

The Next CTPC Meeting

Tuesday, March 25, 2014 - 6:30 p.m.

The Basics of Microsoft SharePoint Online

CTPC member, Richard Frisch, will present "The Basics of Microsoft SharePoint Online" at the next CTPC meeting. SharePoint Online (SPO) is part of Microsoft Office 365 for Business. SPO helps organize information, people and projects, whether working as an individual or in a team.

Do you remember when you moved from a typewriter to a word processor or from a calculator and a ledger to a spreadsheet program? Wonderful new possibilities arose. SPO removes the

limitations imposed by storing files only on our computer's hard drive. It removes the need to create, edit and view documents solely on our computers. It lets us easily collaborate by storing our files simultaneously in the cloud and on our computers. When you move to SPO you can access your work on whatever device you want—computer, tablet or smartphone—and wherever you are.

Like pornography, SharePoint can be hard to define but when you see it you'll

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Mar 25th Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.
CTPC Meeting
Silver Star Diner, Norwalk, CT

Apr 22nd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.
CTPC Meeting
Silver Star Diner, Norwalk, CT

GENERAL MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the 4th (not last) Tuesday of the month. There is no charge to attend general meetings. See back page for directions.

www.ctpc.org

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

Goodbye XP

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

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

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

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

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

The wording on the MS Website implies that old patches will remain available,

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

The second alternative is to keep your hardware, but change your operating sys-

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What You Need to Know about QR Codes

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

QR codes: They are small squares filled with black square dots arranged in a grid pattern on a white background. If you look carefully at a QR code, you will see that each one is unique in the placement of the small black and white squares. While this doesn't mean anything to the eye of the beholder, the placement of the dots defines the additional data that is embedded in the code. The QR code on the left will lead you to The website of The Pilot, a newspaper I write for. The one on the right will lead you to the home page on my Compu-KISS website.



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

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

CTPC Dues Were Due 01/01/14

You can mail your check for \$25.00 to the CTPC, PO Box 291, New Canaan, CT 06840. You can also bring your check to the March meeting.

We really would like to see you continue as a member so we have been sending you a newsletter but this will be the last one sent to unpaid members. ♠

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

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

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

Several companies have developed further enhancements for QR codes allowing them to be hidden in a picture. They embed

imperceptible digital information in pictures or behind text, creating an invisible hyperlink to online content. They can even embed a QR code in an audio file.

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

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

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

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

Linda Gonse, Editor & Webmaster, Orange County PC Users' Group, CA, October 2013 issue, Nibbles & Bits, www.orcopug.org, editor (at) orcopug.org

The Jeopardy Answer Is... What?

The final question on Jeopardy on its September 26 episode was based on the category "Internet." The question was "The animal for which this computer program is named is actually a red panda."

Do you have any idea what that program is? When I tell you the answer, you will shake your head — as I did — and you will say "What? That's not right!" — just as I did.

Are you ready? The answer is "What is Firefox (the internet browser)?"

"Fire fox," in Chinese, is another name for the red panda.

In fact, Mozilla launched a website called "Firefox Live" in November 2011 to

educate and raise awareness of the endangered red panda species.

Live videos of three baby red pandas, Bernadette, Dolly, and Winston, that were sheltered at the Knoxville Zoo, were streamed on the Firefox Live website until March 2012. When the babies reached maturity they were sent to breed and become part of the animal families at the Virginia Zoo (Norfolk, Virginia) and the Zoo Boise (Boise, Idaho). Subsequently, the Firefox Live website was retired.

If you'd like to find a red panda in a zoo near you, go to http://redpandanetwork.org/red_panda/find-a-red-panda-near-you/ ♠

Fun With Your Scanner

In a previous article we looked at the many options and ways of having fun with your printer. This time I would like to look at using a scanner. It only makes sense that if you are purchasing a new printer it is a good idea to get a “combo” printer that includes a scanner.

Scanners have been around for a long time and their technology keeps improving. If you have a scanner, you can think of it as a digital camera – it is really taking a digital photo of what you are scanning and making a new file of that image on your computer. Anything you can do with a digital photo you can do with what you scan with your scanner – it creates a “.jpg” file, for example. Here are some basic tips for using a scanner (but read your scanner’s manual!).

When you install your scanner (i.e. combo printer) it will create an icon on your computer Windows desktop to control it. Whenever I scan something I first double-click on that icon to open it and use the controls there to control the scanner. Many combo printers have some controls and buttons to push on the control panel to make copies, print, or do a scan, but I always find that I see more options and get better results if I always use the controls on my computer window. When you do a scan you need to provide the scanner with some information – such as the following:

- + File type – do you want to save your scanned image as a “.jpg” photo file? That is my usual choice. But other file types may be available too if you want or need them.

- + File name – give your new file a meaningful name.

- + Destination folder – into what folder would you like your new file to be placed? My usual selection is “My documents”. I can move the file anywhere from there whenever I want. You should always be aware of where your scanner is putting the new files so that you can find them!

- + Scan resolution – the higher the density (of dots per inch) the higher the resolution and the more time it takes to scan and create the new file. Go with the suggested default resolution settings to start with and change them later if you need to. Usually 200 dpi (dots per inch) is fine, although most scanners are capable of much higher resolutions.

Scanners will have “default” settings for these and other options. Read your manual to understand how to change these default settings – or you can change them before each scan is performed.

Double-click (the right mouse button) on the printer/scanner icon on your desktop and follow the instructions. Place the object you would like to scan flat (and I mean totally flat) on the clean scanning bed – facedown, of course, the scanner is not an x-ray machine! Then click on the “scan” control box on your computer window. The pop-ups should tell you what the settings will be for the scan or give you an opportunity to change them. I always give the file a good name, put it into the “My documents” folder, and use “.jpg” as the file type (scanning the object to create a photo file). When I hit the “scan” button on the screen, the scanner will do an “initial scan” of the object and display it in your window. Now you may be able to change the area scanned (that is, you can select only a portion of the image to scan, sort of like cropping a photo). So if you are scanning the page of a magazine, you can select only what you want on that page to be scanned for your final image. When you are ready, hit “scan” again and wait for the results. After a scan has completed, always view the file you created right away to make sure it worked! Scanning your old family photos to create timeless digital images is always a good use for a scanner.

If you are scanning text (and this is really amazing) you can scan the text and put it directly into a Word file, for example. Do you understand what this means?

It means your scanner can actually “read” text and put the text right into a Word file (or another text file) just as if you typed the text in using your keyboard. You can then edit and change the text in the file all you want. So in this case, your scanner is not “taking a photo” of the text or creating a .jpg file — it is interpreting the text and entering it into a word processor file for you – so you do not have to enter the text from the keyboard! An example of this would be scanning a recipe from a document, letting your scanner create a text file with the words (you would select a text “file type” such as Word (.doc) or .txt or other text file type you know you can open and edit) and then opening the file and changing the recipe.

Don’t forget that Google is a great source of information. Even if you lost your scanner manual, just enter the make and model in Google and get all the information you need. But take some time to try your scanner and see what happens. You are not going to break it by trying it out. I am sure you will be impressed.

Finally, remember that it is illegal to scan (or copy) copyrighted material – you know, like books or money. Well, maybe you could scan a few coins but I don’t think they would work in a vending machine anyway. ♠

Bill Crowe, 2nd Vice President, Sarasota PCUG, FL, October 2013 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, editor (at) spcug.org

Google Translate



Google Translate is a simple mobile translation tool that supports more than 60 languages, and even speaks some of your translations aloud. With its dead-simple

interface and variety of input options, it’s perfect for pumping out translations in a pinch. To use Google Translate, select your input and output languages, then choose a method for entering your text. You can type text using your mobile device’s keyboard or say the words aloud. The translation will appear quickly and in some cases it will speak the words in the translated language. The only drawback for this iPad/iPhone application, at this time, is that you must have an internet connection to use it. ♠

Filter Out Junk Email with Outlook 2010

I have used Outlook for my email since my first version of Office (97). I keep my junk email protection level at high and have Outlook disable links in messages considered to be phishing and warn me about suspicious domain names.

Outlook's junk email filter is designed to keep spam and junk from getting to the inbox. It is on by default and will place the junk in its own folder. One of the default options is to have Outlook automatically delete suspected junk but it only takes a second to open the junk folder and glance to be sure something wanted didn't end up there. I changed the filtering protection from the default level to high.

Junk Email Options

To control Junk Email options while in Mail on Home tab in the Delete group

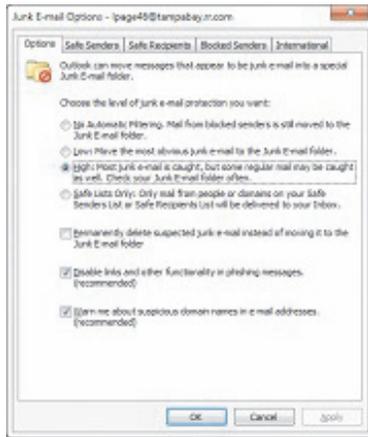
Kathy Frey, Member, Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ, October Issue, Green Bytes, www.ccgval.org, Freyrbgv (at) gmail.com

Protect Your Laptop

Traveling to and from Green Valley or other parts of the world with a laptop in tow? Then here a few tips to keep it from being stolen.

1. Never leave it in your car.
2. Keep it locked with a strong password and lock your case.
3. Do not put it on the floor of a restaurant, meeting room, airport, etc. If you do, then put your leg through the strap so you can feel its presence.
4. Do not keep your password in or around the case.
5. Do not leave it in the care of someone you just met so you can go to the restroom or talk to an airport agent.
6. Turn on alarms if you have them so you can hear if someone is tampering with your laptop or laptop case.
7. Check on the internet for other ways to secure your valuables whether it be a laptop, iPad, iPhone or other device.
8. Treat your electronic gadgets like cash. ♠

click the down arrow by Junk. On the dialog box Options tab select the level of protection desired. Selecting No Automatic Filtering turns the junk email filter off but you can still block senders and that email goes into the Junk folder.



The Safe Senders tab lists email addresses that you trust and have noted so. Email addresses and/or domain names in this list are never considered junk, regardless of message content.

The Safe Recipients tab lets you add specify an email address you use for a mailing or distribution list. All email sent to that address is never considered junk. I use this for my Corel PaintShop Pro Groups.

All email from addresses or domain names on the Blocked Senders list are automatically considered junk.

Add Senders to Safe Senders List

I mentioned that I keep the filter set to high so occasionally Outlook flags message I want as junk. That is not a problem. For an occasional email I simply drag it from the Junk to the Inbox. If the email is from someone I expect to continue to receive email from I add the address to the Safe Senders List. Simply select the email in the Junk folder and in the Junk drop down menu (Home tab Delete group) select Not Junk and respond as required.

Block a Sender

Conversely a few times email slips through from someone I do not know and I don't want to continue receiving messages from them. In this case select the message an in the Junk drop down menu select Block Sender. ♠

Steve Costello, President / Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, October 2013 issue, Boca Bits, <http://sefcug.com/>, president (at) brcs.org

Interesting Internet Finds

In the course of going through the more than 200 news feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during the month of October 2013.

How risky will it be to keep running Windows XP?

<http://askleo.com/how-risky-will-it-be-to-keep-running-windows-xp/>

POP vs. IMAP: What Do They Mean and Which One Should You Use?

<http://www.ilovefreeware.com/31/windows/pop-vs-imap.html>

Talk to your Navigating Device: Android or iPhone

<http://geeksonatour.tv/2013/08/talk-to-your-navigating-device-android-or-iphone/>

Can You Really Be Anonymous Online?

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/can-you-really-be-anonymous-online/>

Why You Don't Need an Outbound Firewall On Your Laptop or Desktop PC

<http://www.howtogeek.com/172349/why-you-dont-need-an-outbound-firewall-on-your-laptop-or-desktop-pc/>

How To Use the New Google+ Photo Editing Tools

<http://www.groovypost.com/howto/google-plus-photo-editing-tools/>

Where to Donate Your Used Tech

<http://www.wonderoftech.com/where-to-donate-your-used-tech/>

How to Keep Your Internet Usage Private [INFOGRAPHIC]

<http://socialmediatoday.com/socialbarrel/1765451/online-privacy-how-keep-your-internet-usage-private-infographic>

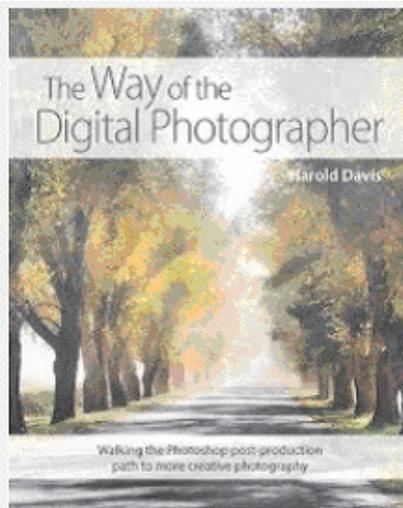
How to View and Work on Google Drive Files When You're Offline

<http://www.guidingtech.com/24186/google-drive-offline/>

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

The Way of the Digital Photographer

Hot off the press comes the latest book from photographer and author Harold Davis dealing with the subject of post-production techniques in the digital photography world.



At first glance, the title may seem to indicate that this volume deals with how to improve your digital photography skills. In a way, it might, because Harold keeps impressing on the reader that getting it as right in-camera is important to producing great images. Rather, 'The Way' he presents to you is how to take your already good images and make them the best they can be...or better.

As you travel along the journey this book takes you on, you discover many gems of wisdom Harold has learned over the years, and passes them on to you. For instance, one passage early in the book struck me as something I never thought of before when doing my photography. It starts on page 27 and continues onto 28. Basically what he is telling you is that you are not photographing an object, rather you are photographing the LIGHT that defines the object. The light falling on your subject can make it appear different, depending on the direction and quality the light has at any given moment. You may notice a subject and shoot an image right at that moment. But if you wait a minute or an hour or longer, the light will change and oftentimes make for an even better photo.

Reading this passage made me stop and really think about how I've been looking at photography all these years. It made me wonder if I had it wrong, and that was

what holds me back from making even better images. It's now part of my thinking when I pick up the camera... and something I need to explore further.

Study your subject...see how the light shapes and defines it. Move around, change positions and see how it changes the scene. Unless you're shooting fast-paced action such as sports, time is your friend to making great images. Be patient.

The book runs 192 pages. It is divided into three main sections, with chapters falling under those sections detailing further the subject at hand. The main sections are:

- Digital Photography is Painting
- Multi-RAW and Hand-HDR Processing
- Enhancement to Glory

Also present is a short Resources section, and a detailed Index to all topics covered in the book.

The volume is filled with both color and black and white photos taken by author Davis to

illustrate the concepts he is presenting to you. Being a volume on Photoshop post-processing techniques, there are also many screen captures of his system illustrating how the concept being discussed is performed, so you may apply them to your own images.

Two of the chapters were of particular interest to me, the one dealing with Multi-RAW processing and that dealing with the LAB color space. MultiRAW processing is another way of making an image with a high contrast range, similar to HDR processing. However, it is accomplished using a single RAW file that is

Mike Lyons, ORCOPUG President, October 2013 issue, Nibbles & Bits, www.orcopug.org, editor (at) orcopug.org

strobist.com - Lighting 101

It's been quite a while since I mentioned one of the best photo education sites on the web — Strobist.com.

Started in March 2006, David Hobby created a lighting tutorial to help beginning photo students learn flash photography with a minimum of equipment. What is really cool is he explains in understandable terms and gives you his thoughts behind the instructions.

Between 2006 and 2013, David learned

processed twice.

The LAB color space is a different mode in Photoshop used to adjust color in your image; some prefer it as it gives more precise results in certain circumstances than using the RGB adjustments.

There are many of what Harold calls 'Meditations' interspersed throughout the book, intended to make you think about and understand the topic being covered. They give you an exercise to make the topic clearer to you. Be sure to read through them as well when working through the volume

The Way of the Digital Photographer is published by Peachpit Press, and is available now. The ISBN number is 978-0321943071.

You may purchase the title direct from the publisher, and use your UG discount code for a discount. It is also available for purchase on Amazon for \$23.03 (list price is \$34.99).

Photography is an art form that can be frustrating, satisfying, creative, and any number of other forms and feelings, depending on how you view it. Experience comes with time, as well as with guidance from those that have gone before. It can be a long and winding path, but with an author such as Harold Davis to show you the way, it can be satisfying and rewarding as well. ♠

a lot about lighting and how to do things better. In addition, lighting equipment and lighting styles have evolved.

David has just completed a rewrite of Lighting 101, called Lighting 102. If you haven't read Lighting 101, I'd start there and move onto Lighting 102 (although you don't have to).

He also has a bunch of behind the scene shots with his thought process included. It's another great resource on the site. ♠

Free Microsoft Fix it Solution Center

WEBSITES:

<http://support.microsoft.com/fixit/>

Any user of a Windows PC has become well aware of the complexities of the features built into modern versions of Windows. The technical support components of the Microsoft empire are all too well aware of the multitude of software issues and problems that can plague any operating system, but are also well aware that many users suffer the same problems with Windows.

Several years ago, in an attempt to satisfy Windows users and to reduce the number of technical support requests received by Microsoft, Microsoft released a "beta" or pre-release version of a downloadable utility, "Fix it Center Client", which could be installed on the computer and used to diagnose and repair most Windows operating system problems. Now, Microsoft has gone to a totally online, interactive method of diagnosing and repairing most Windows related problems, the "Fix it Solution Center" at support.microsoft.com/fixit. Upon going to the "Fix it Solution Center", the user is greeted with "Welcome to the Fix it Solution Center - Find automated solutions for your issues." At the top of the display is a series of seven large interactive icons labeled, Top Solutions, Windows, Internet Explorer, Windows Media Player, Entertainment, Office, and Other. Clicking on any of the large icons will sequentially display a box headed "What are you trying to do?", that lists the most common issues with the chosen selection. While several of the large icons such as Internet Explorer and Windows Media Player are self explanatory, the last three icons, Entertainment, Office, and Other each open a sub-menu offering more detailed selections.

When selected, the first of the large icons, Top Solutions, displays a list of seven of the most common issues or problems that some people have with Windows. These problems include desktop issues, media problems, internet connection troubles, problems installing or upgrading software, problems printing or faxing, performance and crash issues, and security along with privacy issues. When one of these is selected, a third box headed "View or run solutions" displays a series of potential diagnosis and repair items, each

with a "Run Now" button. Clicking on "Run Now" will download a specific repair utility directly from Microsoft, which is then run by the user. While the general repair utilities are somewhat similar in appearance, each is very specific about the resolutions offered. I tried several, and each downloaded a relatively small utility, which when executed, performed a sequential series of diagnostic and repair actions.

Since upgrading my primary desktop PC from Vista to Windows 7-64 several years ago, my Windows Media Player has never functioned properly. I have read many of the other online hints and tips attempting to repair my Windows 7-64 media Player, with no success. Apparently, I am not the only person having problems with that Microsoft product, as Windows Media Player has earned its own large icon in the Solution Center. Clicking on the large icon displayed a short selection of choices in the "What are you trying to do?" box. The problems listed are All Windows Media Player problem areas, Music & sound, Performance, Video, and Other. Not being sure what precisely is wrong with my Windows Media Player, I selected "All Windows Media Player problem areas" and proceeded to choose the first of the 14 selections offered, which appeared to be the most comprehensive fix offered. I clicked on the green "Run Now" button, which immediately downloaded a 340k file from Microsoft. I ran the file which then opened up a series of small

windows, each performing a different diagnostic procedure, sometimes downloading more material from Microsoft. After completing the several diagnostic and repair procedures initiated by that one download, a lengthy report headed "Windows Media Player Troubleshooter" was presented that listed every problem issue found (four major issues), and eight other issues checked for which no problems were found. Of the four problem issues found, three were successfully repaired, but one problem was not fixed. The one problem identified but not successfully repaired by the downloaded utility was my "Windows Media Player Library" which was corrupted. In order to try and finally resolve this one remaining problem with my Windows Media Player, the Fix It utility attempted to delete the media player's library without deleting any of my media files. The Troubleshooter said, "... the library will be rebuilt the next time that you run Windows Media Player."

The large Entertainment icon displays additional choices, Xbox, Zune, and Windows Phone. Choosing one of those sub-selections opens another heading "View or run solutions". Each of the solutions presented commences an interactive series of downloads, diagnostics, and repairs; a similar process is implemented with all of the other solutions presented under each of the other large icons or sub-menus.

Anyone having operating system or func-

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Review by George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ, October 2013 issue, TCS eJournal, www.aztcs.org, [georgehardingsbd \(at\) earthlink.net](mailto:georgehardingsbd@earthlink.net)

808 Headphones



and easy to carry.

But cords often get so tangled that using them is too much trouble.

Our mobile devices usually play sound, especially music. Most cell phones and all MP3 players come with earbuds, which are convenient

The earpieces may not be the right size or may be irritating to one's ear. An elegant solution to these problems is a set of headphones, but the best ones are quite expensive.

808 Headphones are reasonably priced and give you all the advantages over earbuds. .

They are elegant in design, being smooth in appearance. They fit snugly over your ears, so there's no problem with fit or irritation. The earpads are very comfortable. Each earpad is adjustable so as to fit different head sizes and shapes.

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Interpreting SMART Data

SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology – often written as S.M.A.R.T.) is a feature most hard drives use to provide you with indicators of their reliability. The hope is that these will predict pending failures and allow you in time to move data to another device. Unfortunately, experience shows that this is possible only about half the time. While SMART is a useful tool, it does not relax at all the importance of following a rigorous backup procedure.

Even when SMART detects a problem, it probably does not inform your operating system, largely because operating systems seldom ask. Instead, you must take the initiative by using one of the many free programs available. For this discussion, I'll use GsmartControl (<http://gsmartcontrol.berlios.de>), which is available for Linux, Mac OS X, and Windows and can check both internal and external hard disks. This program is one of the tools included in Parted Magic, a diagnostic tool I carry on a memory stick in my key case. (See my article in April 2012 issue of BCUG Bytes, available at <http://www.bcug.com>.) The subject of the tests here is a much used laptop and its occasionally abused hard drive. The first screen you see when GSmartControl starts shows the disks; see the screen-shot below. This shows three drives, a Fujitsu internal hard disk, an external Western Digital (labeled v100w) USB drive, and an internal CD-ROM drive.

Pix#1

Right-click on a drive icon and select View details to see what SMART knows about a drive. There isn't much under the Identity tab of interest, although the model and serial numbers could be useful if you have a warranty issue. However, note the red labels on the Attributes and Error log tabs, which show that SMART has detected problems in this disk.

Pix#2

The next screen-shot shows the *Attributes* tab. Note the line highlighted in pink, indicating a problem, in this case an off-line uncorrectable error. Before we panic though, let's gather a little more information. Note first that no sectors have been reallocated, indicating that the failure wasn't permanent. (Modern disks have a reserve of unused sectors that they can substitute for those that fail, but they don't make the swap unless a sector experiences

repeated errors.) Also note the total number of operating hours, almost 5400 in this case; we'll use this later. This figure applies only to this particular disk, a replacement for the original after it failed. The laptop also has a new motherboard, but replacing that didn't affect the SMART data on its hard disk.

Pix#3

If you move the cursor over an attribute in this table, you will see an explanation of its significance, as shown in the next screen-shot. Here, it says that perhaps we should be concerned, but SMART has not yet issued a warning, probably because the disk has not reallocated any sectors.

Pix#4

Let's look at the *Error log* tab to see what else we can learn. Note in the next screen-shot that although there have been 80 errors logged, the last one was at 1968 hours of operation, and we learned earlier that this disk has operated for nearly 5400 hours. In other terms, the last error occurred just 36 per cent into the total operating time. At this point, we relax; we needn't replace the disk, although we probably will begin pursuing our backup program with renewed enthusiasm.

Pix#5

Here too, moving the cursor over the high-lighted message will produce an explanation, shown in the next screen-shot.

Pix#6

The last tab we'll examine allows us to run tests. As the screen-shot shows, the short one takes just two minutes. A more rigorous one is available, but for this disk it will take almost an hour.

Pix#7

For more information on SMART, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.M.A.R.T>. In particular, this lists the following parameters that merit close scrutiny, but not all manufactures include all of these.

- *Reallocated Sectors Count* – discussed above
- *Spin Retry Count* – failed attempts to get the platter up to speed
- *End-to-End error / IOEDC* – count of parity errors
- *Command Timeout* – number of failed commands
- *Reallocation Event Count* – number of

attempts (both successful and unsuccessful) to transfer data to a reallocated sector

- *Current Pending Sector Count* – number of sectors experiencing errors, but not yet reallocated
- *Offline Uncorrectable* – number of uncorrectable errors (this term varies among manufacturers)
- *Soft Read Error Rate* – off-track error count
- *Drive Life Protection Status* – state of the drive based on its life expectancy

SMART is a useful tool for predicting failures due to aging, but it can't predict sudden catastrophes, such as you driving over your laptop with your car or your disk's electronics developing an open circuit. Keep your backups up-to-date. ♠

[Dick provided 7 interesting (but large) screenshots to accompany this article. I have posted them in the appropriate places in the online version of this article. Navigate to the March, 2014 on the CTPC website and click on the link to Dick's article. CTPC Editor]

808 Headphones

cont'd from Page 6

Probably the best feature is the sound quality. You get very good bass response as well as treble (although my ears are too old to benefit from those high notes!). The rated frequency response is 20 – 20K Hz. The power capability is 20mW, 60mW maximum. The headphones come in a very nice flexible case with a zipper closure.

One of the earpads folds in so as to fit compactly in the case. There are two cables supplied with the headphones, stowed in a net pocket inside the case. The company describes them as "tangle-free," and they appear to be so. One is a plain cable with 3.5 mm plug on each end. The other is a flat cable with a control for play/pause, for those devices that permit that. A 6 .3mm adapter is also supplied.

These are really nice headphones and are reasonably priced.

About 808 Headphones
Vendor: 808 Headphones
www.808headphones.com
Price: About \$90 ♠

Microsoft Officially Releases Internet Explorer 11

Microsoft finally released the stable version of Internet Explorer 11. Actually, there were two public releases of Internet Explorer 11; there was an official release of the Windows 8.1 version on October 17, and a release for Windows 7 on November 7. Microsoft has made it clear that the newly minted Internet Explorer is for Windows 7 and 8 only, and will not run on older versions of Windows including Vista and XP.

In the earliest days of what we now call the "world wide web" or "WWW", there was no Internet Explorer. While there was a slightly earlier Windows browser called Cello, which never gained any significant popularity, and an early Unix version of Mosaic that had a small following, the first successful Windows web browser was Mosaic, which was developed at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in late 1992. The Windows version of Mosaic was officially released to the public in early 1993, and was discontinued in 1997. Several of the creators of Mosaic, along with several of their students and staff, left NCSA and started a new company, Mosaic Communications Corporation. Mosaic Communications eventually morphed into Netscape Communications Corporation, which released an improved version of the Mosaic browser, widely marketed as Netscape. Another company, Spyglass, licensed the Mosaic technology and trademarks from NCSA, and produced their own browser with their own original code. In 1995, after seeing the potential for the explosive growth of the internet, Microsoft entered the fray by licensing the Spyglass version of Mosaic for a paltry \$2 million (later increased by another \$8 million), and started giving away the "new" Microsoft Internet Explorer to compete with the commercially available (paid) Netscape web browser. All versions of Internet Explorer through Internet Explorer 6 displayed the statement, "Based on NCSA Mosaic" whenever a user clicked on the "About" button on the menu bar. Starting with Internet Explorer 7, there was no Mosaic

code used in Microsoft's browser.

As the popularity of the internet grew dramatically, Netscape earned a 90% share

WEBSITES:

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/internet-explorer/download-ie>
<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/ie/dn269977.aspx>
<http://www.7tutorials.com/browser-wars-does-internet-explorer-11-deliver-browsing-performance>
<http://www.pcworld.com/article/2061156/best-parts-of-internet-explorer-11-for-windows-7-are-for-windows-8-users.html>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_%28web_browser%29

of the world browser market. Microsoft wanted Internet Explorer to be the dominant web browser, so Microsoft gave it away, and built in at the system level of all subsequent versions of Windows; as Netscape was a paid commercial program, it quickly lost market share to Internet Explorer, eventually dropping to only a 1% market share in 2006 (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netscape). In 1999, Netscape was purchased by AOL, but not before releasing the source code for the browser, and creating the Mozilla Organization. This code was revised and rewritten, and eventually became the very popular Firefox browser. AOL continued to develop its final version of Netscape Navigator 9 until 2007, effectively discontinuing it in 2008. Netscape only survives today as an AOL owned, discount internet service provider (ISP).

Today, while all versions of Internet Explorer maintains the majority of the browser market, with an estimated 55% market share (Source: thenextweb.com/insider/2013/03/01/internet-explorer-continues-growth-past-55-market-share-thanks-to-ie9-and-ie10-as-chrome-hits-17-month-low/), Mozilla Firefox is a distant second with 20%, Google's Chrome browser third at 16%, Apple's Safari at 5%, Opera at 2%, with the small remaining market share belonging to several less known browsers. Among Internet Explorer (IE) users, the older IE 8 and IE 9 combined make up about 45% of the browsers in use, with the newer IE10, and the older IE 7 each having about a 2% market share; the older and somewhat insecure Internet Explorer 6 that Microsoft has been warning users to upgrade from, has more than a 6% share of the entire browser market.

Now that Internet Explorer 11 has been officially released, it appears that Microsoft once again not only intends to maintain its market share, but also apparently wants to take market share from its major competitors. According to Microsoft (technet.microsoft.com/en-us/ie/dn269977.aspx), IE11 offers several changes and improvements not only over earlier versions of Internet Explorer, but also over its major competitors. Among these improvements are: faster and more

efficient web browsing, even over slow connections; fast and fluid navigation with smart web page caching, prefetch and prerender, and faster search results; fast 2D and 3D displays with support for the newly emerging Web Graphics Library (WebGL) standards, with improved gaming and interactive performance along with hardware accelerated DirectX 9 (and later). According to Microsoft, "(users) ... will see a 9 percent performance improvement versus IE10, which is about 30 percent faster than competing browsers." This performance improvement has been corroborated on several other websites which tested the performance of IE11 against its leading competitors. In one such comprehensive test which disputed the IE11 supremacy, "Browser Wars: What Performance Does Internet Explorer 11 Deliver?", dated October 24, 2013, (www.7tutorials.com/browser-wars-does-internet-explorer-11-deliver-browsing-performance), that even though IE11 has substantially improved in terms of performance, Google's Chrome browser was overall faster than IE11.

The display on IE 11 has been improved to look better on any size screen, and includes side-by-side browsing, multi-monitor support, and enhanced pixel scaling for large screens. Many users of IE11 will immediately notice the enhanced compatibility with evolving web standards, other browsers, and popular websites; even older websites utilizing older obsolescent web standards display correctly on IE11. Now that touch screen devices are becoming very common, IE11 supports touch based devices, touch drag and drop, and other touch enhancements.

Continued on Page 10

tem.

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

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

Consider Linux, especially for a secondary PC. I've converted two XP machines to Xubuntu (<http://xubuntu.org/>), which is more responsive than XP on old hardware. It has the advantage that you can try it out with a "live-CD," which is bootable from a CD drive. It will be slow in this mode, but since it doesn't make any changes to the hard disk, you are just a reboot away from XP. While running Xubuntu, all the files on your hard disk are available, so you can check whether Linux applications can read them. (Instructions on how to create a live CD or DVD in Windows are available at <http://www.ubuntu.com/download/help/try-ubuntu-before-you-install>.)

If you have room on your disk or can add a second one, consider a dual-boot system in which you can run either system. (All your Windows files will be accessible in Linux, and Windows applications are available that can read Linux disk partitions.) However, Linux is not Windows, which means there are many differences between the two systems. Try to find a sympathetic, experienced Linux user to help you get started, especially if you are less than comfortable in adventure mode.

The third alternative, buying new hardware and software is the easy and safe, but expensive. You are probably best off to purchase new components. XP-era processors, RAM, displays, and hard disks are woefully inadequate for any current OS. Keyboards and mice now cost just a few dollars, and your old ones may use obsolete connectors. You can keep your printer and scanner if drivers are available for the new OS; your old speakers will be fine.

- Your old PC with your data, applications, and peripherals remains available for use.

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

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

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

Microsoft Fix it – *continued from Page 6*

tion problems with these Microsoft products may likely find solutions under these headings.

I have seen several users of Microsoft Office that have appeared to have had software related problems with one or more of the several Office products. The large Office icon offers fixes for Office itself, as well as specific repairs for Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word, InfoPath, Live Meeting, and Project. As it does with the other large icons, selecting a Microsoft Office product displays product specific solutions for each of the Office items. Since most of the problems that people are having with Office are functional, rather than software related, most of the Office solutions have a "Learn More" link rather than the "Run Now" button. Upon clicking on "Learn More", a new Microsoft Support window opens which describes the problem, and instructions on how to fix or otherwise resolve the issue.

The last large icon with the ubiquitous title "Other" offers diagnosis and tips on ten other Microsoft products, including

Windows Server, Exchange, SharePoint, SQL Server, Streets & Trips, and a few other Microsoft products. While some of the solutions presented have the now familiar green "Run Now" button which will download and execute diagnostic and repair utilities, several others have the "Learn More" link which, as above, opens a specific Microsoft Support Window.

For anyone having problems or issues that may be related to the Windows operating system, Microsoft produced game and entertainment systems, Microsoft Office, and other Microsoft products, this online "Fix it Solution Center" would be an ideal first choice to try. It is apparent that the most common Microsoft related problems may be quickly diagnosed and resolved at this free website. ♠

[Ira provides a number of interesting screen shots to go along with each of his articles. Due to space constraints, I omit them from the printed version of the newsletter but post all of them on the CTPC website. They are at the end of the HTML version of each article - see the March online newsletter. CTPC Editor]

IE11 allows up to 100 open tabs per window. Users of Windows 8 can pin websites to Live Tiles, which creates a seamless interface between apps (applications) and web apps. Now that VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) applications and devices are being widely used to make telephone calls over the internet, IE11 offers “Click to call” which makes phone numbers into clickable links for apps such as Skype; clicking on a browser link connects the voice call.

As IE11 is being released for multiple devices, IE11 can automatically sync with other devices, such that when IE11 is opened on other synched computers or devices, the user will see the same tabs, browsing history, typed URLs (web addresses), favorites and bookmarks, user configured settings, and passwords.

I downloaded and installed IE11 for my primary Windows 7-64 directly from Microsoft (windows.microsoft.com/en-US/internet-explorer/download-ie). On the download page the user is presented with a checkbox that is checked by default which says, “I would also like Bing and MSN defaults”. Since I prefer to set my own defaults for search engines and other items, I chose to uncheck the box. The initial IE11 installer downloaded quickly,

but had a minor issue on my computer, which will likely happen on many other computers; the IE11 installer did not like many of the utilities and applications currently running on my computer, and offered to stop them prior to continuing the installation, or I could manually exit them, and then continue installing IE11. The remainder of the install went smoothly, with the IE11 installer performing two system reboots, one of which displayed a boot progress screen similar to a monthly Windows update. After the second automatic reboot, all of my programs that the installer stopped prior to the install were back and functioning properly.

For the past few days, I have been using IE11 exclusively in order to better get a handle on it and its performance. I can definitely say anecdotally that it does seem to be faster than the IE10 that I had used previously, and it definitely has improved the displays of some web pages that I visit. All of my third-party add-ons, mostly security enhancements, were accepted without issue by IE11 and load and function well. My only issue with IE11 that I will find an add-on to resolve, is the appearance of the tabs at the top of the page which show the loaded websites. On IE11, unlike my primary browser, Firefox, or my secondary browser, Chrome, the tab for the currently viewed webpage is not adequately colored or highlighted enough to make it quickly identifiable among the other tabs. There is likely a quick fix for this, but I have not yet searched for it. Since many of the websites that I regularly access are Java based, I was interested in IE11’s performance on those sites; utilizing IE11’s integral Chakra JavaScript engine, those Java based pages loaded very quickly and look fine. One feature that I unexpectedly found, which I really appreciated, was that if a webpage displayed under a tab crashes, only that tab is effected; the other tabs remain functional. I also

found that there is an option in IE11 to enable “Start” with the tabs that were open when the prior session was closed, meaning that I can start where I left off in a previous browsing session. Another cute feature in IE11 is “Tab Grouping” where tabs are grouped by color. Tab grouping takes place when a link is opened from another tab; both tabs, and subsequent links from those tabs, will be the same tab color. Ungrouped tabs will always be light blue.

I found Internet Explorer 11 to be fast, reliable, feature rich, and highly compatible. Users of Windows 7 and 8 should strongly consider upgrading to Internet Explorer 11. Users of older versions of Windows, such as XP and Vista, can continue to use earlier versions of Internet Explorer, but should be aware that older versions still widely used, particularly Internet Explorer 6, are very vulnerable to attacks by hackers. If users of Vista and XP would like to continue to use older versions on Internet Explorer, rather than the more capable and secure updated competitors such as Firefox or Opera, they should go to microsoft.com/ie to download and install the latest version of Internet Explorer supported by their operating system. Users of Windows 7 and 8 can get Internet Explorer 11 from the same link at microsoft.com/ie which will automatically direct the user to the proper page. While I did not use Internet Explorer 10 very much in the past, preferring my newer versions of Firefox and Chrome, Internet Explorer 11 has proven itself to be worthy of consideration, and a very worthy competitor. ♣

[Ira provides a number of interesting screen shots to go along with each of his articles. Due to space constraints, I omit them from the printed version of the newsletter but post all of them on the CTPC website. They are at the end of the HTML version of each article – see the March online newsletter. CTPC Editor]

Next CTPC Meeting

cont’d from Page 1

want it. Come see a live demonstration of SPO at the next CTPC meeting, Tuesday, March 25, 2014. It’s a G-rated program but prepare to be amazed!

Meetings are held at the Silver Star diner (directions are below). We also invite you to remain after the meeting for some socializing and to have pizza, salad and the beverage of your choice. ♣



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MEETING LOCATION

Silver Star Diner
210 Connecticut Ave. (US-1/ Post Road)

From I-95 Stamford: Take Exit 13 for US-1/Post Road and turn right at US-1 N/ Connecticut Avenue. The diner will be on your left almost at Exit 14.

From I-95 New Haven: Take Exit 14 for US-1/Connecticut Ave and turn right at US-1 N/Connecticut Ave. The Diner will be just ahead on your right.

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