

PC Post



Official Newsletter of the
Modesto PC User Group.
Modesto, California

30 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

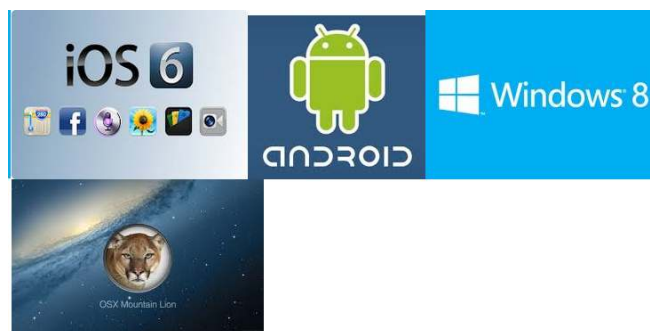
October 2012, Volume 30.10

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Mountain Lion Windows 8 Google

Just How Good is Apple's Mac OS 7.8--Mountain Lion--Will it recede into the shadows after the release of Windows 8 (the next day after our General Meeting)? Was Apple's iOS 6 for mobile devices a "Bomb?" Will Microsoft's Windows 8 RT and Google's Android capitalize on Apple's "fumble?" Terry Fix will try to answer these questions and more--Such as: What does Age have to do with knowing how to use the new Windows 8! ALSO--What about all the New Gadgets from Apple--Is it TOO MUCH?



The group meets at 6:30 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group featuring questions and problems members are facing. At 7:30, following dinner, the presentation will start.

BOD Meeting - November 7, 7pm at Ridgeway's



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Apple, Google & Microsoft Create Technology Ecosystems

Today's technology is being separated into ecosystems. Will you buy into Apple's ecosystem? Google's Ecosystem? Amazon's? or Microsoft's? Or perhaps you have already bought into one or the other without even knowing it? This is a must read for anyone making purchasing a piece of digital equipment or software.

Not only has technology changed over the last few years, but the way we use technology has also changed. There used to be two main camps when it came to technology: PC and Mac. These were built around the two competing computers systems, Microsoft's Windows PC operating system and Apple's Mac operating system. Software was written specifically for each of these systems, so you couldn't use PC software on a Mac or Mac software on a PC. When you bought a computer, you pretty much bought into one of these two types of computers. The PCs and Apple battled it out for years with PC garnering more than 90% of the market and Apple never getting out of single digits.

Now, however, things have completely changed. With the introduction of the iPhone and the iPad, Apple has soared in popularity. Other large companies have become technology powerhouses. Google with their Android operating system and Amazon have both entered the fray, while Microsoft is struggling to keep up.



Previously we were only talking about computers, but now we are talking about smartphones, tablets, and cloud computing. We are talking about entire ecosystems. The choices are mind-boggling. Each of the above mentioned companies is trying to get you to buy into their ecosystem. Each is pretty much proprietary. That means that for the most part, they are incompatible.

Right now, Apple has the largest ecosystem (I call it an ecosystem because it is an entire network or environment where one thing is dependent on another.) Apple's iPhone and iPads run on the iOS operating system. These devices run apps, which are like mini software programs that are purchased from the iTunes App store. There are currently more than 500,000 in Apple's App store. Some are free, but many are sold for a fee. These can only be used on Apple devices. If you switch to a Google Android phone or tablet, you cannot use the Apple products that you may have already purchased. You have to repurchase them from the Android Marketplace that has apps similar to those found in the Apple iTunes store.

This ecosystem also extends to storage and services in the cloud (think Internet). Apple has announced a cloud service, called iCloud that lets you store information on Apple's servers and access it from any Internet-connected device. Amazon, Microsoft, and Google also have cloud storage systems available. Since many of Microsoft's followers use Microsoft Office, Google has also developed a set of programs that are the equivalent of Microsoft Office programs, but that can be stored in the cloud and used from any Internet-connected device.



These companies make money from their hardware and their App sales. They give you a basic amount of cloud storage for free, but if you need more storage, there is a charge. You can see why so many companies are battling for supremacy of their ecosystem. It is very profitable.

Each of the current ecosystems is expanding. Apple not only has the software in its App store, but they also have the hardware in their iPhone, iPad devices and Mac computers. Apple recently announced their new cloud storage system and an App store for their Mac computers. Their new Lion operating system which is used for their Mac computers is so similar to the iOS operating system that you have to wonder just how soon the Mac computer and the Apple iPhone and iPads will share an operating system. When that happens, they will have added another component to their ecosystem.

Microsoft is a slightly different story. They don't manufacture smartphones or tablets, but they have a new mobile operating system called Windows Phone 7, which runs on hardware from other manufacturers. Microsoft has an App Marketplace like Apple and Google. They also have cloud storage. The phones that run the Microsoft operating system shine at running Microsoft office programs like Word and Excel. This is a part of their ecosystem. I expect that when Microsoft comes out with Windows 8, it will also be able to run on tablets, so we will soon see tablets running Microsoft software and apps.

Amazon has developed their own app store filled with Android apps. They also have a cloud storage system called Amazon Cloud Drive. They are already into the hardware business with their Kindle e-reader, and I expect that they will soon release a tablet to compete with the Apple iPad.

Blackberry and HP have both entered this competition with operating systems, hardware, and app stores of their own.

It's not that you cannot mix products. For instance, my husband has an Android phone, while we also own an iPad. He obviously can use both, but to do so, he had to learn two different operating systems. On top of that, if he wants to have a certain app on both his phone and our tablet, we may have to purchase it twice, buying a copy for his phone from the Android Marketplace and buying a copy for our tablet from the iTunes store. So not only is it easier to stay within one ecosystem, it is also more economical.

Knowing about these ecosystems may make purchasing a tablet or a new smartphone a little more complicated, because besides assessing the qualities of the hardware, you also have to stop and think about the ecosystem you are buying into. Yet, the number of large

companies involved in this rivalry and the constant changes, additions, and improvements they make to their line-ups makes this a very exciting time in the history of technology.

What you can do if your mobile phone gets wet
 by Tom Allen, Publisher/Editor, Mountain CUG, GA
 May 2012 issue, Mountain Bits & Bites
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Many of you get your mobile phone wet by one way or another. You worry as you mistakenly drop your mobile phone in water. It can also get wet if you are out in a heavy rain. However, there is no need to panic. It is possible to save your wet mobile phone by quickly repairing it. In order to save your mobile phone from water damage, you can consider doing this:

The most important thing you have to do is to act rapidly. Quickly remove all the detachable parts as well as covers possible such as the back cover, battery, the SIM card, memory card etc.



Next, take a piece of cloth or a tissue paper to wipe the excess water you are able to notice within the mobile phone. Make sure that you dry it completely. If you don't do this, the water inside the mobile phone will begin to evaporate and gather in places which will be difficult to reach.

Take a hair dryer and begin drying the mobile phone while giving more consideration to the place where the battery is located. The battery housing usually consists of tiny holes to let in air (so giving more space for water) inside the mobile phone. It will take several minutes. You may also set your oven to 180 degrees and let it preheat (if you are brave!). Turn it off, open the door and set the phone in it for about half an hour. I have done this but watched it very carefully and the phone survived.

The Amazing PIXEL
 By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PCUG, FL
 October 2012 issue, PC Monitor
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Years ago my daughter had a toy called "Lite-Brite" where you made your own "digital" image by putting colored plastic pegs into a black board that had a light bulb behind it. We had to view it in a dark room to see the colorful image. It was crude, but each peg really was a "pixel." You probably have heard the term "pixel" before, especially if you have purchased a digital camera. But what exactly is a "pixel" anyway? And what do you really need to know about it?

As technology furiously changes everything we are comfortable with (and leaves us in the dust with the dinosaurs) it introduces many new words into our vocabulary. There is no better example of this than how digital photography and computers have changed the way pictures are taken, stored, viewed, shared, edited, and printed. Goodbye film, goodbye Brownie camera (remember them?) and hello digital and hello pixel. A brief definition of a "pixel" would be: the smallest element of a digital photograph or image which has only one specific color.

So a digital photograph is composed of pixels. Millions of them. Each pixel (usually a tiny square in shape) can be only one color. Digital photos are usually measured by the number of pixels, either the total number of pixels in the photo (such as an 8 mega-pixel photo) or by the number of pixels horizontally and vertically (a 1,000 by 1,000 pixel photo is the same as a 1,000,000 or 1 mega-pixel photo). The greater number of pixels the higher the resolution of your photo. Usually more expensive cameras give you more pixels in the photo, and this is a good thing. The number of pixels per photo that your camera is capable of is shown on the front of the camera. When you take a photo, each pixel is saved in computer memory with its exact location in the photo and its specific color out of about 16 million colors possible. (By the way, I believe the human eye can distinguish around 10 million colors, so our technology used here is already beyond our sense of sight). No wonder a single photo can take up many times the space of a document in computer memory! It is at this point that I want you to imagine a "Lite-Brite" toy the size of a football field and a choice of about 16 million colors for the pegs. Work as fast as you can to create an image. And, so you don't forget, write down the exact location of each peg and the color you selected. You will need this information to copy or do anything with your image. This is basically what a digital camera does in a fraction of a second when you press the button.



To see a single pixel, try opening a photo on your computer (go to "My pictures", find a photo and double-click on it with your left mouse button to open it - it will probably open in the "Windows Photo Viewer" program if you are using Windows 7). When you are viewing a picture in a program look for a magnifying glass icon or click on "view" to get to a zoom option for your photo. If you zoom in far enough you will see the small squares that make up your photo - each square is a pixel. So, if your photo has a curve or an arch in it and you zoom in far enough you will see that the curve is really made up of tiny squares. So in this sense, computers really are "squaring the circle"!

How you view or look at a photo is dependent upon the hardware device (monitor or printer) or the software program (Windows Photo Viewer, Adobe Photoshop, Picassa, etc.) you use. Fortunately today both monitors and printers are very capable of dealing with high-resolution photos.

I guess the bottom line is that we will let the computers and the printers do their magic and we won't worry about pixels at all. But here are a few tips that may help anyway:

1. Always save the original photo before you start messing with it. Only play with a copy.
2. If you crop a photo you are deleting the pixels you do not want. The cropped photo will have fewer pixels and take up less computer memory space.

3. Reducing the size of a photo may be helpful if you want it to take up less computer memory. Suppose you reduce the photo to 25% of its original size. That would mean that you are replacing four pixels with one pixel. You will have lost resolution but your photo will now take up only 25% of the computer memory space as the original. Why would you want to do this? Well, it is easier and faster to send them in emails and also many more photos can fit into those "digital picture frames", on CDs, and on those little "thumb" drives.
4. You can print an image almost any size you want but you cannot "add pixels" to the image and get more resolution. (But I bet there are some programs out there that can do a good job of trying this trick.)

If you want to find out more information, go to Google, of course, and enter "pixel". If you have lots of time on your hands, you can pretend that you are a digital camera -- just find one of those old "Lite-Brite" toys and make your own picture. It gives you a whole new appreciation for technology, doesn't it?

Warning: 81 Apps Accessed My Personal Info Online
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When I scanned Google for invasive Apps I found six Apps that were non-Google apps that had access to my personal information. Who is accessing your personal info?

Scary...It should be.

Wired magazine agrees. "You may trust Google to keep your mail safe," but would you trust an interesting startup app by unknown college kids? Wired asks you to also consider what a disgruntled employee can do or even "an engineer working in his 20 percent time [at Google maybe]" Here is a must read detailing this topic: <http://bit.ly/wired-security>

Not scared yet?

Do you use Facebook? Is it secured? Of course, you went into Facebook's security settings and set them all. Even if you did, are you sure someone is not peeking into your personal life, still? You bet they are.

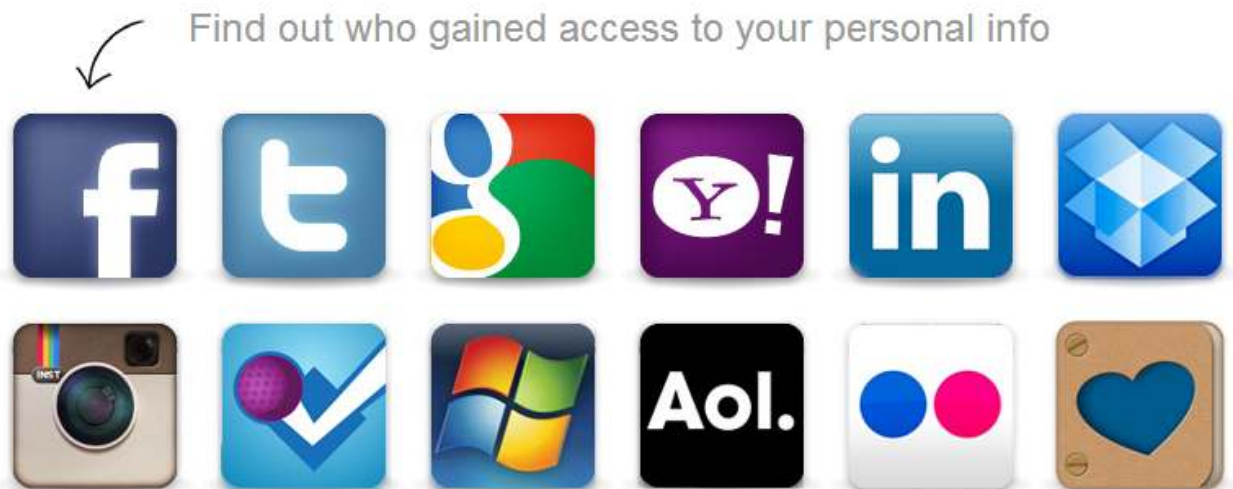
I scanned my computer and found 81 "intrusive Apps" in Facebook alone and they could access my personal information in various degrees. Here is what I found intrusive Apps could do with my Facebook data:

- 66 apps can use my name somewhere
- 81 apps have access to my personal info
- 5 apps know my home location
- 2 apps are able to access my contacts

51 apps can access my 24/7 Facebook app
52 apps have access to my media and files

The Naked Security blog, by Sophros, one of the leading security and antivirus companies, says, "Of course, there are many legitimate apps and websites which you can give permission to connect with your account - but that doesn't mean you have to have a free-for-all [in downloading them]." Sophros goes on to say that apps that you give permissions to are potentially not safe anymore, "And, in the case of Facebook, it could put your friends' information at risk, as well." One reason is the free-for-all way many simply give their info to anyone out there. Here is another must read: <http://bit.ly/nakedsecurity>

"OK, so what can we do?" The big tech guns such as Mashable, Tim O'Reilly, Techzilla, MNSBC and many more, recommend this free and amazing software app "MyPermissions." This program scans your computer (and no, they don't have any accesses) for all invasive apps on your computer and/or mobile devices. After the scan you are given the complete list of apps that are a possible threat and gives the number of how many can access what information.



Now you can click on the icons of the apps listed and go through and remove apps you do not trust. In my case I simply clicked the "Nuke All Intrusive Apps" button and after several minutes all apps were removed. Of course you don't have to go to this extreme if you want to go through each app and alter settings. I will add them back on a need-to- have basis.

Wired magazine listed ways for you to "Stay Safe":

Clean up your app permissions, especially ones you no longer use.
Think before you authorize an app. Put on your detective hat and research the app.
Whenever in doubt, change your password in the given program.

To get the "MyPermissions" software go to: <http://mypermissions.org>. You can find video tutorials at <http://alternatecloud.com>.

APP OF THE MONTH - zoom.us

<http://zoom.us> This is an easy way to set up an online conference call with up to 15 people. It is fast and free and the best part is the clarity of screenshots and video. The screen resolution, by far, beats Skype. Screen sharing is easy to use and is great for showing family members photos or videos and giving your business people a PowerPoint presentation without leaving your home. I have been helping Rayjon Sarnia (<http://www.rayjon.sarnia.com/>) who is planning on using this for some of their presentations to organize their missions to Haiti. To see how Zoom.us works, watch this video from the Wall Street Journal: <http://on.wsj.com/RQul8J>

High Quality Screen Sharing



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Get Creative with Text Boxes

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September 2012 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

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When you use Microsoft Office, you create and edit text all the time. Word, of course, is dominated by text; Excel and PowerPoint both use text in many of their functions. All recent versions of Office also include a tool called a "text box" for special uses of text. Let's find out what it is and how to use it.

A text box is a specialized shape in which you can enter text. It functions outside the regular margin constraints of a document and can be moved or resized as needed. A text box is useful for adding a caption to a photo or annotating a diagram or chart. If you want to emphasize an important statement in a document, you can use a text box to repeat the statement in a "pull quote" and locate it in an unexpected spot, such as along



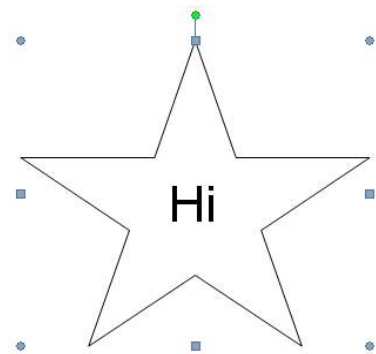
a margin (known as a Sidebar) or across columns in the document. Its flexibility makes a text box useful in many situations.

Text boxes have most of the same properties as shapes. In Word 2007 and 2010, when you click the Insert tab, then Text Box, you open the Text Box gallery of 36 preformatted text boxes, as well as the "Draw text box" option. If one of the preset boxes meets your needs, click to insert it into the document. Older versions of Word lack this gallery, but you can still draw a text box, which is most often my choice. Click "Draw text box" at the bottom of the gallery. Then click anywhere in your document where you want the text box to appear and drag diagonally down the page to the right to create the text box. At first the box covers a

portion of the normal text. This is because the default text wrapping setting is "in front of text." If you don't want the text box to hide the document text, select the text box so "handles" appear around the box. At this point, the Text Box Tools Format tab appears on the ribbon. Click Format, and then Text Wrapping in the Arrange group. Change the setting to Tight, which will position the text box within the existing text and also allow you to move the text box. Do this by clicking an edge so a crossed arrows icon appears and dragging it to a new location. You can also resize the box by dragging an edge or corner. To enter text in the box, replace the informational text with your own.

Once a text box is created and located in the document, it can be formatted in many ways. To format the text, select it, and a small version of the Font group on the Home tab will appear. Use these tools to change the font style, size, color, and other attributes. (You can also click the Home tab and use the full set of options in the Font group.) To format the text box itself, select it and use the tools on the Text Box Tools Format tab. For example, you can fill the box with a color, remove or change the border styles, make the text read vertically, or add special 3-D effects.

In Office 2007 and 2010, text boxes are not limited to a rectangular shape. You can add text to any of the items in the shapes gallery. Click Insert - Shapes and click a shape. Click in your document and draw the shape in the same way you drew the text box. Change the text wrapping to Tight as you did above, then right click inside the shape and choose "Add Text." The large number of shape choices gives you many options for text boxes. Another approach is to begin with a classic text box, even after it is filled with text. Select it, which opens the Text Box Tools Format tab. Click Format and select "Change shape," which opens the shapes gallery. Click a new shape, and the text box transforms into that shape with all its contents intact. Another interesting possibility is inserting a photo or piece of clip art into a text box. With the text box or shape selected, click the Insert tab - Picture. Click the photo you want, then Insert. The photo appears in the text box, resized to fit. The same steps work to insert clip art, charts or tables within text boxes.



Text boxes can be rotated for a dramatic effect. In Office 2010, select the text box, and click and drag the little green rotator circle above the box to rotate it left or right. In Word 2007, for an unknown reason, classic text boxes cannot be rotated, even though shapes can. One way to work around this problem is to create a text box, cut it using the Cut command on the Home tab, and then paste it as a "Picture (Windows Metafile)" using the Paste Special command option under the Paste icon.

Occasionally, you might create a text box in Word that you'd like to reuse at a later time. You can save it by selecting the text inside the box and then clicking Insert and the arrow under the Text Box icon. Choose "Save Selection to Text Box Gallery."

Besides Word, text boxes appear in Excel and PowerPoint 2007/10. Neither program contains a text box gallery, but each has the "Draw a Text Box" tool, which gives you all the

functions that Word does, including rotation. You can also start with a shape and include text by right clicking and using the "Edit Text" command.

Have a little fun. Create a few text boxes in your next document, spreadsheet or presentation.

The Tip Corner - September 2012
 Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator,
 Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA
 September 2012 issue, The LVCG Journal
[www.lvcg.org/nsheff\(at\)aol.com](http://www.lvcg.org/nsheff(at)aol.com)

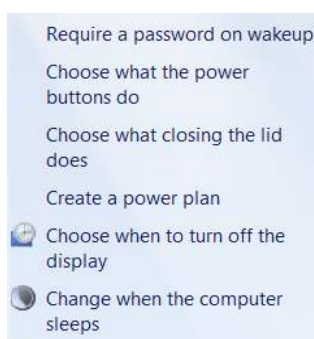


If you notice that your laptop is starting to run sluggishly and pages load slower, along with other general slowness it could be the battery. So before you run out and replace your laptop battery try this trick first.

First, charge your laptop's battery all the way to 100%. After being fully charged, unplug it and let the battery drain. Using the laptop during this period will help it drain more quickly. Once you see that the battery is almost empty, save your work and close any open pages. Then let the laptop shut itself off. Let the dead battery sit for about 5 or 6 hours, or overnight. This will help eliminate any leftover charge the battery may have, and lets the battery start over from zero. After you've let your laptop sit, plug it back in and let it charge all the way to 100% before using it again. This can extend battery life and possibly postpone purchasing a new battery Energy Consumption Since we started with the battery lets continue with some energy consumption hints for both laptops and PCs.



Conserving laptop battery power or simply managing the energy consumption of any PC can easily be accomplished by making adjustments in Windows Power Options. To access the Power Options you can use Run and type in powercfg.cpt. However in Vista and Win7 run can be skipped by just typing in power options in the Start search. In the Power Options dialog box, the three choices are; Balanced, Power saver, and High performance.



Power saver offers the most conservative use of energy; Balanced combines the Power saver plan and High performance. High performance is the gas guzzler of the three. Other settings options are available at the left. Clicking the Change plan settings link opens the Edit Plan Settings dialog box for the selected plan. There, settings can be tweaked to provide the desired mix of effectiveness and efficiency.

In Power Options, you can also control what happens when the lid on a laptop is closed. Just click the Choose what closing the lid does link.

Settings can be individually adjusted for when the laptop is running on battery, or for when it's plugged in. The choices are Do nothing, Sleep, Hibernate, or Shut down. (We discussed these choices in our July 2012 Tip Column). Clicking the 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' link offers the opportunity to change what happens when the computer wakes up.

It is also possible to make more advanced power settings. Be a little cautious here since it is for the more advanced user. Any changes made, can be undone by clicking the Restore default settings for this plan link.

What does a smart phone replace?

I am going to end this month's Tip Corner with a small list. Since tablets are now appearing like rabbits in a hutch, ready to replace laptops and smart phones with a plethora of apps and lots of battery life, let's take a nostalgic look back at the many things smart phones have replaced.

- ! MP3 Players - When was the last time you carried a digital music player that couldn't do a dozen other things, too?
- ! Portable Game Consoles - Nintendo 3DS and DS as well as the Sony PSP are still selling, but these portable game gadgets seem like relics from an era when people used cell phones strictly to make and receive calls. Today's smartphone, of course, is a gaming juggernaut: App stores for Apple and Android handsets offer tens of thousands of games.
- ! Point-and-Shoot Cameras - The pictures in your smartphone are positioned to match or surpass the photographic prowess of the point-and-shoot cameras.
- ! Personal Video Players - Remember the lineup of portable media players? This capability has also migrated to the jack-of-all-trades smartphone.
- ! Voice Recorders - "Note to self: Buy jacket with extra pockets to hold voice recorder, PDA, cell phone..." That's a voice memo from a digital recorder, circa 2001. Okay, not really--but the point is that stand-alone voice recorders were yet another digital device to carry around. No wonder they've gone the way of the PDA (see below). Some dirt-cheap recorders still persist, but a smartphone with an app like the free RecForge Free (for Android) or the \$2 Voice Record (for iPhone) is the sensible choice for any pocket challenged gadget lover.
- ! Portable GPS Navigation Devices - Why buy a separate GPS device for your car when your smartphone can perform the same tasks? Portable navigation hardware from major GPS players such as Garmin, Magellan, and TomTom are have grown more powerful and more affordable, but GPS-enabled smartphones deliver similar functionality. Interestingly, GPS vendors may be contributing to the demise of their portable devices by offering apps like Garmin's StreetPilot, which provides turn-by-turn directions for smartphone users. Hey, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.
- ! Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) - A now-classic PalmPilot PDA. It manages your contacts! It has a to-do list! It tracks expenses! Yes, the PDA was a handy contrivance back in the day when a 25-pound desktop PC and a 50-pound CRT monitor seemed welded to every workstation. But as cellphones began to acquire PDA capabilities in 2001, it became obvious that the phoneless digital assistant's days were numbered. Today, the term "PDA" sounds as anachronistic as "Pocket PC." Then again, today's smartphones are pocket PCs, aren't they?

- ! Wristwatch - Is a wristwatch a necessity or a fashion accessory? The smartphone has become the 21st Century pocket watch, while the wristwatch has become, well, your father's timepiece. This may change, since new tech-savvy watchmakers have now put the time on the wristband. But the truth is the smart phone gives great time, and dates.
- ! Paper Maps - When's the last time you bought a paper map? Do you still use them? A smartphone devotee may unfold a map every now and then, but only as a navigational tool of last resort. Mobile map apps from Google, MapQuest, and Bing provide directions, satellite images, and search tools that paper can't match. But it's wise to keep a paper map on hand as a backup, especially if you're driving in an area where wireless signals are weak. And GPS mapping tools have been known to give bad directions every once in a while.
- ! 411 Directory Assistance - Google Mobile's Voice Search. A Newspaper article once lamented the lost art of the phone call, but what about the 411 call? A savvy smartphone user is more likely to access free online tools such as Google's voice search than to make a traditional directory-assistance call. But old habits die hard, however.

According to Snopes.com from October 2010, U.S. consumers were still placing about 6 billion calls to 411 services per year, even though phone companies had switched to charging \$1 or more per call. Nevertheless, the directory assistance of the future seems likely to be automated, online, and (maybe) free. And the prologue: All of this will be included in the tablets coming out today. Will we have to widen our pockets or start carrying man-purses?

But one more thing you might want to carry with your smart phone. A spare battery. I have just finished testing how long my extra battery lasts since last charging. Well, it has been over a two weeks now and the battery is still over 60% charged.

So if you listen to a lot of music on your smart phone, it might not be a bad idea to have a charged battery in your pocket just in case. And yes they are very cheap on ebay.com. Play a lot of music, make a lot of calls and then switch. A really good assist when you are on the road and can't plug in to a charger.



**“All in One” Free Windows Performance Utilities
Updated
By Ira Wilsker
iwilsker (at) sbcglobal.com**

WEBSITES:

<http://www.easeus.com/cleangenius>
<http://slimcleaner.com>
<http://www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcareper.html>

There are several excellent "all in one" Windows system cleaners available. These system cleaners may be able to improve system performance by cleaning the hard drive, managing the startup, tweaking internal Windows settings, cleaning and optimizing the registry (NOTE:

cleaning the registry is controversial) improving internet speeds, and performing a host of other system maintenance functions.

What may be the most widely used free comprehensive system cleaner is **IObit's Advanced System Care Free** (www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcareper.html), whose website claims that 130 million copies have been downloaded. IObit recently (October 10th) announced the release of a new Version 6 of its very popular Advanced System Care line. While the free version of Advanced System Care is very adequate for most users, some users will appreciate the increased functionality and features of the commercial version. The new version 6 is an 18.2 mb download, and will uninstall any previous versions of the program that may have been on the computer. After downloading and installing the new version 6, the opening window displays the current health of the machine, an option to select "Quick Settings," "Smart Scan," and "Expert Mode." The "Quick Settings" mode offers a wide selection of security, performance, and cleaning options, as well as a selection of automatic options. The "Security - Full Detection" setting allows the user to perform a security scan and remove malware from the computer, as well as provides some protection from future infections. Also under "Security" is an option that will provide substantial security while surfing the web, a major vector for malware infections. The "Performance" group provides system performance monitoring, active optimization, intelligent drive optimization (defragmentation), and an "Ultimate TuneUp" which optimizes Windows performance and maximizes internet speed by implementing revised browser settings. The cleaning choices include "Deep Cleaning" of the registry (some users do not recommend cleaning the registry), and secure file deletion. The "Automatic" settings will provide the selected services anytime that the computer is idle, remove privacy threats, and keep Advanced System Care updated.



In the center of the opening Advances System Care screen is a large "Smart Scan" button, which will invoke a series of scans, including malware detection and removal, registry repair and cleaning, a privacy sweep (removes tracking cookies and other privacy threats), deletes junk files from the hard drive freeing up space, boosts the internet speed, and repairs any broken shortcuts. My personal choice is to implement the "Expert Mode" which includes all of the basic cleaning functions already listed, as well as a "Toolbox" with over two dozen helpful utilities, and a "Turbo Boost" function which will optimize and speed up the computer. On the expert window is also the option of changing the "skin" or appearance of Advanced System Care between the classic view, and a black or white background.

Slim Cleaner (slimcleaner.com) is a well regarded system cleaner, with a 5-Star "Spectacular" rating from the CNET editors, and a 4-Star average users' rating. Slim Cleaner, updated October 4th, and rated #4 in downloads from the CNET Maintenance and Optimization category with nearly a million downloads, is a very strong contender. In order to



install Slim Cleaner, a small 700k installer is downloaded, which in turn downloads the complete program (6.5 mb). Slim Cleaner is a very comprehensive cleaning and optimization utility that offers features in one program that are competitive with the combined features of several other programs. One of the several Slim Cleaner features includes virtually all of the cleaning capabilities of CCleaner, the world's most widely used hard drive cleaner. Under the "Optimize" menu is an excellent startup manager that uses cloud computing and community ratings to indicate which programs are necessary in startup, which are

optional, and which should be removed from the startup in order to speed the boot process and improve overall performance. If a suspicious program is found in the startup (or other optimize functions), clicking on the "View Results" will display the risk factors using Cloud AV (anti-virus); if a program in startup is not determined as malware by Cloud AV, it will be marked with a green check. The Optimize - Services displays the services (programs and Windows components) that are currently running, their risk as determined by Cloud AV, and includes the ability to control which systems are running, another performance and security benefit.

Other menu selections in Slim Cleaner include "Software" which displays the community rating of all programs installed on the computer, publisher information, and an uninstall link for each program. The "Browsers" menu displays information on the internet browsers installed on the computer including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Opera, and Safari browsers. Clicking on the browser displays information on the startup page, extensions, and plugins, as well as the community ratings for each item displayed. The "Disk Tools" menu includes several hard drive utilities including a smart defragmentation utility, disk analyzer, disk wiper, file shredder (securely deletes files), and a duplicate file finder to free up hard drive space. The "Windows Tools" offers 15 system utilities, as well as a speedometer type display that shows CPU usage and RAM utilization. The "Hijack Log" is a strong competitor to the industry leading "Hijack This" from EmsiSoft, which is used to determine if any running programs or other items are malware. The Hijack Log displays all of the items in the startup, browser toolbars, browser helpers (BHO), and Active X, along with the community ratings for each, the Cloud AV results (displays if malware), the path, and the publisher of the item. In summary, Slim Cleaner is well deserved of its "Spectacular" rating from CNET.

Clean Genius

(www.easeus.com/cleangenius) is somewhat of a newcomer to the all in one cleaning and optimization category, even though it listed as a version 3, dated October 2nd. Its



publisher, the well regarded EaseUS, is known for its excellent utilities, and Clean Genius is one of the newest utilities in its large stable of software utilities. As with most other cleaning utilities, there are both free and commercial versions available. According to the EaseUS website, the free version of Clean Genius offers optimized computer speed and performance, a quick scan and deep scan for computer issues and problems, and a comprehensive hard disk cleaner. The Quick Scan includes a junk files cleaner, registry cleaner (some users recommend against cleaning the registry), shortcut repair, system optimizer, and a privacy sweeper. The Deep Scan does all of the above, plus includes a system optimizer, network optimizer, and disk defragmenting utility. In addition to the automated functions, there are an even 20 individually selectable utilities available from a scrolling menu at the bottom of the program window; some of these utilities are a RAM manager, a hard drive checker, a file splitter, and uninstall manager, driver backup function, file encryption, and several other useful functions.

While there are countless other free and commercial all in one optimizers and cleaners, any one (or more) of these three comprehensive free utilities would serve PC users well.

Ira is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club, an Assoc. Professor at Lamar Institute of Technology, and hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVI News Talk AM560. He also writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <www.theexaminer.com>. Ira is also a deputy sheriff who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.

Computer Humor



From Ray Nichols

If you have items you would be willing to donate for our club drawings, they will be gratefully accepted. Be sure to wear your name badge for the drawing.

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