

PC Post



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"Passwords and Beyond: Securing your data from adversaries with skillz!"



Eric Wallace of Wallace Investigative Services in Turlock will be demonstrating some good and bad methods of keeping your data secure from associates or strangers who have the dangerous combination of significant skills and malicious intent.

www.wallaceinvestigativeserivces.com

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 – June 5, 7pm at Ridgeway's





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Internet Alerts Can Keep You Informed

How would you like to know every time your name is mentioned on the Web? Or when there is a breakthrough on a disease that you are following? Or when your favorite actor is starting in a new movie? This is all possible with automated Internet alerts. Read this to see how it works.

Internet alerts are available by many different Internet services. The Weather channel at www.weather.com has free alerts that will give you daily weather alerts as well as alerts for allergens like pollen and also alerts for severe weather. Other alerts will keep you informed of the weather on school days and give warnings for snow and rain. You can apply several customization options such as the time of the alert and the severity that triggers the alert. You can get alerts sent by e-mail and/or text to a cell phone.

Many news stations also have alerts regarding news, sports, and weather. One of my local North Carolina stations, WRAL (www.wral.com) even has an app that uses GPS to alert you to severe weather no matter where you travel as long as you have your cell phone turned on. While most other alerts are free, WRAL charges \$8 a year for their GPS-based alerts. Check your local news stations for news alerts.



The granddaddy of all alerts, Google Alerts, is a very useful one that you should be aware of. This is one of Google's powerful tools that is completely free. You can use Google Alerts to keep track of anything on the Web. Just surf over to

<http://www.google.com/alerts> and enter a search query. Then choose your options. You can control how often you get alerts (as it happens, once a day or once a week), the type of Web coverage that triggers an alert (news, blogs, video, discussions, books, or all of these), and you can also choose only the best results or all results. Enter your e-mail address and your alerts will start. You can change or remove an alert at any time. Once you start using Google Alerts, you will be surprised at the results.

Alerts

Search query:

Result type:

How often:

How many:

Deliver to:

Monitor the Web for interesting new content

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your queries.

Enter a search query you wish to monitor. You will see a preview of the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- monitoring a developing news story
- keeping current on a competitor or industry
- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams

Most people start with creating an alert with their own name. My “Sandy Berger” alert tells me when any news article or blog mentions my name. Of course, it also gives me results for the other Sandy Berger. You know -- that guy from the Clinton administration who stuffed documents from the National Archives into his pants. Unless you have a very unusual name, you can expect to get news of others with the same name. That’s not all bad. In fact, it can be very interesting.

The Google Alerts can be wonderful if you are following the news about a certain item. For instance, they are wonderful if you are interested in following a certain disease, medical condition or treatment. You can use Google Alerts to follow any current event or any specific public figure, actor, or personality.

If you are a transplant and want to follow the news from your old hometown, this is a perfect way to do it. Just enter the name of your old city and state in the search terms. If you want to be more specific, you can just enter the zip code. This will give you results directly from your old neighborhood.

When you set up a Google Alert, you may want to limit the results to just the best results and once a day. If you let Google give you all the results as they happen, I can assure you that you will be inundated with email.

You are sure to find many different ways to use Google Alerts. In fact, it is good to play with the Alerts a little to get to just what you want. Like any Google search, you can enter as many search terms as you like to narrow the results. You can put names in quotes to get exact matches.

Be creative with your alerts. You can have Google search for coupons for your favorite restaurant. You can use it to follow a company whose stock you may be interested in purchasing. You can use it to follow an item that you want to purchase.

The Demise of the Digital Camera
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I probably should have used one more adjective in the title, “inexpensive”, so that the title would have read “The Demise of the Inexpensive Digital Camera”. You only have to look around you at any party or gathering and see that the majority of the picture taking is being done by the guests with “smart phones”. Relatively few cameras appear at these gatherings, so you might ask why? What has happened? What is happening to fuel this dramatic change?

By some estimates, smart phones account for over 50% of the cell phones in use today, and those smart phones all have built in cameras. And within the last couple of years, the cameras in those smart phones are getting much, much better. To prove my point you only have to look at two new products to be announced, one from Nikon and the other from Nokia, one a camera company the other a phone company.

The Nikon S800c combines a camera with Wi-Fi capability, even internet browsing. It will not be long before a phone is added to that device. Nokia on the other hand created a phone, the 808c Nokia PureView Pro which combines a phone with new digital technology. It dispenses with the usual scaling/interpolation model of digital zoom used in virtually all smartphones, as well as optical zoom used in most digital cameras, to vary the magnification and field of view. This new technology which is already in use by Sony in some of their more advanced cameras (Sony NEX F3), allows zooming without any lens elements changing positions. And amazingly enough, the results are really fantastic.



More and more camera manufacturers are equipping their cameras with the ability to transfer images from the camera to a phone, iPad type device or a computer directly, no wiring required. As phone manufacturers start to incorporate this new technology into their phones, the need for people to have both a smart phone AND a camera diminishes. Many manufacturers, aware of the missteps of Kodak in failing to recognize the change in technology (film to digital) and the eventual destruction of the company, are moving quickly to rearrange their product offerings.

What will be showing up in the marketplace are more mid to high end cameras with fewer and fewer low end cameras. The reasoning is pretty simple, the camera phones, as good as they are getting, are still a very long way from producing images as good as those from

the mid to high end range of cameras. If you take a close look at the camera offerings of today you may note the changes that are taking place right now.

Digital SLR cameras are moving in two price directions, up and down. Canon/Nikon/Pentax/Sony are locked in a battle in both the high end professional/ semi – professional/dedicated amateur lines at one end and the beginner/intermediary dSLR camera lines. However, this is an area that has fragmented greatly; new camera designs along with new technology are resulting in smaller and lighter cameras capable of producing results equal to that of their bigger cousins. I can hear the verbal challenges now to that statement, but I am noticing more and more pros/semi-pros using this newer technology and reaping the benefits of fewer backaches from the lighter, pounds lighter equipment. These stark changes were brought about by the “mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras. In some circles these are referred to as CSC (compact system cameras) or ILC (interchangeable lens cameras) or EVIL (electronic viewfinder interchangeable lens cameras). Cameras in this mirrorless grouping are the Fuji X-Pro 1, the Sony alpha and NEX family of cameras, the Nikon J1/Vi cameras, the just announced Canon EOS M cameras, the micro four-thirds (mFT) line of cameras such as the Olympus OM-D5 and Panasonic GX1, and of course the entirely different Ricoh line of interchangeable lens AND sensor cameras.

In addition to those camera groupings another new collection of cameras has appeared, the large sensor fixed lens cameras such as the Canon G1 X and the Sony RX 100 along with the Fujifilm X10 and X100. I can see some questions arising about what constitutes a large sensor. To my way of thinking, sensors in the size range of 1/1.7 and larger meet that criterion, but just barely. But wait, the camera companies are also introducing more mid- to high-end point and shoot cameras such as the Panasonic FZ200, Pentax X5, Canon SD500, Nikon P7700, and Fuji SL300.

But if you look, you will see relatively little effort or money being spent on the inexpensive line of cameras, those retailing for \$200 or less. What you are seeing is product renaming with a change in camera color but very little in the way of any new features. What also appears to be happening here is that as the new models appear the older models are marked down substantially. As an example, Olympus Pen LP-2 was \$550 or more. It can now be had for about \$300 while the even older version, the LP1 is still around and going for a bit under \$300 and those are prices with the kit lens. The Fuji S4500 came out at about \$300, but today it can be bought for under \$200 and it came out in January of this year.

The economic downturn of the last few years certainly has played a part in the changing face of digital photography, making it less lucrative to introduce middling to low cost cameras and to focus on the mid to upper range of cameras with special features, such as better video, longer zoom ranges, great low light and high ISO ability. You will also be seeing a move away from the traditional CCD sensor to the CMOS and BSI-CMOS type sensor since these are far better suited to video and low light photography.

One other very bad thing is happening and that is the increase in camera complexity. I hear it almost every week from my students, “I can’t understand the manual (if there is even one included), there is no index or the index is vastly incomplete, the booklet uses abbreviations without ever defining them, they seem to assume I know something when I do not, they don’t explain a feature or how to use that feature.” I have long maintained that the instructions are written by people whose native language is NOT English and may not even be photographers.

This is a most interesting period in photography. Image quality and the ability to use high ISO settings or shoot in dim light has never been better. Cameras, at least the mid to high price cameras, have more features and generally perform much better. The next five years will see very significant changes in the photographic landscape, stick around, you may even like what you see.

Enjoy Your CD-ROM/DVD Drive
Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
March 2013 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
www.spcug.org / [jimcerny123 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:jimcerny123@gmail.com)



Almost all computers have a CD-ROM/DVD drive (I will call it a “CD-drive”) into which you can insert a computer disk (CD or DVD) for all sorts of reasons. Some new computers and all touch-pads do not have such a drive, they expect you to load things onto them by using the internet or another computer. Now that the “cloud” exists via the internet, I suppose the days of the CD disk are numbered, but I still believe that CD drives will be around for many more years to come. They come in very handy, are fun, and really not difficult to use at all. Do you use your CD drive? I use mine for backups, photos, movies, and for a media which is cheap to mail to a friend. If your computer has a CD drive, why not enjoy it?

What is a CD (computer disk) anyway? – It is a plastic shiny disk that can hold all kinds of information (i.e. files) which can be read by a computer that has such a drive. These disks can be used to store information in different ways, such as music, videos, photos, files, etc. They are usually one-sided, but there are two-sided disks (shiny on both sides). Keep your oily fingerprints off the shiny side of the disk and hold the disk by the edges.

What is a CD drive? – It is a device that can read and write data to and from a CD disk. To use your drive, you need to open it. To do this you simply push the button on the drive tray and it will open. The problem is that on most computers this button is hidden very well so that you cannot find it. I don’t know why the computer manufacturers do this, but they make the button the same color as the whole computer! Obviously they don’t want you to know it’s there or, if you do know, to make it very difficult to find. (I tried to paint my button a bright orange, but the paint wouldn’t stick to the plastic.) Anyway, after you play their hide-and-seek game, press the button and the drive drawer should open.

Place your disk on the tray carefully and close the drawer until it clicks. If you have a desktop, gently pushing the drawer in will do it. If you have a laptop you will probably have to push the disk gently onto the spindle (support the tray with your finger from the bottom when you do this so that you do not put too much pressure on the drive drawer). Your computer will now attempt to see what is on the disk and help you use it. Let's go over some possibilities:

If you put in a DVD disk – i.e. a DVD movie – your computer should open a program which will start playing the movie for you. I have a Toshiba laptop and when I put in a DVD movie it automatically opens the Toshiba program to play it for me, in a window that I can adjust and with controls on the screen just like a DVD player. Use your mouse to click on the controls. A similar thing will happen if you put in a music CD – the computer will open a program that will allow you to play the music. If you put in a disk that has files on it (they could be data files, documents, photos, music, video files, etc.) the computer will probably show you a small window of “choices”. What the computer is telling you is that there are different files on the disk and it is up to you to select what program you want the computer to use to work with those files. In almost ALL cases, given a choice, you will want to select “Open folder to view files – using Windows Explorer”. Once Windows Explorer opens it will show you all the files on the disk, no matter what kind of files they are. You will need a program on your computer to open and use a file – you will need the Word program, for example, to open and use Word files, the Excel program to open Excel files, etc. It's cool that a disk can save any file but you need a program that can open the file in order to see it or use it.

The key to using a disk, a disk drive, or any memory device is using Windows Explorer (do not confuse this program with the “Internet Explorer” program). And that, my friends, is an excellent topic for a future article. Now I am off to watch a movie or listen to some great music, why don't you give your drive a test spin?

Misery from Social Media
By Greg Skalka, President, Under the
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February 2013 issue, DriveLight
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Does Facebook make you miserable? I know I get depressed when I think about all the time people waste on social media sites, spending hours looking at what other people are doing or raising imaginary crops on Farmville. I get perturbed when I read about those bird-brains that spend all their time tweeting their every action, and the twits that follow them. I'm not sure what is higher



on the worthless scale in that case, being the tweet-er or the tweet-ee (at least the tweeter is writing something).

Now there may be proof that all this social media connectivity is bad for our mental health. A joint study conducted by two German universities indicates that use of social media sites like Facebook causes increased feelings of envy. Researchers reported that one in three people felt worse and more dissatisfied with their lives after visiting these sites. "We were surprised by how many people have a negative experience from Facebook, with envy leaving them lonely, frustrated or angry", said researcher Hanna Krasnova from the Institute of Information Systems at Berlin's Humboldt University. This is not very surprising to me. The tendency of most people to post mostly positive information about themselves, their families and their activities, and leave off the unflattering bits tends to skew what is seen on these sites. I'm sure some use social media as the high tech way to brag. When faced with glowing reports of friend's lives and activities and beautiful photos of their latest adventures, a viewer's feelings of inadequacy seem a reasonable result of the social media experience. The study did report that vacation photos posted by others was the biggest cause of resentment. How surprising. Second was social interactions, where being able to compare against others the number of birthday greetings received or comments and "likes" on photos and posts produced envy.

The researchers noted that these feelings of envy prompted users to boast more about their own activities, which I would think would result in more angst overall for Facebook users, as everyone competes to report having the most impressive lives. It reminds me of the feelings I recall having when my wife and I would go out to tour model homes on the weekends, not to buy but to get decorating ideas for our own home. We would leave our house feeling reasonably satisfied with it, but interested in making it just a little better. We would return from touring these fabulously decorated and ridiculously neat model homes with the feeling that our house was a dump. It would have been better for our mental health and overall happiness if we had never gone looking. I wonder if we will someday find it is the same with social media?

A Hard Drive In Your Pocket

Ignore those that say you can't take it with you - now you can. When you need to carry around a lot of data, Kingston is there for you. They announced the 1 TB version of the DataTraveler HyperX Predator 3.0 flash drive at CES, which is expected to be available in the first quarter of this year. It will allow you to carry a hard drive's worth of data with you and access it at USB 3 speeds. You will have room in your pocket for it, however, as the price will empty your pockets, wallet and more. "Greg's Rule of Flash Drive Pricing" says not to pay more than \$0.50 per GB for flash drive storage, and you can do that for drives up to 32 GB. Unfortunately, the 512 GB version of this drive is priced at \$1300 (\$2.50 per GB), and the 1 TB version is expected to fetch over \$2500, about what you would pay for 35 1 TB 3.5" hard drives.

The Extermination of the Mouse

Those of us that were at the January general meeting at the Microsoft Store in the Fashion Valley Mall saw a demonstration of Windows 8 on a large display screen connected to a touch screen computer. The touch screen is one way to get rid of the mouse in our computing lives. Another way is coming from a company called Leap Motion (<http://www.leapmotion.com/>). They are producing a product that will allow you to interact with your computer without a mouse, using hand gestures similar to those controlling the computers shown in the movie *Minority Report*. Think of it as a Microsoft Kinect interface for your hands only. You can interact with your computer through hand waves, pinches and other gestures more intuitive than a mouse can allow. You can pre-order their 3D hand gesture control capability for \$69.99. The small hardware motion controller, the size of a pack of gum, plugs into a USB port and sits in front of your monitor. With the Leap Motion software, they claim it can track individual finger movements to 1/100th of a millimeter. If this becomes real like Kinect, it could make the mouse obsolete.

What's Going into the Gadget Graveyard by the End of 2013?

My column last month contained my predictions for the next year. One of them was that desktop and laptop computers would continue to hold their own against the onslaught of tablets and smart phones. I'm happy to report that my prediction is in line with the 2013 Gadget Graveyard predictions made by IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organization. Their survey of IEEE members, engineers, engineering students and CES attendees predicts that desktop computers should live on for at least another year.

Smart phones also will not yet force cameras, car keys or GPS systems into the gadget graveyard. What are most likely to head for extinction are entertainment devices like CDs, radios, MP3 players, DVDs and cable boxes, as streaming services for audio and video continue to gain in popularity. The consensus was that paper-based items, including printers and paper money, would be around a while longer.

I think I will hang onto my DVDs and MP3 players, as they may provide the only entertainment I will get this year. The problem with Internet streaming services is bandwidth, and in just one month I've found mine to be more limited than I thought. I've got cable Internet at home that typically shows a 12 Mbps or greater download speed (often approaching 20 Mbps), but recently I was confronted with web pages that would not load on my computer. Something was bogging down my Internet access. I went downstairs to find my wife watching an episode of *Downton Abbey* on her Kindle Fire HD tablet, while my son was downloading something on his Google Nexus tablet. It is kind of like the water we San Diegans get from the Colorado River.

At the state line it is an impressive flow, but if enough users turn on the tap at the same time, all I'm likely to get is a trickle. All these new tablets are thirsty for bandwidth, so I may need to wait until everyone has gone to bed before I can pay the bills online. Meanwhile, as they are screaming for more bandwidth, I can watch my DVDs on my laptop in peace (as long as I have on my noise canceling headphones, that is).

A Warning from the Cable Company

As if limited bandwidth isn't bad enough, I recently received a warning from Road Runner / Time Warner that I had an infected computer. When I tried to access the Internet through a browser, a web page popped up that appeared for be from Time Warner. It appeared in the same manner that an initial web page would on a hotel Internet connection, requiring a log in or acceptance of terms before proceeding to the Internet. This page warned me that they had "received a report of suspected virus activity from a machine connected to the cable modem" on my Internet connection. The page provided links to Microsoft's free Malicious Software Removal Tool, as well as McAfee anti-virus software that I could download for free as a subscriber. It also warned me that I could be in violation of their Acceptable Use Policy and could have my access suspended. To proceed to the Internet, I had to click on a button that indicated I was aware of this issue and would clean and secure my computers.

I regularly scan my computers for viruses and malware, but occasionally have guests, like my son's girlfriend's laptop, connected to my network. I was also not sure how regularly my son maintains his PCs. I persuaded my son to install a free antivirus to take the place of his expired software, but he found no infections. I scanned my laptop and desktop, but found no problems there. When I scanned my wife's desktop, the antivirus did find something that was reported as part of a trojan, and eliminated it.

I don't know if that was the "reported" problem, or how it was that a problem was detected by the cable company. The web message said to contact my local cable office for further questions regarding this incident, but knowing how much fun it is to try to get useful information out of them over the phone, I never made an attempt to learn more. So far my cable Internet access has not been cut off.

iCan't: 5 Things Android Users Take for Granted and iPhone Users Just Can't Do

Danny Stieben, Writer, MakeUseOf.com

May 6, 2013

<http://bit.ly/12bdyZ2>

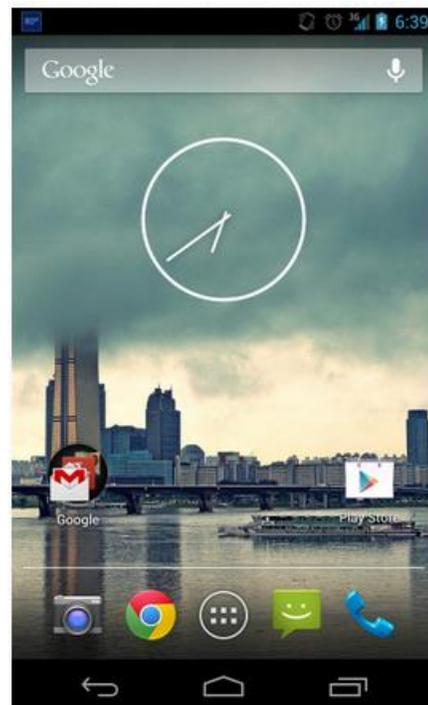
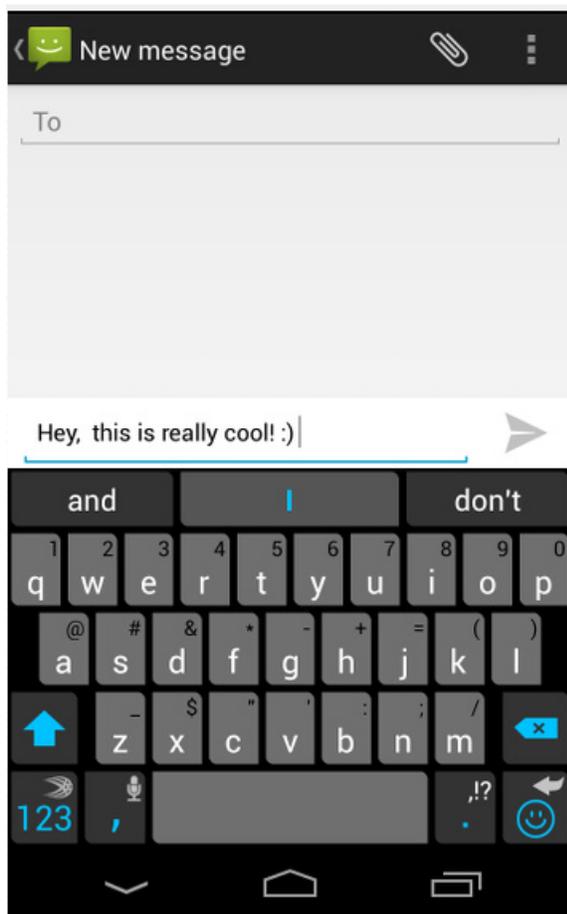


Have you ever thought that there might be a reason Android users brag about their customizability? Sure, as an iPhone user, you can add and configure apps, change your wallpaper, and otherwise make yourself feel at home. But at the end of the day, you've only changed a few small details. If you happen to have jailbroken your iPhone to run Cydia and are enjoying some of the best Cydia tweaks, you can do more. But users with stock iOS are able to do much less. Don't believe me? Check out these different things that Android users can do but iOS users cannot.

From changing your keyboard to using a live wallpaper to putting an entirely new face on your phone (in the form of a launcher), Android lets you customize your phones in remarkably flexible ways.

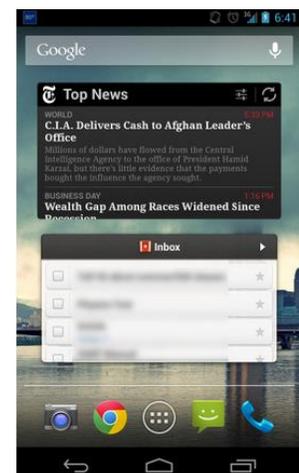
Keyboards

If you don't like the keyboard on your iPhone, tough luck. Without jailbreaking the device, there's no way to get a different keyboard app on your iPhone. On the contrary, Android is built to allow users to choose between different installed keyboards, from the very capable default keyboard to Swype to SwiftKey. This not only allows for different looking keyboards, but also different typing mechanisms (tapping versus swiping) and prediction algorithms for those fast typers with low accuracy. I'm not saying that the iPhone's keyboard is bad, but I highly doubt that every iPhone user likes it and those picky users will just have to endure.



Home Screen Mechanics

The iPhone's home screen is one of the most iconic features of the iOS platform — big icons in a 4x4 grid (or 4x5 grid with the iPhone 5) and four buttons along the bottom bar for commonly



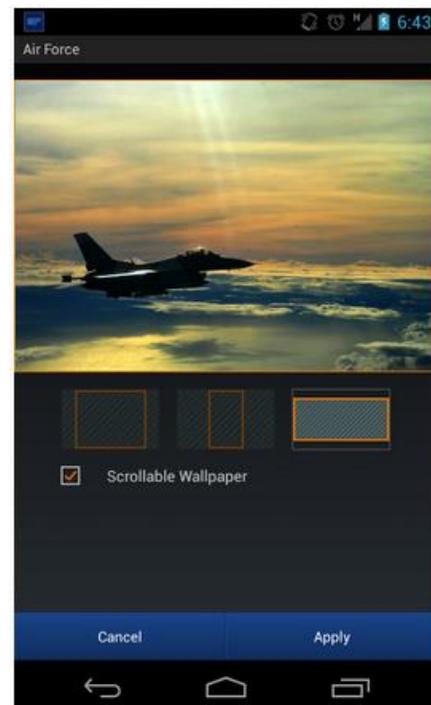
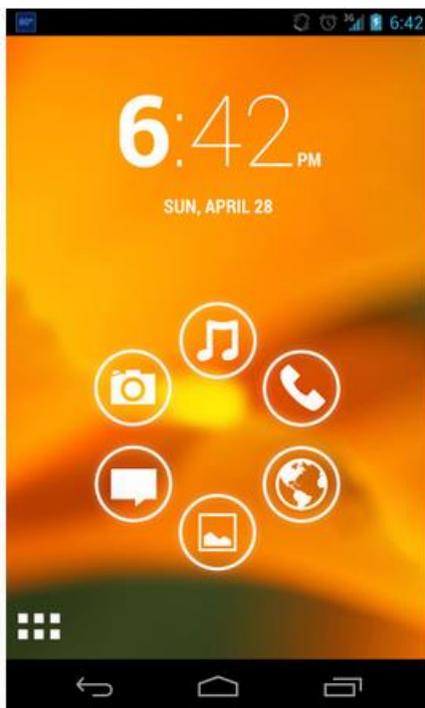
accessed apps. Besides changing the wallpaper and rearranging the order of the icons, there's nothing that the iPhone user can do to change how it looks. For example, a mechanic that annoys me would be the fact that I cannot move an icon from the very top of the screen to the very bottom — all icons fill in row by row. At least iPhone users can move their icons onto a new page.

Widgets

Android launchers also have another cool feature that is entirely lacking in iOS — widgets. These nifty tools can be placed anywhere in your home screens and offer quick access to the related app's functionality. For example, the Wunderlist widget will display your to-do list, the New York Times widget can be configured to show the latest news, and weather.

Launchers

I absolutely love the default Android launcher, but others may want to use other alternatives. With Android, you can install additional launchers and choose which one you'd like to use. Each launcher can offer different functionality, such as themes and the ability to add more pages to your home screen. With iOS, this is also completely impossible as Apple wants everyone using the same launcher.



Wallpapers

Android includes some creative features with wallpapers to give your phone a nice touch with small details. Whenever you set a new image as your wallpaper, you can choose how you'd like to resize it, as well as determine whether the image should be "scrollable" or not. When set to scrollable, the wallpaper moves left and right as you switch between different pages in your home screen. Otherwise, the wallpaper would remain completely still as you

switch between pages in your home screen. Additionally, Android also offers the use of live, animated wallpapers. These cool wallpapers are similar to Windows Vista's DreamScene wallpapers; however, are more appropriate on a smartphone as they usually include smooth animations and other computer-generated objects, and not a real-life video. Some live wallpapers animate on their own, while others react to the user's touch. They can be pretty fun to mess around with, and with (usually) minimal battery impact.

Android vs iPhone – Conclusion

Believe me now? Android users can change some significant stuff to their phones, without having to resort to rooting or installing custom ROMs. I'm sure this list isn't entirely inclusive of all things Android users can do that iPhone users cannot, but it gives you a good idea of how you can do more with Android.

What's your favorite feature of your Android or iOS device? What do you wish it could have that the competitor has? Let us know in the comments!

Is Windows Going the Way of the Dinosaur? by Ira Wilsker

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.



Microsoft has been the major provider of computer operating systems since the earliest days of the personal computer I have had my own PCs running a series of Microsoft operating systems including MS-DOS, Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows ME (no jokes, please), Windows 2000, XP, Vista, and Windows 7 I have tried Windows 8 on a new computer, and setup several computers using Windows 8, and I did not personally find it as difficult to use as some allege that it is Throughout American and world history, many companies have grown to a huge size with enormous profitability, only to enter a state of decline where if they survive, they tend to be only a shadow of their former



greatness Businesses depending on a specific line of products and services tend to follow the traditional product life cycle known to all business students; introduction, growth, maturity, and then decline With some thought we can all think of some mega-businesses that have dramatically declined including big steel, big railroads, "Ma Bell", Montgomery Ward, and many others There are some contemporary pundits who are now adding Microsoft to that esteemed list of big businesses

that matured in the past, and may now be in a state of decline.

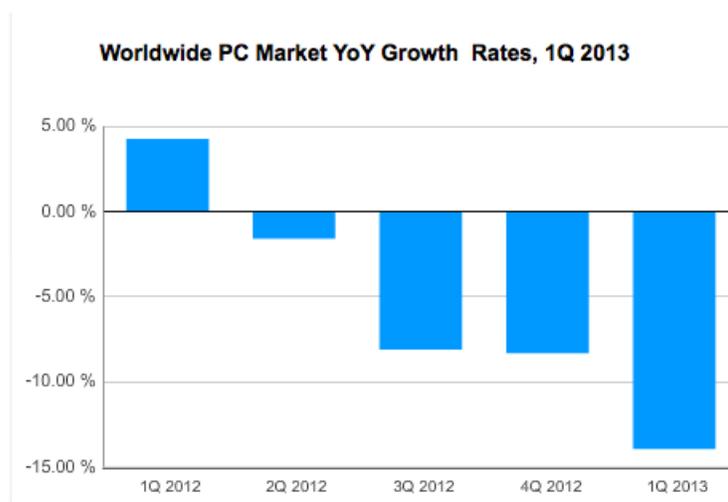
While some blame the economy, competition, or technological change for the decline of Microsoft and its flagship operating system Windows, there is no doubt that Microsoft's current offering, Windows 8, is nowhere even close to meeting its sales projections. This failure to meet sales projections has also hurt others in the industry dependent of the sales of Windows based computers, including such manufacturers as Dell and HP, as well as Intel, AMD, and other component makers. According to an April 10, 2013 press release from IDC, "PC Shipments Post the Steepest Decline Ever in a Single Quarter" (source: <http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS24065413>), Bob O'Donnell, IDC Program Vice President said, "Worldwide PC shipments totaled 76.3 million units in the first quarter of 2013 (1Q13), down -13.9% compared to the same quarter in 2012 and worse than the forecast decline of -7.7%, according to the International Data Corporation (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly PC Tracker. The extent of the year-on-year contraction marked the worst quarter since IDC began tracking the PC market quarterly in 1994. The results also marked the fourth consecutive quarter of year-on-year shipment declines. At this point, unfortunately, it seems clear that the Windows 8 launch not only failed to provide a positive boost to the PC market, but appears to have slowed the market." Sales of PCs in the United States were down 12.7% in the first quarter of 2013, following a plunge of 18.3% over all of 2012. In the fourth quarter of 2012, which included the busy Christmas shopping season, US sales of PCs totaled 14.2 million, down 9.6% from the same quarter in 2011, the lowest level since 2006.



Some of the issues that have dissuaded consumers from purchasing PCs running Windows 8 is the initial appearance of its "Metro" interface that utilizes "tiles" on its default desktop, rather than the more familiar icons used since the earliest days of Windows. While it is fairly simple to display a more traditional desktop on Windows 8, many users find the default tile approach confusing, and notice that the lack of the classical "Start" button is annoying. For many users, tiles are a convenient way to have live, real-time content on their desktops which can simultaneously display any of many combinations of social media, news, sports, weather, stock quotes, entertainment, and other content in each of the individual tiles. While many users of tablets and other touch screen devices find that manipulating tiles with a swipe of the finger to be fast and convenient, many users of the more traditional PCs with monitors or laptop computers find working with the tiles confusing and cumbersome. Among the most popular freeware downloads for Windows 8 are utilities that restore the start button of Windows 7 and earlier versions of Windows, as well as set the traditional desktop with icons as the default desktop in Windows 8. Despite the ready availability of free utilities that make Windows 8 look and work more like

Windows 7 or XP (very few want Windows 8 to behave and look like Windows Vista), there are many potential purchasers of PCs that have forgone the purchase of a new computer because they do not want a new PC with Windows 8.

In an article dated April 15, posted on the well-respected ZDNet, author Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols proclaimed, "Windows: It's over", giving his interpretation of facts that Windows is nearing its end as an operating system (source: www.zdnet.com/windows-its-over-7000013964) Citing the growth of smart phones and tablets running operating systems other than Windows, which have taken away Windows' market share (other sources have published that Google's Android operating system has taken 75% of the market for tablets and smart phones), the decline of Windows as we know it is inevitable According to Vaughan-Nichols. Windows 8 gets to take a lot of the blame too. After all, the debate wasn't whether or not Windows 8 was any good. It's not. The debate was over whether it could be saved."



NOTE: Source of graphic is:
<http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS24065413>

With the threat of a disastrous operating system that had the noble idea of unifying the interface used on PCs, tablets and smart phones, Microsoft is well aware of the predicament that it is in, considering the drastic decline in revenues of Windows 8, compared to its previously rosy projections Microsoft might get a second chance or reprieve when later this summer, it releases an "improved" version of Windows 8, codenamed "Blue", which will be released as Windows 8.1 The new product will likely be rolled out at a software developers' conference in San Francisco, to be held June 26-28 Supposedly, Microsoft is well aware that the current iteration of Windows 8 is too touch screen focused and is not very intuitive (one Microsoft VP allegedly used the word "counterintuitive" in a blog post on Windows 8) "Product leaders across Microsoft are working together on plans to advance our devices and services, a set of plans referred to internally as Blue," wrote Frank XShaw, corporate vice president of corporate communications at Microsoft Among the changes and improvements rumored to be included in Windows 8.1 includes resizable tiles (already available in Windows 8 smart

phones), and the ability to customize the Start Screen without having to go through the Desktop Control Panel. Other rumored improvements to Windows 8.1 includes the ability to "snap" two windows side-by-side, as well as to optionally display four running applications on the display (source: foxnews.com/tech/2013/03/26/windows-8-update-coming-this-summer).

Will "Blue" be able to save Windows 8 from the dustbin of failed operating systems, and stop the hemorrhage of market share currently being suffered by Microsoft? Will Microsoft even survive as a corporation in its current form, as other operating systems win away market share for new technology smart devices, for which Microsoft is currently only a bit player? Is Microsoft the "Titanic" of the software industry, unable to turn in time to avoid disaster? Only time will tell. Good luck Microsoft; I have used your products faithfully for almost 30 years, and would hate to see you go the way of your long ago nemesis, IBM's OS/2.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.zdnet.com/windows-its-over-7000013964/>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324695104578414973888155516.html>

<http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2013/04/11/windows-8-blamed-for-biggest-pc-shipment-plunge-ever/>

<http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2013/03/26/windows-8-update-coming-this-summer/>

<http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS24065413>

I had a job at my local school board doing on-site technical support. We had just recently replaced all the Macintosh machines with Windows machines. While showing one of the secretaries the Windows environment, she asked where all of her icons were. I pointed to the two columns of icons on the left side of her screen.



Her: "Yes, but on my Mac they were all over here on the right."

Me: "Well, by default, Windows arranges the columns on the left side."

Her: "But I'm right-handed!"



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.

Please also remember to bring your used magazines, books, videos, DVD's, and cassettes for distribution to Veterans in our area. If you have old household or device batteries, or used CFL (Compact Fluorescent Lamp) bulbs, bring them for legal recycling (it is against the law to dispose of them in the trash). Old Cellphones can be converted to Telephone Calling Cards for overseas Military Personnel. Old eyeglasses will be turned over to the Lions Club for reissuing to needy

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Elizabeth Leedom

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