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The Digital

Viking



Twin Cities
PC USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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*TC/PC Exists to
Facilitate and Encourage
the Cooperative Exchange of
PC Knowledge and
Information Across
All Levels of Experience*

April 2013

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General Meeting Tuesday, April 9, 2013 7:00 PM

Digital Video
Presented by
National Camera Exchange

Location:
National Camera Exchange
7101 France Ave South
Edina, MN 55435

The April General Meeting will be held at the Edina National Camera Store. Our speaker for this event will be Peter Anderson, Department Manager, and the topic will be digital video. As more video capability has been added to smartphones, digital camcorders have had to work hard to compete, but they have added some great functionality. Some new features include built in projectors eliminating the need for a second device, built in WiFi for instant sharing, better shake control, and high def.

National Camera is located at the NE corner of France Avenue and Hazelton Road in Edina; the store faces France Avenue (behind Bruegger's). Enter the parking lot off Hazelton Road, the entrance is across from the Edina Byerly's store entrance. The meeting will be held in the newly remodeled Edina National Camera store classroom area, which is just to the left as you enter the store from the entrance facing France Avenue.

Please come early to browse the store before the meeting! 

TC/PC is a
Member of



24-Hour Information • www.tpc.com

Application form inside back cover

TC/PC Business Members

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Thank You!

The Digital Viking

The Digital Viking is the official monthly publication of the Twin Cities PC User Group, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to users of IBM-compatible computers. Subscriptions are included in membership. We welcome articles and reviews from members. The Digital Viking is a copyrighted publication and reproduction of any material is expressly prohibited without permission. Exception: other User Groups may use material if unaltered and credited.

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Advertising

Full page (7½ x 9½)	\$100.00
Two-thirds page (7½ x 6)	80.00
Half page (7½ x 4¾)	65.00
One-third page (7½ x 3)	50.00
Quarter page (3½ x 4¾)	40.00
Member Bus. Card (2 x 3½)	10.00

Multiple insertion discounts available.

Contact Sharon Walbran at: SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Deadline for ad placement is the 1st of the month prior to publication. All rates are per issue and for digital or camera-ready ads. Typesetting and other services are extra and must be requested in advance of submission deadlines.

Payment must accompany order unless other arrangements are made in advance. Place make checks payable to: Twin Cities PC User Group

TC/PC Member Benefits

Product previews
and demonstrations

Special Interest Groups
Monthly Newsletter

Discounts on products
and services

Contests and prizes

Business Member Benefits

All of the above PLUS:

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payment of each renewal

20% discount on all ads
Placed in the *Digital
Viking* Newsletter

Up to 5 newsletters mailed to
your site
(only a nominal cost for each
additional 5 mailed)

TC/PC 2011-2012 Board of Directors

Meets second Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. All members welcome to attend.

Call **Ross Held** (612-386-3172) for meeting details.

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Last Month's Meeting: Windows 8 and Raspberry Pi

By Sharon Walbran, TC/PC, SQWalbran(at)yahoo.com

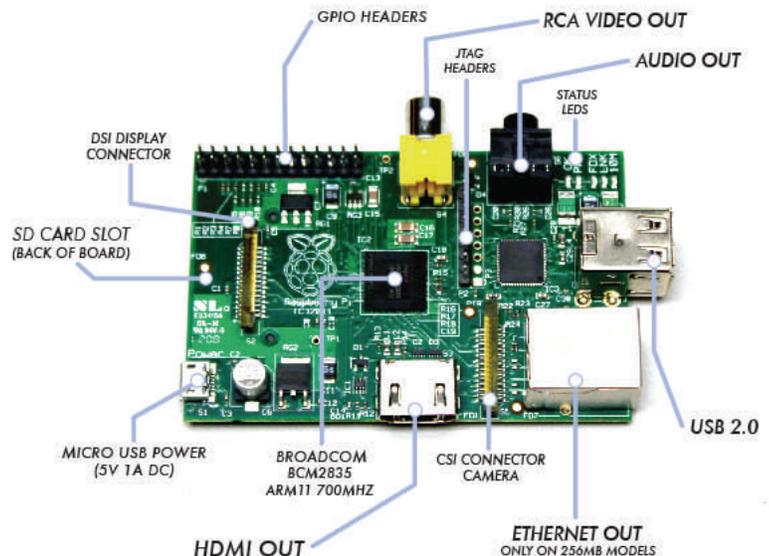
At last month's meeting we had two presentations by active members, Steve Kuhlmeier and Bill Ryder.

Steve demonstrated Windows 8, which he has been getting used to and he is convinced it's here to stay so we all need to learn more about it. Windows 8 comes in two major formats, one uses gestures and the other uses the mouse and keyboard. Steve booted his computer which has the gesture type of Windows 8 operating system, which means you can use the tap of your fingers to activate an icon or part of the screen, you can sweep your hand across the screen from right to left to move to a new screen or from left to right to return to a previous screen. Windows 8 boots into a very simple opening screen, called the Lock Screen. Tapping on that screen (or clicking with a mouse) switches to the Start or Metro screen. The Metro screen is the signature of this new operating system and is meant to replace the Start Menu with colorful tiles for each program, utility, or folder on the computer. These tiles extend beyond the visible monitor area so one can sweep the screen (or use the horizontal scroll bar with the mouse version) to get to more tiles to the right. The tiles can be easily re-arranged by dragging and dropping with one's fingers (or with the mouse) so the most-used programs will be on the first visible area. Some tiles are dynamic and display weather information, some sports news, some travel information, etc. and can be customized to match your interests. One of the key tiles is the Desktop tile. Tapping (or clicking) it changes the screen to the Windows 8 Desktop which has a more familiar look to it and one can add shortcuts to programs and folders to it just as in previous versions of Windows. Switching back and forth between the Start or Metro screen and the Desktop is done most easily by pressing the Windows key on the keyboard. The Search utility is quite a change. From the Start or Metro screen you just start typing the item you are searching for, i.e., "Calculator", and very quickly the tiles go away and a short list displays. You can then tap (or click) on Calculator to run it or right-click with the mouse and add a shortcut to the Calculator on the Start (Metro) screen or on the Taskbar. At times the new interface can be frustrating because when using certain utilities there might not be any buttons or icons on the screen. Tapping (or clicking) in the upper right-hand corner activates the Charms menu on the right-hand side of the screen with five icons that display menus, when tapped or clicked to get you into other parts of the operating system. Tapping or clicking in the upper left hand corner opens the Windows Switcher panel where you can right-click a program and close it or switch to a different program or the Start screen. Windows 8 presents quite a learning curve and Steve gave us a great introduction to it. Thanks, Steve.



Charms Menu

Bill Ryder brought his Raspberry Pi computer to show us how it works. This credit card sized computer consists of a circuit board with various ports on each side: 2 USB ports and video and audio output ports. An iPhone type charging cable can be connected to the circuit board to provide power or you can purchase a power supply. SD cards can add memory to the basic 256 mb or 512 mb of RAM. Bill connected a keyboard and computer and projected the start up screen with its Raspberry icon and then showed us the Linux code he uses to program the Raspberry Pi. Because of the keen interest in this device a large online community has developed and shares code and programs they've created and offer help forums. Bill showed several "getting started" books that are available. The Raspberry Pi is available from www.mcmelectronics.com in the U.S. and prices range from \$35 to \$85 depending on the model and features. Thanks for a terrific presentation, Bill.



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New Type of Search Engine Provides More Information with "Mind Mapping"

by Ira Wilsker, iwilsker@sbcglobal.net

WEBSITES:

<http://www.instagrok.com>

<http://www.instagrok.com/brochure.pdf>

(Brochure in PDF format)

<https://www.techsupportalert.com/content/amazing-site-gets-you-speed-any-subject.htm>

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/grok>

We are all aware of several of the major search engines including Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. These search engines, along with most of their other competitors, use a linear type of search results. With these search engines, the user simply types a search term, which promptly displays a linear listing of results, with little indication of how those results displayed are connected to each other. Many of the displayed results on these traditional search engines are not necessarily the "best" results for the user's inquiry, as there are a variety of "SEO" or "Search Engine Optimization" tools and utilities designed to influence the search engines to manipulate the displayed results. The websites that used "SEO" appear higher up on the list than those that did not, an important and valuable consideration because most users do not scroll past the first few results that are displayed. Since the search engine results are manipulated, those websites displayed towards the top of the listings may not necessarily be the most relevant for the intended search.

Many consumers of search engine services are very visual, in that they may better comprehend data and information if presented in a logical graphic format showing interactions and relationships; a new search engine service instaGrok does precisely that. By entering a search term in the search box at the top of the page, www.instagrok.com displays a graphical representation of the search results, clearly showing the relationships between the results, allowing the user to better find the results that he is seeking. According to the instaGrok website, "instaGrok presents each topic as an interactive visual interface, allowing the user to quickly grasp important concepts, key facts and relationships." The term "grok" may appear to be some onomatopoeia from "Star Trek", but it actually has a definition, according to the instaGrok website, "grok (v): to understand thoroughly and intuitively".

Unlike the more traditional search engines, instaGrok filters the results based on a selectable "Difficulty Level" slider on the top of the results page which coincides with the academic level of the user, ranging from a basic elementary school level (left on the slider bar), to a high school level (middle), to a college or professional level of content (slider to the right). Graphically, this slider displays an "ABC's blackboard" to an Einstein caricature, to indicate the level of the display. instaGrok sees itself as both a search engine and an educational tool, with features beneficial to individuals at all levels as well as features geared to classroom and academic use. The educational utilization of instaGrok is embedded on the mission statement, "Our mission is to help everyone discover the joy of learning and empower them to be lifelong learners. So we are dedicated to building innovative technology to enable engaging, safe and personalized learning.

Like the more mainstream search engines, instaGrok can quickly find information on any topic, displaying the search results in real-time. The instaGrok graphical display shows relational results from web pages, images, videos, and forums, but, unlike its competitors, filters out spam, shopping sites, profanity, and pornography.

As an experiment, I entered several search terms into the instaGrok search box to examine the results. I entered "Lamar Institute of Technology", which promptly displayed a graphical representation of the results, looking somewhat like an atomic structure or solar system; instaGrok calls this a "concept cloud". In the most basic view (Difficulty Slider to the left), "Lamar Institute of Technology" was in the center or nucleus, and radiating from it were 10 "satellites", each with terms such as "train", "review", "college", "service", "program", and "school." Clicking on the displayed term "train" opened a subset indicating some of the programs, costs, scholarship information, and other training information. On the right side of the window are a series of headers displaying key facts, websites, videos, images, and other links. Sliding the "Difficulty Slider" to the center (high school level), and then to the right (academic) displayed a similar number of satellite topics, but with greater detail and complexity as the slider was moved.

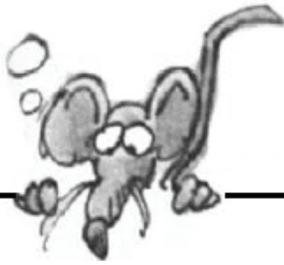
Clicking on the "Websites" button on the right side of the page opens a new display in a chart format with the headings "Like", "Preview", "Difficulty", and "Concept Cloud". In the "Like" column are two small icons, a push pin and a trash can; the push pin icon is to "pin" the results in a registered version (details below), while the trash can might be used to hide that particular selection. The "Preview" column provides a summary of the content included in each website, while the "Difficulty" column utilizes an icon to show the reading level of the particular websites similar to the icons on the "Difficulty Slider", with an "ABC blackboard" indicating that the website results are appropriate for elementary school level, a graduation cap and diploma indicates high school level content, and Einstein indicates college level content. The "Difficulty Slider" controls the levels of content displayed on this page. The "Concept Cloud" graphically displays how a particular website is linked to other websites.

While the initial search results are displayed graphically, on the top of the graphics display is a "Journal" tag, which when opened, appears to be a word processor like display, with common word processor controls and features. This journal feature allows the user to compile or report on what is found in the search process. Anyone can use the journal feature, printing or emailing the journal contents, but registration is required in order to save a journal on the instaGrok server.

instaGrok offers four levels of service, two of which are totally free, and two of which are paid and intended for classroom or other academic use. The two free levels of service are "Anonymous" and "Registered" and differ in the number and level of services available. The free Anonymous level is available to everyone, and does not require any registration; instaGrok simply says, "Just use it!". Anonymous users get the visual (graphical) interface, key facts, websites, quizzes, glossary, videos, and images, and can use the adjustable "Difficulty Slider". The free "Registered User" level adds the ability to customize and share the graphical concept maps, and save search history and journals. In the headings on the right side of the page is an additional listing for registered users, "My Pins" which stores web links "pinned" (selected) from the websites displayed.

There are two paid versions of instaGrok which are intended for teachers and classroom use at all levels, and these paid versions are each \$35 per calendar year. These paid "Classroom" and "Edmodo" versions add a "Teacher Dashboard", suppress any advertising (no ads appear on these paid versions), enhanced "safe content" displays, and priority technical support. The "Teacher Dashboard" allows the teacher to monitor the search results and progress of the students, view students' journals, and evaluate quiz results from the quizzes integrated into the search function and displayed on the right side of any search results. The "Edmodo" level of registration integrates instaGrok into the established and popular Edmodo teacher - student collaboration software already used by many teachers.

instaGrok is an interesting alternative to the more traditional search engines, while it also integrates well into academic environments at all educational levels. The graphical interface takes some minimal experience to become familiar with it, but is easy to master. For those looking for a change from the major search engines, instaGrok is worthy of a try.  [Go to Page 1](#)



NIBBLERS

By Jeannine Sloan

Next Generation Library

Next Generation Library websites are now live in 22 library systems around the world including Minnesota's Hennepin County Library. These websites offer expanded ebook search & reading capability using **Overdrive Media Console** and with **OverDrive Read**. Devices that support Overdrive Media Console include: BlackBerry®, Android™, Windows® Tablet, Windows® 8, Windows® Phone 7 & 8, iPhone®, iPad®, iPad® Mini, iPad® Touch. For the most current information, visit overdrive.com/eBookdevices

With **OverDrive Read**, there are no files to download, and no software to install – just click once and start reading. From smart phones and tablets to desktop computers and even televisions, the reader works anywhere there's a modern web browser. And with offline caching, you don't have to be connected to the internet to read. <http://www.overdrive.com/Next-Gen/>



Windows System Restore and Backup

This article is a nice illustrated tutorial on how to use Windows built in backup software. It also introduces online backup and buying a third party backup program. Worth reading.

<http://tips4pc.com/computer-maintenance-help/backing-up-your-data-3-ways-to-keep-your-data-safe.htm>

Future

Introducing **Muse**, the brain-sensing headband using thought controlled computing. It's a comfortable, sleek, four-sensor headband that allows you to control games, reduce stress, improve memory and concentration, and eventually to control devices directly with your mind. <http://interaxon.ca/muse/>

Electronics that conform to humans. MC10 is removing the constraints of conventional electronics with the development of technology that stretches and expands with the body. (electronic band aids anyone?). <http://www.mc10inc.com/company-information/technology/>
Scanadu, a new personalized health electronics company making low-cost tools (apps) that uses the smartphone as a reader to assess symptoms quickly. <http://www.scanadu.com/>

Ergonomics

Make sure to sit correctly. Here is a video that explains the proper sitting posture to protect your back and neck: <http://lifehacker.com/5990775/>

"Craplets"

Often new PCs come with pre-installed software which the manufacturer was paid to include but is of dubious value to the purchaser. Such unwanted pre-installed software and advertisements are derogatorily called "craplets" (*crap* and *applet*) and crapware.

SWATting

SWATting someone is a way of exacting revenge or having fun at the target's expense. We - the police included - trust in the technology we use. Criminals will always exploit that trust. One recent method the bad guys, or just idiots, are using technology is called SWATting. Read this story <http://krebsonsecurity.com/> to learn about it. In fact the site is a good one to bookmark (IMO).

Internet Slang

Don't know what that term means—look it up here: <http://www.internetslang.com/>

Check Out Browser-Based Ebooks

Try OverDrive Read, a browser-based eBook reader. It's compatible with computers, tablets and mobile devices, and no additional apps are necessary!

From hclib enews

Quote from Andrew Brandt, Malware Analyst

Some security software is better than others at finding and quarantining infections, but no single product can detect everything that's out there, especially when it changes **by the minute!** Yes **by the minute!**
<http://www.soleranetworks.com/blogs/author/andrewbrandt/>

Quickkey to Window 8 Print Screen

Win+PrntScrn: Take screenshot and save to Pictures in Windows 8. The photo is automatically saved as a .png file in C:\Users\username\Pictures\Screenshots.

Check Your Computer for Memory (RAM) Problems

Got weird errors and file corruption? Traditionally, that problem meant your computer's RAM was going bad and so it's time for a memory check. Whether that's still true any more is up for debate, but here's how to use the Windows Memory Diagnostic tool to scan for problems.

<http://www.howtogeek.com/tips/how-to-check-your-computer-for-memory-ram-problems/>

Qubit

A qubit is a bit that can have 3 states: 0, 1 and both at once. IBM Research today said they have achieved a major advance in quantum computing that will allow engineers to begin work on creating a full-scale quantum computer. Original article here:

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9224670/IBM_touts_quantum_computing_breakthrough

Go here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sICXOwOwS4E> to view a video that explains it--sort of.

Where Does That Short URL GO?

You can preview shortened URLs to see their true destination. For example, with **bitly** addresses, simply paste them into your browser, add a **+** after the URL (for example, `//bitly.com/13LRaF4+` [Solera Networks page]), and press Enter. Adding the **plus sign** takes you to the **bitly** site first, where you'll see a stats page for the destination site.

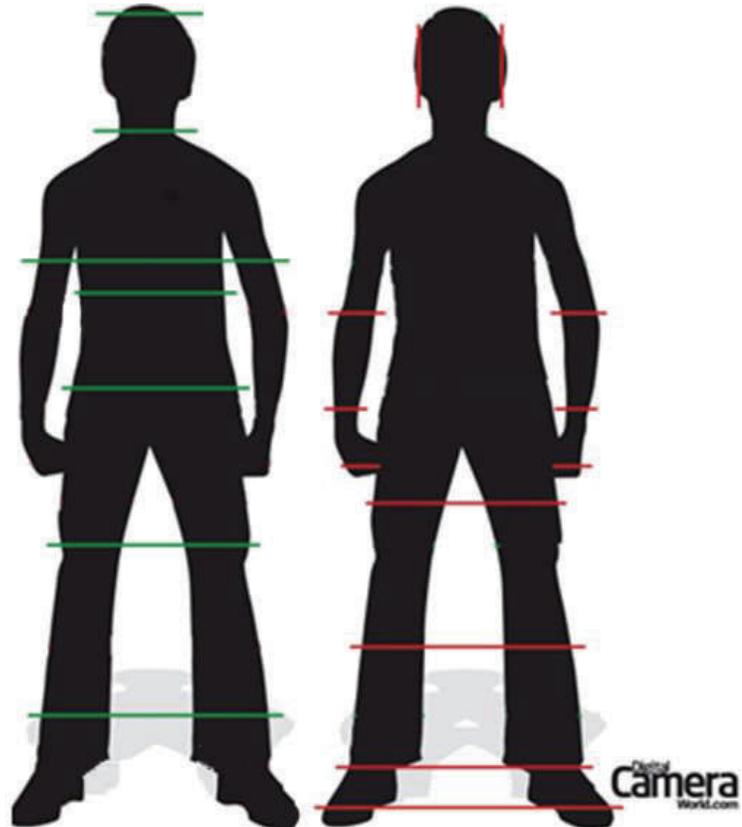
For **tinyurl** addresses, add "preview" before the address. For example, enter `//preview.tinyurl.com/{xxxxx}`, and the uncloaked address will appear at the **tinyurl** site.

For **snipurl** addresses, add "peek" before the shortened address. For example, `//peek.snipurl.com/26kl5qy` takes you to the Snipurl site and displays the full URL.

Crop Photos Properly

The lines on the figure at left are the "good" places to crop a photo and the ones on the figure at the right are places to avoid cropping a picture. Original article is here:

<http://lifehacker.com/5991733/>



Password Strength

Quite simply, computer forensics is a lot harder than Hollywood would like you to believe.

When you've got a choice between making a password longer or making it more complex length always wins.

Online Photo Blemish Remover

The free online service Webinpaint allows you to easily remove spots, blemishes, scratches, objects, and any other problems you may have in a picture. <http://www.webinpaint.com/>
In addition the company has a nice selection of apps to download. Take a look.
<http://www.teorex.com/>

High Tech Traffic Control

Los Angeles has synchronized every one of its 4,500 traffic signals across 469 square miles.
<http://tinyurl.com/bouwtyo>

Wi-Fi & Router Acronyms in a Nutshell

Choose the right options for your home network. Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/d47hjo3>

How to Make Printed Out Colors Match Those on Your Pc Screen

Color management is a complex topic, and it can be time-consuming and expensive to achieve professional-level results. Nevertheless, it is possible for home users to improve on a completely unmanaged color setup. Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/dx9x5k8>

The Psychology of Effective Workout Music

New research clarifies why music and exercise make such a good team, and how to create an optimal workout playlist.
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=psychology-workout-music>

Rootkits

"... rootkits are becoming the cornerstone on which all malware exploits are built."

http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/security/rootkit-coders-beware-malwarebytes-is-in-hot-pursuit/9207?tag=nl.e101&s_cid=e101&ttag=e101

Windows 8 Tips

Any Desktop shortcut or program can be pinned to the Start screen by right-clicking the icon and choosing Pin to Start.

In Windows 8, a speed bump is the name of the small gap found between groups of tiles. To create new speed bumps drag one of the tiles to a speed bump.

Press the Windows key + X to open the power user menu, which gives you access to many of the features most power users would want (e.g. Device Manager and Command Prompt).

Thanks, Jeannine. Always great information we can use.

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Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

w Work phone h Home phone c Cell phone
* Meets at an alternate location

Most SIGs will meet at Edina Executive Plaza, Conference Room #102, 5200 Willson Road, Edina, MN

Confirm with a SIG group if they meet elsewhere.

For more info contact the SIG Leader(s) listed here.

Get SIG announcements!

Link from www.tpc.com

Board of Directors*

All members are welcome! Call for location.

Selected Saturday mornings

Ross Held RHeld83745@aol.com

Community Outreach*

To request services or volunteer to help

Contact:

Ross Held RHeld83745@aol.com

Linux on Saturday

This is for the Linux newbie and those trying to come over from Microsoft to a different operating system.

Second Saturday @ 9 AM-Noon

Note: No Meetings June-August

Jack Ungerleider 612/418-3494 c
jack@jacku.com

Picture Perfect

Explore how to use your digital camera and learn how to use a variety of software for editing, organizing, and sharing images and video.

Second Tuesday 6:00—7:00 PM

Every other month

Right before the general meeting

Sharon Walbran SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Microsoft Access

All levels. Presentations by expert developers within the group and by MS reps.

Third Saturday 9:00 AM—Noon

Note: No Meetings June-August

Steve Kuhlmeier 952/934-8492
steve@kuhlmeysystems.com

Microsoft Office

Addresses the use, integration, and nuances of the Microsoft Office applications.

Combined with Systems on Saturday

Third Saturday of the Month

Note: No Meetings June-August

Steve Kuhlmeier 952/934-8492
steve@kuhlmeysystems.com

Web Page Design

Discussion and demonstration of HTML, web publishing software and page design.

Second Tuesday @ 6:00-7:00 PM

Every other month

Right before the general meeting.

Jack Ungerleider 612/418-3494 c
jack@jacku.com

Microsoft Word for PC & Mac

Any level user can be proficient and efficient in basics and advanced features of Word..

Combined with Systems on

Third Saturday 9:00 AM—Noon

Note: No Meetings June-August

Tom Ostertag 612/951-5520 w
651/488-9979 h

Curt Trout 651/484-4569 h
ctrout@troutreach.com

Systems on Saturday

For all levels of computer challenges and any type of computer-related question. Incl. Q&A

Meets 2nd & 3rd Saturdays 9:00 AM-Noon

Note: No Meetings June-August

Curt Trout 651/484-4569 h
ctrout@troutreach.com

Directions to Summit Place for General Meetings:

Proceed to Eden Prairie Center Flying Cloud Drive . [Flying Cloud Drive runs along the West side of the Eden Prairie Center.] Once you have driven past Eden Prairie Center (on the left) along Flying Cloud Drive you will come to a stop light at Prairie Center Drive. The next intersection with a stop light and left turn lane is Fountain Place. Turn left at Fountain Place and go straight into the parking lot. Turn left again to the first covered entry way of Summit Place. There is plenty of parking in the large parking lot in front of the first Summit Place covered entry way. When you enter the door at the first covered entry way, ask to be directed to the Performance Room for the TC/PC meeting. For a map of more detailed directions and *info on Web SIG and Board meeting*, check the TC/PC website.

Directions to Edina Executive Plaza for Systems on Saturday, Access, Word and Picture Perfect SIGs: Take Highway 100 to the 50th Street/Vernon exit. [If you have come from the north, cross back over Highway 100 to the east side.] Take the first right and go past Perkins [The golf course will be on your left.] and continue on the east frontage road (Willson Road) to the next building—5200 . There is ample parking in the building's lot. Conference Room #102 is on 1st floor.

Help yourself by helping others!

Join the team & share your knowledge with others.

Contact TC/PC at www.tpc.com

Meetings start at 7:00 PM (9:00 AM on Saturday) unless otherwise noted. *Meets at Edina Executive Plaza.

April

May

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
7	8	9 General Mtg Digital Video Cameras— Nat'l Camera Exchange 7:00 PM	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4 Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 General Mtg 7:00 PM 6:00 Pic Perf SIG	15	16	17	18 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
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Speccy: Another Useful Utility

By Phil Sorrentino, Member, Sarasota PCUG, Florida, February issue, The Monitor,
www.spcug.org, philsorr (at) yahoo.com

Introduction

Way back in November 2009, in the heydays of XP, shortly after the release of Windows 7, I started reviewing useful utilities.

Along the way I reviewed some very useful utilities such as Stickies, MP3Tag, CKRename, and UltraFileSearch.

Just as a matter of review, Utilities are usually small programs that are intended to do a specific task or a small range of tasks, they are small software application. Today, after the release of the Apple iPad and in the current Tablet environment, we would call these Utilities "Apps".

These Utilities (or Apps) are usually designed to help manage the computer hardware, Operating System (OS), or assist a particular software application.

Just as a matter of history, sometimes a utility becomes so popular that the functionality of the utility is included in newer versions of the OS.

SNAGIT / SNIPPING TOOL

The functionality of one longtime popular utility, Snagit, which allows a user to capture a piece of the display into a graphics file, is now included in Windows as the Snipping Tool.

The functionality in Windows may not be as complete as the commercial version of Snagit, but it is a part of Windows, which means it is integrated into the OS, and therefore available at no additional cost.

USEFUL UTILITIES SOURCES

Useful Utilities can be found in a variety of places such as computer stores (internet or brick & mortar), Google searches, and The Computer Buffet, edited by our own Monitor editor, Herb Goldstein.

The Computer Buffet is a treasure trove of useful software, some of which can be considered Utilities, like Speccy, and some of which are full-blown applications, like Open Office.

Speccy

Speccy was originally discussed in a Monitor article in the December 2012 issue.

Speccy was developed by Piriform, the same company that brings us Ccleaner and Recuva, two other useful utilities that many SPCUG members have used. You can download Speccy at www.piriform.com/speccy.

When you download it, be sure to uncheck the boxes for other things like the Google Toolbar, unless you want them to come along with the Speccy download.

Speccy is a Utility used to provide information about your computer hardware and Operating System. Speccy is very similar to Belarc, a Utility that is fairly well known and often used at the Refurbishing Facility. Belarc goes a little further and additionally provides information about the software and the software versions, installed on the computer.

Just remember "I have not come to bury Belarc, I have come to praise Speccy".

There is probably more information provided by Belarc, but what I like about Speccy is the visual organization and presentation. The initial results are presented in a two windowpane format, much like Windows Explorer. Highlight an item in the left pane and you get detailed results in the right pane. The left pane includes the Summary and all the major computer subsystems; Operating System, CPU, RAM, Motherboard, Graphics, Hard drives, Optical drives, Audio, Peripherals, and Network.

The Summary that is shown on the right pane after the program completes its initial analysis phase has the answers to many of the basic questions regarding this specific computer. Immediately you

know the Operating System name and the Service Pack (if applicable), and whether it is a 32 or 64 bit OS, and the type of computer CPU.

Other basics in the Summary are the amount of RAM, the size of the Hard drive, along with the drive connection type, and the Optical drive and its connection type.

From the main menu you can Print any of the results or you can choose "Save as a Text file" and save the results for future review.

Details of the major subsystems, shown on the left, can be obtained by selecting the appropriate subsystem. Click on any of the major subsystems, and the details will be shown in the right pane. The details are very extensive, probably much more than the average computer user needs to know, but may be useful to someone trying to help solve a problem. Some of the detailed information provided by these subsystems is as follows:

- The Operating System subsystem shows the OS type (Windows 7, XP), 32 or 64 bit OS, the serial number, the Windows Update schedule, the Antivirus software installed and the age of its Virus Signature Database.
- The CPU subsystem indicates the number of Cores (today most modern CPUs are multicore), the Bus speed, the Cache configuration, and the Average Temperature the CPU has been experiencing (if this is approaching 60 degrees C you may be in for some trouble, although the Critical Temperature depends on the specific CPU).
- The RAM subsystem shows the amount of RAM installed as well as the number of memory slots and the number of free memory slots (nice to know if you are thinking of increasing your memory).
- The Motherboard subsystem shows the motherboard manufacturer, the chipset (CPU and glue chips) vendor, and the BIOS brand and version number (things that you probably will never need to know).
- The Graphics subsystem provides information about your Monitor such as the Resolution, and the Graphics chipset (again probably never needed by the average user).
- The Hard Drives subsystem shows the Drive size, the File System type (FAT or NTFS), and the Partition information (nice to know if you think you will ever repartition the drive).
- The Optical Drive subsystem indicates the Media type (CD or DVD), and whether or not you can write to the drive (Writer or Readonly).
- The Audio subsystem just shows the Sound Card and the Playback Device (usually speakers).
- The Peripherals subsystem indicates the type of keyboard and mouse, the Printers that are currently in use, and any external disk drives or USB memory devices attached.
- The Network subsystem provides all the IP addresses, DHCP status (enabled or not), the Computer Name and Workgroup (if it belongs to one), the WiFi SSID (network name) and channel number (good to know if you are experiencing slow operation caused by interference on the network). Surprisingly, I didn't find the MAC (or physical) address of the communications adapters.

Conclusion

As you can see, Speccy provides a lot of information and is definitely a very useful utility. Download it and pin it to the task bar so it will be available and easily accessible when you need it. By the way, a printed version of the results might be nice to have for reference if the computer is down for any reason.



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Windows 8: Add a Shut Down Button to Taskbar

By Sharon Walbran, TC/PC, SQWalbran (at) yahoo.com

As a new Windows 8 user, I am gradually getting used to the Start Screen and Charms bar, but I still find the lack of a Shut Down button an annoyance. I often want to put my laptop to sleep on a moment's notice and it seems like there are a half-dozen taps or clicks to get to that option. I combed the web and came up with the answer: adding a Go to Sleep button to the Taskbar. Here are the steps:

1. Right-click on the Windows 8 Desktop
2. Click the New, Shortcut command
3. In the location box, type:
`rundll32.exe powrprof.dll, SetSuspendState`
4. Name the shortcut: Sleep
5. Change the icon by right-clicking the Sleep shortcut, click Properties
6. Click the Change Icon button in the Shortcut Properties tab,
An alert displays announcing there are no icons for this command.
Click the OK button and select a new icon from the other icon files, then click the OK button. *Now the shortcut is on the Desktop.*
7. Right-click the Sleep shortcut and click Pin to Taskbar.

If you prefer creating a Shutdown button that shuts down the computer, in step 3, type:

```
Shutdown.exe -s -t 00
```

In the Location box and name the shortcut Shutdown.

To create a Restart button shortcut, in step 3 type:

```
Shutdown.exe -r -t 00
```

In the Location box and name the shortcut Restart.

Be sure to leave a space before the -s and -r and -t and the 00 or it won't work.

The -t switch sets the time delay before this action takes place. Here it's set to 00 or no delay. The -s and -r are for shutdown and restart, respectively. 

Windows 8 Upgrade Rumors

By Sharon Walbran, TC/PC, SQWalbran (at) yahoo.com

The social network and web blogs are a-buzz with rumors about a new release of Windows 8 that Microsoft is working on. Code-named Windows Blue and rumored to be released in August of this year as Windows 8.1 – not Windows 9 – is on the design table.

Some screenshots have been made available to Windows forums in Europe. The tiles on the Start screen have been downsized to fit more on the screen at one time. There are new snap windows side by side features that will allow up to 4 windows to be tiled on the screen or spread on more than one monitor. Even more use of gestures have been added—from the bottom of the screen up, for example—to expand that functionality. No sign of a Start button or Start menu so the Windows Start screen with its Metro design looks like it is here to stay. Watch for more news and beta releases in the next few months. 

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Note that the Saturday SIGs—Linux and MS Office—will be taking a much-deserved summer vacation. No Saturday SIGs will be meeting during the months of June, July, and August. Visit these SIGs soon !



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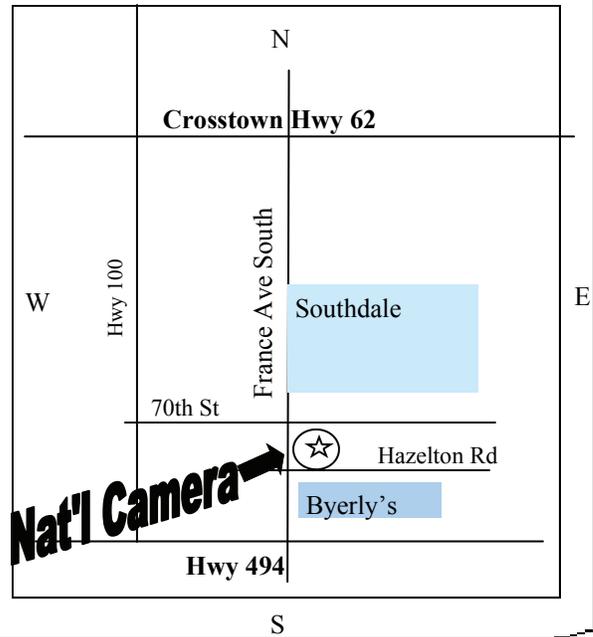
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