

The NCTCUG Journal

www.nctcug.org

March/April 2012

Volume 35 Issue 2

What Are You Tweeting?

By Linda Gonse, Editor/Webmaster, Orange County PCUG, California December 2011 issue, nibbles & bits. Via APCUG www.orcopug.org editor (at) orcopug.org

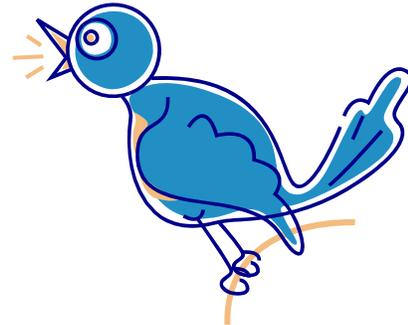
New users of Twitter sometimes get confused by the conventions commonly used in tweets. (Comments posted by Twitter users are called “tweets.”)

When you copy what someone else has tweeted and repost it for other people to read, it is called a “retweet.” Retweets not only pass along tweets you have found noteworthy, but gives credit publicly to the person who tweeted it.

Retweets are designated by tagging the beginning of a tweet with the capital letters “RT.”

If you see a tweet such as the one below, you might wonder what the tweet is all about.

In [this] example, it is a retweet of a retweet.



Confused? I’ll explain. The original writer’s user name is @carolynedgar. The person who retweeted her was @Geniusbastard. (The @ sign before a username links a tweet to that account page.) The tweet itself was: For the love of God, people: Google. It really works.

I’ll digress here to explain the tweet itself. It’s clear that it’s written from exasperation. How many times do people ask where they can find something? Well, where do WE look to find something? Google. Right? But, you can tell people and you can tell them, and still they don’t think of Google first, or they believe it is easier to just ask someone else who uses Google!

(Continued on page 16)



Inside



Discovering Windows 7 — Part 19	page 2
Discovering Windows 7 — Part 20	page 3
Dick’s Clicks: iPad2	page 5
Motorola XOOM & Samsung Hotspot.....	page 6
Flickr: A Look Inside the Photostream.....	page 8
Nero Multimedia Suite Platinum	page 9
The Cloud	page 10
Do You YouTube?.....	page 11
Windows Live Skydrive	page 12
What’s All This Cloud Stuff, Anyhow?	Page 14

Discovering Windows 7 – Part 19

By Neil Stahfest, Vice President, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington

September 2011 issue, the Data Line NCStahfest (at) msn.com www.tapcug.org

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Microsoft Windows uses small files called device drivers to communicate with peripheral devices by like printers and scanners. For example, when you use a word processing program and enter a line feed character, the code for a line feed must be translated to a code your printer understands to feed a new line. Drivers can be for a specific device or a family of devices like HP LaserJet printers. Over the years thousands of device drivers have been written. Windows 7 comes with many built-in drivers to simplify the installation when you plug in a new printer or scanner into your computer. If Windows 7 doesn't have a driver for your device it asks you to provide one. This could be from a CD that came with your device or you can search the Internet for the right driver.

So what if you can't find a driver on the Internet? Your best bet is to check the device manufacturer's web site for Windows 7 drivers. If your device is old, however, the manufacturer may no longer support it and there may be no drivers for Windows 7. In that case, try looking for drivers for Windows Vista or a similar model of the device. Ultimately, you may have to buy a replacement device. The good news is many new devices are faster, do more and are less expensive than the old ones.

So what can you do if you have an old program that worked fine with Windows XP but now runs poorly or maybe not at all with Windows 7? Well it turns out that Microsoft has thought of that and created something called a "Windows compatibility mode". Using the compatibility mode you can tell it to run the program using the settings for an earlier version of Windows (like Windows XP), limit the set of colors displayed, change the screen resolution and other settings. There are two ways you can change the compatibility settings. You can use the Windows "Program Compatibility Troubleshooter" or change them manually.

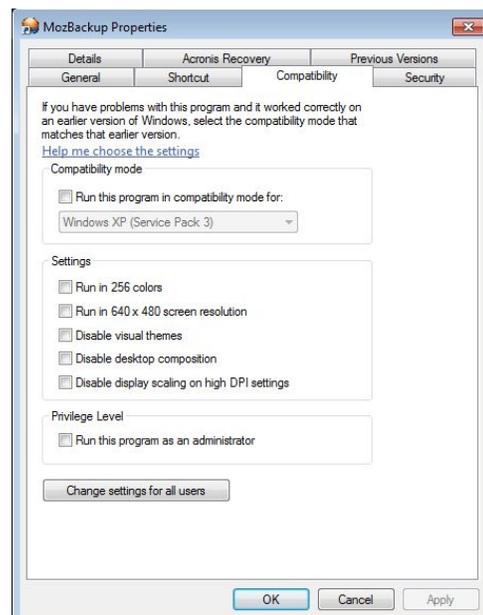
To use the "Program Compatibility Troubleshooter", right-click on the program's name or desktop shortcut and in the window that appears, right-click on "Troubleshoot compatibility" and follow the on-screen instructions.. If you cannot install the program, locate

the program's setup file, usually called Setup.exe or Install.exe, click on "Troubleshoot compatibility" and follow the instructions that appear.



To change program compatibility settings manually, start by right-clicking on the program icon. At the bottom of the window that appears you will see "Properties". Click on it and then click on the "Compatibility" tab (see Figure below). In this example Windows has already selected Windows XP (Service Pack 3) for the compatible operating system but if you click on the box above it you will see a

(Continued on page 3)



Discovering Windows 7 – Part 20

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October 2011 issue, the Data Line NCStahfest (at) msn.com www.tapcug.org

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In the days before Microsoft Windows, when we deleted a file the file was gone and there was empty space on the disk was increased. Accidental file deletions could be a problem if you didn't have copies. Enter Peter Norton who created a powerful unerase program followed by a number of other similar programs. Norton Utilities was a must have software package for businesses and serious PC users.

With the release of Microsoft Windows, Microsoft introduced the "Recycle Bin". Now when you deleted a file it didn't really disappear off your disk. Windows simply changed the file location address from where ever the file was located (i.e. Pictures) to the Recycle Bin. If you discover that you really need a file you just deleted, all you have to do is double-click on the Recycle Bin, select the file or files you want to restore, click on it to select and then click on the Restore button. This causes Windows to change the file address location back to what it was before you deleted the file.

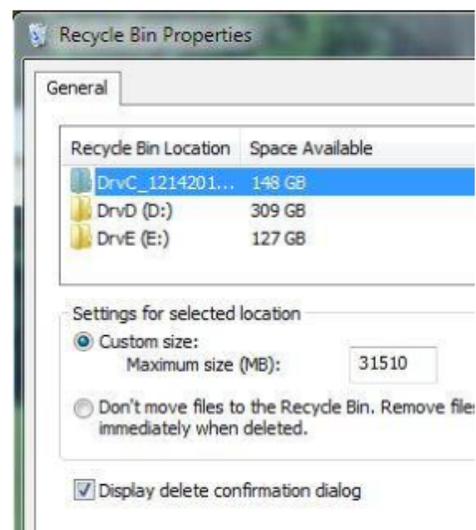
(Continued from page 2)

drop down list of all the versions of Windows that you can select from, going back as far as Windows 95.

Note that under "Settings" you can change colors, screen resolution, etc. Under "Privilege Level" you can restrict the program to use by an administrator only and you can change settings for all users.

After trying different program compatibility settings your program may still not work properly. If you have a really old program they may be a hardware incompatibility with your computer. For example, I have an address database program that was written to run on Microsoft DOS (pre-Windows). It ran in a "Command Window" in Windows 98 and Windows XP but it will not run on my Windows 7 64-bit operating system. Sometimes you just have to move on and get a new program.

Of course, you have a limited amount of space on your hard drive. By default 5% of your total hard drive space (i.e. 15 GB on a 300 GB drive) is allocated for the Recycle Bin. If you have more than one partition on your hard drive, each partition will have its own Recycle Bin. You can change the size of your Recycle Bin to make it bigger or smaller by right-clicking on the Recycle Bin and selecting "Properties". In the Recycle Bin Properties window, select the bin location for the partition you want to change and then enter the amount of space you want to reserve for the Recycle Bin.



Before we move on from the Recycle Bin Properties window, note that there is option that lets you delete files without sending them to the Recycle Bin. This will not delete your Recycle Bin and the amount of disk space it uses. It just allows you to erase files from your disk in one step (with no Recycle Bin safety net). If you are annoyed by Windows asking you if you really want to move a file to the Recycle Bin, you can click to turn off the file delete confirmation dialog.

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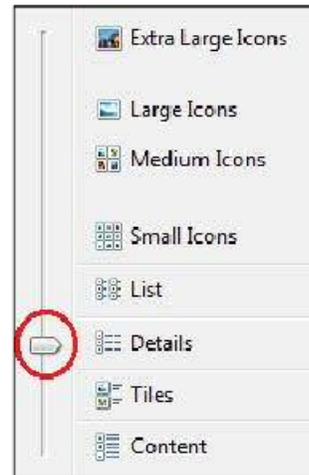
If you keep deleting files eventually you will fill up your Recycle Bin. At that point Windows will start to delete the oldest files in the Recycle Bin from your hard drive. Files deleted from the Recycle Bin are truly gone, creating empty space on your hard drive. Actually you may still be able to still restore them with third party file un-erase programs but that's beyond the scope of this article.

So how do you create empty space on your hard drive by deleting files you no longer need? Well, start by deleting them (sending the files to the Recycle Bin). Then right click on the Recycle Bin and left click on "Empty Recycle Bin" (Figure below). The files are now gone and you have more space on your hard drive.

This brings up the question, should I periodically empty my Recycle Bin? That's really an individual choice but my experience has been when I accidentally delete a file I discover the mistake within minutes or at minutes or at most a few days of the deletion. I usually delete everything that has been in my Recycle Bin for more than a week.

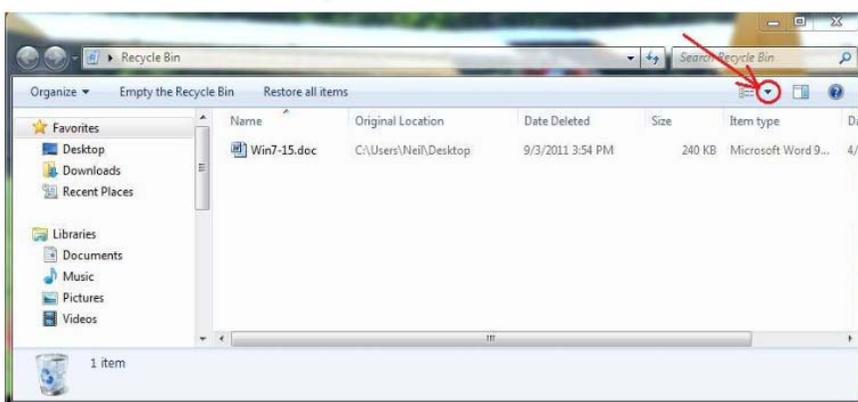
You may wonder how you know how long a file has been in the Recycle Bin. When you open the Recycle Bin you may or may not see the date the file was deleted. If you do not, click on the small triangle in the upper right corner of the Recycle Bin window as shown in Figure below (circled in red).

In the pop-up window that appears (Figure 3), select "Details" (shown circled in red) and now you should see the "Date Deleted" column.



As you can see, the Recycle Bin is a pretty useful tool. You can use it as it comes, out of the box so to speak, or you can alter it to change its size to suite the way you work.

For more information click on the Windows Start button, select "Help and Support" and type "Recycle Bin" in the search box.



Dick's Clicks: iPad2

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Just imagine where we'd be if the Apple that fell on Sir Isaac Newton's head had been an iPad 2. Instead of merely discovering gravity, he would have gone on to invent the App Store and the Internet.

A few months ago I was astonished to have an iPad 2 fall into my life as a surprise birthday gift from my Chicago son's family, and I've been discovering good stuff ever since. My first challenge was to resist addiction to games such as Angry Birds, Scramble and Solitaire.

Gradually I've come to spend more time with my iPad than with my PCs. It's far from a complete replacement, but this tablet sure is a comfortable convenience. It's a huge improvement over my beloved iPod Touch, which remains my choice for music while walking. The first thing I do each morning is to move my iPad from its charger to the sofa so that it's available as an adjunct to the Arizona Daily Star, using my WiFi connection and the Safari browser.

My most-used Apps are the NYTimes, HuffPost, Weather Channel, What'sOn for the TV schedule, Flixster for what's playing at Desert Sky, CCGV of course, Merriam-Webster dictionary which understands my voice, and HiCalc calculator. I also view my favorite comic strips, political cartoons and check my email, which remains on the server for later viewing on my PC.

There's a neat App called HSW HD, for How Stuff Works, which is like that proverbial box of chocolates where you never know what you're gonna get. It's fun to browse HSW with finger swipes, and I spotted an essay by Jonathan Strickland titled "How will computers evolve over the next 100 years?" You can also find this on the Web at <http://www.howstuffworks.co/computer-evolution.htm>.

Another box of candy is Science360, an inexhaustible collection of pictorial goodies from the National Science Foundation. And when my 2003 Buick has aged

a couple more years, I'll surely use CarZen to browse auto models with complete price and specs information.

ShowOfHands lets me see user opinions on numerous personal and political questions, displayed in pie charts for all states and for the nation as a whole.

So far I haven't read a book on my tablet, but I could. I've streamed movies from Netflix, looked at my photo collection and played my iTunes music. Really, there's no going back. My iPad, my recliner chair and I are at one with each other!

Quote of the Month: "...there may be no meaningful difference between computers and humans within 100 years. In that world, we'll be transformed into a new species that can improve upon itself at a pace unimaginable to us in our current forms. Whatever the future may hold, it's a safe bet to assume the machines we rely upon will be very different from today's computers."

Jonathan Strickland



Review

Motorola XOOM™ and Samsung 4G LTE Mobile Hotspot

By David Williams, Secretary, Online Services, and Program Coordinator, Central Iowa Computer User Group www.ciacug.org david.williams.ciacug (at) gmail.com

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Earlier this month I was able to borrow a Motorola XOOM™ (<http://bit.ly/h0zSa>) and a Samsung 4G LTE Mobile Hotspot from Verizon for my trip to the Southwest Computer Conference in San Diego, CA. I took them along with my own Verizon Droid X and my Galaxy Tab. The Mobile Hotspot worked very well for me out in San Diego (*Des Moines only has 3G*), and I was able to check out the Xoom for about 2 weeks. While I was able to “test drive” both myself, I was also able to demo both while at the conference and at our user group meeting the following week.

Motorola Xoom

My experience with the Xoom was very favorable. Much has been written about the specs of the Xoom, so I will focus on my personal observations. The Xoom was running Android 3.1 and was quite fast. I'll admit I didn't load a lot of different applications, I just had the ones I used the most from my phone and Galaxy tab. I found most were available from the android market and displayed correctly on the Xoom.

I found the interface to be very intuitive and had no problem moving around. The Xoom has no physical buttons, and while it took a bit of getting used to, it was easy to navigate the settings and find what you needed. (*I was not able to figure out how to screen print, so I have no screen shots to show.*)

The screen is very clear and both pictures and videos are quite sharp and crisp. I was able to scroll thru images very quickly. The high resolution made everything easier to view and widescreen made watching movies enjoyable. The Xoom can also record Video at 720p.



One of the Apps I downloaded was Dolphin Browser HD. With that app I was able to surf the web like I was on my laptop and not need to use the mobile versions of the websites. I was able to view the web as it was meant to be viewed with both HTML5 and flash pages. I could go to Amazon and watch a movie that I had bought. As I an Amazon prime member, this is a plus as prime members get free videos, but only from their website. Now I can watch these movies on the go, and the movie stream is just fine over WI-F, both from the Verizon 4G and my home Wi-Fi. The web loaded very quickly with the high-speed connections, and I had no problem displaying any of the sites I visited.

I had several people hold the Xoom in one hand and the iPad2 in the other and they could not notice any weight difference. I had no trouble using the Xoom, but I found my stand useful if I was doing much interaction with it for a longer period of time.

One of the features that impressed me was the battery life. Using Wi-Fi and the GPS tend to use a lot of battery. I found if you turn them off you could prolong the life of the battery. I watched about three hours of video on the return trip from San Diego and only used about 15% of the battery. I did have everything else turned off, but found that the level of battery usage for watching video very impressive. Even with normal use it did better than my Tab and way better than my phone. While your usage may vary, I find it safe to say you'll be as impressed as I am.

While the Xoom has a 32GB internal memory, it is supposed to get SD support with a future software update. That means you can store more videos and music for long trips. The Xoom is believed to be getting 4G support soon, so then you can really zip around the web. Downloading movies and large files will be super fast, but could get expensive for those on a limited data plan.

4G Mobile Hotspot

While this was a very small device, I really enjoyed using it. It is very fast on 4G and I could carry it in my front pocket. The only place I got a chance to test it was in San Diego. I first tested it on my laptop, then the Galaxy Tab and finally the Xoom, and I found it ran fast on all of them. The conference had Wi-Fi, and the Hotspot meet or beat it in most head to head tests. The hotspot at times hit speeds comparable to my high speed connection at home. When I was using my laptop in the hotel room and downloading some software deals I had gotten at the conference, it felt like I was at home and not in a hotel room, which is always a great treat on a trip. I must say Verizon's 4G really rocks. The slowest I got was about 5 mbps with a bad connection. My usual speed was between 8 mbps and 11 mbps and I got up to 17 mbps on my laptop. The normal on 3G was between 1 mbps to 3 mbps.

Jim Perry on YouTube talking about Verizon 4G on his Motorola Xoom (<http://bit.ly/qCtBV>)

What else can I say but it is fast. It does use up battery, but it can be connected to a power source while you use it. I like using a device better than a phone as a hotspot as you can use your phone if you have a hotspot and not run down the battery. I would recommend this hotspot to anyone who travels and needs fast connectivity in a 4G city. When more and more areas get 4G connections I can see these as being the standard.

Summary

I would recommend the Xoom to anyone who wants to do light web surfing and computing, email and social networking. It is great for games and videos. I believe a tablet is easier for children to use than a small notebook. I believe they are here to stay, but I am not going to predict which ones will make it and which ones will not. I will say 4G / LTE is the way of the future and my next phone will have it.



Right Click Surprises – Windows XP

By Warner Mach, Editor

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August 2011 issue, SEMCO DATA BUS

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I have recently become familiar with some handy uses of the mouse right-click that are worth mentioning.

- Right click on “Start” brings up a menu that lets you select Microsoft “explorer” and “search.” This can be a quick way to get at those utilities.
- If you want to use a program other than the default in conjunction with a file, then right click on the file and go to “open with.” I sometimes use this with pdf files. My default for pdf files is “Nitro” but it does not have a search function, so I will sometimes switch to “Adobe Reader” if I want to use the search.
- In the tray at the bottom of the screen is an icon that looks like a screen with radiation coming from it. Left click tells the status of your Wi-Fi connection. Right click gives options of disable/status/repair. I was at a location where I appeared to be connected properly, but all of my browsers were unable to reach any URL. Someone assisted me by clicking on “repair” and I could watch the system rework my connection and make it better. I was dazzled.
- The most important time-saver of all: If you are playing solitaire and you reach the point where you have won the game and it is just a matter of moving all the cards to the top row, then right-click on one of the cards in the bottom row and the system will do the remaining work for you.

Flickr: A Look Inside The Photostream

By Larry Klees, member, Orange County PC Users' Group, CA October issue, nibbles & bits
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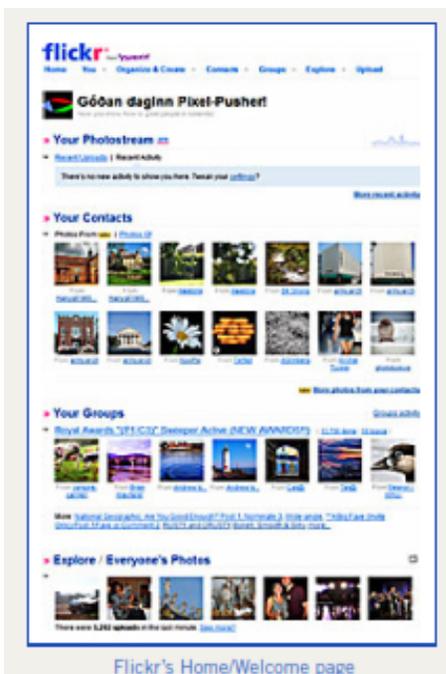
Once upon a time there were only a few photographers in an entire city. Today, thanks to advances in digital photography, there are only a few people in an entire city who are not photographers. When you factor in the internet; millions of photos fly around the world every second with the aid of numerous applications.

One of these applications that I personally like is called Flickr. Anyone with internet access can have a free Flickr account. A Flickr account is based on a thing called a "photostream." Photographs and short videos can be uploaded to this photostream which can be used like a personal photo album. The photos can be left in the order they are uploaded or they can be organized into sets like "Christmas 2010," "fireworks," "black sheep of the family," etc. These can be viewed and, if you like, downloaded or commented on by contacts, friends, and family members. Flickr allows you to place anybody in those categories and you can allow each category different access privileges to each individual photograph.

You can join special interest groups like "Bugs" or "Macro Photography" or "San Francisco," etc. If you don't see a group you like, you can even start a group of your own. You can use all manner of search criteria to find photos in your photostream or elsewhere on Flickr.

When you log on to Flickr you are sent to a Home/Welcome page. This page gives you a quick summary of what has happened since your last log on. From this page you can monitor views of or comments others have left on your own photos; or you can take a quick look at the new things from your contacts, friends, family members, or groups. You can also upload new photos to your own photostream or organize other aspects of your account.

Flickr can be a little overwhelming at first but you will soon learn your way around. Flickr honors copyrights, doesn't sell your information, lets you control access to your photos, and offers many other security features. Many people like the free accounts. Many more like the extra benefits of the pro account for about \$25 per year.



Nero 10 Multimedia Suite Platinum

By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ November 2011 issue, eJournal
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The Suite has a number of applications bundled onto one CD-ROM. Installation takes almost one-half hour and 3.7Gb of hard disk space. There are 17 applications in the package, but the bottom line is four basic functions are provided: Music, Video & Photo, Data and Tools. Nero StartSmart gives you access to all of these. One of the valuable tools is the series of Help files. These are accessed online and include a PDF file for each tool in the package. There are also video tutorials which show you in slow motion how to do a particular task.

The Backup tools allow you to save files or your entire computer image, and to restore either of these. The destination can be a disc, your hard drive, a removable medium or online. You can also verify that the backup is correct. You can do backups automatically or by schedule. The Autobackup service is \$55 per year for 25Gb of space; there is a free trial for 3 months with 1Gb space.

The Music tools offer you the following: play or organize music files; rip and burn music; mix music and digitize LP's and tapes, and edit and record music. The Video & Photo tools give you the ability to create a video or a slide show, play back multimedia and to convert on-protected DVDs to various formats. The Media Hub is a portal to the various tools to accomplish these tasks.



Nero's Start screen

The Data tools include Burn and Copy data, BackUp data, and Restore and Recover. Nero Express gives you step-by-step instructions to burn and copy CD and DVD disks, a process that is not always self-explanatory.

Nero's Start Screen

The Tools section offers a Performance test for your disk drives and System Configuration and Analysis to examine the setup and capabilities of your disks and software. The Performance test uses a blank disk and runs several tests to determine transfer rate, disk quality, CPU usage, burst rate and more. I tried the test on a CD. The process wrote 5,001 variable length records to the disk and saved the test results as well. The burn rate averaged 30.75X.

The System Config and Analysis does a rather complete analysis of your hardware and produces a report divided into Drive/Disk, Configuration (like Device Manager), software (only the Nero applications are listed), Drivers, Hardware, System (operating system, version and browser) and Hardware Readiness.

This is an extensive and complete system of applications and tools for you to deal with any operations involving data, music and disks. There is a 15-day free trial available.

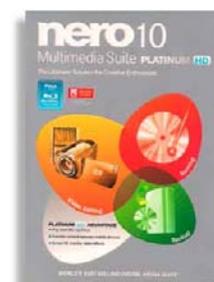
About Nero

Nero 10 Multimedia Suite Platinum

Vendor: Nero www.nero.com

Price: ±\$100

[note: Nero 11 Platinum is now out; upgrade pricing for v.10 owner is ~\$50]



The Cloud

By **Berry F. Phillips**, Member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City
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“Cross my palm with silver” is the common opening line of a fortune teller before looking into her crystal ball to foretell the future. Perhaps at looking into the future of computing we should consult the “clouds” not a crystal ball! “Beam me up, Scotty!”

Your computer in the future may contain almost no software or data. It could be nothing more than a display terminal for processes occurring on a network of computers far away called “The Cloud.” A common explanatory analogy is that of public utilities such as electricity, gas, and water. Just as centralized and standardized utilities free users from the difficulties of generating electricity or pumping water, cloud computing frees users from certain hardware and software installation and maintenance tasks through the use of simpler hardware that accesses a vast network of computer resources (processors, hard drives, etc.) The sharing of resources reduces the cost to individuals.

Today, many of us connect to web-based email such as Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, a company owned e-mail, or even an e-mail client program such as Outlook, Evolution, Mozilla Thunderbird or Entourage that connects to a cloud email server. Utilizing desktop applications to connect to your email is considered a cloud application.

The key characteristic of cloud computing is that computing is “in the cloud.” The processing (and the related data) is not in a specific, known or static place(s). This is in contrast to a model in which the processing takes place in one or more specific servers that are known. All the other concepts mentioned are supplementary or complementary to the concept. In the 1960s John McCarthy said, “computation someday will be organized as a public utility.” Almost all the modern-day characteristics of cloud computing were thoroughly explored in Douglas Parhill’s 1966 book, “The Challenge Of the Computer Utility.”

What are some of the key benefits to cloud computing? Agility improves with the users’ ability to rapidly and inexpensively re-provision technological infrastructure resources.

Application Programming Interface (API) accessibility to software that enables machines to interact with cloud software in the same way the user interface facilitates interaction between humans and computers.

Cost is claimed to be greatly reduced and in a public cloud delivery model capital expenditure is converted to operational expenditure. Device and location independence enable users to access systems using web browser regardless of the location they are using (e.g., PC, mobile phone).

As infrastructure is off-site (typically provided by a third-party) and accessed via the Internet, users can connect from anywhere. This is why many IT professionals believe the future of computing is mobile cloud-based. There may be one day when desktop and laptop computers will be as archaic as dinosaurs. Multi-tenancy enables sharing of resources and costs across a large pool of users.

Reliability is improved if multiple redundant sites are used, which makes well designed cloud computing suitable for business continuity and disaster recovery. Scalability is improved on a self-service bases near real-time.

Performance is monitored and consistent, using web services as the system interface.

Security could improve due to centralization of data.

Maintenance for cloud computing applications is easier because they do not need to be installed on each user’s computer. They are easier to support and to improve as the changes reach the client instantly.

There are different clouds like public clouds, community clouds, hybrid clouds, combined clouds and private clouds which have specific applications. The operation and development of these clouds are called cloud engineering. Cloud storage is a model of networked computer data storage where data is stored on multiple servers which are usually hosted by third parties, rather than hosted on dedicated servers.

I downloaded two cloud-based freeware anti-virus programs on my system to see how they worked. One was Panda and the other was Immundet; I loaded both of them so they ran on my system by themselves. They had one thing in common as they used little resources, and there were few if any updates. Of course, that is to be expected since all the virus databases are updated in the cloud. I found both programs worked very well. Panda will not run with any other anti-virus system on; however Immundet works very well with another anti-virus system operating. As a general rule, users are cautioned to use only one anti-virus system to avoid conflicts. I think in the future we will see more cloud-based applications. There are several companies now providing cloud-based storage for a fee. Looking ahead, mobile devices using cloud computing may indeed be the computing of the future.

My thanks to Wikipedia for most of the information that is contained in this article.



Do You “Youtube”?

By Elaine Szaniszlo, Editor, Northeast Ohio PC Club December 2011 issue, Nybbles & Bytes www.neopc.org water_colors@sbcglobal.net

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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.



Windows Live SkyDrive: An Office in the Cloud

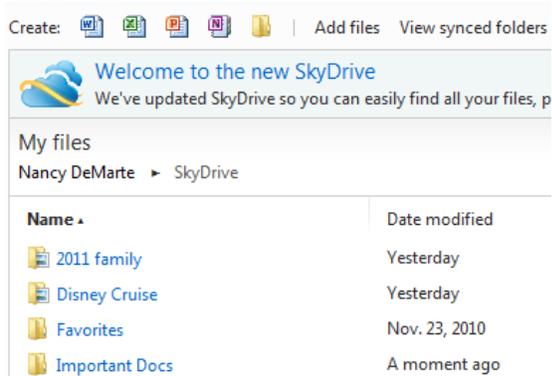
By Nancy DeMarte, a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

December 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor www.spcug.org ndemarte (at) Verizon.net

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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 re-working 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.

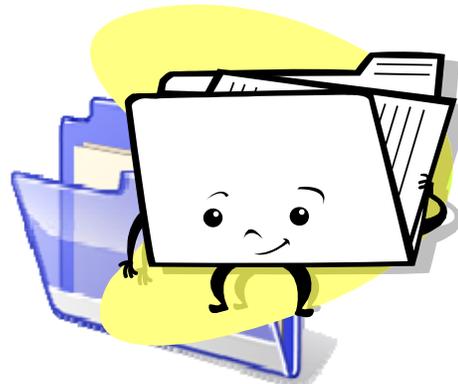
Sharing Files

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.



What's All This Cloud Stuff, Anyhow?

By Greg Skalka, President, UCHUG (Under the Computer Hood UG), California July 2011 issue, DriveLight www.uchug.org president (at) uchug.org

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Cloud computing is supposed to be the next big thing. Microsoft has commercials showing people delayed at an airport watching TV show episodes "in the cloud". Lots of big companies like Amazon, HP, IBM, Dell and AT&T are pushing their own version of the "cloud". Even Apple is introducing iCloud. What does it really mean? Will our stuff be in the public cloud, private cloud or both? Is it going to give us more capabilities, help us save money and have all our stuff available anywhere we want it, or will we only get rain and overcast from the "cloud?"

Cloud computing involves getting data, applications and services over the Internet. You might have your photos, music and other files stored on someone else's servers, rather than on your computer. This would allow you to access those files from any computer connected to the Internet. You might run web-based applications that allow you to perform the same functions as an office productivity suite, like document and spreadsheet creation, without having any office

software installed on your PC. You might get your email through a web-based system and interface. For all the hype, though, it seems that "cloud" is just another word for the Internet.

Is the cloud just a return to the dumb terminals connected to the computer mainframe model of computing, with the Internet now doing the connecting?

Most of us are already doing things in the cloud. If you have used Google Gmail on the web, filed your taxes with the online version of TurboTax, shared photos on Flickr or checked out your friends on Facebook, you've had your head in the cloud. Even if you host photos on your (home) network hard drive that can be accessed by others over the Internet, that is your own private cloud. Think about that the next time you are using Amazon's Cloud Drive to store and listen to your MP3 of The Rolling Stones' "Get Off Of My Cloud."

(Continued on page 15)

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on March 17 & April 21, 2012 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] Meetings will be held at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute [www.olligmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

Topics

March - Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

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

Also see WAC's Web Site at

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



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(Continued from page 14)

One thing that appears obvious to me is that we are each dealing with more information, larger files and larger bandwidth streams than ever before. Without a high-bandwidth Internet connection, cloud computing would not be feasible for an individual. No one will be accessing the cloud with dial-up. As our files get larger, passing them between the cloud and your PC takes more time or bandwidth. While some might be pushing more megapixels in digital cameras and advocating streaming HD video, these trends further challenge the utility of the cloud concept.

Using cloud storage can be great way to share photos and videos. It is about the only way to share the large JPEG files that new 10+ megapixel cameras take. You sure can't email those large files, and no one wants to wait for the CD (or DVD) of photos from the family gathering to arrive in the mail. The problem with the cloud is it can still take a long time to upload and download large files, even with a broadband Internet connection.

This indicates to me that the cloud concept could be a farce in some cases. Every new camera I buy has more megapixels, but if I have to spend hours uploading the photos from my camera to the cloud, and people spend hours tediously downloading, it does not seem like progress. If I have to resize my photos to put them in the cloud (as my primary, or only storage), then why are these camera manufacturers working so hard to sell me on more resolution?

And don't get me started on the security concerns of computing in the cloud, or you'll really have me singing "Get Off Of My Cloud."

*Spring is sprung
The grass is riz
Do you know where your backup is?*



NCTCUG Information

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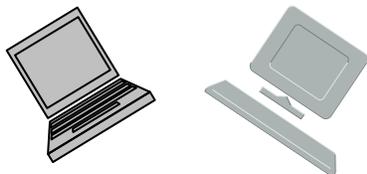
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Please send your change of address to the club address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

(Continued from page 1)



Back to the tweet. When you retweet something that's been retweeted, it is protocol to list it as a RT (retweet) from @ (first person's name) @ (second person's name). The tweet follows after the names.

Another way to handle a retweet of a tweet is to use RT @ (first tweeter's name) The tweet via @ (second tweeter's name). Example: RT @carolynedgar For the love of God, people: Google. It really works. Via @Geniusbastard.

Sometimes you can't get a tweet to fit the 140 characters when including the retweet info. It's okay to make judicious cuts or use abbreviations. When you do this, it is no longer a RT. You tag it as an MT (modified tweet). Also, if there is no extra room, you can drop off the name of the last person who retweeted. In the case above, it is @Geniusbastard.

When you tweet something that someone might like to retweet, leave space in your tweet. This allows room for your username to be added if someone wants to retweet what you wrote. It is flattering to be publicly acknowledged, shows respect for your thoughts, and sometimes it attracts followers to the chronological list of your tweets, called your "timeline."

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First Class

March/April 2012

1st Wed. (3/7, 4,4)
7 p.m. General Meeting

2nd Wed. (3/14, 4/11)
Online-Only Webinar using Skype
for information see club page at
<http://www.nctcug.org/webinarsig.html>

4th Wed (3/28, 4/25)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (4/16; none in March)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

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

