

## Useful Bits & Pieces

by Lorrin R. Garson

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### Shortened URLs

A reader has suggested that shortened URLs be used in place of hard-to-type long URLs. Huh, you ask? Shortened URLs? Interested in men's boots at Amazon? Just click on the URL [http://www.amazon.com/gp/search/ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_acs\\_fw\\_smartcategory\\_1?rh=n%3A679307011%2Ck%3Amen%27s+boots&keywords=men%27s+boots&ie=UTF8&qid=1390083465&sr=8-1-ac](http://www.amazon.com/gp/search/ref=sr_1_1_acs_fw_smartcategory_1?rh=n%3A679307011%2Ck%3Amen%27s+boots&keywords=men%27s+boots&ie=UTF8&qid=1390083465&sr=8-1-ac). No big deal. But what if you need to type this URL from hardcopy? Oh, you're kidding! How about typing <http://goo.gl/K7Xz0r><sup>1</sup> instead? Both URLs go to the identical Web site.

However, you should be very cautious about clicking on shortened URLs. In the example above you have no idea whether this is to Amazon, some pornographic site or whether clicking will dump malware on your computer. If you aren't comfortable with the source of the

<sup>1</sup>This shortened URL was created by Google at <http://goo.gl> where the shortened URL is resolved in order to take you to the right Web site. Google was selected because the company is likely to survive and resolution of shortened URLs is quick. There are many companies offering services URL shortening services. For example, see <http://goo.gl/dHmPFw>.

shortened URL, don't click on it. You can retrieve the original URL by entering the shortened URL at <http://longurl.org/expand> and clicking on Expand. Try it with <http://goo.gl/K7Xz0r>.

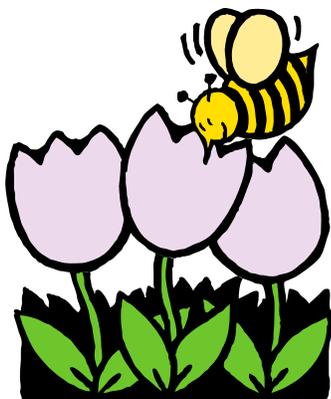
### New Apple Mac Pro

For those who must have the latest and greatest computer at home, and who have very deep pockets, consider the Mac Pro shown below.



Apple started taking orders for this study in beautiful industrial design last December with shipments to begin this month (originally February). In that menacing looking black cylinder 9.9 inches high and 6.6 inches in diameter lurks some high powered hardware. See

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<http://goo.gl/GeHEP2> for specifics. But it will cost you! The minimum system is priced at \$2,999 with only 256 GB of flash storage and without monitor, keyboard, mouse (or trackpad) or back-up storage. If you want to buy a fully tricked out specimen it will set you back \$14,000 to \$15,000. But you'll have a very powerful machine.

### **Deadline of Sales of Windows 7 PCs Postponed?**

Probably as a reflection of the slow sales of Windows 8, Microsoft has very quietly postponed the deadline on which computer manufacturers may sell Windows 7 based computers. See <http://goo.gl/PpJ3t6> and note the deadline for Windows 7 is "To be determined". Earlier, the end date was shown as October 30, 2014, which is consistent with Microsoft's policy to stop selling an older operating system in retail one year after the launch of its successor and halt delivery of the previous Windows edition to OEMs two years after a new version. Microsoft may indeed extend the October 2014 deadline, but it may apply to only enterprise customers and not to retail sales. Uncertainty reigns!

### **BitTorrent Sync**

By now we are all familiar with storing information in the Cloud as a means to share files of many types across disparate devices. However, Cloud storage is expensive for quantities of data larger than 5-20 GB, depending on the service, and for many individuals presents substantial security issues. BitTorrent Sync offers an alternative method to share information between PCs, Macs, Linux machines, tablets and smartphones. After you have installed the BitTorrent Sync client on your computer (or other device), choose a folder you want to sync and BitTorrent Sync will generate a random 21-byte key for that folder. To sync that folder with another device, download and install the BitTorrent Sync client on that device and type in the key. Files that are dropped into the designated folder will now sync between these

two (or more) devices using the well-known P2P (peer-to-peer) protocol. Files to share are stored locally on your hardware, not in the Cloud, and are strongly encrypted (256-bit AES encryption) when sent through the Internet. BitTorrent Sync is free (with ads) or you can purchase BitTorrent Sync Plus (PC only) for \$24.95/year (with no ads), and this includes file conversion for tablets, phones and TVs, anti-virus and an HD media player (see <http://goo.gl/r9oQ77>). Also see <http://goo.gl/EOrseu>.

See <http://goo.gl/4gYpDp> for FAQs and <http://goo.gl/YXpexG> for the 19-page BitTorrent Sync User Guide.

### **My Cloud from Western Digital**

Are you seeking an alternative to expensive Cloud storage? Consider Western Digital's "My Cloud". This NAS (Network Attached Storage) device can be used with Macs, PCs, Linux machines, and apps on tablets and smartphones. My Cloud comes in three sizes that range in price from \$140 (2 TB), to \$170 (3 TB) to \$210 (4 TB). Setup, often a pain with NAS devices, is reported to be fairly simple using a browser or downloading software from Western Digital. Mac users will be pleased to learn My Cloud can be used with "Time Machine" for backup.

**Pros:** Good performance. Relatively inexpensive. Simple setup (well, maybe). Files accessible anywhere via the Internet. USB-3 port for expansion or backup of the My Cloud device ("snapshots"). Gigabit Ethernet.

**Cons:** Does not provide offsite storage. Somewhat limited functionality with Apple iOS 7 (compared to Android). No RAID (thus the vulnerability of a single disk). Slow wireless transfer speed.

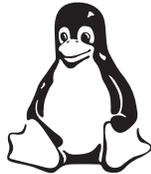
See <http://goo.gl/sCrJny> for a good description and review. See <http://goo.gl/XBqGil> for information from Western Digital. See MaximumPC, January 2014, pp. 20-21 for a comparison between My Cloud and Dropbox.

## Linux and Open Source News

by Geof Goodrum

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### Review: Google Nexus 5 Smartphone

I bought a Google Nexus 5 manufactured by LG Electronics (<http://www.google.com/nexus/5/>) shortly after its initial release in November 2013 to replace an aging pay-by-minute feature phone and a GPS unit that I used for driving and hiking. I purchased the unlocked (no contract required) 32GB model (LG-D820) directly from the Google Play web site for a total delivered price of \$428.94 (\$399+\$9.99 shipping+\$19.95 tax). This is my first smartphone, though I had passing familiarity with the Android operating system.



#### Specifications

Display: IPS 4.95" diagonal 1920x1080 pixels (445 pixels per inch), Corning® Gorilla® Glass 3

Operating System: Google Android 4.4.2 ("KitKat"), Linux kernel 3.4.0-gadb2201

Camera: 1.3 MP front, 8 MP rear with optical image stabilization

Weight: 4.6 oz (130g)

Size: 2.7x5.4x0.3 in (69.2x137.9x8.6mm)

CPU: 2.26GHz ARMv7 quad core Qualcomm Snapdragon™ 800

GPU: 450MHz Adreno 330

Memory: 16GB ROM, 2GB RAM, 16 or 32 GB flash storage (unformatted)

Network: Dual band (2.4/5 GHz) WiFi 802.11a/b/g/n/ac, Bluetooth 4.0, Near Field Communications, 2G/3G/4G LTE cellular

Sensors: GPS, Gyroscope, Accelerometer, Compass, Proximity/Ambient Light, Barometer/Pressure, Hall Effect (Magnetic Field)

Battery: 2300 mAh

Ports and Connectors: 3.5mm stereo audio out, microUSB (SlimPort™ enabled video output), dual microphones, speaker

In the Box: Nexus 5 phone, SIM ejection tool, 3 ft USB to microUSB cable, 120VAC USB port charger, Quick Start Guide, Safety and Warranty Guide

#### Pros

Latest Android OS updates: Google Nexus and Google Play branded products receive updates directly from Google, unlike other products that may or may not receive updates (see [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2013/12/27/htc\\_android\\_update\\_infographic/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2013/12/27/htc_android_update_infographic/)).

Encrypted storage option: During initial setup, internal storage can be encrypted with a passphrase (entered on power-up) to prevent unauthorized users from viewing personal photos and data files.

Wireless charging built-in: Cable-free charging uses Qi chargers (but may not work with some accessory cases).

#### Cons

No memory card expansion: A long-standing complaint about the Nexus devices is lack of a SD card expansion slot to add storage. A deal-breaker for some, others opt for the maximum built-in storage (32GB for Nexus 5).

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### Wireless Service

Both contract and no-contract/pre-paid plans are available from most major carriers with the significant exception of Verizon, which does not support the Nexus 5.

Contract carriers include T-Mobile, AT&T, and Sprint. T-Mobile currently offers a two-year contract at \$16.50 per month plus a \$10 SIM card kit and qualifying service plan with remaining balance due with early termination. Note that some carriers only offer the 16GB model.

I surveyed available pre-paid plans in December 2013, including MetroPCS, Straight Talk (through Walmart), Cricket, Boost Mobile and T-Mobile. I considered not only cost of service, but data service coverage (I live in a service “shadow”). I found the article at <http://www.droid-life.com/2013/11/04/best-prepaid-wireless-plans/> to be very useful, and settled on the T-Mobile \$30 per month plan that includes 100 minutes talk (additional minutes at 10¢ each), unlimited text messages, and 5GB high-speed data (unlimited 2G data after 5GB). I also added a \$15 per month option to allow WiFi Hotspot and USB tethering with my Debian 7 equipped laptop (I found network tethering over USB sometimes requires rebooting the Nexus 5, but otherwise works very well). I use Google Voice (Voice over Internet Protocol, VoIP) service to receive and make infrequent calls, which goes against my data allocation or free WiFi access points (where available), so the lack of phone minutes works for me. I receive LTE service in most locations (though weak at home), but the speed appeared to be as good as my local cable Internet service. My monthly Internet usage averaged 6GB per month, so I ended up canceling my cable Internet service and saved money (\$51 per month for cable, \$45 for T-Mobile), though I’m more conservative about streaming media and took my 9 year old Gentoo Linux desktop PC off the network to reduce software downloads.

### Accessories

The accessory market is ramping up quickly since the product launch. I use an I-Blason Armorbox case to protect against weather, drops and scratches when I hike, and also purchased a SlimPort HDMI video adapter and a Bluetooth-enabled on-board diagnostic computer (OBD) adapter for my car. I also tested the phone with my new Kenwood KDC-BT755HD car stereo, which connects to the Nexus 5 via USB and Bluetooth for phone and music apps. I will review these in the future.

### Apps

The first application I planned to install from the Google Play site was a free anti-virus/anti-malware product. I checked out the latest test results at <http://www.av-test.org/en/tests/mobile-devices/android/>. However, there is debate over the necessity (<http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/do-you-need-antivirus-on-android/>), with the vendors understandably promoting their use but others arguing that users who mind permissions requested by apps at installation and only get apps from trusted sources (such as Google Play) can get by without these utilities. A top-rated free product from an overseas vendor requested overly broad permissions, so I decided to do without. I did install the Open Source Prey Project (<http://preyproject.com/>) client from Google Play on the phone to help find a lost/stolen phone and wipe files remotely. However, I later discovered Android Device Manager is built into KitKat, which has similar functionality to remotely locate and ring the phone, erase all data (perform factory reset), and change the phone’s login PIN.

I also installed GasBuddy to find the cheapest gas near my location, Backcountry Navigator for GPS-assisted hiking (started with free trial, upgraded to paid Pro), AllTrails (hike planner web application), Torque Lite (free OBD app), Xfinity ToGo (on-demand streaming video), Magnatune (streaming music), and the Giant

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Food shopping app. To support user group activities, I installed the Zoom videoconferencing application, though I'm still hoping for a native Linux application. I will also review these as time permits.

### Summary

Reviews of the Nexus 5 are very favorable, noting its value compared to other similarly-equipped phones such as the HTC One, the Samsung Galaxy S4, and the Sony Xperia Z

(<http://www.forbes.com/sites/gordonkelly/2014/01/29/nexus-5-review-the-long-term-owners-test/>).

This smartphone certainly changed the way I do things, as I try to take advantage of its features every day. I usually turn off battery-sapping features I'm not using, including GPS, Bluetooth, and WiFi. I also leave the phone in standby most of the time. I can usually run three days between recharges, though I tend to recharge the phone daily. The OS makes it easy to access most features, though it does have a learning curve for an inexperienced user (Google provides tutorials online, but I picked up most of the features by experimenting). The built-in camera functions well, though there were some early complaints about app sluggishness that were addressed by an update pushed by Google after the initial release. The 8MP camera features a High Dynamic Range "HDR+" mode that improves images by merging two sequential pictures at different light settings and I use it by default, but this is not appropriate for shots with lots of movement. The built-in Optical Image Stabilization helps overcome camera movement to reduce blur. The camera also features built-in panoramic and 360 degree spherical image (autostitching) modes, as well as HD video. Photos and videos can be automatically backed up (over mobile wireless or WiFi, which you control) to your Google account. The new OS also features Google Now, which is a voice-activated feature that provides local weather, news, local events, and navigation.

TIP: if you use mobile wireless routinely to access the web, the Google Chrome browser for Mobile recently introduced a feature (under Settings – Bandwidth Management – Reduce data usage) to compress web page data by an average of 50%, which minimizes data plan usage. This feature is disabled by default, and does not work for encrypted (https) pages and while in incognito mode.

The KitKat OS also provides numerous built-in panels to track and manage battery usage by app and function, storage usage, and data usage over WiFi and mobile wireless.

Android users who are used to wireless carrier and manufacturer enhancements may miss those on the Nexus 5, but the new OS is full of features and people like myself prefer to avoid the bloat of unwanted software. This phone will also keep up with new Android OS updates, unlike most carrier phones. On a pre-paid plan, an unlocked Nexus 5 phone can be moved from one wireless carrier to another very easily as prices and service plans change.

Overall, I am very happy with my Nexus 5 and recommend it highly for anyone looking for the best value Android phone.

### Featured Open Source Software of the Month: March 2014

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

**Darkstat** – v3.0.718.

<http://unix4lyfe.org/darkstat/>. Free GNU General Public License source code by Emil Mikulic and executable packages for FreeBSD and OpenBSD, and Debian, Ubuntu, OpenSuSE, and Slackware Linux, and OpenWRT routers. darkstat is an ntop-workalike network statistics gatherer. It runs as a background process, uses libpcap (required, included in GNU/Linux distributions)

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The screenshot shows the gmusicbrowser interface. The main window displays a list of songs grouped by album and artist. The 'Dire Straits' album 'Live at the BBC' is selected, showing tracks like 'Down To The Waterline', 'Water Of Love', and 'Lions'. The right sidebar shows a list of artists, with 'Dire Straits (1978 - 1996)' highlighted. The bottom of the window shows album covers and statistics for 'Dire Straits' and 'Live at the BBC'.

Above: gmusicbrowser Songtree view

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to capture network traffic, and has a Web interface that serves up reports of statistics such as data transferred by host, port, and protocol. It also has a neat bandwidth usage graph.

**gmusicbrowser** – v1.1.11.

<http://gmusicbrowser.org/>. Free Perl script application by Quentin Sculo. gmusicbrowser is a jukebox designed with large music libraries of over 10,000 MP3, Ogg, m4a, FLAC, and MPC files in mind. It has easy access to related songs (same artist, album, or title) and supports multiple genres per song, ratings, and labels. It has extensive filtering capabilities, customizable random modes, customizable window layouts, mass-tagging, and more. Requires Perl, gtk+2, and a supported music player (e.g. gstreamer, mplayer, amixer), included in GNU/Linux distributions.

**OpenTaxSolver** – v11.01.

<http://opentaxsolver.sourceforge.net/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Linux (32 and 64 bit), Microsoft Windows®, and Apple MacOSX by Aston Roberts et al. OTS is an easy program for calculating personal income tax form entries and taxes-owed or refund due. The initial updated version of OTS for the 2013 Tax Year has been released and is now available for downloading. As in prior years, this version contains programs for US 1040 with Schedules A, B, C, D, and with the 8829 and 8849 forms. It also contains updated State versions for California, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts. The OTS tax package is intended to be used with the Tax booklets published by your government for determining what numbers

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you need to enter, and then it assists you in doing the otherwise tedious calculations while showing the intermediate and final numbers. It takes care of the tedious and error-prone work, leaving you with just the simple task of writing the answers on your final tax form. OTS is particularly useful in combination with the new Adobe PDF Fill-In forms distributed by an ever growing list of government agencies. While the OTS programs has been developed over the past fifteen years, results have been checked against commercial packages such as TurboTax (Intuit), TaxCut (HR Block), and TaxAct (2nd Story Software). The answers produced by OTS have usually matched to within a dollar, differing sometimes by rounding differences. Certainly your mileage may vary. Always double-check your tax forms!

**Why Can't I Connect?** – v1.6.3.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/wciconnect/>.

Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Microsoft Windows, and RPM and DEB package-based GNU/Linux distributions (e.g., Debian, Ubuntu, Fedora) by Chris Ohmstede. "Why Can't I Connect" makes it easier to resolve TCP/IP connection errors. Use it to diagnose connections to common server types and create generic clients and servers. The 32 bit Windows executable runs fine in 64 bit Windows systems. 64 bit Linux systems, however, should compile from source.

**Kernel Source** – v3.13.1.

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



## Windows 7 Libraries

by Dick Maybach

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Windows 7 introduced a new way of accessing files, libraries. These are roughly similar to program shortcuts. A shortcut points to a program, while a library points to group of files and/or directories. Neither takes up significant disk space, and you can delete either without deleting what they point to. Shortcuts appear on your desktop, while libraries appear in your file manager. The purpose of both is the same—make it easier to access things on your PC.

The argument in favor of libraries is best made by citing some examples.

Your primary PC is a laptop with limited disk space, so you have most of your extensive collection of videos on an external USB hard drive, with just a few of your favorites on your laptop. You create a video library that includes both the video directory on your laptop and the external hard drive. When you travel (without the external drive) it includes only your favorites, but when you're home it expands to hold your entire collection. If you fill the USB drive, you can add a second and see its contents in the same library. Searches are now much faster, since they will look only at your video collection, and it will appear in one place even though it may be spread over several hard drives. This becomes even more important if the external drives archive data other than videos.

You are making a report that analyzes data from several different projects, each stored in a different directory. So you create a library that includes all the directories you need, and all the data appears to be in one place. When you finish the report, you can delete the now unneeded library without affecting any of your data.

You have an extensive photo collection with recent ones stored on your desktop PC (in My

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Pictures) and older ones archived on a different internal drive that you added when your C: drive began to fill. Using a library brings these together seamlessly.

You can probably think of other examples that fit your own situation.

It should be obvious that libraries don't affect the need to organize your files logically into directories. If you just throw everything together in My Documents, every library will contain all your files. Libraries augment your directory structure; they don't replace it.

Libraries can include files and directories on internal hard disks and on USB hard disks with NTFS or FAT-32 file systems. In general, they can't access USB memory sticks, DVDs, CD-ROMs, or drives on home networks. (There are some exceptions, but these aren't common.)

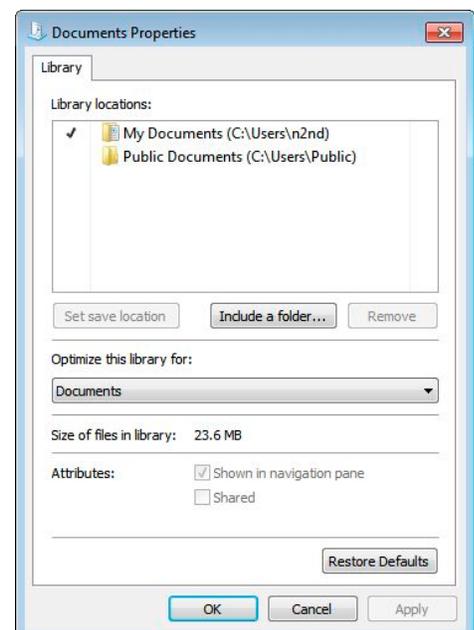
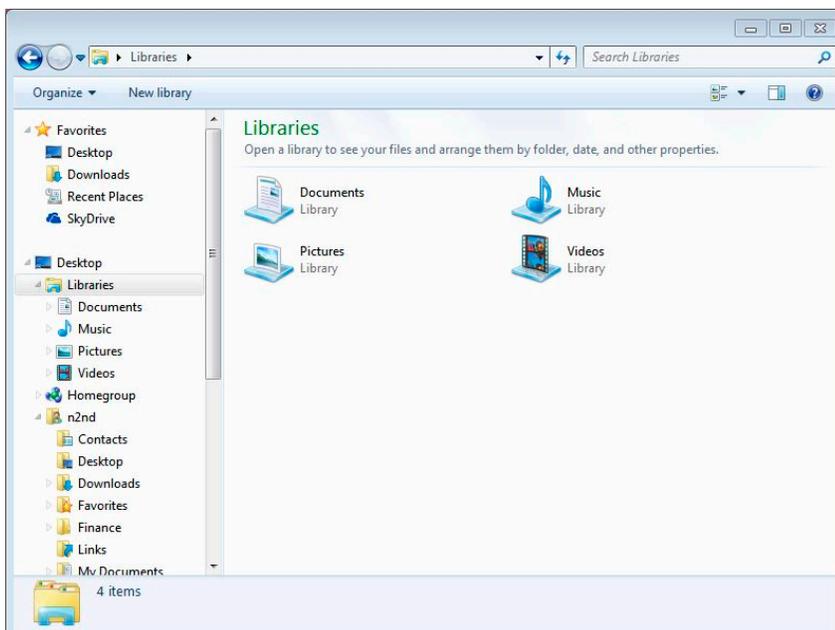
You can see your libraries by calling the Windows File Manager; just click on the folder icon in the taskbar at the bottom of your screen. The screen-shot (below, left) shows the result, which shows the default libraries. (You may have to click on Libraries in the side panel to see something similar.) Note the New Library item in

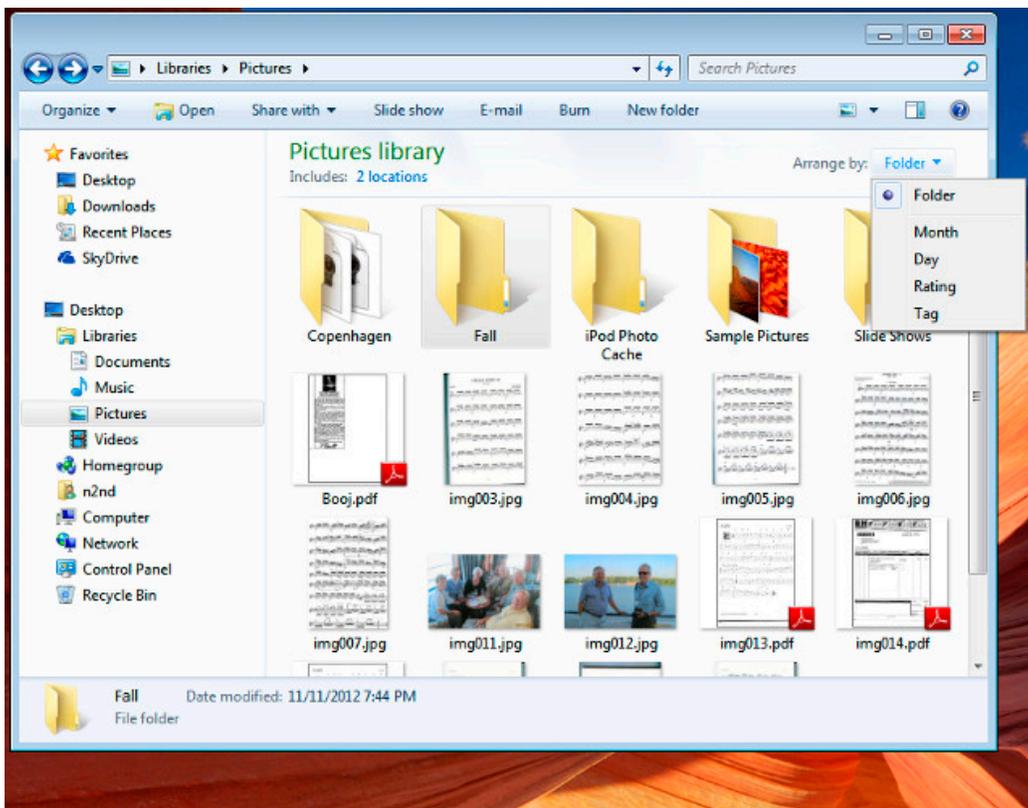
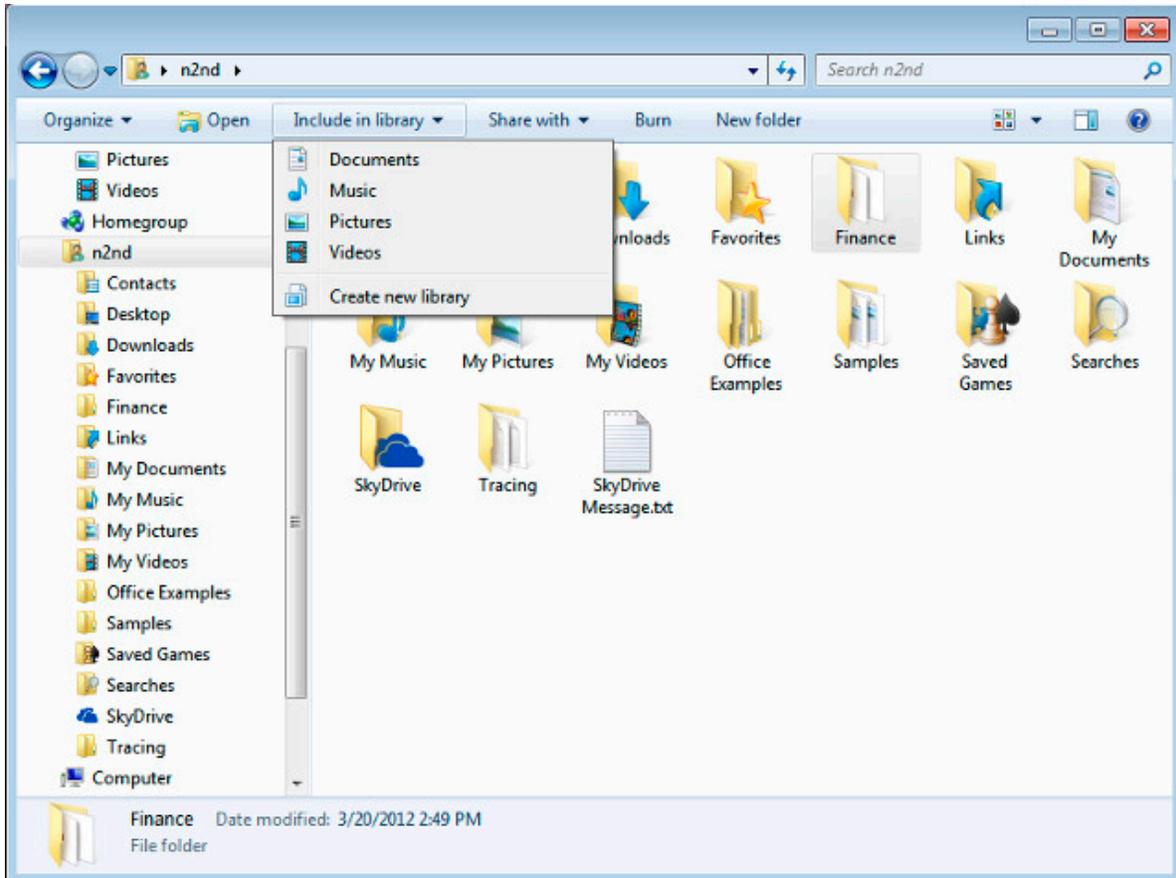
the File Manager menu bar; click on this to create one.

Before you use a library, right-click on its icon and select Properties to see something similar to the second screen-shot (below, right). Although a single library can include many folders, new additions always go to the same folder. The default save folder for the Documents library is My Documents, click on a different folder, then click on the Set Save Location button; a checkmark indicates your choice. Add or remove folders from the library by clicking the appropriate button below the Library locations box. While you have this window open, click on the button below to optimize the library for general items, documents, music, pictures, or videos, depending on its contents.

Any time you are using the file manager you can add folders to a new or an existing library. Single-click on a directory, then click on the Include in Library item in the menu bar, and the drop-down menu shows the existing libraries to which you can add the directory, or you can click Create New Library to create a new one (screen-shot, next page, top).

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When you open a library, what you see depends on the display option you've chosen. The last screen-shot (previous page, bottom) shows my Pictures library. I've just clicked on the button next to "Arrange by," which shows that I've selected "Folder." If you select anything else, you will see all the files in all the folders included in the library arranged by month, day, rating, or tag. Your choices of arrangement depend on how you've optimized the folder. In my Documents library, for example, these are folder, author, date modified, tag, type, and name. While in a library, you can move to a directory by right-clicking on it and selecting Open folder location. Similarly, if you right click on a file and select Open file location, you will move the directory where it resides.

Libraries provide an alternate to the traditional directory tree, which you may find convenient for at least some of your work. It would be worthwhile to experiment with them enough to know when.



## Have You Upgraded to iOS7?

by Bill Crowe

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October 2013 issue, PC Monitor

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Apple's iPhone/iPad operating system, called iOS, got a huge makeover and you may be considering not upgrading. After all I am just getting the hang of iOS6. The changes, while numerous, are not difficult.

The new operating system, called iOS 7, involves hundreds of interface changes and adds a new "control center" (sweep up from the bottom of the screen) that gives you access to important features like the camera, clock, and music player.

It even includes a new way to multi-task between programs and a built-in flashlight. In short, it makes your iPhone look brand new.

But what are you really getting when you upgrade to iOS 7?

Here are some of my favorite features.

1. It looks completely different. The first thing you'll notice about the new iPhone OS is how different it is.

All the icons have been "flattened" with a lot of the textures associated with Steve Jobs' efforts removed.

Instead of rich leather lookalikes, you get clean, clear, and crisp text and lines. Instead of photo-realistic icons you get images that "suggest" their purpose.

2. It is truly secure. This is an interesting feature: when you lose your phone, you can lock it completely and thieves won't be able to reactivate it even if they want to. In short, in 99 percent of cases, a thief will never be able to use your stolen phone again. This should, Apple hopes, reduce iPhone theft.

3. Photo browsing got a lot easier. When you take photos in iOS 7 they are automatically organized into moments. For example, when you shoot a bunch of photos at the petting zoo and then come home and shoot a few more, these photos are broken up by time and location.

4. Expect better battery life. The phone should perform better thanks to upgraded multi-tasking and improvements to the base software. While you probably will still suffer if your phone has horrible battery life now—it probably means your actual battery is broken—new users can expect snappier performance.

5. Siri is smarter. First, Siri doesn't sound like a robot anymore, which is good news. Second, Siri offers more information in a more pleasing way and it can now search more sources of information and do more

6. It has some 3D tricks up its sleeve. One of the coolest features is one of the most subtle: the icons on the screen "float" over the background. In other words, when you move the phone the

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icons move around to reveal parts of the wallpaper underneath. It's a very cute feature that lets you see more of your favorite photos and offers a much cleaner view of the interface.

7. It includes iTunes Radio, a cool way to discover new music. If you've used services like Pandora or Radio, you're probably familiar with how iTunes Radio works. In short, it lets you stream music (and buy it) right from your music player. This means you can listen to almost as much new music as you want whenever you want as well as playlists of popular hits.

Think of it as a way to preview iTunes purchases and a fun way to discover new music.



## Book Review: Michael Freeman's Photo School Fundamentals

Exposure > Light & Lighting > Composition > Digital Editing

Review by Tanya Mattson

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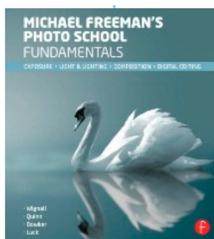


Photo School Fundamentals is the photography book for beginners and advanced photographers alike, giving very basic steps, challenges and reviews of some of Michael Freeman's real students in the book. The exercises are valuable for those just learning, as well as for those in the game for a while and may have forgotten a point or two.

It also just makes for great reading if you aren't into photography but are maybe interested in learning about composition or lighting.

Learning how to see is just as important as what we see. That is a tool, a skill, a talent, an ability that we all could expand from time to time. Not in the literal sense (making our vision more than 20/20), but being more aware of what is in the world and our lives.

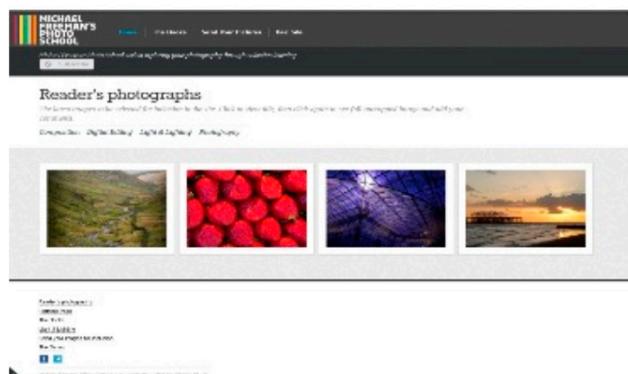
Technically this comes under 'Composition.' As a former portrait photographer it was my job to make sure (especially in a group) all the hair, the clothes, the shoes, etc. were just right, and no piece of bubble gum was left to be chomping at the critical moment.

Michael Freeman starts off Composition with 'Pick Your Subject.' A good lesson for all of us to learn. In this prime time of 'point and shoot' how many pictures generally taken are looked at after the fact with an 'oops' I didn't see that in the background. The digital age has made it so affordable to take so many pictures—do people really look / study / consider what they are taking. Or why?

This book is a great book to get in to the basics of photography—with 'assignments' like texture and pattern—just as I had in my photography courses at college – without the pricey tuition.

It is an easy read; covers just about everything. (Will get to my gripes later) and offers access to a companion website.

I will be honest I haven't worked with the website much yet, so I cannot make a comment other than it looks amazing.



With each 'Assignment / Lesson' Michael Freeman has a Challenge and a Review—and he gives honest feedback to his students. Which when you get to the HDR—I got the feeling he was wondering how they got the results they did. So he is willing to ask his students questions as well as teach. Michael Freeman has written over 40 books and is a well-known photographer.

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

I have to admit I am looking forward to one of the Challenges, that of stitching a panorama together. I have had a notion of how to do a really big one—so I am going to give it a try. Haven't flown it by my husband yet—I know he is going to tell me the software doesn't work that way.

Back to the book. I used to shoot film—and for the life of me for some reason ISO in digital from time to time trips me up. Michael Freeman's has a very clear, easy to read and understand language—that hopefully I will remember better. We will see.

So to my gripes. Or I suppose I should say Cons. My biggest is this... But first I am going to give a direct quote from Freeman about this book:

*This book teaches the fundamentals of photography in a foundational course before moving on to teach specialist areas. The goal is not only to instruct and educate, but also to motivate and inspire. To that end, many of the topics will be punctuated by a challenge to get out and shoot in a specific scenario, practicing the skills that were covered along the way.*

My biggest gripe is that the Index is very – lacking. For a book teaching fundamentals, with the goal to instruct and educate with “many of the topics—to have an Index that is not really even 3 pages long—well, falls short and flat. Which is unfortunate. To be a teaching book as well as a good reference for advanced photographers (or for those that keep the book for later on) Big disappointment.

My other gripe and maybe I missed it—I could have. No lesson on resizing, which may have people scratching their heads. But I know it has been an issue—especially with the web. That and the nitpick that the page number could have been in bold to find them better.

But in the end, overall—Michael Freeman delivered once again. The student profiles he included are interesting and helpful as well. Inspires all of us that we each can start

photography from somewhere and continue or begin brand new.

So Kudos.

This title is available from the publisher, Focal Press ([www.focalpress.com](http://www.focalpress.com)) and lists for \$39.95...but you also get your user group member discount of 40%. It is also available on Amazon.com for \$27.95.



## Using a Publisher Program or a Word Processor

by Jim Cerny

Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida  
November 2013 issue, PC Monitor  
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If you use email or a word-processing application (like Microsoft Word or WordPad) you probably have no trouble entering and editing text. But when it comes to putting things exactly where you want on the page, well, word processing programs can become difficult. For example, if you delete a few lines toward the beginning of your document, the rest of the document “moves up” so that no empty space appears in the middle of your text. This is great for email and word processing programs but can be a pain if you wanted to place things on a page and have them stay where you put them. Most editions of Microsoft Office (a set of application programs) contain Word (for word processing) and Publisher (for creating all sorts of wonderful publications). If you do not have Microsoft Office or Microsoft Publisher, you can purchase a cheap publishing program such as “Printshop”, “Printmaster” or “Page Plus” or other discount software. Just Google “cheap publisher software” to find these or others, some are even free. Most publisher-type programs work the same way. The following works for Microsoft Publisher (2003 edition) and is a good example of how such programs are used.

*(Continued on page 13)*

*(Continued from page 12)*

Basically a publisher program works with “objects”, not words. Oh, an object certainly CAN be words (I’ll use the term “text” if you don’t mind), but an object can be anything else as well—a photo for example. Let’s say you wanted to create and print some business cards. You would open the publisher program and first look to see what samples or “templates” the program already has to pick from. Select one that you like and it should open in the program ready for you to change anything you want. Click on the text that you want to replace with your name. A “box” will appear around the text—that is the object, in this case a box that contains text—and within this box you can change the text anyway you like. If you have a long name or if you pick a font that is too large, the result may not fit in the box. The easy solution to this is to drag the box to make it larger. You can change the size of a box (object) by dragging a “handle” at the corner or the middle edge of the box. You can also drag the whole box (not dragging on a handle point) to reposition the box anywhere you like. Whether things fit on the card or in the boxes is up to you. Remember you can make the boxes any size you want, but then you have to make sure the text size will fit in it.

Would you like to insert a photo? Click on “insert” (it will be on a tab or a menu somewhere) and select “photo from file”—this indicates that you have a photo on your computer that you want to insert. A small window should open to allow you to go to the folder you want to find the photo. Just click on the file name to highlight it and click “ok” or “insert”. Now the photo will appear on your business card as an “object”—it will probably be very large, so you need to find the corner handle and drag it to reduce the size of the photo (you may have to use the scrollbars to get to find the handle). With resizing photos dragging a corner handle keeps the photo in the same proportion. Dragging a side handle will distort the photo. What you see on the screen will be exactly what is printed on the paper.

Once you catch on to creating and working with object boxes, everything is easy. Changing what is in once box does not affect the other boxes. But wait, there is more.

If boxes overlap, one box will be on top of the other and will block the one underneath from being seen. Boxes can be filled with any background color, or be “clear” so that what is behind them is visible. You can change the order of the objects to put the one you want on top of the others. Publisher programs also allow you to “draw” anything you want and keep it as an object (like a photo). Naturally different programs will have different options, but each should have a way to get “help” and find out how to use the tools and options you want. Whatever program you use, knowing how to use the “help” option or tab is always a good idea. Most programs do not come with printed manuals anymore.

Ok, once you have completed your fabulous design of your business cards, you will want to print them out. Because business cards are a standard size, they will print ten cards per 8.5 x 11 inch page. It is best to buy the business card stock from an office supply store—you may even find ones with backgrounds already on them. They will be already perforated for easy separation. I always print on plain paper first and then compare the sheet carefully to the cardstock to make sure all fits nicely before I print.

With a little practice you will be designing your own greeting cards, labels, tags, return address labels, invitations, banners, and much more. Along the way you will have learned how to use some graphics tools too, and that’s a good thing. Don’t be afraid to explore the program—see what other templates and options are available to try, you will discover some amazing things. Try designing and printing some creative business cards for your spouse or friend, it will make you look like a printing (and computer) wizard.

## Review: 808 Headphones

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the earpads folds in so as to fit compactly in the case. There are two cables supplied with the headphones, stowed in a net pocket inside the case. The company describes them as "tangle-free," and they appear to be so. One is a plain cable with 3.5 mm plug on each end. The other is a flat cable with a control for play/pause, for those devices that permit that. A 6.3mm adapter is also supplied.

These are really nice headphones and are reasonably priced.

Vendor: 808 Headphones  
[www.808headphones.com](http://www.808headphones.com)  
Price: About \$90



## Upcoming Meeting

**Saturday, March 15, 1:00-3:30pm ET**  
**PATACS/OPCUG: From Television Sets to Communications Policy**

Presented by Frederick E. Ellrod III

1) Connecting Your Home. Today's home connects to the world via many channels of communication. This presentation focuses on video, which is available via cable, satellite, over-the-air television, recorded video, and the Internet. We will discuss the types of cable networks in Fairfax County, the services they offer, pricing strategies, and factors to consider in choosing a cable provider.

2) Buying a New TV. With the new technologies introduced in recent years, simply buying a TV set is more complex than it used to be. The presentation outlines the key factors consumers need to take into account in choosing a digital TV, such as size, resolution, refresh rate, screen type, 3D capability, sound, Internet connection and "smart TVs."

3) Things to Come in Communications. We will look briefly at some of the leading policy issues in communications today, such as competition, "a la carte" unbundled programming, "over-the-top" Internet video, and open Internet access (network neutrality).

Frederick E. Ellrod III (Rick) is Director of the Communications Policy and Regulation Division of Fairfax County's Department of Cable and Consumer Services. From 1992 until he joined the County in 2009, he worked as an attorney in a law firm representing local governments on cable and telecommunications issues. He helped negotiate the County's 2013 and 1998 Cox cable franchises and assisted with the Comcast franchise renewal in 2005. Mr. Ellrod has been a resident of the County since 1989. He graduated from Harvard Law School cum laude in 1986 and holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from Boston University (1979).

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Carlin Hall Community Center

5711 S. 4th Street, Arlington, VA 22204

<http://www.patacs.org/arlingtonmeetings.html>

#### General Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday (3/5), 7 p.m. ET

#### Technology & PC Help Desk

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday (3/26), 7 p.m. ET

#### Board of Directors

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday (3/17), 7 p.m. ET

### **Fairfax Meetings**

(with OLLI PC User Group)

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)

4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax VA 22032

<http://www.patacs.org/fairfaxmeetings.html>

#### General Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday (3/15), 12:30 p.m. ET

### **Online-Only Webinar**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday (3/12), 7-9 p.m. ET

<http://www.patacs.org/webinarpat.html>