



Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

March 2014

<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:
March 26, 2014

This month's topic:
Windows XP to Linux?

What you missed!
**Club members discussed new and old
gadgets.**

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



Our February General Meeting revealed a number of gadgets of potential use by our members. I am in the process of acquiring some of these plus some surprise items. We should have interesting raffles for the rest of 2014.

March's General Meeting will be our last shot on what to do with our older PCs still running Windows XP. Our timing coincides with the end of support of Windows XP by Microsoft on April 8, 2014. While our focus will be on replacing Windows XP with a Linux operating system, other alternatives will also be discussed.

While preparing for March's meeting, I spent considerable time trying to fix older PCs. I did gain many ideas for repair techniques, and I found a repair shop which I think I can recommend.

In April Joe will be talking about the use of high tech to assist with family budgeting. He has also promised some other surprises.

May will be another round robin discussion of how we each use the Internet on How To projects around the house and garden.

Finally, the nerd in me says I need a way to easily identify what is on my many flash drives. I use DirPrn from karenware.com. We can talk about this unique program at the March meeting.

(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:

(submitted by Howard Lewis)

<http://tinyurl.com/puu9dre>

A group of divers were working off the coast of Hawaii and they encountered a bottlenose dolphin that was snagged on a fishing line. Watch this YouTube video as they free the dolphin from this line.

<http://tinyurl.com/lnenrgw>

If you become one of the many seniors who experience fraud in any form, the U.S. Senate wants to know about it. They may be able to help you.

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

With NADA Guides, you can find out how much a new or used car, RV, motorcycle, boat or modular home is worth. This may help put you in a better position for negotiating a final price

<https://www.bookbub.com>

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Attn: Membership Chairman

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Tips, Tricks & Techniques (submitted by Carol Picard)**Windows 8/8.1: Internet Explorer - Google Chrome**

Internet Explorer browser opens in different modes, based on whether you open it from the Start Screen or Desktop. Google Chrome browser may open in different modes, based on the last mode it was opened in.

Internet Explorer:

If you don't like how Internet Explorer displays when opened from Start Screen, you can have Internet Explorer always open in Desktop mode by setting another browser as the default browser. The downside is that if you click on a website link in an email, pdf file, document, etc., it will open in the default browser, instead of opening in Internet Explorer.

Google Chrome:

Chrome can also open in Windows 8 or Desktop mode but it depends on a setting in Google Chrome, not whether it is launched from Start Screen or Desktop. To switch between the two:

- Launch Google Chrome
- Click the Menu button in upper right corner 
- Click *Relaunch Chrome in Windows 8 mode* or *Relaunch Chrome on the desktop*

Chrome will always re-open in the last mode used.

You may not see the above option in Chrome because, currently, the new Windows 8 mode will not work on laptops or desktops with high-resolution displays. To use Google Chrome in Windows 8 mode on those systems, try changing display scaling setting. The easiest way to do this is from a Google Chrome shortcut on the desktop. If you don't have a desktop shortcut, navigate to the Chrome executable file (usually found under C:\Program Files (x86) - Google - Chrome - Application)

1. Right click on Chrome shortcut icon on desktop or on Chrome executable
2. Select Properties
3. In Compatibility tab, add checkmark by clicking on box next to: *Disable display scaling...*
4. Click OK

If computer experiences problems with that setting or to revert setting so Chrome always opens in Desktop mode, repeat above steps, but click to remove check in box next to: *Disable display scaling...*

Mouse Tips - Word (may also work in other word processing programs)

To select multiple segments of text in a document - press and hold the Ctrl key while selecting the first segment of text. Keep the Ctrl key pressed and select another segment; select the third, and so on. When all text segments selected, release Ctrl key and right click on one of the segments to copy, delete, etc.

To make a vertical selection, hold down ALT as you drag down through the text you want to highlight. After dragging it vertically, you can drag it horizontally also, to select as much of the text you want. Make sure to press the ALT key before pressing the mouse to drag. After text selected, release the ALT key first before releasing the mouse button.

Windows

To maximize a window: click on title bar and drag to top of screen.

To minimize the same window, click on title bar and drag down.

To minimize all windows except the active window: click and "Shake" the title bar. If you want to restore all the windows you just minimized, click and "Shake" again on the title bar of the window in view.

ARTICLE INDEX**Goodbye XP -- Page 4**

Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ

Review: East-Tec Eraser 2014 -- Page 6

Herb Goldstein, Columnist-The Computer Buffet, PC Monitor, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Computer Entertainment -- Page 8

Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL

How to Find a Lost Document and Other Filing Tips -- Page 9

Nancy DeMarte, 1st Vice President, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL

Web Tracking is Monitoring our Every Move -- Page 11

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy (at) compukiss.com

What to do if you think your email has been hacked -- Page 12

John King, Contributing Editor, Golden Gate Computer Society

What You Need to Know about QR Codes -- Page 12

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy (at) compukiss.com

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Goodbye XP

By Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ
October 2013 issue, BUG Bytes, www.bcug.com, n2nd (@) att.net

On April 8, 2014 Microsoft will stop supporting Windows XP and Office 2003. After that date there will be no new security updates, non-security hot-fixes, free or paid assisted support options, or on-line technical content updates. However, all your software will continue to work just as well as it did on April 7, so you needn't panic, but it would be prudent to come up with a rational transition plan. There are three choices: (1) continue to use XP, but take some precautions, (2) keep your present hardware, but upgrade the software, and (3) purchase new hardware and software. The hardware and software vendors as well as the media in which they advertise prefer that you take the third approach, but let's consider all of them.

There are many advantages to staying with XP, which may not hold with the other two approaches.

- Your present hardware works with it.
- Your present applications run under it.
- It supports your present peripherals.
- You don't have to learn anything new.
- It costs less than the alternatives.

The main disadvantage is that as time goes on, you become increasingly more vulnerable to attack over the Internet and by malware. You can reduce this and its consequences by the following.

- Before April 8, 2014, use Microsoft Update to install the latest patches to all your Microsoft software.
- Update all your anti-malware software, and check that the vendor will continue to support it for XP after April 8. If not, change to a vendor that will.
- If you are connected to the Internet through a router, install the latest firmware in it. If your PC connects directly to your ISP's modem, purchase a hardware router, and update its firmware if necessary. For good measure, if you haven't already, install a software XP firewall.
- Be very careful about what you download, and avoid doing it if possible..
- Review you backup program; improve it if needed, and resolve to follow it rigorously.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

The wording on the MS Website implies that old patches will remain available, but why take a chance? Update your software early, as the download rate may slow near the deadline. At the present time, about 35 per cent of the computers in the world use XP. This is a sizable market for anti-malware vendors, and I would expect them to continue supporting XP for some time. Your first line of defense against Internet aggression is your router and its firewall. Most likely, your ISP's modem also includes a firewall, but how careful is he about keeping it up-to-date? You don't know. With your own router, you have ability to keep it up to date, and as a result, having one is desirable even if you have only one PC. Despite all your precautions, as time goes on, and the bad guys find more XP vulnerabilities, your risk will increase. Be wary of any download, including e-mail attachments from friends. The best malware defense is to keep it off your PC. Your last defense is your backup program. Any information you haven't backed up on an external drive is one mouse click or one device failure away from trash. Although its most important to back up your data, you should in addition make an image backup of everything on your hard disk, because once XP becomes an orphan, applications and drivers for it will become increasingly difficult to find.

The second alternative is to keep your hardware, but change your operating system.

- Your vulnerability will be less than if you stay with XP.
- If your PC is old, it may not support some current operating systems.
- Your present applications may not run under the new OS.
- Drivers may not be available for some of your peripherals, requiring you to replace the devices.
- You will have to take care during the transition not to lose any data.
- You will have to learn new ways of working.

The hazard with this approach is that to install a new operating system, you generally must format your hard disk, but you must first insure that all your data is safe and readable by the applications in your new OS. For example, if all your financial records are stored in Quicken files and there is no financial program available in your new operating system that can understand them, you essentially have lost all your financial records. A second problem is to insure that your current hardware supports the new operating system before you format your disk. If you are considering a newer version of Windows, run the Windows Upgrade Advisor (available at <http://windows.microsoft.com/is-is/windows/downloads/upgrade-advisor> for Windows 7). Don't forget to check your peripherals; I found that there was no Windows 7 driver for my scanner and had to buy a new one when I upgraded from XP. If your PC is compatible except for insufficient RAM, this is an inexpensive upgrade, even if done by a shop. (You should have at least one Gigabyte of RAM, even if you stay with XP.)

Consider Linux, especially for a secondary PC. I've converted two XP machines to Xubuntu (<http://xubuntu.org/>), which is more responsive than XP on old hardware. It has the advantage that you can try it out with a "live-CD," which is bootable from a CD drive. It will be slow in this mode, but since it doesn't make any changes to the hard disk, you are just a reboot away from XP. While running Xubuntu, all the files on your hard disk are available, so you can check whether Linux applications can read them. (Instructions on how to create a live CD or DVD in Windows are available at <http://www.ubuntu.com/download/help/try-ubuntu-before-you-install>.) If you have room on your disk or can add a second one, consider a dual-boot system in which you can run either system. (All your Windows files will be accessible in Linux, and Windows applications are available that can read Linux disk partitions.) However, Linux is not Windows, which means there are many differences between the two systems. Try to find a sympathetic, experienced Linux user to help you get started, especially if you are less than comfortable in adventure mode.

The third alternative, buying new hardware and software is the easy and safe, but expensive. You are probably best off to purchase new components. XP-era processors, RAM, displays, and hard disks are woefully inadequate for any current OS. Keyboards and mice now cost just a few dollars, and your old

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

ones may use obsolete connectors. You can keep your printer and scanner if drivers are available for the new OS; your old speakers will be fine.

- Your old PC with your data, applications, and peripherals remains available for use.
- You will probably have to purchase new applications for your new OS and probably some new peripherals, especially if the existing ones are several years old.
- There will be a learning curve for the new system.

Spend some extra money; in particular, get more RAM and a larger disk than you think you can get by with.

I haven't considered a piecemeal hardware upgrade, because I don't think it's cost-effective. Most modern CPUs are incompatible with XP-era motherboards; new motherboards are usually incompatible with XP-era cases and expansion cards; and old RAM is incompatible with both modern CPUs and motherboards. My preference is to get a new PC up and running with all the essential software installed, and keep the old PC operating until you are comfortable with the new one and are sure that it has all the applications you need and that all your data has been successfully transferred to it.

Review: East-Tec Eraser 2014 (www.east-tec.com)

By Herb Goldstein, Columnist-The Computer Buffet, PC Monitor, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org - [pcugedit \(at\) Verizon.net](mailto:pcugedit@verizon.net)

It's a miracle! Yes, finding something on the internet can seem to be miraculous. But the actual miracle is no longer finding what you are looking for; it's finally completely getting rid of what you've found! In fact, getting rid of what you've found is the real miracle. Pound on your delete key all you will, take an oath it's gone and forgotten, and don't you know that some smart-aleck computer enthusiast will come along and make a liar out of you despite your fervent oath.

Bringing back the text or photo you have vigorously deleted is not as miraculous as it may seem. The real miracle is how easy it can be to bring back from the dead. With surprisingly little effort your deleted item can be readily restored. Now if your restored text or photo happens to exist in any variety between embarrassing and deadly, you may wish you backed up your delete key with something that really did the job.

East-Tec Eraser is the quintessential software for eliminating anything you really want to get rid of without worrying that it will show up unexpectedly because someone was able to restore it. What's more, it's easy to use and fool-proof.

After an easy installation, East-Tec Eraser opens with a vertically placed menu bar the first item in which is Privacy Guard. Its purpose is to erase sensitive data you have gathered from Windows and the internet that was extracted without your knowledge or permission. It will not erase files you have saved or that are needed for normal operation.

The Privacy Guard engages as the first and basic "hot" item in Eraser's menu and in my initial venture gathered a collection of 2,351 previously "deleted" files that had been originally quarantined by Malwarebytes or Norton Utilities over a several year period among a collection of other files that I had long ago considered "gone forever". Well what do you know? There they were just sitting there unknown and out of reach to me, just waiting to be reclaimed by someone with the smarts to do it. With the click of a single button in Privacy Guard, one by one each of those 2,351 files was finally and finitely laid to rest by East-Tec Eraser.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Of course the object in the future would be not to wait until a few thousand of those files were accumulated, but to use Privacy Guard regularly on an ongoing basis which I will make it my business to do henceforth. Needless to say, before using Privacy Guard you need to be certain you are not erasing something you plan to possibly restore at a future time. This is a caveat that holds true for anything else you feed to East-Tec Eraser in one or another of its tools. The items selected by Privacy Guard will conform to pre-chosen defaults.

Button #2, Erase Files and Folders, allows you to indicate files or folders that you want to add to your erase list. You can specify certain criteria or otherwise drag and drop specific files or folders to this area.

Button #3, Erase Deleted Data, ensures that previously deleted files are removed from specified drives on your computer beyond recovery.

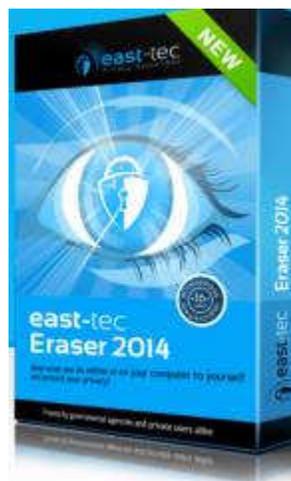
Button #4, Media Wiper, was designed to address all removable media devices up to 64 GB. It also has provisions for wiping entire disks or partitions.

Button #5 cleans traces of your online activities at certain intervals which you specify.

How does it all work? To the best of our judgment, East-Tec competently removed everything it boasted it was going to. We had the opportunity to put East-Tec Eraser through its paces in both Firefox and Chrome browsers. It worked equally well with both and can be expected to work similarly with other common browsers. Erasing the free space allocated to previously deleted files needs to be done while the computer is not in normal occupied usage. It takes plenty of time.

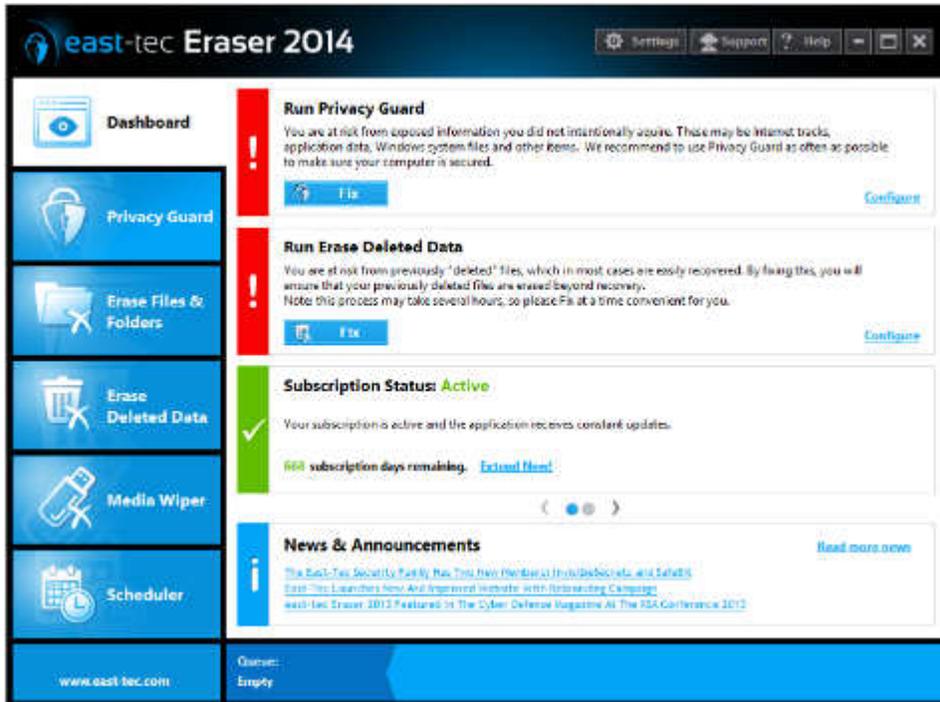
East-Tec provides for very secure erasing that meets and exceeds the U.S. Department of Defense standards for the permanent erasure of digital information. If there is a caveat, it is in nomenclature. East-Tec provides for a free trial period for Eraser. You need to wring the software out to make certain you are comfortable with its instructions, straightforward as they may be. It is very powerful software whose purpose is to readily, permanently and irretrievably erase. Not too much imagination is required to imagine problems that can result in improper use. While there is little really difficult in its usage, wisdom dictates caution. East-Tec helps by making a trial copy of Eraser available to you. It will also help convince you it is software you don't want to be without if you desire to maintain unrestricted control over what is available or not on your hard drive.

As you would expect, whatever Eraser activities you may be employing at the moment need be during a period of time when your cyber-activities are not otherwise occupied. Eraser helps by offering a scheduler to properly and conveniently plan the periods of time during which Eraser functioning will occur and prevent other computer or internet usage.



(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)



Computer Entertainment

By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL
August 2013 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, [jimcerny123 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:jimcerny123@gmail.com)

Are you old enough to remember sitting around watching the radio and listening to The Lone Ranger or other programs? Then came TV, movies, records, tapes, and DVDs. We all have our favorite forms of entertainment and entertainers. I am sure most of you have already used your computer, tablet or phone for some kind of entertainment, but I thought it might be helpful (i.e. entertaining?) for you if I gave you a quick overview of the almost infinite entertainment possibilities with computer devices. For the purpose of this article I will assume you have a computer, tablet, or phone connected to the internet. I am sure you will find the following ideas fun and entertaining:

YouTube – one of my favorites. You do not have to join anything or get an ID or password, just go to the YouTube website at youtube.com and in the search box at the top enter in anything you like and hit the “Enter” key. You can enter an actor, TV show, name, event, topic, or news item. Be prepared to get a list of videos you can watch that can take all day. Rarely is an “app” so easy to use and so much fun! To watch a video, just click on it (or touch it on a touch-screen) and it should start playing in a few moments. While playing, you can use the controls to pause or drag to any point in the video.

Google Earth – You can download this free through the Google website. (If you don’t know how to get to the Google website there is no hope for you at all, please donate your computer today to our refurbishing group.) Google has many tools that are entertaining and fun, but one of my favorites is Google Earth. When it begins you see a slowly spinning earth that you appear to be approaching from outer space. Use your finger on the touch-screen or your mouse to rotate the earth or stop it from spinning. Zoom in or out using your fingers to pinch or spread, or use your mouse wheel or the zoom in-out bar. Try zooming in on Disney World in Orlando and you can see the parks and the people. You can’t quite read a car license plate, but it’s pretty close. Many cities have 3D rendered buildings and you can fly right between them if you want. Explore your planet and checkout the many options available.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

Free games – Whatever games you enjoy you can bet there are computer versions of them. Many are free. On the Google search website, enter in the search bar the word “free” followed by whatever game you are interested in. You will get quite a list. Be aware, however, that some “free” games may ask you to register or set up an account. I never do this – I have too many accounts and passwords to keep track of as it is. Some games on the internet you can play with or against other people all over the world. I generally prefer to play against the computer instead of a real person. When you do find a website that allows you to play a game right on the internet for free, you can be sure there will be some advertising. It may be on the border at the edge of the game screen or window, or it may appear as “pop-up” windows. Carefully click your mouse or tap your finger on the “X” (wherever it is, usually in the upper right) to close the window. If you miss the “X” and hit any other part of the window you will probably be sent to another window with more advertising. But do not be afraid, the internet is all about advertizing you know, just click on the next “X” you see to remove the unwanted window or ad.

TV and Radio Stations – Use Google to find your favorite radio or TV programs (current or from days gone by) and see what you find. Many current TV and radio programs can be viewed or listened to on the station’s internet site.

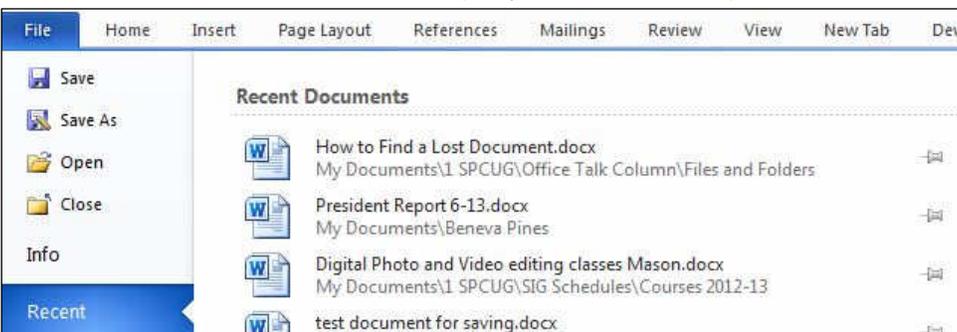
The whole idea of all this is to consider your computer a window to the world—the present and the past. Don’t be afraid to search and explore, you will find fun and amazing things. Give yourself a time limit, otherwise you will find the hours slipping by and missing meals. Oops, look at the time! I think I just missed dinner.

How to Find a Lost Document and Other Filing Tips

By Nancy DeMarte, 1st Vice President, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL
August 2013 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, ndemarte (at) Verizon.net

I suppose you’re thinking this could never happen...until it does. You have a large number of folders full of documents and photos on your computer. One day you need to find a letter that you wrote and saved a week ago, but can’t remember what name you gave it or which folder you saved it in. Here are some ways to find that document:

Look in your Recent Documents list: Open Word 2010 or 2007 and click File, and you will see a list of documents you opened recently. If you haven’t opened more than about 20 documents since you saved the letter, it will be on the list. If you find the letter, you can open it from the Recent Documents list. But before you do that, it’s a good idea to take note of its “path,” so you’ll know exactly where it’s stored. The path of a document file in Word 2010 is shown below its name in the Recent Documents list. It is represented by a string of folders, starting with the largest folder, My Documents, and ending with the sub-folder in which the document is stored. As shown, the path for this article is “My Documents\1 SPCUG\Office Talk Column\Files and Folders.” In Word 2007, the path is missing in the Recent Documents view, but with a few steps, you can find it. Open Word 2007 and click the Office button to



open the Recent Documents list. Click a recent document to open it. Then click Office button – Save As. In this window the path of the document appears in the address bar across the top. The last folder in the string of folders is where the document is stored.

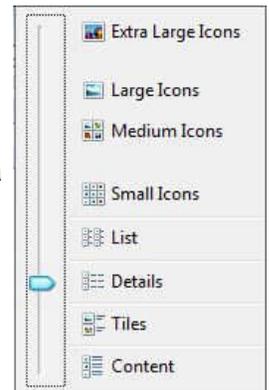
(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

You can keep or “pin” any Recent Document to the list for easy future access by clicking the pushpin icon next to it. You can also right click a recent document in Word 2010 and select “Remove from list.” Recent files lists exist in most 2007 and 2010 Office programs.

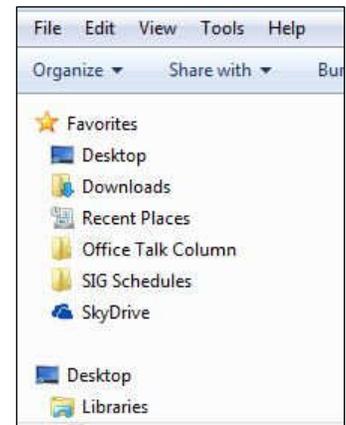
Search your computer: In Windows 7, click the Start button at the left end of the taskbar, then type in the search box one or more words which you guess are part of your lost letter’s name. If your guess is correct, the letter should appear in the Files list and can be opened from there. Sometimes, however, a Windows 7 search does not find files stored too deeply in sub-folders. Windows 8 offers a more targeted search. Open the Charms from the Start Screen and click the category of item you’re looking for, such as Mail or, in this case, Files. Then type your search words in the Search box. This tool searches inside all levels of sub-folders in the category and returns a list of possibilities. It searches not only file names, but also the body of the document.

Make use of File Views: The contents of any folder on the computer can be viewed in various ways, but some views fit certain kinds of files better than others. It’s easiest to find a document in a file list using the Details view, which is a list which includes File Name, Date Modified, File Type, and Size. A photo is best viewed as an Icon or Tile, which shows a thumbnail of the photo, its name, and file size. To change the view of a file list in Windows 7, open a folder, then click the Views icon at the right end of the menu bar. By moving the slider, you can preview how different views affect your list before making your selection.



If your letter does not appear in Recent Documents and is not found with a Search, you can open My Documents and scroll to the bottom of the list of folders to see unfiled documents. If it isn’t there, then open a sub-folder where you guess it might be. Set the view to Details, and sort the list by Date Modified, which will put recently opened files at the top of the list. To sort, click the heading of the Date Modified column. Reverse the sort order by clicking the heading again. File names sort alphabetically; dates chronologically.

Add folders to your Favorites: Much like the Favorite websites list you keep in your Internet browser, Windows provides a convenient spot for you to park folders that you open frequently. Open Libraries. In the Explorer Window, at the top of the navigation pane on the left, you’ll see a section called Favorites. A few folders are listed there by default, but you can customize this list with your own folders. I keep my SIG Schedules and Office Talk Column folders there because I open them frequently, and because opening a Favorite folder takes only one click. To add a folder to Favorites, make it visible in the main Explorer window (but don’t open it), then click and drag it left onto the word Favorites, or use Copy and Paste. A Favorite folder is synchronized with the original one. Whenever you make a change to files in the original folder, the change will also appear in the Favorites version and vice versa.



File Management is one of the most difficult skills to master in a Windows environment. And each new version of Windows changes the system just enough to cause confusion.

The more you understand how files and folders are stored and organized on your computer, the more control you’ll have of your documents and other important files. You won’t have many lost documents, either.

Web Tracking is Monitoring our Every Move

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com, [sandy \(at\) compukiss.com](mailto:sandy@compukiss.com)

Web tracking has gotten completely out of hand! The government is snooping on everything we do. On top of that, sharing of information between companies for advertising purposes has reached a level of alarming sophistication. Here's my story about what they do and how they do it.

Times have changed quickly in the Internet world. It used to be fun to visit a website and be presented with an ad about some new product or service that I found interesting. I fully realized that they chose what they presented to me by scanning the information that had been gathered about me from my previous Web searches and Web browsing, but it didn't really bother me.

Today, however, was an eye-opener for me. Today I realized just how invasive that Web tracking has become. This morning I looked at a skirt that was on sale at the J Jill website. During my browsing session I looked at the skirt several times.

Here's the eye-opener. That afternoon, when I was doing some research, I was struck by the fact that the same skirt was featured in two prominent J Jill ads. These ads were on the Associated Press website, which had nothing to do with J Jill or with clothing.

In my morning shopping I also looked at some Web services. In the afternoon, I was shown ads for one of the Web service that I had looked at in the morning. Of course, the Website that showed me the ads had nothing to do with Web hosting.

This all has to do with advertising and the sharing of information. When you visit a website that website knows your IP address. It also has a record of the web browser you used, the time of your visit and what you looked at. All shopping sites do this. Search engines like Google also keep track of this type of information. In addition, they track everything you search for. They can also see which website you visit when you leave their website. Search engines, including Google, retain this information for some time.

When we are on the Internet, we are constantly being categorized, identified, and targeted. All of the data from multiple visits and multiple searches is congregated to give a pretty good representation of who you are. On top of that this information is shared by all of the search engine or website's advertising, marketing, and tracking partners and affiliates. That is how the skirt that I was looking at showed up on a totally unrelated website.

All of this is done in the name of advertising and it follows the American way of advertising. Remember when television transmissions were totally free, supported only by advertising? Well, although we pay for both the Internet service and the device that we use to access the Internet, many things on the Internet are free. These include programs and services like Internet browsers and search engines.

They offer us free stuff, but they either have direct ads or they have deals with others who are advertisers. They also use small, almost invisible single pixel graphic images called web beacons to scan computer and cookie log files to analyze people and to target purchasers. The information that they gather cannot identify us personally, but it can tell them a lot about our preferences, surfing habits, and purchasing behaviors.

I don't mind direct ads but unfortunately, the advertisers and their partners and affiliates have become more and more invasive. Technology is being used to predict and to affect consumer behavior. A few years ago, when a website said, "Welcome back Sandy", it felt comforting to have the site recognize me. Now, however, the targeting is becoming so accurate that it feels artificial, intrusive, and even a bit eerie.

Add that to the fact that the American government has been gathering the telephone and Internet records of millions of citizens, and you will agree that WE HAVE A REAL PROBLEM!!

What to do if you think your email has been hacked

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The first thing to do if you worry about email hacking is to change your email account password to something more complex than 123456. For best security, use a password such as Q*93im#&qrR-57\$. You'll never remember it and won't have any more email problems [insert snicker].

My Hotmail account was hacked a while ago. A human hacker or automated bot was indeed sending spam from my account on Hotmail. My local computer wasn't involved. Everything was happening on the Hotmail computers.

Spammers like to use other people's email accounts to send spam because it's free and makes the spam harder to block. After I changed my weak Hotmail password to a stronger one, the spammer/bot couldn't access my account; and the problem ended.

Alternatively, a spammer may be simply spoofing the return address of the spam using your email address to make the message less likely to be blocked. There's nothing that you can do to stop that. You could stop using that email address, but the spammer can keep using it as the return address anyway. Fortunately, spam with your spoofed return address usually stops in a few days or weeks at the most. The spammer probably found your address without hacking your account, for example, from the address book of a friend, an intercepted email, etc. Nonetheless, changing your email password is still a good idea.

If your email is a POP account, as opposed to a web mail account such as Hotmail or Gmail, the odds are higher that your computer has been hacked, which is a much larger problem. The best solution is to restore a backup system image made well before the hacking was suspected. The chance that you have a backup image to restore is as likely as the intruder putting money into your bank account, but this instance is when you want backups. Lacking a backup, you can thoroughly scan your system with several antimalware products in addition to your normal antivirus product.

Again, you should change the passwords for your Internet Service Provider, router, and email, and be sure that your Wi-Fi network is protected with the highest level of security possible. People often hate passwords on computers; but if any computer on the network was hacked, all computers on the network should have logon passwords. Fortunately, protecting the network is enough in most cases.

Personally, I'd suggest you change your email password, scan your computer with your up-to-date antivirus software, and wait to see what happens. If possible, do not do any online shopping or banking until some time has passed to confirm that only your email was hacked. Also watch for any suspicious activity on credit card and bank accounts.

What You Need to Know about QR Codes

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com, sandy (at) compukiss.com

If you've seen QR or Quick Response Codes, but don't know what they mean, this article will explain it all for you. QR codes are becoming more and more prevalent and offer additional information on many of the things you read and see. QR codes can be found in many current magazines and newspapers.

QR codes: They are small squares filled with black square dots arranged in a grid pattern on a white background. If you look carefully at a QR code, you will see that each one is unique in the placement of

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

the small black and white squares. While this doesn't mean anything to the eye of the beholder, the placement of the dots defines the additional data that is embedded in the code. The QR code on the left will lead you to The website of The Pilot, a newspaper I write for. The one on the right will lead you to the home page on my Compu-KISS website.



Although most QR codes are black and white, they can also contain stars, squares, and other color and/or black and white images.

QR codes are now linking paper content like newspapers and magazines to digital content. To understand QR codes, you can think of them as paper-based hyperlinks that work like bar codes. To access the digital content, you need a QR reader which you can easily download to your smart phone or tablet. Most of these are free. They use the camera in your phone to read the QR code and take you to the digital content.

You can find a QR code on a newspaper or magazine article, a business card, or a menu. Actually QR codes can be printed on just about anything. I've even seen them printed on T-shirts. Of course, they can also be used digitally. For example a QR code could be displayed on a web page to transfer information directly to a cell phone. A QR code can even be added to a Tweet.

To access the information in a QR code, after you download a free QR reader, you simply start the app and hold your mobile phone or tablet about 4" to 6" with the camera squarely above the QR code. When you get it positioned properly, your phone will take the picture and display the additional information on your device. You don't have to press any buttons or the screen, everything is done automatically.

QR codes can give you many different types of additional information. If you see one on an advertisement, it will probably lead you to more information about the product. A QR code on a business card can lead you to more information about that person or company. QR codes can lead you to things like coupons, movie trailers, phone numbers, or directions. I find them invaluable when on a recipe because they allow me to view the recipe on a tablet and use it immediately in the kitchen.

Several companies have developed further enhancements for QR codes allowing them to be hidden in a picture. They embed imperceptible digital information in pictures or behind text, creating an invisible hyperlink to online content. They can even embed a QR code in an audio file.

Digimarc is a company in the forefront of the QR world. I use the free Digimarc app because it works with their own "hidden" codes as well as regular QR codes and barcodes. It is available for both Android and Apple.

When a QR code is hidden, there will usually be a note to that effect or a small logo on or near the picture to indicate that it is, in fact, a QR code. Even though you don't see the code, you can hold your phone or tablet over the picture to activate the code.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

QR codes are very popular in Japan and are becoming more and more popular here as people find new uses for them. I imagine that sometime soon, all smart phones and tablets will come with a QR code reader so you won't have to download one.

If you are interested in creating a QR code for your T-shirt, business card, or website, the easiest way to do it is to use a third-party QR code generator. I created the two QR codes shown in this article using a website called Kaywa at <http://qrcode.kaywa.com>. Of course, Kaywa has professional options that you have to pay for, but creating a few simple QR codes is completely free.
