



Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

December 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: 3rd Wednesday
December 18, 2013**

**This month's topic: Club Holiday
Party - bring dish to pass. Club will
provide pizza and soft drinks.**

**What you missed! November meeting was
discussion of Microsoft plans to eliminate
support for Windows XP in April 2014**

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



December will be our traditional
pizza party. As in the past, it will be
the third Wednesday, Dec 18, 2013,
at 7 pm. Bring a dish to pass and
the Club will provide pop, pizza and
table service. Consider bringing
your spouse.

We will not have a specific topic in December, so
this will leave plenty of time for questions. I think we
can get Joe to update us on numerous tech topics. I
have been collecting data on events on the history of
computers, and this week I found two related items
on a pioneer named Douglas Engelhart. Perhaps
now is the time to discuss some of these dates and
events.

I was recently apprised of a local example of the FBI
virus. It has similar characteristics to CryptoLocker;
we will discuss how to deal with this virus.

We also will be electing Officers for the coming year
at our December meeting.

At present no topics have been chosen for 2014
meetings; be thinking of ideas which you would like
to hear discussed.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the officers and
members of our Club for their work and support in
2013. We all should be congratulated for keeping
our Club alive; computer user groups seem to be a
dying institution across much of the U.S.

Have a happy, safe and healthy holiday.

*(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
 7:00 PM

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

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

<http://accidentalwine.com/>

What happens to those bottles of wine that have a blemish on the label? Why they get discounted (sometimes severely)! They wine is perfectly good, but because of the labeling problem, they cannot be sold via normal channels. Therefore the reason for this site!

<http://advocacyforpatients.org/>

Get free legal information, advice, and counseling for patients with chronic conditions.

<http://tinyurl.com/puo25pl>

Find out if there are any disciplinary actions against your physician.

<http://sundials.org/>

If you've ever thought about setting up a sundial, the North American Sundial Society can help.

<https://www.bighistoryproject.com/>

During a recent interview, Bill Gates was asked what was his favorite course that he ever took. Without hesitating, he said it was an Australian course called Big History. He enjoyed it so much, that he has made it possible to take all eight sections online for free. The course tells the story of our Universe and humanity

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

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Tips, Tricks & Techniques**Windows 8.1 Interface Changes**

In October, Microsoft released Windows 8.1 for general use. Many of the changes in the new Windows release are usability changes in response to user input along with some new performance enhancements and a new, more secure Windows Explorer. This article will detail a few of the interface changes which are available in Windows 8.1.



Figure 1. Windows 8.1 Start button

The most notable change to the desktop side of Windows 8.1 is the reintroduction of the Windows **Start** button (**Figure 1**). This should not be confused with the Start button available in previous versions of Windows (which brought up the Start menu), but instead makes it more obvious on how to get to the Start screen for simpler access to your applications.

On the modern interface side (**Figure 2**), Microsoft has made a number of changes. One is the introduction of more sizes for the tiles. In Windows 8, you had two options – Large and Small. In Windows 8.1, the old Large tile size is now called Wide and Small has become Medium. Figure 2 demonstrates all four tile sizes. The primary advantage of the larger size is that dynamic tiles can now display more information (as demonstrated on the Weather tile). The new smaller tile allows more tiles to be placed on the screen, which is good if you instantly recognize the app icon displayed on the tile.

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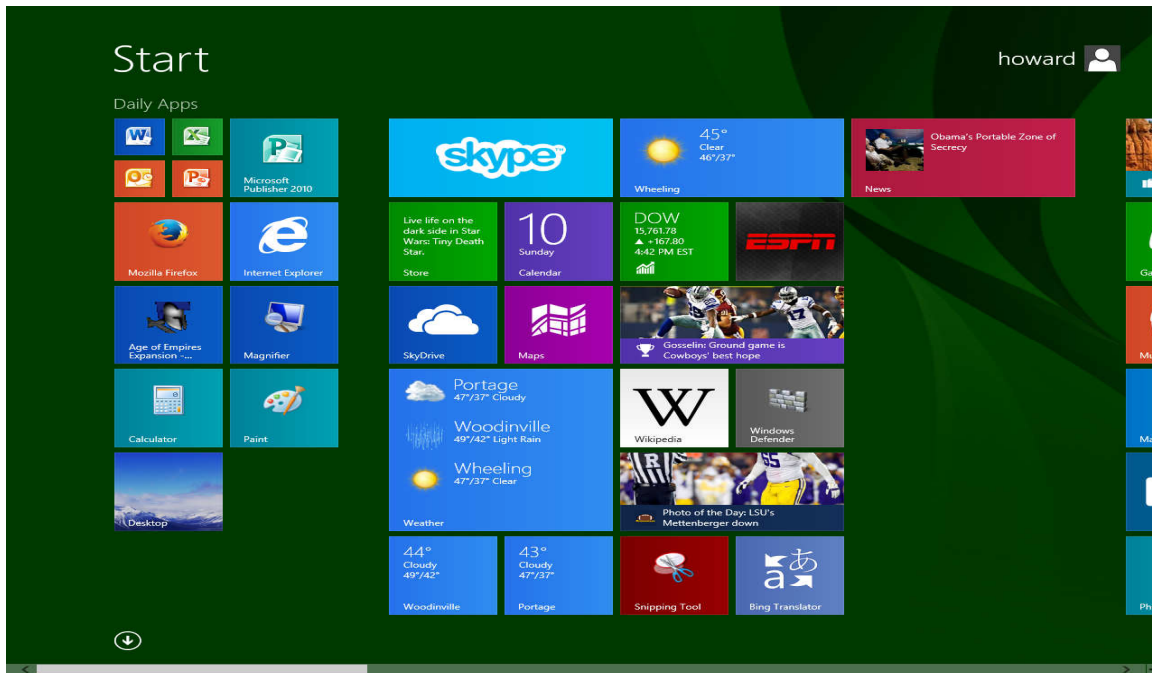


Figure 2 Windows 8.1 Start screen

One additional change in the modern interface is the introduction of a shortcut to the All Apps screen. This is demonstrated by the downward pointing arrow in the lower left corner of Figure 2. By pressing this arrow, the All Apps screen (Figure 3) will be displayed, giving you access to all of your installed apps and applications. The list of Apps can be displayed by **Name**, **Date installed**, **Most used**, and **Category**. The **Most used** view is probably the most useful as your frequently used apps will be listed first.

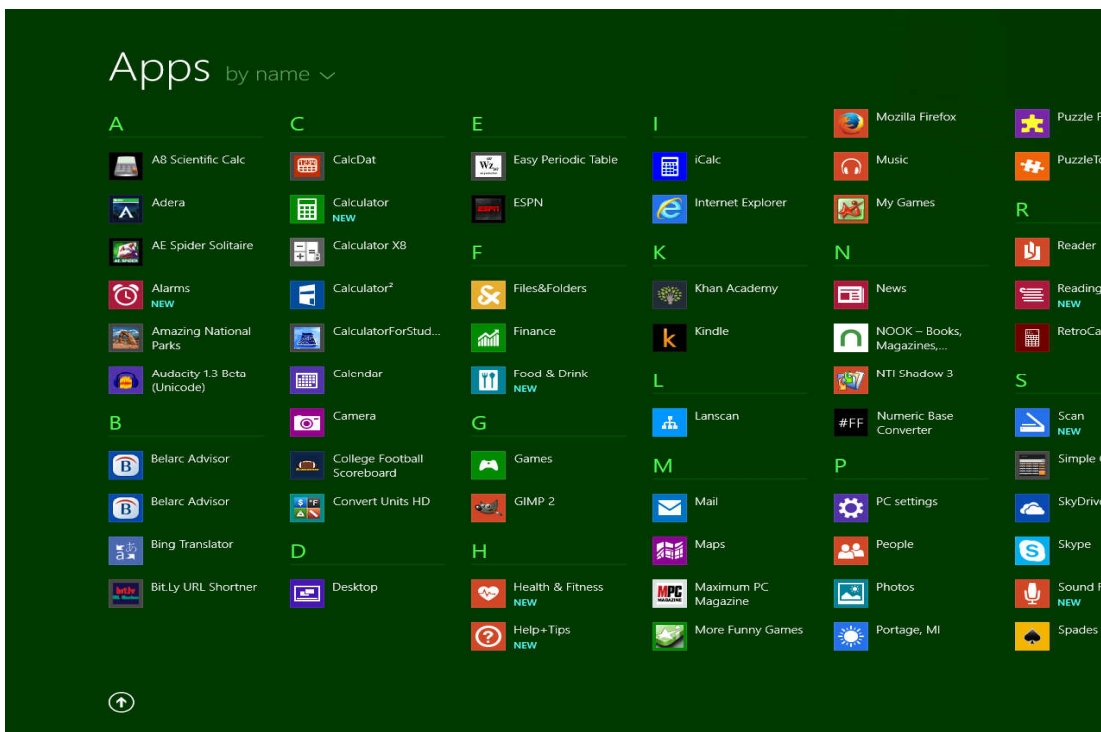


Figure 3 Windows 8.1 All Apps screen

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Probably one of the most eagerly awaited changes in Windows 8.1 (for those who are desktop-centric) is the ability to boot directly to the desktop without having to go through the Start screen. To accomplish this, *right-click on the Taskbar* in desktop mode and select *Properties*. The newly renamed **Taskbar and Navigation Properties** dialog box (**Figure 4**) will appear. Next select the *Navigation* tab and in the **Start screen** section, check the box in front of *When I sign in or close all apps on a screen, go to the desktop instead of Start*. Another handy check box is the *Show the Apps view automatically when I go to Start*. If you have the All Apps screen sorted by Most used, you should have quick access to the application that you wish to run.

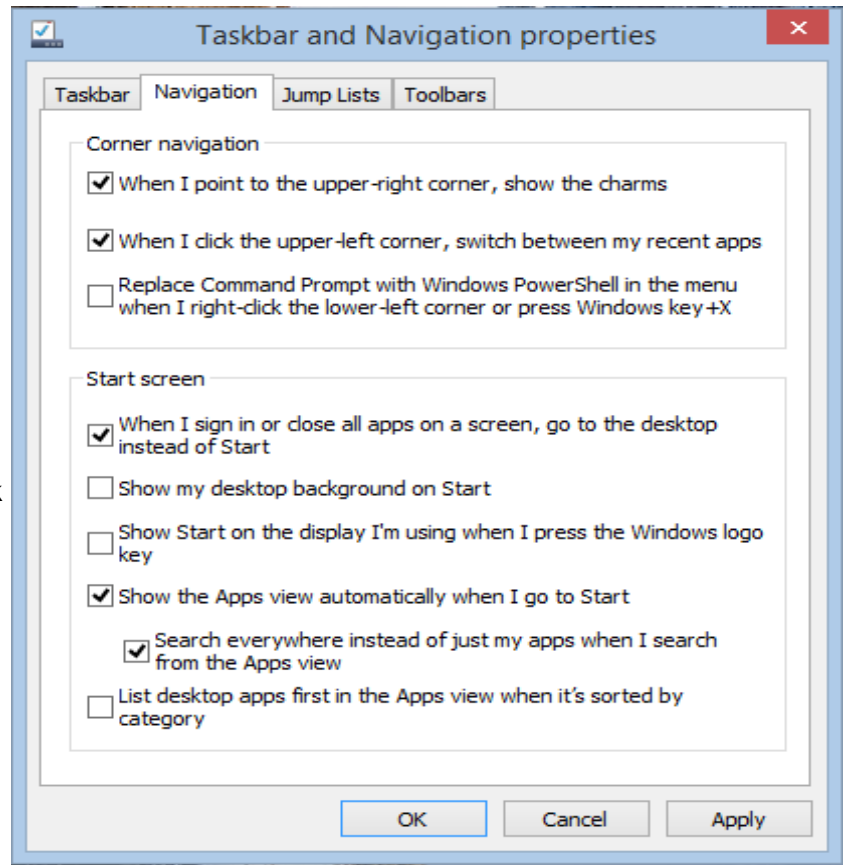


Figure 4 Taskbar and Navigation properties dialog box

Two other checkboxes that you might find useful in deactivating are the first two of the **Corner navigation** section: **When I point to the upper-right corner, show the charms** and **When I click the upper-left corner, switch between my recent apps**. These two allow you to turn off those two hot corners to prevent the **Charms** bar and the **App** bar from being displayed when the mouse pointer runs to those corners.

Freeware

By Berry F. Phillips, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City
April 2013 issue, eMonitor, www.ccokc.org, editor (at) ccokc.org

During the many years that I have been writing the Computer Hysteria Column, I have been a strong advocate of using freeware. On my computer, the only commercial software is my operating system. All the rest of the software on my system is freeware. Perhaps this frugality has something to do with my Scottish ancestry or I could be considered just plain cheap! In any event, I have done my best to give my readers some tips on freeware that I have used on my system that is exceptional. Free software is a valid choice for the home computer, office computer and Internet server uses. It is very important to remember that freeware is not cheap or an inferior option. Freeware comes in two basic types, free software with proprietary (private) code, and open-source software. Some freeware can be functionally superior to equivalent commercial software and even of higher quality.

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For example, the Firefox browser was built and developed by a large distributed workforce as opposed to a small centralized one. A large number of programmers can contribute a range of skills, and whose input is graded by peer review. These programs can be tested and developed in a wide variety of locations and situations. These community based projects would cost millions to create commercially. The bottom line, free software can be of the highest quality and should not be considered inferior to commercial products. The products they generate are among the most successful applications in the world, PHP, MySQL, Apache, and various types of Linux.

What are the best free programs that work the best? It used to be utilities. However, today there are many priceless small programs that work better than the operating systems resident applications. Free software is a viable solution in every possible area of a computer's work. The acceptability of freeware is demonstrated as the standard server solution. Freeware is widely used in PC security situations. Free versions of popular firewalls, antivirus and antispymware programs are often accepted as first choice. How do you find the best freeware to use on your system?

For years I have recommended Gizmo's Freeware be bookmarked on your computer for fast reference when you need fully reviewed and recommended freeware. In August 2010, PC Magazine included Gizmo's Freeware in its "100 Top Websites of 2010." As of November 2011 it was rated by Alexa in the top 3000 sites in English speaking countries and in the top, 5,000 worldwide with more than 100,000 people visiting the site every day. It is also the most bookmarked site under "freeware" at most of the web's major bookmarking services.

Gizmo's Freeware is a community-based site dedicated to keep the site independent and noncommercial. The site is maintained by hundreds of volunteers. Freeware is reviewed for safety and performance by these volunteer editors with comments from users. Gizmo's best freeware list is available at the website and has been used for years to locate the best freeware. You can post on forums, respond to reviews after using the freeware, and even write review depending on your computer skills. I would strongly encourage you to bookmark and visit this website which will save you money as well as increase your computer capabilities.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com>

I will have to admit that I am "hysterical" about this website.

Free Internet Faxing Services: No Fax Machine Required!

by Bob Rankin, Ask Bob Rankin, www.askbobrankin.com

Reprinted with permission, <http://goo.gl/Jhh9XE>

Dump your fax machine, the Internet has made this dinosaur obsolete. Think of the savings on toner, paper, and time when all you really need these days is a cell phone, PDA, or PC. I have a big list of sites for you that offer free Internet faxing services. Some of them are completely free, while others offer free or limited trials. Pick the online fax service that suits you best...

FaxZero lets you send free faxes from a simple web-based interface. Just enter the sender and recipient info, type in your message, and hit the "Send Free Fax Now" button. The rich-text editor lets you add basic formatting, highlighting and fonts to your text. You can also fax a file from your hard drive. Supported file formats include PDF, Microsoft Word (DOC, DOCX or RTF), Excel spreadsheet (XLS or XLSX), image files (PNG or JPG), TXT, HTML, and PowerPoint (PPT). You can attach multiple files, but the combined size of all attachments must be 20MB or less.

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And yes, it's really free to send a fax to anywhere in the USA or Canada. You can send five free faxes per day, each with a maximum of three pages. No ads are inserted on your faxed pages, but the FaxZero logo will appear on the cover page of your outgoing fax. You can even use FaxZero to fax your U.S. congressperson or senator. I've written more about FaxZero in my [Send a Free Fax](#) article.

GotFreeFax is basically a clone of FaxZero, with some minor differences. You can send 2 free faxes daily to the USA or Canada, with a 3 page per fax maximum. No ads or branding appear on the cover page. GotFreeFax supports PDF, Microsoft Word, OpenDocument Text (.odt), and Rich Text (.rtf) file formats only. One unique feature is the ability to substitute tokens in the message, such as {RECEIVER_NAME}, {RECEIVER_COMPANY}, and {RECEIVER_FAX}.

PamFax is another free faxing service that offers 3 free outgoing pages (after signup) with no ads. You can also get a free fax number for inbound faxes. PamFax has an address book for convenience, integrates with Outlook, and works with popular cloud services such as DropBox, Google Drive, and SkyDrive.

PopFax is yet another free fax sending service. Like the others, you can input a brief text message, or upload a document from your hard drive. But I can't recommend PopFax for several reasons. In the Terms of Use on their website, it says that PopFax does not guarantee "the possible alteration of the data sent by the User nor the service availability." It also says they are not liable for damage "following to an alteration of the User data transfer." This could be badly translated legal mumbo-jumbo, but yikes! Also my Chrome browser crashed when trying to send a DOC file with PopFax. On another attempt, it said my fax number was "invalid." After sending a test fax to another number, it never arrived. Of course, your mileage may vary, but with so many other choices, I'd steer clear of PopFax.

Sign up with K7, a messaging system that will send free faxes and voicemail to your email address, with an option to view or listen to your messages via the web. You get a free fax/voicemail number which you can give to your family, friends, and business buds. Just sit back and wait for the faxes to start dropping into your inbox as email attachments. If a K7 number is inactive for 30 days (no incoming voice or fax messages), it will be terminated. K7 cannot be used to send outgoing faxes. My companion article [Free Inbound Faxing](#) goes into more detail about Faxaway, an almost-free service that forwards incoming faxes to your email.

eFax claims that they are the largest online network on the planet with over a million subscribers in 2,500 cities and 27 countries. Also known as Zipfax, you can send and receive faxes as email attachments. You simply use the recipient's fax number and eFax's address. The 30-day freebie allows you to send or receive up to 150 pages. If you don't cancel during the initial month, you will be charged \$16.95 per month. See also [Free Inbound Faxing](#) for more details on eFax Limited Accounts, a free service that forwards incoming faxes to your email.

Nextiva Fax offers a 30-day free trial, including 500 free faxes. Send a fax by email, or send and receive faxes from Microsoft applications. Instead of hitting the print button, simply select "fax" right from Word, Excel, etc. Nextiva also lets you send and receive faxes from mobile devices. After the trial period, you'll be \$8.95 per month, unless you cancel.

RingCentral is designed for small businesses, not only can you receive and send faxes via email, they can supply you with toll-free fax numbers, custom greetings, an auto-receptionist, voicemail, and multiple extensions. The company offers a 7-day free trial, during which you get 500 free fax pages. After the trial period, you'll be charged \$7.99 per month, unless you cancel.

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I couldn't find a smartphone app that sends free faxes. There's an app called scanR that's supposed to do that, but apparently it's defunct. CamScanner is a free app that turns your iPhone or Android smartphone into a scanner, fax machine and PDF creator. Take a picture of a document, receipt, business card, etc. CamScanner turns it into a searchable PDF that you can fax, print or upload to various cloud storage services. Faxing costs 99 cents per page.

Interesting Internet Finds

Steve Costello, President/Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc., Florida
June 2013 issue, Boca Bits, www.brccs.org
Steve Costello (<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>), Editor (at) brccs.org

In the course of going through the more than 200 news feeds in my Google Reader, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during the month of May 2013.

HTG Explains: Why Does Chrome Say PDF Files Can Harm Your Computer?

<http://www.howtogeek.com/161461/htg-explains-why-does-chrome-say-pdf-files-can-harm-your-computer/>

How to Create A PDF With Fillable Forms in LibreOffice

<http://www.maketecheasier.com/create-a-pdf-with-fillable-forms-in-libreoffice/2013/04/29>

4 Best Free Alternatives to Microsoft Visio

<http://www.nirmaltv.com/2013/05/02/4-best-free-alternatives-to-microsoft-visio/>

Fix: Bluetooth Mouse disconnects randomly in Windows

<http://www.thewindowsclub.com/bluetooth-mouse-disconnects>

Is geotagging my photos a bad thing?

<http://askleo.com/is-geotagging-my-photos-a-bad-thing/>

How To Choose A Strong Password

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/how-choose-strong-password.htm>

How To Use Remote Desktop Connections Like An IT Pro

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/how-to-use-remote-desktop-connections-like-an-it-pro/>

Send to Kindle — eRead (Almost) Anything

http://www.wonderoftech.com/send_to_kindle/

Tips and Tricks With Technology To Save You Time

<http://inspiretothrive.com/2013/05/tech-tips-and-tricks/>

How to Print to Any Printer from Android

<http://savedelete.com/how-to-print-to-any-printer-from-android.html>

Upload EPUBs & PDFs To Google Play Books; Read On Web, iOS & Android

<http://www.addictivetips.com/web/upload-epubs-read-on-web-ios-android/>

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Most Fridays, more interesting finds will be posted on the Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog:

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>

The posts are under Creative Commons licensing.

Recent posts:

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-Mt>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-Mg>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-M4>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-LQ>

The Other Side of the Street Monthly Column

Google

Bill Hart, Member, The PC Users Group of Connecticut

July 2013 issue, The Program, www.tpcug-ct.org, adrabinowitz@ieee.org

Google, it seems, has not just the most wonderful web search device in its arsenal; it is also accused of collecting private data from its clients (that's us) – far more than we necessarily know or suspect. No one in this country seems to bother about that much, but in Europe....

Think of it: how has Google become so huge? And I mean HUGE. If it's just there for us to use as a combination dictionary, gazetteer, art museum and library – for free – how can it amass the \$millions necessary to keep those battalions of servers waiting to satisfy us almost instantaneously? The answer is: Cookies.

A Cookie is a small file of data sent by a website to a contact and stored on the contact's computer. When you log in to a website which uses cookies it will create a quick summary of who you are and maybe what you have accessed on the site and this will be saved on your computer so that next time you log in you can be recognized and perhaps welcomed by name. Fine; but think of it: the site now knows who you are, what your email address is, maybe (if you set up a more formal link) the User ID and password you created to use the site, and even the fact that you looked at, say, electric kettles rather than glassware. And for Google, what you looked at could be anything.

So Google can collect this data and sell it to others: to marketers of electric kettles to warn them you are on the prowl for one, say – the list could be endless. And as you move from searching history to ski equipment to checking maps to reading the news, a fairly full idea can be formed of the sort of person you are. Rather like the personal live-in servant who, over the years, knows a lot more about who you really are than even you may realize. And this worries a lot of people – particularly in Europe, which has had more than its share of secret police over the years.

So now Google is in trouble in Europe, and most of all in France. The trouble really came with the introduction of Google Street View, when specially-equipped vehicles drove the roads of the world recording pictures of what they were passing. It turned out that someone had added to the equipment a Wi-Fi recorder which was picking up all sorts of extraneous information – emails, data transfers, passwords and such. And though Google officially denied authorizing this and promised to delete the data recovered, it turns out that they have not done so. Two years ago an investigation was begun. It is still raging today, as the authorities try to rein Google in. Now the BBC reports Google has been given 35 days to delete the material. After that, who knows? Can France remove the website www.google.fr from the world?

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Back to cookies. They started in the 1990s when a commercial site wanted to retain some information on visitors, but found this would quickly clog its data storage. So they asked the browser writers (Netscape in those days) to arrange for small files to be stored by the browser on each personal machine instead. When they were originally implemented nobody knew they even existed, let alone they were being stored locally. But there are now, as a result of complaints, rules for cookie construction (each issuer can only read its own cookies, for example) and ways of reducing the numbers.

You can, for example, turn them off completely (“I do not wish to help you recognize me at all!”) but this may backfire. There are sites today which will not let you onto them unless you allow them to store cookies on your machine. My Firefox browser is set to tell me when cookies are requested and I can reply Yes or No. This is interesting: I have seen sites that want to place as many as six cookies at a time on my machine (Six? Why?). I often reply No and wait to see if the request is repeated until I say Yes, or if I can get onto the site without.

Many sites also, as they create the data stream for building their picture on your screen, branch to other sites which then ask for cookie permission. One of the most notorious is DoubleClick (which is now owned by Google too!). DoubleClick is purely advertising-related: we can provide marketers (for a fee) with information on the effectiveness of their ads, or the shopping habits of the public. It seems all they do is drop cookies and read them. By being called from a website as part of its setup routine, they get by the restriction that only the issuer can read a cookie. This annoys me. I try to say No to DoubleClick cookies when I can.

What fascinates me is that “google” has become a word in common use. We no longer search for information; we google it, even if we are using another search engine. I remember as a child that Hoover came into the common English lexicon. We did not vacuum the carpet; we hoovered it. And my parents owned an Electrolux hoover. That is, to me, the ultimate in Having Arrived!

Tablets—a review with random musings

Frank Ramsey, newsletter editor, Akron Canton PC Users Group, Ohio
www.acpcug.org, Aframsey (at) yahoo.com

Those of you that know me understand I have fallen in love with tablets. They are sweet in my mind.

This doesn't mean that all tablets are created equal.

I thought it was time for some random musings on what I've found in the tablet markets.

My tablet journey has consisted of 16 tablets with something like 10 different models.

I've owned: Apple iPad 1, Apple iPad 2 (2 of these), Apple iPad 3, (all 9.7”), Samsung Galaxy Tablet 8.9 (4 different ones, all 8.9”) a Sony S Tablet (9.7”), a Asus TF101 (10.1”), an Acer A500 (10.1”), a Toshiba AT305 (10.1”), a Acer W500 (10.1”), and a Google Nexus 7 (7”).

I've also spent significant time with Lenovo's ThinkPad Tablet (10.1”) .

Of the tablets I've experienced, four have run Apple iOS, 10 have run Android of various versions (2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.x, 4.1 and 4.2) and one runs Windows 7/8.

I currently have 4 tablets, two iPad's, the Nexus 7 and the Acer W500.

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Observations

My first suggestion is don't buy a cheap tablet. You'll be sorry. You'd be better to wait till you can afford the \$200 price of a Google Nexus 7 than spend \$100 on a low end tablet.

Why you ask? The low end tablets are under powered and have very limited storage. And they typically use resistive touch screens. Without getting into the dynamics, resistive touch screens are not as sensitive or responsive as the capacitive touch screens used on higher end tablets.

With the Google Nexus 7 selling for \$200, buying something less expensive to save a few bucks will only bring on frustration.

That brings another observation. Buy a general purpose tablet, not a reader.

Amazon and Barnes and Noble both sell very good tablets in the Amazon Fire and Nook Tablet. However, all these are intended to lock you into their store. You buy your books and applications only from them. Unless you root the device. We'll talk about rooting a little later.

Give the Google Nexus 7 is available for 200 bucks, pass on the Amazon and Nooks and go for it as a fantastic general purpose tablet.

Customizability

By this I mean your ability to change how the tablet looks and works. This should be more than just changing your wallpaper.

iOS limits the customizability to what Apple feels you should do. Change the wallpaper and organization of the applications is about all you can do. Even when jailbroke, you cannot perform a lot more extensibility on iOS.

Android allows a lot more customizability. You can change the wallpaper including live wallpapers that change while you view.

Android also allows you to change the default keyboard and other input methods and select alternate launchers. What's a launcher? Basically a launcher is the method you interface with the tablet. Think of this as the look and feel of the screens.

Overall, Android allows more extensibility than iOS.

Applications

Applications written for tablets typically use higher resolutions.

Applications written for phones use lower resolutions.

I know duh! Right!

Screen Size

I like to hold the tablet in one hand in a vertical position and use my other hand to navigate on the tablet.

Given this, I find the traditional sized tablets of either 9.7" or 10.1" too big, bulky and heavy to hold comfortably in one hand for very long.

My favorite tablets are the smaller sized ones. 7" is a good size for personal viewing of videos. It can be a little too small when viewing web sites. The 8.9" form factor is about perfect in my opinion; videos are great and web sites show clarity.

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Storage

The presence or lack of expandable storage probably isn't too big a deal for me. Tablets typically come with some built-in memory ranging from 2 GB and up to 64gb or more.

The more storage, the more stuff you can store on the tablet. Another duh right?!

I don't use my tablet to listen to music from. Waste of good hardware in my opinion. I carry either an iPod or Sansa device to listen to music. That's what they were made to do and they do it very well. Music typically takes lots of storage; removing it saves a lot of space on the tablet..

I find 16gb a decent amount of internal storage. That's enough to store 10 or so movies for viewing on long flights.

Books and applications typically don't take a lot of storage, 16gb is a decent amount. Sure, you'll not be much of a pack rat with 16gb,

Larger amounts of storage allow you to get sloppy.

Expandable storage can be used to back the device up which we all should do, right?

Device memory

Here you have to watch. It's pretty easy to find the amount of storage. Much more difficult to find the amount of memory in the device. My experience is if the device has 512kb or less, stay clear. It's going to run out of memory and slow down.

iPads and most higher end tablets have at least 768k memory. Some have 1 to 2 GB. The more memory, the more applications. On a duh role aren't !!

CPU

Again, here you may have to search to find the specs on the tablet.

The best tablet experience also has fast multicore CPUs. Didn't know tablets come with multiple cores on their CPU's heh? Well it's true.

Quad core tablets are all the rage. The Nexus 7 uses a quad core CPU and it's fast and responsive.

Dual core tablets are normally responsive, but there may be times you experience a lag because either you don't have enough memory or enough CPU to do the task you're asking for.

My suggestion is get at least a dual core CPU running at least 1.0 GHz.

Battery Life

iPads have better battery life. Before you get ready to argue with me, this is my column with my observations so I can write what I feel. So there!

However, this is backed up by a number of independent studies.

Why you ask? iOS is a single tasking operating system. The application that runs is in the "fore ground". Other applications simply pause. This saves battery life.

Android allows applications to run in the "background". You may find the features performed by the background applications useful, but they do affect your battery life.

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Screen Resolution

The more expensive tablets come with better screens. Currently iPad 3/4 and the Nexus 10 have the highest pixel count screen.

Can you see the difference? Absolutely. This truly is a time where more is better!

What price do you pay for the increased screen resolution? You will pay a price in battery life as the more pixels to be changed, the more power that it takes.

You may not see much difference when watching movies, although you can see the difference on the iPad 1 and iPad 2 with their lower resolution screens pretty easily.

Select a table that has at least 800x600 resolution. If you can afford it, go for 1280x800 (720p) resolution.

Cameras

Tablets have built in cameras, sometimes multiple ones, front and back.

They can be useful if you're Skypeing with someone. You will probably not use the cameras for much, although the higher resolution ones (5 mpixels and up) take great pictures.

An Android tablet running Ice Cream Sandwich (Android 4.0) typically has a panoramic view allowing you to have a scene that pans a wider area, much like a wide angle lens. It's a unique feature that you might find useful. There are multiple applications available to edit the photos on the tablet.

Application Stores

Applications written for tablets typically take advantage of a tablet's higher resolution screen.

The Apple Store has more applications than Google Play and more that take advantage of a tablet's higher resolution screen.

Having said this, you will find both stores have selections in almost whatever type application you desire. Lots of games, utilities, weather updates, etc.

Without jailbreaking, iOS applications can only be downloaded from the Apple Store.

Android tablets can download from the Google Play store, the Amazon store and other locations. You don't need to root the device to enable installation from other than the Google Play store however.

Rooting/Jailbreaking

Both refer to the same thing, but on different platforms. You root an android tablet and jailbreak an iPad.

So what is rooting/jailbreaking? Basically it's removing the limitations the hardware vendor placed on you.

Jailbreaking an iPad means you can install applications from places other than the Apple Store.

Once jailbroke, an iPad can install applications from non-Apple Store locations. Additionally you can customize the iPad interface somewhat. Not as much as Android allows, but you can add things like a mouse driver.

Rooting an Android device allows more control over the hardware. Typical things you can do include over or under clocking the CPU (running the CPU faster or slower than rated). Note: you don't really need to under clock as the Android OS does a pretty good job of slowing the CPU down when it's not required. Another thing rooting does is allow for total backups. I know, you mean you cannot backup everything

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about an Android tablet without rooting? Sad but true. While email accounts typically are synced with your Gmail account, application settings are not.

Do you need to jailbreak or root the tablet to enjoy it? Absolutely NOT! I used to jailbreak/root a device soon after acquiring it. Now I'm not finding the need to jailbreak/root it. Just enjoy the tablet is my current view

Expandability

By this I mean accessories, cases, hardware add-ons, etc.

iOS takes the cake here hands down. There are simply more add-ons available that use the Apple Dock connector. Radios, speakers, video games, even piano keyboards.

Apple has complicated this with the iPad 4. The Apple Dock connector was changed from the 30 pin one that has been standard. This immediately obsoleted many of the hardware accessories out there. Yes, there is an adapter from the old to new Apple Dock.

Android tablets have suffered and continue to suffer special connectors which limits the reusability of devices. Even power connectors can be unique to a tablet.

Android allows Bluetooth connectivity for keyboards and mice while iOS only supports Bluetooth keyboards. Both support Bluetooth headphones.

As previously discussed, iPad does not support addition of memory, while many Android tablets allow you to use a SD or microSD card for additional storage.

I do encourage protecting the tablet with a case and possibly a screen protector. There are a lot of different cases available. I prefer those that allow you to have the tablet vertically and horizontally. They're called 360 rotatable.

I also like cases that allow the tablet to be detached and protected. Not a lot of these are available in the 9.7" or 10.1" tablets. The 7" tablets have a number of better options.

Screen protectors are available for almost any tablet. Some will say if the tablet has Gorilla glass (a type of glass that resists scratches) you don't need a screen protector. Personally I prefer a screen protector on every tablet as the screen protector can improve readability in bright light situations.

Manageability/Backups

How do you manage the tablets?

iPad makes it easy. iTunes is the universal answer. You transfer music, movies, and applications within iTunes. You back up the device using iTunes. You restore to a new device using, yes, iTunes.

Android doesn't have an iTunes. Most of the manageability is drag and drop. Want to copy an application to the device. Drag the install file from your laptop to the device. Need to copy a movie. Same thing, drag and drop. Music? Ditto!

Backup of an Android tablet requires an application. Yes, you can "mount" the tablet's internal storage on your laptop and copy the files from the tablet to the laptop.

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Without rooting the Android tablet, backups do not include application settings. Want to preserve your high score or customized settings on your favorite game? The only way is to root the tablet and run a program like My Backup Pro or Titanium Backup Pro.

Whew! Are you as tired as I am?

You've probably noticed a lack of Windows tablets? Ok, the Acer W500 is a Windows tablet and it's currently running both Windows 8 and Android Ice Cream sandwich.

I simply cannot afford a Windows Surface tablet. They do look very interesting. The main claim to fame seems to be the ability to run Microsoft Office. Hummmm, is this enough to sell a \$500 device? Stay tuned!.

We've been through a lot and hopefully you have a better idea about tablets and some pointers on what to look for when shopping for a tablet.

What other things might you find?
