BITS AND BYTES

November 2010

Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club
Midland MI

http://mcc.apcug.org/

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Meets 4th Wednesday of the month at the Midland Community Center, 2001 George St., Midland, MI

This month's date:
November 17, 2010
(3rd Wednesday)

This month's topic:
Overview of Microsoft Office 2010 by
   Howard Lewis
Nominations for officers for 2011

Program Coordinators
Contact : Co-Chairpersons

Howard Lewis   lewis3ha@chartermi.net

Joe Lykowski   joseph@lykowski.com

What you missed!
At the October meeting, Laura Hammel gave a presentation on Cloud Computing—what it is, how we are already using it (even though we may not think we are) and what we might expect in the future.

Upcoming Activities:
December is the Club Christmas party. The Club will provide pizza and pop. Please bring a dish to pass. Meeting is the third Wednesday - December 15, 2010.

January meeting:
Scams by Joe Lykowski
Keeping your Computer Updated by Carol Picard

President Piper's Ponderings

In keeping with the season for giving thanks, this newsletter is going to be more personal rather than technical.

My first year as your President has been a rollercoaster ride for me. I knew I had a number of potential health issues that might arise; indeed I half expected that I might have to back away from all my social and Club activities.

But with some great doctors and a lot of support from others, I have, so far, been able to maintain a balance between my personal and social life. So I have a lot for which to be thankful.

First, my wife Judy has closely monitored my progress, and she would have grounded me in a second if she thought I was doing too much.

Secondly, I am thankful for the support of Howard, our past President, as he has shared my load of the President's duties.

I am thankful for other members of our Board who have stepped forward to give the Club their expertise: Laura, Carol and Joe to name just three.

I am thankful for our viable Club that continues to flourish while other clubs fade away.

Our November General Meeting will include nominations for officers for the following year. Openings currently exist for two slots: a VP and an at-large board member. I challenge you to step forward to fill one of these positions.

A year ago I was concerned about recovery from spinal fusion and the prospect of heart surgery. These both went reasonably well. But then I was blind-sided by the need

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Rich Holbrook

PUBLICITY

Kathy Bohl   kbohl30265@aol.com

http://mcc.apcug.org/

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., January 11, 2011, at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

President Piper's Ponderings (cont'd)

to redo a 22 year old hip transplant. So on Nov 23 we will be off to Cleveland Clinic for 4-5 days of R & R. I likely will not be at the December General Meeting, but Judy will take advantage of technology by posting my daily progress on a blog – address to be made public at the November meeting.

I wonder how turkey will taste at the Cleveland Clinic.

(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)

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Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:

www.restaurantdiscountcenter.com/atm
Buy gift certificates for restaurants at a discount. The gift certificates are usually at least 50% off.

www.financialprivacynow.org
This site is a Consumers Union's website with lots of information on how to protect your financial information.

www.idtheftcenter.org
Get free help if you find that your identity has been stolen.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgwF8mdQwlw
We know about army skills in combat, but they can also disassemble and reassemble a jeep in less than four minutes!

Membership Enrollment Form

NAME _____   PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____   CITY _____

ZIP _____   EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues   FAMILY ($20)   STUDENT ($15)   New Member _____   Renewal _____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB   Attn: Membership Chairman
  P.O. Box 132
  Midland, MI 48640-0132

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Shortcuts for More Efficient Viewing of YouTube Videos
If you watch very many videos on YouTube, you may find these tips useful.
To make these tips work, you need to make sure that the control bar (located at the bottom of the video) has the focus. To accomplish this, just click the *play* button on the control bar (not the big button in the middle of the video). Once the video has started to play, you can skip to a specific percentage place in the video by simply pressing *1* to go 10% into the video, *2* to go 20%, *3* to go 30%, etc. These percentages are percent of the video, not the amount left. You can press *0* to start the video over again. **There is one thing to note: this only works with the number keys across the top of the keyboard, not the numeric keypad.**
If you want smaller control of forward or backward movement, you can use the right and left arrow keys to move forward or backward in 10-30 second increments.

A Simpler Way To Enter File Names Into the Command Line
If you frequently use the command line in Windows and you need to enter a file name, you usually have to type the fully qualified path of the file every time it's needed (unless your command line focus is in the folder in which the file resides). This can be tedious and error prone, especially if you have a fairly elaborate file structure. The simple solution is to drag the file from its folder in Windows Explorer and drop it on the open command prompt window. The prompt will then display the file with its full path.
If the file name is part of a command, type the command and a space and then drop the file on the command prompt window.
For example, to open c:\help.txt in Notepad:
    Open the command prompt window.
    At the prompt type *notepad* followed by a *space*
    Open **Windows Explorer** and go to the root folder of the *C* drive.
    Drag the file *help.txt* and drop it on the open command prompt window.
This will open the file c:\help.txt in Notepad.
This tip will work in Windows XP and Standard User mode in Windows 7. It will not work in Windows Vista or in Administrator mode of Windows 7.

Mozilla Firefox Tabs
How many times did you close a tab unintentionally? By pressing Ctrl-Shift-T on PC's or Cmd-Shift-T for Macs, you can re-open closed tabs.

Controlling System Restore

By Vinny La Bash, Member and Regular Columnist, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
www.spcug.org—vlabash (at) comcast.net

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Did a shareware application you were enamored of turn out to be an unmitigated disaster? Perhaps a device driver installation, system update or modification to a registry key went bad, and your system wandered into an alternate universe. Windows has a utility called System Restore that takes a picture, called a Restore Point, of your system before certain types of operations are started. System Restore is a very handy feature that allows you to go back in time to erase actions you have come to regret. If a problem occurs you can revert back to the way things were, and all is well again.

System Restore, for all its utility and convenience, has its drawbacks. Some argue that if there is not enough free disk space, System Restore will fail to create a restore point, so an unsuspecting person may discover that there is no restore point available when trying to put things back to normal. There is also no way to make a permanent restore point that will not get deleted after a time when automatic restore points need the disk space. This could be a predicament if a problem is intermittent.

It is possible that System Restore may be responsible for your disk drive running out of room. While today's super-sized drives make that less likely than a few years ago running out of disk space could still happen, especially if you load up your system with videos. You can reduce that likelihood even further by configuring System Restore properly.

The snapshots we talked about in the first paragraph are taken by a built-in program called the Volume Snapshot Service (VSS). There is no way to access this utility in the standard Windows Graphical Utility Interface (GUI). This means you can't get to it with a menu option. You need to open a Command Prompt window with elevated administrator privileges.

Click on the Start orb located down at the bottom left corner of your screen, select All Programs, and open the Accessories folder. Right click on the Command Prompt icon, and then select Run as Administrator from the menu. That will open up a Command Prompt window with enough authority to configure System Restore.

Before doing any configuration, let's take some time to understand how System Restore works. You can do this with the vssadmin tool. At the Command Prompt type vssadmin /? (Press Enter after typing a command.)

You see a list of all the commands supported by the utility.

(Note: Shadow copy = Restore Point)

Enter the command vssadmin list shadows

This displays a list of all the restore points currently on the system.

The list shadowstorage command displays the amount of disk drive space currently being used to store restore points, how much space is set aside to accommodate restore points, and the maximum permitted size for restore points.

To see what's available on your own system, at the Command Prompt type:

Vssadmin list shadowstorage

Take a few minutes to understand the way the information is displayed. If there is enough free disk space you can store up to 64 restore points before Windows automatically starts deleting old restore points to accommodate new ones.

Making backups is an essential task, but there is no reason why Windows should be allowed to consume every available byte of storage with System Restore points. The default settings allow Windows to run amok but you can reset the maximum value with the resize shadowstorage command.

Here is an example:

Vssadmin resize shadowstorage /for=c: /on=c: /maxsize = 12GB

The /for= switch specifies the disk drive where the storage space is to be resized.

The /on= switch tells Windows where to save the Restore Point.

The /maxsize= switch tells Windows how much space it can use for Restore Points.

If you don't specify a maximum size you are giving Windows permission to do anything it wants. The minimum size is 1GB. I have seen references stating that the minimum size can be as low as 300MB, but I could not verify that information.

After entering the resize command the system needs to be restarted to take effect. Configuring System Restore points won't solve every problem you may have with Windows, but it will give you more control of how Windows allocates resources.

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Free Utilities from CPUID Describe System Details
by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:
http://www.cpuid.com
http://www.cpuid.com/softwares.html

As regular readers of this column know, I am a fan of utilities, especially if they are free! Frequently, situations arise where it is necessary to know the details of a computer, including specifics about its software, hardware, drivers, and other components in order to diagnose a problem and make recommendations. There are several fine utilities that can perform these functions, but several that I have been using recently come from the historical city of Dunkerque, France, courtesy of their publisher CPUID Software.

CPUID software is best known for its namesake product, CPUID, which is as it says, a utility to identify the details of the CPU chip installed in a computer. This is often necessary to know if the computer is being benchmarked (performance measured), upgraded, or undergoing major repairs. The

latest CPUID software is named CPU-Z, version 1.55. This small utility displays the processor brand and model number, the type of socket it uses (necessary to know for replacement or upgrades), speeds, and other details about the CPU chip, which is the central "brains" of the computer. Sometimes it is desirable or necessary to replace a motherboard, or determine the BIOS on the motherboard. The motherboard is the central platform on which most of the other internal components are either directly attached to, or otherwise connected to, and provides much of the internal communication between the components. While generally very reliable and long lived, sometimes it is necessary to replace a motherboard. The BIOS, an acronym for "Basic Input - Output System" is typically attached to the motherboard, and contains the first code run by a PC when it is initially powered on. The BIOS identifies and initializes the video card, keyboard, mouse, hard drive, CD/DVD drive, and other key components. The BIOS contains software in a non-volatile ROM chip, and is typically firmly attached to the motherboard. Most BIOS chips can be updated and upgraded with software provided either by the BIOS manufacturer, motherboard maker, or computer manufacturer. CPU-Z identifies the brand of BIOS, the version of its software, and the date of the software stored in it; with this information, it is somewhat easy to determine if the BIOS contains the latest software. Keeping the BIOS updated is not a critical task if everything appears to be working OK, but for those of us always trying to tweak our computers and capitalize in the latest offerings, this is good information to have. One warning is appropriate here; if the user is considering updating the BIOS, be absolutely sure to explicitly follow the manufacturer's directions to the letter! In a worst case scenario, failure to do so will result in an expensive paperweight, but in many cases, there is a procedure to "roll back" or restore the BIOS to its earlier status.

When I ask people how much memory they have in their computer, they are often clueless, or erroneously confuse the memory with the storage capacity of their hard drives. Clicking on the "Memory" tab of CPU-Z displays the type of memory, the amount of memory, speed, and other characteristics. The "SPD" tap allows the user to cycle through the memory stick installed in his computer, displaying the capacity of each stick, the type, manufacturer, part number, and other information. This information may be necessary if the user wants to add or replace memory in the computer.

The "Graphics" tab displays information about the display device, including the brand, model number, chipset, speed, and memory. Since the video card makers often release updates, enhancements, and new features, this information could be very useful.

CPUID also publishes several other utilities, and another one that I found useful is PC Wizard 2010. PC Wizard was first published in 1996, and is considered one of the most comprehensive system information utilities available. Since the hardware industry is very dynamic, with new hardware being introduced on a daily basis, PC Wizard is frequently updated, typically monthly. In addition to identifying and displaying the details of the hardware and software on the computer, PC Wizard can also benchmark the performance of the individual computer components, as well as the entire computer. By noting which components and software are the performance laggards, the user can then determine what, if any, practical solutions may improve performance. PC Wizard utilizes a series of icons representing each of the components or software titles installed on the computer, and can determine the hardware, configuration, system files, and resources used by the computer. The benchmark selection can test and display the performance of the entire computer, the CPU (processor chip), memory, video, hard drive, external storage devices (like CD/DVD and USB drives), and other hardware components. In addition to displaying the performance of the hardware itself, a "Compare Results" shows how the user's computer compares to others. The results are also displayed and announced (audio) using the wizard avatar and voice synthesis similar to the "Vox Proxy" PowerPoint accessory. PC Wizard provides the user with a wealth of information.

While CPUID has several utilities available for free download, one of those that I also found very useful is HWMonitor, which is a shortened "Hardware Monitor". This utility is also available in an enhanced commercial version, HWMonitor Pro, which adds additional features and functionality. HWMonitor (the free version) can identify the power supply in the computer, and display the real-time voltages, temperatures, and fans in the power supply. This is important to monitor the health of the power supply, and consider a replacement or upgrade if necessary. Many users are unaware that their computers report the temperatures of various components in the computer, which is important in that heat is one of the big killers of components. Being somewhat colonial, I selected to display the temperatures in Fahrenheit (F) rather than Celsius (C).   Usually there are some fans in each computer which are critical in exhausting the heat from the components, and bring in cool outside air. HWMonitor tracks and reports the performance of the fans, which can enable the user to easily and quickly see if a fan is failing; a dead fan can lead to overheating and damage or destruction of the computer's components. This utility can also track and report on the temperatures of the motherboard, CPU chip, video card, and hard drive.

Most of these utilities are available for 32 and 64 bit Windows PCs using recent versions of Windows such as XP, Vista, and Windows 7, although some of the utilities also have builds that are explicitly for Windows 98. The files are relatively small and fast to download, and consume minimal system resources, such that they do not noticeably degrade system performance. These utilities could be a useful asset to anyone who wants to keep up with the performance, condition, and health of his system.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DATA STORAGE
by Ron Hirsch - Boca Raton Computer Society

In part 1 of this article, I introduced you to the binary system. In part 2, I'm going to give you a brief history of the primary way that data is stored in your computer. Remember, we are not going to use light bulbs, but we are going to use something which has two states. The light bulbs in part 1 had an on or off state. The use of magnetic material will now be substituted. And, even though it is not necessarily done as I will note, it may be simpler to think of a magnetic situation where something is magnetized to be a south pole, or a north pole. Since this represents 2 states, it qualifies as a binary device to store and access values.

MAGNETIC STORAGE ARRIVES
Some of the earliest magnetic devices were floppy disks, which were really floppy, unlike the floppy disks you may remember, which were 3.5", and were encased in a hard thin plastic case. The early 8" floppies used a thin sheet of plastic, which had a layer of very fine iron based coating placed onto it. Floppy disks are actually similar to the old audio record disks we used to play in the past. If you remember, these records had a fine spiral groove on them, and a special needle in a cartridge at the end of a tone arm, that rode in that spiral track, and produced sound based on small "bumps" and holes at the bottom of the groove. When vinyl LP records came along, they managed to get more music in the same space, by making the groves smaller, and the needle finer.

Well, the floppy discs stored bits of data in a similar fashion, except the groove was an electronic groove, and the "bumps and holes" were magnetized "spots". And the arm was a very lightweight floating arm with a magnetic reading or writing device on the end, which would read or write the all the magnetic spots, which are bits of information, which can then be converted into numbers or characters, as applicable.

Needless to say, the arm reading or writing all this magnetic info cannot really be allowed touch the surface, but must float just above it. If it touched the surface, it could scrape off material, and cease to function properly. And each magnetic bit must be sufficiently isolated from its neighbors, so that the

(A Brief History of Data Storage-continued from page 7)

magnetic sensor in the floating head can reliably read each bit at a rapid pace. Sounds like a tough task, considering that the number of magnetic "spots" on the old floppies did reach into the millions. As time marched on, smaller floppies arrived, bringing the size down to 3.5 with improved mechanical and electrical specifications.

THE HARD DRIVE STARTS TO COME OF AGE.
When my company got its first computer, an IBM 32, the IBM rep told us that the built in storage capacity of 4 MB would be enough to last us for many years. We believed that story for about 1 week after we got the IBM 32. In addition, not only was the storage capacity very little, but the built in & non interchangeable monitor was so small, that it bordered on being useless. So we called IBM, and they agreed to take the unit back, and sell us an IBM 34, which did have more storage, and a better display. And not too much later, we again moved upward and went for the model 36. In that era of the late 70's and early 80's, cooling the computer, which was a huge monster, required that it be housed in its own small specially air conditioned room, which we constructed.

Now, needing more memory storage space, we purchased IBM's latest hard drive package, which was the size of a large refrigerator, and came with a single 64 MB platter. And, it could accept a number of additional 64 MB platters. These platters were the size of large pizza. I don't recall the cost of each platter, but the total unit, including the platters was many thousands of dollars.

Later on, in the mid-late 1980's the cost for a 30 MB hard drive for use in a personal computer had come down to about $300. When my first personal computer, the IBM PC AT, had the 30 MB hard drive fail one week after the one year guarantee expired, it cost me about $300 (plus labor) to have a new unit installed in my machine. I stayed with the same 30 MB size, as the store representative said I'd never need any more than that. In retrospect, that size drive would only hold about 5-10 images from a digital camera in current times.

HARD DRIVES CONTINUE TO GROW IN CAPACITY
When I had my 30 MB hard drive, it was actually 240 million bits. I could not imagine that many magnetic spots being available on that rapidly spinning disk inside the case. To me, that was unbelievable then. And to have all the storage capability, and to read and write from the drive at millions of bits per second, how could this be possible?

I moved on with a new computer every 4 years or so And every machine had a bigger hard drive, and it needed it. The Windows operating system needed more and more drive space. And the programs also needed more space. And the hard drives started adding more platters inside the case. Each platter had its own read and write head, and the rotational speed continued speeding up to make things perform faster. And, the price per megabyte of space continued to drop. It seemed as if there was no limit. And how could these complex mechanical monsters continue to get better and cheaper?

CHECK OUT THIS COMPARISON
My original IBM 30 MB drive cost about $10 per MB, which is $10,000 per GB. Today's hard drives are selling for about $90 for a 1 terabyte drive, which is 9 cents per GB. In other words, storage space in the early days was 100,000 times more expensive than today. And, the size has shrunk dramatically. Current 1 TB drives are smaller than my old 30 MB IBM drive.

(A Brief History of Data Storage-continued from page 8)

Here are some numbers which are hard to believe, but are true. The magnetic "spot" which is one bit on a hard drive has continued to shrink in size. That spot has gotten down to one millionth of an inch in diameter! And the rate at which bits are read from and written to has reached into the hundreds of million per second! This is inconceivable. Fortunately, the hard drive doesn't know that, and it continues to purr along anyway.

And, the power drain is much less for today's 1TB drive than the old 30 MB IBM drive. And, the statistical failure rate is claimed to have the drive run continuously for many years with no missed bits. I challenge this statement. In the course of my computer activities, I've had at least a dozen hard drives fail. And in recent times the failure rate has been high. In the past year, I've had 4 hard drives fail in 3 different machines. At the work they are doing, and the specs they are seeking, I'm not surprised. Fortunately, in every failure case, the drive was the C system drive, where I use True Image weekly. And, I always keep new spare drives around. **So, a quick change out, and an image restore, and that machine is back in business.**

JUST HOW BIG IS A TERABYTE (TB)?
A terabyte is 1 followed by 12 zeroes, or 1 trillion bytes. If you started counting at a rate of 1 count per second, to reach 1 trillion, you would have to continue counting for about 30,000 years.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?
In the past, it was always felt that since the magnetic hard drive is a "mechanical" device, it would ultimately be replaced by a nonmechanical component. Holographic storage seemed to be a potential medium. It had no moving parts, had virtually unlimited capacity, and looked promising. But, it has yet to meet its expectations. The newest kid on the block is SSD. This stands for Solid State Drive. You probably already use such devices, as this approach is used in digital camera memory cards, and flash drives. They have now been designed to have larger capacities and packaging/interface to be interchangeable with current magnetic hard drives.

The pricing is still much higher than magnetic drives, about 10 times as high, but this should drop rapidly in the next few years. Their performance can actually run circles around their magnetic counterparts. And, with no moving parts, they should last almost forever. Some manufacturers have already started building them into their high end models.

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Microsoft Offers Free Online Version of Office
by Ira Wilsker
WEBSITE: http://www.live.com (Click on "Office")

    In the over 10 years I have been writing this weekly column I have used the Microsoft Word installed on my desktop computer for all but a handful of the columns. There were a few columns I wrote while using Open Office as a topic of the column; one column was typed using Google Docs and saved as a Word file to send to my editor. Today I am using Microsoft's recently released Word Web App, which is

one of the several Office utilities now available for free at www.live.com.   Since these applications are online, they can be accessed from anywhere the user has internet access, and are utilized in a browser window.

From the live.com webpage, the office applications can be utilized by clicking on the "Office" link at the top of the page. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote are currently available. Registration is required in order to use the Microsoft Live utilities, but registration is fast and free. For those users who may need access to the primary components of Microsoft Office, but do not have it installed on their computers, this service from Live is a viable alternative.

I started by using Live's Word Web App to type this column. The "ribbon" or menu at the top of the browser window is reminiscent of the one in Word 2007, but does not have quite as many choices as the full version of Word 2007 on my computer. While all of the major functions are available, many of the enhancements and "bells and whistles" are not available on the web version.   The top line menu choices are "File", "Home", "Insert", and "View". Above the ribbon are small icons to save and undo.   Clicking on the "File" tab gives the user choices to open, save, share, close, properties, feedback, and privacy.   As I am typing this, I am periodically saving the file in the default .docx (Word 2007) format to Microsoft's SkyDrive, which is Microsoft's server sometimes referred to as "in the cloud". Once saved to the SkyDrive, I can access this file from anywhere.

The default tab on the Word Web App is "Home" which displays the simplified Word 2007 ribbon (menu) with the ubiquitous copy, paste, fonts, formatting, spell check, and another feature which is not in the computer based version of Word, "Open in Word". This "Open in Word" will connect to the Word installed on the computer, and open the document in the computer based Word, but only if a compatible browser is being used. I am using Firefox as my browser as I type this, and clicking on the "Open in Word" icon on the ribbon displays a message that my browser is not compatible. Another anomaly (browser incompatibility) occurred when I tried to copy some text by painting it, right clicking and going to "copy". A window opened that said, "Your browser does not allow access to the clipboard. Use the keyboard shortcuts for cut, copy, and paste instead." Using the keyboard commands CTRL-C allowed me to copy the text I wanted, and CTRL-V allowed me to paste it where I wanted it. This inability to work nicely with some browsers other than Microsoft's lowers my opinions of this product; while it is not a fatal defect, I do not like the idea of being compelled to use Internet Explorer in order to utilize all of the features of the Word Web App. The "Insert" tab on the ribbon allows the user to insert a table, picture, clip art or links. The "View" tab offers the user the choice of an "Editing View" and a "Reading View". One important item missing from the menu is a "Print" button; I could not find any easy way to print a document, other than using the browser print function.

While Word may be one of the most widely used applications, Excel and PowerPoint are also very widely used. The online version of Excel can be accessed by clicking on the Excel icon on the Live - Office web page.   The Excel Web App looks much like a simplified version of the full computer based version of Excel, and uses the same interface and commands. By default, files are saved to the SkyDrive in the Excel 2007 .xlsx format. The first thing I noticed on the Excel Web App is that the formula bar (Fx) does not pull down to display the list of available formulae.   I also found that the auto-fill functions where dates and cells could be auto-filled by clicking on the corner of a cell and dragging does not work, at least when used in Firefox. The ribbon bar on the Excel Web App looks much like a simplified Excel 2007 menu bar, but lacks some of the choices available on the computer installed version. As with the other Microsoft Web Apps, the spreadsheet can be shared as desired. Also as with the Word App, the icon

"Open in Excel" will generate an error. According to the online help, none of the Web Apps will open the computer's Office if using Firefox and Office 2003 or Office 2007; Microsoft's recommended fix is to install Office 2010. The online help also says that the 64-bit version of Internet Explorer is not supported, and that browsers other than Internet Explorer and Firefox are not supported at all. That means that it may be difficult or impossible for the many users of Chrome, Safari, Opera, and other browsers to utilize these otherwise useful Web Apps.

I do a lot of PowerPoint presentations, and I was especially interested to try the PowerPoint Web App. As with the other apps, it saves in the Office 2007 formats, in this case .pptx. The screen looks familiar, but much simplified from the full version of PowerPoint.   One item obviously missing from the ribbon (menu) is the "save" button; that is because the PowerPoint Web App automatically saves the presentation.   Another feature that is missing is the ability to right click on an image or text box in a slide to add animations or special effects. I easily inserted an image into a slide, and was given a choice of eight picture styles or frames, but could not animate or otherwise add the special effects that I sometimes use in the full version. Other than using some of the more sophisticated features of the full version of PowerPoint, the Web App version is adequate for simple PowerPoint presentations.

I will admit that I do not use Microsoft's OneNote, but it is available as a Web App. Looking much like a Word document, with the addition of a calendar line, when shared, it also shows the other authors and page versions that were accessed and modified.   OneNote also allows for images, clipart, links, and tables to be inserted, which can provide a richer user experience. Like Word, the ribbon (menu) in OneNote allows the user to implement traditional formatting and fonts as desired.   I could see where OneNote would be useful for taking notes and sharing content. As with PowerPoint, there is no "save" button, as OneNote documents are automatically saved.

If the user desires to import a document or image on his computer in the appropriate Web App, the user would click on the SkyDrive link at the top of the Office page, and then "Add Files". The user can then drag and drop files from his computer into the "Add Files" browser window, or files can be uploaded to SkyDrive by clicking on "Select documents from your computer".   Documents and other files stored on SkyDrive can be downloaded individually in native format, or all of the files can be downloaded together as a single ZIP file from SkyDrive. I experimented with SkyDrive and the Web Apps and found that this may be a viable choice either as a primary or backup method of doing presentations or working on documents away from my home or office computer, providing there is good internet access. Clicking on the SkyDrive "More" link allows the user to view a file's properties, or delete it from SkyDrive.

One of the strengths of using web applications like these is the ability to work together or collaborate on projects. By clicking on FILE - SHARE others can be authorized to access the file. The share choices can be controlled with a slider that ranges from "Just me" to "Some friends", "Friends", "My friends and their friends", and "Everyone (public)". Specific people can be added to those eligible to share by name or by email address.

While not as feature rich as the full versions of Office, the free Web Apps versions at live.com do offer a viable alternative to those who do not have Office installed on their computers, or who need a portable version of those applications. Many users will find these Web Apps quite useful.

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never lose a manual again
by Linda Gonse, ORCOPUG

I just found my old Sharp PDA, discovered it was still working, and decided to put it to use again. The downside was the manual was gone. An Internet search showed the original manual available, but prices ranged from $20 to $39! The Sharp device began to look obsolete to me. Then, I discovered retrevo.com. It boasts a library of more than 100,000 downloadable manuals from more than 1,000 brands of consumer electronics for consumer electronics searchable by category and brand at

http://www.retrevo.com/samples/index.html

My manual was there and it was free. In seconds, I downloaded it. There are more than 100 categories to search for manuals:

There are more than 100 categories you can search for manuals:

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Bread Maker	CD Player	CRT TV	Calculator	Camcorders	Car Amplifier
Car Receiver	Car Video	Cell Phone	Clock Radio	Coffee Maker	Controller
Copier	DVD Drive	DVD Players	DVR	Desktop	Digital Camera
Digital Photo Frame		Dishwasher	Dreamcast Game	Dryer	Fax Machine	Film Camera
Food Processor	Freezer	GPS	GPS Accessory		Game Boy Game Console
Game Cube Game	Gaming Accessory	Graphics & Publishing	Grill Guitar Headphone	Headset
Heating Cooling / Air	Home Theater	Hub	Karaoke System	Keyboard	LCD TV
Labeling System	Laptop	MP3 Accessory	MP3 Player	Microwave	Mini Audio System
Monitor	Mouse	Multifunction Printer	Music Keyboard	NIC	Network Adapter
Nintendo DS Lite	Oven	PBX	PDA	PDA Accessory	PS2 Game
Plasma TV	Portable DVD Player		Portable TV	Printer	Projection TV	Projector
Radar Detector	Radio	Range	Receiver	Refrigerator	Remote Control
Router	Satellite Radio	Satellite Receiver	Scanner	Security Camera	Speaker
Speaker System	Storage	Subwoofer	Switch	TV	Tablet
Tape Deck	Telephone	Telescope	Turntable	VCR	Vacuum
Voice Recorder	Washer	Watch	Wii Game	Wireless Router	Xbox Game

Another benefit of the site is that it also will store your manuals for you. Is that great or what?

At retrevo.com again later I learned that over 4 million people visit the site every month to get help with decisions about the gadgets they buy. Retrevo is NOT a retailer and does not sell consumer electronics, but it uses artificial intelligence to analyze and visually summarize more than 50 million real-time data points from across the web; and gives shoppers comprehensive, unbiased, up-to-date product information about what products to buy as well as when and where to buy them.