The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Paul Howard (left) introduces Dan Feighery (right)

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Only in the Download Edition:

Presidential Bits
by Geof Goodrum
President WACUG, president(at)wacug.org

The February meeting, one of our best attended ever, featured excellent presentations about Digital Photography by Dan Feighery and TrueCrypt disk encryption software by Lorrin Garson.

Dan characterized his session as plowing the digital photo field "a mile wide and an inch deep." Dan covered the characteristics of digital cameras from inexpensive "point & shoot" models to high-end Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) models. Even the basic cameras have extensive manuals describing available features, displays, and controls of the camera, and Dan encouraged everyone who buys a camera to spend some time with the manual to understand the camera's capabilities. One particular function is the histogram, which can help you optimize your pictures. Dan also discussed color management, a somewhat involved end-to-end process that includes adjustment of video monitor, camera, and printer to ensure that the colors captured by the camera are reproduced as accurately as possible on screen and in print. Dan's briefing slides are on the WAC Recent Meetings web page (http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html) as a 21 MB PDF file, and serves as an invaluable reference to the general concepts of digital photography.

Lorrin Garson returned to talk about "Protecting Private Information with TrueCrypt" software, available as a free download for Microsoft Windows, GNU/Linux, and Apple Macintosh OS X systems. TrueCrypt creates password-encrypted space on your disk for your sensitive financial, medical, and other personal data. Lorrin pointed out that TrueCrypt "containers" (virtual disks that appear as files on your hard drive) can be copied to portable media (e.g. flash drives) and even exchanged by e-mail securely as long as only the recipient has the password. Lorrin also noted that a secure file deletion utility (e.g. file shredder) should be used to delete sensitive files that are not kept in an encrypted container, as normal deletion utilities leave data on the drive that can be recovered and viewed. Although there are

Useful Bits & Pieces

by Lorrin R. Garson
Washington Area Computer User Group

Microsoft Warns About Ransomware

Ransomware is malicious software inadvertently installed on your computer that extortionists use in an attempt to shakedown money. Recently Microsoft has issued a warning that about 25,000+ computers have been infected in Germany in which crooks posing as the German Federal Police demanding payment of a fine because illicit material has been detected and your disk drive will be erased unless prompt payment is made to PaySafeCard or Ukash. This particular scheme has so far been limited to Europe, but its only a matter of time until it spreads. See http://blogs.technet.com/b/mmpc/archive/2011/12/19/disorderly-conduct-localized-malware-impersonates-the-police.aspx for details. Also see http://www.microsoft.com/security/portal/ for general security warnings from Microsoft.

12 Atoms to Store a Bit

In storing information on todays disk drives, about one million atoms are used to store a single bit of information. Scientists at IBM have recently published an article in which one bit of information is stored using only 12 atoms. This remarkable bit of nanotechnology (sorry) does not mean we will see magnetic storage with 83,000 times the capacity of todays devices, but it is estimated this technology could lead to magnetic storage devices holding 100 times the information density we see today. Dont bother to place an order with Amazon.com quite yet. It will be sometime before this comes to the marketplace.

- See http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/36473.wss for a press release from IBM describing this research finding.

- See https://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9223396/IBM_smashes_Moore_s_Law_cuts_bit_size_to_12_atoms for a summary in Computerworld.

- The original research was published by Sebastian Loth, Susanne Baumann, Christopher P. Lutz, D.M. Eigler, and Andreas J. Heinrich, Bistability in Atomic-Scale Antiferromagnets, Science, 13 January 2012, 335 (6065), pp. 196-199). You can see an abstract at http://www.sciencemag.org/content/335/6065/196. Abstract and supplemental technical information is freely available available at

http://www.sciencemag.org/content/335/6065/196/suppl/DC1.

Oh No! The Blue Screen of Death

Yes, it happens to everyone eventually. Getting information from the blue screen that accompanies a crash can be challenging. Help is available in the form of BlueScreenView from NirSoft. See http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/blue_screen_view.html for a description and to download the program. This application scans minidump files that are created during crashes and displays information in a table. This information includes modules and drivers that may be responsible for the sad event. Learning to make sense of the data provided takes some effort, but if you have persistent crashes, this tool may be of considerable help.

Not Enough Space on Your Tablet or Smartphone?

These devices are quite limited in storage space, but you can add an additional 16 GB or 32 GB of storage to your iPhone or iPad using Kingston's wireless USB flashdrive, the Wi-Drive. Currently Amazon.com is selling Wi-Drives for $59.99 (16 GB) and $89.99 (32 GB). See http://www.engadget.com/2011/07/09/kingston-wi-drive-wireless-storage-for-ios-review/ for a review of the Wi-Drive and other devices for solving this capacity problem.

Windows 8 is Coming!

So you've been thinking about upgrading to Windows 7. You may possibly want to wait for Windows 8 which will probably be released the latter half of 2012. The beta version is scheduled to be released in late February. Windows 7 has been very well accepted in the marketplace. Windows 8 seems to be trying hard to compete with Apples outstanding user interface. Will Windows 8 be a success? Time will tell. Undoubtedly much will be written about this new operating system in the coming months.
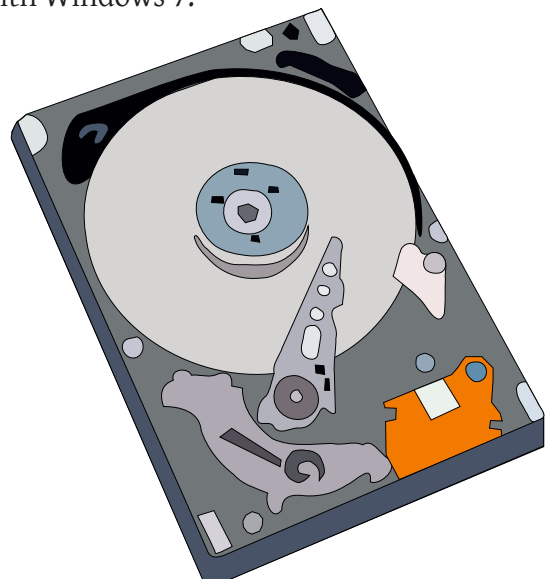
- See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92QfWOw88I for a video from Microsoft on Windows 8.

- See http://www.windows8news.com/ for news and tips about Windows 8.

- See http://www.zdnet.com/blog/microsoft/microsoft-previews-windows-8-app-store-launching-with-the-beta-in-late-february/11340 for information about Windows 8 and Microsoft's coming app store.

Acronis True Image 2012

This application has been quite popular for a number of years for backing up home computers. The 2012 version is now available from Acronis (see http://www.acronis.com/homecomputing/products/trueimage/) for $39.99 for one PC or $69.99 for three PCs. You can get a better deal from Gene Barlow at http://www.ugr.com/index.html.

- See http://www.infopackets.com/news/software/reviews/2011/20111216_acronis_true_image_2012_review.htm#details for a description of this product and its new features.

- See http://www.softpedia.com/reviews/windows/Acronis-True-Image-Home-2012-Review-232888.shtml for a review from Softpedia.

- See http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/products/features/backup-and-restore for information about a viable, free competitor to Acronis True Image, which comes with Windows 7.
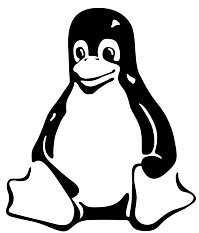
several commercial products that have similar capabilities (and Lorrin provides links to several of them), Lorrin noted that TrueCrypt is all most people will need. Lorrin's presentation, which includes step-by-step screen instructions for installing TrueCrypt, is also available as a 2 MB PDF file on the WAC Recent Meetings web page.

At the March meeting, Abby Stokes, author of "Is This Thing On? A Computer Handbook for Late Bloomers, Technophobes, and the Kicking & Screaming," will join us in person to talk about Social Networking, participate in an interview, a book signing (her book will be available for purchase), and a Questions & Answers session. Check out Abby's web site at http://abbyandme.com/, and plan to see her in person at the WAC meeting on March 17th.

As last month, I am grateful for Lorrin Garson's "Bits & Pieces" article contributions, and encourage other WAC members to submit their own articles and product reviews. And, as always, I thank editor Judy Taylour and the writers from members of the Association of Personal User Groups (APCUG) for their article contributions, who share their articles with the members of WAC and other APCUG user groups. This is one of the most obvious of the benefits that WAC receives as a member of APCUG.

Linux and Open Source News
by Geof Goodrum
linux(at)wacug.org

Privoxy: The Privacy-enhancing Web Proxy

Privoxy is free, Open Source (GNU General Public License v2) software that is an excellent addition to, or replacement for, the ad blockers and security plug-ins for web browsers. From the description on the Privoxy project's web site (http://www.privoxy.org/):

Privoxy is a non-caching web proxy with advanced filtering capabilities for enhancing privacy, modifying web page data and HTTP headers, controlling access, and removing ads and other obnoxious Internet junk. Privoxy has a flexible configuration and can be customized to suit individual needs and tastes. It has application for both stand-alone systems and multi-user networks.

As proxy server software that runs within the PC, Privoxy intercepts and filters web-based communications after they get to the computer but before they get passed to the web-browser, and therefore serves as a more general and consistent solution regardless of the browser. Note that Privoxy is not designed to block malware attacks and is not a firewall, so your system still needs software for these functions.

According to the extensive FAQ, Privoxy supports any web browser that can be configured to use a proxy, which includes nearly all browsers including Mozilla Firefox, Opera, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari. Privoxy also supports a broad range of Operating Systems, with Microsoft Windows (95, 98, ME, 2000, XP, Vista), GNU/Linux (RedHat, SuSE, Debian, Fedora, Gentoo, Slackware and others), Apple Mac OSX, IBM OS/2, AmigaOS, FreeBSD, NetBSD, OpenBSD, Solaris, and "various other flavors of Unix" listed.

Privoxy is easy to install on a PC (Privoxy is included in the Ubuntu Software Center for point and click installs). Most GNU/Linux installations will automatically start Privoxy in the background after installation. To use Privoxy, each web browser on the system must be configured under proxy settings to use it. For example, for Chromium in GNU/Linux, select "Preferences" from the configuration drop-down menu, "Under the Hood" in the left panel, and click the "Change Proxy Settings" button under Network and "Network proxy." Select "Manual" from the method drop down box, enter "localhost" in both the HTTP and HTTPS proxy boxes (leave the others blank), and enter Privoxy's port number (default is 8118) in the boxes to the immediate right.

Although the default configuration is usually sufficient to start, Privoxy configuration and documentation is accessible directly through the web browser by entering http://config.privoxy.org/ or the shortcut http://p.p/. These addresses will work if Privoxy is successfully functioning.

Once setup, you may notice some advertising on web pages is replaced by empty spaces or "Request blocked by Privoxy" followed by links to display why Privoxy blocked the request and to override the Privoxy block. Privoxy will also block certain tracking cookies, web bugs (invisible graphics to track your browsing), and advertising web sites.

If Privoxy is not included in your software catalog, you can download directly from the project web site. The web site is also the place to learn about all of Privoxy's features, as well as installation and configuration instructions.

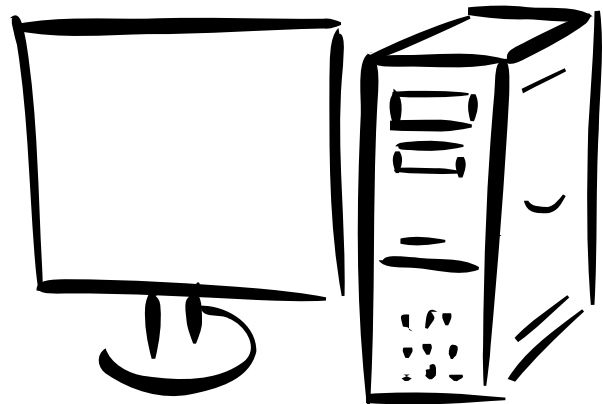## Featured Linux Software of the Month: March 2012

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.
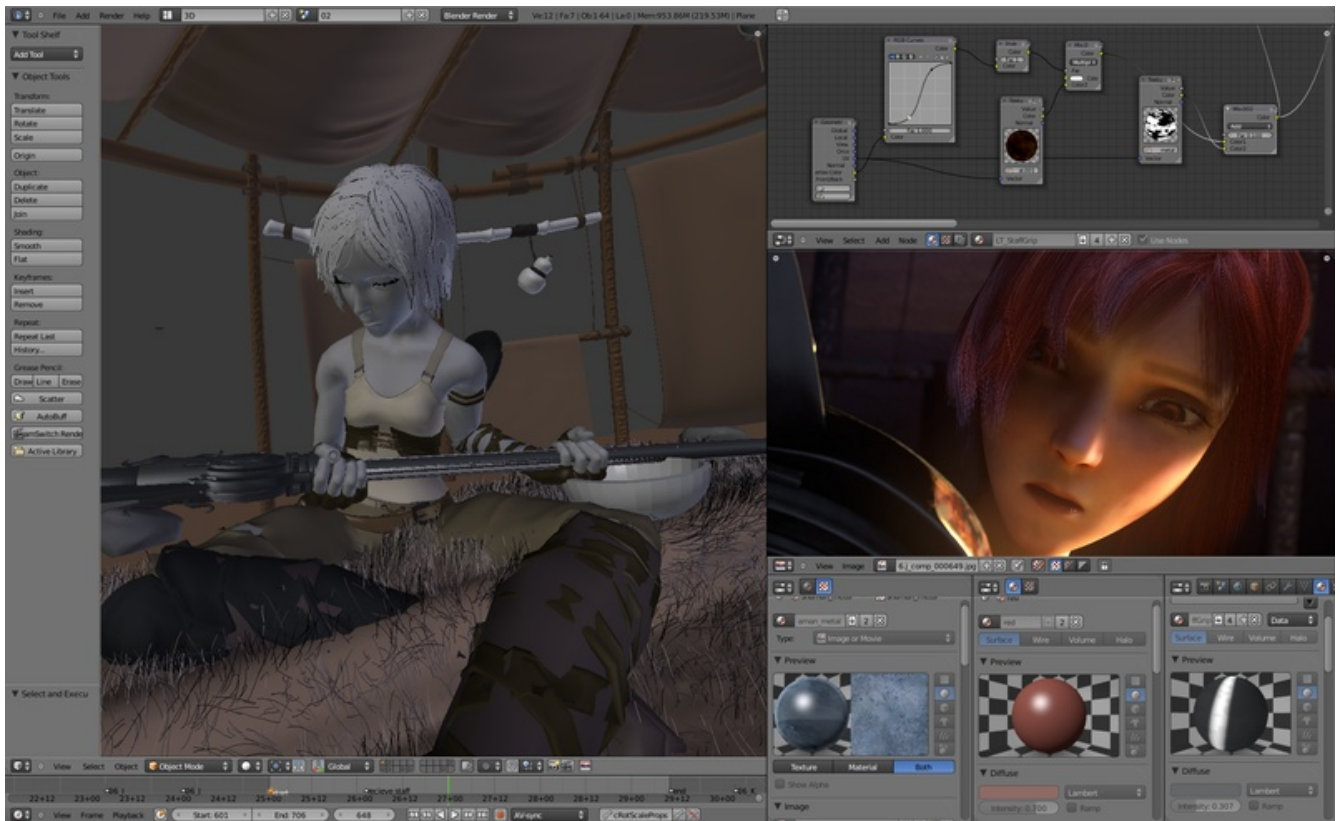
Blender – v2.62. http://www.blender.org/. Free GNU General Public License source code with development supported by The Blender Foundation and executable packages for Mandriva and Fedora. Blender is a free 3D animation studio. It includes tools for modeling, sculpting, texturing (painting, node-based shader materials, or UV mapped), UV mapping, rigging and constraints, weight painting, particle systems, simulation (fluids, physics, and soft body dynamics and an external crowd simulator), rendering, node-based compositing, and non linear video editing, as well as an integrated game engine for real-time interactive 3D, and game creation and playback with cross-platform compatibility.

Privoxy – v3.0.19. http://www.privoxy.org/. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable package for Debian by Privoxy Developers. See article in this issue.

TORCS – v1.3.3. http://torcs.sourceforge.net/. Free GNU General Public License source code and binary installer by Bernhard Wymann et al and executable packages for Mandriva, Fedora, and Debian/Ubuntu. TORCS, The Open Racing Car Simulator, is a highly portable multi platform 3D car racing simulation that features more than 50 different cars, more than 20 tracks, and 50 opponents to race against. Your can steer with a joystick or steering wheel, if the device is supported by your platform. It is also possible to drive with the mouse or the keyboard. Graphic features lighting, smoke, skidmarks and glowing brake disks. The simulation features a simple damage model, collisions, tire and wheel properties (springs, dampers, stiffness), aerodynamics (ground effect, spoilers) and much more. The gameplay allows different types of races from the simple practice session up to the championship. Enjoy racing against your friends in the split screen mode with up to four human players. and programmable computer opponents. It runs on Linux (x86, AMD64 and PPC), FreeBSD, OpenSolaris and Windows. Recommended hardware includes 800MHz CPU, 256MB RAM, OpenGL 1.3 compatible accelerated graphics card with 64 MB RAM. TORCS requires GLUT 3.7 or FreeGlut (better for full screen support than GLUT), PLIB 1.8.5 version, OpenAL, libpng and zlib, and libogg/vorbis (most or all included in major GNU/Linux distributions).

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

Top: Blender renders scene from Durian Open Movie Project "Sintel"   Bottom: TORCS

Using Sandboxie to Safely Browse the Internet (Based on ver 3.60)

by Jim McKnight

Director, Los Angeles Computer Society, California   December 2011 issue, User Friendly
www.jimopi.net
jim.mcknight (at) lacspc.org

General

Once Sandboxie is set up, all you have to do is click the Sandboxie Icon on the desktop and your regular Internet Browser opens safely in a sandbox.

Sandboxie uses your regular Internet Browser to go on the Internet without the fear that you will be tricked into infecting your PC by malicious websites, or by infected downloads.

Although Sandboxie does some amazing things with many kinds of programs, this article focuses on using the Sandboxie program to make your Internet browsing safe from malware infections.

The tips in this article are for the FREE version of Sandboxie. The paid version offers many bells and whistles, but for safe Internet browsing, the FREE version is adequate.

Be aware that some programs do not play well with Sandboxie. For details, see:

http://www.sandboxie.com/index.php?KnownConflicts

Nag Screen

The only downside to the FREE version of Sandboxie is that 30 days after installation, a Nag screen pops up most every time you use it with a 5 second delay telling you that the Nag delay will go away permanently if you buy Sandboxie. (Currently about $42.00 for a lifetime license that works for all your PC's (as an Individual owner).

Help and Tutorials

For an overview of what a sandbox is, go to the http://www.sandboxie.com home page.

Also see the Sandboxie Help pages at:
http://www.sandboxie.com/index.php?HelpTopics

See this Tutorial video set (3 parts; About 20 min total). It is very good:

http://www.securitytube.net/video/578

You can get to the 6-part "Getting Started" tutorial for the Sandboxie program at any time as follows: (Double-click the Sandboxie Control Icon on the Task bar > Help > Getting Started Tutorial)

Download and Install Sandboxie

You can download the Sandboxie program from:
http://www.sandboxie.com

During the installation, you may be notified of software compatibility conflicts between

Sandboxie and some other program/s. You will be asked to give permission to automatically change some configuration settings to fix it. Just click OK. Note: You can get to this screen anytime: (click Sandbox > Configure > Software Compatibility).

Setting Up Sandboxie to "Auto-Delete" Files

By default, Sandboxie does NOT Auto-delete anything. Everything is saved in the sandbox until you delete it.

I highly recommend setting up Sandboxie to "Automatically delete contents of sandbox" when the sandboxed browser is closed. This will delete all browser changes, add-ons, downloads, and program installs (including malware) each time you close Sandboxie.

To set up Sandboxie to always Auto-Delete:

1) Double-click the Sandboxie Control Icon in the System Notification area.

2) In the Sandboxie window, click Sandbox > Default Box > Sandbox Settings > Delete > Delete Invocation.

3) Click to check the box for _ Automatically delete contents of sandbox, and click OK.

NOTE: "Auto-delete" usually does not include manually downloaded files. They are kept in the sandbox until you manually either Recover them or Delete them.

Manually Delete Everything in the Sandbox

Double-click the "Sandboxie Control" system tray Icon, then; (click Sandbox > Default Box >Delete Contents) Close the Sandboxie Control window.

Save (Recover) Downloaded Files

Sandboxie offers you the opportunity to save "for real" any downloaded files both after you download the file and when you close the browser. If you do not save them, they disappear when you close Sandboxie (but by default stay in the sandbox for you to recover or delete later). Saving for real is called Quick Recovery.

Each time you download files to the Desktop, you are usually (but not always) prompted to "Quick Recover" that file (save for real).

If you download files to anywhere other than the Desktop, you will NOT be prompted for "Quick Recovery." Later, you can get to the Quick Recovery (save for real) screen by double-clicking the Sandboxie Control Icon in the notification area, then select (Sandbox >Default Box > Quick Recovery). Click on the desired Item/s (to highlight them), then click either "Recover to Same Folder" or "Recover to Any Folder."

Last resort: If you are still having trouble saving a file "for real" AND if you trust the download website AND if you trust the file: Close sandboxie, browse to that site without Sandboxie, and download your file. Scan it for malware before using.

Exploring Downloaded Files

It is best to explore downloaded files that are in the sandbox by using the "Sandboxed" version of Windows Explorer:

1) Open the Sandboxie Control program by double-clicking its Icon in the System Tray.

2) Click Sandbox > Default Box > Run Sandboxed > Run Windows Explorer.

Now as you explore the system using Windows Explorer in sandboxed mode, you will see your downloaded and sandboxed files right alongside regular files in the same folder where you downloaded them. This can be confusing so hang in there.

Check Downloaded Files for Malware

There are two ways to scan downloaded files for malware:

1) You can get to the file using the sandboxed Windows Explorer shown above, then right-click the file and run your normal Anti-malware program scan on it to make sure it is safe before "Saving it for real."

2) Everything that is sandboxed is actually hidden in a folder called C:\Sandbox. Your antivirus scanner can be run against that folder and will inspect all the files in it for malware. It should then be safe to save those downloaded files "for real."

How Do You Know if You Are Running in the Sandbox?

Two ways:

1) Look for # (pound signs) before and after the Browser's name in the Title Bar.

2) Hover the mouse pointer near the top of the active browser window. If you are running in the sandbox, the window frame will be outlined in a YELLOW border.

Making E-Mail Links Open in a Sandboxed Browser

My preferred way is to first open your default browser in the sandbox. Then if you click any links in your e-mail, they will open in the sandboxed browser.

If the default browser is not already open in the sandbox when you click an e-mail link, then the link will open the default browser WITHOUT being sandboxed.

Run a Different Browser "Sandboxed"

The Sandboxie Icon (Free version) always uses the system's "Default" browser. You cannot specify different browsers for the Sandboxie "Sandboxed Web Browser" Icon. (The paid version of Sandboxie has more flexibility).

If you want to use a different browser with Sandboxie, you have two choices:

1) Right-click the desired browser Icon (Context Menu), then select "Run Sandboxed." Note: Depending on your Operating System, the context menu option for Sandboxie may not show up. (IE: Quick launch Icons or the Start Menu Favorites Icons). It does always work with the Desktop Icons.

2) Change the Default browser:

a. Close the sandboxed browser.

b. Change the default browsing program to the one you desire. The method varies for different operating systems.

c. Double-click the Sandboxie "Sandboxed Web Browser" Icon. The new browser should now open.

Changes to the Browser

With Auto-Delete turned ON, Sandboxie will NOT save your Browsing History or any added Bookmarks, or any other changes to the Browser when Sandboxie closes.

With Auto-Delete turned OFF, your Browser changes will be remembered, but only within the Sandboxie browsing session. If you open the Browser without Sandboxie, the changes will not be visible.

Permanent Changes

Any Browser customizations such as (Add-ons, Favorites, Bookmarks, Toolbars, etc.) that you want to be permanently changed in your Browser must be installed by opening the Browser WITHOUT using Sandboxie, and then making the changes. Otherwise, any changes you make will be sandboxed and will disappear.

Printing

Yes, you can print stuff as usual from your Browser (even PDF's from the sandboxed Adobe Reader).

Browser is Slow to Close

This is normal from time to time. Make sure there are no open windows hidden behind the main browser window awaiting user action.

Desktop "Internet" Shortcut Icons

If you like to use various different browsers to go on the internet, be aware that your regular Desktop Internet Browser Icons do NOT use Sandboxie to open them. To create new Desktop Internet Icons that WILL use Sandboxie to open a specific Browser program, try this:

Open the Sandboxie Control program by double-clicking its Icon in the System Tray. Click (Configure > Windows Shell Integration > click the "Add Shortcut Icons" button).

Click OK a couple times until you get to the window titled "Sandboxie Start Menu Default box" and select "Desktop."

Click to highlight the desktop Icon you want to duplicate. The new Icon will immediately appear on the Desktop.

Be sure to rename each Icon after you create it. This is so Sandboxie will not overwrite it when you create another Icon.

Beyond Bullet Points: Using Microsoft PowerPoint to Create Presentations That Inform, Motivate, and Inspire

Book Review by Greg West
Vice President, Sarnia CUG, Canada
APCUG Advisor, Regions 6 and International
Gregory (at) alternatecloud.com

All of us have had, or were forced, to sit through a PowerPoint presentation wishing we were somewhere else. The speaker was so boring, the

presentation slides were cheesy and extremely confusing, and our insides screamed for us to get up and leave the room.

Beyond Bullet Points is designed in such a way that this will never happen when you give your next presentation. This book takes us through the proper steps in creating the most interesting and very definitive presentation possible. Here is where we learn the importance of telling a story with our slides. Layout is another import issue that is fully covered in Chapter 4: "Planning Your First Five Slides." This is where you learn how to grab your audience right away and keep them focused on your presentation.

You will learn why graphics are so important and how they can make or break a presentation. Chapter 8 is where the fun begins as you learn how to add graphics to various areas within your slides. You will learn how to use the graphics you already have on your computer, and how to get graphics from "Stock Photography Web Sites".

Your PowerPoint presentation comes together in Chapter 9: "Delivering Your...Presentation". The amateur presenters are separated from the professionals. This chapter prepares you for the delivery of your presentation. Here you are shown the basic ground rules for removing distractions, prompting a dialogue and how to enhance your presentation effectively.

A real treat is found in Appendix A, where ground rules and checklists act as an overview ensuring you have created a very professional presentation. Added features: This book comes with website links for "Companion Content" with key tools and a bonus Chapter 11, introducing a "Visual Improv," PDF version of the ground rules and checklists. You also get a voucher for your free online version of this book. For anyone who is serious about their presentations, this book is a keeper.

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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/sign_up.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.

March 2012 Schedule

Start Time is 2pm local unless otherwise stated.

Mar 17 & Mar 18: Multiple Monitors

Mar 24 & Mar 25: Backup & Archiving

Mar 31 & Apr 1: Multiboot & Virtual Machines

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

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Columnist:.. Lorrin Garson, netcolumn(at)wacug.org

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

WAC Membership Application / Renewal

Dues are collected on an Annual basis and include download access to WAC's monthly newsletter, ***The Cursor***, in PDF format.

Annual Dues: $25.00

Make checks payable to WAC. Please do not send cash by mail. Remit payment in person at the WAC Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:

Washington Area Computer User Group
30 Fendall Ave
Alexandria VA 22304-6300

E-mail membership questions and address changes to membership(at)wacug.org

Thank you for joining WAC!

Name:

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State: Zip Code:

Windows	MacOS	Linux/Unix
Word Processing	Spreadsheet	Database
Photography	Video	Graphics
Genealogy	Finance	Music
Programming	Publishing	Hardware
Other:		

Next WAC Meetings: <u>Mar 17</u> · Apr 21 · May 19 · Jun 16 · Jul 21
Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or visit our web site at
http://www.wacug.org/

<u>Meeting Location</u>

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)
4210 Roberts Road
Fairfax, VA 22032

FREE ADMISSION
BRING A FRIEND!

Service Desks open at
12:30 PM

Meeting starts at
1:00 PM

LABEL

ICE Your Cell Phone—Save Your Life

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS
Sandy (at) compukiss.com
www.compukiss.com

You may have never heard of the ACEP, American College of Emergency Physicians, but their new consumer website (www.acep.org) is one you might want to visit. With the number of emergency room visits growing rapidly, this organization has put together a website where patients can access health information, share stories, and get involved in advocacy efforts.

Visits to the emergency department hit a new high in 2006. A record 119.2 million people, up from 115 million, were recorded by the Centers for Disease Control, with an average of 227 visits per minute. The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) predicts those numbers will only keep rising.

According to the report, age groups with the highest visit rates were infants under 12 months of age and those over the age of 75. In fact, people aged 65 and older are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and are the most likely to be admitted to the hospital of all emergency patients. Researchers conclude that visits for patients between 65 and 74 could nearly double from 64 million in 2003 to 111.7 million by 2013. Despite these numbers, emergency departments continue to close—causing delays for people with serious medical conditions like heart attacks.

In honor of its 40th anniversary, ACEP will be making available video clips featuring emergency medicine pioneers, vintage photographs and radio public service announcements. In addition, the organization is launching a new consumer website, EmergencyCareForYou.org, which features extensive public information. The year-long campaign is sponsored in part by General Motors OnStar, Ultrasonix and ZOLL Medical Corporation.

The EmergencyCareForYou website is a comprehensive site that you will want to visit. It has information on everything from "how to tell if it is an emergency" to "family disaster preparedness".

One important section of this website talks about how "ICE" and Your Cell Phone Can Help Save Your Life.

The website states, "Emergency physicians are recommending that people with cellular phones add "ICE'" entries into their cell phone address books. This stands for "In Case of Emergency," and medical professionals are using it to notify the person's emergency contacts and to obtain critical medical information when a patient arrives unconscious or unable to answer questions."

I didn't know about this, yet it sounds like a great idea! Check it out. It may save your life. More information can be found at the ICEforHelp website, www.iceforhelp.com.

Windows Live SkyDrive: An Office in the Cloud

by Nancy DeMarte
Member, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
December 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
www.spcug.org
ndemarte (at) Verizon.net

A quiet, steady evolution is taking place in the data storage world. Soon CD's and external hard drives may be replaced by storage on the Internet, or, as we say, the "cloud." In this era of mobile devices like smart phones, laptops, and tablets, it is natural for us to want to have access to the files and photos on our base computer when we are in some remote location. SkyDrive is Microsoft's password-protected, free online storage area, complete with abbreviated versions of popular Microsoft Office programs for editing the stored files. It is also equipped for sharing files with others and is a convenient way to transfer files from an old computer to a new one. Microsoft Office users should get to know Windows Live SkyDrive as a solid option for online backup.

Online storage has been around for awhile, primarily purchased by businesses as a backup for large amounts of data. Carbonite, for example, is a well-respected online storage company popular

with businesses which also offers a package for home clients. The home client pays an annual fee of about $60 per computer to upload user-created files to a secure spot. Free online storage is not as common, but Google and Microsoft are competing for the title of most popular free cloud storage. I have used Microsoft's SkyDrive for a couple of years and have found it to be a user friendly, flexible service with many good features and being updated all the time.
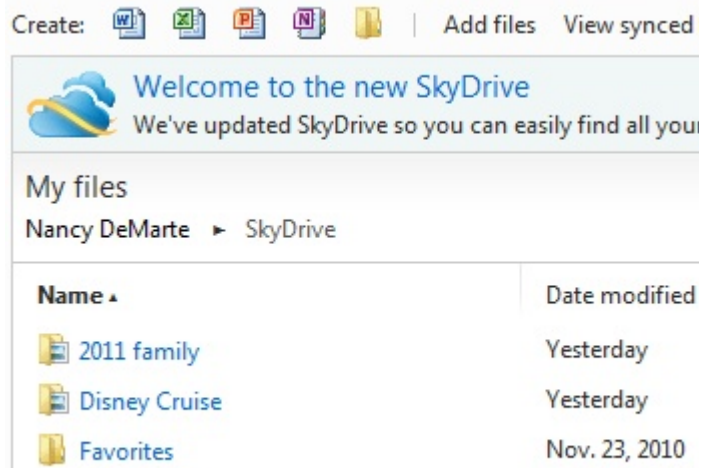
Windows Live

Before we explore how SkyDrive works, let's take a minute to review the concept of "Windows Live," of which SkyDrive is a part. Microsoft has been reworking the "Live" idea since 2005. It is a group of online services and software downloads which complement Microsoft's operating systems. When Windows 7 was introduced, several applications which had been part of earlier Windows versions were removed, among them Windows Mail and Photo Gallery. Instead, Microsoft offered a suite of programs and services called Microsoft Live Essentials and made it available for free downloads, as long as the person joined the Live community with a username and password. (I have belonged for years and have not received spam as a result.) Users can choose the programs they want from a long list. Many of these are online services, such as SkyDrive and Hotmail. Others are downloadable programs, such as Windows Live Mail and Movie Maker. All are free. Microsoft has announced recently that Windows 8 will have the Live Essentials package included with the system.

SkyDrive: Free Storage

SkyDrive lets a Microsoft Office user add Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, OneNote documents, and photos to a password-protected place on the Internet at skydrive.live.com. You can add a single file up to 100MB in size and can store a total of 25GB at no charge. These limits were recently raised, and the prediction is that storage space on SkyDrive may be unlimited very soon. Isn't competition great?

To add files to SkyDrive, you must first create a free Live account, then log on to SkyDrive and create

folders to hold your files. You then select the files, including photos, from your computer and upload copies of them into these folders using an easy-to-follow wizard on the SkyDrive home page. You can even upload a whole folder at once as a local zip drive. Next you set permissions for each folder using a simple slider and folksy categories: Everyone (public), People I selected, People with a link, or Just me.

Once files are in SkyDrive, they can be deleted, organized, and renamed. Plus, they can be edited with the Office web apps, mini-versions of Office programs located on the SkyDrive home page, using any version of Office back to 2003. If you have Office 2010, you can open a file that you have stored in SkyDrive in the appropriate web app, and then click the "Open in ..." button to open it with your full version of program on your computer. If you have an earlier version of Office, you can download a plug-in program from Microsoft that allows you to open a file with your full program. I tried this on my laptop with Word 2007, however, and found it cumbersome. I guess they want us to buy Office 2010. As a workaround, you can always download a file from SkyDrive to your computer for full editing capabilities.

Sharing Files

If you want to share a file, whether an Office file for a photo, on SkyDrive with someone, you can either send him a link or set the permission so he can view and/or edit it. I experimented by sharing a Word 2007 document with a friend who is not a member of Windows Live. In SkyDrive, I highlighted the file I

wanted to send. From the Sharing menu, I clicked 'Send a Link'. An email message opened ready to address. It contained a link to the file with a spot for me to type a message. My friend received the message with no problem and merely clicked the link to go directly to the folder on SkyDrive. She now has permission to view documents in that folder.

Currently, the only Office web app that allows for shared editing is Excel. This involves editing a spreadsheet in SkyDrive with selected people. Names of those working on the file at the same time show up in the toolbar.

SkyDrive is greatly improved from its predecessor, Windows Live Workspace. I would expect it to get even better as the competition heats up with its rival Google. The reviews show that although Google made a huge push a couple of years ago, with its array of services like Google Apps and Google Calendar, Microsoft is catching up. Its latest version of SkyDrive, plus two new related synchronization services, Live Sync and Live Mesh, are a good start. Microsoft now offers 25 GB of free storage compared with Google's 1 GB (although there is the option to purchase more). If you are a Microsoft Office fan, then you can't go wrong by giving SkyDrive a try.

Stellarium

by Cal Esneault
President, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA and leader of many Open Source Workshops & SIGs
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http://cccclinuxsig.pbwiki.com
www.clickers.org
ccnewsletter (at) cox.net

In my youth, I would take a copy of my uncle's Star and Telescope magazine and go to the center section to use the two-page star map guide. Twisting and turning the map to match my view, the many constellations and other night time wonders of the universe could be identified. Today, we can use vastly superior computerized versions to guide us through the night sky. One excellent program is

Stellarium, an open-source program available for Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, and BSD operating systems. Although there are more sophisticated programs designed for professional and advanced amateur stargazers, Stellarium fits in the "fun" group by providing simple but detailed functions in a user friendly manner. The essential concept is to get an annotated view of a portion of the sky, adjusted for location and desired viewing time, which can be adjusted horizontally and vertically to match your viewing perspective.

Initial use can be confusing. It starts up in full screen mode with no menu items visible. Move your mouse to the left or bottom border to activate the command tool bars (see below). Those items on the bottom turn on the various viewing items (constellation names, constellation connectors, planet id's, horizon types, etc.). Those items on the left set up the system controls (location, time, item luminosity to display, etc.).

The default location is Paris, France. Go to the "Location window" icon to choose your city from a dropdown list (or input latitude and longitude). Next, go to the "Date/time window" to set your local time. By using up/down arrow controls you can see what the sky will look like at any future or past time (for example, what can I see if I go out tonight at 10:00 PM?).

Below is a screenshot of a night time view. I have added an azimuthal grid and constellation connectors. If you have a telescope with an equatorial mount, you can also display an equatorial grid. Clicking on any object will display key

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information (apparent magnitude, hour angle and declination, and azimuthal information updated for passage of time). Using the "ocular" view, you can see any listed object as viewed by a telescope of approximately 80x magnification.

The default system includes 600,000 stars along with a full Messier catalog of Nebulae. The constellations of 10 different cultures are included. Various upgrade modules, plug-ins, and scripts exist (for example, you can expand to view over 200 million stars). Depending upon your needs, you can change the projected view of the sky—stereoscopic, fish-eye, cylindrical, etc. There is a text-entry search window to quickly locate objects.

Download a free copy at stellarium.org (Linux users, find with your package manager). Smartphone versions are available for iOS (Android users, use Google Sky instead).

Invisible Shield
by George Harding
Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ
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www.aztcs.org
georgehardingsbd (at) earthlink.net

If you have a smart phone, MP3 player, tablet or other portable device, you need a durable covering for the faces of your instrument. ZAGG has a solution for you.

Why have a covering? Many reasons:

First, you want to protect the surfaces from scratches. Plastic scratches very easily and even glass can be marred.

Second, it's easier to clean than the natural surface.

Third, even the corners and curves are protected.

Fourth, the covering is easier to hold onto, so you're less likely to drop it. And last, it's invisible.

The product is specific to each device, since it must have the proper cutouts for the device you're going to protect. ZAGG has a product for just about every device known to the tech world.

The Invisible Shield product has a lifetime guarantee. If it gets damaged, ZAGG will replace it for free. You can't get better protection than that!

Installation is carefully done. First, wash your hands (didn't think of that, did you?). Unplug or turn off your device. Wipe it clean with a lint-free cloth. The kit comes with a small bottle of spray. You spray your fingertips with it. Then remove the paper backing from the clear plastic overlay for the surface you are working on (there are overlays for all sides of your device). Then spray the overlay.

Next, place the overlay on the surface you're working on and make sure it's aligned properly. If necessary, remove the overly, spray it again and realign it. You can lightly spray the non-adhesive side of the overlay to make the squeegee move more smoothly. The squeegee (supplied) is then used to push out the bubbles and excess solution. Soak up any excess solution with a clean cloth. You'll want to set your device aside for overnight to let the solution dry and cure.

The overlays won't scratch, tear or become damaged and should last for the lifetime of your device. If you encounter a problem, contact Zagg for replacement of the Invisible Shield.

About: Invisible Shield
Vendor: ZAGG
www.zagg.com
Price: Varies by device, but about $25 for most