Glendora's Computer Club Gigabyte Gazette

Meetings
2ⁿᵈ & 4ᵗʰ Wednesday
1:00 – 3:00 pm
La Fetra Community Center
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626 914 8235

www.gscclub.org/

In This Issue

Windows 10 1909 Update Is Small and Polished
What's coming in the Spring 2020 Update
How-To Geek - http://bit.ly/2PAkglj

Since Windows 10's release, Microsoft has issued a major new update to the operating system every six months, starting with the first November Update in 2015.

These updates have often been packed with major new features. Rather than the usual process of cramming in as many features as possible, testing them for a few months with Windows Insiders, and then releasing the update to users, Microsoft slowed down for this update. It doesn't change very much, either. It's a small download that installs just as quickly as a typical monthly update package for Windows 10.

The update makes a few visual tweaks and adds a few helpful features to the notifications, calendar, and File Explorer, but it's mostly focused on under-the-hood improvements.

Microsoft hasn't given up on major updates to Windows 10, of course. Windows 10's 20H1 update is scheduled for the first half of 2020 and is now called Windows 10 2004. Expect it around May or April 2020. This update features major changes:

- More Control Over Optional Updates
- A New Cortana Experience (With Typing)
- A Faster Windows Search Experience
- Windows Lets You "Make Your Device Passwordless"
- Improved Network Status Information
- Disk Cleanup Won't Delete Your Downloads Folder
- Quick Searches in Search Home
  When you open the "Search Home" panel by clicking the search box on the taskbar, you'll see new "quick searches" at the bottom, giving you one-click access to things like the weather, top news, and new movies.
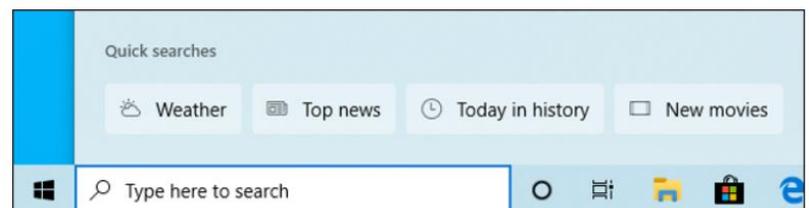
President's Corner
Tech Trek - Traveling with Technology, Part 1 - Planning and Booking
Author: Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA
November 2019 issue, Drive Light
www.uchug.org / president (at) uchug.org

We all use a lot of technology in our everyday lives - various devices and services that make our lives better. They help us communicate, keep us safe and well, inform us, get us where we want to go, get us the things we need and entertain us. When we travel, we usually want to take all those benefits along with us.

There are many travel-related capabilities in the technology currently available to us. The travel industry, from transportation and lodging to hospitality and entertainment, has embraced the internet and mobile devices to make the traveler's life easier. There are lots of new ways to protect ourselves while traveling and protect the home and stuff we left behind. There are a lot of devices we can take with us to enhance our traveling experience and even save us money. All these added capabilities carry a price, however, in added equipment to take, costs to buy and use, additional restrictions to follow and addition risks in loss.

Technology has become important in all aspects of travel, occurring before, during and after the trip. Selecting a destination, planning a trip, comparing costs and bookings components of the trip are all made easier by the internet and all the web-related travel resources now available. It may not have decreased travel times any as compared to ten years ago, but travel is now on average more fuel efficient, reliable, safer and easier to arrange, and in some cases lower in cost, all due to technology.

While motor vehicle average passenger and cargo spaces have decreased, and airline average passenger seat space and free baggage allowances have decreased, the tech stuff we want to bring along on our trips has only increased. Smart phones may be small and provide a lot of capabilities, but it seldom stops there for most travelers. When you add in laptops, tablets or e-readers, digital cameras, music players, noise canceling headphones, GPS devices and all the extra memory cards, batteries and chargers to support them, you've typically got a big bag of heavy tech gear to cart around, get through TSA screening and protect against theft or loss.

I really like to travel, though I don't get the opportunity to do so all that often. For various reasons, it had been more than a year since our previous overnight trip when my wife and I took a week-long anniversary vacation trip this last month. I've always been a tech user and tech traveler but was surprised at how much more dependent on it we had become since our last trip.

As expected, we relied heavily on the internet for our pre-trip planning and arranging. In the old days, one might consult with a travel agent to select a destination, price the arrangements and book the travel and lodgings. Now the commissions that paid for the agent's time have been reduced or eliminated, and most companies prefer to sell on the web directly to consumers. We did all our planning and made all our arrangements on

the web, with (almost) no human interactions, and believe we got a very good deal on our trip.

The internet can be of great benefit for travel planning, as it is easy to do price comparisons to come up with the lowest-cost options. Comparing other factors can be done, but you can wind up spending a lot of time on the web researching. Our first plan for an October trip was to visit our nephew and see the fall colors (leaves turning color) in New England. Our nephew had just started school at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, and the photos my sister forwarded when they dropped him off there looked inviting. I figured we could also visit Niagara Falls, which is somewhat nearby. When my wife determined that the optimal place to see the fall colors was in Stowe, Vermont, the trip became more complicated than my week of vacation could accommodate. To hit all three locations would require flying in and out of two destination cities, a one-way car rental and a rapid pace. It would also be a bit expensive from San Diego.

Our second plan was to go to New Orleans, a place we'd both wanted to go to and would have earlier this year, were it not for other issues. I was concerned about going at this time of year, however, so we abandoned that plan.

Our third and final plan came courtesy of a Southwest Airlines sales email, which advertised $49 one-way non-stop flights to select cities. From San Diego, these included mostly Northern California, Nevada and Arizona destinations. We considered the Bay Area, but one of our last trips was to Napa. I was interested in going to Sacramento, to see the California State Railroad Museum, as well as destinations related to the gold rush. My wife was more interested in going to South Lake Tahoe, and I thought that would be OK as well. When I compared flight prices, however, I found you could fly about once an hour all day to Sacramento for $49 with this sale, but the lowest price to fly to Reno/Tahoe was $112 one way, with that price good only a couple of flights per day. I'd already compared days and found the lowest costs and greatest availability were for flying mid-week, so I was targeting flying out on a Wednesday and returning on the following Tuesday.

Frustrated with the large price difference between going to Sacramento and Reno, I looked at the map of where Southwest flies in order to get other ideas and noticed that the distance between the two cities was not that great. With only a 2.5-hour drive to get from Sacramento to Reno, it made more economic sense to fly to Sacramento, rent a car and then drive to Reno (or South Lake Tahoe). I even found that renting a car at the Sacramento airport was less expensive than from the Reno airport. I didn't shop around much for rental cars as I'd found over many trips that Costco Travel always seems to offer the best prices on rental cars. Thus the combination trip concept was born, where we would fly to and from Sacramento, but stay three nights there and three nights in South Lake Tahoe. This allowed each of us to get what we wanted, at a very low price.

Once I'd booked our flights on the Southwest web site and the car on the Costco Travel site, it was time to make our hotel selections, as well as decide which city we would stay in first. Once again, the internet provided an easy way to locate and price prospective hotels. This process can be quick, but to get the best pricing, many iterations and a fair amount of time searching are necessary. My wife got to choose where we stayed in South Lake Tahoe, and for Sacramento I looked to a hotel chain we have used

frequently, as I determined we could get one night free there through redeeming our accumulated points.

Through web pricing comparisons, I found both of our prospective hotels were less expensive for the first half of our trip (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights) and more expensive for the second half (Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights). This was not too surprising. What was a surprise was that the Sacramento hotel was only about 20% more in the second half of our trip, while for South Lake Tahoe the price doubled. Thus the internet showed it would save us money to stay in South Lake Tahoe first, and then in Sacramento for the last three nights (which is what I thought would be best anyway). After looking at the South Lake Tahoe hotel my wife liked on a number of travel sites, I booked it on Hotels.com, as it was as low there as anywhere else, and I could earn hotel points on the site for free future stays.

There were still pricing games to be played with the Sacramento hotel. I had previously checked the hotel chain's web site to determine I had enough points for one free night there, and it required the same number of points regardless of the day of the week. For the two nights I would be paying for, it did matter, as the cost could be different for each day of the week. I found our Saturday night stay would cost the most if purchased, so I made the points redemption reservation online for that night, and the paid nights (Sunday and Monday) were made on a separate online reservation. Up to this point I'd made all of our travel arrangements online, but now I had to break down and call someone at the hotel to make sure I had selected the same room type in the two reservations (for points stay and paid stay) to be able to get the same room and not have to vacate between reservations. I didn't trust that this would work out if all I did was send them an online message.

Before making the final hotel reservations, I did look a bit at the hotel reviews online, to make sure there were no problems mentioned repeatedly, or a lot of unsatisfied guests. I also went on Google Maps and used Street View to look at the area around the hotels to make sure they looked to be in safe neighborhoods. I learned this trick when booking hotels for the night of my wife's company Christmas party. She works for a company based in Los Angeles but works remotely on her own in San Diego. She is always invited to the company party, which is held in a nice restaurant in the LA area. Since I don't know the restaurants or the area very well, we have to be cautious when looking for a hotel to stay at so we don't have to drive back that night. You can't tell much from the Google Maps satellite view, but street view will reveal if the building next to the prospective hotel is covered in gang graffiti, or the hotel has fortress-like barricades around it. Those are the ones I avoid.

We researched and booked a few things to do on our trip through the web, like a boat ride on Lake Tahoe and bike rentals so we could ride the river trails in Sacramento. That completed all our travel arrangements. Now all that was left to do before we traveled was to figure out which tech devices to take along, and what needed to be set up at home to protect our stuff and make it look like we never left.

Why Is My Computer So Slow?
(Updated from April 2017)
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**November 2019 issue, Gigabyte Gazette**
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There are plenty of computers being used that are performing much more slowly than they should. One of the quickest ways to turn a fast, new computer into a slow system crippled by malware is to start downloading what you think is good software from the wrong sites, or by downloading the wrong software from what appears to be the right site.

Newer computers being slowed by unwanted programs is a bother, but the damage done by PUPs (Potentially Unwanted Programs) can be much more serious; PUPs can be responsible for programs that lock up your system and make it impossible to access any of your files, or otherwise ruin your system.

Every time you download anything from the Internet you first issue permissions that enable the opening of a conduit between the Internet and your computer. The series of complex events is mostly invisible to you, except for your clicking on that virtual button that starts the whole process.
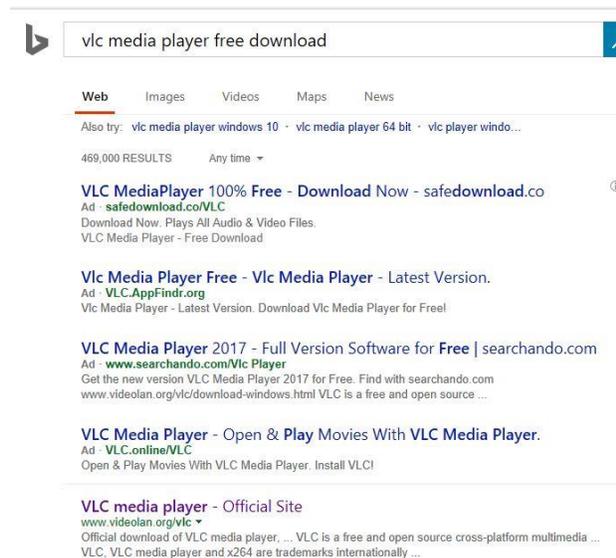
Bing and Google searches often can take you where you don't want to go. When searching for popular software, sponsored search results (which result in unwanted programs) often appear at the top of the search results page, along with links from the actual software source sites. Often those ad links try to install software on your computer that you do not want. It could be anything; it could be a fake driver update program or a scam system cleaning program. Note that my Bing search for VLC media player (left) first showed 4 sites NOT associated with VLC – places that have a high potential for providing bad software.

Testing Misleading Advertisement links
How bad is it? To find out, I installed a fresh Windows 10, plus all Windows updates, on a freshly formatted hard drive. I downloaded and installed the free version of Avast! Antivirus software that brought a hitchhiker of its own - Google Chrome. OK, I wanted Chrome, but not every user would so I considered this an invasive act by a program I downloaded for protection.

I used Edge, Firefox, and Google Chrome and started using Google and Bing search engines to start searching for popular free programs. The programs I sought are often

the first programs that get installed on a PC; Firefox, Google Chrome, OpenOffice, iTunes, Adobe Flash, Java, Adobe Acrobat, VLC, and WinZip. Then, I carelessly clicked on ad results, which appeared above or on the same first page as "real" search results. These paid ads were identified by notes and highlighted in a very pale color to differentiate them (slightly) from the actual search links that appeared nearby.

The ads didn't appear after every search and the ones that appeared varied among searches and were different for different browsers. Sometimes, the first paid ad link actually took me to the software's true source site (i.e. searching for Google offered www.google.com first). Often Avast would block a download it recognized as harmful, but Avast did not catch many problems.

For all of the searched for programs, I was able to bring up more questionable sponsored search results within seconds of repeated searching. Misleading results showed up in all search engines and I could not determine that any browser offered better or worse protection than others.

For each ad link, I clicked through and installed the respective programs via the link or button provided. Instead of delivering just the application I was looking for, all of the paid links attempted to tack on unwanted programs. In some cases, if I was careful to read all of the fine print and uncheck boxes, I could get the files I was looking for without a bunch of extra "added value" software, but it was very difficult.

For the purposes of this article, I acted as an inexperienced user (or an experienced user who's not paying attention) and clicked my way through ads and dialogue boxes that looked like the End User License Agreement (EULA) we're used to seeing through when installing software.

And ...They Got Me!
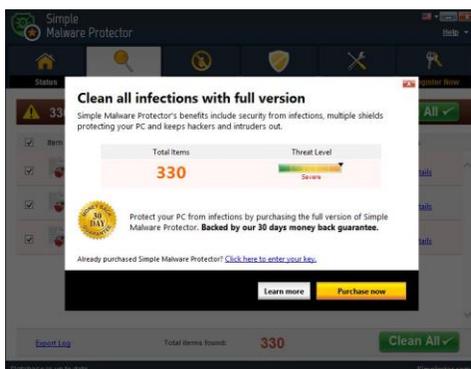
After installing just a few programs this way, I started accumulating browser toolbars (Bing, Yahoo, and Google) and noticed my search engine and home page had been hijacked to something unwanted. As I continued the process, Windows started slowing down to a crawl.

After installing all of the programs on my list, I opened Windows 10's Programs and Features and each browser's extensions and add-ons and counted 39 items that had been installed in addition to the programs I intended to get. On rebooting, three new programs launched popup windows at startup, including two that started running virus/registry scans as soon as they launched, and a couple that flashed warning windows and offered fixes if I registered and/or upgraded to the full paid version.

Remember this was originally a clean install of Windows 10 that needed nothing. Within a few
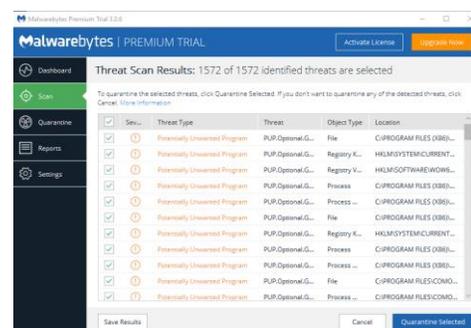
minutes, my computer became noticeably slower, plagued by numerous popups, and was becoming essentially unusable.

A Malwarebytes scan disclosed 1572 unwanted programs were present on my system. I'm sure not all of these were nasty, but if even a small fraction of them were, I would be in real trouble.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Most of us will occasionally have reason to download and install some third-party (non-Microsoft) software from the Internet. This does not have to be dangerous if you pay attention that the software is being offered from the true home site of that product. NEVER download software from any sponsored link unless the desired software creator is the sponsor.

Do not depend on your anti-malware program to protect you. It will catch some issues, but not all.

Interesting Internet Finds – November
Author: Steve Costello
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While going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members. The following are some items I found interesting during the month of October.

How To Change the DNS on Android – Every Android Versions
https://joyofandroid.com/how-to-change-dns-on-android/
I have changed the DNS on all my computers and router, but until now wasn't able to figure out how to do it on my Galaxy S9. I find that I get faster more reliable internet connections than with my internet provider or cellular provider.

What Is "Mixed Content," And Why Is Chrome Blocking It?
https://www.howtogeek.com/443032/what-is-mixed-content-and-why-is-chrome-blocking-it/
If you use Google Chrome you might ask this question. This post from How-To Geek explains what it is and why Chrome blocks it.

How To Convert PDF files To ePub And MOBI Formats
https://www.maketecheasier.com/convert-pdf-to-epub-mobi/
There are times when I get files in the PDF format. If I want to use an e-reader it is better to have them converted to the format used by the device. This post explains how to use various conversion websites, and the Calibre desktop application, to make the conversion.

5 Steps To Clean Up Your Smartphone Address Book
https://www.techlicious.com/tip/steps-to-clean-up-your-smartphone-contact-list/
If your smartphone address book is anything link mine, and I am pretty sure it is, there are duplicate and incomplete entries all through it. When I saw this post, it reminded me

to do my annual address book clean up. If you need to clean your address book too, this post explains what to do.

How Do I Post A Book Review On Goodreads?
https://www.askdavetaylor.com/how-to-write-post-book-review-on-goodreads/
Do you read a lot? Do you want to post book reviews on Goodreads? If you answered yes to these questions, check out this post to learn how. (Check out my reviews https://www.goodreads.com/review/list/7320487-steve?order=d&sort=review&view=reviews)

Why That "Unimportant" Account Matters
https://askleo.com/why-that-unimportant-account-matters/
Leo explains why every account should be as secure as you can make it. I agree with his reasoning. Check this out for yourself and then secure all your accounts, even those you think are unimportant.
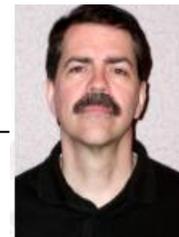
Is "Refurbished" Worth the Price?
News and/or Opinion from Paul Baecker, Newsletter Publisher & Editor
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October 2019 issue, WYSIWYG
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I recently went shopping for a cable modem to eliminate the rental cost of the one supplied by my ISP. After doing some online research, I decided on a capable Arris model and found it at a local retailer. The store had some new ones but also had some refurbished ones for about half the price of the new ones.

I thought to myself, well, they've simply been returned by shoppers who had changed their minds because they didn't like the color or style, and the units were probably basically unused. I inquired and learned that they had previously been used in a business somewhere (how would the salesman know?). So next I thought, well, do I want to save a few bucks by buying this so-called refurbished unit? Surely the items would have been repaired (if necessary) and tested by an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) facility so that they operated as though they were new, even if they did have some wear marks on them. A no brainer to save the money, right?

But for whatever reason, I got a bit more inquisitive and asked about to what extent these items were refurbished. To the original manufacturer's specifications? In this case, nope. Well, then, surely the store could vouch for the level of refurbishment done by the third party. Nope again. I learned that there are businesses that exist to refurbish electronic products to their own specifications, and they are not necessarily noted as to their relationship to the product's original specs. My excitement in getting a great deal

was gradually waning. Finally, the store rep tells me that they offer a 14-day return on a purchase of this item, but no warranty beyond that return option. I eventually passed on this offer. I figured that with my luck, the item would last past those 14 days, but die soon thereafter.

I also checked the details on the web site of a popular online retailer of computers and accessories. I found similar statements about refurbished products being refurbished to the specs of the refurbishing organization. Some refurbished items came with warranties, some could be warranted at extra cost, and some items were 'as is' (such as demos) with no right to complain after the purchase.

So, what this adventure taught me is to carefully vet the retailer of any refurbished item you're considering (whether electronics, furniture, appliances, etc.) and carefully study the purchase agreement and any (often hidden) disclaimers that apply to the purchase.

A definition I found online for the term "refurbish" is "to brighten or freshen up."

Yikes!!!

This is an online article about doing your homework when shopping for refurbished products. You can snag discounts as high as 50% off on smartphones, tablets, computers and associated devices when looking for a refurbished unit, but you've got to do your homework. https://lifehacker.com/when-should-i-buy-refurbished-electronics-5885492

How Has AI Changed Your Life?
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When I find myself at social events, I like to ask a question to start a conversation with those around me. The question is: "Tell me how Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed your life. What are your experiences?" Then I sit back and listen.

I started asking this question after attending a few seminars and reading books about the topic. Everyone has a story. Recently I asked my dental hygienist that question. She immediately became very tense and anxious. She denied it was affecting her at first, but after a few moments, she proceeded to tell me about a few new devices that will clean your teeth. They're available on Amazon of course and are Bluetooth compatible. You charge this dental retainer type device, then you pop it in your mouth. Fifteen minutes later, your teeth are cleaned. That's one less dental visit.

This week I asked a journeyman electrician how his life is changing. His answer: homes and offices being built today have less copper wire. It's not needed anymore since everything is wireless. They still have to run some copper to the light, but nowhere else. That's a huge savings in new home construction. Also, the power companies are putting in controls that let them dim our lights when needed. So instead of black or brownouts, the power company can dim our lights from their location to save power.

From the books and articles I've read, I came across the name Jim Dator, an author and Professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. One of the Dator Laws is: "Any useful idea about the future should appear to be ridiculous."

Think about that for a moment. Things that we mocked, saw on TV, laughed at in movies are now modern-day. Star Trek communicators, Dick Tracy watches, "Back to the Future" hoverboards, "Beam me up, Scotty," it's here.

They seemed ridiculous at the time, yet they are as real as the Apple Watch you're wearing. If it's scary, and it is, it's because change is hard. It's rarely accepted or appreciated. We're all stuck in our ways and want to leave it like that. However, we must accept the change because it's happening whether we want it or not.

The banks didn't ask us if we want to now withdraw money from a machine and replace the friendly teller. They just did it, and we adjusted. As a result, many of us haven't been inside a bank for years. This week I needed to refer a friend to a personal banker. I couldn't, I don't have one. Those days of walking in, saying hi, asking about the kids and work, are gone. AI has taken that away. And you know, that's okay. We all have adjusted very well to that change. So, let's not be afraid of these changes. Let's instead open up our eyes to see what's coming. How can we benefit from them? How will it improve my life? Example: the BMW dealership contacted me recently because my car sent them a message informing them that an oil change is overdue. Now I'll be bringing the car in for service. That's a good thing, it's extending the life of the vehicle. So, help me here. Share with me, what are your experiences? How is your personal world affected by AI? Tell me something I don't know. I look forward to reading your replies. *From Drive Light, Under the Computer Hood UG newsletter.*

Windows FREE Snip and Sketch Tool is new and replacing the old
Author: Jim Cerny, Forums Coordinator
December 2019 issue, STUG Monitor
www.thestug.org / jimcerny123 (at) gmail.com

The new Windows "Snip and Sketch" tool was part of the Windows 10 October 2018 update. This tool is intended to REPLACE the old "Snipping Tool" of previous Windows editions. But they (Microsoft) did something to actually help us users this time – they kept the old tool! So you can play and learn the new Snip and Sketch and keep the old Snipping Tool too! Maybe they learned not to force users into using updated or changed apps right away – we need time to adjust and learn, right?

Everything you could do in the old Snipping Tool you can do in Snip and Sketch, plus you get a few more tools and options. Thankfully these new additions are easy to see and use, and they can be ignored if you do not want to use them. Microsoft promises more options to come. Be sure to search Google for videos on how to use Windows Snip and Sketch! I am including here only the basic options.

Click on the Windows logo in the lower-left corner of your desktop and you will find Snip and Sketch in the alphabetical list of apps that appear. It is not inside the Windows Accessories folder of apps (where the Snipping Tool still remains).

I recommend dragging this app to your desktop screen to always keep it handy. But you can also open it anytime by holding down the Windows key + Shift key + S on your keyboard. Upon opening the app, your whole screen goes gray and you will see the small controls rectangle at the top. Here you select HOW you want to select what you want to snip or capture. From left to right you can select a rectangular area, freeform selection, the entire window, or your full screen.

If you select the rectangle, you drag your mouse on the screen to select whatever you want. As soon as you release your mouse – presto, your selected image has been captured and saved on the clipboard to do with whatever you want!

You can open a Word document, for example, place your cursor where you want, and "paste" your clip right in your document. Or you can open the Windows Paint app and you can "paste" it there if you want to do more editing. At the same time that your snip is placed on the clipboard, you will also see a message stating that you can edit, draw, or markup your selection. Click to do that and Snip and Sketch opens in its own window with its own menu of options.

Various easy marking tools are available for you to play with and try. There are highlighters and markers, and clicking on the down arrows will open things like color choices, etc. Once you have "sketched" on your "snip" you can save it as a ".jpg," ".png," or ".gif" format by clicking on the old floppy disk save icon and selecting the file type you want. The new Snip and Sketch is easy to use and very helpful for saving and sketching on any image on your screen for any purpose. Why not give it a try?

Santa's List, the original AI Maybe?
Author: Art Greshman, Editor, Drive Light
Under the Computer Hood User Group
1Editor101 (at) uchug.org / www.uchug.org

He's making a list
He's checking it twice
He's gonna find out
Who's naughty or nice

So was the Jolly old Elf the original Artificial Intelligence? How did he find out? We may never know. But if your kids or grandkids want to track his progress this year you can do it from your computer or cell phone.

To get everyone in the Christmas spirit, here is a list of the top 5 free Santa apps for kids (and adults) to enjoy:

1. Dating back to 1955, NORAD Tracks Santa is the longest-running interactive Santa

Claus experience for kids and adults. Every December the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) launches its annual Santa tracking event. Kids and parents alike can enjoy interactive games, videos, information and much more – let's not fail to mention that everyone can track Santa as he makes his way around the world. NORAD Tracks Santa is available on the web as well as the Google Play Store (Android Mobile App) and iTunes (iOS Mobile App). noradsanta.org

2. Each year parents are able to visit DialMyCalls' Santa Calls event and schedule a personalized call to their children/ grandchildren, direct from Santa Claus himself. Easily select your child's/grandchild's name from the list and schedule when you want them to receive a call from jolly old Saint Nick – if your child's/grandchild's name is not available, they offer a standard greeting from Santa that can be sent. Send free Santa calls today!

3. Throughout the month of December, the Google Santa Tracker app will countdown to

Christmas with fun and exciting games for kids to enjoy – on December 24th, the interactive Santa tracker will go live, allowing kids to follow his progress as he delivers gifts around the world.santatracker.google.com

4. Office Max officially launched its extremely viral, dancing elves website back in 2006. Since its inception, Elf Yourself has become an annual

tradition for people all across the world. Visitors to the Elf Yourself Christmas app can upload photos of themselves, family members and friends, which are then added to a hilarious dancing elves video – there are several different video templates to choose from. After users of the website or mobile apps (iOS and

Android) upload their faces, the dancing elves video that is created is then shareable across all social media platforms – spread some holiday cheer this Christmas by becoming a hilarious dancing elf.elfyourself.com

5. JibJab offers a similar Christmas app as Elf Yourself but has a wide variety of video eCards to choose from. Instead of only being able to superimpose your face on Santa's elves, JibJab lets users create hilarious video eCards for the Christmas season – become a dancing reindeer or a rapping Santa Claus with one of their many video eCard templates and then share the end result with the world. JibJab's holiday video eCards are available on their website as well as their mobile app for iOS.jibjab.com

Desktop vs. Laptop
Author: Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG, Florida
December 2019 issue, The Space Coast Journal
www.scpcug.org / datadan (at) msn.com

At a recent learning center meeting, the topic of what was better to get, in my opinion, a desktop or a laptop?

We agreed to include various other devices in the category of 'laptop' - tablets, Chromebooks, netbooks, notebooks, etc. Let's take a look at the various factors that should influence your decision.

Performance – This used to be the biggest differentiator between laptop versus desktop decisions, but this is not true any longer. The modern CPU (Central Processing Unit) chip designs have greatly reduced the heat generated and thereby eliminated one of the biggest problems with portable devices; they need to cool down the CPU effectively in a limited space within the case. The latest Intel and AMD CPUs are available in basically the same speeds and formats across both desktop and laptop motherboards.

However, the smaller size of laptops does command a premium price over that of desktops due to higher manufacturing costs for the same performance, as a general rule. SSDs (Solid State Disks) are available for both and their performance will be similar in either PC.

Storage Capacity – This is the other major area that has dramatically changed. Desktops typically have had larger capacity hard drives for storage – a 3.5" width hard drive case is still the standard in desktops while laptops standardized on a 2.5" width form. Large capacity drives (1TB+) are cheaper and were only available in the desktop size until the last 2 years or so when SSDs became available at a competitive cost to traditional hard drives. When fitted into a desktop case, newer cases have drive bays sized for the 2.5" SSD case, while cheap brackets are available for fitting them into any 3.5" case opening.

The latest developments are to move away from both 2.5" and 3.5" sizes to a "stick" SSD. There are several sizes in use today; one of the most common is called m2. These SSDs clip into a slot directly on the motherboard, similar to how a memory stick would This saves significant space that would otherwise be used by the storage drive in either a desktop or a laptop case.

Currently, only traditional 3.5" drives have very large capacities available (4TB+), but as time goes by, SSDs will become cheaper and a much better alternative. Check out my journal article earlier this year where I compared the two for full details. Display – This is an area where desktops can be a better value for the flexibility to connect to whatever

size display you have. Whether it is a 4K UHD 75" panel or a 24" desk LCD panel, either will work on a desktop. Now, many laptops offer HDMI or other ports to connect to displays, but if the reason for the laptop is portability, then the size of the laptop screen is what you'll be using most of the time, typically 13" to 17". The larger the screen, the weight will also increase proportionally on a laptop.

Graphics – Without a doubt, desktops are better suited for gaming due to the flexibility to replace and upgrade the video card. Some laptops, such as those from Alienware, do offer several video card options to compete with the best desktop offerings, but these are limited and more costly. For non-gamers, the basic video in either laptops or desktops is sufficient 95% of the time.

In the December 2019 issue of Consumer Reports, there just happens to be an article about this very topic. They report that in a survey taken in 2009, about 72% of the households have a desktop versus the 52% reporting having a laptop. Jump forward to 2019 and the number is now reversed with more households reporting laptops than desktops in almost the same ratio – about 74% laptops and 52% desktops now. Check it out for their recommended models and other factors you may want to consider.
If you have suggestions for topics that you would like to see explained, please let me know!

A Recent Scam Experience
Author: Jeff Wilkinson, President,
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December 2019 issue, The Gigabyte Gazette
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Recently I received the "Social Security" scam call, the recorded message informing me that I should call an 800 number because my account was about to be suspended. I decided to play along and see what the suspected scam pitch was; since I was 99.99% sure that Social Security doesn't call you.

I called the 800 number, exclaimed my surprise that there was a problem and breathlessly asked what the problem was. The responder, "Officer Ronald Smith" explained, in an almost unintelligible accent, that he was a senior investigator and I should get a pencil and paper and write down his name and badge number, which he proceeded to give me. He then went on to outline the "problem" which included seven bank accounts opened under my social security number. He said the accounts had been used for money laundering and an investigation was underway with an arrest warrant about to be issued. In addition, there were multiple credit cards also under my social security number which had been linked to illegal activity.

"Officer Smith" then asked if these were my accounts. Upon my answering No, he explained he needed to know how many bank accounts and their approximate balance

and how many credit cards I had and their credit limits. I responded with fictitious information of course. He advised me that this conversation was being recorded and I

was repeatedly told to listen to his instructions very carefully. When I told him in a frightened, exasperated voice that the accounts he described were not mine, he wanted the local police department phone number so he could call to see if we could clarify some additional information. I gave him a fake phone number and he put me on hold; he came back a short time later and said that the number I gave him was incorrect! "Officer Smith" then told me I could get the number from the yellow pages or Google and said he would wait while I looked it up. When I asked why *he* didn't have it, he exclaimed he did but was not allowed to give it to me. I looked up the number in the city I had claimed to live in and gave it to him; he again put me on hold and returned a couple of minutes later. He said he had a senior investigator on his other line, and she would be calling me. I was to put him on hold when she called. Then my phone rang! The call was from the number I had provided which was the number of the Palo Alto, CA police department! "Officer Smith," told me to put him on hold and to add the new caller to the conversation.

Throughout this entire 22-minute ordeal he had not yet asked for any money or access to my computer. I was tempted to continue the charade, but the language barrier became intolerable along with the level of minutia, so I ended the calls. Almost immediately my phone began ringing from an unknown 800 number, over and over until I blocked the number. I believe the ploy was to obtain my information such as date of birth, address and social security number so they could steal my identity.

Although I didn't get far enough to determine the full scam, I was very surprised that they added so much credibility by calling me back and "spoofing" (faking the Caller ID) of the actual police department number I had provided and they had checked!! As we know, spoofing a phone number occurs often on junk and scam calls. This specific trick could cause a reluctant mark to falsely think they were maybe being too cautious. The scammer may attempt to retrieve your date of birth, name, address and partial social security number by asking throughout the conversation for you to verify the information. With those items, it is possible to initiate a change of address and phone number with Social Security and then redirect your direct deposit to a different bank.

Having repaired two cases of scammers gaining access to computers that week, one which was able to gain bank information and withdraw a four-figure sum of money from a retiree, I was interested in experiencing the actual pitch. It can't be stressed enough that allowing remote access to your computer from random phone calls, emails or web page screens is to be avoided. Also do not release any personal information to unknown callers no matter how official they attempt to sound, with so much information available in the public domain many times only a small about of additional information is needed to initiate an identity theft.

Tech Humor One-liners - http://www.jokes4us.com/peoplejokes/technologyjokes.html

What do you call a ride-sharing app that serves breakfast? Eggs Uber Easy.

What is an astronaut's favorite place on a computer? The Space bar!
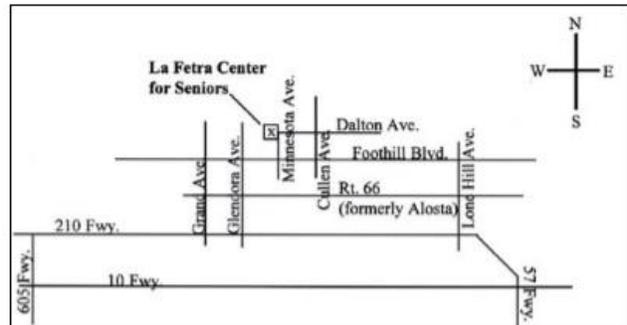

Elected Officers

President	Jim Glass	jggscc (at) gmail.com
Past President	Anne Marie Hunt	ajhunt1447(at) aol.com
Vice President	Connie Lang	connielang (at) verizon.net
Secretary	Ruthann Mayrose	ruthannmeister (at) gmail.com
Treasurer	Jeannine Foote	jeanninefoote (at) yahoo.com
Tech Advisor	Jose Aguilar	eagler97 (at) aol.com

Committees & Chairpersons

Programs	Jim Glass and Anne Marie Hunt	
Membership Chair	Helga Djordjevic	Hdjordjevic (at) verizon.net
Education	Connie Lang	connielang (at) verizon.net
Nominations Chair	Connie Lang	connielang (at) verizon.net
Webmaster	Jose Aguilar	eagler97 (at) aol.com

Have a new e-mail address? Please notify Helga Djordjevic Hdjordjevic (at) verizon.net

Planning Meeting
after the 2nd Wednesday
membership meeting
All are welcome to attend

GSCC is a proud member of APCUG (www.apcug2.org)

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR OUR TECH GUYS?

Please fill out the form below & bring it to the meeting

Name _____

Computer OS   Win 7 _____   Win 10 _____   Mac _____   Other _____

Question

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