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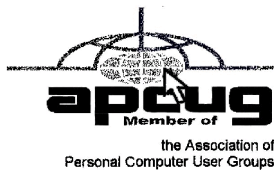
June 2014

Next Meeting
Tuesday, June 10
New Computer? Now What?

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Don't forget August's picnic, Geek Olympics, and silent auction.



Clouded Judgment

by Greg Skalka

Under the Computer Hood UG, CA

The latest trend in computer operation and data storage is “in the cloud.” This refers to storage of files not on your local computer hardware, but on remote servers which are accessed through the Internet. The cloud can be used to store your files so they can be accessed from anywhere, not just from your own computer. Applications can be stored and run through the cloud, requiring less sophisticated local hardware.

Almost all computer users today presently use the cloud, and many probably don't realize it. There are of course the online file storage sites which many use for storing and sharing photos. Any photos you view that are not in your computer, tablet or smartphone's local memory or hard drive are coming from the cloud. Videos you watch from YouTube, Netflix or other web sites originate in the cloud. All the information you posted to Facebook about your

personal activities now resides in the cloud. Anytime you play one of the games associated with the Google Doodles, those changes made to the Google home page logo to celebrate or commemorate something, you are play a game in the cloud. In reality, the cloud is the Internet.

Silver Linings

There are a lot of advantages to cloud storage and operation for the computer user. With your files stored on a hard drive in someone else's server, you don't need to have as much hard drive space of your own. Most online services, including Google, Yahoo and Amazon, provide some free cloud storage to their account holders. Having your files in the online storage provided by these companies allows access to your files from any computer connected to the Internet. If your computer is stolen or fails, your files are still safe in the cloud. This can be a great means of data back-up, and most software back-up programs now include a cloud option and online storage space for their customers.

Watching media content from the cloud has many advantages over local content. A vast array of movies and videos can be available to view over the Internet without the hassle of loading and storing on your local hard drive.

Many programs that you might otherwise have had to install and run from local storage space on your computer can now be run over the Internet, often through a web browser. Web mail is one example of a cloud application. With an email client like Outlook or Thunderbird installed on your computer, you can download and read your Gmail email and store it on your PC. Should something happen to your PC, however, your stored messages may be lost. By using the web mail online application for Gmail instead, you can always access your new and stored messages from any PC connected to the Internet.

More and more companies are providing cloud-based applications. Cloud software allows users to save local disk space, avoid installation issues, buy on a subscription basis and always have the most current version. For software makers, cloud subscription software lowers distribution costs and provides continuous revenue streams. In addition to the traditional versions installed on your PC, Intuit now provides a web version for all of its TurboTax programs. Office 365 is Microsoft's cloud version of its Office software suite. It allows users to buy a subscription to their productivity software and run it from the Internet, with access for up to five PCs and five mobile devices. This allows users to have access to the most current Office software on a yearly or even monthly basis, with 20 GB of online storage for documents.

Another advantage of cloud computing is that the hardware requirements are lower, allowing computing devices that are less expensive and more mobile to be used. Tablet computers and smartphones don't have internal hard drives and their internal Flash memory space is limited, so cloud file storage is almost a necessity. Google's low-cost Chromebook computers are specifically made for cloud computing. The latest version, built by HP, has 16 GB of Flash memory, no hard drive and is priced at \$279. It runs Google's Chrome OS and relies on applications that run online like Gmail and Google Docs, with most data files stored in the cloud. With lower hardware requirements, cloud devices like this can be cheaper, lighter and have greater battery life.

Dark Clouds

Unfortunately, there are a number of downsides to the cloud computing scenario. All those files you stored on someone else's server are now no longer fully under your control. Cloud services companies are occasionally acquired, sold and shut down, so you may not be able to depend on your data being there when you need it. Cloud providers can also have access problems outside of your control, causing you to lose access to your data, perhaps at critical times. If your web email provider is down, you lose all email access. If you instead use an

installed email client, you at least have access to the email archived on your PC.

With your data in the cloud, not only can there be problems for you to access your data, there can also be unintended access to your data by others. Since the terms of service are often unintelligible, you may not have full certainty that your data won't wind up in places you didn't intend it through intentional actions by the cloud companies. And you really don't know what might happen to your data if the company's servers are hacked. It is therefore risky to put sensitive personal information in the cloud, even if it is encrypted, as it could be compromised through no fault of your own.

Another problem with cloud computing is that it requires an Internet connection (often through Wi-Fi only) to do anything useful. If you can't get online, all those files and photos of yours in the cloud might as well be on the moon. That Chromebook laptop may be small and light, but unless it can get a Wi-Fi signal (it has no wired Ethernet connector), it is pretty much useless dead weight, as most of its apps run over the Internet. Other Wi-Fi devices like most tablet computers have the same issue. Even with a cellular-connected tablet or smartphone, a good connection is never guaranteed. I recently found this to be the case in the lower decks of the U.S.S. Midway Aircraft Carrier Museum. If you want to be sure you can watch a movie on your tablet during your next plane flight, you'd better load it on the device.

The performance of web-based applications is often much worse than that of apps running on your local hardware. This is especially true if your Internet connection is poor. Even with good connections, some web sites always appear to be slow. I much prefer to use a local email client for my email as my email provider's web mail site is so slow to respond.

Clearing the Air for Personal Clouds

In spite of the drawbacks, the trend towards computing devices that are more mobile yet storage-limited, like tablets and smartphones, is accelerating this push into the cloud. External USB hard drives and Flash drives may be popular storage accessories for laptops, but few tablets have USB connections. A new class of external storage devices promises to expand the local storage for Wi-Fi devices like tablets, smart-phones, Chromebooks and even laptops. These devices combine the bulk storage of a hard drive or Flash memory with a Wi-Fi hot spot to create your own personal cloud.

The Gigastone Smartbox (<http://www.gigastone.com/>; \$45) combines an SD memory socket with an 802.11 b/g/n hot spot and a lithium ion battery. It allows up to six Wi-Fi devices to connect and share up to 32 GB of SDHC memory, providing handy file sharing and streaming. It can even provide a back-up power source for USB-powered devices.



The Sony WG-C10 Portable Wireless Server (http://www.sony.net/Products/ws/en_us/pwsintro; \$80) does all the Smartbox does for eight simultaneous users, and adds a port to share a USB Flash drive.

SanDisk's SDWS2 Connect Wireless Flash Drive (www.sandisk.com/products/wireless/flash-drive, \$60) does the same as Sony but can't charge other devices. The Kingston Digital MobileLite Wireless Flash Reader (www.kingston.com/us/usb/wireless; \$60) and Wi-Drive (\$60 for 32 GB) are similar products.



Another class of mobile storage devices uses a hard drive instead of Flash memory, providing much more storage capacity.



This includes the Patriot Aero Wireless Mobile Drive (www.patriotmemory.com; \$150 for 500GB), a 500 GB or 1 TB USB3 external hard drive that serves to up to five wireless users. Other similar devices include the Corsair Voyager Air (www.corsair.com/voyager-air) and the Seagate Wireless Plus (www.seagate.com).

In spite of drawbacks, a greater use of portable devices means an increase in cloudiness in the computer world. To avoid operating in a dangerously obscuring fog, good judgment must be used in determining how and where to access the cloud and what data to store there. Personal clouds like the wireless mobile storage devices now available can be a safe and convenient storage alternative for use with mobile devices.

From the December 2013 issue of DriveLight, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood UG, CA. Courtesy of APCUG.

Paid Apps for Free or Deeply Discounted Now Readily Available

by Ira Wilsker

Several months ago I wrote about some of the online services that make available to users a "daily deal" of commercial PC and MAC software either for free or deeply discounted. This fully functional commercial software is legally licensed and legitimate, not pirated, and made available for a very limited time for free (or deeply discounted). Two of the websites that I monitor on a daily basis as a source of free or discounted commercial PC software are SharewareOnSale.com and Giveawayoftheday.com. Recently, Shareware OnSale.com has offered for very brief periods of time, name brand software from Norton, BitDefender, IObit, and other well known software publishers. These are legal, full versions of commercial software, made available in the hope that users will later pay for annual renewals or upgrades. Several of the publishers offered a free one year license of their products, with the option of buying multiyear or lifetime licenses at deep discounts, often exceeding an 80% discount from the retail price. This has proven to be an effective way of improving market share in a highly competitive industry while giving users a reasonable opportunity to use commercial software instead of the "freeware" alternatives.

The deals offered by some of these websites have proven so popular that it was only a matter of time until additional categories of commercial software became available. Recently,

Ashraf, the publisher of the very popular SharewareOnSale.com website that has become an industry leader in making available these super deals on commercial PC and MAC software, introduced a companion software site that offers similar deals on apps for Android, iOS devices (iPad and iPhone), MAC powered devices. and Windows powered smart devices. This new website is HungryForApps.com.

Updated at least daily,

POD Computers™

1925 South Ave.
Corner of South Ave. and
East Henrietta Rd.
244-2240

What we do

Windows, Mac, and Linux
PC Repair
Mac Repair
Virus Removal
Custom System Builds
Data Destruction
Electronics Recycling

Laptops starting At
\$129⁹⁹

Desktops starting at
\$149⁹⁹

Rochester Computer Society
Members receive 10% off
(must have membership card to redeem)

www.podcomputers.com

HungryForApps.com is currently offering (as I type this) almost 250 normally paid (commercial) apps either for free or at a significant discount from the "app store" prices. Almost all of the apps listed are downloaded and installed directly from the authorized app stores, such as Google's Play Store, or iTunes, which provides a degree of safety and security not available from third party or illicit pirate download websites.

On the HungryForApps.com website, each app is initially displayed as an icon, about 50 per page, with the descriptive app name, the normal selling price, and the discounted rate. If the item is displayed with the statement "100% Discount," the descriptive word "Free" will always be the first word in the description. Just above and to the right of each descriptive app icon is a smaller icon that denotes the operating system for that particular app. It is very easy for users to visually determine which operating system is required for each displayed app; a small blue icon with a circled capital "A" indicates that the listed app is for iOS devices, and that the app can be downloaded directly by clicking on the icon, and receiving the app directly from the official Apple App Store; a small green robot, the trademark for Android, indicates that the app is for Android smart devices, and can be downloaded via the linked icon directly from the Google Play Store. Several of the displayed icons, often featuring some excellent deals, have a small Amazon App Store logo, which indicates that the app can be downloaded from Amazon's Android App Store, a worthy competitor to Google's Play Store. A quick glance at some of the listed Amazon distributed Android apps showed several relatively expensive Android apps, many in the \$10 to \$25 range, could be downloaded from Amazon for free through the HungryForApps.com linked icon.

These apps marketed by HungryForApps.com serve a variety of purposes and functions. Many of them are games, including some of the more popular paid games, which are available for free or discounted; many others are a variety of utilities, including security software, word processing, mapping, and other practical apps. On just the first page of today's deals (the total listing as I type this is five pages long, 50 apps per page), are an assortment of games, language learning and translation utilities (Spanish, French, Arabic, English), paint and photo editing apps, camera utilities, mathematical and calculator apps, contact managers, encryption apps, ringtone generators and converters, e-book readers, QSR code readers and generators, exercise guides, a bartending guide, city travel guides, and calendar apps.

Of all of the commercial (paid) apps listed, about 150 are available for a limited time for free, and about another 100 are discounted from the app store listed prices. The discounts on the paid items mostly range from 30% to 85% off the app store prices, and include a wide assortment of apps including PowerPoint and PDF converters, Microsoft Word commercial templates, large bundles of iBooks, file managers, music editors, games, security software, finance and investment managers, digital scanners, and other types of paid apps.

For ease of use, HungryForApps.com offers a menu bar on its website that can sort the available apps by operating system, or price (free or paid). The current list offers 40 free Android apps, including a \$13 office suite available for a limited time from Amazon for free. Also listed are about 45 paid Android apps, with original prices as high as \$15 with discounts as much as 85% off listed prices. The selection of about 100 iPhone and iPad apps includes an assortment of apps similar to the Android selection, but almost all of the normally paid iPhone and iPad are available for free, with only a few available with retail prices as high as \$30, but available at discounted prices of 99 cents to \$5. All of the iPhone and iPad apps listed are available for download directly from itunes.apple.com. Another 52 MAC apps are available under similar terms as the others, free or discounted, and available for download from Apple's Mac Download Store.

With an average of about 250 apps a day available from Hungry ForApps.com, it is an

excellent resource for apps, but it is not the only collection of its type. Another excellent source of free and deeply discounted commercial apps is AppGratis at appgratis.com. While its daily offerings for iPhone, iPad, and Android are listed on its website, its primary promotional vector is a daily announcement sent directly to the selected device which lists the day's offerings for that device. While at least one paid app offered for free is featured daily for each device, AppGratis also offers some deeply discounted commercial titles as well. In recent days AppGratis has offered for my Android devices an assortment of paid games and utilities for free. Several of the iPad and iPhone specific apps have also been most interesting and useful. AppGratis has its own free app for these devices, which can be found in the appropriate app store; this AppGratis app displays a notification on the device whenever new free apps are featured for that device, typically once a day. I can recommend the free AppGratis app as an efficient way to be kept informed of the daily deals. AppGratis also offers a once-daily email of its offerings, as well as its website which displays all currently available offerings.

Between HungryForApps.com and AppGratis, almost any smart device user will almost certainly find some occasional super deals, usually free, that will enhance the enjoyment and functionality of his device. As far as apps are concerned, both of these services are a daily top priority for me.



Working with Folders

Q. I want to create a new folder in my Documents folder so I can consolidate several folders into one. The problem is, when I create a new folder, it appears at the top of the list of folders, and the ones I need to move into this new folder start with a "W." I cannot drag the "W" folders to the top of the list to get them into the new folder. Do you have a solution for me, Mr. M? (Silly me. Of course you do!)

A. Folders will appear alphabetically, so click the column heading and it will sort A to Z. Click the heading again and it will sort from Z to A. You cannot, however, drag to reposition files within folders or folders within their own alphabetical hierarchy.

If you want to force a folder to appear in a specific order, you can do that by changing the name of a folder to anything that places it in the desired sequential (alphabetical) order. For example, if you had files named Aardvarks.doc, Apples.doc and Argyles.doc, and you wanted to insert a new file – let's say you had another Apples file and you wanted it to appear after the existing Apples file, all you would have to do is rename the existing Apples.doc file to Apples1.doc and name the new file Apples2.doc and presto, everything will be exactly as you want it to be. If you want the Argyles.doc file to always appear at the top, above all other files, rename it Aargyles.doc or !Argyles.doc or any other naming convention that makes sense to you, but accomplishes the same purpose.

To rename a file or folder, click to select it and press F2 or right-click it and select Rename.

Q. Can I have too many devices running on a wireless router? At my house, when all the grandkids are here, we have two Xboxes, a laptop, a couple of iPads that are in use at one time or another. My wife wants to purchase two additional tablets, so would it be better to add another router? Thanks for your always good advice, Mr. M.

A. A typical router can accommodate 50 to 100 computers and/or devices, so what you describe

would not cause your router to swoon. Internet access speed, of course, will depend on the bandwidth available to you from your Internet Service Provider, so the more devices online, the more the existing bandwidth is being shared among all devices. Adding a router would not accomplish anything because you would still be sharing the same amount of bandwidth.

Q. I'm getting a pop-up that asks if I would like to use Windows Live Photo Gallery to open .JXR files? What are .JXR files and are they safe to open?

A. The .JXR extension is an infrequently used file format, developed for professional photographers. It yields higher bit depth and compression without loss of quality. JXR files aren't particularly popular due to the widespread use of Adobe PhotoShop and other products that do not support that file type. The .JXR file format itself presents no unique risks.

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

10 Life Hacks From 100 Years Ago

Originally printed on cards used to strengthen cigarette packaging during the late 1880s, it wasn't long before these cards were used for advertisements and even inspirational and informative messages. During the 1910s, Gallaher Ltd. of London printed a "How-To" series, with hints for everyday living that provide a fascinating glimpse into life more than 100 years ago. Just keep in mind that these tips were written a very long time ago, so use your good common sense before trying any of the ancient advice provided on this site.

<http://bit.ly/1ehHnMQ>

Animated Engines

If you are fascinated with how gizmos work, as I am, this site provides animated explanations how any of 21 different types of engines function. Select an engine and you will learn when it was invented, what fuel it requires, and as you scroll down the page, it breaks down how each of the various engine components function.

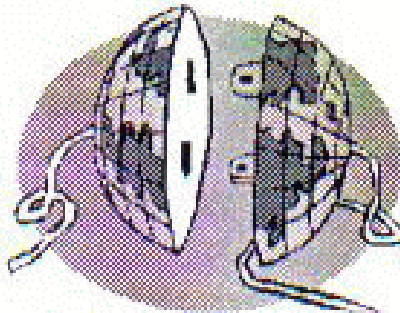
www.animatedengines.com/

SwitchCam

SwitchCam aggregates the best concert footage (political events and conferences) from the Web, making them easy for you to find and enjoy. When you watch a concert for the first time, a pop-up explains the interface to you. Click the Okay, Let's Get Started button to make it disappear or you can click the X. If there are multiple camera angles for an event you are watching, you can switch between them (hence the name SwitchCam) by clicking a selected view as you are watching. You can use the set list at the left to skip to your favorite song. Use the Search field at the top to find your favorite artists quickly. This site is in beta (test version) as I write this, but it promises to be an up and comer.

<http://switchcam.com/>

Use Promo Code MODEM 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.



Book Review - The Art of the Photograph

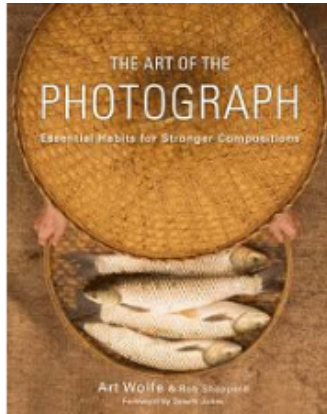
By Art Wolfe and Rob Sheppard

Review by Mark Mattson

Computer Users of Erie, PA

"Good photography does not come from simply capturing an image. It comes from constructing a photo, building it up visually in your mind" (*–Art Wolfe*).

The thought process embodied in the quote above describes the ideals that are presented in this book. Based upon a series of workshops taught by Wolfe over the years, it attempts to change the way photographers look at the world around them, to help them improve in their art.



Published in early December, the 256 pages in this book are chock-full of valuable information from the 40+ year career of Art Wolfe. There are also contributions from fellow photographer Rob Sheppard interspersed throughout, giving his insights into the topic at hand.

The book is divided into ten chapters, covering the whole gamut of photographic composition:

1. Finding Inspiration
2. Discovering the Subject
3. Constructing the Image
4. Camera and Lens
5. The Elements of Design
6. Color and Black-and-white
7. Light and Composition
8. Creative Solutions
9. 10 Deadly Sins of Composition
10. Equipment and Workflow

In addition to the information presented on each page, there are also photos illustrating the concepts being discussed, with technical details given for each. Also, each chapter ends with a series of questions related to the information in that chapter. These are presented to give you a chance to think about what you've learned, and starting points to apply the techniques to your own photography. The final spread in each chapter presents an image shot by Wolfe, and gives detailed information on how it was made, further illustrating the concepts presented in the preceding pages.

This is not, however, your typical "do these things and you'll shoot better" photo book. Everything in its pages has been learned and refined over many years of practical field experience. It goes beyond the mere technical aspects, and presents the knowledge in an almost philo-sophical tone, in the hopes that the reader will feel the material as well as learn it ... to incorporate it into the reader's thoughts and emotions.

The bulk of the book concentrates on the various topics relating to the composition and creation of your images. Chapter nine discusses the 10 deadly sins of photographic composition, such as centering your subject, putting the horizon in the center, and eight more. These cover the most common mistakes made by amateur photographers, and are presented to help you avoid them.

The final chapter talks a bit about what gear Art Wolfe carries in the field, and why. There is also several pages devoted to the workflow Art has developed when preparing to go on a shoot, and also the process he follows when home doing is post-processing.

This book is an enjoyable and thought-provoking read from cover to cover. If you wish to

improve your photos and give them more impact, then you'll want to add this one to your library, and absorb it fully.

This book was published December 3, 2013 by Amphoto Books (<http://crownpublishing.com/imprint/amphoto-books/>). It lists for \$29.99, and may be purchased from the publisher direct, or from Amazon.com (click the cover image to go to their page). Amazon offers the title for \$23.20, or a Kindle edition for \$18.99. In either case, the ISBN number is 978-0770433161.

Free Online Backup Services

by Ira Wilsker

At the local computer club meeting earlier today (gtpcc.org), we had a brief discussion on the subject of online backup services. For those who might not be aware, there are literally dozens, if not more, online companies that provide remote backup services, often using the term "in the cloud." Unlike the more traditional in-house backup methods, such as an external hard or flash drive which are very common today, these online services utilize an internet connection to send and receive the data to a distant server to be stored on that distant server.

While there are advantages to local drive based data backups, mostly their relative fast speed, there are also distinct advantages to distant, remote storage of critical data files. Locally, we have a recent history of hurricanes, massive flooding, other natural disasters, and other accidents such as house fires that could compromise our data stored in our homes on external backup devices. While there are a variety of fire resistant and waterproof hard drives available, as well as waterproof and fire resistant safes to store our personal data backup devices, the redundancy of remote and distant internet connected server storage provides protection for our critical data that may surpass the data protection that we might individually provide.

The term "the cloud" or "cloud storage service" is defined by Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_storage_service) as, "file hosting service, cloud storage service, online file storage provider, or cyberlocker is an Internet hosting service specifically designed to host user files. It allows users to upload files that could then be accessed over the internet from a different computer, tablet, smart phone or other networked device, by the same user or possibly by other users, after a password or other authentication is provided. Typically, the services allow HTTP access, and sometimes FTP access."

Radio listeners and TV viewers may have heard a myriad of commercial spots promoting one or more of the several commercial online backup services personally endorsed by prominent celebrities; while these remote backup services are of decent quality and value, priced well within the reach of typical computer users, there are also a wide assortment of free online backup services available to anyone. Two of the popular computer technical review websites, Gizmo's Tech SupportAlert.com and About.com Computing PC Support have recently published updated (March, 2014) reviews and recommendations on the free online backup services. What is especially interesting is the fact that these two highly respected services distinctly differ on which of these free services are the best; Gizmo's top three recommendations are not even listed by About.com, and About.com's top three recommendations are not listed by Gizmo.

Gizmo's TechSupportAlert recommendations (tech.supportalert.com/content/best-free-online-backup-sites.htm) suggests that users consider and evaluate the free (and paid) online backup services based on several listed factors and features. These features to be considered when choosing a storage services include: Storage Size (more free storage is better); Document

Synchronization (documents and files created or changed need to automatically be uploaded to the backup server); Long Term Reliability of the Site (will your files be there available several years from now); Security (encryption); File Location (some backup services require a special folder to be created on your hard drive); and Ease of Use (the service should be menu driven and intuitive when selecting the files and folders to be backed up). Gizmo also has a suggestion for those who have more critical data to store than the space allowed by the free remote storage service, "One possible strategy is to use several free sites. Use one site for photos, a second for general documents and a third site with pre-upload and post-download encryption for your financial documents and other documents you want to keep private."

While Gizmo reviewed and commented on eight free online backup services, its current top recommendations only include four services. Gizmo gave its highest five-star rating, and "Gizmo's Freeware award as the best product in its class!" to IDrive (idrive.com). According to Gizmo, IDrive, "Combines a web service with a stand-alone program; Files can be located any place on your computer. Does have pre/post file transfer encryption. It has versioning." IDrive is also available in a portable version that can be run from a flash drive. The only downside of IDrive noted by Gizmo was IDrive's relatively low limit of online storage, currently capped at 5 GB.

Gizmo had a three-way tie (four star rating out of five for each) for its other recommended free products, Google Drive, Microsoft's One Drive (formerly called SkyDrive), and Spideroak. Google Drive (drive.google.com) is both a web service and a stand-alone program that offers 15 GB of storage, ease of installation, and automatically synchronizes files between the connected devices (Windows, Mac, iOS, and Android devices). According to Gizmo, Google Drive offers "No file security." One Drive (formerly SkyDrive) also combines a web service with a stand-alone program that offers a variable amount of storage (onedrive.live.com); earlier subscribers have 25 GB of storage, while new subscribers will only receive 7 GB of storage, with the opportunity to earn up to 100 GB of free storage on an annual basis, which Microsoft calls a \$50 value." OneDrive users can get this free additional storage by signing up for Microsoft's free "Bing Rewards" program (bing.com/explore/rewards), and earning 100 points by searching the web with Microsoft's Bing search engine. Bing Reward Points can also be redeemed for gift cards, or donated to charity. Gizmo had one concern with OneDrive similar to the concern with Google Drive; that was (according to Gizmo) "No Security." Gizmo's last recommended free online storage service is Spideroak (spideroak.com) which had all of the recommended features, including "Pre and Post File Encryption <sic>," but was criticized for its very limited 2 GB of free storage. Not stated by Gizmo, Spideroak offers an additional GB of storage for each friend referred to Spideroak who signs up, up to 10 GB of additional storage, for a total limit of 12 GB.

The About.com listing of "12 Free Online Backup Plans" (pc-support.about.com/od/software-tools/tp/free-online-backup.htm), generally included a lesser known listing of "truly free" online backup services, ranked in order of available storage space. This listing ranged from a top-rated 10 GB of storage space from Symform (symform.com), to as little as 2 GB of storage from each of the six lowest rated services. Second on the About.com rankings is Cyphertite Basic (cyphertite.com/plans.php) which offers 8 GB of storage, followed by MiMedia Free (online.mimedia.com/www/v1/signup/free) with 7 GB, IDrive (idrive.com) at 5 GB, and Jottacloud Free (jottacloud.com/products), a Norwegian based service that offers 5 GB of free storage. The remaining About.com recommendations all offered either 3 GB or 2 GB of free storage.

One factor often overlooked by users of both the free and paid online backup services is the limiting speed factor of their broadband internet connections. Most local broadband users were

"sold" by their internet providers on a possible top download speed, which published reports have indicated is often greatly overstated. Many users that I have spoken with were unaware that the advertised maximum speed of their internet connection is the download speed, but that the upload speed is typically only one-half to one-quarter of the download speed, meaning that it will take two to four times longer to upload a file than it does to download the same size file. In one specific case that I heard firsthand, the user subscribed to one of the very good quality, highly advertised, paid cloud based storage services with enough capacity to backup all of the data on his hard drive.

Running 24/7, it took him several days to upload his entire backup to the remote service; while uploading, his internet download had slowed to a crawl, making it a slow process to open web pages and access his email. If he had backed up his system to a modern USB external hard drive, it might have only taken a few hours to back up the same amount of data, a clear indication of the great difference of speed between the competing methods.

A few weeks later, that same user called me angry with his broadband internet provider; he had a large fee added to his internet bill for "overage," as he went far beyond his "metered" limits of service included in his normal monthly data allocation by sending the massive amount of data to the remote server. Some internet service providers "throttle back" the internet speed, slowing it significantly, if too much data is transferred, not just making online backups, but also including streaming media such as Netflix and Hulu.

Prior to using any of the remote "cloud" backup services, free or paid, for anything more than occasionally backing up small numbers of files, it would be most worthwhile to check with your internet service provider (ISP) and determine if there are any caps on monthly data, or "throttling back" of speed if large amounts of data are sent or received. I also recommend that users determine their actual upload and download speeds using a free utility, such as Ookla's free SpeedTest, at speedtest.net. Not just can the user accurately determine his real internet performance and compare it to what was the advertised speed (it will almost always be lower than advertised), but he can also estimate data upload and download times using simple arithmetic by dividing the amount of data by the appropriate speed, as determined during the speed test. Often the user will find that the convenience of a remote cloud backup for anything greater than a few very critical files, is more than offset by the time and potential cost of the backup.

While I personally use Google Drive and OneDrive for remote storage of critical data files, zipping (compressing) sensitive personal data in password protected zip files to offset any "prying eyes," I still maintain continuous backups on a pair of USB external hard drives as my primary, comprehensive backup. I did the simple arithmetic, and with my current internet connection, it is not practical to do comprehensive backups to a "cloud" backup server. If you are considering remote backup services, I strongly recommend that you do the arithmetic yourself to determine if comprehensive remote backup is appropriate for you.

Websites:

<http://pcsupport.about.com/od/software-tools/tp/free-online-backup.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/best-free-online-backup-sites.htm>

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

<http://winsupersite.com/skydrive/bing-rewards-members-get-100-gb-free-onedrive-storage-one-year>

Courtesy of Mr. Wilsker.

Windows Apps on a Chromebook?

by Bob Rankin

Microsoft seems to be very scared of the Google Chromebook, judging by the disingenuous TV commercials the developer of Windows is running. "You can't run Windows apps on a Chromebook" is the message, and it's simply untrue. Here are several ways to run Windows apps on a Chromebook...Yes, You Can Run Windows and Office on Chromebooks! The loudest criticism I hear about Chromebooks is that because they don't run the Windows operating system, you're stuck in a world without Microsoft Word, Excel and other Office tools. But that's not true. Here's how to prove those nay-sayers wrong. (For a bit of background, see [Why Do Chromebooks Worry Microsoft?](#)) Business users are Microsoft's bread and butter; they rely on Windows and Microsoft Office. The Windows-based Office suite cannot be installed on Chrome-books, but who cares? All you really need is the use of MS Office, and you can get that from Microsoft Office 365, the cloud service.

Up to five members of a household can use the Home Premium version of Office 365 for \$9.99 per month. But there's also a completely free version of Microsoft Office, called Office Online, which provides web-based access to Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Read about Office Online in my article [Free Microsoft Office Online?](#) to find out how it compares to the paid Office 365, and a similar free offering, Google Docs.

Here's another alternative that brings a full-fledged Windows desktop experience to your Chromebook. The Chrome Remote Desktop app will let you tap a Windows computer and run any software residing on it. Your Chromebook basically acts as a dumb terminal, displaying the remote computer's screen and transmitting your commands to it.



AskBobRankin.com

I've written about other web-based remote desktop access services that serve this purpose just as well as Chrome Remote Desktop.

Other Options for Chromebooks

So what if you don't have an Internet connection? Even an offline Chromebook can run Windows apps with a little help from two open-source programs. The Chromebook must be running an Intel processor; ARM processors won't support this trick. You will have to be geeky enough to enter Chrome's "developer mode" and do some down-and-dirty hacking. Here are the details: First, you'll need to install Crouton to create a Linux desktop alongside your Chrome OS system. You can then install Wine in the Linux environment and use it to install and run native Windows apps. The good geeks at [HowToGeek.com](#) have very nice tutorials on these subjects. See [Install Linux with Crouton on Chromebook](#) and [Install Wine on Linux and run Windows apps](#).

Business users generally seek the reassurance of a well-known, established business to support their IT needs. VMWare's Horizon Desktop-as-a-Service solution fits that bill, and now the company is providing business Chromebook users with software and services to bring Windows apps to Chromebooks just as the open-source Crouton and Wine programs do for home users. Bottom line, there ARE ways to run Windows and Office apps on your Chromebook. More and more software is becoming web-based, which means you don't have to

install it or worry about updates. It also means that your operating system (Windows, Mac OS, Linux or Chrome OS) doesn't matter as much.

Courtesy of Bob Rankin.

The Running of the Nerds 2014

by Lou Torraca

MOAA – The TUG, Hawaii

Who needs Barcelona and the bulls when we have Las Vegas and the Nerds? Yup, The International Consumer Electronics Show kicked off in Vegas 7-10 January with 150,000 folks running with the Nerds, wanting to see as many of the 3,200 exhibits as possible. For the media, the show starts with 3 events, CES Unveiled on Sunday night at the Mandalay Bay, Digital Experience at the Mirage on Monday night and Showstoppers at the Wynn on Tuesday night. Monday is an all-day extravaganza of press conferences, each one an hour and fifteen minutes, then a fifteen minute break to run to the next one. I also went to one that previewed the China information technology expo (CITE) sponsored by the government in April and another one that previewed IFA, held in Berlin in September and which they bill as the world's leading trade show for consumer electronics and home appliances. So, with all that said, how do you get to see anything? Fortunately, the first three events take place in ballrooms and as many as 200 vendors display their best products, which, BTW, include cars, which look like the next Tech Hot spot!



From streaming music to BING search to self-parking there was a lot of buzz about all the various models displayed. TVs were also a big hit with UHD, and curved screens causing a lot of oohs and aahs ... biggest was when, with the push of a button, the curved screen was returned to a flat screen.

But be prepared for sticker shock ... an LG 84inch UHD is priced at \$17,000. !!!!!

OK, back to the real world, here are a few gadgets that caught my eye.

DISH Super Joey

The eight-show system involves Dish's Hopper (pronounced Happah by folks from Boston or who went to BU J) DVR and a new Super Joey add-on box for separate rooms. The catch is that four of those shows have to be from the broadcast networks ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox. Dish also unveiled Joey boxes that can run wirelessly with the help of a router that sits next to the Hopper. Previously, Joey boxes had to be connected by separate coaxial cables. Now they just need power outlets. Improvements in Wi-Fi technology made the new wireless setup possible.



ASUS PadFoneX:

Combines a smartphone with the convenience of a tablet. Easily dock the smartphone into the tablet docking station and you have a full tablet with all of your files and customizations in one place. You can charge the smartphone wirelessly or while docked for extended battery life. For techno nerds, this ASUS Padfone X device powers with 300~ 2266MHz MSM8974AB and Adreno 330 chipset. Other specs include 1920×1200 resolution, 2GB RAM, 16GB ROM and it will run Android 4.4 OS. Very impressive!



The Martian Notifier



It doesn't advertise to the world that it's a tech gadget. On the contrary, it looks almost completely like a regular watch, save for a small horizontal screen on its face. That's where you see those notifications, which have replaced voice control as the newer model's bread and butter. It lets you customize your own vibration patterns for each different type of notification. So, if you have your arms full, the pattern of vibrations you feel will let

you know right away what kind of notification just came in. Just an email ... no rush. That's a text ... might be the one you're waiting for. You customize the patterns for each type of alert and instantly know what type of notification is coming in without looking at the watch. Smartwatches in general keep you from having to look at your phone so often – but the Martian takes that a step further and keeps you from even having to look at your watch so often. If you have one or have a friend with one ... you know what I mean.

Kolibree Smart Toothbrush



Toothbrushes have joined smartphones, smartwatches and smart beds in the ranks of devices with artificial intelligence, NBC News reported.

Kolibree has introduced what they are calling "the world's first connected electric toothbrush." The smart toothbrush senses how long and how well the user brushes and tracks down the user's performance on their phone. Besides tracking down tooth brushing performance, the electric toothbrush also teaches users how to brush right and it also tracks brushing habits.

The gadget comes with a mobile app compatible with iOS and the Android operating system that connects with the toothbrush via a Bluetooth connection. When the brush is in use, it syncs to the smartphone sharing information on how it's being used to the mobile app. Users can then share that information with their dentist, friends, family, or anyone else they choose. They can even post their results on social media. Somehow I can't see any of my grandkids /greatgrandkids posting their brushing info on Facebook ... but who knows!! On the other hand, parents trying to teach their young ones about brushing may have a winner here.

GOJI Smart Lock

It will not only unlock when it senses your smartphone near it, but will also greet you with your name. The entire thing works through Bluetooth connectivity! Once you have the Goji smart lock installed on your door and a free app on your smartphone, you are all set to lock away your door of your room / cabinet / locker and keep your precious things safe from intruders. And when you are back, the lock senses your smartphone and unlocks the door automatically. And there's more. The Goji lock also has a built-in camera that takes pictures



of all those who arrive. The lock connects to the home's Wi-Fi connection and relays images and alerts to residents' smartphones. So what if you end up losing your smartphone itself? Well you can cancel that particular phone's access. All you need to do is cancel Goji access for your lost phone using Goji's website or their 24-hour call center. You can cancel Goji access for your lost phone and request access to be transferred to another phone, effective immediately. You can regain control over your home access without changing or re-keying locks or worrying about anyone using your lost phone to gain access.

Voyce Band

Introducing a "smart" dog collar. It's called VOYCE. (I was surprised it wasn't called iSmart but there really are other folks as smart as the Apple ones!!) Created by a team of bio-medical engineers, veterinarians and dog behaviorists, the collar essentially tracks everything your dog is up to throughout the day. This includes all pertinent health data and, of course, info as to what that pooch put in its mouth. Since my best buddy is Pooky, my Shih Tzu, this was my favorite at CES.



While u catch ur breath with all that techno stuff, I'll be putting together a new list of gee-wizzers, so stay tuned, but stay safe out there on the www. –Aloha, Lou

Smartpens Wise Up

by Bob Rankin

What's a smartpen? Think of it as a handwriting instrument for the Internet era. The basic idea is to capture everything you jot down in digital form immediately, then manipulate it with software and store it locally or in the cloud. Some smartpens include audio recording and tie what you said or heard to what you wrote at the same time. The combination can be awesome!

What Can You Do With a Smartpen?

Typed text and video dominate the digital world, but much of the important stuff still gets done with handwriting and audible speech. Students scribble notes while listening to lectures. Business plans are mapped out on cocktail napkins. Fashion designs are doodled over coffee chat. All of



that rough, static data would be more useful if it was digitized, indexed, integrated, and editable. Enter the smartpen. For example, the word "address" written in a note about an upcoming meeting may be the only word you need to write down if you use a smartpen. Later, just tap the word "address" to hear yourself repeating the full street address as you made that brief note. The implications for lecture notes are obvious.

There are standalone smartpens, and smartpens that must be used in conjunction with other hardware. Some smartpens require special paper while others work with any writing surface.

Basic models transfer data to computers and tablets via USB cable, while others use WiFi to upload data to the cloud. Prices range from \$100 to \$200; some third-party smartpen apps may cost extra. Here are examples of the various breeds of smartpen:

Livescribe sells three smartpen models dubbed Echo, Sky WiFi, and Livescribe 3. Retail prices range from \$119 to \$199. The pen measures 5/8" in diameter by 6-1/8" long and incorporates a replaceable ballpoint ink cartridge, a microphone to record audio, a speaker for playback, a small OLED display, an infra-red camera, and internal flash memory to hold digitized handwritten notes and drawings, plus audio notes. Its battery is charged via an included micro-USB cable.

The Echo is an entry-level product that does basic recording and allows file transfers to computers via micro-USB cable. The Sky WiFi series integrates wireless data transfer and Evernote cloud storage. Livescribe 3 instantly syncs what you're rewriting and what is heard to your iPad or iPhone. All three require special paper printed with a non-repeating pattern of dots that help the pen determine what page it's on and where on the page it is.

The Equil JOT does not require special paper, but it records only handwriting not audio. It's compatible with iOS, Android, and Windows. Instead of cramming processor and flash memory into a fat, heavy pen, the JOT is a comfortable, normal sized pen that communicates wirelessly with a slim little box perched at the top of your writing surface. Both devices fit into a trim carrying/recharging case. It cost \$150.

The WACOM Inkling smartpen is similar to the Equil JOT, but it's designed for sketches as well as handwritten words. One can create layers of drawings, annotate and edit them, enrich them with colors, and so on. The Inkling is integrated into the ASUS VivoTab Note 8, a Windows 8 tablet, or can be purchased separately for as little as \$99.

WACOM has been recognized for many years by graphic artists one of the premier names in digitizing tablets. They also offer the Bamboo stylus which lets you take notes or sketch on your iPad or Android tablet. The optional Bamboo Pad lets you save your work to a PC or Mac computer. The Intuos Creative Stylus, is a professional-grade stylus for the iPad. This pressure-sensitive pen lets you draw, sketch, and paint on your iPad with the artistic control of traditional tools. The "palm rejection" feature means that you can rest your palm on the drawing surface without making unwanted marks.

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/smartpens_wise_up.html#ixzz320jXNjij

Society News

Help's Half Hour Notes

by Jan Rothfuss

Led by Mark Zinzow

Q: A member has received a DVD of a wedding held last week. Does she have to use her computer to view it?

A: Those present agreed that she should be able to view it using her DVD player and her television.

Q: A member asked about trying to log into the Internet using a Vista machine. It was asking for a domain on a configuration page when trying to get in wireless.

A: You may have to use a machine that already has access and verify the necessary information. Usually a domain server is used in a business. You may need to change your setting to indicate that you will not use a domain but another more open group. You may need to delete the wi-fi SSID definition matching the network and then reconnect as if it is a new network.

Q: A member's wireless keyboard is now to be used with a new computer. What does he need to do to use it?

A: You may need to google the keyboard model and see what else is needed. It may have had a dongle originally. It might be easiest to buy a new one.

Q: Last month there was a question about Windows updates and what to do if it fails.

A: It was suggested to first, run Disk Cleanup to verify that there is space. Then attempt to update only one selection at a time.

Q: Last month a member wanted to rename a set of files.

A: NameTwister allows to you rename a set of files at a time by assigning an 'expression'. There are good examples in the tutorial.

Q: Internet Explorer had a bug in the Flash software.

A: The update has been available and should be applied if you use IE.

President's Note

I am proud to announce the 2014 Geek Picnic (olympics) will be held August 12th. We have reserved the Carmen Clark Lodge in the Brighton Town Park (777 Westfall Rd. – by the pond). This is the site of the original Geek Olympics some years ago. We are planning to recreate three games that anyone can enjoy. See this column next month for more picnic details.

We are now meeting in Briarwood, (first building on the left after you turn right!). We apologize for the lack of signage last month. The room is big and has great tech so the move has been well worth it. –Steve Staub

The Lighter Side

