



Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

April 2017

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

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GENERAL CLUB MEETING

Midland Public Schools Administration Building
600 E Carpenter Street - Room D

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

6:00 P.M.

Educational, Fun, and Interesting Web Sites (submitted by Howard Lewis)

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

If you have some sort of fraudulent complaint, you can report it to the Federal Trade Commission.

<http://bit.ly/2oC1QKV>

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau deals with consumer complaints about a product or service.

<http://cnn.it/2mPDDki>

A day in the life of Snopes – the art of debunking myths.

<http://gethealthyu.com/>

Ideas on how to lead a healthier life style.

<http://bigthink.com/>

We're drowning in information. Big Think believes that success in the future is all about knowing the ideas that allow you to manage and master this universe of information. The aim of Big Think is to help you move above and beyond random information, toward real knowledge, offering ideas that you can apply toward the questions and challenges in your own life.

findaphotographer.com

If you need a photographer, the Professional Photographers of America can help you find one.

Tom's Tech-Notes

Backing Up Using Windows File History

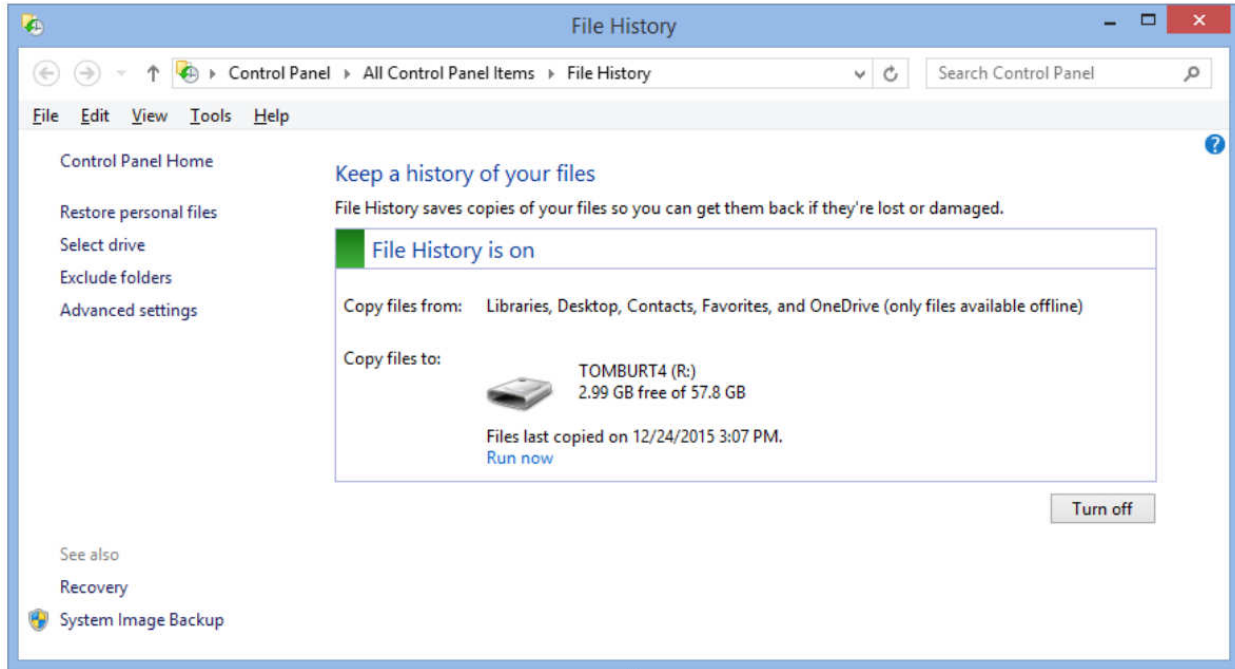
Tom Burt, Vice President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club, NV

January 2016 issue, Gigabyte Gazette - <http://www.scsccl.com/> - [tomburt89134 \(at\) cox.net](mailto:tomburt89134@cox.net)

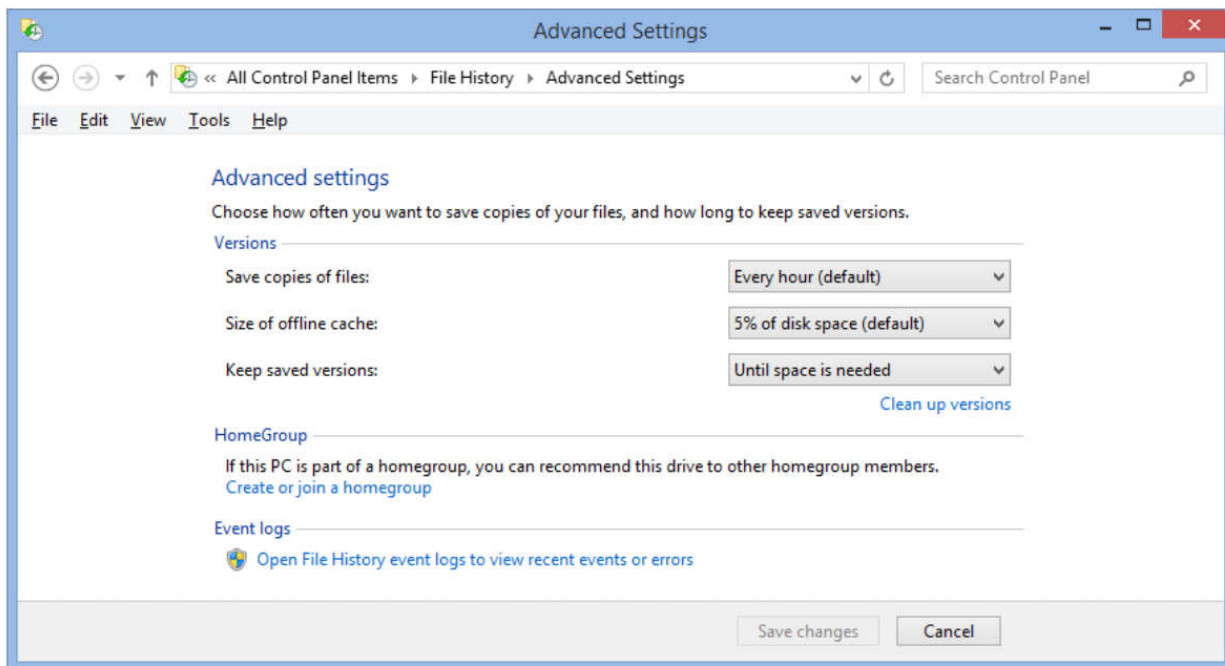
It can't be stressed enough that computer users need to back up their PC's data files regularly. Without backups, the inevitable failure of a PC's disk drive means that all that data becomes lost permanently. A backup regimen usually includes some kind of full clone or image process that makes a complete backup of everything on the hard drive. However, full backups are time-consuming and so are not convenient to perform every day or even every week. Also, in a full backup, probably 95% of the data being backed up has not changed since the last backup.

To complement the full backup process, it would be nice to have a facility that automatically backs up just those files that have changed within a designated set of folders. Enter Windows File History. File History appeared in Windows 8 and has been improved in Windows 10. Its ancestry goes back to Windows XP's little known or used Volume Shadow Copy feature. File History makes regular backup copies of files in a designated set of folders to a designated backup drive. Commonly, the backup drive is an external hard drive, a USB flash drive or a folder on another PC on your network. Generally, you will want to leave this backup drive plugged in continually.

File History has to be turned on and a backup location has to be designated. To get started, go to the File History Settings via the Control Panel. The screen below is from Windows 8.1, but the screen from Windows 10 is similar. Plug in the desired external hard drive or flash drive, or create a Mapped drive to a network share on another PC. In my case, I am using a 64GB USB 3 flash drive as the backup drive.



Click the “Turn On” button and specify the drive letter of your backup drive. Then click the “Advanced Settings” button and review the detailed settings for how often the backup runs, the size of the offline cache (space on the regular PC hard drive used to save copies if the backup drive is not plugged in) and conditions on how long to keep backup versions of files.



File History takes care of backing up files in my “profile folder” that change frequently, such as saved emails, Internet favorites, contents of “My Documents” and other libraries. In Windows 8.1, you can add other folders as libraries and they will then get backed up. In Windows 10, File History was improved to allow you to specify an open-ended list of folders to include in the backup.

Each time a file in one of my "profile folders" changes, File History will create a new backup version of that file, also keeping previous backup versions. I set File History to keep saved versions until the backup drive gets full. File History will then automatically delete the oldest versions to make room for new backups.

The File History backup drive is visible in the File Explorer, just like any other drive. Let's say you've accidentally deleted a file within one of the folders File History is backing up and then you also emptied the recycle bin. You can start File History and then click "Restore personal files" (see the first screen shot above) to find that file on the File History drive and copy it back to the original location. You might want to restore an earlier version of a file if the live version of the file gets damaged in some way (maybe you accidentally deleted a large paragraph in a Word document and saved it before you noticed).

This has been just a quick overview of File History. So far, I've been very happy with File History as an ongoing complement to my full system image backups. Once it's set up, it just quietly works in the background and I can be confident that ALL my data files are backed up to within the last hour.

Stu's Media Column

How to Take Better Photos with Your Smartphone

By Stu Gershon, Digital Photo SIG

Sun City Summerlin Computer Club, Nevada - www.scsccl.com - [tomburt89134 \(at\) cox.net](mailto:tomburt89134@cox.net)

1. Hold camera HORIZONTALLY (Landscape). If you take a photo horizontally, you get a wider field of view. This "fills the screen". When you see cell phone photos on TV, they have large blank bars on the side because a phone photo has a different aspect ratio than your TV (or computer screen). If you take a landscape photo, you can always zoom in or crop to make the picture vertical and closer. You cannot do that if you've taken the photo vertically.
 2. Hold the camera firmly which will keep the photo steady. Most pictures are blurry because people naturally seem to push downward when they press the shutter button, and this movement causes blur. Also, just lightly tap the shutter button - the less the movement the steadier the shot and the clearer the final photo.
 3. Light - the natural light (outdoors) should always be behind or to the side of the photographer. This will eliminate "backlight" which often causes your subject to be in silhouette or look like little black stick figures.
 4. Rule of thirds - if you imagine a tic-tac-toe board (with nine boxes), try to keep your subject at one of the corners of the center box, NOT IN THE CENTER BOX. This gives the picture some "movement" with either more foreground (what's in front), or more background (what's behind).
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Interesting Internet Finds – April

Steve Costello, President/Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society
editor@brcs.org - <http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>

In the course of going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, 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 March 2016.

How to Use Google Maps Offline (Without Internet) on Android and iOS

<http://www.nirmaltv.com/2016/02/29/use-google-maps-offline-without-internet-on-android-and-ios/>

I have been using Google Maps on my android, but sometimes end up without internet. This post shows how to prepare for those times.

How to Make YouTube Videos Loop Continuously

<http://www.online-tech-tips.com/google-softwaretips/loop-youtube-videos-continuously/>

If you need to continuously loop a YouTube video, like maybe before a meeting, check out this post from Online Tech Tips to learn how.

How to Choose a USB Wi-Fi Adapter for Your Laptop

<http://www.howtogeek.com/243330/how-to-choose-a-usb-wi-fi-adapter-for-your-laptop/>

Is your laptop Wi-Fi broken, or not capable of your new routers' 802.11ac speed? This HowToGeek will help you find a USB adapter that will solve the problem without hefty repair fees.

How to fix the dreaded Google Cloud printer offline issue

<http://www.techrepublic.com/article/how-to-fix-the-dreaded-google-cloud-printer-offline-issue/>

Do you use Google Cloud Print? If so sooner or later you are going to have a printer go offline. This TechRepublic post has the solution. (Note: This has worked for me.)

A True Story of a Computer Scam and How to Avoid It Happening to You

<http://www.wonderoftech.com/computer-scam-microsoft-windows/>

After you read this, you will be much more aware of these types of scams. This story shows that even tech savvy people can be scammed.

You Can Use a Picture If: Guidelines for Image Copyrights

<http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2016/03/24/you-can-use-a-picture-if-guidelines-for-image-copyrights/>

This post has an infographic that can help you decide if you can legally use a picture for your blog, newsletter, presentation, or whatever. And, if it is under a Creative Commons license, what each of those mean

Most Fridays, more interesting finds will be posted on the Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog: <http://ctublog.sefcug.com/tag/interesting-internet-finds/>

The posts are under Creative Commons licensing.

Open Source Software of the Month

By Geof Goodrum, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society
February 2016 Issue, PATACS Posts - www.patacs.org - [linux \(at\) patacs.org](mailto:linux@patacs.org)

Gramps – v4.2.1. <https://gramps-project.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X® and GNU/Linux® by Don Allingham and the Gramps Team. Gramps is a genealogy program for Linux, Windows, Mac, and FreeBSD that allows you to easily build and keep track of your family tree. It supports the GEDCOM standard, allows fine grained privacy controls and can generate many different types of reports (descendant trees, graphs, connection diagrams,)

Features include:

Gramplets - A dashboard to help you monitor the progress of your research. A variety of widgets provide quick analysis of your data and more.

People - A list of every individual in your records featuring birth/death dates and more.

Relationships - A summary of the active person's parents, siblings, spouses and children.

Families - A list of every family group featuring parent names, relationship status and, if applicable, marriage dates.

Ancestry - A graphic representation of the active person's ancestry featuring photos and birth/death dates.

Events - A list of every event in your records featuring descriptions, event types, dates and places.

Places - A list of every place in your records featuring place names and location details.

Geography - An interactive map view highlighting places associated with one person, a group of people or all people in your records.

Sources - A list of all sources referenced in your records featuring authors and publication details.

Citations - A list of all citations referenced in your records featuring quality, date, volume and page.

Repositories - A list of source repositories referenced in your records featuring web addresses, physical addresses and email contact information.

Media - A list of all photos, videos and other media referenced in your records featuring thumbnail preview, media type and more.

Notes - A list of all text notes included in your records featuring note type and preview.

[Screenshots at <https://gramps-project.org/wiki/index.php?title=Features>]

Kernel Source – v4.3.3. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for GNU/Linux by Linus Torvalds et al.

LenMus – v5.4.1. <http://lenmus.sourceforge.net/mws/noticias>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Microsoft® Windows® and GNU/Linux® by Cecilio Salmerón. LenMus is a free program for learning music. It allows you to focus on specific skills and exercises, on both theory and aural training. The different activities can be customized to meet your needs. It includes an score editor. [Screenshot at <http://a.fsdn.com/con/app/proj/lenmus/screenshots/201363.jpg>]

NetHack – v3.6.0. <http://www.nethack.org/>. Free NetHack General Public License source code and executables for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X® and GNU/Linux® by the NetHack DevTeam. First released in 1987, NetHack is a single player dungeon exploration game that runs on a wide variety of computer systems, with a variety of graphical and text interfaces all using the same game engine. Unlike many other Dungeons & Dragons-inspired games, the emphasis in NetHack is on discovering the detail of the dungeon and not simply killing everything in sight - in fact, killing everything in sight is a good way to die quickly. Each game presents a different landscape - the random number generator provides an essentially unlimited number of variations of the dungeon and its denizens to be discovered by the player in one of a number of characters: you can pick your race, your role, and your gender. This is the first official update of NetHack in twelve years, and features a number of "foundational changes" to support future development.

[Screenshot at <http://www.nethack.org/common/scrn3b.gif>]

SMPlayer – v15.11.0. <http://smplayer.sourceforge.net/>. Free GNU General Public License source codes and executables for Microsoft® Windows® and GNU/Linux® by Ricardo Villalba and redxii. SMPlayer is a free media player for Windows and Linux with built-in codecs that can play virtually all video and audio

formats. It doesn't need any external codecs. Just install SMPlayer and you'll be able to play all formats without the hassle to find and install codec packs.

One of the most interesting features of SMPlayer: it remembers the settings of all files you play. So you start to watch a movie but you have to leave... don't worry, when you open that movie again it will be resumed at the same point you left it, and with the same settings: audio track, subtitles, volume...

Other features include:

- Support for YouTube.
- Many video and audio filters are available
- Complete preferences dialog
- Possibility to search and download subtitles from opensubtitles.org
- Thumbnail generator
- Video equalizer
- Skins
- Seeking by mouse wheel
- Multiple speed playback
- Audio and subtitles delay adjustment
- New! Now it supports mpv as well

[Screenshots at <http://smplayer.sourceforge.net/en/screenshots>]

Are You a Smart Online Shopper?

By Bob Rankin, AskBobRankin - www.askbobrankin.com - bob@rankin.org

Shopping online for Christmas, Hanukkah (or any time of year) is easy and convenient, but when you use the right tools, you can also save a lot of cash. Here are some money-saving tips for the smart online shopper...

Wish list? Check. Credit card? Check. Okay, before you head off to your favorite online store, are you sure you've found the best possible price for the item you're planning to buy? Have you researched other brands or similar items?

Have you searched for coupons or other discount offers? Are you getting free shipping whenever possible? And are you taking advantage of the power of group buying, and the wisdom of the crowd?

Use my ten simple shopping tips to make sure you're getting the best deal when you shop online...

TIP #1: Look for rebates and rewards BEFORE you shop. Loyalty programs such as Ebates offer shoppers rebates and other incentives to purchase from stores where they already shop. Ebates offers up to 25% in cash rebates when you shop online at popular stores like Amazon, Best Buy, JCPenney, Kohls, Macy's, Old Navy, Target and 1000 more. Even better, Ebates will pay you \$75 when you refer 3 friends via their Tell-A-Friend promotion.

TIP #2: Use price-comparison sites to find the best deals.

Google Shopping is a good place to start. Just type in what you're seeking, such as "42-inch HDTV" or "cordless drills" and up pops an assortment of vendors. The initial results are displayed sorted by "relevancy" but I recommend that you re-sort them by price from low to high.

Bizrate.com is another good tool. It can display prices including shipping to your Zip code, or even limit your search to items that ship for free.

Pricegrabber.com lets you save interesting items as you shop for comparison to others.

Pricewatch.com was one of the first price comparison sites, specializing in computers and electronics since 1995. They now list non-tech items as well.

TIP #3: Before you buy, look for coupons that can reduce your final price. RetailMeNot has thousands of digital coupons and discount codes from many well-known and obscure online sellers. A little-known trick is to use Google's search function to find coupon codes buried on blog pages. Just use "coupon" and the name of the brand, merchant, or product that you are seeking as your search term.

TIP #4: An Amazon Prime membership may save you money. If you use Amazon.com frequently, that \$99 flat fee gets you unlimited free, 2-day shipping on products delivered by Amazon. If you haven't been to Amazon lately, it's no longer just a bookstore. Amazon also offers music, movies, electronics, home & garden, health & beauty, toys, clothing shoes & jewelry, sporting and outdoor goods -- just to name a few categories. Also, take note of the prices offered by Amazon affiliates on both new and used items; they are sometimes lower than Amazon's price. Amazon is also a great shopping research tool. After searching for the item (or type of item) you're after, Amazon will help you compare brands, prices, and retailers. You can also see what items and accessories other customers bought.

TIP #5: Patience Pays Off. Speaking of Amazon, here's a cool tip to save money when shopping online: CamelCamelCamel is an Amazon price tracking, research, and alert service that helps users get the best deals on the e-commerce giant. If you don't need to buy right away, this tool can alert you to price drops for items you're watching.

TIP #6: Don't forget eBay, especially if the item you seek is a staple rather than a fad of the moment. Because it's an auction site, the price you pay items (both new and used) tend to be very reasonable. And if you prefer to skip the drama of a bidding war, look for an item with a "Buy it Now" option. Oh, and here are two eBay Ninja trick that'll save you money every time. First, start your search at the eBay home page. When you get the list of matching items, refine your search by checking the "Completed listings" box under the "Show Only" header This will tell you what the item has actually sold for in recent eBay sales or auctions. And second, use BidRobot to boost your chances of winning the auction.

TIP #7: Take advantage of group buying power. Group-buying services such as Groupon, LivingSocial are geared mainly towards local, face-to-face merchants. But Groupon has inspired a slew of "daily deal" offers from many online sellers, too. Subscribe to email lists to receive special limited time offers from your favorite stores.

TIP #8: Use social networking to your advantage. Many online sellers want you to follow, friend or "like" them on Twitter and Facebook. If you do, you'll gain access to coupon codes and special offers. If you find you're getting too many messages from these merchants, you can unfollow or unfriend to stop the flow after you've made your purchase.

TIP #9: Got gift cards? Gift cards are a great option when you don't know exactly what to get for someone on your Christmas list. My friend Aaron and his team have created GiftCard Zen, a site where you can buy gift cards at a discount. You can also sell your unwanted gift cards for cash, or check the balance of a gift card you have. GiftCard Zen handles gift cards from hundreds of popular stores. It's a win-win scenario!

TIP #10: Skip the Warranty. Are you giving a mobile phone, tablet, computer or TV? Read SCAM ALERT: Mobile Device Insurance and Extended Warranties to find out why these are almost always a waste of money.

TIP #11: Avoid Penny Auctions. Have you seen those commercials where people brag about how they bought a \$1200 HDTV for \$25? See my article Penny Auctions: Scam or Legit? to see why these sites are to be avoided.

TIP #12: The Wisdom of Others. It's smart to take advantage of the experience of others, especially when it comes to considering big-ticket purchases. Sites like Amazon and Epinions offer actual consumer

experiences and reviews of products. Consumer Reports and PC Magazine are good places to look for professional ratings and reviews.

BONUS TIP: Shop on Mobile (or fake it) Researchers at Northeastern University found that shopping online with your smartphone may yield a lower price than shopping from a desktop computer. I tried a few hotel searches myself, and found that prices were about 10% lower when I did the exact same search on my phone. So I had an idea... I wondered if changing the UserAgent on my desktop browser would fool these sites into giving me the "mobile discount." And it seems to work. I checked the price for one night at a hotel in Orlando using Chrome on desktop: \$145. After changing my UserAgent string to make my desktop browser identify as an iPad, the price showed as \$131.

Reader's Comments:

As well as finding the best price sometimes the online stores you use are affiliated with airlines to reward you with extra miles for purchasing through their site. For example, I use Newegg.com and Backcountry.com which I access through the American Airlines shopping site (<https://www.aadvantageeshopping.com/>). You can earn bonus miles per dollar spent IN ADDITION to any miles earned by your credit card. I believe most of the major airlines have similar shopping sites.

Don't forget to ask if there is a Senior Discount!

YouTube is a great source of product reviews.

I always comparison shop at several outlets and I often use Amazon Prime, because unlike what many say the total price with shipping is frequently lower or very little more for the free 2-day shipping and many of the places that might be a couple of bucks lower don't seem to care how long it takes them to fill your order and get it in the mail. Of course, there are exceptions and if I can afford to wait I will take advantage of those deals. I have also been taking advantage of the Honey Chrome addon for Amazon that tells you if there is a lower price on the same item.

As you said in tip #10, smart phone insurance is almost always a waste of money. But, some homeowners/renter's insurance policies have a rider available that is cheap. I pay \$18/year (not per phone, total) which gives me \$5000 coverage on my computers and smart phones with a \$50 deductible. This is all risk coverage (lost, stolen, falls in the toilet, etc.) although they can deny coverage if it is negligence (i.e., I throw it at someone).

Inasmuch as one has to use a credit card in order to make a purchase online, I find it best to use a virtual credit card. My Visa from BankAmerica calls their virtual card "ShopSafe" with a link by that name. Enter the CVC code from the back and the spending limit and you are provided with a one-time use credit card number with which to make your purchase. My MasterCard from AT&T Universal Card has a link to get a virtual card; same principle although there is no spending limit nor CVC number. Virtual cards expire in a month or two, and nobody else can use them. Totally safe. I would probably wager that lots of other cards also offer something similar.

Netiquette: Forwards

Contributed by Melanie Birnbom, Century Village Computer Club, FL
September 2016 Mid-Month Newsletter - www.centuryvillagecomputerclub.com - mbirnbom (at) yahoo.com

It is important to use good manners when forwarding e-mails. Now and again, we all see an interesting message that we might want to share with friends, so we forward it along.

However, other folks practice mass-forwarding. They forward every joke, prayer chain, political e-mail, funny image, urban legend or anything else they can get their hands to everyone they know, including people who are business contacts. That many messages can clog up already full inboxes. It also makes

people less likely to notice an actual important e-mail from you. Always avoid sending items like forwards to your friends' work e-mail addresses. Some examples of emails that should be forwarded using caution are:

Fwd: FW: THE CREEPY \$20 BILL.....

Fwd: FW: Visit with God - Forwarded mes

Fwd: FW: Riddle for seniors.... - Subject: I

Fwd: FW: MAGNIFICENT!! - Forwarded me

Fwd: - . Read, heed and forward.. This will c

Fwd: The Irish Furniture Dealer - Begin fo

Fwd: Fw: Fwd: Six trivia questions. How

Think back to the days of phone calls and letters. You might call someone up or write them a letter if you saw something interesting, but would you make seven separate phone calls in a day or write seven letters?

One way to be sure you aren't bombarding your friends is to ask if they want to receive fun forwards or not. But don't be offended if they say they don't have the time. Or consider combining the information into one e-mail featuring the best things you've seen recently. That takes a little copying and pasting, but a lot of folks actually do that. It's a convenient way for friends to enjoy things you want to share.

Another considerate thing to do is not to use a "send all" function or go down and select everyone on your list of contacts.

Think carefully about whether or not the person will really be interested. This is also where you can make specific lists of folks to receive jokes or political e-mails after you check with them to see if they are interested.

Social media, such as Facebook, is a great outlet for sharing news stories and jokes. There's less likelihood of some type of important communication getting buried in a pile of forwards and it was specifically designed for sharing that type of information.

From Judy – Don't forget to delete all addresses before forwarding any 'message' on your joke, etc. e-mail list. If you receive a forwarded joke, etc. with a gazillion e-mail addresses, please let the sender know they should delete all of the addresses before forwarding the message. Tell them Homeland Security, their police department, etc. appreciates them doing that to help reduce people harvesting all of the e-mail addresses and using them for phishing e-mails. They should put the addresses in the Bcc: field.

Techspert Talk

Tablet Checklist: What can it do?

By Melanie Birnbom

June 2016 issue, CVC Computer Club Newsletter - www.cvcomputerclub.com - nbirnbom (at) yahoo.com

Tablet Checklist: What can it do?

Q. A frequent question I get from users is: "What can a tablet actually do? Is it just for playing games?"

That is why I've put this checklist together using the three main operating systems for tablets: Android, iOS (found on iPads), and Windows (this does not include the now discontinued Windows RT operating system.)

Read and Write E-mail

Android: Yes
iPad: Yes
Windows Tablet: Yes

Surf the Internet

Android: Yes
iPad: Yes
Windows Tablet: Yes

Use Sites that Require Flash player:

Android: No
iPad: No
Windows Tablet: Yes

Play Games

Android: Yes (With apps downloaded from Google Play store)
iPad: Yes (With apps downloaded from Apple App store)
Windows Tablet: Yes (With apps downloaded from Windows store. If tablet model has enough computing power you can also download PC games. Windows 10 tablets will allow you to stream games from an Xbox One).

Use Office Programs

Android: Yes (several office suites available including MS Office apps)
iPad: Yes (multiple office suites available as well as MS Office apps)
Windows Tablet: Yes (multiple office suites available and Microsoft Office apps. Users can also run the full desktop version of Office.)

Print

All three tablets will allow you to print from selected apps with compatible wireless printers.

Listen to Music

Android: You can stream from services like Pandora, Spotify, and Amazon as well keep digital copies of music on your tablet.
iPad: Designed to work especially well with iTunes; you can also stream using apps for services like Pandora and Spotify.
Windows Tablet: Works with streaming services and Groove Music.

Stream Movies

All three operating systems will allow you to watch services like Netflix or Hulu, as well as view videos on websites. (If the videos require Flash Player, only a Windows tablet will work.)

eBooks

All three tablets will allow you to download apps for reading eBooks including Kindle and Nook books.

Use Facebook and other Social Media

All three tablets will allow you to use a Facebook app.

Make Video Calls

All three tablets allow you to use Skype and other services for video calls and programs like Messenger for video or audio chats in addition to text chatting. Almost every tablet has a built-in front-facing camera.

Use a Keyboard

Nearly any tablet will allow you to connect with a keyboard (usually via Bluetooth). There are keyboard cases available for carrying convenience. Make sure you get the compatible keyboard for your tablet. If it is a case, make sure it is the right size.

Use a Mouse

Only Windows tablets are compatible with using a mouse and it is a fairly simple process to pair a Bluetooth mouse.

Use Desktop Versions of Programs

Only Windows tablets can run full desktop versions of programs.

Access Cloud Storage

All three tablets will allow you access cloud storage.

Tech Heck

by Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA
November 2016 issue, Drive Light - www.uchug.org - president (at) uchug.org

Somewhere between tech heaven and tech hell is tech heck, where most of us that are tech users reside. No one's technology experience is always flawless and perfect, so tech heaven is not achievable in this existence (I mean, really - who has not received a spam email or had a cell call dropped). Likewise, it is unlikely anyone is always bested by technology and gets absolutely no benefit from it, or lives a life of total misery because of technology. We all live somewhere in between, usually where technology helps us a lot of the time, but betrays us on occasion. We all have our own individual tech hecks, and where ours is in that wide spectrum can vary greatly, and even change over time.

I don't think that anyone today can live completely apart from our modern technology. Even if you forsake everything modern and retreat to the wilderness to live completely off the grid and off the land with only stone tools, you'll probably be spotted by surveillance satellites or aircraft. Then the authorities will soon arrive to find out why you are trespassing, or if you do own the land, why you have not been paying your property taxes. In a world that seems to be shrinking due to increased population and easy travel, technology serves the purpose of helping us to better get along with all the other humans here.

That does not mean that everyone has to be "all in" on the latest tech. Each person must decide for themselves what they feel comfortable dealing with and capable of understanding. No one need be forced into using Snapchat or smart phones or self-driving cars, but we all live in a world where these exist, and we can still benefit from their existence. I don't know how to perform laparoscopic (or minimally invasive) surgery, but I am glad the technology to perform it exists, otherwise the recent removal of my appendix might have left a big scar and required a lengthy recovery. All the latest medical devices and procedures help us to live longer and healthier lives, but as I found with my recent procedure, and as we are all finding out as country, there is often a higher financial price to be paid for those advances.

Shunning technology can reduce the negatives of tech heck in a limited sense, but we are all sharing this planet and are affected by what everyone else does, at least to some degree. The Amish certainly don't have to worry about their buggies being set afire by an exploding Samsung Galaxy Note 7, as they shun modern conveniences like smart phones. They will, however, suffer the same unfortunate fate as the rest of us tech users if we can't prevent a climate disaster from human-induced global warming or avoid a global nuclear war. The Amish may decline modern transport and walk beside the roads, but could still fall victim to an accident caused by a cellphone-distracted automobile driver.

Technology connects us all and provides a backdrop for all we do. Television, telephones, computers and the Internet have reduced the distance between us and broken down geographic barriers, all without our having to leave our homes. We have the advantage of knowing what is happening on the other side of the globe; we also have the disadvantage sometimes of knowing exactly what is happening on the other side of the globe. The media's emphasis on sensationalism can make it seem that all news everywhere is bad. The internet can help spread knowledge and tolerance, but can also be used by the hateful and intolerant to spread their views. We benefit from the ability to conduct financial transactions and shop online, but suffer from identity theft, online scams and loss of privacy.

Tech heck is even creeping into the political debate, one of the main current news subjects. Both major party presidential candidates have their own tech problems, Hillary Clinton with email servers, and Donald Trump with having embarrassing recordings from his past made public. We have had concerns about the integrity of election results in the past due to technology; now do we have to worry about the Russians hacking voter databases and influencing our election?

Our technology problems are not even confined to this world alone. Going into space is difficult. We have had many successes, but also a number of failures, and lost lives in the process. We were able to land men on the moon with computers not much more powerful than a pocket calculator, yet we still crash expensive, sophisticated spacecraft today. Mars appears to be particularly intolerant of our technology, as of the 55 spacecraft humans have tried to send its way, less than half have been successful missions. The recent crash of the European Space Agency's Schiaparelli lander is another example of Mars tech heck. The U.S. and Russia have sent the bulk of the missions to the red planet, with NASA succeeding in 19 out of 25 tries, while Russia succeeded in only three of 23. Maybe we don't have to worry so much about election hacking after all.

When it comes to new technology, it appears the young are the most eager and adept adopters. Put a smart phone in the hands of a two-year-old and they will dive right in, but the same device may be intimidating to a senior citizen. My children (in their late 20's now) are more accepting of and accomplished with some new tech than I am, while my parents (in their late 70's) would like to keep up but need some help.

My daughter is not very technical, but knows most everything about social media, and the iPhone and iPad are her weapons of choice. My son is an engineer and has become quite accomplished at building little project boards that communicate over text or the internet, letting him know if his mail was delivered, if a monitored item moved and how much beer is left in the keg. He uses computers all day at work, set up his own home network (with network cameras) and is kind of tethered to his smart phone. He seems quite pragmatic about technology and is not at all intimidated by it; he has no reluctance to just trying things until he gets it working. Part of his confidence I'm sure comes from growing up with all this tech stuff. When I bought network cams like his, I resorted to having him come over to help me set them up (a true indication that I'm getting old). He has no interest in a user group to help solve his tech problems; he'll just Google the problem.

My parents live 100 miles away; I wish I were closer, so that I could help them with their tech problems more often. My dad has been my idol and role model through life. It has always impressed me that he grew up in a farm house with no indoor plumbing or electricity, yet picked up tech and computers easily. He has built his own computers, but lately has had a harder time keeping up with advanced topics like networking and email. My mom has used computers for years but is slowing down a bit as well. Both have cell phones but don't text. My mom now has a smart phone, but is waiting on my nephew to come over and give her more guidance on how to use it. What is intuitive for the younger generation is not so much for the older.

I'm somewhere in between, in my own tech heck. I'm an engineer and spend my work days designing telecom hardware, but no longer have the time or inclination to build little projects like my son. My first computer was a Timex Sinclair 1000, so I knew BASIC pretty well, but by the time C programming came along I was so much into the hardware that programming fell by the wayside. I'm pretty good at networking and setting up tech stuff; I have a wide variety of printers, scanners, cameras, GPS receivers, action cams and other gadgets. I may succeed in conquering technology more due to being methodical and persistent than being skilled. I have lived so long in the Windows environment that I've never had much interest in the Apple world (too expensive) or in Linux (too unfamiliar and seemingly less useful). Mobile devices have never caught on with me; I own a couple of tablets that I rarely use, and I've yet to buy a smart phone (I'm paying for everyone else's data plans, so can't afford one for myself). I don't really see a point in social media like Facebook; it is hard enough keeping up with email.

I am the IT department for my extended household, responsible for keeping everything running. On the whole, things usually work as expected, but with more tech comes more opportunities for interaction

problems or outright failures. My least favorite call to receive is from my wife, to tell me while I'm at work that her home PC is having problems (as if there was anything I could easily do to diagnose or fix it remotely). I sometimes wonder if in an afterlife our heaven or hell would be tailored specifically to us individually. In that case, I know my heaven would be a place where everything works and nothing ever breaks or malfunctions, while my hell would be a place where everything was perpetually broken, and Lucifer was constantly after me to fix it all.

Oh heck!

President's Corner

I Feel the Need, the Need for Speed!

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This quote from the 1986 hit movie “Top Gun” states what we all strive for in the end - faster and better. Though now thirty years old, this movie is still one of my favorites. At the time, it seemed to portray an exciting, high-tech world. Young naval aviators Maverick and Goose fly their F-14 Tomcat fighter jet off aircraft carriers and go supersonic, have mock engagements with “enemy” aircraft in the Top Gun Naval Fighter Weapons School and shoot down MiGs with guided missiles and sophisticated radars. Yet 1986 was a long time ago, before the commercial Internet, cell phones and a lot of the technology that we take for granted today. A lot of 1986 tech seems almost antiquated by today’s standards. We have come a long way since then in many ways, but in other ways not so much, and progress has usually come at a cost.

The cost of the Grumman F-14 Tomcat fighter that Maverick piloted thirty years ago was around \$38 million dollars. Today’s new Navy-version Lockheed Martin F-35C Lightning fighter costs \$337 million apiece. Though it is meant to perform the same job as the Tomcat, today’s Maverick would have to dump Goose, as the F-35C is a smaller single-seat, single-engine plane. For ten times the per unit cost, Maverick would get tremendously better radars, weapons and electronics in the F-35C. Based on that, New Maverick should be able to easily shoot down Old Maverick’s F-14. His need for actual speed may not be helped, however. Though the F-35C and other modern military aircraft have become more efficient over the years, the advertised top speed of the F-35 (1199 mph) is actually less than the F-14 (1544 mph). Sorry, New Mav!

Automobiles have seen progress in a lot of the same ways as military aircraft over the last thirty years. No, you can’t shoot a missile at that guy that just sits there at the light though it has turned green, but our cars are now packed full of electronics and technology. They can’t drive any faster, but they do cost a lot more.

The first new car I bought for my wife was a 1986 Ford Tempo, a five-passenger sedan with a four-cylinder engine. We had been married for a little less than a year, and were planning to start a family. We would need something a little bigger and safer than her old Pinto, and with more seating than my two-seat pickup truck.

Like the F-14, the Tempo had some electronics, but it was pretty basic by today's standards. It was the first car I ever owned without a carburetor, having electronic fuel injection (how high-tech!), which I hoped at that point was a mature technology, as I performed my own auto servicing. The entertainment system consisted of a dial-tuned AM/FM radio and cassette tape player. All the instrumentation was analog; the only digital readout in the entire car was the LCD clock in the middle of the dash. We bought a fairly basic four-door model, but there were not many options available in those days, anyway. I was able to find the purchase contract for the car after all these years (I really need to scan and/or shred the contents of that old file cabinet); we paid \$10K for it brand new.

Fast-forward 30 years, and my wife just got another new car (unfortunately not the second new car I bought her). She now drives a 2016 Hyundai Tucson Eco. It is a compact SUV and so is a little bigger than that Tempo was. Unlike the Tempo, it is loaded with electronics and high-tech stuff. The 1.6L Turbo four-cylinder engine is a little smaller than the 2.0L engine in the Tempo, but is completely electronically controlled and has better performance (power and gas mileage). Our Tempo had a five-speed manual transmission. The Tucson has an electronically controlled seven-speed dual clutch transmission. For better fuel economy, the transmission, essentially a manual transmission, has standard clutches, instead of a fluid torque converter. The clutches and transmission are controlled and actuated electronically, so to the driver it acts like an automatic transmission.

The Tucson has a digital dash display, as well as a center display for the entertainment system. It has an integrated digital AM/FM radio and satellite radio, and can play digital audio files on memory sticks plugged into the dashboard USB connector. It of course has Bluetooth to integrate your smart phone into the sound system and display. It has a lot more capability than the old Tempo and should be more reliable, but it also cost around \$25K, and can't really get you there any faster.

It seems funny to think about it now, but in 1986 Maverick and his friends had no Internet and no cell phones. A movie about Navy pilots today would no doubt show them on their smart phones all the time. The only phone scene I recall from Top Gun showed "Wolfman" on a pay phone, a piece of technology you would be hard pressed to find today. The World Wide Web was born in 1991, with dial-up commercial Internet access starting in 1992. I remember as UCHUG secretary sending my meeting minutes to the editor, then Ray Ferbrache, via a dial-up connection to a BBS (bulletin board system). That 56K modem seemed fast back then, but as the Internet became more popular and filled with features, we all felt the need for more speed.

I found some old bills that showed I had EarthLink High Speed Internet through Time Warner Cable in early 2004. I don't know how fast it was then, but it cost \$42 per month. Over the years, TWC hid the cost of my Internet access in a "bundle" with TV. Adding in DVRs and other charges, my total bill grew to be around \$170. I did see an increase in speed over those years; my access got up to 17 Mbps download, 1.2 Mbps upload, which is pretty reasonable. Still, the bill seemed high and only seemed to go one way - up.

My parents have been complaining about how slow their computers have become over the last year. My dad thought their computers were just getting old and had bought a new one for my mom, but when I was there to help him set it up for her and performed an ISP speed test, I found their real problem was a slow Internet connection. Their basic DSL service was only giving them 1.7 Mbps download and around 200K upload. At those speeds, a Yahoo home page filled with photos and other fluff took a minute or more to load. It was like being back in the days of dial-up.

After researching their ISP's current DSL plans, we found they could up their speed considerably for not much more cost. Their old house phone wiring limited them somewhat in how fast a service they could get, but in the end they were able to increase access to 15 Mbps, which made their old computers work on the Internet just fine. Sometimes a little speed is all you need.

Meanwhile, my wife was approached by someone from AT&T, who reminded us that they had pulled fiber up our street a few years back, and now that they had bought DirecTV, they could offer much faster Internet and satellite TV for a lower combined cost. In the end, we saved \$40 per month and got better TV, a tremendously bigger DVR and 50 Mbps download, 5 Mbps upload Internet. Finally the speed I need!

The switchover was not without its issues, however. The change to DirecTV was easy and problem-free. The Internet access was a bit more challenging. Though they claim to have fiber in the box in my front yard, it still must come the 20 feet into my garage on buried twisted pair phone lines. It took two separate installation visits, but they were somehow finally able to get the 50 Mbps they promised (and I checked it) out of their box in my garage (where the phone line comes in). Unfortunately, their equipment was a little different from what I was used to. I had previously used a TWC cable modem, followed by my own router. Since I have network cameras and network hard drives that require specific router settings to work, I wanted to continue using my old router as configured. Unfortunately, AT&T supplies a combination DSL modem / router with this service, and I could not figure out a way to bypass the router.

I tried many times to configure things so I could connect my router's WAN input to their router's LAN output. I was able to set this up with a spare router, but was unsuccessful in doing so with my old router. I finally gave up on my old router and tried to use the router in the AT&T box. After playing with the settings in their router for a few days (port forwarding was required), I was able to get almost all of my home network working.

I still have a few network items to clean up, but I'm finally getting their advertised service speed and saving money. Now when I feel the need for speed, I have it. So far it seems fast enough (though not fast enough to "take my breath away"), but is anything really enough in the long term?
