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Cloud Computing

By Dick Maybach n2nd (at) charter.net

Although you can hardly pick up a computer publication without being assaulted by references to *cloud computing*, the term has been abducted by marketing organizations to the extent that it means almost nothing. Today, “cloud” is to computing as “natural” is to food. Although the term means little, the concept is very valuable, and is something that most computer owners use every day. I define cloud computing as using storage or processing resources on the Internet. Most of us already use cloud computing far more than we realize; for example, every e-mail we receive sits on our ISP’s disk until we download it to our PCs, and when we use Google Maps, much the processing and all of the storage occurs on Google’s hardware. In the extreme, cloud computing could evolve to the point where our computer would consist of only a keyboard, mouse, display, and perhaps a printer, with just enough processing power and software to support a Web browser. Google foresaw this as the future of home computing and began developing their Chrome operating system to support it.

A simple example of cloud computing is a backup service, which continually backs up all your data whenever you are connected to the Internet. You don’t have to



think about it, and because your backups are stored at a different location, they are safe even in case of a local catastrophe. A similar use is synchronizing data among several computers, where the data might be files, contacts, and your favorite Web sites and (with care) their passwords. Many people also use the cloud to share information with others, for example by using Facebook for personal information, Flickr for photos, or Google Docs for documents. Cloud storage is both convenient and inexpensive; indeed, many vendors offer up to two gigabytes free.

All the above examples are data storage ones, but there are also cloud processing services, such as Google Docs. Google Docs supports the common office tasks such as word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations, which means you can perform these

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Discovering Windows 7 – Part 8

by Neil Stahfest – Tacoma Area PC User Group

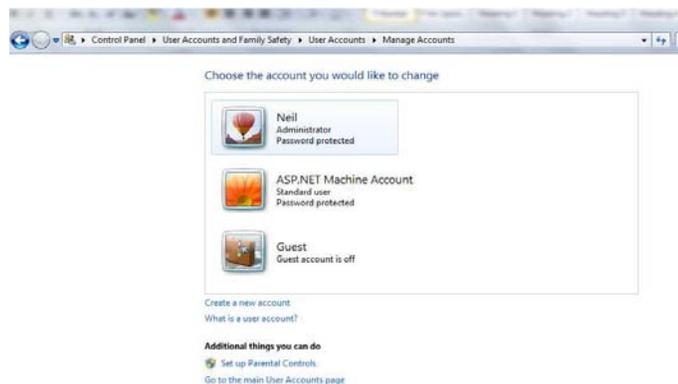
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A “Guest Account” is a built-in Windows user account that allows limited use of your computer. It's handy to have if visitors (i.e. grandchildren) want to use your computer. It allows them to easily run the computer but it prevents them from installing new programs, changing computer settings and modifying passwords. By default the Guest Account is turned off but, as an Administrator, you have the power to turn it on.

There are several ways you can control the Guest Account, here's one. Left-click on the Start button and then type “guest account” in the search box. In the “Search Results” box you should see “Turn guest account on or off”. Click on this and the manage accounts window will open. It will look similar to the figure below.

You can do a number of things from this window including creating new accounts and setting parental controls but we'll just deal with the Guest account for now. In our example we see that the Guest account is turned off. If you click on the “Guest” icon a new window will open where you can turn the account on. Now when you turn the computer on your Guest account will be available for login.

Now let's consider what you can do if someone does use your computer changes your settings that in some way prevents your computer from booting properly or some important function (like email) from working. Of course the best insurance is a full backup of your system. I'm talking about an image backup like the backup program that comes with Windows 7 or something like



Acronis True Image that saves everything (including Windows) to a separate hard disk or DVDs. But what if you didn't do this or you don't have recent backup?

Sometimes a malfunctioning computer can be fixed by using the Windows System Restore function. System Restore works by creating restore points that will return your system files and settings to an earlier point in time without affecting your personal files. System Restore will not recover deleted files and programs. Windows automatically creates new restore points every week, when you download and install Windows updates and (usually) just before the installation of new programs and device drivers. You can also manually create new restore points.

Using System Restore is pretty easy. Start by saving all open files and close all programs. Left-click on the Start button and then type “system restore” in the search box. Listed in the “Search Results” box you should see “System Restore”. Click on it. If you are prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation to continue. That will bring you to the System Restore window. In the example shown you'll notice it shows the date and time when restore points were made, descriptions and the type of update. If you click on one of the restore points to highlight it, you can then click on the button that says “scan for affected programs”. This will show you things like what program updates will be deleted if you use the restore point plus what program version you be reverting to.

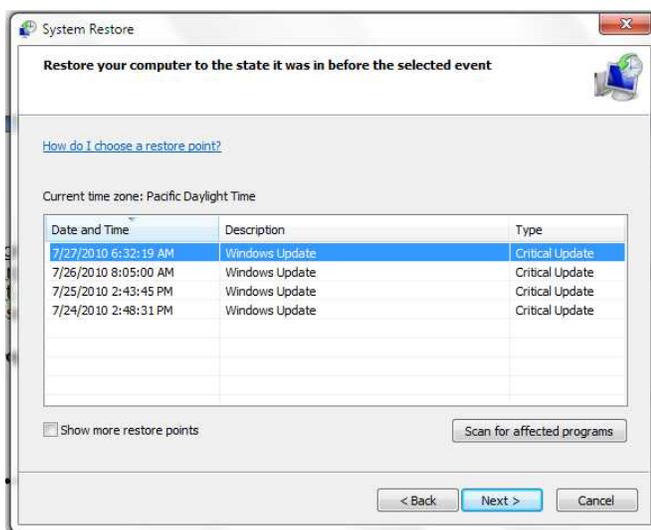
Clicking on the “Next” button will bring you to a confirmation screen. It shows you what restore point you have selected and you can then cancel the operation, go back and revise your selection or click on “Finish” to reset your settings and then restart your computer.

A new restore point is created every time you use System Restore. This will allow you to undo the changes if they don't fix your problem. Every time

you use System Restore, a restore point is created before proceeding so you can undo the changes if they don't fix your problem. You cannot undo System Restore if your computer was in Safe Mode or using System Recovery Options. In that such a case, however, you still have the option of using System Restore and picking a different restore point.

The data stored for each restore point takes space on your hard drive and this space is limited. When the space to save restore points is full, one or more old restore points are deleted to create space for each new restore point. Therefore you may only find restore points for the last 30 days (or less). If you fail to notice a problem in time, it may be too late to fix it with a restore point. That's why I recommend making a full image backup of your computer saved on a separate hard drive.

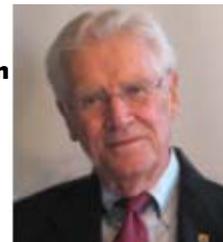
For more information about System Restore, left-click on the Start button, select "Help and Support:" and then type system restore in the "Search Help" window.



The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, from Editor to Google

Review by Dick Ramette, President, Computer Club of Green Valley, Arizona
 September 2010 issue of the Green Bytes
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I just finished a 2008 book by Nicholas Carr, The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, from Edison to Google (Amazon, \$11.53). It's a fascinating story of how imaginative technology evolves to permeate our lives.

Early computers were behemoths and unavailable to the public. IBM's Thomas J. Watson opined, "I think there is a world market for about five computers." Some fifty years ago I toured a Harvard computer, actually strolling inside the machine between walls of hot vacuum tubes, with big floor fans doing their cooling best, while the computer patiently calculated logarithm tables and large tape drives stored the results. Transistor technology transformed everything, making computers cheaper, lighter, smaller and faster. We CCGV members remember our gaping astonishment at the first hand-held calculators, which could +, -, x and /.

When personal computers became popular, around 1980, all their functions were contained within, rather like sewing machines. The "user" (a new term then), could buy a word-processing program such as Wordstar, and a typewriter-like printer with a ribbon, and a monochrome screen, all managed by the pre-Windows disk operating system, DOS. Email was unthought-of, and geeky friends would visit each other to show off their programming creations made with early BASIC. Personal computing steadily became more interesting and complex, as software applications multiplied and

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Discovering Windows 7 – Part 9

by Neil Stahfest – Tacoma Area PC User Group

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Computers are designed to store and manipulate lots of information in a way that we can easily find and use it. To do this efficiently requires a little effort on the part of the user. When we transfer pictures from our digital cameras they often bare names like HPIM0468.JPG . This may mean something to your camera but what does it mean to you? In a week or a month from now will you remember HPIM0468.JPG was that great sunset picture you took in Hawaii? Probably not. How will you find that picture when you need it? That's why it's important for you to go through your digital pictures and give them meaningful names when you save them to your computer. The same is true of your spreadsheets and other files that you save. Take the time to give each file a meaning full name so that you can find it in the future.

Now that you've given names to each of your pictures, let's talk about how we can use Windows 7 to find them. People new to Windows 7 continue to ask me questions about how to search for files Windows 7. To be honest, when Windows 7 changed the way the Search function works from previous versions of Windows it took me by surprise too. It also took me a while to figure it out. The following is a brief tutorial that may help you.

There is more than one way to search for a file but this is probably the easiest. Start by going to is the "Windows Start" button and left-click on it. In the Search Box that appears directly above the Start Button (see Figure 1), enter the file name you are searching for (ttools in our example). As you type in the file name, Windows 7 searches file indexes (explained below), files and file contents and Windows 7 will list various file names that appear to match your search. In, our example we found three files. You're probably wondering why one of the files listed is named CollectAirports.exe . That's because the search found a reference to ttools within the file CollectAirports.exe. But let's assume that none of these was the file we're looking for.

The next step is to click on the magnifying glass next to "See more results" (see *figure 1* circled in red). This will bring up the second search window (see *figure 2*). This window offers a number of search options in the area which I've marked with a green box.

Unless you know that the file you are looking for is located in a Library or your Homegroup or one of the other options within the green box, you'll want to click on "Computer" (circled in red). This will cause

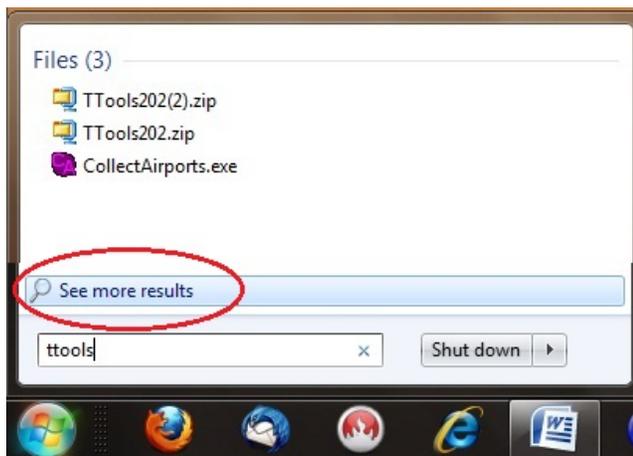


Figure 1

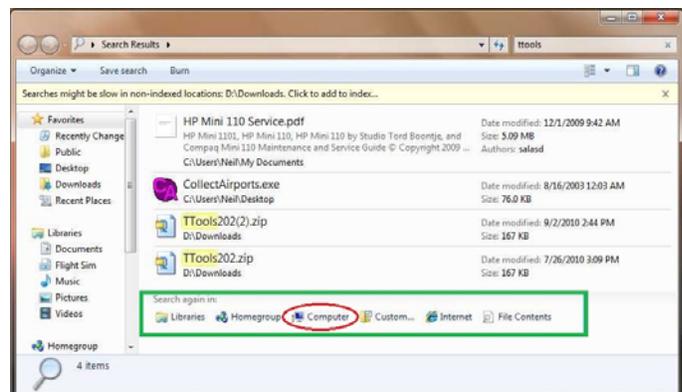


Figure 2

Windows 7 to search your entire computer for “tttools”. This will probably take a few minutes as it searches the thousands (millions?) of files on your computer. A green line will appear at the top of the window to show the progress of the search but it’s not too accurate. Don’t be surprised if it extends past the point which you expect would indicate 100%. This search may be slow but it should find the file you are looking for. Notice that near the top of the window it offers you an option to save a search. If the file you’ve found is not in the Windows 7 index, clicking on this will add it and speed future searches.

That’s twice(?) that I’ve mentioned file indexes in connection with searching for files. Windows maintains a file index of key words in or associated with files stored on your computer. This includes program names, file names and sometimes including the contents of documents, email, audio and video recordings and various data files. When you enter a name in the Windows 7 Search Box, the file index is the initial method used to locate your file(s). By using the Index instead of searching for file names it is very fast but it’s also limited in what it searches for. It does not check System file areas (which would create a huge index and slow the search process). You can change how and which files are indexed as well as completely rebuild the index but that’s a lengthy topic and we’ll leave it for another day.

Instead I’ll tell you how you can change file types and locations to customize your Windows 7 search settings. You can do this through “Folder Options”. Click on “Start” and in the “Search Box” type “Folder Options”. When the “Folder Options” box appears, click on the “Search” tab (see *figure 3*).

By default “What to search” should have “In indexed locations, search file names and contents, in non-indexed locations, select file names only” as shown below. This is the most commonly used search option and is reasonably fast. The other option does not use the index and is slower.

Under “How to search”, both “Include subfolders...” and “Find partial matches” should be checked. These options will let you find almost any files and folders on your computer reasonably fast. “Natural language search” is a method of using verbs, phrases and claus-

es to search for files. You won’t find any explanation about how to use natural language searches in the Windows Help area or here. Unless you have some experience with it, leave this item unchecked. The last item, “Don’t use the index when searching...” is best left unchecked also.

Under “When searching non-indexed locations” make sure that you select “Include system directories”.

If you download and save lot of Zipped files you may want to check “Include compressed files” so you can search your computer for one at some future date. Otherwise, leave it unchecked.

Experiment with these folder options to find the combination that works best for the way you use your computer. Remember you can always restore the default settings by clicking on the “Restore Defaults” button.



Figure 3

Let's Have Fun With Art

Elizabeth B. Wright, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City

September 2010 issue, CCOKC eMonitor www.ccokc.org [wright599new\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:wright599new(at)sbcglobal.net)

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Do you want to create a masterpiece? If you have as little artistic talent as I have, then you probably would say "perish the thought."

Many of you will recognize one of the world's most iconic ruins, Stonehenge in England.



But you might not recognize this picture.

Remember, I am not an artist, so even by tracing I didn't end up with a great picture, but it could probably be improved with little effort. Believe it or not, this is traced from a small photograph taken in 1946, and while the subject is myself, it came out making me look older than my 15 years at the time. But so what? Now it is just a "graphic" rather than a photo. It would take far greater skill than mine to make it a "portrait," but I'm sure some of you can do it.



Keep in mind that these pictures are a very quick, rough attempt to demonstrate the process of tracing by your own hand using the tools you may already have in your computer. Not to be confused with the tracing utilities built into high end graphics software, used primarily for commercial purposes, these steps are just for fun.

What you will need in the way of software is any photo editing program which has the ability to create layers. Photoshop Elements is one such program. If you remember using tracing paper as a child, or maybe for a project of some sort even later, you will find that layers act much the same as translucent tracing paper. Layers are more or less invisible. While most people use layers to make enhancements to their photographs, they can also be used to view and "paint" over portions of the image beneath the layer while not actually disturbing the underlying picture. Using the paintbrush tool or possibly the pen tool, you can create your own masterpiece in short order.

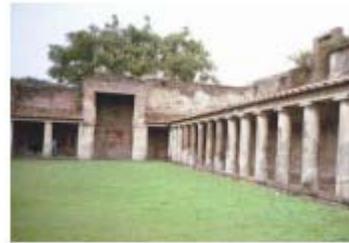


Figure 1

The first step is to open some photo that you want to play with, noting that pictures with larger images are best for the first attempt at tracing. This picture is probably a bit complicated, but it is useful for showing the steps.

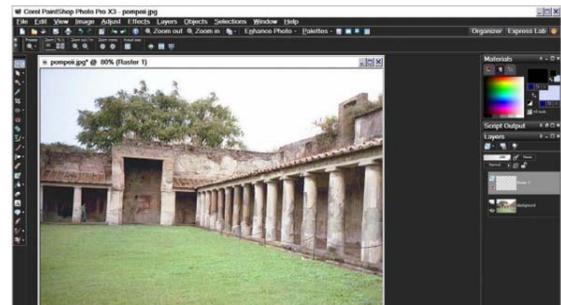


Figure 2

If you are new to using layers, then consult the program’s help file to find out how to open a new “raster” layer and also how to keep it active.

Make sure the new layer is the active one. Your screen will then reflect what appears to be the primary picture (photo), but what you are actually seeing is the invisible layer above it, the one on which we will trace parts of the image below. Picture number two shows my program, Paint Shop Pro Photo X3. On the right side of the picture there is a greyed area midway down showing the new raster layer as the active layer. Other programs might show layers in a different way, but basically they will all be the same.

Using either the paintbrush tool or the pen tool in your program, use it to draw around the portion of the picture you want to trace. I find the paintbrush tool in my program the easiest to use. The picture below (number three) shows the same layer, but with the black lines I have used to trace the contours of the building. The building is one of the surviving archeological treasures in Pompeii.

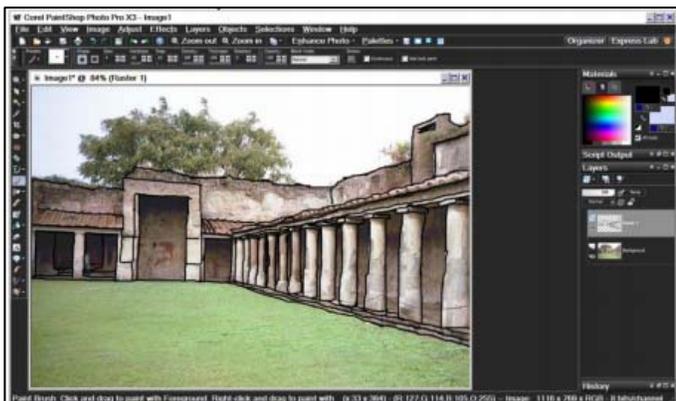


Figure 3

A dependable graphics program will have the ability to “turn off” the underlying image, leaving other layers visible. In this case we only have one extra layer, so by turning off the background layer we are left with just the traced image to view. See image number four. You need to again make sure your drawing layer is active, otherwise whatever you draw or save will be on either the background layer or, if you have created any other layers, possibly one of them. The background will appear to be checkered or possibly something else, depending on what graphics program you are using.

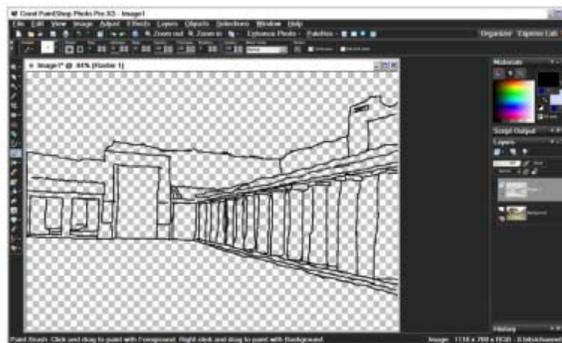


Figure 4

It is now time to copy just the layer with your drawing (remember, you have turned off the background and any other layers that might have been added.) After copying the layer, paste it into your program as a new image. The checkered background in image number four will be filled with a solid color, probably white. You can then save this resulting image as your new creation. (figure five)

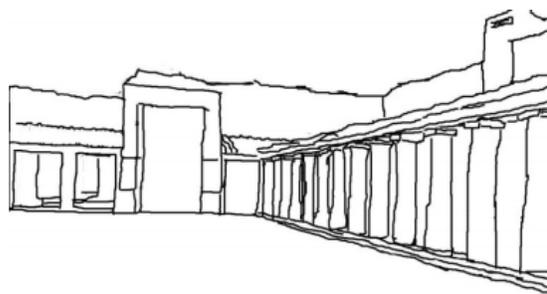


Figure 5

Image number five is the result of my hasty effort to create an image for this article. One of these days I will probably try to improve it enough to have something worthwhile to show my family. Until then, I hope you will give this a try. It really is fun.



Finding Our Roots

By Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, Ohio

The Memory Map, October 2009 <http://camug.apcug.org> [constance \(at\) mystepco.com](mailto:constance@mystepco.com)

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Finding our roots has become important to many families as they begin realizing that much of the past will be lost as those who have been a part of our lives forever begin to slip away. Capturing the information the older generation knows about our families, recording the stories of their joys and struggles, and discovering the strength that sustained them is an important part of preserving our family history. Not everyone has the patience to research their family roots, but those who do may find surprises along the way: family members they have not met in the past, ancestors who actively created history, others whose lives were an embarrassment to their families and society. When you research genealogy, you have to be prepared for it all!

If you are ready to find out more about your roots, the Internet offers an abundance of materials to help you locate information that will shed light on world events that shaped the lives of your ancestors. Other sites will help you locate missing pieces of the genealogical puzzle. Here are a few sites you will want to visit. First is FamilySearch.org, the official genealogy records site hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City.

Not only do they provide free genealogical software, but also a huge database of records including census, military, marriage, and death records. If you are looking specifically for death certificates, they can be found at <http://familysearchlabs.org>. The records are for dates after 1908 & prior to 1953.

Newer death certificates can be found at the County Health Department of the county where the individual died or your state's health department. The records at Family Search are free. Newer records typically cost \$17.95. Family search also provides at no charge the ability to permanently archive your family tree, making it available for download or on CD.

Another of my favorite sites is found at <http://www.usgenweb.or>. The UsGenWeb project is developing as volunteers add information to the site. The amount and type of information for each state varies. If

you click on Ohio, you will find each county listed. Under them is the information that has been preserved for that county. More is added

regularly. I checked Clinton County where my paternal grandparents lived and was delighted to find the old Clinton County history book preserved and readable there.

Yes, I read about my great great grandfather Jonathan McKay! As I searched Vigo County in Indiana, I was surprised to find the newspaper obituaries for my grandmother Harvey who died in 1982 as well as my aunt whom we buried on Christmas Eve in 2001.

I found that watching Robert Ragan's 5 minute Genealogy Courses was a great help. He gives a number of tips on how to find information about your family using specialized Google searches.

Here are links to some of his materials:

www.5minutegenealogy.com

<http://www.youtube.com/user/5minutegenealogy>

<http://amberskyline.com/treasuremaps>

If understanding the political, economic, and scientific events that were shaping the times in which your ancestors lived, you will want to visit Google's Time Line at <http://newstimeline.googlelabs.com> You may also want to check through the lists of Google Books to see what books were read and shaping the lives of that generation.

Here are a few a few more helpful tips. Robert Size-love has spent a life-time photographing cemeteries with a special focus on stones that are difficult to read and cemeteries that are not visited frequently. If you have pictures of any tombstones, he appreciates your sending them to him so they can be uploaded to the USGenWeb project and other sites to preserve these memorials.

To look at cemetery pictures he has collected, do a Google Search for Robert Sizelove along with the county and state name, putting both into the search box, e.g. robert sizelove stark county ohio.

Not all research can be done free.

One of my distant cousins works at a family history center for the Latter Day Saints. She has created 60 family genealogies and has researched and traced the family tree to 168 AD. The only site for which she pays a fee is Ancestry.com. Most other paid sites eventually send you there, so you might as well pay that fee. When you upload your GedCom file, Ancestry.com looks for possible connections to other uploaded ancestral files and places a leaf by the name on your family tree that may be connected to a name on another family tree. This feature allows you to expand your tree much more quickly than doing all the research yourself. Caution. Make sure the information you connect to your tree is as accurate as your own!

Another of my favorite sites is found at tribalpages.com. Here you can upload your tree, add pictures, create slide shows, add family memories and connect with others. This is a wonderful place to host the wealth of family memories. It is free until you have more than 50 pictures. At the highest hosting charge, you get 5,000 pictures and pay less than \$60 per year. The site is amazingly inexpensive, simple to use, and very well designed!

Do you need ship lists? Here are a few sites to check. Ellis Island Free records of ship lists:

www.ellisland.org/default.asp?SID=2188&gclid=ClezfioipwCFQEhDQodTQ58Y

www.Olivetree.com

and Cindi's List: <http://www.cyndislist.com>



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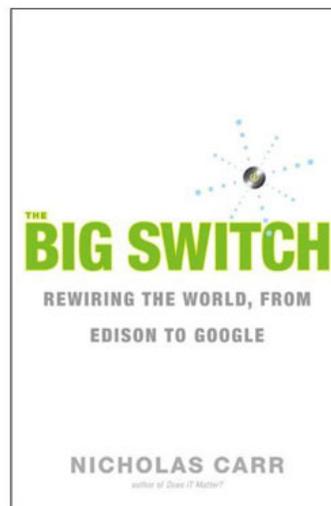
hardware got faster and cheaper. Users bought spreadsheets, databases, games and ever-evolving word processors, but the loneliness persisted. One asked a friend, "What computer do you have?"

Now, in the 21st century, we don't often ask that question, because we all have the same computer, the World Wide Computer, which provides us with vast information resources. We live in a new era of information technology that greatly extends our intellectual capabilities. It's as life-changing as when, a century ago, the genius of Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla ushered in the utility of electric power, whereby distribution into homes and factories greatly extended our physical capabilities.

The Internet is now a ubiquitous utility, delivered over fiber-optic cables and, importantly, shared simultaneously by countless users. This was unthinkable just 20 years ago, before Tim Berners-Lee invented HTML code for the World Wide Web. Through Skype, email, and Facebook our social communications are greatly enhanced. A plethora of blogs and reader comments on op-ed pieces reveals the public psyche as never before. We're further wired in with the likes of iPhones/Pods/Pads.

Carr's Part Two is titled "Living in the Cloud," a reference to the seemingly infinite and ever shifting melange of resources offered by Google, Amazon, etc., beckoning to us from cyberspace.

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Microsoft Offers Free Online Version of Office

By Ira Wilsker

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Website: <http://www.live.com>
(Click on "Office")

In the over 10 years I have been writing this weekly column I have used the Microsoft Word installed on my desktop computer for all but a handful of the columns. There were a few columns I wrote while using Open Office as a topic of the column; one column was typed using Google Docs and saved as a Word file to send to my editor. Today I am using Microsoft's recently released Word Web App, which is one of the several Office utilities now available for free at www.live.com. Since these applications are online, they can be accessed from anywhere the user has internet access, and are utilized in a browser window.

From the live.com webpage, the office applications can be utilized by clicking on the "Office" link at the top of the page. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote are currently available. Registration is required in order to use the Microsoft Live utilities, but registration is fast and free. For those users who may need access to the primary components of Microsoft Office, but do not have it installed on their computers, this service from Live is a viable alternative.

I started by using Live's Word Web App to type this column. The "ribbon" or menu at the top of the browser window is reminiscent of the one in Word 2007, but does not have quite as many choices as the full version of Word 2007 on my computer. While all of the major functions are available, many of the enhancements and "bells and whistles" are not available on the web version.

The top line menu choices are "File", "Home", "Insert", and "View". Above the ribbon are small icons to save and undo. Clicking on the "File" tab gives the user choices to open, save, share, close, properties, feedback, and privacy. As I am typing this, I am periodically saving the file in the default .docx (Word 2007) format to Microsoft's SkyDrive, which is Microsoft's server sometimes referred to as "in the cloud". Once saved to the SkyDrive, I can access this file from anywhere.

The default tab on the Word Web App is "Home" which displays the simplified Word 2007 ribbon (menu) with the ubiquitous copy, paste, fonts, formatting, spell check, and another feature which is not in the computer based version of Word, "Open in Word". This "Open in Word" will connect to the Word installed on the computer, and open the document in the computer based Word, but only if a compatible browser is being used.

I am using Firefox as my browser as I type this, and clicking on the "Open in Word" icon on the ribbon displays a message that my browser is not compatible. Another anomaly (browser incompatibility) occurred when I tried to copy some text by painting it, right clicking and going to "copy". A window opened that said, "Your browser does not allow access to the clipboard. Use the keyboard shortcuts for cut, copy, and paste instead." Using the keyboard commands CTRL-C allowed me to copy the text I wanted, and CTRL-V allowed me to paste it where I wanted it.

This inability to work nicely with some browsers other than Microsoft's lowers my opinions of this product; while it is not a fatal defect, I do not like the idea of being compelled to use Internet Explorer in order to utilize all of the features of the Word Web App. The "Insert" tab on the ribbon allows the user to insert a table, picture, clip art or links. The "View" tab offers the user the choice of an "Editing View" and a "Reading View".

One important item missing from the menu is a "Print" button; I could not find any easy way to print a document, other than using the browser print function.

While Word may be one of the most widely used applications, Excel and PowerPoint are also very widely used. The online version of Excel can be accessed by clicking on the Excel icon on the Live - Office web page. The Excel Web App looks much like a simplified version of the full computer based version of Excel, and uses the same interface and commands. By default, files are saved to the SkyDrive in the Excel 2007 .xlsx format.

The first thing I noticed on the Excel Web App is that the formula bar (Fx) does not pull down to display the list of available formulae. I also found that the auto-fill functions where dates and cells could be auto-filled by clicking on the corner of a cell and dragging does not work, at least when used in Firefox. The ribbon bar on the Excel Web App looks much like a simplified Excel 2007 menu bar, but lacks some of the choices available on the computer installed version. As with the other Microsoft Web Apps, the spreadsheet can be shared as desired. Also as with the Word App, the icon "Open in Excel" will generate an error.

According to the online help, none of the Web Apps will open the computer's Office if using Firefox and Office 2003 or Office 2007; Microsoft's recommended fix is to install Office 2010. The online help also says that the 64-bit version of Internet Explorer is not supported, and that browsers other than Internet Explorer and Firefox are not supported at all. That means that it may be difficult or impossible for the many users of Chrome, Safari, Opera, and other browsers to utilize these otherwise useful Web Apps.

I do a lot of PowerPoint presentations, and I was especially interested to try the PowerPoint Web App. As with the other apps, it saves in the Office 2007 formats, in this case .pptx. The screen looks familiar, but much simplified from the full version of PowerPoint. One item obviously missing from the ribbon (menu) is the "save" button; that is because the PowerPoint Web App automatically saves the presentation.

Another feature that is missing is the ability to right click on an image or text box in a slide to add animations or special effects. I easily inserted an image into a slide, and was given a choice of eight picture styles or frames, but could not animate or otherwise add the special effects that I sometimes use in the full version. Other than using some of the more sophisticated features of the full version of PowerPoint, the Web App version is adequate for simple PowerPoint presentations.

I will admit that I do not use Microsoft's OneNote, but it is available as a Web App. Looking much like a Word document, with the addition of a calendar line, when shared, it also shows the other authors and page versions that were accessed and modified. OneNote

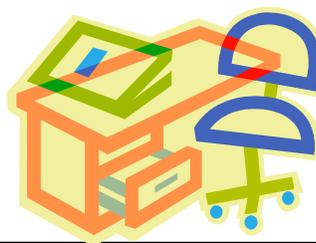
also allows for images, clipart, links, and tables to be inserted, which can provide a richer user experience. Like Word, the ribbon (menu) in OneNote allows the user to implement traditional formatting and fonts as desired. I could see where OneNote would be useful for taking notes and sharing content. As with PowerPoint, there is no "save" button, as OneNote documents are automatically saved.

If the user desires to import a document or image on his computer in the appropriate Web App, the user would click on the SkyDrive link at the top of the Office page, and then "Add Files". The user can then drag and drop files from his computer into the "Add Files" browser window, or files can be uploaded to SkyDrive by clicking on "Select documents from your computer".

Documents and other files stored on SkyDrive can be downloaded individually in native format, or all of the files can be downloaded together as a single ZIP file from SkyDrive. I experimented with SkyDrive and the Web Apps and found that this may be a viable choice either as a primary or backup method of doing presentations or working on documents away from my home or office computer, providing there is good internet access. Clicking on the SkyDrive "More" link allows the user to view a file's properties, or delete it from SkyDrive.

One of the strengths of using web applications like these is the ability to work together or collaborate on projects. By clicking on FILE - SHARE others can be authorized to access the file. The share choices can be controlled with a slider that ranges from "Just me" to "Some friends", "Friends", "My friends and their friends", and "Everyone (public)". Specific people can be added to those eligible to share by name or by email address.

While not as feature rich as the full versions of Office, the free Web Apps versions at live.com do offer a viable alternative to those who do not have Office installed on their computers, or who need a portable version of those applications. Many users will find these Web Apps quite useful.



eBooks

**By Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, CA
February 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes, The Official Electronic Newsletter of the SCG
www.SCGsd.org wilw(at)adnc.com**

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It took a long time for e-books to arrive on the scene, but now they are here in a swarm, offering many styles, file formats and displays. In a few years, when standards are established, this confusing variety will disappear. Currently, the major players are Kindle by Amazon, Nook by Barnes & Noble, Sony eReader, and a lot of fledglings trying to get their foot in the door.

The concept of the e-book is great: a portable electronic book containing hundreds of titles; low cost books in digital format so no paper printing is required; variable type font selection for ease of reading; immediate downloads for impulse purchases; access to the Web for blogs, magazines and newspapers; audio text-to-speech for when your eyes are tired. And I know of other advantages besides these. Recently, there has been a price war and Amazon and others have slashed prices drastically. I predict that Walmart will have an e-book for \$39.95 in the not too distant future. The e-book concept has been around for years; I recall promoting the idea 25 years ago, but at that time the technology was not yet available to make it practical. What was missing was an inexpensive low cost display; cheap large memory; a fast computer chip; and a small, lightweight, powerful battery. None of these existed at that time, but now they are here and the concept has been actualized.

Several types of displays are now available: Kindle uses a black/white display called e-ink. It is low power for long battery life and reflective so sunlight doesn't fade it; in fact, it is viewed best in bright light. The downside is that a book light is required to read in bed without disturbing your bed partner.

The Nook is a color display using liquid crystals, which is poor in bright light and a battery power hog. However, it is color and can be viewed in the dark, the darker the better.

Qualcomm has developed a color display called Mirasol that uses interference colors like butterfly wings or oil-on-water; it also uses very little power for

long battery life. Like the Kindle, it is reflective for viewing in bright light. Although holding great promise, it is not yet on the market, but is due later this year in some e-book. Every day hundreds more books become available in digital format. Google claims to be converting almost every book in print to digital format, and they have the resources to do it. Amazon and Barnes & Noble offer huge book selections on their Web sites. Surprisingly, Amazon sold more digital books last year than printed ones.

A major problem is the plethora of file formats that are too numerous to describe here.

For more info go to: <http://bit.ly/fznE7>
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_e-book_formats]

In time, these will boil down to just a few standard file formats. In the meantime, there are free conversion programs which will allow you to read almost any file format on your e-book, regardless of the model.

If you are an avid reader, I would recommend that you consider an e-book. It will save you money in the long run on the cost of books (NY Times Best Sellers, \$9.99 and many free ones), Plus, all the neat features make it a joy to use.



eBook Readers Compared

By Constance Brown, President, Canton/Alliance/Massillon User Group, OH
February 2011 issue, The Memory Map www.camug.org
president (at) camug.org

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Technology with new capabilities and applications is constantly available. It can be difficult to stay focused on what will be most suitable for our requirements when we are constantly wowed by the latest innovations. Suppose you wish to read eBooks and listen to music. How many pieces of equipment will allow you to do this? Here are a few:

Computer, web book, a variety of phones, iPad, some mp3 players, some GPS devices and some eBook readers.

The cross-application of many of these devices is amazing and sometimes confusing. In January we heard a presentation from the Stark County District Library about eBooks and eAudio books and were introduced to a variety of devices that can be used to check out these Books. The library has a links to lists of compatible and incompatible devices at <http://www.overdrive.com/Resources/DRC/Default.asp>

During the presentation, I became interested in the comparison between Apple's iPad and Barnes and Nobles Nookcolor. Both of them have one disadvantage when compared to other readers such as other Nook products, Sony, Kobo or Kindle: the screen is not E Ink or E Paper.

That means the battery is being drained when it is in use and that it will be more tiring to the eyes and perhaps impossible to read in bright light. However, Nookcolor lets you read books and a magazine in full color and works both in Wi-Fi and 3G networks. It has 8 Gig of internal memory, enough to hold 6,000 books, and is expandable to 32 Gig. Over 2 million book titles are available, and it has internal support for Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.



Additional features include resizable text and graphics with AliveTouch™, audio, Read to Me, Keep your last page, read between devices, LendMe™ technology, borrowing, and you can share updates on Social sites like Facebook® and Twitter®. It runs with the Android™ Operating System. The price tag is \$249. More information is available at <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/nook/index.as> Here the comparison stops. Nookcolor was not designed for Internet browsing or communicating via email.

Apple's iPad comes with 16 Gig to 64 Gig of internal memory. Some iPads are Wi-Fi only and others are either 3G or Wi-Fi. The price tag varies from \$499-\$829. The iPad is much more than an eBook reader. It offers Internet access and applications. It is still awaiting an app to be released that will let the reader view eBooks full screen. You can page through websites, write an email, flick through photos, or watch a movie with just the touch of a finger. The 3G data plan is through ATT and starts at \$14.99 per month. It has many computer capabilities, especially when it comes to browsing the Internet and reading email.

When it comes to comparing eBook readers that use E ink and E paper, it is a bit more difficult to make a selection. The Kindle is great, but doesn't allow for you to check out eBooks from the library at this time. Kobo from Borders does not allow you to listen to EAudio and requires that books be loaded from a computer. Sony and Nook have their own trade-offs with weight, bulkiness, and a screen that is sometimes difficult to read in sunlight in the case of the Sony. So if an E Reader is in your future, you will have to select what best meets your needs. Having an eReader certainly beats having to carry heavy, bulky books through the airport in order to satiate your reading appetite as you wait for your next flight!

(Continued from page 9)

Businesses increasingly gain computing power at lower costs by replacing part or all of their in-house IT with utilities from “the cloud.”

If everyone were good guys like CCGV members, the World Wide Computer would be a utopian blessing. Alas, as we learn in Chapter 9, “Fighting the Net,” there are lots and lots of bad guys. Guys much badder than purveyors of porn. They have the proven ability to inundate us with spam, phishing, viruses and other malware, to hijack our computers and make them participate in “netbots,” to engineer the crashing of computers of targeted businesses, to wreak malignant effects on electoral campaigns, etc. In 2006 the British in Iraq discovered that insurgents were using Google Earth and GPS to accurately aim mortars at their camps. In a worst case scenario cyber terrorists could kill the Internet itself.

Chapter 10, “The Spider’s Web,” describes massive programs of data mining, which use the recorded collections of our internet clicks and choices to selectively target advertising. My Amazon and Netflix pages are glad to recommend books and films based on my site history. Large companies, such as Google, compile gigantic databases on their employees replete with personal information. Many websites use cookies to put us on record. Some of this is to our benefit, but I

wonder how much the commercial and political world secretly knows about me. We are subject to an unprecedented degree of control in ways we are unaware of. A decade ago the CEO

of Sun Microsystems pronounced, “You have zero privacy. Get over it” [p. 190].

The last chapter of Big Switch has the startling title “iGod,” which may amuse Brad and Robbie.

It looks at artificial intelligence and considers eventual merger of human minds with the World Wide Computer. You’ll have to read it to decide for yourself whether the prospects are exhilarating or dismaying. I eagerly await Carr’s 2010 opus, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (Amazon \$17.79).

Thoughts of the Month (from the book): “We may find, twenty or so years from now, that the personal computer has become a museum piece, a reminder of a curious time when all of us were forced to become amateur computer technicians.”

“The time of Bill Gates and the other great programmers who wrote the code of the PC age has come to an end. The future of computing belongs to the new utilitarians.”

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on June 18th & July 16th from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] Meetings will be held at the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** [www.olligmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

Topics

June 18th - Comparing the Mac to Windows PCs

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC’s Web Site at

<http://www.wacug.org/>



Washington Area User Group Partners

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without purchasing an office suite and having to keep it updated. It also allows on-line collaboration (where, for example, several people edit the same document), although few home users are likely to need this feature. Like cloud storage, cloud processing is inexpensive or even free.

By now, you may be thinking, "What's the Catch?" Somebody has to pay for these services, as providing them requires non-trivial costs for computer hardware, support staff, and communications. In some cases, the free service is a limited sample to entice you to purchase a more versatile one. In others, you are the product being sold. Your habits and preferences are valuable commodities that advertisers will pay to learn about. For many of us this is a fair trade; in return for the convenience of Google's search engine, we tolerate the ads in the sidebar and being directed to sites that want to sell to us.

However, there are some security and safety caveats involved. Security is complex for a cloud vendor; your data are stored on the same disks, the same memory, and pass through the same processors as everybody else's. The process is much like what happens in a commercial laundry or dry cleaner, where every-

body's clothes are tagged and thrown together into a large machine. Afterwards, somebody looks at the tags to get them back to their proper owners. Contrast this to a bank deposit vault, where only your key can open the box where you place your documents. Even at such competent vendors as Google, there have been instances of data leaking from one customer to another, and many cloud vendors are start-ups who have much less expertise than Google. This means that you should take responsibility for safeguarding your data. For example, if you back up your disk in the cloud, encrypt any files (such as those containing passwords or on-line banking data) that present security risks. I store my passwords using KeePassX, <http://www.KeepassX.org>. Its file is always encrypted on your PC's disk, and you can safely back it up anywhere. I also use Gnu Privacy Guard (gpg), <http://www.gnupg.org>, to encrypt files and e-mail. (Both of these programs are available for the Windows, Mac, and Linux platforms.) By the way, when you encrypt a file, be sure that only the encrypted version is ever placed in a directory that is backed up in the cloud.

Safety also is not trivial. Vendors do go out of business and, even if they keep operating, they may find that providing cloud services isn't profitable. Not all of them back up their storage, which means that their

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NCTCUG Information

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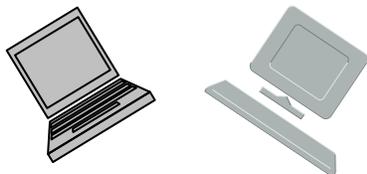
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Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Articles may be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or plain unformatted text (C/R only at end of paragraphs, no indents preferred) via email to the editor nctcugj@verizon.net

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/compucenter/>

If you are moving

Please send your change of address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

(Continued from page 15)

hardware failures and software bugs can destroy your data. If you use the service for back-up or synchronization, this isn't a problem because the chances of simultaneous failures in the cloud and on your PC is negligible. However, if you store your only copy of your photograph or music collection in the cloud, you are risking disaster. In the case of cloud processing, you should also be concerned about the format in which your data is stored. It does little good to download the file containing your novel if it's stored in a format that only the (now out of business cloud vendor) could read.

Finally, cloud computing is new, so you should expect some glitches.



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First Class



Summer

June/July 2011

1st Wed. (6/1, 7/6)
7 p.m. General Meeting

2nd Wed. (6/8, 7/13)
Online-Only Webinar using Skype
for information see club page at
<http://www.nctcug.org/webinarsig.html>

4th Wed (6/22, 7/27)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (7/18)
7 p.m. Board of Directors
(no meeting in June)

Meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St.,
Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just
south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50. See website for
directions to post-meeting pizza gathering.