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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

July 2013

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

Summer Social

Location:
Summit Place
8505 Flying Cloud Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Please join us for the annual summer TC/PC indoor picnic. We'll supply the light snacks and drinks and you supply the conversation.

As part of the agenda we'll be holding club elections so come with your ideas on how to split up the responsibilities of organizing club events, recruiting presenters, collecting dues, and communicating news with members. As a club member you will want to play an active part so consider which of these you would like to work on and maybe we can put together teams to distribute the tasks so no one "burns out."

See you at the meeting!! ☞

Upcoming Meeting in September: Mark your calendar for the September meeting. The CEO of Caring Bridge will be our speaker. She has a background in computer science and has an interesting story to tell as to how Caring Bridge got started and what motivated her to start this very successful non-profit based in the Twin Cities. ☞

TC/PC is a Member of



24-Hour Information • www.tcpc.com
Application form inside back cover

TC/PC Business Members

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Metro Sales

Thank You!

The Digital Viking

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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. Please 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:

FREE ½ page ad on
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: Online Living with Google

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

Jack Ungerleider brought us up to date on changes to Google and reviewed and demonstrated some of the more popular apps available on Google Chrome that will enhance your web browsing experience.

At a TC/PC meeting a while back Jack had demonstrated how to use iGoogle, a user interface and organizer for Google. Well, now Google has killed off iGoogle and replaced it with **Google Drive**. With Google Drive you have 15 gigabytes of free storage space, 10 gigabytes from Gmail, Google's email and 5 gigabytes from Google Drive. If you are looking for free back up storage for photos or other files in the Cloud this is a good place to upload those.

Duplicati is a free backup tool available via download through Google that allows you to upload files to a number of different Cloud locations: SkyDrive, Google Drive, etc. It has built-in encryption and runs as an app in Windows.

Gmail, Google's email component, has gotten a makeover and added new features. In Gmail there is a new Compose new email form which floats on the screen and thus makes it possible for the user to pull up a document or webpage while keeping the email form active and without having to save the email as a draft. There is also a formatting bar with buttons to embed links in the email message.

Google Hangout, Google's version of Skype, offers online video calls with one person or a group. The Chrome web store has lots of apps available. Some that Jack likes and uses are:

Google Keep, a note-taking tool that stores data on Google Drive. It needs Android 4.0 to run.

QR Code Generator, which you can use to encode your information such as a business card or an apartment for rent as a QR Code. Jack demonstrated creating a QR Code for TC/PC User Group. If the user pulls up the QR with a phone number on his/her smart phone it will call that number.

Access to Go, a remote desktop app.

Radium is an epub reader.

Tab Cloud, where you can save and restore a Windows session.

PicMonkey, a photo-editing app with both a free version supported by ads and the Royale mode paid version with no ads.

Mini radio player is an app where you can select music by style or genre, and which uses HTML5 audio component so it can play independently.

Yoono, a social networking app, lets you share and sync with all your social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) all in one place.

This was a terrific presentation with in-depth research of apps that would be appealing to our group members. Thanks, Jack, for a great meeting.  [Go to Page 1](#)

Freeware

By **Berry F. Phillips**, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City, April 2013 issue, eMonitor, www.ccokc.org, editor (at) ccokc.org

During the many years that I have been writing the Computer Hysteria Column, I have been a strong advocate of using freeware. On my computer, the only commercial software is my operating system. All the rest of the software on my system is freeware. Perhaps this frugality has something to do with my Scottish ancestry or I could be considered just plain cheap! In any event, I have done my best to give my readers some tips on freeware that I have used on my system that is exceptional. Free software is a valid choice for the home computer, office computer and Internet server uses. It is very important to remember that freeware is not cheap or an inferior option. Freeware comes in two basic types, free software with proprietary (private) code, and open-source software. Some freeware can be functionally superior to equivalent commercial software and even of higher quality.


For example, the Firefox browser was built and developed by a large distributed workforce as opposed to a small centralized one. A large number of programmers can contribute a range of skills, and whose input is graded by peer review. These programs can be tested and developed in a wide variety of locations and situations. These community based projects would cost millions to create commercially. The bottom line, free software can be of the highest quality and should not be considered inferior to commercial products. The products they generate are among the most successful applications in the world, PHP, MySQL, Apache, and various types of Linux.

What are the best free programs that work the best? It used to be utilities. However, today there are many priceless small programs that work better than the operating systems resident applications. Free software is a viable solution in every possible area of a computer's work. The acceptability of freeware is demonstrated as the standard server solution. Freeware is widely used in PC security situations. Free versions of popular firewalls, antivirus and antispyware programs are often accepted as first choice. How do you find the best freeware to use on your system?

For years I have recommended Gizmo's Freeware be bookmarked on your computer for fast reference when you need fully reviewed and recommended freeware. In August 2010, PC Magazine included Gizmo's Freeware in its "100 Top Websites of 2010." As of November 2011 it was rated by Alexa in the top 3000 sites in English speaking countries and in the top, 5,000 worldwide with more than 100,000 people visiting the site every day. It is also the most bookmarked site under "freeware" at most of the web's major bookmarking services.

Gizmo's Freeware is a community-based site dedicated to keep the site independent and noncommercial. The site is maintained by hundreds of volunteers. Freeware is reviewed for safety and performance by these volunteer editors with comments from users. Gizmo's best freeware list is available at the website and has been used for years to locate the best freeware. You can post on forums, respond to reviews after using the freeware, and even write review depending on your computer skills. I would strongly encourage you to bookmark and visit this website which will save you money as well as increase your computer capabilities.

<http://www.techsupportalert.com>

I will have to admit that I am "hysterical" about this website.  [Go to Page 1](#)

Got Windows 8? Then get Start8

By Tom Kuklinski, President, Computer Users of Erie, PA, April 2013 Issue, Horizons, www.cuerie.com, tkuklinski (at) gmail.com

Some reviews of Microsoft's Windows 8 have been brutal. I have been using Windows 8 since December 2012. It is on a desktop and does not have a touch screen. It works well. I have not experienced a crash to date.

Overall, I do like Windows 8. Do I prefer it to Windows 7 or XP? Yes, I do! That is a powerful statement. Here is why.

Windows 8, like Windows 7 is pleasant to use. I find it overall to be aesthetic in appearance. It is like having two operating systems. The so called Metro-Modern Start Screen consists of blocks that contain your programs. There is no START BUTTON like in previous Windows versions. This look was made to conform to hand-held devices like phones and tablets. These devices use touch screens and this layout works. However, when using a traditional Windows 7 desktop, it almost becomes useless. There is no point to have it other than to remain consistent in appearance between hand-held devices and your desktop or laptop. Microsoft made one of these Metro-Modern Start Screen program blocks to access the good old traditional desktop of by gone Windows versions. EXCEPT, there is no START button like previous versions of Windows.

Some of the apps that are made for the Metro-Modern look may work different that you would expect on a laptop or desktop application. For instance, Internet Explorer 10 when in the Metro-Modern mode will be in a minimalist mode. You will not have the full robust appearance that you would be used to having if launched from a Windows 7 desktop. However, Microsoft did include the full version of Internet Explorer 10 in the Windows 8 desktop. Sounds confusing. It is, until you become accustomed to this. However, this difference really is not great. You can choose to stay in the familiar traditional Desktop mode that looks like Windows 7 and not visit the Metro-Modern Start Screen very much.

However, one great issue exists. This single issue may be the problem as to why Windows 8 has not been too successful. The START Button at the lower left corner of your screen is missing. Microsoft purposely left this button out. So if you use Windows XP, Vista or 7, you are familiar with the Start button and rely on it for just about everything you do. Picture it gone. Now you see the problem.

It is this anomaly that may have caused the negative reviews and caused slow sales of Windows 8. So Microsoft, wake up and give us that START BUTTON back.

Until Microsoft does include the Start Button, here comes a company that has been around for thirty years. It is Stardock. This company created a program called START8. The purpose of this program is to put the good old Start Button back on the Windows 8 Desktop screen and function as before.

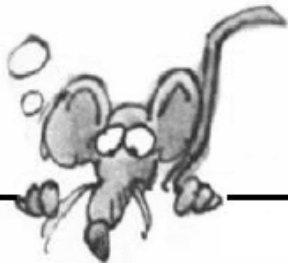
START8 costs a mere \$4.99. To me this is a bargain. Lets take a look at this START8. You need to download it from www.stardock.com. Then install it. Simple and done. You can customize this START. You can choose a STYLE. It can be the traditional Windows 7 theme or custom to your preference. You may choose a Windows 8 style. You may have translucency, flag look START button or customize.

You also can choose, Large Icons, Show Recently used applications, Open sub Menus, create shortcuts, show Windows 8 Modern User Interface, control some Window 8 features – on and on.

That is about all it does. It is cheap and works well. This is one of those programs that is so obvious. In fact, this one program may actually increase sales of Windows 8.

I recommend this to anyone that uses Windows 8. Thank You Stardock. 

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NIBBLERS

By Jeannine Sloan

Send eMail to Your Cloud Storage Account

If you have occasion to want to keep a copy of a document you are sending as an email attachment to someone simply include the cloud storage address for your account in the CC or BCC field. Or send direct in the TO field. Instructions to do this for the popular cloud storage services are here:

Box.net: <http://techjournal.318.com/network-architecture/emailing-a-file-to-box-net/>

Dropbox: <http://www.labnol.org/software/upload-dropbox-files-by-email/18526/>

gDrive: <https://www.emailtin.com/>

Skydrive: <http://www.howtogeek.com/112270/> (not the same as above but might be useful).

iCloud: <http://ipadhelp.com/ipad-help/icloud-email-folders-and-forwarding-other-accounts-to-icloud/>

Cloud Printing Is the Next Big Thing

Cloud Ready printers connect directly to the web and don't require a PC to setup: you can connect one to your Google Cloud Print account in seconds, and immediately start printing to it. This article is sponsored by Google but has a list of several brands of affordable WiFi ready Printers.

<http://www.google.com/cloudprint/learn/printers.html#info-hp>

Here is a video explaining this technology: <http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/videos/3352334/>

How to Print From the Devices Charm in Windows 8

For this example, we are going to be printing a PDF file. Simply find the document you want to print on your PC and open it with the PDF reader that is included in Windows 8.

Then use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+p or the Devices Charm. Here's how to use the charm:

1. Move your cursor to the bottom right hand corner of the screen or press the Win + C keyboard combination to bring up the Charms bar, then click on the Devices Charm.
2. Here you will see a list of print devices available for you to use. We will just be printing to an XPS file for now, but feel free to choose your own printer at this point.
3. The configuration screen that then follows is context sensitive, meaning it will display different options depending on what program you are trying to print from. This one, for the PDF Reader included in Windows 8, allows us to pick a range of pages to print, you can now click the Print button. Read the complete article at:

<http://www.howtogeek.com/164930/>

60 Seconds of Security News

Watch our 60 Second Security videos for a fast, incisive and entertaining angle on what's been going on recently in computer security. Go to this page, scroll down to the video:

<http://tinyurl.com/ke6pwcj>

Windows 8 Startup Manager

Windows 8 includes a new startup manager built into the Windows Task Manager. It allows you to view and control the applications that start with your computer at startup, finally providing an easy and obvious way to control this. More new system tools listed here:

<http://www.howtogeek.com/165522/>

Scrabble Online

Here are some good Scrabble urls: <http://www.lexulous.com/> free site to play Scrabble with others or against robots. It uses 8 tiles (Canadian) instead of the standard 7.

<http://www.scrabblefinder.com/two-letter-scrabble-words/> A reference or word lookup site. You can type in the tiles in your tray, and it shows you all the words you could make.

<http://www.morewords.com/ends-with/jo/> Similar to the previous url but more powerful. You can search with wildcards, to find a word that fits in with letters that are already on the board.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/game/scrabble.htm> scroll down to Scrabble Zone. This is a skill building timed game. The site gives you 7 letters and you have to make them into a word. It continues until all 100 tiles are played (or until you run out of time).

<http://www.games.com/play/masque-publishing/wordchuck> Another skill building site. It's like a word find. You get a grid full of letters. You try to get as many words as you can in two minutes. Then you get your score. If you don't want to register, look for the link Play as guest.

Contributed by Dianne Runnels

Command Prompt Output to Clipboard

Write the output of the command prompt to the Windows Clipboard. This is done with the clip command that you add to your command that you want executed.

Basic examples of how this looks like are **dir | clip** to write the contents of the directory to the Clipboard, or **ipconfig | clip** to write the ipconfig information to it instead. Any command that normally displays the output to the monitor can be followed with **| clip** and then pasted into a text editor.

Anti-Tracking Software

Disconnect, like similar software from Abine and Ghostery, aims to give consumers more control over the data they share. After the extension is installed, an icon in the browser lets users adjust which advertisers and tracking companies can access their data. Disconnect sorts the requests into categories like advertising, analytics, and social. Eliminating them is as simple as clicking a check box. <http://www.theverge.com/2013/4/16/4232370/>

Computer Desktop Encyclopedia

For anyone who's not an engineer, its definitions are far superior to the crowd sourced, sprawling, digital haystack of Wikipedia. And they're far more current than what you find on Webopedia.

Yes, it's true. ComputerLanguage.com is the very definition of a concise, user-friendly, up-to-date technical dictionary. From the "Pogue's Posts" column in the NY Times. <http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/20/a-technical-dictionary-that-fits-the-definition-of-user-friendly/>

This is the link to CDE to bookmark: <http://www.computerlanguage.com/>

Wire Tapping: Privacy vs. Security

From the Bill of Rights to Edward Snowden, there has always been a battle between the right to privacy and the prying eyes of the government. Read this infographic and its plain text translation. It is Informative and entertaining.

1791 - The 4th Amendment 1844 - The invention of the Morse Telegraph

1876 - The invention of the Telephone 1888 - "Strowger Selector" Cuts Out Phone Operators

Invented by funeral parlor owner, Almon Strowger, the "Strowger Selector" replaces telephone operators as first automatic telephone switching system. Almon Strowger was convinced that a rival undertaker's wife was, in her role as a telephone switchboard operator, transferring calls from his business to her husband's. The "Strowger Selector" cut the operator out of the connection.

<http://www.whocalledmyphone.net/wire-tapping/>

Ctrl+Alt x

Hold down Ctrl and Alt while tapping the x key to open the Snipping Tool.

Buffer Flush

The transfer of data from memory (RAM) to storage. Whenever a document is saved, the program writes the contents of a reserved area of memory to the hard disk

Virtual Memory Is Low Error

Virtual memory is a part of the computer's hard drive that is set aside and used like RAM by the operating system. When the physical RAM is all used up, the operating system begins to use the virtual memory. When the virtual memory is nearly all used up, the "Virtual Memory is Low" warning message will pop up. If you have seen this error read this:

<http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch001390.htm>

Hint from Lifehacker

Turn Frozen Tater Tots into Homestyle Hash Browns with a Waffle Iron: Toss them on, cook ± 3 min.

Good Practice

RESTART regularly to refresh the RAM. Going too long without a restart tends to slow down a PC and to generate various error messages.

Fantastic Fiction

A website with over 25,000 bibliographies with all the latest books, covers and descriptions. Books are categorized by author and series as well as copy-written dates. Very useful. www.fantasticfiction.co.uk

Contributed by Jim Matson

Windows 8 Cheat Sheet

Search the Store for Cheat Sheet and install it to your Start screen. Watch the live tile to learn key stroke shortcuts or pin it to one side of the screen for a quick reference no matter what you are doing.

What Can I Safely Uninstall From My Computer

Sadly, this is an unanswerable question. It all depends on you, your computer, and how you use it. What can be removed is different from one person and one computer to the next. http://askleo.com/uninstalling-software-you-dont-need/?awt_l=MJWWI&awt_m=J3z.o1gmlZdfbL

Change the Default List Indent in Word

1. After creating an indented list, double-click any number in the list to select all of the numbers in the list.
2. Right-click the selection and choose Adjust List Indents.
3. In the resulting dialog, set Number Position to 0. This is the position where you want to align the numbers.
4. Set Text Indent to .25. This setting denotes the position where you want the text to align.
5. Click OK.

With these settings, all subsequent lists in your document will default to the left margin (0). This semi-permanent fix works only for the document at hand. The .dot has not been changed.

From a Tech Republic blog

Adobe Photoshop CC

But now, Photoshop is also the biggest-name software that you can't actually buy. You can only rent it, for a month or a year at a time. If you ever stop paying, you keep your files but lose the ability to edit them.

<http://poque.blogs.nytimes.com/?ref=personaltech>

802.11ac

Wi-Fi junkies, people addicted to streaming content, and Ethernet-cable haters are excited.

There's a new Wi-Fi protocol in town, and vendors are starting to push products based on the new standard out the door. It seems like a good time to meet 802.11ac, and see what all the excitement's about. Tech Republic has an article outlining the protocol here: <http://tinyurl.com/ka7mqrg>



Interested in learning Drupal, an open-source program for developing websites.

Visit www.2013.tcdrupal.org

Drupal Camp will run 7/19-7/20

Free training seminars on July 18. Materials fee of \$35.
Location: University of St. Thomas Downtown Mpls Campus.
Bring your own laptop.

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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.tcpc.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 Kuhlmeiy 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 Kuhlmeiy 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.tcpc.com

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

July

August

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 General Mtg 7:00 PM 6:00 Pic Perf SIG	10	11	Reminder: No Saturday SIGs during the summer. See you in Sept.	
14	15	16	17	18		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 General Mtg 7:00 PM 6:00 Web SIG	14	15	16	17
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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Flight Delays and Real Time Flight Tracking

by Ira Wilsker, iwilsker(at)sbcglobal.net

WEBSITES:

<https://www.aa.com/i18n/urls/mobile.jsp>

<https://www.aa.com/notify>

<http://flightcaster.com>

<http://www.wunderground.com/flights>

<http://www.intellicast.com/Travel/Flying/Default.aspx>

Recently, I had to fly to Fort Lauderdale International Airport (FLL) to attend a professional meeting. I was scheduled on a morning flight out of Jack Brooks Regional Airport (BPT), arriving at the airport well before the flight. Check in and baggage check went quickly and smoothly as I awaited the boarding call for my flight. I was flying American Airlines from BPT to DFW to FLL, and had previously signed up for the free text alerts from American Airlines which gave gate information, updated departure times, baggage pick up locations, and other useful information. As I was awaiting the boarding call, I received a text message on my smart phone informing me the outbound flight would be delayed, and gave an updated departure time about 30 minutes later; several minutes later the counter attendant made the same announcement over the PA system. Not too concerned about catching my connecting flight at DFW, I settled in for the short additional wait, only to receive another text message on my phone informing me of an additional hour delay; this time, it was about 10 minutes later that the check in counter made a similar announcement regarding the delay. Now it appeared that I would miss my connecting flight at DFW, a fact not lost upon many of the other travelers on my flight who descended en masse to the counter to check on their connecting flights. While concerned about missing my scheduled ride from FLL to the conference hotel, I did not have to join the throngs at the counter as I had the American Airlines app on my smart phone, which indicated that I would make the second connecting flight to FLL with no problem. Trepidation set in as another text message from American Airlines indicated another departure delay, which implied that my connecting to that next FLL flight was now in doubt, and that the next DFW to FLL flight would arrive at Fort Lauderdale too late to attend the meeting's opening dinner event.

When finally starting the local boarding process, hours late, a text message informed me that my original flight from DFW to FLL was boarding at that time, and gave the gate information at DFW; obviously I would be missing that connecting flight. A quick check of my American Airlines app gave me information on the next flight to FLL, but now the projected arrival of my flight from BPT, as stated in still another text message, indicated that if we landed at DFW at the projected time, I would have less than 15 minutes to catch the connecting flight at DFW several terminals away. Fortunately, I made that second connecting flight to FLL, arriving three hours late, missing my airport pickup. As soon as I turned on my phone at FLL, a text message from American alerted me of the carousel that should contain my bag; I was relieved that my luggage also made the short connection. An earlier text message, sent while in-flight, indicated that my original flight landed at FLL on time (without me on it), and provided the gate and baggage pickup information.

While it is common for flyers to encounter flight delays, the information provided by American Airlines via text messages, and their smart phone app, helped to alleviate some of the distress as I was able to instantly be informed as to flight status and possible connecting flights. As a frequent flyer on several airlines, it is now the rule, rather than the exception, that the major airlines offer free text messages regarding comprehensive flight information as well as dedicated apps for most smart devices, as well as a dedicated website optimized for mobile browsers.

While there are some variations between the smart device apps, they generally offer many of the same features and functions. Most of the airlines have free apps that will run on Android devices, iPad, iPhone, Windows Phone, BlackBerry, Nook, Kindle, and possibly other devices. These apps are linked on the airline websites or can easily be found by going to the appropriate app store for your device, and searching for the airline by name. For those who have internet connected smart devices but do not have their airline's app, a mobile optimized version of the airline webpage will either be automatically displayed in the mobile browser when entering the regular web address of the airline; almost all airlines dedicate a mobile friendly website with the prefix "mobile." before their normal web address, such as mobile.aa.com for American Airlines.

I have tried several of the Android apps for the major airlines, and of those I tried, all seem to be intuitive, feature rich, and well designed. Common features among the major airlines provide for the user to check flight status, view or change existing reservations, access frequent flyer accounts and benefits, perform flight


check in, make seat selection, display a digital boarding pass, provide baggage pickup information, display terminal and airport maps, view local weather at the destination, and other helpful information.

For those who prefer the simplicity and convenience of common text messaging, the airlines offer a variety of free SMS (text messaging) services for travelers; while the airlines do not charge for the service, smart phone users need to be aware that there are still many mobile phone accounts that charge fees for text messaging. Generally, the airlines offer three types of text messaging service; the first, is a direct, automated reply to an inquiry about gates, times, baggage claim and other requests. The airlines each have a simple address to send direct text inquiries; for American Airlines the address is "FLYAA" or 35922. The second type of SMS or text service offered by most of the airlines is a "One Time Flight Notification" which can be used for self-notification or can be sent to friends and family. For those without smart device access, these notifications can also be sent by email or by voicemail. This level of notification may contain flight information (such as revised departure and arrival times), gate information, and baggage claim locations. These onetime notifications can also be used to automatically alert the list of recipients (including yourself) of any last minute schedule updates, gate changes, and flight changes. The third primary type of notification service is a free "Flight Status Notification" subscription, that automatically generates comprehensive flight information notifications by SMS text messaging, email, or voice mail, simply created and scheduled automatically as a part of the booking and reservation process (this feature does not work on some of the third party travel booking websites and services). As with the onetime service, comprehensive flight schedule, gate, last minute flight changes, delays, and baggage information will be sent according to the prearranged settings created by the traveler. Most of the airlines allow members of the frequent flyer programs to create a notification list that will automatically notify selected members of the contact list to receive updated flight information.

There are also some excellent third party websites and apps that can be used to track flight status and location, and provide information about flight delays. One of my favorites is FlightCaster, at flightcaster.com. Available as a web service or as an app for iOS devices(iPhone and iPad), BlackBerry, and Android, FlightCaster is different from most of the other flight tracking utilities in that it claims to predict flight delays up to six hours before the airline officially announces flight delays! FlightCaster claims that it can provide these advance warnings of flight delays because it uses and analyzes multiple sources of data, often more comprehensive than those used by the airlines themselves. Some of the sources utilized by FlightCaster to make its long-term projections of flight delays include Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center, FlightStats, and the National Weather Service.

For a limited time, the official FlightCaster app is currently free in the iTunes store for iPhone and iPad devices. There are two versions available for Android devices; Flight Predictor Lite which is a limited free version, and the paid version of Flight Predictor (\$1.99) which offers more comprehensive information, and is not limited to the number of flights that it can track. There are several other flight trackers listed in the respective app stores; one that I have used is FlightView Free Flight Tracker, which offers real-time flight tracking, flight status, maps showing the flight location and route information, airport delays, and other information; flight information can be easily shared with others. While I have been satisfied with the free version of FlightView, there also are a pair of paid versions including the 99 cent FlightView Flight Tracker which does not display ads like the free version does. The last is FlightView Elite Flight Tracker (\$3.99) which provides much more comprehensive flight information, as well as real-time views of the arrival and departure boards at major North American airports, flight status alerts, flight integrated weather maps, airport delay information, and other relevant data about current and future flights. Another very comprehensive free Android app is Airport (All) Flight Tracker which offers flight tracking, live arrival and departure boards from the major airports, terminal maps showing amenities (restaurants, parking, ground transportation, Wi-Fi hotspots, and more), flight delays and cancellation notices, flight rebooking service, remote check-in for most airlines, baggage claim, seat assignments, and much more. Airport (All) Flight Tracker is different from most of the other flight tracking apps in that it provides extensive coverage of international flights and airports, while most competitors only cover domestic flights.

The major weather websites, including WeatherUnderground (wunderground.com/flights), Intellicast (intellicast.com/Travel/Flying/Default.aspx), and Weather.com also provide real-time information on airport delays with some flight information. There are also plug-ins for Google Maps, Google Earth, and other online mapping services that can display real-time flight tracking and other information.

With the abundance of free and nominally priced apps from the airlines and third parties, it may be possible to ease many of the stresses of air travel.  [Go to Page 1](#)

Interesting Internet Finds

Steve Costello, President/Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc., Florida

June 2013 issue, Boca Bits, www.bracs.org, Steve Costello (<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>), Editor (at) bracs.org

In the course of going through the more than 200 news feeds in my Google Reader, 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 May 2013.

HTG Explains: Why Does Chrome Say PDF Files Can Harm Your Computer?

<http://www.howtogeek.com/161461/htg-explains-why-does-chrome-say-pdf-files-can-harm-your-computer/>

How to Create A PDF With Fillable Forms in LibreOffice

<http://www.maketecheasier.com/create-a-pdf-with-fillable-forms-in-libreoffice/2013/04/29>

4 Best Free Alternatives to Microsoft Visio

<http://www.nirmaltv.com/2013/05/02/4-best-free-alternatives-to-microsoft-visio/>

Fix: Bluetooth Mouse disconnects randomly in Windows

<http://www.thewindowsclub.com/bluetooth-mouse-disconnects>

Is geotagging my photos a bad thing?

<http://askleo.com/is-geotagging-my-photos-a-bad-thing/>

How To Choose A Strong Password

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/how-choose-strong-password.htm>

How To Use Remote Desktop Connections Like An IT Pro

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/how-to-use-remote-desktop-connections-like-an-it-pro/>

Send to Kindle — eRead (Almost) Anything

http://www.wonderoftech.com/send_to_kindle/

Tips and Tricks With Technology To Save You Time

<http://inspiretothrive.com/2013/05/tech-tips-and-tricks/>

How to Print to Any Printer from Android

<http://savedelete.com/how-to-print-to-any-printer-from-android.html>

Upload EPUBs & PDFs To Google Play Books; Read On Web, iOS & Android

<http://www.addictivetips.com/web/upload-epubs-read-on-web-ios-android/>

Most Fridays, more interesting finds will be posted on the Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog:

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>

The posts are under Creative Commons licensing.. Recent posts:

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-Mt>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-M4>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-Mg>

<http://wp.me/p2S31p-LQ>



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You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

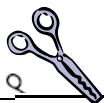
Would you like to receive this delivered directly to your email or business each month?

As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com.

As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for software drawings. The small membership fee also includes access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

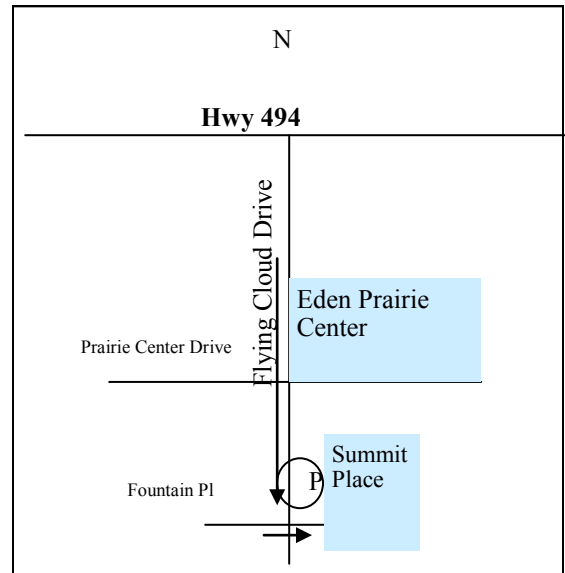


		7/13
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**July 9, 2013
General Meeting
Summer Social**

**Summit Place
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More info: www.tcpc.com



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