BITS AND BYTES

MARCH 2019

Midland Computer Club

Midland Michigan

https://mcc.apcug.org/

ARTICLE INDEX

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

**Wednesday, March 27, 2019
6:00 P.M.**

President's Message
Are your trips being tracked by your mobile devices?
By Jeff Wilkinson, President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club, NV
September 2018 issue, The Gigabyte Gazette   www.scscc.org pres.scscc (at) gmail.com

Computer Club and Friends:

At the Computer Club's weekly Kaffee Klatch session, longtime member Captain Jack (Jack Spargo) brought up an interesting, and to many, unknown feature of the Android mobile operating system.

Apparently when logged in on an Android device, iPhone, or iPad device, Google tracks your GPS coordinates, nearby Wi-Fi networks, barometric pressure, and even takes a guess at your current activity. Jack recounted how he had discovered, somewhat by accident, that a recent trip to Canada was tracked, complete with stops and locations annotated.

So, after the meeting, I went home and took a look at my own activity, as obtained from my Samsung Galaxy S7 phone. Low and behold, there was a recent trip to the Bay Area complete with all my stops in Sunnyvale, San Jose, and San Francisco.

Location History, while not turned on by default, is part of Google Maps, Photos, Google Assistant, and the Google Chrome browser. And you can opt out of location history, although it is a number of screens deep in the phone's settings for the Google App. Look for Data and Personalization tabs.

You can go to Google Account Help screen, Google My Activity -→ Activity Controls, which gives a page with options for turning features on or off. Google claims to use this information to personalize and enhance your experience across all of Google Services.

I don't recall agreeing to all these tracking services when I installed Chrome, but I may have, or, as I suspect, the default setting is on. But Google still is able to track you through your use of Google Maps, weather updates, or Google searches.

If you Pause Web and App Activity, Google lets you know that you "…. may limit or disable more personalized experiences across Google services." Even when paused, Google may temporarily use recent search information ostensibly to improve the quality of your search experience.
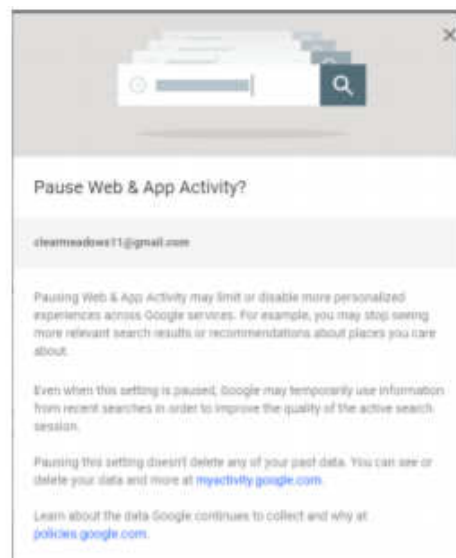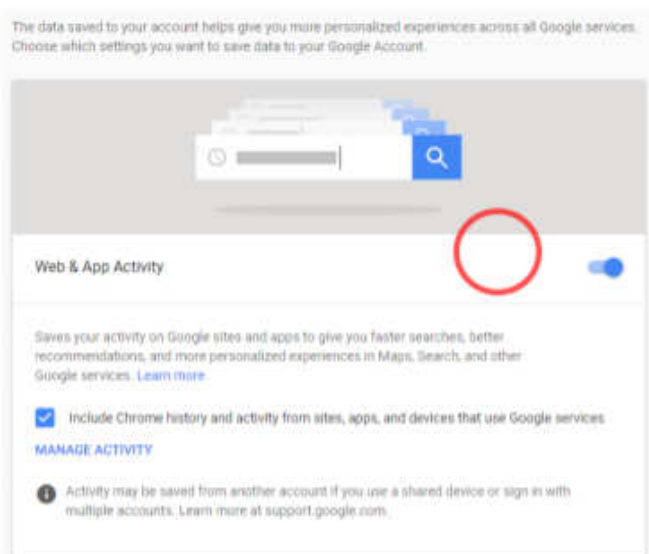
While not all bad, this location tracking does allow targeted advertising and more precise directions or responses to inquiries looking for a restaurant for instance, which can be very helpful.

A visit to your Google account page at Google My Activity, while interesting can also be a bit frightening as you realize all the information being collected.

So, while you can delete your activity data if you want to, if this tracking is of concern, you will have to keep on top of it since it appears many normal actions on your part can turn it back on.
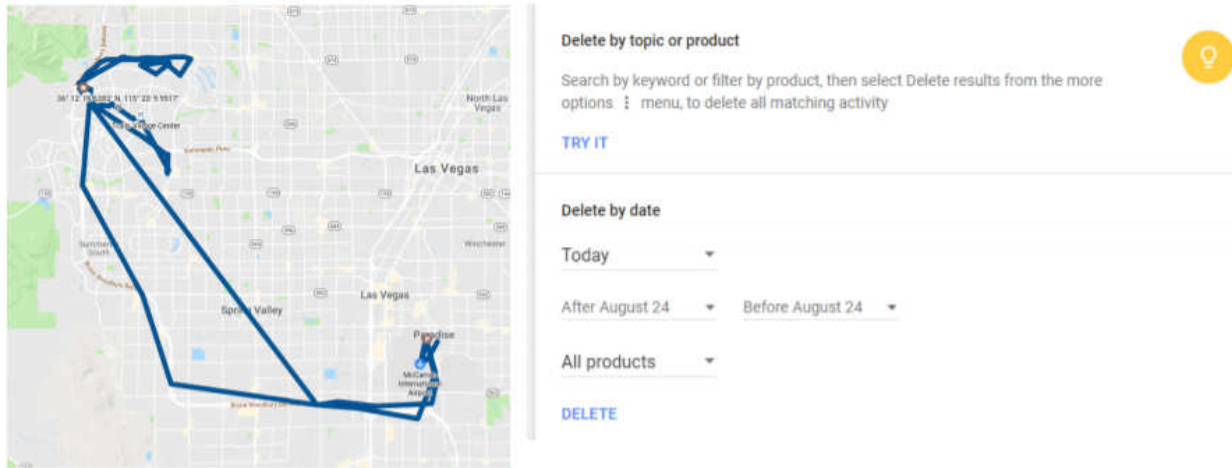
Dan's Desk
Defragmentation Tools
By Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG, FL
December issue, The Space Coast PC Journal www.scpcug.org datadan (at) msn.com

This month I'll start a series that will look at programs and utilities that we were all told we absolutely had to have. All of these, for the most part, are now obsolete and yet people still spend their money on purchasing them.

Defragmentation Tools

In the days of XP PCs, both the size and the physical engineering of the hard drives, made the process of defragmenting result in measurable performance improvements. The older relatively expense hard drives (I remember when $1/MB was considered a good buy! Compared to the $.025/GB ofered today) resulted in heavily used space with a low amount of free space in most PCs. When the amount of free space is low, a fle cannot be written in a contiguous manner, especially if a drive has fragments of fles throughout the entire area of the disk. This causes all read and write operations to that fle to take longer to complete as the drive must read or write sections of the file from or to multiple areas of the disk. So buying a larger drive would result in more free space, at least initially, until the free space on that drive also became used up.

To help address this issue, the hard drive physical read/write mechanisms were also re-engineered. From the earliest hard drives in 1956 until 2005, most drives read and wrote in a longitudinal manner. That is, it placed the data in a long row. If the disk was fragmented, then that row had to be placed in sections of the disk areas that were not together. This would take longer to access since the platters of the disk had to rotate to allow the read/write heads to read each section that made up the entire fle. In 2005 Hitachi pioneered the new read/write process by switching to perpendicular heads. This meant the heads would write data on different platters simultaneously in a perpendicular manner. So if your disk had four platters, each platter had a dedicated read/write head. The amount of time to rotate the disk meant that each head could be collecting data in a fraction of the time. Even if a file was fragmented, the time required to read/ write each section was greatly reduced.

You had to manually setup a schedule for the built-in defragmenting utility to run and remember to leave your PC on at the scheduled time. After Windows Vista/7/8/10 came out, the built-in defragmenting tool has been automatically run by the OS itself. 3rd party defragmentation tools have offered a few minor benefits over the built-in version included with Windows, but usually came with a dollar cost to the user.

If you are a user of SSDs (Solid State Drives – see my column from the August Journal to learn more), then you should actually turn defragmentation OFF. Windows 7/8/10 will automatically disable disk defragmentation on SSD drives because SSDs perform extremely well on random read operations. Defragmenting files on SSDs isn't helpful enough to warrant the added disk writing defragmentation produces which results in a reduced lifespan of the SSD.

But here's the bottom line: Over the years, as hard drives have gotten much faster at both sequential and random reads and writes, the usefulness of defragging has dropped. Your hard drive 15 years ago only had to be partially fragmented to cause system slowdown, but these days, it'll require a very fragmented drive to make that happen. Another factor are the giant hard drives in modern computers, which have enough free space that Windows doesn't have to fragment your files in order to write them to the drive. With SSDs, do not even think about it! Save your defragmentation tool money and buy an SSD instead, to really get a performance hit that you can see.

If you have suggestions for other topics like this, that you would like to see explained, please let me know!

Don't Just Sit There! (At the computer, that is)
By Keith Connes, Member, The Computer Club, FL
July 2018 issue, The Journal of The Computer Club, Inc. www.scccomputerclub.org/ diane (at) scccomputerclub.org

"Oh, my aching back!" Not a very original thought, but that's what used to go through my mind every time I would get up from my office chair after a long session at the computer. Note that I said used to. Not anymore. Understand, I've had chronic low back pain for decades and I don't expect ever to be totally free of it. But that special ouch that comes from a lengthy computer session became history the day I began to use a standing desk. That's right, literally the very day I changed my work habit at the computer.

A standing desk is a collapsible desk that you set on top of your existing desk. You place your monitor and keyboard (or laptop) on it, along with your mouse and other work-related equipment. Then you raise the entire work surface to a height that allows you to stand and type comfortably – or dictate, if you use speech recognition software, as I do.

The manually operated standing desks generally have a hydraulic piston that enables them to be raised quite easily. Electrically powered models are also available.

Even if you don't suffer from back pain, it's good to be able to stretch your legs after sitting for a while and continue your work while standing. You can alternate between sitting and standing as often as you want, and the chances are you'll feel a lot better for it.

I purchased my standing desk on Amazon from a seller named Defy Desk. The desk's surface is wood, painted black, measuring 32" W x 22" D. when collapsed, it adds 2.5" of height to the desk on which it sits. While some standing desks are raised to a variety of pre-set heights, my desk can be set at any height up to its maximum of 15.5". That maximum is just right for me at my height of 5'6", so if you're taller you might want a model that raises to a greater height. One drawback to this desk is that I really have to press hard to get it to start down to the collapsed position and then I must keep a firm grip on it to keep it from making a crash landing. I don't consider this to be a big deal, even though at 92 I don't have bulging biceps (actually, I never did). Other models might de-escalate more tamely and if that's a major concern you might want to pop for an electrically operated desk.

The price I paid was $139, but similar or possibly identical models have sprung up on Amazon prices a slow as $99. These are all 1-tier desks, meaning that they have just one surface. Some companies offer 2-tier models consisting of a large surface for one or even two monitors plus a smaller lower surface for the keyboard. The Mount-it! Brand is available as an electric two-tier desk for $240. Staples sells a manual 27" 2-tier desk for $250 and a 35" version that has been on sale for $200.

Probably the best-known company for this type of product, tanks to its TV ad campaign, is VARIDESK, which offers free delivery plus free return within 30 days if not satisfied. Their smallest model, a 1-tier desk specifically for laptops, measures 30" x 10.75" and costs $175. Their 36" 1-tier and 2-tier manual models are priced at $395 and their 36" 2-tier electric version is $495.

So, as you can see, a lot of choices are available, at prices ranging from about $100 to just under $500. There is the old saying that you get what you pay for, but for me personally, my standing desk at the lower end of the price spectrum is perfectly satisfactory; and most important, it is making a significant difference on the way my body feels during my time spent at the computer. And that, as those as say, is Priceless.

Help, I'm Stuck! What do I do Now?
By Dorothy Fitch, Editor, GVR Computer Club, AZ
October 2018 issue, Green Bytes www.ccgvaz.org   newsletter (at) ccgvaz.org

Have you ever forgotten how to do something you have done before in a software program or operating system? Or perhaps you know you should be able to do something you need to accomplish, but don't have a clue how to do it? Wandering through menus and settings can be laborious and often, not very productive. So, how can you get "unstuck" in your task?

There are lots of resources you can try. If you aren't in a hurry, you can check out your local library.

If you need immediate help, your first instinct might be to use the program's Help system. However, I sometimes think that people who write Help information aren't really using the program in a "real-world" setting and don't cover everything you might encounter. They tell you what they expect you want to know, not what you really do need to know.

The best way I have found to get "unstuck" is to search the Internet instead. In your favorite search engine, type name of the program and exactly what you are trying to do. I am relearning InDesign, an Adobe product for graphic design, and it is very complex. The version I have is older and pressing F1 for Help doesn't work, as the product is no longer supported. All I wanted to do was to put a box around some text, and so I googled this: indesign put box around text.

I immediately got lots of answers, some with video tutorials (which you aren't going to find in the application's Help system). Not only did I find many ways to put a box around text, but I also learned how to remove a box, which might come in handy someday. And how was I to know to look for the Glyphs menu to insert a special character? The Web to the rescue yet again.

Sometimes, a Help system doesn't mention what you are looking for because the product can't do it. I had to search the Web to learn that Paint.net, my favorite (free) graphics editing software, supports RGB color format, but not CMYK, which was what I needed. Their Help information didn't even mention CMYK.

And what do you do if you get an error message you don't understand? Just google the text of the message! I encountered this cryptic error message in InDesign when creating a PDF and couldn't figure out how to resolve it.

"The document's transparency blend space doesn't match the destination color space specified in the Export Adobe PDF settings. To avoid color appearance changes in the PDF, click cancel and change either the document's transparency blend space, or the destination color space."

When I searched for indesign the document's transparency blend space doesn't match, I got several suggestions of what to do, and eventually figured out how to fix the problem.

The bottom line is that people who answer questions in a User Forum or blog, those who take the time to create tutorials and videos, and authors of Tips and Tricks columns are more likely to get you "unstuck" than any product's Help system. All you have to do is ask the Web for help.

Interesting Internet Finds for November
By Steve Costello
scostello (at) sefcug.com

While going through more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some more items I found interesting during November 2018.

Here's the END of Weak Passwords

https://askbobrankin.com/heres_the_end_of_weak_passwords.html

Bob Rankin explains why there is no excuse for weak passwords any longer now that password managers are readily available an inexpensive. (Editor's Note: If you don't already have one, get and use a password manager now!)

How to Close Your Security Holes

https://firewallsdontstopdragons.com/close-security-holes/

This post talks about often overlooked security holes, and how to fix them. Also, it advises to periodically review all your security procedures on all of your electronic devices, not just your PC but your smartphone, tablet, etc. (My practice is to run a security review any time a device is updated, and of specific applications when they are updated.)

5 Reasons Why You Should Use Incognito Mode for Browsing

https://www.maketecheasier.com/reasons-for-browsers-incognito-mode/

If you are not using incognito mode in your browser check out this post to find out some good reasons why you should be using it.

10 Useful LibreOffice Tips to Boost Your Productivity

https://www.fossmint.com/libreoffice-tips-to-boost-your-productivity/

Increasingly users are switching to Linux. The most commonly included office software included with Linux is LibreOffice. In this post are tips to make using and exchanging documents with Windows users easier.

CamScanner vs Google Drive: In-Depth Comparison

https://www.guidingtech.com/camscanner-vs-google-drive/

I have used CamScanner on my smartphone and have Google Drive on it too. After reading this post and experimenting for a few days, I have removed CamScanner and use Google Drive when I need to scan something. I like having fewer apps active on my phone. Check it out for yourself.

Why You NEVER Should Use Facebook to Log Into Another Website. Ever.

https://www.wonderoftech.com/facebook-login-websites/

Facebook has had many problems, including being hacked. This post explains why you shouldn't use Facebook to log in to any other site. Also, it tells you what to do to block your Facebook account from being used for other websites.

5 No-Hassle Ways to Connect a Microphone to Your PC

https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/ways-connect-microphone-pc/

There are reasons you might want to connect a microphone to your PC. Most desktops don't even come with a microphone, and the quality of the built in one on a laptop may not be that great. This post tells you how to connect a microphone without hassle.

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Network Attached Storage – It's like a Personal Cloud
By Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer, The Computer Club, Florida
Technical Thoughts, Sarasota Technology Users Group, Florida
http://scccomputerclub.org / www.thestug.org   philsorr (at) yahoo.com

It seems like everybody is into, or onto, the cloud these days. Most of the time, for the average user, it means taking advantage of one of the Cloud Storage services like OneDrive, Dropbox, Google Drive, or Box. Many users even backup their data to one of these cloud services. Cloud services provide a great way to store a fairly large amount of data, like all your pictures, music, and videos. OneDrive will give you 5GB for your own use, and Google will give you 15GB, and allow you to store an unlimited number of pictures and videos, if they are within a limited size and resolution. With these services, your pictures and videos are stored in some mass storage location somewhere on the internet. You must have a connection to the internet to access any of the data stored in the cloud, but a connection to the internet is almost a given for most of us nowadays. But there is another alternative, a personal cloud that you setup in your home. This cloud takes the form of a Network Attached Storage (NAS) device connected to your router. The data on the NAS device is shared by all the devices (wired and Wi-Fi) on your local area network (those indicated under "Network" in File Explorer). And the NAS device drive acts as a cloud by allowing you to access it from any remote location over the internet, even if your home computers are turned off. The NAS device installation is quite easy all it basically requires is an Ethernet cable connection to the router, and the router password.

NAS devices are available from many of the same storage companies that make the hard drives we have in our laptops and desktops, like Western Digital and Seagate. Western Digital has a line of "My Cloud" NAS devices and Seagate calls their line the "Personal Cloud". Qnap, Synology, and Buffalo also have NAS product lines. The product literature boasts that "Today's NAS devices allow you to extend that file-sharing access to people outside the local area network, which essentially gives you the personal cloud storage." If you have only one or two computers and you don't need a central storage facility, you probably don't need an NAS device. Most people probably don't have thousands of photos and gigabytes of digital music and large video collections, but some people do; so, if you are one of these people, you just might think of adding a NAS device to your network.

Aside from data streaming, it seems to me that the NAS device can be used in two different ways. (Data streaming on a network might be a future article.) First, the files stored on the NAS device could be copies of files from each of the computers on the network, or second, the files on the NAS device could be a database to be used by all the computers on the network. If the files on the NAS device are copies, then the NAS device is providing a backup capability. If the files on the NAS device are the primary storage files for all the network computers, then the NAS device is providing a database capability. (By the way, a much cheaper alternative to installing a NAS device is to set up file sharing on one of the networked computers and configure it to allow other computers to use its files and folders. Though this is a reasonable way to share files, the shared computer must always be powered on or the other computers will not have access to the shared files, so for some it may not be a good choice.)

Currently, reasonably priced NAS devices for home use are in the 2 to 8 TB range, and they are built with 1 or 2 bays (a bay holds 1 hard drive). A two-bay device can then be setup in a couple of different arrangements depending on how much storage is needed and how dependable the access to the data needs to be. For example, a two-bay device with two 4 TB hard drives could be arranged as one large 8 TB of storage, or a mirrored 4TB of storage. If arranged in a mirrored 4TB arrangement, the hard drives would be configured in a RAID configuration where the data is stored (mirrored) on both drives so that if one drive fails the other drive will still have the latest data. RAID is the term used to describe the coordinated use of multiple hard drives. It stands for Redundant Array of Independent (or Inexpensive) Disks and is a data storage technology that combines multiple hard drives into a single logical unit for the purposes of data redundancy, performance improvement, or both. The data is distributed across the hard drives in one of several ways, referred to as RAID levels. Each level defines a different desired level of redundancy and performance. The arrangement that gives 8TB of storage from the two 4GB hard drives is an example of RAID 0. The mirrored 4TB arrangement of two 4TB hard drives is an example of RAID 1. RAID 0 and RAID 1 are the simplest, but there are at least 5 RAID levels defined that provide a different balance among the goals of reliability and performance. RAID arrangements beyond 0 and 1 are probably overkill for a typical home use.

So, when it comes to cloud data storage there are at least two choices; cloud storage services or an NAS device right on your own local area network. With the expense of a NAS device and the extra hardware to maintain, I wonder if it is practical for most home networks. Especially since the Cloud Storage companies are giving a reasonable amount of memory for free, and additional memory at a reasonable price. But, then for those who have large amounts of data, or may be a little on the paranoid side, or for someone who just doesn't trust their data to the cloud storage providers, this may be a better choice. With a NAS device, your data is always secure and physically within your reach, and not housed in some far away data center, where it may be the object of some far away hackers. It's your choice.

President's Corner
The Year of Living Dangerously
(The Last Year of Windows 7 Support)
By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood UG, CA
November 2018 issue Drive Light www.uchug. Org President (at) uchug. org

Google's Android is now the most-used operating system in the world, holding 40% of market share. This is due to its popularity with smart phone users. Surprisingly, Microsoft's Windows (all versions) still holds nearly 36. 5%, in spite of being relegated almost completely to the personal computer market. This appears to be the case because, although there are now more smart phones in the world than personal computers, there are still not that many more (maybe 2. 3 billion vs. 2 billion PCs). Per StatCounter, iOS holds 13. 02% (of Operating System Market Share Worldwide from July 2017 - July 2018) and OS X is at 5. 51%. Linux holds the next largest share (and lowest of named OS's) at a minute 0. 74%. Unfortunately for those Linux advocates I know, it was beaten out by "Unknown" at 2. 56% and "Other" at 1. 61%.

In the PC market, Windows truly dominates, holding 82.79% (of worldwide market share, 7/2017 to 7/2018). OS X comes in second with 12.63%, with Linux at 1.61% and Chrome OS at 0.86%. For Windows versions, Win10 has finally edged out Win7, 42.37% to 42.14%, and Windows 8. 1 has 8.59%. These three are the only versions still supported by Microsoft, per the Windows Lifecycle Fact Sheet. The remaining, unsupported versions (XP, 8, Vista and others) hold less than 7% of market share.

Windows 7 was released to the world on July 22, 2009. Its mainstream support ended on 1/10/15, meaning the end of product improvements and new features. In a little more than a year from now (1/14/20), extended support is scheduled to end. This will mean that Microsoft will stop making security updates to Win7, and it will become more dangerous to use (at least when connected to the internet).

I currently have six actively used personal computers (desktops and laptops) at home. Of these, more than half (3.5, by my accounting) run Win7. I have a Chromebook, which runs the Chrome OS; it is my favorite for travel and for getting on the web quickly. I still have one desktop PC I still use (I'm writing this on it) which runs XP, though for security it is not connected to any network. My newest computer is a tower desktop that I call my chameleon computer, as its boot hard drive is removable from the front. I have separate hard drives that allow it to run either Win7 or Win10 (thus the '3.5' for Win7 machines, and Win10 would be on 0.5 computers). My primary computer is a 14" laptop running Win7. My wife has a Win7 desktop, as well as a 15.6" Win7 laptop.

Next year will the 'year of living dangerously' for these three Win7-only machines. Something will need to happen before 1/14/20, so that my wife and I can continue computing safely. Microsoft could extend the support date out further, but that is highly unlikely, as their apparent goal since it was released in 2015 is to get all users on Windows 10. I might spend most of 2018 trying to figure out what to do, but by the end of next year, I will need to be on the path of one or more of these likely actions:

Update my Win7 PCs to Win10. Microsoft did provide me with several opportunities to update my Win7 computers to Win10 for free in the past, but I was not willing to switch at the time. As the end-of-support deadline nears, it is possible they could provide some final upgrade offer to entice those still on the fence to join the Win10 collective. They could offer a discount on an upgrade version, but it is more likely they will hold the line on price and rake in more upgrade money. If I were to go with this option, I'd likely wait as the deadline approaches, to see if any good deals come up.

I could buy the Win10 upgrade for some or all, but I'd need to weigh that cost against the age of these computers, which range from 6 to 8 years old. All seem to still run well, though I fear my wife's desktop, her primary computer, could have a catastrophic failure at any time. I have made upgrades in memory, drive space and interfaces over the years, but none have USB3 or gigabit Ethernet capability, or meet the most current Wi-Fi standards. I could pay for OS updates and then wind up having a hardware failure soon after. I could also find my computer hardware, though once verified to be compatible with an older Win10 version, may not be with the latest. It may be more cost effective to follow the next action.

Buy new Win10 computers as replacements. Buying new computers, with Win10 installed, would certainly be the most expensive option, but would provide many benefits over upgrading old hardware. We could have all the most current capabilities and features, with higher performance and (presumably) longer life going forward. OS compatibility issues would be eliminated, though there would no doubt be extra costs for new application software, to replace those programs we used on our old PCs. My wife's poor old desktop is definitely a good candidate for this option, as is possibly my laptop.

To minimize costs, I'd again likely wait until the deadline looms closer, to buy the most current hardware I can within my budget. I'd probably look more intently at the Black Friday deals this year and next, to see if there are good savings at those times. There is always this China trade war issue to consider, however; I'd hate to find that even larger tariffs on foreign-made computers (effectively the only kind available) have doubled their prices as Win7 support ends.

Abandon Windows and convert to another OS. Both of the options explained so far assume we will need to learn to use Win10. Though I despise change for change's sake, I'm sure I can adapt to Win10 and the new programs that will go with it. I've not used my Win10 incarnation of my chameleon computer

very much, though, as I prefer to stay with the more familiar Win7. That would obviously have to change. Getting my wife comfortable with Win10 may be another story, however, as she has a sometimes-tense relationship with Win7 now. Still, she has figured out her iPhone with absolutely no help from me (being an Android advocate), so the transition for her may not be as bad as I might imagine.

Still, there would be an OS change, and so this might be an opportunity to consider other possible changes. While staying with Windows, which is likely to remain the overwhelming favorite PC OS, will facilitate compatibility with computer use required in employment for both of us, there are other PC operating systems to consider. We could consider a Mac, but my exposure to Apple products so far indicates I don't think the way their developers do. My wife might make this transition better than I (could it be that men are from Mars / Google / Microsoft, and women are from Venus / Apple?).

Ultimately, the high cost of Apple product would deter me, as I'm among the most value-conscious persons you are likely to find. We could switch to Linux, and maybe even continue using our old hardware, but I fear the learning curve would be great, and we would still have work compatibility issues with our existing stuff and the work world. Maybe I could convert one of the old computers to Linux to experiment with (though I could be doing this with my chameleon computer now and don't), but, overall, I'd say this option is not likely as a comprehensive solution.

Abandon Windows PCs and use only non-Windows or mobile devices. There are a lot of people now that don't use personal computers in their personal lives at all; smart phones and tablets fulfill all their computing needs. While there are more and more web-based applications available, and I find I'm online more and using "offline" programs less, I'm not yet ready to give up word processing, spreadsheets, photo editing, tax filing and other more PC-centric activities to the small screens (and lower performance) of phones and tablets. It might be possible, but as I get older, I want bigger screens, not smaller. My smart phone and my Chromebook have definitely taken over a growing percentage of my computing time, but I really can't see them increasing to all the time. Maybe some new neural implant and projection display technologies will change that one day, but not by 2020. For better or worse, I feel we need to be tied to that majority of PC users that, again for better or worse, support Microsoft (at least through Windows).

Note that "**Continue using Win7 on the internet**" is not one of the options I'm considering for after its security support ends. It might be safe for a short time, but eventually uncorrected issues found by hackers in Win7 will make it too vulnerable. Since we use these computers to access our online financial accounts, the risk is just too great.

It is likely I will in any case keep at least one Win7 computer available to run off the network, especially if I find, as I did with XP, that some programs and interfaces for other devices are not easily available on other computing devices or with other operating systems. I have handheld GPS receivers that I can only connect to through my XP machine. I have a lot of admittedly older software for things like mapping, photo editing and scanning that is either not available, not available without significant cost or that I simply prefer on my old XP computer. I'll likely find similar issues going from Win7 to Win10 or to other operating systems and computing devices.

As my year of living dangerously comes to an end and 1/14/20 approaches, I hope I will have determined and perhaps implemented a course of action to allow my wife and I to safely continue the computing activities we need to perform. If not, 2020 might really be dangerous.

Use Your Computer to Write a Memoir

By Keith Connes, Member, The Computer Club, FL
September 2018 issue, The Journal of The Computer Club, Inc.
www.scccomputerclub.org/ diane (at) scccomputerclub.org

Here's a way to use your computer to create a legacy: Write a memoir. It doesn't matter whether you are a beginning writer or a seasoned pro – or even if you don't consider yourself to be a writer at all. Write a memoir to present the gift of your inner self to your family, friends, and perhaps a wider audience. You might find that you've acquired a new hobby!

A memoir can give your loved ones a greater insight into who you are and how you got to become the person you are – your thoughts, your feelings, your adventures through life, and the things you learned along the way.

Let me be clear as to what I mean by "memoir." Some people may think of that word "memoir" as meaning an autobiography. Well, yes, an autobiography is a very extensive memoir, taking in the entire life of the subject, but a memoir can also be just a small nugget of that person's existence – a series of reminiscences, or even a single recollection. So, it's not that daunting a task.

Even so, would your memoir really be that valuable to others? Well, think of somebody who is important to you, be it a spouse, relative, or friend – and even though you've known that person for years, you sense that there are aspects of her or his life that you don't know about and wish you did. Not necessarily skeletons in the closet, but – well, wouldn't it be fun to know that Mom always wanted to be a trapeze artist, but somehow never got around to it?

My best friend since high school was, for most of his adult life, a sales executive whose high-powered drive enabled him to start up and run several insurance companies. I thought I knew him pretty well, but I was astonished when he sent me a book of sensitive and lovely poetry that he had written! I saw an aspect of Frank I had never suspected, and my respect and admiration for him became even greater.

Well, you may not be a secret poet, or even a wannabe trapeze artist, but aren't there some unrevealed parts of you that you wouldn't mind sharing, but you haven't gotten around to it, or maybe you're just a little shy about it?

Write it down. Write your memoir. One of the easiest ways to get it done is to use speech recognition software (some of it is free) and possibly a compatible recorder. The software automatically converts your spoken words into a text file, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.

Here are a few basics about getting comfortable with the dictation process: Just start talking and don't worry about grammar or punctuation – you can fix it later. If it would help get the thoughts flowing, sit down with someone you feel relaxed with and record the conversation as you chat about a topic for your memoir.

Regardless of where your memoir begins, it can take on a life of its own – because it is, after all, the life of your own.

Write your memoir. Do it for the ones you love, for yourself, and maybe for some great-great-grandchildren you will never know. But through your memoir, they will get to know you.

Windows 10 Paint 3D

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April-May 2018 issue, BVCC Newsletter http://bvres.org/bvcchome.html   webmaster (at) bvres.org

Microsoft has included a simple paint program with all earlier versions of Windows. In the latest update to Windows 10, a new version of Paint, called Paint 3D, is included. The addition of being able to create and edit 3D images is a significant change to the Paint program You can open Paint 3D from the Start menu.
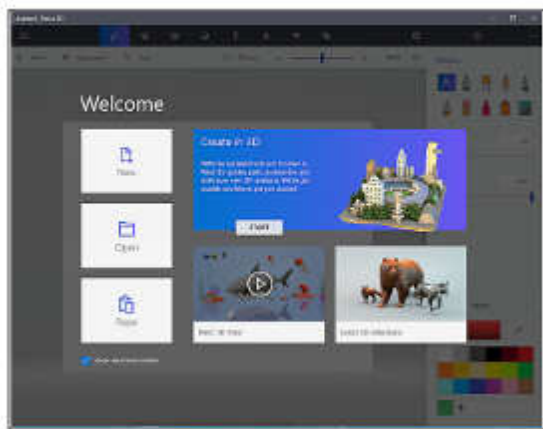
If you search YouTube for Paint 3D you will find a long list of efforts by various individuals to create Paint 3D tutorials. Microsoft has provided their own introduction video.

If you want to see a list of YouTube videos from Microsoft that deal specifically with Paint 3D, click on this link.
        https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWs4_NfqMtozAC5tdXutbdiu28Tk4rG5j

For 3rd party YouTube tutorials for Paint 3D, enter Paint 3D tutorials in the YouTube search box.

Microsoft has not provided a user manual for Paint 3D. Instead they seem to be relying on YouTube videos to demonstrate various features of the program. If you are new to this stuff, it might be helpful to learn some of the basics of the user interface. Here are a few tips for using Paint 3D.

✔ **Open** Paint 3D.
✔ Select **New** to start a new project.
✔ Select the **Brushes** tool from the top menu.
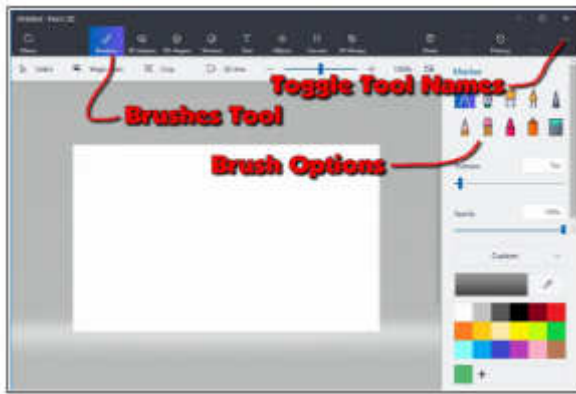
Selecting the Brushes tool displays 10 brush options in the right-side panel. This panel also provides options for Thickness, Opacity, Material, and Color. You can adjust Thickness and Opacity either by entering a value in a text box, or by using a slider found beneath the option.

Windows tip: Whenever you want to undo and action, for example drawing a line in a Paint program, press **Ctrl+Z**.

If you hover the mouse cursor over a brush, a tool tip will pop up showing the name of the brush.

✔ Choose a **brush** and draw lines by clicking the left mouse button at a start point, and then (with the left button pressed) drag the cursor to make a line.

✔ Experiment with the different brushes. Try different colors and thickness settings.
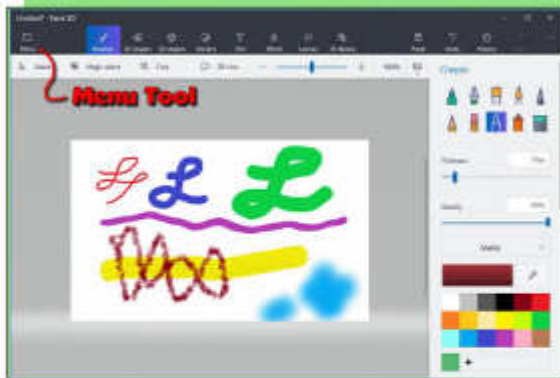
✔ From the **Menu**, select **New**. You will get options to *Save*, *Don't Save*, or *Cancel*.
✔ Experiment with the **2D shapes** options.
✔ Once you have selected a shape, drag out (left click at the start point and hold down the left mouse button and drag to the end point) the shape on your drawing.
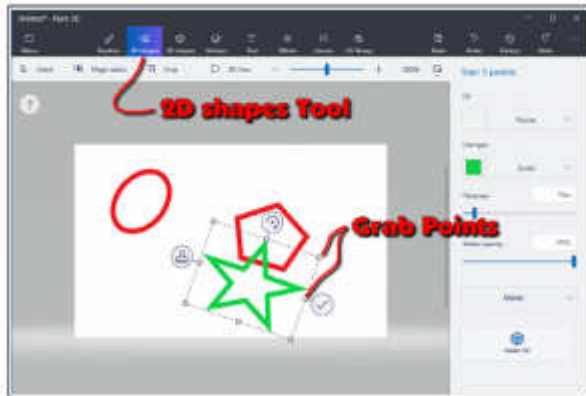
Once you drag out a shape, the right-side panel will show options for modifying the shape.

- Change the Fill, Line Type, Thickness, and Opacity options.

- Grab Points at the corners and mid points of the shape let you change the size and proportions of the shape.

- Rotate tool is used to rotate the shape.

- Check mark tool completes the shape. You can also complete a shape by clicking somewhere away from the shape.

- Clone tool makes a copy of the shape. Here is an example of using the clone tool. See if you can duplicate the drawing.
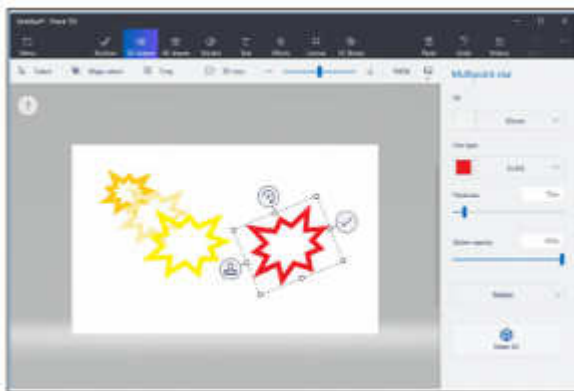
First a multipoint star was dragged out. The clone tool was selected, and the new star was moved, resized, and the color was changed.

This clone process was repeated to make the yellow star. The process was repeated again, and the red star was rotated.

What about 3D? Here is an example of creating 3D text. Select the Text tool, and then select the 3D Text option.

✔ Select the desired *Font, Size, Color, Style*, and *alignment* options, then enter your text.
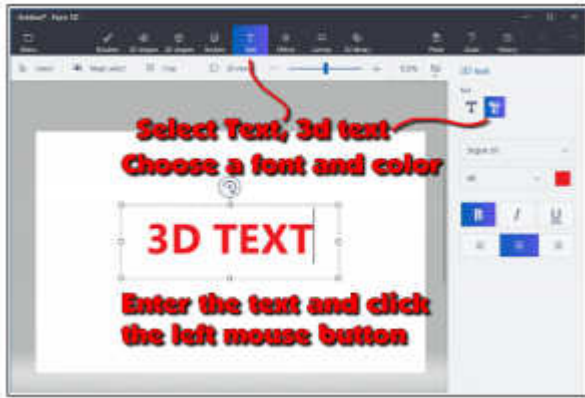
✔ When you have entered the text, click the mouse cursor outside the text box.

This will open 3D text control tools. When the control tools are open, the text will be highlighted in cyan.
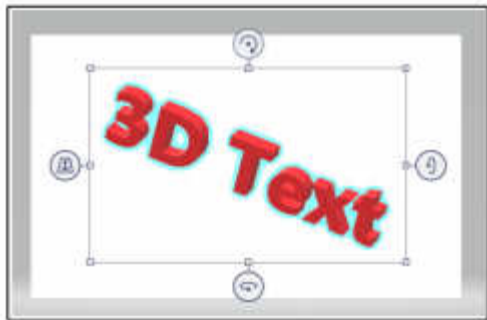
To increase the text depth, use the right side rotate tool to rotate the object more than 45 degrees. Then use the top mid-point grab point to drag the text to a new depth.
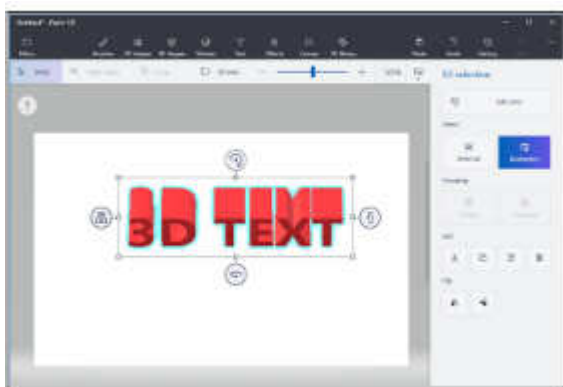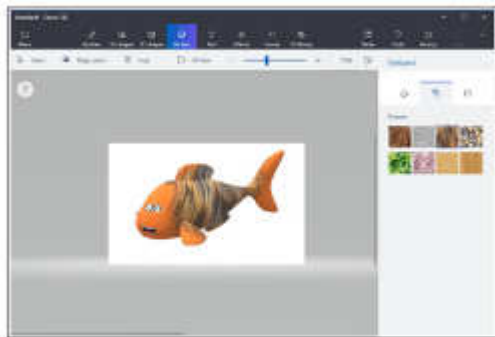

Paint 3D provides a collection of geometric shape that can be added to a drawing. Here are some 3D shapes.
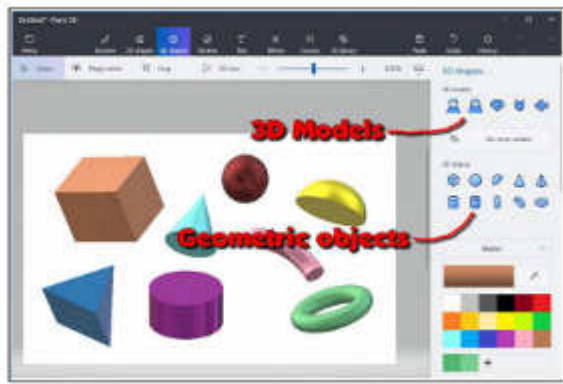
In addition to 3D geometric shapes, several 3D models are available.

Once you have created and selected a 3D Model, you can use the Stickers tool to add stickers or textures to the surface of the model.


There is a large collection of 3D models available online. Use the 3D Library tool to get models.

One last thing to discuss is how the canvas is related to the position of 3D models. The canvas is like a sheet of paper that lies somewhere in the 3D space.
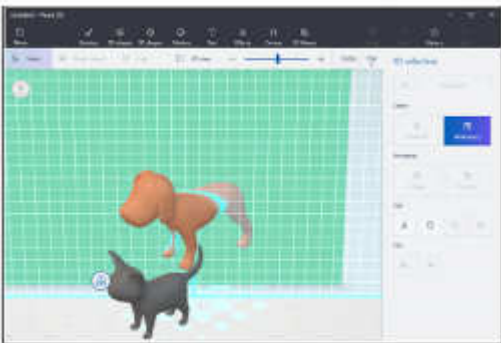

The illustrations show a dog and a cat. These models live in 3D space somewhere with respect to the canvas, and you can control who is in front of who.
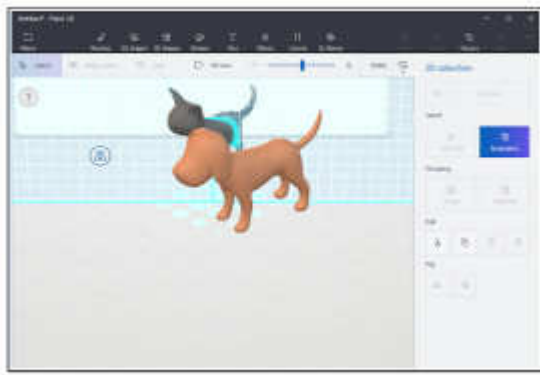
The tool on the left side of the selected 3D model is used to slide the model in and out of the 3D space.

In the next illustration, the fill brush was used to paint the canvas green.

The dog model was selected and then dragged so that dog model was half in front of the green canvas, and half behind the canvas.

This provides a very brief tour of some of the features of Paint 3D. Perhaps it will give you enough information so that the YouTube videos about Paint 3D will make a little more sense.