



Midland Michigan

# BITS AND BYTES

June 2013

<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

## GENERAL CLUB MEETING

7:00 P.M.

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

### This month's date:

Wednesday, June 26

### This month's topic:

**The Internet: The Good, The Bad  
and The Ugly**

### What you missed!

**Backup scenarios**

### Upcoming Activities:

August meeting – Club picnic—bring dish to pass.

### Program Coordinators

Howard Lewis      lewis3ha@chartermi.net

Bill Tower          tower.w@gmail.com

Please let Howard or Bill know of topics you would like covered at future meetings.

### President Piper's Ponderings

We spent the weekend at the annual reunion for all the classes from my high school. When I asked the organizers (also my age) for the password to the WiFi so I could Skype, all I got was a blank stare. There are a lot of messages here. I sure am glad I belong to our Club.



Judy and I are both planning to create a Facebook page for our individual high school classes. What do you think of a Facebook page for our Club? It would be in addition to our website. I find most people around my age do have a Facebook account, but they use it solely to keep in contact with their family. (Perhaps a review of all the social media sites would be a good topic for the future.)

I sprung for \$35 + \$10.50 s/h to get my hands on a Raspberry Pi. It will take another \$40-50 for cables and power supply, but I have most of these. I also saw an offer of \$60 from Brick Pi, which supplies Lego robotic parts. Then I would have to learn Python programming language to make it do something.

I attended the Saginaw Macintosh (SMUG) meeting last week. The topic was similar to what we have planned for June. They had a three-page list of sites, but only 3-4 people made any comments.

Our June meeting, on the Good, the Bad and the Ugly side of the Internet, will give each attendee 5 minutes to explain a website of their choosing. I implied in an earlier letter that our choices lean towards the 'non-traditional' or darker side of the Internet. Whatever site you choose, educate us on why this is or is not a useful site to visit.

*(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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### Board Meeting

First Thursday of the month  
 (September through June)  
 7:00 PM

Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church,  
 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland MI

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

(submitted by Howard Lewis)

<http://www.carfax.com/entry.cfx>

If you are thinking about buying a used car, you might want to check out Carfax to see if there are any reported issues with that car. Carfax reports cost \$39.99, but they can save you many headaches with a future purchase.

<http://www.altcodes.org/>

I like to use symbols in my texts that are not available in the keyboard. So I go to this site to find codes for various symbols like the Euro (€), the divide symbol (÷), the approximation symbol (≈), etc. However, the table does not show my favorite, the degree symbol (°), which is Alt-0176.

<http://www.pzzls.com/>

It is a good thing to exercise your brain every day. This site offers some puzzles which may help ward off Alzheimer's.

<http://tinyurl.com/cdhlren>

For your laugh of the day, watch some fisherman bloopers, featuring pro fisherman Bill Dance.

<http://www.canistream.it/>

If you want to ditch your cable subscription but don't want to miss your favorite programs, you can go to CanIStream.it to see if it is available for view online via streaming. This site will tell you if it is available for streaming and where to find it,

### 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  
 1816 Bauss Ct  
 Midland, MI 48642-4023

Attn: Membership Chairman

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

**Tips, Tricks & Techniques** *(Submitted by Howard Lewis)***Get A Free Legal Copy Of A Windows 7 Installation Disk**

When you purchased your Windows 7 PC, it probably did not come with any installation media. It probably came with a restore or recovery partition stored on the hard disk. However, neither of these provide the full feature set of a full installation disk, plus the recovery partition may not be available if the hard drive experiences some catastrophic failure.

Having a copy of the installation DVD has a couple of advantages:

- 1 – you can reinstall Windows without all of the additional bloatware that many vendors install on their computers;
- 2 – the installation DVD has several good utilities to allow you to repair your copy of Windows.

The primary downside is that the installation DVD may not have all of the drivers specifically tuned for your particular set of hardware. However, most of the default hardware drivers will get your machine functional so that you can get on the Internet and download the appropriate drivers from the hardware vendor's site so that you can get optimum performance from your computer.

Microsoft does allow free downloads of Windows 7 media through DigitalRiver, but this copy does not contain a product key. However, a DVD can be created to allow you to reinstall your copy of Windows 7 with your product key on your own computer. These copies will NOT activate if you try to install them on another computer. A second advantage to having an installation copy of the Windows 7 DVD is that the installation DVDs contain various procedures for performing repairs to your version of Windows.

Finding the link to this site is not a trivial task. Fortunately, Victor Laurie has provided links to the various versions of Windows 7 at the DigitalRiver site (<http://best-windows.vlaurie.com/boot-disks.html#full>). These downloads are ISO images of the Windows 7 installation media and will need to be burned as an ISO image to the DVD.

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## Enable or Disable Installed Plug-ins In Chrome, Firefox or Internet Explorer

Howard Lewis, Midland Computer Club, Midland MI

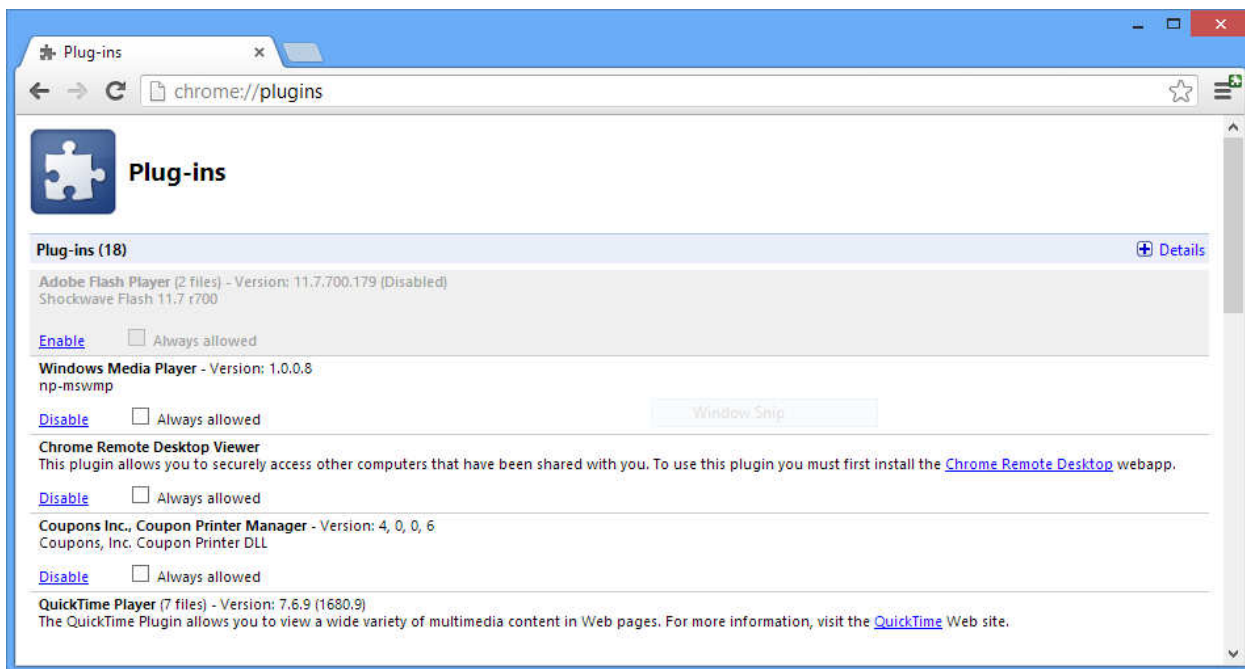
More and more we are hearing of the vulnerability of many of the plug-ins that we use in our browsers. Frequently we may not even know what plug-ins we have installed. Use the following procedures to view/enable/disable plug-ins in Chrome, Firefox or Internet Explorer.

### Google Chrome

To view the plug-ins in Google Chrome type *chrome://plugins* into the Chrome address bar and press *Enter*. This will display a list of the plug-ins installed on your computer.

Below the plug-in name a **Disable** or **Enable** link will be shown, depending on whether the plug-in is currently enabled or disabled.

To change the status of the plug-in, simply click on the link. For example, to Enable the **Adobe Flash Player** plug-in, simply click the *Enable* link and **Adobe Flash Player** will become enabled.

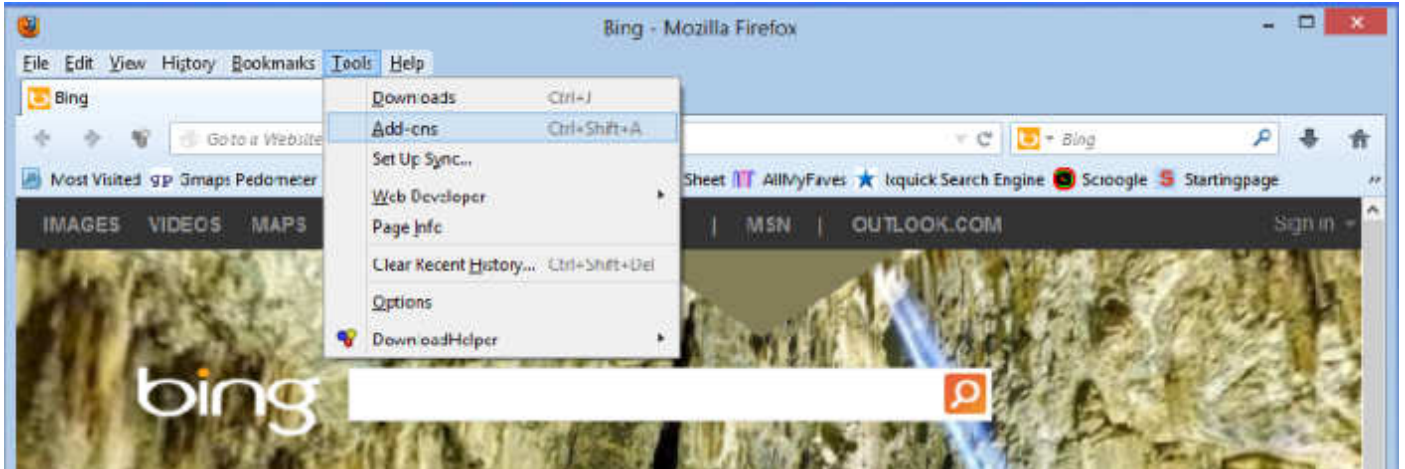


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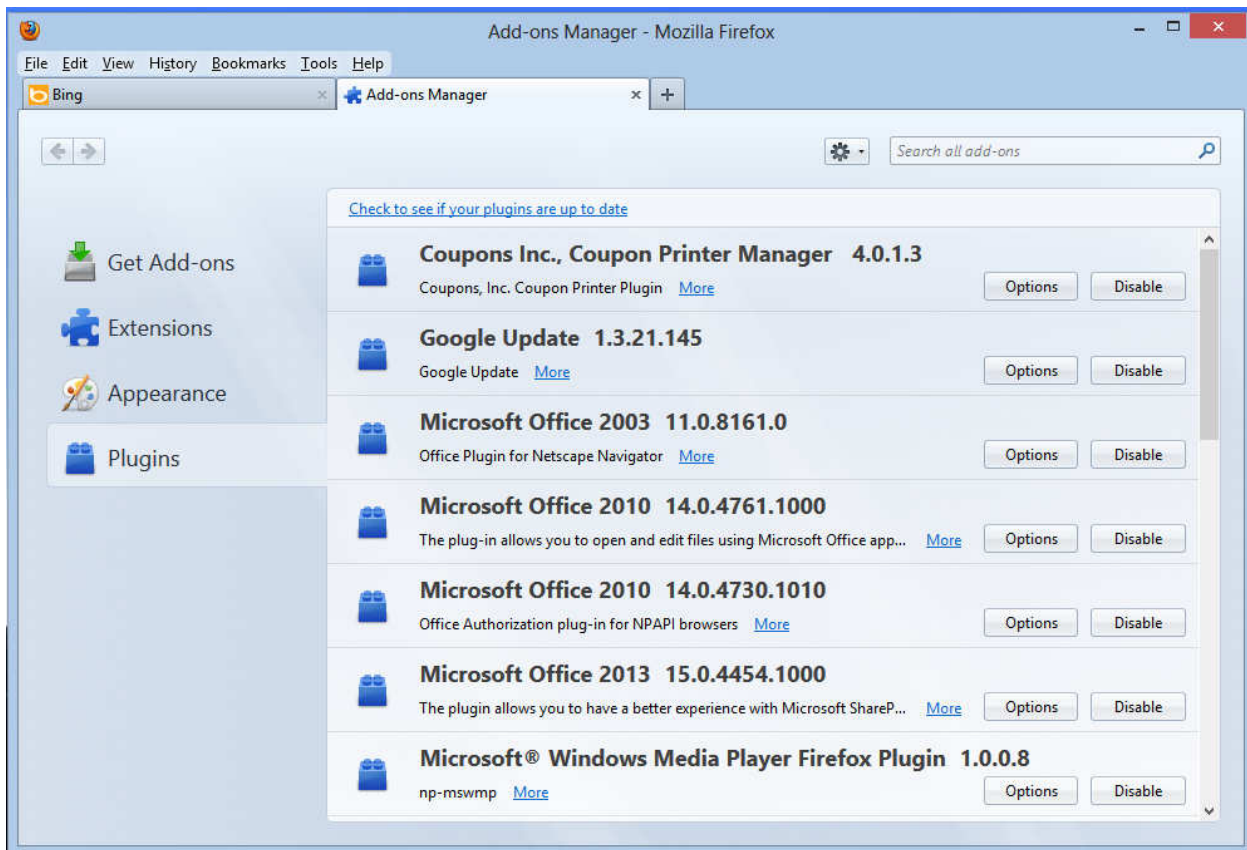
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### Mozilla Firefox

To access the plug-ins in Mozilla Firefox, the process is somewhat simpler as you go to *Tools/Add-ons* in the Firefox menu.



Next, choose *Plugins* (if not already selected) and a list of your installed plug-ins will be displayed. As in Chrome, simply click on the *Disable/Enable* button on the far right side of the window. For example, to disable **Google Update**, click on the *Disable* button and **Google Update** will be disabled.

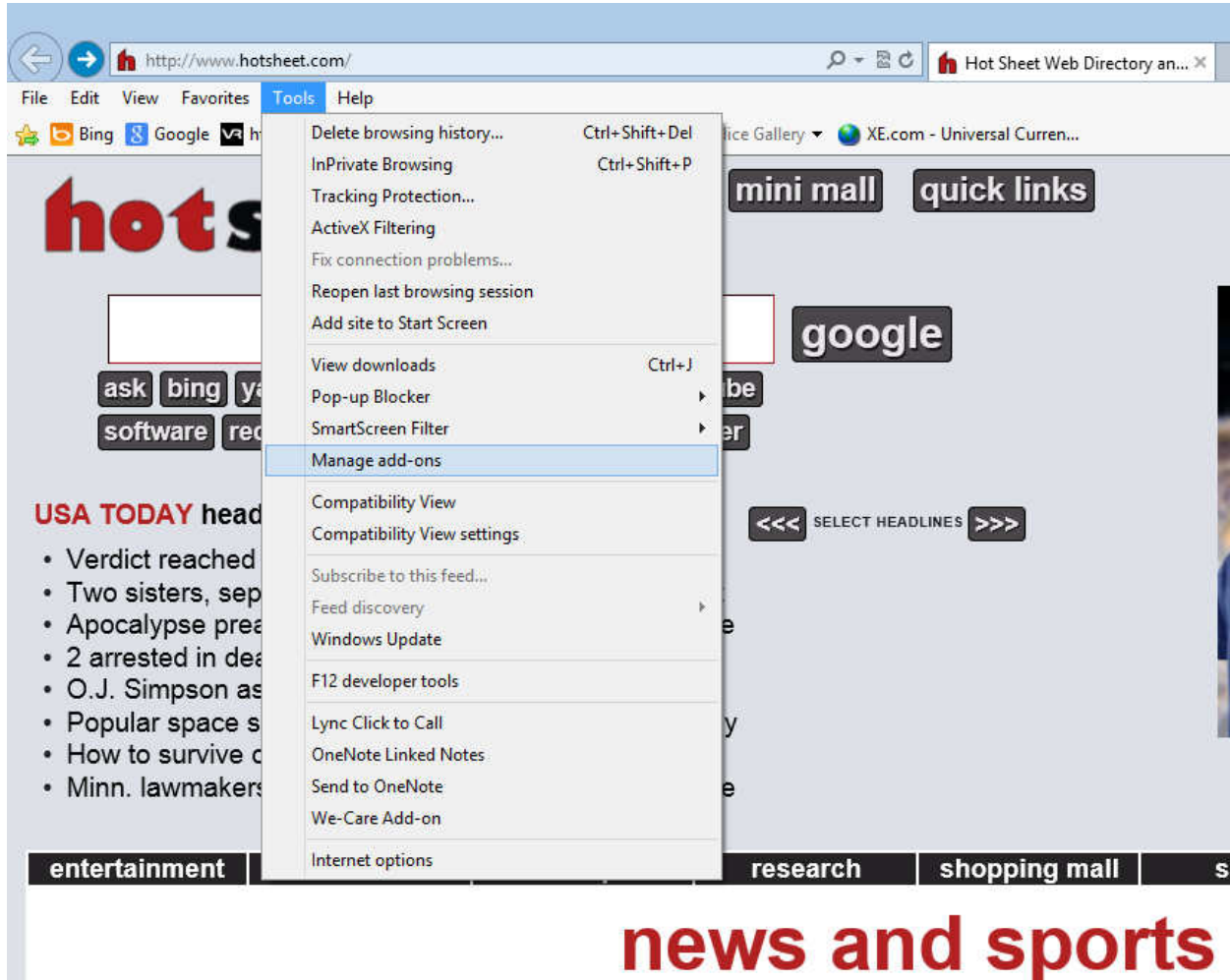


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### Internet Explorer

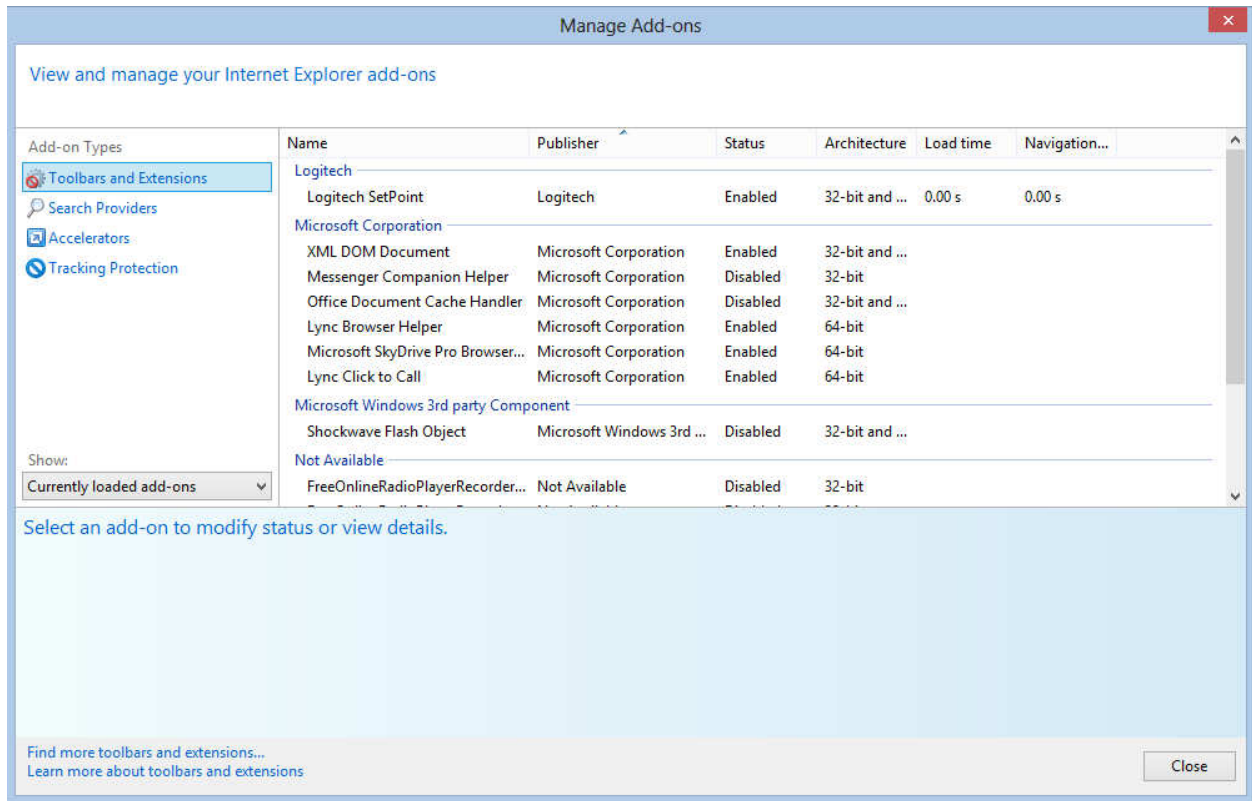
Internet Explorer allows you to access plug-ins the same way as Mozilla Firefox does: go to your Menu bar and select *Tools* and *Manage add-ons*.



The **Manage Add-ons** window will now open showing all add-ons that are loaded into Internet Explorer and their current Status: **Enabled** or **Disabled**.

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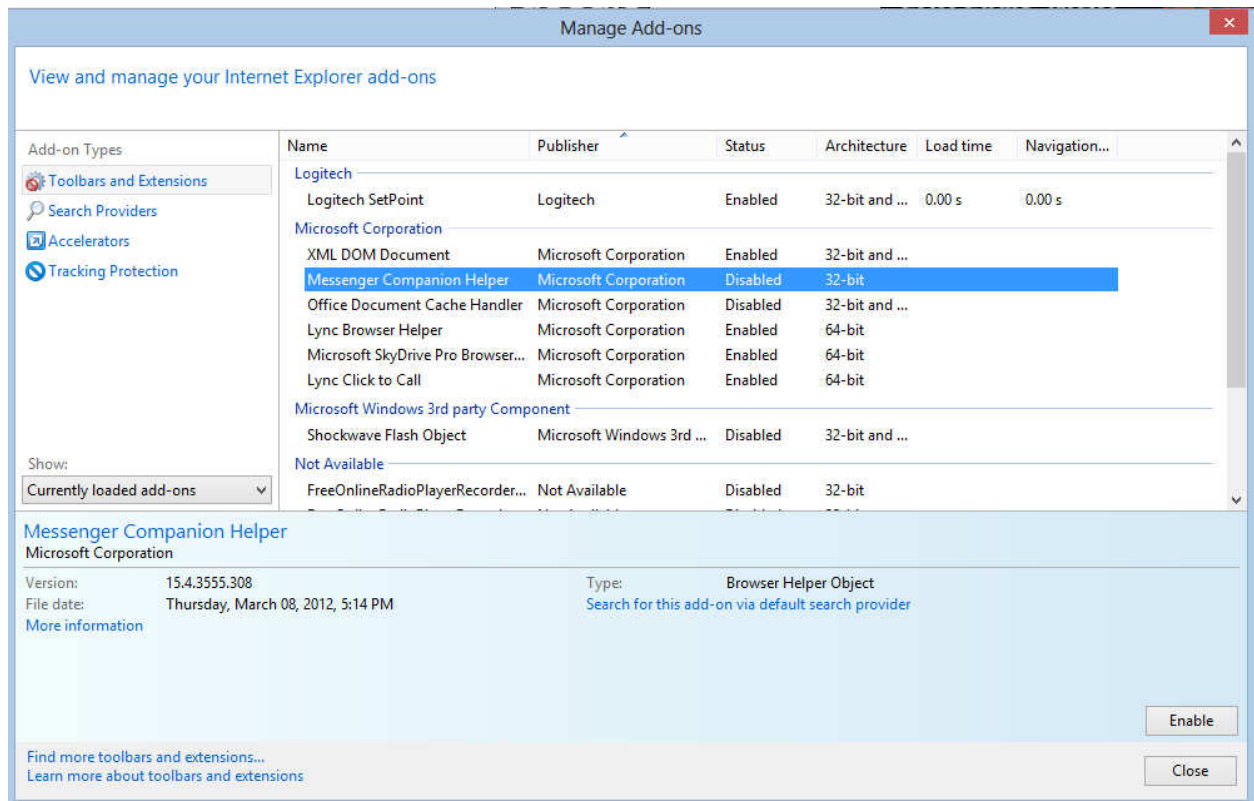
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Next select the item that you wish to enable or disable and in the lower portion of the window additional information on the add-on will be displayed including an **Enable** or **Disable** button. Click on the *Enable* or *Disable* button and a confirmation dialog box will appear asking you to confirm the action. Once you confirm the action, the add-on will be enabled or disabled, whichever you chose. For example, if I select Messenger Companion Helper, I can now enable that add-on by clicking on the Enable button.

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## Uninstalling a Plug-in

By enabling or disabling a plug-in, you are not deleting it from the system. The actual removal of the plug-in must be accomplished in the **Control Panel** applet **Programs and Features** (Windows Vista, 7 or 8) or **Add/Remove Programs** (Windows XP) just as you would uninstall any other program.

## Holy cow! Is this a virus?

By Linda Gonse, Editor/Webmaster, Orange County PC Users' Group, CA  
March 2013 issue, nibbles & bits, www.orcopug.org, editor (at) orcopug.org

I recently added a second external hard drive to my computer system. I use one for backups of InDesign files and the other one for Acronis True Image system backups.

As I browsed through the files I'd saved to the drives, I ran into something peculiar. Both drives had folders with names that were long strings of random letters. And each folder contained one file: mrtstub.exe at 89KB on the Iomega drive, and MPSigStub.exe at 227KB on the Seagate drive.

Fearing these might be malware or a virus, I quickly did a Google search. Interestingly, the search turned up conflicting opinions in different forums. Some people said it was a virus and highly dangerous, some said the folder and file(s) inside were benign, some said the files were leftover from when Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool (MRT) was run and had not been deleted automatically, and some said Windows created them.

Although I only found one file in the folders, other people have seen as many as four at one time: mrtstub.exe, mrt.exe.\_p, MRT.exe, and \$shtdwn\$.req.

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I found a link to information about the Malicious Software Removal Tool at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/890830#Faq>. In particular, it gave instructions on how to remove the Malicious Software Removal Tool.

The Malicious Software Removal Tool does not use an installer. Typically, when you run the Malicious Software Removal Tool, it creates a randomly named temporary directory on the root drive of the computer. This directory contains several files, and it includes the Mrtstub.exe file. Most of the time, this folder is automatically deleted after the tool finishes running or after the next time that you start the computer. However, this folder may not always be automatically deleted. In these cases, you can manually delete this folder, and this has no adverse effect on the computer.

I also learned that MRT is not a substitute for a resident antivirus for various reasons: 1. MRT only removes malware AFTER infection, it doesn't BLOCK malware like an antivirus does; 2. MRT is designed to target a small set of malware only, while an antivirus takes care of most malware in the wild; and 3. MRT can only detect actively running malware — an antivirus can also detect dormant malware.

Microsoft's Knowledge Base (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/890830>) also said a new version of the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool is released every month. After you download the tool, the tool runs one time to check your computer for infection by specific prevalent malicious software (including Blaster, Sasser, and Mydoom) and helps remove any infection it finds.

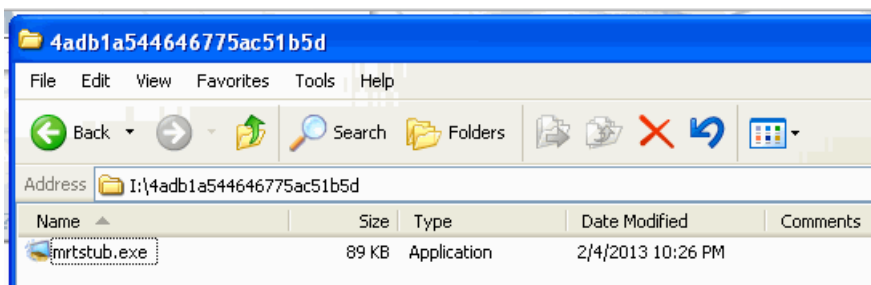
This KB article contains information about how you can download and run the tool, and what happens when the tool finds malicious software on your computer.

Even though I did not intentionally download the Removal Tool or run it, I read that Windows Update may do that when it downloads automatic updates. Further, it uses the largest hard drive on the system to create the temp folders; and in my case, the external hard drives are the largest with each being 2TB.

The upshot of this was I checked each file's Properties and confirmed Microsoft had signed them. Then I deleted the folders and files manually and nothing bad happened. In the future, I'll disconnect the external drives before downloading or installing Windows Update.

### Folders and files found on external drive.

4adb1a544646775ac51b5d	File Folder	2/13/2013 3:12 AM
42d2f25a836739301afb69	File Folder	11/15/2012 3:07 AM
400f8594bd90ae7748	File Folder	10/11/2012 2:05 AM
ce2de5958a65c1d6553dc15b052138	File Folder	10/2/2012 2:01 AM
3fdaa3608369462ba6fca4cb2500409a	File Folder	9/13/2012 2:03 AM
d87320e64e98e3fa79	File Folder	8/15/2012 10:48 PM
8ae149b3c648939f9a59eb	File Folder	7/11/2012 2:05 AM
61d09937c7438b2901d8	File Folder	6/14/2012 2:10 AM
fc12df0ac3d13f6467fd9be822	File Folder	5/11/2012 2:10 AM
4fd72056f35a0f2c4965bdee41980059	File Folder	3/22/2012 2:15 PM
3e9ebf04b9c0f008d169ebc425b421	File Folder	3/22/2012 2:14 PM
fdafab52692797eeb6939f5669aa	File Folder	8/9/2011 2:01 AM



## The Demise of the Digital Camera

By Jerry Schneir, Member, Los Angeles Computer Society, California  
www.lacspc.org, editor (at) lacspc.org

I probably should have used one more adjective in the title, “inexpensive”, so that the title would have read “The Demise of the Inexpensive Digital Camera”. You only have to look around you at any party or gathering and see that the majority of the picture taking is being done by the guests with “smart phones”. Relatively few cameras appear at these gatherings, so you might ask why? What has happened? What is happening to fuel this dramatic change?

By some estimates, smart phones account for over 50% of the cell phones in use today, and those smart phones all have built in cameras. And within the last couple of years, the cameras in those smart phones are getting much, much better. To prove my point you only have to look at two new products to be announced, one from Nikon and the other from Nokia, one a camera company the other a phone company.

The Nikon S800c combines a camera with Wi-Fi capability, even internet browsing. It will not be long before a phone is added to that device. Nokia on the other hand created a phone, the 808c Nokia PureView Pro which combines a phone with new digital technology. It dispenses with the usual scaling/interpolation model of digital zoom used in virtually all smartphones, as well as optical zoom used in most digital cameras, to vary the magnification and field of view. This new technology which is already in use by Sony in some of their more advanced cameras (Sony NEX F3), allows zooming without any lens elements changing positions. And amazingly enough, the results are really fantastic.

More and more camera manufacturers are equipping their cameras with the ability to transfer images from the camera to a phone, iPad type device or a computer directly, no wiring required. As phone manufacturers start to incorporate this new technology into their phones, the need for people to have both a smart phone AND a camera diminishes. Many manufacturers, aware of the missteps of Kodak in failing to recognize the change in technology (film to digital) and the eventual destruction of the company, are moving quickly to rearrange their product offerings.

What will be showing up in the marketplace are more mid to high end cameras with fewer and fewer low end cameras. The reasoning is pretty simple, the camera phones, as good as they are getting, are still a very long way from producing images as good as those from the mid to high end range of cameras. If you take a close look at the camera offerings of today you may note the changes that are taking place right now.

Digital SLR cameras are moving in two price directions, up and down. Canon/Nikon/Pentax/Sony are locked in a battle in both the high end professional/ semi –professional/dedicated amateur lines at one end and the beginner/intermediary dSLR camera lines. However, this is an area that has fragmented greatly; new camera designs along with new technology are resulting in smaller and lighter cameras capable of producing results equal to that of their bigger cousins. I can hear the verbal challenges now to that statement, but I am noticing more and more pros/semi-pros using this newer technology and reaping the benefits of fewer backaches from the lighter, pounds lighter equipment. These stark changes were brought about by the “mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras. In some circles these are referred to as CSC (compact system cameras) or ILC (interchangeable lens cameras) or EVIL (electronic viewfinder interchangeable lens cameras). Cameras in this mirrorless grouping are the Fuji X-Pro 1, the Sony alpha and NEX family of cameras, the Nikon J1/Vi cameras, the just announced Canon EOS M cameras, the micro four-thirds (mFT) line of cameras such as the Olympus OM-D5 and Panasonic GX1, and of course the entirely different Ricoh line of interchangeable lens AND sensor cameras.

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In addition to those camera groupings another new collection of cameras has appeared, the large sensor fixed lens cameras such as the Canon G1 X and the Sony RX 100 along with the Fujifilm X10 and X100. I can see some questions arising about what constitutes a large sensor. To my way of thinking, sensors in the size range of 1/1.7 and larger meet that criterion, but just barely. But wait, the camera companies are also introducing more mid- to high-end point and shoot cameras such as the Panasonic FZ200, Pentax X5, Canon SD500, Nikon P7700, and Fuji SL300.

But if you look, you will see relatively little effort or money being spent on the inexpensive line of cameras, those retailing for \$200 or less. What you are seeing is product renaming with a change in camera color but very little in the way of any new features. What also appears to be happening here is that as the new models appear the older models are marked down substantially. As an example, Olympus Pen LP-2 was \$550 or more. It can now be had for about \$300 while the even older version, the LP1 is still around and going for a bit under \$300 and those are prices with the kit lens. The Fuji S4500 came out at about \$300, but today it can be bought for under \$200 and it came out in January of this year.

The economic downturn of the last few years certainly has played a part in the changing face of digital photography, making it less lucrative to introduce middling to low cost cameras and to focus on the mid to upper range of cameras with special features, such as better video, longer zoom ranges, great low light and high ISO ability. You will also be seeing a move away from the traditional CCD sensor to the CMOS and BSI-CMOS type sensor since these are far better suited to video and low light photography.

One other very bad thing is happening and that is the increase in camera complexity. I hear it almost every week from my students, "I can't understand the manual (if there is even one included), there is no index or the index is vastly incomplete, the booklet uses abbreviations without ever defining them, they seem to assume I know something when I do not, they don't explain a feature or how to use that feature." I have long maintained that the instructions are written by people whose native language is NOT English and may not even be photographers.

This is a most interesting period in photography. Image quality and the ability to use high ISO settings or shoot in dim light has never been better. Cameras, at least the mid to high price cameras, have more features and generally perform much better. The next five years will see very significant changes in the photographic landscape, stick around, you may even like what you see.

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## **Amazing Tale of a Satisfying Call to Tech Support . . .**

By Judi Shade, Mac Monday Volunteer, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, SC  
February 2013 issue, The Islander, [www.hhicc.org](http://www.hhicc.org), newsletter (at) hhicc.org

I recently acquired a Dell laptop with Windows 7 to start working on a database project that only could only be accessed on a PC and used through Internet Explorer. The database program also required that I be able to print various pdf files, Word files and screen shots. Since I am a long-time computer user (PowerMac), I also have two HP printers -- an older, very reliable LaserJet and an equally old HP All-in-One. Neither printer has WiFi capabilities, but both are USB printers.

Thinking this would be easy, I ran a USB printer cable from my HP LaserJet P2035n directly to my laptop and the printer icon appeared in the devices window along with a big yellow triangle telling me I had the infamous 'issue' problem and would I like to "troubleshoot." "Of course," I told the machine and lo and behold, the little Dell that couldn't, came back and said "sorry, Charlie, there is no driver available for your antique printer."

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Funny thing though, on HP's own web site, the driver not only exists, but I had already easily downloaded it. But, it would not install. I did not want to buy a 3rd printer and I needed to print desperately – paperwork was backing up. So even though I knew HP's customer support reputation from years back (prefer a trip to the dentist than to be on hold button hell with HP), I went to HP's web site again for Tech Support and surprisingly (?) HP has outsourced tech support. BUT, and this is a big but, to a company that can actually do technical support for all kinds of software and hardware.

So I punched in the 877 number and got "Sam" in New Delhi who listened to my tale of woe and whose first question was, "If you own a Mac, why would you ever get a PC?" That is honestly what he said! Anyway, he assured me he and "Michael" could make my old HP printer work perfectly with my Dell. Thirty-five minutes (and \$149.99) later, my printing problems were resolved. There were programs on the hard drive that had to be activated and some removed in order for Windows 7 to allow a driver from an 'old' HP printer to be used.

Even though I paid slightly more for the call than the cost of a newer, inexpensive printer, I do not end up with 3 printers on my desk and my LaserJet prints nice and fast and reliably.

Anyone with an old HP, I would encourage you to use the new HP Tech Assist number (the company is called Upquake Technical Services) to bring extended life to your printer or any other device you may have. Sam and Michael were both excellent!

Sam and Michael were much better than the old Help Desk.

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## **Misery from Social Media**

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA  
February 2013 issue, DriveLight, [www.uchug.org](http://www.uchug.org), president (at) uchug.org

Does Facebook make you miserable? I know I get depressed when I think about all the time people waste on social media sites, spending hours looking at what other people are doing or raising imaginary crops on Farmville. I get perturbed when I read about those bird-brains that spend all their time tweeting their every action, and the twits that follow them. I'm not sure what is higher on the worthless scale in that case, being the tweet-er or the tweet-ee (at least the tweeter is writing something).

Now there may be proof that all this social media connectivity is bad for our mental health. A joint study conducted by two German universities indicates that use of social media sites like Facebook causes increased feelings of envy. Researchers reported that one in three people felt worse and more dissatisfied with their lives after visiting these sites. "We were surprised by how many people have a negative experience from Facebook, with envy leaving them lonely, frustrated or angry", said researcher Hanna Krasnova from the Institute of Information Systems at Berlin's Humboldt University.

This is not very surprising to me. The tendency of most people to post mostly positive information about themselves, their families and their activities, and leave off the unflattering bits tends to skew what is seen on these sites. I'm sure some use social media as the high tech way to brag. When faced with glowing reports of friend's lives and activities and beautiful photos of their latest adventures, a viewer's feelings of inadequacy seem a reasonable result of the social media experience. The study did report that vacation photos posted by others was the biggest cause of resentment. How surprising. Second was social interactions, where being able to compare against others the number of birthday greetings received or comments and "likes" on photos and posts produced envy.

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The researchers noted that these feelings of envy prompted users to boast more about their own activities, which I would think would result in more angst overall for Facebook users, as everyone competes to report having the most impressive lives. It reminds me of the feelings I recall having when my wife and I would go out to tour model homes on the weekends, not to buy but to get decorating ideas for our own home. We would leave our house feeling reasonably satisfied with it, but interested in making it just a little better. We would return from touring these fabulously decorated and ridiculously neat model homes with the feeling that our house was a dump. It would have been better for our mental health and overall happiness if we had never gone looking. I wonder if we will someday find it is the same with social media?

### **A Hard Drive In Your Pocket**

Ignore those that say you can't take it with you - now you can. When you need to carry around a lot of data, Kingston is there for you. They announced the 1 TB version of the DataTraveler HyperX Predator 3.0 flash drive at CES, which is expected to be available in the first quarter of this year. It will allow you to carry a hard drive's worth of data with you and access it at USB 3 speeds. You will have room in your pocket for it, however, as the price will empty your pockets, wallet and more. "Greg's Rule of Flash Drive Pricing" says not to pay more than \$0.50 per GB for flash drive storage, and you can do that for drives up to 32 GB. Unfortunately, the 512 GB version of this drive is priced at \$1300 (\$2.50 per GB), and the 1 TB version is expected to fetch over \$2500, about what you would pay for 35 1 TB 3.5" hard drives.

### **The Extermination of the Mouse**

Those of us that were at the January general meeting at the Microsoft Store in the Fashion Valley Mall saw a demonstration of Windows 8 on a large display screen connected to a touch screen computer. The touch screen is one way to get rid of the mouse in our computing lives. Another way is coming from a company called Leap Motion (<http://www.leapmotion.com/>). They are producing a product that will allow you to interact with your computer without a mouse, using hand gestures similar to those controlling the computers shown in the movie *Minority Report*. Think of it as a Microsoft Kinect interface for your hands only. You can interact with your computer through hand waves, pinches and other gestures more intuitive than a mouse can allow. You can pre-order their 3D hand gesture control capability for \$69.99. The small hardware motion controller, the size of a pack of gum, plugs into a USB port and sits in front of your monitor. With the Leap Motion software, they claim it can track individual finger movements to 1/100th of a millimeter. If this becomes real like Kinect, it could make the mouse obsolete.

### **What's Going into the Gadget Graveyard by the End of 2013?**

My column last month contained my predictions for the next year. One of them was that desktop and laptop computers would continue to hold their own against the onslaught of tablets and smart phones. I'm happy to report that my prediction is in line with the 2013 Gadget Graveyard predictions made by IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organization. Their survey of IEEE members, engineers, engineering students and CES attendees predicts that desktop computers should live on for at least another year.

Smart phones also will not yet force cameras, car keys or GPS systems into the gadget graveyard. What are most likely to head for extinction are entertainment devices like CDs, radios, MP3 players, DVDs and cable boxes, as streaming services for audio and video continue to gain in popularity. The consensus was that paper-based items, including printers and paper money, would be around a while longer.

I think I will hang onto my DVDs and MP3 players, as they may provide the only entertainment I will get this year. The problem with Internet streaming services is bandwidth, and in just one month I've found mine to be more limited than I thought. I've got cable Internet at home that typically shows a 12 Mbps or

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greater download speed (often approaching 20 Mbps), but recently I was confronted with web pages that would not load on my computer. Something was bogging down my Internet access. I went downstairs to find my wife watching an episode of Downton Abbey on her Kindle Fire HD tablet, while my son was downloading something on his Google Nexus tablet. It is kind of like the water we San Diegans get from the Colorado River.

At the state line it is an impressive flow, but if enough users turn on the tap at the same time, all I'm likely to get is a trickle. All these new tablets are thirsty for bandwidth, so I may need to wait until everyone has gone to bed before I can pay the bills online. Meanwhile, as they are screaming for more bandwidth, I can watch my DVDs on my laptop in peace (as long as I have on my noise canceling headphones, that is).

### **A Warning from the Cable Company**

As if limited bandwidth isn't bad enough, I recently received a warning from Road Runner / Time Warner that I had an infected computer. When I tried to access the Internet through a browser, a web page popped up that appeared to be from Time Warner. It appeared in the same manner that an initial web page would on a hotel Internet connection, requiring a log in or acceptance of terms before proceeding to the Internet. This page warned me that they had "received a report of suspected virus activity from a machine connected to the cable modem" on my Internet connection. The page provided links to Microsoft's free Malicious Software Removal Tool, as well as McAfee anti-virus software that I could download for free as a subscriber. It also warned me that I could be in violation of their Acceptable Use Policy and could have my access suspended. To proceed to the Internet, I had to click on a button that indicated I was aware of this issue and would clean and secure my computers.

I regularly scan my computers for viruses and malware, but occasionally have guests, like my son's girlfriend's laptop, connected to my network. I was also not sure how regularly my son maintains his PCs. I persuaded my son to install a free antivirus to take the place of his expired software, but he found no infections. I scanned my laptop and desktop, but found no problems there. When I scanned my wife's desktop, the antivirus did find something that was reported as part of a trojan, and eliminated it.

I don't know if that was the "reported" problem, or how it was that a problem was detected by the cable company. The web message said to contact my local cable office for further questions regarding this incident, but knowing how much fun it is to try to get useful information out of them over the phone, I never made an attempt to learn more. So far my cable Internet access has not been cut off.

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