



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road
Fairfax, VA



Next Meeting:
January 21, 2012



John Kennedy discusses the benefits of free software

Presidential Bits

by Geof Goodrum

President WACUG, [president\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:president(at)wacug.org)

I hope that each of you enjoyed the holidays and, perhaps, have new technology that you would be willing to share with the group in 2012 via presentation or a review article in *The Cursor*:

At our December meeting, “Free John” Kennedy of the Licking County (Ohio) Computer Society gave a live presentation via the web about free software alternatives for many popular applications, including word processing, spreadsheets, photo editing, and antivirus/malware/firewall security software. To see the software that John recommended, view John’s presentation on the WACUG Recent Meetings web page (<http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>) and the handout with web links that summarizes the list. Joh’s suggestion is to try the free software alternatives first to see if it meets your needs. If not, you can also pay to use the commercial software. One of John’s suggestions was the Linux Mint operating system, a derivative of the Ubuntu Linux operating system. As it happened, I demonstrated the current version of Ubuntu (v11.10) during the Learn 30 tutorial, despite some glitches that only occur during live demos. I probably overwhelmed the audience by trying to cover too much in my 30 minutes, but some of the audience said that they would give Ubuntu a try. As the Ubuntu operating system can be run entirely from CD, DVD, or USB flash drive without installing on a computer’s hard drive, there is no harm in trying it out, like John suggests. Let me know by e-mail to [linux\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:linux(at)wacug.org) if you need help with this.

I’d also like to thank our stalwart PC Clinic volunteers Scott Hanak, Nick Wenri, and Roger Fujii, who provided assistance to several members who brought their computers in.

As you know, the WACUG Board of Directors decided to cancel the January General Meeting and WACUG Annual Meeting because of the ice storm. OLLI follows closure decisions for the Fairfax County schools, which canceled all activities on January 21st. The Board did

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Useful Bits & Pieces

by Lorrin R. Garson

Washington Area Computer User Group

Important changes for Verizon E-Mail Users

If you use Outlook, Outlook Express, Apple Mail, etc., you will need to change the configuration for Verizon e-mail within your e-mail client. The incoming and outgoing port numbers have been changed and SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) has been implemented. Verizon is making these changes to improve security. If you access your Verizon e-mail directly using a Web browser (i.e., MyVerizon e-mail), these changes do not apply. See <http://verizon.com/emailsettings> for details.

Want to check out the battery on your laptop?

Inevitably the battery in your laptop or netbook will decline with age and eventually die. BatteryInfoView will give you numerous details about the status of your battery; battery name, manufacturer, serial number, manufacture date, power state (charging or discharging), current battery capacity, full charged capacity, etc. It's free!

See

http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/battery_information_view.html for information about this utility and to download. It can also be downloaded from c|net at http://download.cnet.com/BatteryInfoView/3000-20430_4-75453295.html.

Which is the most widely used Web browser?

While Microsoft's Internet Explorer continues to be the most used Web browser worldwide with 41% market share, Google's Chrome has now taken second place from Mozilla Firefox (25.7% and 25.2%, respectively). Ironically, Google provides 84% of Mozilla's royalty payments for making Google the default search engine within Firefox. It isn't certain this arrangement is in Google's best interest. Use of Chrome has grown from 4.7% market share two years ago and is expected to continue to grow. For more information see

http://www.infopackets.com/news/internet/2011/20111207_google_could_pull_plug_on_firefox.htm. In recent months, Firefox has required frequent updates that have been unpopular with users thus causing further movement away from this browser. Which is the safest browser? Not a simple question to answer, but it would seem at this time Chrome is the safest followed by Microsoft Internet Explorer and Firefox a distant third (see <http://lifehacker.com/5867545/whats-the-most-secure-web-browser>).

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NCTCUG

Visit our "sister" user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

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

Meetings start at 7:00 PM

Washington Area User
Group Partners
Working Together for
Our Members

NCTCUG

WACUG

OPCUG

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Yahoo Messenger

Are you interested instant messaging? Take a look at <http://messenger.yahoo.com/> for Yahoo Messenger 11.5. This application allows you to connect via the Web or your iPhone to friends and family in numerous countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific.

How paranoid are you?

No one should be surprised that “big brother” in the guise of commercialism is watching us and our behaviors. If you use a computer or cell phone, your actions are being tracked and recorded to one degree or another. If you are truly paranoid, you may not want to read Woody Leonard’s piece in Windows Secrets (<http://windowssecrets.com/top-story/carrier-iq-a-privacy-tempest-of-what-size/>) about the widespread use of Carrier IQ to monitor our actions. If you are even mildly paranoid, reading about Carrier IQ in InfoWorld (<http://www.infoworld.com/t/cringely/carrier-iq-spying-your-cellphone-180425>) will cause you discomfort. Being circumspect in your digital activities would be wise.

Duqu Worm Thwarted

The Microsoft December Patch Tuesday (December 13th) pluggeopend a vulnerability in Windows kernel that hackers could potentially take control of a PC remotely, i.e., the Duqu Worm. While this is rather old news, it illustrates the importance of keeping current with Windows updates.

See http://www.infopackets.com/news/business/microsoft/2011/20111214_december_patch_tuesday_fixes_duqu_worm.htm for information about this patch.

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duqu> for a description of the Duqu Worm from Wikipedia.

AT&T rated worst cell phone carrier

For the second year in a row AT&T was rated last by Consumer Reports (January 2012, p.36) with poor voice service and phone-based customer service—even lower than last year. Consumer Cellular ranks first followed by U.S. Cellular, Credo, Verizon Wireless, Sprint and T-Mobile. For more

information see http://news.cnet.com/8301-13506_3-57337424-17/at-t-rated-worst-cell-phone-carrier-for-second-year-in-a-row/ and http://money.cnn.com/2010/12/06/technology/consumer_reports_att/index.htm. Hey, someone has to be last!



Presidential Bits, continued from page 1

not want to risk the safety of our members, nor expect our guest presenter, Sam Clay of the Fairfax County Public Library, to show up when we could not ensure a good turnout. We are working to reschedule Mr Clay’s presentation about the Fairfax County library’s online services, as well as my slide show and report from the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) held in Las Vegas from 10-13 January. In the meantime, this issue contains a first installment of quick links to interesting products that I saw at CES.

There was a Board Meeting on January 21st via Skype™ teleconference. Election Commissioner Gabe Goldberg presented the results of the 2012 WACUG Election: President – Geof Goodrum; Vice President – Mel Mikoskinski; Treasurer – Paul Howard; Secretary – Bill Walsh. The elected Board members appointed Neal Grotenstein, Gabe Goldberg, and Jorn Dakin as additional Board members. If you would like to serve on the WACUG Board of Directors, please contact an existing Board member.

Many thanks to Bob Rott for eleven years of service as WACUG Treasurer! As you may know, Bob is out of a rehabilitation facility but still recovering from a hip fracture sustained last June; we expect to have him back at meetings in the near future.

The next issue of *The Cursor* will have details about the meeting topics on February 18th.

See you there!



Editor's Notes

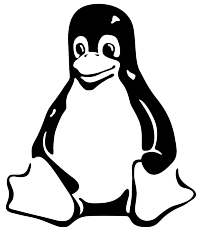
The New Year presented an opportunity to make changes to *The Cursor*.

The Cursor has new typefaces that eliminate license restrictions. See details about the new typefaces and software used to produce *The Cursor* in the colophon on page 11 (updated).

Thanks to Lorrin Garson, who contributes a new Bits & Pieces column covering a variety of topics.

The Cursor no longer reprints Allen Wyatt's Word Tips and Excel Tips columns—tips are available online at <http://word.tips.net/> and <http://excel.tips.net/> for menu interface and <http://wordribbon.tips.net/> and <http://excelribbon.tips.net/> for ribbon interface. Subscription to tips by e-mail are also available through the web sites.

The Cursor no longer lists GNU/Linux distribution updates. The Distrowatch web site (<http://distrowatch.com/>) has the latest information with details about each distribution and where to get them.



Linux and Open Source

News

by Geof Goodrum
[linux\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:linux@wacug.org)

Raspberry Pi: A GNU/Linux Computer for \$25

The Raspberry Pi Foundation, a charitable organization, is preparing to sell a credit-card sized computer in February for only \$25 (Model A; \$35 for Model B with additional features) plus tax. The Raspberry Pi has the following features:

- Broadcom BCM2835 System on a Chip (SoC), featuring a 700 MHz ARM processor and a Graphics Processing Unit capable of BluRay quality playback
- RAM: 128 MB (Model A); 256 MB (Model B)

- Secure Digital (SD) card port
- Audio output jack (3.5mm)
- RCA composite video output
- HDMI video output
- USB 2.0 (Model A one port; Model B two ports)
- Ethernet (Model B only)

The Raspberry Pi is a finished (assembled) system board weighing 45 grams, but without case, keyboard, or mouse. Configurations with cases will be available later, and external peripherals can be attached to the USB connector (and USB hub). The system RAM is not expandable. Power (5 VDC@1Amp) is provided via an external source connected to the microUSB port (powered USB hub?), but the project's FAQ suggests four AA batteries would also work. The system boots from an operating system such as GNU/Linux (Fedora recommended, Debian and ArchLinux supported) on SD card—preloaded SD cards will be available. However, an external USB hard disk can have additional operating system files and user storage. While the Model A does not have a wired Ethernet port, many WiFi USB adapters work. See the project wiki for more information on tested devices.

For more information, visit the project home page at <http://www.raspberrypi.org/>.

Barnes & Noble Complaint About Microsoft

Microsoft claims that Google's Android Operating System, based upon the Linux kernel and used in smartphones, tablets, and other consumer devices, infringes upon Microsoft patents. Microsoft notified manufacturer's of devices using Android to pay for licenses to use the patented technology. However, Barnes & Noble, whose Nook e-reader uses the Android OS, challenged Microsoft's patent claims and is pushing back. In November, the Groklaw website (<http://www.groklaw.net/article.php?story=2011111121548972>) provided material from Barnes & Noble lawyers including a letter to the US International Trade Commission and slides titled "Microsoft's Anticompetitive Behavior in the Mobile

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Operating System Market” presented to the US Department of Justice Antitrust Division.

The slides, well worth reading, document allegations that Microsoft exhibits anticompetitive behavior by:

- Publicly Claiming Control of Android and Other Open Source Operating Systems
- Requiring Potential Licensees to Enter into Overly Restrictive Non-Disclosure Agreements
- Demanding Royalties Commensurate with Owning the Entire Android Operating System (and Similar to Royalties for a Windows Phone License) Even Though Microsoft Only Owns Trivial Patents
- Imposing Licensing Provisions Unrelated to Microsoft's Patents and Designed to Prevent Competitor Innovation
- Filing Frivolous Patent Infringement Actions Against Companies That Refuse to Enter Into Anticompetitive Licensing Agreements
- Deal with Nokia Includes an Agreement to Engage in a Coordinated Offense Use of Patents Against Open Source Software
- Purchasing Patent Portfolios that Threaten Open Source Software.

GNU/Linux Distribution Releases

GNU/Linux distributions are bundled collections of software including a set of applications and an operating system built on the Linux kernel. Some distributions include general applications such as office suites, music players, and web browsers, while others may have specific purposes such as computer system recovery, network firewall, media center, or gaming. Individuals, community projects, or businesses create distributions. While some distributions are commercial and include fee-based technical support, other distributions are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost.

WAC can provide CD-R and DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora, Mandriva, Ubuntu, Debian,

Knoppix). Please note that free download distributions do not include official technical support nor printed documentation. Single CD-R discs are available with a \$3 donation; GNU/Linux distributions on multiple CD-Rs or single DVD±R are available with a \$6 donation. Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by e-mail (linux@wacug.org) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information.

Featured Linux Software of the Month: January 2012

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

Arno's IPTABLES Firewall Script – v2.0.1.

<http://rocky.eld.leidenuniv.nl/joomla/>. Free GNU General Public License shell code by Arno van Amersfoort. Arno's IPTABLES Firewall Script is a secure stateful firewall for both single and multi-homed machines. It supports NAT and SNAT, port forwarding, ADSL ethernet modems with both static and dynamically assigned IPs, MAC address filtering, stealth port scan detection, DMZ support, protection against SYN/ICMP flooding, experimental IPv6 support, multi-interface/aliased-IP support, and extensive user definable logging with rate limiting to prevent log flooding. It has plugin support to add extra features (like SSH Brute Force protection and (Racoon) IPSEC support). It is easy to configure and highly customizable. A filter script that makes your firewall log more readable is also included.

Flare – v0.15.1. <http://clintbellanger.net/rpg/>. Free GNU General Public License source code by Clint Bellanger. Flare (Free Libre Action Roleplaying Engine) is a simple game engine built to handle a very specific kind of game: single-player 2D action RPGs. Flare is not a reimplementation of an existing game or engine. It is a tribute to and exploration of the action RPG genre. Rather than building a very abstract, robust game engine, the goal of this project is to build several real games and harvest an engine from the common, reusable code. The first

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game, included, is a fantasy dungeon crawl to demonstrate the engine features. Flare uses simple file formats (INI style config files) for most of the game data, allowing anyone to easily modify game contents. Open formats are preferred (png, ogg). The game code is C++. Requires SDL libraries, included with major GNU/Linux distributions.

Gpsprune – v13.2.

<http://activityworkshop.net/software/gpsprune/index.html>. Free GNU General Public License source code by the Activity Workshop. GpsPrune is an application for viewing, editing and converting coordinate data from GPS systems. Basically it's a tool to let you play with your GPS data after you get home from your trip. It can load data from arbitrary text-based formats (for example, any tab-separated or comma-separated file) or Xml, or directly from a GPS receiver. It can display the data (as map view using openstreetmap images and as altitude profile), edit this data (for example delete points and ranges, sort waypoints, compress tracks), and save the data (in various text-based formats). It can also export data as a GPX file, or as KML/KMZ for import into Google Earth, or send it to a GPS receiver. Furthermore, GpsPrune is able to display the tracks in 3D format and lets you spin the model round to look at it from various directions. You can also export the model in POV format so that you can render a nice picture using Povray. You can also create charts of altitudes or speeds. It can also load Jpegs and read their coordinates from the exif tags, and export thumbnails of these photos to Kmz format so that they appear as popups in Google Earth. If your photos don't have coordinates yet, GpsPrune can be used to connect them (either manually or automatically using the photo timestamps) to data points, and write these coordinates into the exif tags. GpsPrune requires Java runtime 1.5 or later.

grpn – v1.3.4. <http://www.getreu.net/>. Free GNU General Public License source code by Jens Getreu and Paul Wilkins, and packages (earlier version) for Mandriva and Debian/Ubuntu. GRPN is a RPN calculator for the X Window system built using the GIMP Toolkit (GTK). GRPN works with real numbers, complex numbers, matrices, and complex matrices.

Numbers can be displayed in four different radix modes, and complex numbers can be displayed in either Cartesian or polar form, in decimal or engineering notation.

Kernel Source – v3.1.6. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.



Dealing with Customer Support, Reporting Problems, Getting Answers

by *Gabe Goldberg*

Nobody enjoys calling companies for service or help. It can be so unpleasant, time consuming, and frustrating that it's often tempting to put aside or even discard something that's broken, not working quite right, or just baffling because of missing, incomplete, or incomprehensible instructions.

Resist that defeatist attitude! Know how to seek problem remedies, assert your right to a properly functioning [whatever], and deal effectively or even partner with people on company service front lines.

Remember that only the right questions get useful answers. Just as you describe to a doctor or auto mechanic what's wrong and when you first noticed it—perhaps even imitating an odd car noise you don't like—be specific. General complaints like, “I can't use my email”, “My scanner stopped working”, or “PowerPoint gave me an error” may (or may not!) draw sympathy, but you'll have to give more details before getting help.

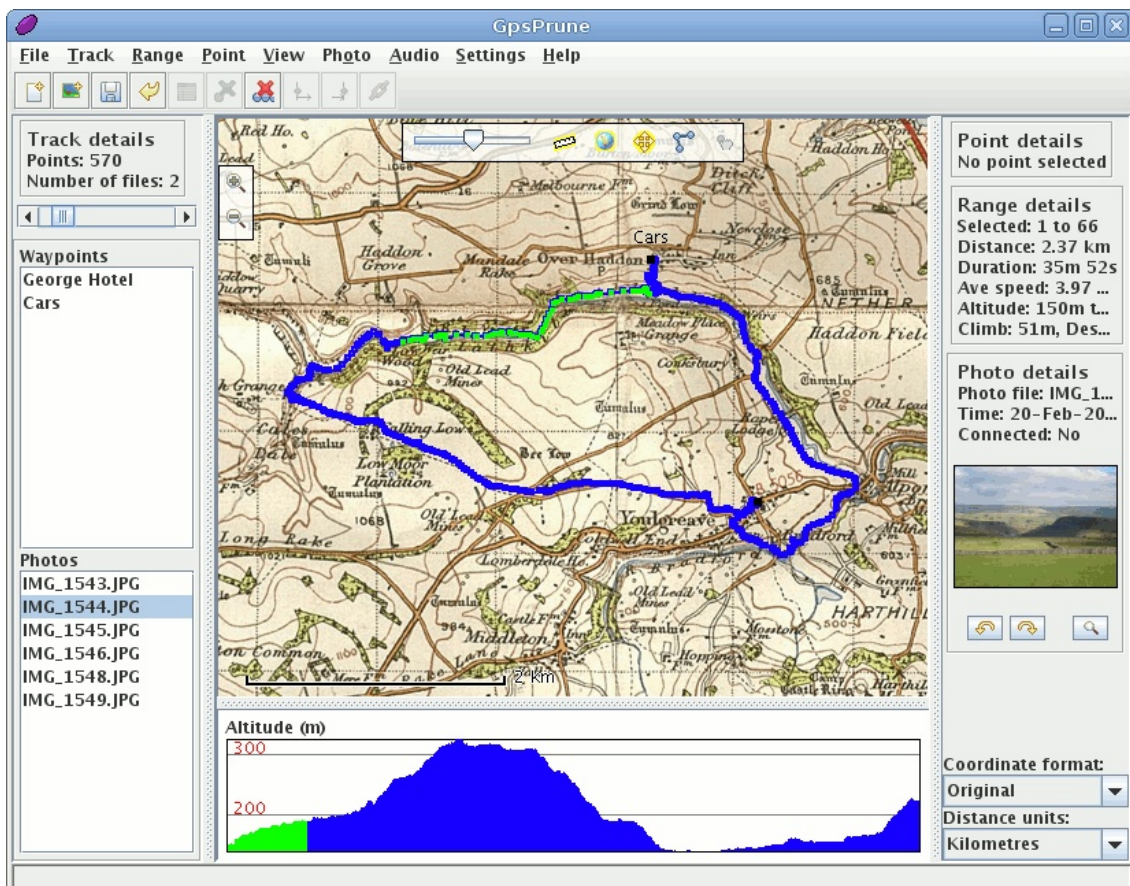
First, collect as much information as possible about your problem or question. That includes recording any error messages word-for-word, including any codes or program names. Sometimes error message text is enough for self-service problem resolution: feed the message text to Google, in quotes. If—as is likely—you're not the first person to encounter the message, you may find discussion, tips, and answers. Of course, don't take the first hit as gospel; browse multiple websites for credible sources and to learn multiple options.

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Top: Flare Role Playing Game

Bottom: Photo geolocation in GPSPRUNE



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If you'll call/email/chat for support, remember that just as the doctor or mechanic needs details, someone analyzing a technology problem must know the environment in which it occurred. If it's a computer problem, be ready to describe relevant features of your system (hardware, software, networking, applications, etc.), your operating system (the version of Windows XP/Vista/7 or Mac OS), what application failed (Thunderbird, Audacity, Firefox, Excel, etc.), your Internet connection (cable, DSL, FiOS, dial-up). If it's another gadget, have model and serial numbers ready, along with specs like memory size, database version, software revision number, or anything to describe the environment.

Don't omit details—support staffers usually prefer having more information than necessary to missing crucial details. But be clear about what you know and what's assumed or guessed.

Note anything done just before the problem occurred and whether you noticed anything else unusual, since seemingly unrelated matters can provide useful patterns and context. Explain whether the problem has happened before and identify whatever (hardware, software, settings, anything) changed recently. Think CAREFULLY about recent changes, since they're easily forgotten but often explain mysterious behavior.

Be honest about attempts to resolve the problem, since those may have changed the environment in which the support person will have you working. Especially note if you've rebooted your computer or power cycled (turned off/on) a gadget, since doing that often cures—though doesn't explain—problems.

Mention where you've looked for information (product manual, company website, FAQ, etc.).

If you're sending an email or getting ready for an online chat, reread your query as if you know nothing about the problem besides what's there. Is it complete? Does it make sense? Have you assumed or omitted key details?

For an email subject or chat title, use meaningful terms detailing the product in question (e.g.,

Window 7) and the problem (e.g., "Windows Update never finds new patches"). Text like "Help!", "Urgent", or "Question" is uninformative and is useless for later indexing/searching.

Be clear what you want; don't focus on the process to follow; that may distract the responder into addressing how you're trying to do something rather than what you want to do.

Once discussion starts, collaborate rather than argue, criticize, or overpower. Be respectful—make it easy for them to help you. Don't make them feel stupid even if you think they are; they may have missed a detail or you may not have conveyed the whole story. Don't try to impress them based on age, experience, or professional credentials—but explain your suspicions and reasoning. No matter what, for better or worse, they're your gateway to additional company resources. Always request a problem or ticket number—that's often the only way to continue working on a problem without starting over.

Sadly, many support conversations are script-driven—that is, consist of mechanical responses that may not make sense. For example, you may be told to reboot your computer when you've already done that. Sometimes it's easiest to play along and do—or say you've done—whatever's instructed, to get to the next step. If asked to capture a trace, check a log, reset a connection—just do it. They're there to help, not waste your and their time; they may have seen your problem before and KNOW what's needed to resolve it. A friend's favorite apparently useless but reasonable tech support action is having someone reverse a network cable. The cable orientation is meaningless, but removing and reseating it can reestablish a connection degraded by corrosion, dust, or vibration.

On the other hand, if a support person who sounds relatively clueful has just told you to do something ridiculous ("Go check the phase of the moon"), you might ask whether that makes sense or is just from a canned checklist.

Always keep perspective and save anger, escalation, complaining, and social media ranting for severe problems. And if you're lucky enough to reach

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someone who resolves your problem with a verbal smile, gently ask for their contact information. If they provide it, don't abuse it; save it for emergencies, not minor issues/questions or chats.

Besides help from your product's vendor, many technology sites host discussion forums where experts hang out and offer help. For my Honda Accord I've had great success on sites like [CarTalk](#) and [Honda Tech](#). Similar sites exist for almost any product.

Finally, resolve to never enter the "Customer is not always right" hall of shame for perpetrating dialogues like this:

<http://notalwaysright.com/remote-chance-of-a-refund/6390>.

Gabe Goldberg has developed, worked with, and written about technology for decades. This article appeared originally on the <http://www.slickdeals.net> web site. © Gabriel Goldberg 2010. Permission is granted for reprinting and distribution by non-profit organizations with text reproduced unchanged and this paragraph included. Please email slickdeals@gabegold.com when you use it.



Highlights from the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show

by *Geof Goodrum*

President, Washington Area Computer User Group, www.wacug.org

Much of the media coverage from the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES, <http://www.cesweb.org/>) focuses on the flashy items—bigger TVs with higher resolution, smartphones, cameras, etc. However, I find many interesting or quirky items are overlooked. Below are links roughly organized into categories for your browsing pleasure (without the cost of a trip to CES Las Vegas).

Custom skins for your digital devices

My thanks to SkinIt for free skin coupons

<http://www.skinit.com/>
<http://www.iapeel.com/>

3D Printers

Almost a trend. Three companies showed these computer peripherals that create physical objects from resins or even chocolate!

<http://essentialdynamics.net/>

<http://cubify.com/>

<http://www.makerbot.com/blog/tag/3d-printer/>

Portrait Weavers

One of several companies that create woven products within days from digital photos

<http://www.portraitweavers.com/>

Aerial Drones with video

Use a smartphone or remote control to take pictures or video from the air.

<http://rotorconcept.com/helicopters.asp>

<http://ardrone.parrot.com/parrot-ar-drone/en>

Romotive

Small robot driven by your smartphone.

<http://www.romotive.com/>

Sphero

Use your smartphone to control the Sphero ball.

<http://www.gosphero.com/>

Modular Robotics Cubelets

Building blocks for multifunction robots.

<http://www.modrobotics.com/>

Ecotricity portable solar generator

1800 Watt portable solar panel.

<http://1000bulbs.com/product/62145/BAT-ECO1800S.html>

Tagg GPS-enabled Pet Tracker

Runaway pet? Find it quickly online with the Tagg.

<http://www.pettracker.com/>

Hovercam Impress book scanner

Convert your book library to digital format; turns pages for you.

<http://lastgadgetstanding.com/2012/01/10/hovercam-impress-book-scanner/>

Lytro light field camera

Change focus after capturing the image.

<http://www.lytro.com/>

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iOnRoad

Augmented reality traffic warning app.

<http://www.ionroad.com/>

Cobra JoyRide for Android

Lighter plug charger also reconfigures smartphone for driving.

http://ces.cnet.com/8301-33369_1-57354608/cobra-joyride-transforms-android-phones-into-driving-machines/

Scosche cellCONTROL

Disables unsafe cell phone applications while driving.

<http://www.scosche.com/car-audio/product/2277>

I'm Watch

Access your phone apps on your wrist.

<http://www.imwatch.it/us-en/>

Bottle Opener phone case

<http://beaheadcase.com/>

Mophie phone case

Snapon phone cases with extra battery power.

<http://www.mophie.com/>

Octa tablet stand/holder

Whale-tail shaped stand and holder for tablets.

<http://www.octa.com/products/whaletail-vacuum-dock.html>

Solowheel

Single self-balancing wheel for personal transport.

<http://solowheel.com/>

Brondell bidet/heated toilet seats

Not something you expect to see at an electronics show, but some models have a wireless remote.

<http://www.brondell.com/products/index.php>



Micro Center® In Store Clinics

by Neal Grotenstein

Vendor Liaison, Washington Area Computer User Group

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Micro Center stores host free events called “In Store Clinics.” The clinics cover a wide range of topics. All Micro Center store locations follow the same schedule of topics.

A link for store locations is at the top center of the home page, www.microcenter.com. For those in the Washington, D.C. area, the only store in Virginia is in the Pan Am Plaza at 3089 Nutley Street, Fairfax, VA 22031, phone (703) 204-8400, and the only store in Maryland is in the Federal Plaza at 1776 E. Jefferson #203, Rockville, MD 20852, phone (301) 692-2130.

Micro Center Clinics are held on most weekends, except during holidays. The same topic is usually presented on both Saturday and Sunday. Topics may change and clinics may be cancelled without notice. Please verify the schedule with the store before leaving and register online for e-mail updates (http://www.microcenter.com/instore_clinic/signup.html).

Signing up in advance reserves a seat, recommended as space is limited. This can only be done at a store, either at the Tech Support or Customer Support area.

February 2012 Schedule

Start Time is 2pm local unless otherwise stated.

Feb 4 & 5: Build Your Own PC (BYOPC) Product Selection & Build Demo

Feb 18 (11am) & 25 (11am): BYO Workshop

Notes from previous clinics are available online at http://www.microcenter.com/understand_tech/index.html.

The WACUG Board of Directors and Volunteers

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The Editor prepares *The Cursor* with [Scribus v1.4](#) and [LibreOffice Writer v3.4](#) software. The typefaces are [Heuristica](#) for the banner and footers, and [Gentium](#) for heading and body text. The authors provide photographs and screen images. Public domain clip art are from [openclipart.org](#) and [www.wpclipart.com](#).

E-mail article submission and reprint requests to [cursor\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:cursor(at)wacug.org)

WAC Membership Application / Renewal

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Annual Dues: \$25.00

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Photographically Speaking

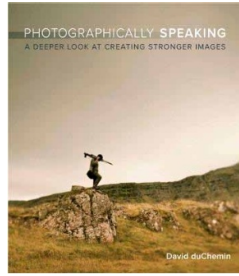
Reviewed by Marlene Martin

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December 2011 issue, eJournal

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photographs taken immediately before or after and discusses, in the same depth, why they aren't as strong and/or don't communicate his intent as well as the selected photo.

The same format is used to explore each decision that organizes and presents the selected elements – framing, placement, optics, focus, etc.

To assist the reader to explore each concept for themselves, each subsection ends with a suggested “Creative Exercise.” These are fairly simply, short exercises to trigger making an idea or technique part of your photographic thought process. For example, in the section on color, the creative exercise is “pick six of your favorite color photographs, rendering one of each into black and white.”

There are then a set of suggested questions to use when viewing the original and changed photos – what is the difference in your emotional response, does your eye travel differently when you view the photograph, does color add or detract, etc.

DuChemin suggests that photographers are often distracted by color and that it prevents them from looking critically at the elements in the photograph. He believes that the ability to see beyond the color and pay more attention to the elements prior to making the photograph will improve the decisions used to create the image.

I found that just reading and thinking about each “Creative Exercise” was very helpful in reviewing and driving home the concept being explored, and many of them are definitely on my “to do” list.

The last section of the book, Part III is a series of 20 photographs selected from the author's work to represent the concepts explored in the book. Each is discussed in detail in terms of the elements and decisions used to make the photo, plus possible alternatives that might have made the photograph stronger. DuChemin challenges the reader to critically view each photograph – intent, subject, elements, decisions, etc. and actually write down their responses – before reading his description.

For each photograph, the format is similar to that of Part II – alternative photographs taken at the same

DuChemin, in his introduction states that the “subject of this book is the expression of vision or intent and not the vision itself.” DuChemin's premise is that successful photographs “communicate a key thought or feeling.”

To accomplish this, photographers must first be clear in their own minds about their “intent” prior to making decisions about what to include or exclude. Only then can the more technical decisions be made to portray those chosen elements to communicate that vision or intent. The author compares the craft of photography to writing but with its own visual language and grammar.

Learning to use photographic language effectively allows photographers to communicate their intent to the reader, i.e. the viewer, in ways that evoke a response. After setting the stage in Part 1, and making a case for his premise that “mindfully” determining your intent will lead to stronger images, DuChemin looks at how to use the elements of Visual Language along with compositional and technical aspects to communicate intent.

“Part II – “Visual Language” explores the Elements (words) that can be manipulated within the photographic frame and the Decisions (grammar) that determines how we visual present the elements to the “reader.” Each element (lines, repetition, contrast, color, etc.) is explored, individually and in depth, using the author's photographs as examples of that particular element.

This is one of the real strengths of this book. The author not only shows us the picture, he describes what he did and why, but also what he wanted to communicate with the selected element. His descriptions are clear, articulate and are often accompanied by additional graphic examples or photographs on which he superimposes additional information to illustrate his example. He also, where it adds to the lesson, includes

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time and graphic overlays to illustrate a concept present in the photograph. Careful viewing and reading of this section helps solidify the educational and practical material presented in this book.

Appended to the final photograph, “Candles & Prayers, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2010,” is a list of 19 questions to “mindfully ask” when viewing your own or other’s photographs. They include questions designed to elicit your feelings and emotional responses in addition to how decisions about elements (“words”) and decisions (“grammar”) affect the photograph and thereby communication with the reader. They are a very useful summary of the book.

In his conclusion, DuChemin cautions that while he has simplified the material for educational purposes, to fully integrate the concepts into your photographic workflow is anything but easy. Just like learning any new language, it takes time and conscious practice.

While this is the fourth book of a series DuChemin has written on photographic vision, it stands on its own and is eminently readable and usable without knowledge of the first three books. I have not read any of the others. I can enthusiastically recommend this book to anyone except perhaps a very novice photographer. A basic knowledge of focus, shutter speed, etc. and how these affect a photograph would definitely add to getting the most from the material.

The book is probably most helpful for someone who has mastered the technical aspects and now wants to improve how they create their “intent” within the photographic frame to increase the impact of their work. The author presents organized, well written concepts and information with appropriate images and detail and has caused me to think about how I approach photographs in a more thoughtful way.

My suggestion would be to read Part I, “The Photographer’s Intent” first but without getting too caught up in whether you agree or disagree with his “message.”

Read Parts II and III for the specifics and consider doing the “Creative Exercises” as you go along or

pick and choose afterwards. Then go back and re-read Part I. This worked for me.

About: Photographically Speaking – A Deeper Look at Creating Stronger Images

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Backup – Image, What’s the difference?

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This topic can be very confusing because of the similarities and the differences between backups and images. Backups and Images are similar in that they are both copies of something. The difference is in the “what” and the “how”. Normally, a backup is thought of as a copy of a file or a folder or a collection of files and folders (that is the “what”). The backup copy is just a copy, an exact duplicate and is not processed in any way (the “how”). The backup files can be used by any programs that could use the original files. The reason for having a backup file is to restore a file if it is accidentally destroyed or deleted.

An Image, on the other hand, is a copy of the Operating System and all of its components (referred to as the Operating Environment), as they exist in the memory of your operating computer (that’s the “what”). The Image can only be created by an imaging program (the how), and the image created can only be used by that same imaging program. The reason for having an image is to be able to re-install your “Operating Environment” if, or rather when, a virus or hardware problem makes your system unusable.

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The topic can also be confusing because people, and even the literature, often use the terms backup and image in confusing ways. Often you will see or hear the term “backup image” which is meant to refer to a copy of an image. Well, an image is already a copy of something, so is this an image or is it a copy of an image? In order to keep things straight, I have tried to use the term “backup” to mean an exact copy of a file that needs to be saved. (I know that sometimes backup copies are “zipped” or compressed to save space, but those files are no longer exact copies of the originals and are not directly usable, so I would not call them backups, I would have to call them “zipped backups” or “compressed backups”, to be accurate.) And I use the term “image” to refer to the resultant file (or file collection) that is produced by an imaging program such as Ghost, or Acronis True Image, or Macrium Reflect, or even Windows 7.

To be completely protected against potential problems (viruses and/or hardware problems) you have to address both issues, backup and image. You have to backup all of your important files, those that you really do not want to lose, and you have to have an image of your Operating Environment for re-installation when needed. (Just as a point of interest, Windows 7 includes the ability to do both, via the Backup & Restore Control Panel.)

The files to backup are those that you have created or collected, such as your pictures, music, videos, Word documents, and spreadsheets. Any file that you would really be hard pressed to reproduce, if it was lost, is a good candidate for backup. How often to backup is dependent on the file in question. Files that are changing daily should probably be backed up daily, but files that don’t change need only be backed up on some weekly or monthly schedule. For backups, in general, follow “Chicago Politics” advice and backup early and often.

Also, be aware that there are many ways of backing up your files since it is only a Copy operation. However, there are many programs that make the job quick and easy. If you have a folder of pictures and you only add a few pictures to the collection weekly, then there is no need to copy all of the pictures each week, you only need to backup the new pictures. Backup programs such as Microsoft

Synctoy, and Synchronmagic, check the collection of files to be backed up against the last backup and only copy the new files or those that have changed since the last backup. These programs make the backup process quick, efficient and so easy that you will probably do it often enough. By now you are probably feeling that you have got the idea of backup, but where do you put these backup files? The best place for backup files is on an external hard drive that is normally not connected to the computer. Right before you are ready to backup your file collection, connect the external hard drive and fire-up the backup program and run the backup task. After the backup is finished disconnect the external drive and put it away in a safe place.

Creating an image is a little more difficult than creating backup files because imaging is not just a simple Copy operation. Because an image is a copy of your operating computer memory, the program must know a lot about the architecture of the memory. This is very specialized knowledge and is the essence of an imaging program. The imaging program must be installed on your computer for use in creating an image. And, it must create a bootable disk to be used when your system is not operating correctly. The image it creates can usually be put on a system drive (other than the C: drive), or an external hard drive, or a number of DVDs. The image created is usually a very large collection of files that may total from 20 to 60 GB. The imaging process can take many hours depending on the size of the image and the amount of compression that is selected. Imaging is a very lengthy process, and it creates such large files, so you probably only want to do it when absolutely necessary. A new image is only necessary when the Operating Environment changes, when you add or delete programs, or when you update your operating system. You may not add or delete programs very often, but the operating system is updated, at least monthly, so you might want to create a new image every 3 or 4 months or whenever a big change is made to the Operating Environment.

So you can see there is a great difference between Backup and Image. But, both are necessary if you hope to completely recover from a future hardware failure or malware infection.

Do You “YouTube?”

by Elaine Szaniszlo

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I had always thought that YouTube was a site that had lots of fun videos. Well, it does, but read on!

I was on a trip recently and the fuses blew on the car power outlets. We needed to replace the fuses as our plug-in GPS would not work otherwise. Of course, everyone knows the fuse box is located under the dashboard, right? But did you know some cars have another fuse box under the hood? We found that out on youtube.com. We typed in the car make, model and year, and fuse box, and up came a very nice video showing where the fuses were in the engine compartment, how to get the cover off and showed there was a fuse puller included (a very useful tool, indeed!). Now we would never have known that.

A friend told me he was going to replace a garbage disposal. He went to YouTube. Again, there was a detailed video explaining how to do that. Other ambitious folks I know have used YouTube to get videos on repairing clothes washers, too.

I used YouTube once to get some cooking information, but never realized the wide scope of informative videos that was available. So the next time you want to solve a problem or get information on any do-it-yourself project, check out YouTube. It may make YOU happier.



Staying Technology Young

by Darry D Eggleston

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The challenges for me are increasing as I strive to remain technologically young. What used to take years to change now occurs in a matter of months. So many new products are appearing in such rapid order that, unless one reads, observes, and communicates with like-minded friends, one ends

up talking about the “good old days” of technology way back in 2009.

Someone referred to technology’s growth in “dog years” and I suspect she might be right. Technology now leaps in one year where we would expect it to take seven years in the past.

One need only look at cellphones, cameras, and notebook computers to see that devices are shrinking while their capabilities are exponentially increasing.

Just yesterday, a conversation between two neighbors awoke me to this fact again. Both are my age in the 60-to-1,000-year-old range. One neighbor extolled finding a new restaurant quickly because of his car’s trusty dashboard-mounted global positioning device (GPS).

The other, without hesitating, replied, “Oh, I got rid of my old GPS six months ago,” as he pulled out his cellphone. “Mine’s in here.” Proudly, he showed us his Nokia N8: “Unlocked GSM touchscreen phone featuring GPS with voice navigation and a 12 megapixel camera.”

Even my research for this simple article relied on technology that I wish was available when I was younger:

1. I Googled to learn more about Dave’s cellphone. (Nokia’s website boasts that N8 phones can connect to social networks, web TV programs and Ovi Store apps. It has Carl Zeiss optics, Xenon flash, HD-quality video recording, film editing software, and Dolby Surround Sound.)
2. I used FastStone Capture to take a screenshot of the Nokia description, pasted it into OmniPage, which scanned the image and converted it into plain text, which I copied and pasted it into WordPerfect.

You can either ride the waves of innovation rushing to the shores of your existence or you can be swept out into the sea of ignorance. You can stay technologically young or die in place at a pace that’s more fitting for an old folk’s home.

Choices, my friend, it’s all about choices.