phone. Check to see what type and size (capacity) memory card can be used on a particular phone, and consider getting the fastest and highest capacity memory card supported by your phone. If considering purchasing a new memory card for your phone, be sure that it is the correct type (physical size and form factor), and then look at the speed and capacity of the memory card itself. The memory card will have a number, usually circled, on the front with a number up to "10" displayed; the higher the number, the faster the card, and the more expensive, although the difference in cost between a slower (such as a "4" speed card) and a fast "10" speed card is minimal, often just a few dollars. For most functions, the speed difference is negligible, but if videos are being recorded, the speed difference can have an impact on performance. Consider the capacity of the card; in the phone manual or online, there will be a listing that shows the capacity limit that can be addressed by the phone. Many older smart phones can access 8 gb, while almost all newer phones can access 16, 32, or 64 gb of data stored on the tiny memory cards. Good prices and "deals" from multiple vendors can be found online at dealnews.com/c108/Computers/Storage /Flash-Memory-Cards/.

The HERE website does have an important statement about the beta status of the app, "Please note that this is a beta version of the application that is still undergoing final testing. It is a known issue that cache cleaners have been found to cause navigation voices to be unavailable. We're investigating and will release an update soon." If the app is installed and registered, update and upgrade notifications will be displayed for the user.

In the limited time that I have played with HERE, I was very impressed with its capability. Understanding that the current app is a beta, or pre-release version, and improvements and additional features will inevitably be added to it, HERE currently has almost all of the functionality of its major competitors, with the added benefit of functionality while offline. HERE would be a worthwhile download and is worthy of further experimentation and likely adoption.

WEBSITES:

http://HERE.com

http://HERE.com/download

http://HERE.com/beta/android

http://HERE.com/help/android

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Courtesy of Mr. Wilsker

Twitter for Seniors

by Larry McJunkin

Retired Geek Technical Tips for the Non-Technical "Over 50" Crowd

You've never used Twitter. You say you're too old for Twitter…it's only for kids, and you could care less about reading what Lady Gaga had for lunch today. So obviously, Twitter is not for you. Wrong! If these are your thoughts about Twitter, I can say with authority that Twitter is not what you think.

Twitter does not exist to tell you what a celebrity had for lunch, or what the thoughts are of the singer who was just voted this year's American Idol (though they might tweet this information). Twitter is a handy way to break news, share knowledge, and refer people to longer forms of communication.

Here's some great examples of how I use Twitter. Where we live, in Tellico Village (a golfing and boating community in East Tennessee), the demographic is very much retired and very much over the age of 60, and some of the most important information we receive each day comes via Twitter. Updates from our three golf courses regarding whether carts are on the path or not; what the flag positions are; are any holes under repair; status of last night's storm damage…and the list goes on. The golf course superintendents post these tweets very early in the morning so the hundreds of golfers here know what to expect as they start their day on the links.

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the followers. That's why information on Twitter is short, to the point and effective.

More than half the people I talk to about Twitter think they have to have a smartphone to use it. Not so! You can access Twitter via Web, Desktop Applications and smartphones. It costs nothing to use and it's just one more social media source, like Facebook, that you won't know how much you needed it until you try it.

Twitter also has a built-in function for you to befriend and track the messages of other users. This is a simple way for you connect with like-minded people outside of your usual circle. A Twitter association can be developed into a long term acquaintance (if you desire).

If you do happen to have some famous folks you like (singers, actors, golfers, etc.), Twitter is a wonderful way to unobtrusively follow what they're up to. One of my personal favorites is Brandt Snedeker, the professional golfer from Nashville. His life is comedy of tweets that make me laugh almost every day. Recently, he's been trying to figure out how to win a war with raccoons and his garbage can…and so far the raccoons are winning!

As an individual, you have a variety of interests that a single newspaper or magazine can't cover. With Twitter you create your own personal newsfeed. You can get small bites information on local events, celebrities, politicians, hobbies or interests, your favorite news sites, etc. Much like you read a newspaper by scanning the headlines, on Twitter you can see short headlines describing an article and you can decide if you want to click on the link to read the rest of the story.

News is published on Twitter the instant it happens and if something big happens you'll likely find out when someone you follow tweets about it. In fact, Twitter became

more widely known after a user tweeted a link to a picture of the US Airways plane that successfully landed in the Hudson River.

Unlike traditional media where it is a one-way medium, you can be involved in Twitter. You can re-broadcast (re-tweet) the infor-mation you find valuable. You can comment on issues and share your own views (within the 140-character constraint, of course).

You can quickly and directly contact local politicians, celebrities and other people you don't know. You don't have to find out their address and compose a lengthy message, you can instantly let them know your opinion. These are people you will probably never meet in real life but now you can get daily updates on their lives and their interests.

Public figures tend to have hundreds of thousands, if not millions of followers and they may not respond to a tweet, but they often do read their (most important) messages because a 140 character tweet is easier to read quickly than a lengthy e-mail. Celebrities usually have an aide sift through tweets and pass on only the ones they think are worth reading.

You can also use Twitter to quickly inform friends and family about your daily life. You can tweet about things that aren't important enough for an e-mail but something you would mention to your friends if you bumped into them. You can also keep track of what they are up to by following them (if they're on Twitter, of course). You may also connect with other people with similar interests and strike-up an online friendship.

In any event, much like Facebook or Skype, don't be afraid to give Twitter a try. It's free, nothing tracks you or your actions, and you might just find that it's fun! If it isn't for you…that's what the DELETE key is for.

Courtesy of APCUG.

Book Review
by Mark Mattson

The Digital Negative
by Jeff Schewe
Computer Users of Erie PA

If you've been involved in photography for a lot of years, the title of this book may ring familiar. That's because it was named as an homage to a work by Ansel Adams titled *The Negative*, originally published in 1955. Ansel also wrote *The Camera* and *The Print*, of which Jeff has reworked the last tile into another homage title, *The Digital Print.*
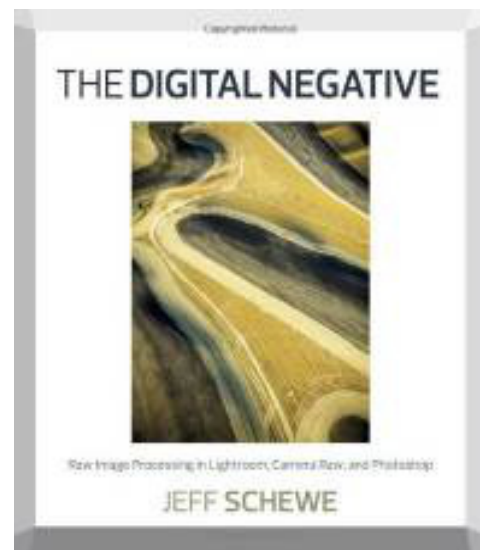
This volume brings you the most comprehensive look at how a digital camera produces its negative, otherwise known as the RAW file. Rather than being based on physical film emulsion and base, it is a purely digital image, living life as a collection of bits in a file on your computer. Nonetheless, it is just as important as the film negative in how it stores and presents your images to the world.

The volume is divided into six highly detailed chapters, covering topics ranging from what a digital negative is, to developing an efficient workflow to speed your image processing:

Ch. 1: What is a digital negative?
Ch. 2: Adobe RAW Image Processing: An Overview
Ch. 3: Fundamentals of Lightroom and Camera RAW
Ch. 4: Advanced RAW Processing using Lightroom or Camera RAW
Ch. 5: Deploying Photoshop to Perfect your Digital Negatives
Ch. 6: Creating an Efficient Workflow

Don't let the small number of chapters fool you: this book packs 312 pages full of content, from sample images and screenshots to tips and insights into how best to process your images.

If your camera supports shooting in RAW format, you would be better off using it to make your images than the JPEG option. JPEG gives you a smaller file size, but at the expense of losing a lot of image detail and data. RAW gives you the most image data your camera can produce, and will allow you to make your images the highest quality you could want, especially if you are trying to make a living selling your photography.

Author Schewe gives many detailed examples of how best to deal with different image types, from blown-out skies to sharpening for maximum effect.

The early chapters deal with what a digital negative is, how it is created, and some other technical details…but all of which are written in easy to understand language. Following this comes a look at Camera RAW and Lightroom, and explores the controls and functionality of each as related to RAW image editing. I don't think there was a control or option that was missed from either application and, again, it's in easy to read language.

The chapter on Photoshop is included as there *are* times when you need the extra power and capabilities not present in Camera RAW and Lightroom to fine-tune your images. Finally, chapter six takes a look at Jeff's workflow, from ingestion of the RAW images to archiving and outputting the finished image. It can give you a look at what you're doing, and how to improve it to be more efficient.

If you're looking for a good background primer on the Digital Negative and how and what a RAW file is, this is the volume you've been waiting for. It gives you the information you need to produce the best images you can from your digital camera, and does so in a way that you won't find intimidating or confusing.

The Digital Negative is published by Peachpit Press (www .peachpit.com), and is available either in print form ($39.99 list) or eBook format ($31.99 list). You can find them also on Amazon.com, or you can order from Peachpit and use your UG discount code. The print ISBN is 978-0-321-83957-2 and the eBook ISBN is 978-0-13-306436-0.
Courtesy of APCUG.

Beware of Personalized Prices
by Bob Rankin
askbobrankin.com

Did you know that prices you pay for online purchases can be affected by your zipcode, your computer's operating system, using a smartphone for shopping, and other mysterious factors? Read on to find out why, and what you can do about it...

Location, Location, Location

I've always been suspicious of websites that want to know my location before showing me their prices. Cellular carriers and supermarkets have done this for as long as I can recall. Home Depot also insists on a zipcode before showing prices. Why do they need my zipcode to give me their best deal on carrier service, carrots or carriage bolts?

Now researchers at Northeastern University have discovered that a great many other factors about you influence the prices you are shown on many e-commerce websites. For the same product, you may see different prices depending on whether you're using a mobile or desktop browser; the operating system of your browsing device; what you have clicked on in the past; and what you have purchased in the past.

Price Personalization

Similar secret algorithms "steer" you to certain products based upon what they know

about your online activity; but that's what "personalization" is supposed to be about. It's supposed to anticipate your interests and show you a power tool instead of a network appliance when you search for a "router," or vice versa.

I'll even allow that it's permissible to steer a customer who always buys top-of-the-line routers (of either type) to top-of-the-line other types of products that cost more than average. If quality matters more than price to a shopper, show him quality first.

But personalization is not supposed to be about gouging extra dollars out of a customer for a given product just because his dossier says you can probably get away with it. That's what appears to be happening on a broad variety of e-commerce sites.

What is Price Personalization and Discrimination?

You'll need a degree in statistics to interpret much of the data in the Northeastern study, but their summary claims that "there is mounting evidence that e-commerce sites are using personalization algorithms to implement price steering and discrimination" and they found evidence this on four general retailers and five travel sites.

Savvy online shoppers will use price comparison tools, and scour the web for coupons, promo codes and rebates. Those are just a few of the money-saving ideas I offer in my Ten Tips for Online Holiday Shoppers.

Travel sites are infamous for "differential pricing," of course. The researchers found that Travelocity charged iPhone and iPad users an average of $15 less than others paid. (Must be a bug in that algorithm; everyone knows that Apple fans are spendthrifts.) Cheaptickets.com charged "guest" shoppers who were not logged in to an account on the site an average of $12 more than those who registered. Prices paid by users of Expedia, Priceline, and Hotels.com seemed to be tied to the presence of certain cookies on the users' devices, but the researchers could not divine why.

The researchers also looked at 10 large retailers including Walmart, Staples, and JCPenney (but not Amazon). Home Depot steers customers to higher-priced products

based on their browsing histories; as much as $80 higher, the study found. Because the researchers could not actually buy things on these sites (budget constraints) they were unable to explore how past purchases affected current prices displayed. Travel prices were tested by booking and then canceling reservations.

There's nothing illegal about charging an Apple fan less than a Windows user, or steering customers to higher-priced options based on past purchases. But it certainly feels arbitrary, unreasonable, and unfair. The distinction between mobile and desktop browsers is baffling, too. But avoiding such price discrimination is difficult, even if you are one of the few consumers who realize that it's happening.

To get the best price, the researchers recommend checking the same item on the same site with both mobile and desktop browsers; using incognito mode to eliminate cookies from the equation; and having a friend check the price from his/her machine. But there's more you can do to make sure you get the best price when shopping online.

Tips for Online Holiday Shoppers

Holiday decorations appeared in stores almost two months ago, but there's still plenty of time to find great deals. Shopping online for the holidays is easy and convenient, but when you use the right tools, you can also save a lot of cash. Here are some money-saving tips for the smart online holiday shopper...

Are You a Smart Online Shopper?

Wish list? Check. Credit card? Check. Okay, before you head off to your favorite online store, are you sure you've found the best possible price for the item you're planning to buy? Have you researched other brands or similar items?

Have you searched for coupons or other discount offers? Are you getting free shipping whenever possible? And are you taking advantage of the power of group buying, and the wisdom of the crowd?

Use my ten simple shopping tips to make sure you're getting the best deal when you shop online...

Use price-comparison sites to find the best deals. Google Shopping is a good place to start. Just type in what you're seeking, such as "42 inch HDTV" or "cordless drills" and up pops an assortment of vendors. The initial results are displayed sorted by "relevancy" but I recommend that you re-sort them by price from low to high. Bizrate.com is another good tool. It can display prices including shipping to your Zip code, or even limit your search to items that ship for free. Pricegrabber.com lets you save interesting items as you shop for comparison to others. Pricewatch was one of the first price comparison sites, specializing in computers and electronics since 1995. They now list non-tech items as well.

Before you buy, look for coupons that can reduce your final price. RetailMeNot and CouponChief have thousands of digital coupons and discount codes from many well-known and obscure online sellers. A little known trick is to use Google's Blogsearch function to find coupon codes buried on blog pages. Just use "coupon" and the name of the brand, merchant, or product that you are seeking as your search term.

Look for rebates and rewards. Loyalty programs such as Ebates, Lyoness and others offer shoppers rebates, rewards, points and other incentives to purchase from one of their featured stores or recommended merchants. It's free to sign up, but you must remember to login and use the supplied link to visit the online stores, or you might not get credit for the purchase. Note that some loyalty programs allow you support a non-profit or other organization instead of receiving the rebate yourself.

Don't forget eBay, especially if the item you seek is a staple rather than a fad of the

moment. Prices of jewelry, tools and electronics (both new and used) are very reasonable. And for every dollar you spend on eBay, you earn "eBay Bucks" that can be redeemed quarterly. Oh, and here are two eBay Ninja trick that'll save you money every time. First, start your search at the eBay home page. When you get the list of matching items, refine your search by checking the "Completed listings" box under the "Show Only" header. This will tell you what the item has actually sold for in recent eBay sales or auctions. And second, use BidRobot to boost your chances of winning the auction.

The Lighter Side