August 2014

Visit our website at www.pcs4me.com   Ken Johnson, Newsletter Editor

CALENDAR

SIG = Special Interest Group

This Week's Schedule:

August 16 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM
General Meeting - Leader: Ray Carlson
Location: Prescott Public Library

First Hour: Russian Password Hacking Group and Dealing With Malware

Another major story about a Russian group hacking passwords was in the headlines recently. Should we be concerned or is this just hype that does not impact on average computer users?

There are several ways corrupt people try to take partial or full control of your computer including using your computer to send out their phishing email, stealing your financial information, tricking you into using their software or totally hijacking or stealing your computer. We will update information about such malicious practices, how to reduce the risk of getting these invasions, and how to get rid of them. The audience will be encouraged to share their experience with such menaces.

Second Hour: Phil Ball will offer more positive content offering tips about how to get increasing value from your computer.

In addition to the presentations, the following are typical events which take place at our General meetings:

1) We hold an informal Flea Market in which you are encouraged to bring in your excess computer equipment or software and make them available for others to enjoy at no charge. Please deposit give-away items on the table in the back marked "Free Stuff." Any items left here at the end of the meeting are subject to disposal.

2) If you have items that are just too good to give away, you may set up a separate table and hold your own sale.

3) We conduct a raffle of new computer items at the end of the meeting, so make sure to get a pair of tickets from whoever is in charge and place one on the item you'd like to win.

4) We will also accept your used ink and toner cartridges for recycling. They are turned in to Think4Inc for credits which PCS uses to purchase office supplies from them.

Future Meetings

August 23 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM
Special Topics SIG - Leader: JB Burke
Location: Prescott Public Library

This month, JB will delve into topics related to computer hardware, software, the Internet and the World Wide Web. You are sure to find something educational and/or entertaining and/or interesting in this fast-paced enjoyable session. As always, questions and comments will be welcome. After all, JB has to be learning something from these sessions too!

August 30 - Saturday
There will be no PCS meeting today.

September 6 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM
Digital Photo SIG - Leader: Phil Ball
Location: Prescott Public Library

Many aspects of digital photography will be discussed, including use of digital cameras and using Photo-shop Elements to make your photos look their best.

September 13 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM
General Meeting - Leader: Ray Carlson
Location: Prescott Public Library

First Hour: To be determined

Second Hour: Phil Ball will present Tips and Tricks with insights into various topics that assist with regular computer

Note that these dates are correct at time of publication but are subject to change.
Up to date information can be found on our website, www.pcs4me.com
Unless otherwise noted, our meetings are usually held in the
Founder's Suite at the Prescott Public Library.

Prescott Computer Society
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2012-2013

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Welcome to
NEW MEMBERS

Wayne Case and Kathy Jensen

Prescott Computer Society
Where you share
what you know,
and learn what you don't.

3 Better Ways to Store Your Files than On the Desktop

By Joel Lee, MakeUseOfCom.com,

May 5, 2014

http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/3-better-ways-store-files-desktop/

http://bit.ly/1iiLU2u

Did you know that storing files directly on your desktop can harm your productivity? I used to be one of "those" people who downloaded files straight to the desktop. If you can identify with that, then I have good news for you: you can do better. Desktop storage is simple, sure, but it comes with hidden drawbacks you may not know about.

Kick the bad habit with these alternative file storage methods. They may not be as convenient but I promise that you'll learn to love them in the long run.

The urge to save files to the desktop is understandable. It provides immediate access with a single click, which means that it's tempting to turn the desktop into a de facto headquarters for storage. But unless you are strict with maintenance, you'll eventually succumb to these issues:

No file protection. As noted by PC World, certain directories are not affected by System Restore, the most recognizable location being My Documents. Files on the desktop are affected by System Restore, which can result in unexpected file disappearances.

No file backups. Many file backup programs ignore desktop files by default. Most programs worth their salt will allow you to change the settings and include the desktop if necessary, but all it takes is one forgetful moment to accidentally lose an important desktop file.

Clutter, clutter, clutter. The story is always the same. You begin your desktop collection with a few documents. Over time, the collection grows to include images, music, pro-

grams, zip files, and more documents. Suddenly, finding the right document takes more time than actually opening it.

Separate Drive Partitions

One bit of computer wisdom that you should learn is this: "Never save data on the same partition as your operating system." In Windows, the location of the desktop on the file system does reside on the same partition as the operating system itself.

Why is this important advice? Because you want to avoid putting ALL of your eggs in the same basket.

Let's say that you happen to contract a mild virus or malware that attacks your operating system. It might wipe all files related to the operating system itself OR it may affect the entire partition that holds the operating system. By losing the operating system, you lose all of your saved data as well.

But if you installed Windows to the C: partition and stored all of your files on the D: partition, your files on D: would be safe even if C: were wiped clean. The only way D: would be affected is if the physical hard drive itself was wiped or damaged.

One additional benefit of having separate partitions is that you can reinstall Windows without losing your saved data. Tina has written on the subject of resizing Windows partitions, so check it out if you want to take advantage of this feature. http://bit.ly/1lfBCDe .

Every installation of Windows comes with a directory called My Documents. In Windows 7, it was renamed to Documents and came with a couple of buddies: Music, Pictures, and Videos. They're called libraries and you've probably seen them before, but never really used them, right? Well, you should reconsider.

In truth, these four libraries are special. They aren't just directories; they're collections of multiple directories. In each library, you can specify different directories to be included and that library will show the content from all included directories. It sounds more complicated than it is.

Think of it like this: You can save your videos to many different locations and link those directories to the Videos library. Then, whenever you access the Videos library, you'll see all of those files in one place.

It's just as convenient as storing everything on the desktop, yet infinitely more flexible and organized.

For more details on how to take advantage of this feature, check out Chris's writeup on how to use Windows Libraries. http://bit.ly/1iMkORF

Store Files in the Cloud

Cloud storage has been a big buzz term over the past few years and for good reason. While cloud-related solutions like Dropbox, G+ Drive, or Microsoft One-Drive come with privacy concerns <http://bit.ly/1lzsQ4F>, they also offer many benefits and I think people are too quick to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Here's how it works: You set aside one or more directories that automatically sync with whatever service you're using (comparison of cloud storage services). These files can be accessed from anywhere and they can be set to private or public.

Why is this better than storing straight on the desktop?

• Immediate backups. Due to automatic synchronization, you rarely need to worry about lost files. If your computer gets wiped somehow, those files still reside on the cloud and you can always retrieve them again.

Revision history. Not every cloud service offers a revision history, but most do and it's an important feature. Basically, the service will track every change that's made to the file (it may be limited to the last X changes) and allow you to instantly revert to a past version if necessary.

One Drive (aka SkyDrive) comes integrated with Windows 8 and can help you keep your files synced.

Need Quick Access to Files?

Sometimes convenience wins out over practicality and reason. The desktop is great because it allows for immediate access, right? With one small compromise, you can maintain that convenience. The answer is to use shortcuts.

Creating a shortcut is as simple as dragging a file using the right mouse button to where you want the shortcut to appear, then selecting Create shortcut here from the menu. Even if a shortcut gets wiped, the actual file will still be safe.

But instead of putting the shortcuts on the desktop, why not take it one step further?

Right click on any file shortcut and select either *Pin to taskbar* or *Pin to start menu*. It's a self-explanatory feature that works just as well as, if not better than, traditional desktop shortcuts. I use it day in and day out and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Conclusion

Ultimately, personal preference will always win. For those of you who have been "desktopping" for years, you'll probably find it near impossible to break the habit. I still do it from time to time, though I try my best to clean up after myself when I realize what I'm doing. It just doesn't make sense to store everything on the desktop anymore.

Do you clutter up your desktop with files and folders galore? If so, are you convinced enough to try a safer method of file storage? Share your thoughts with us in the comments! http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/3-better-ways-store-files-desktop/

Computer Problems Plague Everyone, Even Me

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

Sandy (at) compukiss.com

www.compukiss.com

Why do things change on your computer? One day everything comes up just as it normally does. The next day, you can't get on the Internet, the icons are in a different place, and/or your program is working differently. Well I am here to tell you that everyone has problems like this -- even me! Here's the whole story!

When weird things happen on the computer, most people immediately blame themselves saying, "I must have done something to make this happen." The truth, however, is that in the computer world changes can happen without your having done a thing to cause them. This was really brought home to me this week when I had several "problems" with my own computer.

When I sat down to work on the computer last Monday, the icons for my password manager and several other shortcuts that I use regularly were no longer on my browser toolbar at the top of the screen. On Tuesday, when I opened my Quicken program, the numbers and text was twice as large as normal. On Thursday I tried to play some music and found that iTunes was no longer working. On Friday I found that my CD drive, which I hadn't used for months, was no longer working.

Now, it is unusual for all of these things to happen in one week, but it is not unusual for them to happen. I did not do anything to cause any of these changes. So what happened? Well the simple explanation is that the computer is run by millions of lines of code. As you work on the computer, add files, and download programs, things change. Even installing updates from the manufacturer causes changes. Sometimes these changes, even if they are aimed at making a certain part of the computer better or more secure, can adversely affect other programs and other computer operations.

Although these types of changes can produce huge frustrations for the end user, the first thing to learn is that you probably didn't cause the different behavior and that, if you remain cool and calm, you can often correct the changes. Here's how I got through my aggravating week:

To find the missing icons, I had to look carefully at the screen where they normally appear. I found two arrows next to where the icons normally appeared. Low and behold, when I pressed the arrows, the missing icons cascaded down. To actually solve the problem, I simply put my cursor on the area next to the arrows until it turned into a double-ended arrow. Then I dragged that to the left and my icons appeared and remained on the screen.

Quicken was another disconcerting item. For several days, the text and numbers appeared larger one time and smaller the next. To be honest, I never found the cause, but luckily it all went back to normal and has stayed that way.

Why in the world would iTunes stop working? I had no explanation, but I did have an easy solution. I simply reinstalled the iTunes program. It was aggravating and a bit time-consuming to have to do so, but after I did, everything went back to normal.

The most vexing problem was my CD drive. Last time I used it, it worked fine. Now wasn't working. It did not appear in My Computer at all. A trip over to the Device Manager showed the CD drive with a yellow exclamation meaning that it was not working properly, which I already knew. I tried a few things like uninstalling the CD driver and rebooting, but had no success. I knew that this could be a hardware problem. Perhaps the drive itself had stopped working. I also knew, that it could be a software problem. Since the driver and filters from the operating system are used to run the CD drive and other peripherals, I decided to check that out first. I headed over to the Microsoft website where I found a Microsoft tool called "Fix It." I used it to troubleshoot and correct the problem. There are multiple Fix It tools, and the proper one can be a bit hard to find, but Fix It checked out the software, found the problem, and helped me quickly solve the problem at no cost. That sure beat having to purchase and install a new CD drive.

Well, now everything on my computer is back to normal. At least for the moment. The moral of the story is that, unfortunately, we have to expect glitches when working with computers. The best thing that you can do is to keep your eyes open for possible solutions, learn as much as you can about how your computer works and be bold enough to troubleshoot small problems. I keep my Sherlock Holmes hat ready for use at any time. You may want to do the same.

Sacrificing for the benefit of PCS!

Ken Johnson–Messenger Newsletter Editor for

the Prescott Computer Society

kjohnson244@cableone.net

Well, I did it!

Last week my Motorola Droid popped it's SIM card out when the phone rang.

After diligently trying to push it in, it refused to co-operate, even for the "Pros" at the Verizon store.

After being sold a new Droid Maxx that had no Micro SD but supposedly had 32gb of memory, it easily captured all my contacts and calendar info and I was up and running without a problem.

I re-installed most of my favorite apps, got it pretty much running as before, enjoyed the prospect of the additional battery life that the Maxx offers, was pleased with the new 4000mah backup battery that was available at a bargain price as a bonus for my plan upgrade, I discovered the current Maxx now only has 16gbs of memory!

I knew that this would never satisfy my needs so I bit the bullet and returned the Maxx after 3 days.

During that 3 day period, I did some rather extensive research on the new Windows 8.1 phone and found that the reviews were positive about the improvements to this OS.

I found that I could get suitable Windows Phone apps to replace my favorite Android one's, so I made the momentous decision.

Now any of you who have made a change to-or-from Android and iPhone know that it is not seamless and so it was with this change.

My first challenge was that having had an easy transition from my Droid to the Droid Maxx, it didn't occur to me to back up to my PC before changing to Windows Phone. Big mistake!

The good news is that after working through the Microsoft Account problem (doesn't everyone inadvertently wind up with several of these accounts due to acquiring several Microsoft devices?), a call

to Verizon support, reading the various help blogs, a return trip to the Verizon store and finally discovering that my contacts and calendar finally appeared, I am now up-and-running on my new Samsung ATIV SE which has 16gb of internal memory and a micro SD slot (up to 64gb),a 2.3 ghz quad-core processor AND a removable 2600mah battery!

I am still refining it to my taste and have not yet received the 8.1 update (the blogs are all over that problem!) but I am hopeful that this will satisfy my needs in the near future.

My thought process for this change was that I have heard all the stories how those John Carter types that are using all Apple devices enjoy seamless cooperation between them and that the goal of Microsoft (be it ever so slow to fruition) is to provide that connectivity as well.

Since I am not into games, watching videos and listening to music on my devices, and that I want compatibility with my PC with Office 365, my Windows 8.1 Asus Transformer and such, this seems to be a worthwhile endeavor.

So far it is providing some advantages over my Droid as well as roadblocks which I have been overcoming with sheer stick-to-it-ivity.

Stay tuned! I will continue my quest and either achieve my goals or switch at the next upgrade time. Either way, I am functioning.