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

November 2013

General Meeting
Tuesday, November 12, 2013
7:00 PM

On-line Selling with Anne Simpson
Current Trends. What's "hot"?

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

Anne Simpson always draws a good crowd when she presents the current trends in on-line selling on eBay, eCrater, and Amazon. With over 7 years of successful online selling under her belt, she is an expert on how to get started, how to set up an online store and promote it well, where to buy stuff to sell after you've sold everything in your basement or attic, how to price it, and how to handle shipping. Anne's business has expanded beyond the United States, so she will be able to tell us how to deal with payments from customers outside the country and the best methods for shipping overseas. Anne is such a fun person to listen to and she is always full of great stories.

There may even be some decent prizes for those members attending who are in good standing with our Treasurer. Hope to see you there! 💻

Picture Perfect SIG at 6:00 PM Tues., Nov. 12, before the General Meeting. Photoshop Elements 12: What's New?

TC/PC Business Members

Friendship Village

Metro Sales

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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Full page (7½ x 9½)	**$100.00**
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One-third page (7½ x 3)	50.00
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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**

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Product previews and demonstrations

Special Interest Groups Monthly Newsletter

Discounts on products and services

Contests and prizes

Business Member Benefits

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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: Social Media with Jonathan Freed
By Sharon Walbran, TC/PC, SQWalbran(at)yahoo.com

Jonathan Freed covered the broad range of social media options available to us and explained in practical terms his reasons for using each one and why we should start using them, both for personal communication and business marketing. A self-described "social media junky," Jonathan makes using social media part of his daily regimen. Jonathan walked us through his own Facebook page, explained how to set security and privacy settings to make certain you are safe from predators and demonstrated typical posts he does. He also explained how he has used Twitter to follow people he considers interesting and how he uses Tweets to keep his followers abreast of where he is teaching or working and what he's working on. He explained how to get the best use of re-tweeting . He dissected a complicated tweet and explained each of the hashtags and @addresses to show who created it, who re-tweeted it and how to get more information. He really showed us how to communicate a lot of information in only 140 characters. He encouraged everyone at the meeting to get involved in LinkedIn. He considers it the most professional of all the social media programs and very useful for connecting with new business opportunities and/or people who share your same interests. A new, and not well-known as yet, social media program is neighbor.org, a way to set up a community of your neighbors where they can communicate with each other when they have items to sell or give away or when they may be going on vacation and need neighbors to keep an eye on their home and to broadcast issues of concern in the neighborhood. Jonathan has set up a neighbor.org community in his Fulton neighborhood and it has proven very successful.

There was so much more information that Jonathan wanted to cover and he is such a great resource on this topic we will be inviting him back for a second session in the spring. Watch the newsletter for that presentation. You won't want to miss it!⌨

Upcoming Meetings—FabLab 3-D Printing visit and Printer Experts:

Tuesday, December 10 at 7:00 PM: Scott Simenson, Director of the Fab Lab at Century College in White Bear Lake, will give us a tour of the Fab Lab. The Fab Lab has a number of 3-D Printers and other leading edge equipment that the students learn to use. With 3-D printing becoming the next biggest thing in the marketplace this visit will give us a chance to see these machines in operation and learn the process they use for creating objects based on Computer-Aided-Design (CAD) input. Because the December meeting falls on the same date that Summit Place hosts its annual holiday party in the Media Room we are unable to have our meeting there.

Tuesday, January 14 at 7:00 PM: Bob Brennan, Owner of Iot, Inc. in Eagan, will be giving a presentation on Printers. Which brands and models have proven to be most trouble-free. How to keep your printer in good running order. How to troubleshoot printer problems. When to call in the experts for repairs. Iot, Inc. provides computer services to area corporations and small businesses.⌨

Do Not Fall Prey to the Vicious CryptoLocker Extortion
by Ira Wilsker, iwilsker@sbcglobal.net

WEBSITES:

http://www.dhs.gov/national-cyber-security-awareness-month

http://www.fbi.gov/news/news_blog/national-cyber-security-awareness-month-2013

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cryptolocker

http://blog.emsisoft.com/2013/09/10/cryptolocker-a-new-ransomware-variant/

http://www.bleepingcomputer.com/virus-removal/cryptolocker-ransomware-information

http://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2013/10/18/cryptolocker-ransomware-see-how-it-works-learn-about-prevention-cleanup-and-recovery/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Key_size

GRAPHICS:
http://blog.emsisoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/crilock.png

http://blog.hotspotshield.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/who-is-spying-on-you.png

October was the tenth anniversary of National Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM). According to a statement on the FBI website, "(National Cyber Security Awareness Month) Established by presidential directive in 2004, the initiative—administered by the Department of Homeland Security—raises cyber security awareness across the nation by engaging and educating public and private sector partners through a variety of events and programs. The ultimate goal is to protect the country from cyber incidents and respond to them effectively if they do occur."

Around the country, at K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and private businesses, thousands of seminars and events took place during NCSAM in order to educate computer users at all levels on cyber security. I had the honor and privilege of presenting two citizen awareness sessions for the city of Port Arthur, Texas. I discussed several of the contemporary online threats and how users could effectively protect themselves from those threats. One of the warnings that I repeated several times was to never open email attachments, as they are a common vector used to bypass much of the security software that we (should) have installed on our computers.

Now that the National Cyber Security Awareness Month is behind us, we should not forget the lessons learned about clicking on email attachments. Unlike our new years' resolutions that many of us make, but quickly forget to implement, cyber security threats are continuing, and in many cases becoming more threatening. One recent example is a new version of an old Russian cybercriminal extortion scam; in the original versions, which took over countless millions of computers worldwide (and still showing up in large numbers), the purloined computer displayed a window after boot that had an official looking logo of the FBI or other law enforcement agency, along with an official looking criminal complaint that child pornography (or other illicit content) was found on the computer. Nothing else could be done on the computer, as it was effectively locked by the "FBI". The computer user was told that if they did not pay the fine, typically $200, within 24 or 48 hours, he would be subject to arrest, charged with a felony, and face 10 years in federal prison, plus a $10,000 fine. Detailed instructions were provided on where to purchase a specific prepaid debit card, and then

entering the cards 16 digit number into the payment box on the warning screen. After payment was received, the 'FBI" would drop the charges and (hopefully) release control of the computer.

The especially nasty new type of ransom ware, also likely from Russia, goes a step further than the other recent ransom ware; the new version contains a version of a vicious piece of malware called "CryptoLocker". Some variants contain a version of the well-know Zeus trojan, which is used to install and run CryptoLocker. Typically spread via an email attachment, often apparently sent from a known acquaintance or company, the attachment appears to contain a ZIP file with a disguised file that looks like an innocent PDF file. I have personally received dozens of these emails, and I will admit that they do look like they are from a legitimate source, but I know not to open email attachments that have any vestige of being suspicious. Once opened, the attachment executes, installing itself in the Documents and Settings folder with a random file name, adding a startup command key to the registry which causes CryptoLocker to load when the computer is booted. CryptoLocker then goes through a series of servers, making it difficult to trace, eventually connecting to a command and control server. This remote server generates a very sophisticated 2048-bit RSA encryption key pair using the public key to encrypt Microsoft Office and Open Document files, as well as some common graphics file formats. CryptoLocker will not just encrypt the computer of the user unfortunate enough to open the email attachment, but can also encrypt those file types on any mapped network drive, including USB drives, network file shares, and even cloud storage folders that are made to appear as a drive letter (like "G:\" drive), which may effectively shut down a business, school, hospital, or government agency that uses mapped network drives; it only takes one infected computer to possibly compromise the targeted files on an entire network.

Once the files are encrypted using the 2048-bit RSA public encryption key, a warning is displayed on the computer that critical data files have been encrypted, and that the ransom (extortion) payment must be made in a specified time, often 72 or 100 hours, or else private encryption key on the command and control server will be destroyed and "nobody and never [sic] will be able to restore files". The extortion demand is, " ... a payment of either 100 or 300 USD or Euro through an anonymous pre-paid cash voucher (i.e. MoneyPak or Ukash), or 2 Bitcoin in order to decrypt the files." Anecdotally, some published reports have claimed that some businesses have received cyber extortion demands of $10,000 or $20,000 dollars, or equivalent amounts in Euros or Bitcoins (private currency). In order to add a sense of urgency, a countdown timer is displayed indicating the deadline to pay the ransom, or the files will forever become unrecoverable (Image:http://blog.emsisoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/crilock.png). The 2048-bit encryption keys used by CryptoLocker are considered in the security industry as extremely secure and virtually unbreakable, and can be expected to meet security requirements until the year 2030 (source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Key_size#Asymmetric_algorithm_key_lengths).

Almost all of the common security suites, including Kaspersky, Symantec, Sophos, Emsisoft, and others, can detect and remove the CryptoLocker malware and the Zeus trojan, but no one (yet) has been able to come up with a practical method to crack the encryption key and recover the encrypted files; effectively they are gone forever. Removing the infection is a moot point, as the encrypted files will remain unusable. While some experts claim that paying the extortion prior to the expiration, hoping that the cyber criminal will send the private key necessary to decrypt the files, many others, including most law enforcement agencies do not condone paying ransom under the theory that it will only encourage more criminal behavior. Cited by Wikipedia, "Symantec estimated that 3% of users infected by CryptoLocker chose to pay the ransom." Do some simple arithmetic; if a million computers are hijacked by these criminals, and only 3% pay a $200 ransom, the crook receives a cool $6 million in illicit proceeds. Since multiple millions of computers have been held for ransom by CryptoLocker, the proceeds to the criminal enterprise may be staggering.

As is typical, prevention is the best method from being taken over by CryptoLocker or any of the other cyber threats. Sophos, a well respected multinational security company headquartered in the

UK has published "Five "top tips" for keeping safe against malware in general, and cyberblackmailers in particular" (nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2013/10/18/).

The first of the five tips is common sense, and a task incumbent on all computer users, "Keep regular backups of your important files." After cleaning the CryptoLocker and any other malware that infected the computer, the encrypted files can be safely deleted and replaced by their backup copies. One strong warning about the backup copies and the devices that the backups are stored on; do not leave the backup devices, such as external hard drives, attached to the computer or the network, as they will likely have a drive letter that can be identified by CryptoLocker. If CryptoLocker can see it, it will also encrypt the files on those devices, making the backup copies as useless as the encrypted files on the primary hard drive. Good practice is to frequently rotate through multiple backup devices, creating redundant backup copies, and never allowing more than one device to be attached and running at any given time. The other backup devices should be stored securely, and only connected in rotation, never having more than one backup device connected at a time. While CryptoLocker may also encrypt the files on an attached backup device, it cannot attack any unattached devices.

The second tip from Sophos is the often stated, "Use an anti-virus, and keep it up to date." I would add to that rule that it should also be required to do frequent and periodic security scans for malware using alternate third-party security software such as Emsisoft, SuperAntiSpyware, and MalwareBytes. My rationale for this secondary scanning by alternative scanning utilities is that prior infections may have either slipped through the primary security software, or rendered itself immune to detection by it. There are documented cases of CryptoLocker being downloaded and installed by Zeus or other malware that was already present on an infected computer, without a user opening an email attachment.

"Keep your operating system and software up to date with patches" is Sophos' third tip. Software publishers often release patches and updates to close newly detected security vulnerabilities. According to Sophos, "This lessens the chance of malware sneaking onto your computer unnoticed through security holes."

Number four on the Sophos list of tips is, "Review the access control settings on any network shares you have, whether at home or at work. Don't grant yourself or anyone else write access to files that you only need to read. Don't grant yourself any access at all to files that you don't need to see - that stops malware seeing and stealing them, too."

Sophos concludes its list of five tips with, "Don't give administrative privileges to your user accounts. Privileged accounts can "reach out" much further and more destructively both on your own hard disk and across the network. Malware that runs as administrator can do much more damage, and be much harder to get rid of, than malware running as a regular user."

Using the lessons learned during National Cyber Security Awareness Month, such as "don't click on and open email attachments", being aware of the tremendous threat and damage that the rapidly spreading CryptoLocker Ransomware can wreak, and following the five safety tips recommended by Sophos, our computing safety and security may be much improved. Remember that in computers, as well as in other aspects of life, prevention is far better than the alternatives. ⌨
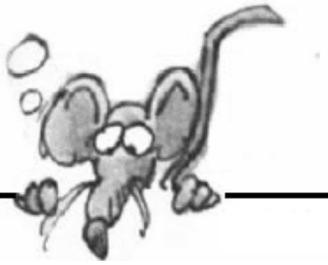
NIBBLERS

By Jeannine Sloan

Keyboard Shortcuts for Tablets & Smart Phones

Tip #1: If you want to type special characters with accent marks (like the letters à or è), simply tap and hold the corresponding alphabet key for a while and it will pop-up a list of related accented characters for you to choose from. Don't release the key before making a selection else the choices will disappear.

Tip #2: When you are done typing a sentence, double-tap the space bar on the keyboard and it will automatically insert a dot (or period) followed by a space. The next alphabet that you type will be written in uppercase without you having to press the Shift key.

Tip #3: The keyboard is pretty smart at adding apostrophes. For instance, if you need to type "doesn't", just forget the apostrophe and quickly type "doesnt" – the keyboard will automatically insert the apostrophe at the appropriate place. You can also press and hold the comma key to get the apostrophe without switching to the numeric keyboard.

Tip #4: The numeric keyboard shows the dollar ($) symbol by default. However, if you need to type the Pound or the Euro currency symbol, just hold the $ key and you'll see a long list of alternative currency symbols.

Try these on your device; some brands support all of them.

10-Tips-For-Securing-Your-Smartphone

http://tinyurl.com/n3wezty

- Always secure your smartphone with a password.
- Ensure that your device locks itself automatically.
- Install security software.
- Only download apps from approved sources.
- Check your apps' permissions.
- Don't miss operating system updates.
- Be wary of any links you receive via email or text message.
- Encrypt your smartphone.
- Turn off automatic Wi-Fi connection.
- Turn off Bluetooth and NFC when not in use.

Compare Tablets

Select the criteria that are important to you from an exhaustive list (Operating system, Battery life, Price, Weight, etc., etc.) and compare the resulting list of tablet models available.
http://tabletrocket.com/

Fuel Economy Tool for Used Vehicles

The Energy Department and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today released a new label that features EPA fuel economy estimates and CO_2 estimates for used vehicles sold in the United States since 1984. http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/UsedCarLabel.jsp

Clipboard history

The **Clipboard** keeps a copy of the past 24 items you have copied. To view (and paste) any of these items, from the **Home** tab, click the down arrow icon in the lower-right corner of the **Clipboard** group.

Windows Explorer Forward and Back Arrows

When using Windows Explorer to browse your files did you know you can use shortcut keystrokes to move forward or back one screen at a time? Alt and pressing the left arrow key will move you backward in your Explorer history, and right will move you forward. By left-clicking on the drop-down arrow you can choose from among previously visited screens.

Start Menu or Not

The Windows 8.1 revision does not bring back the Start menu; instead it revives the Start button, which takes the user straight to an "all apps" view of the Windows 8 Start screen, a collection of "tiles". It also introduces an option so that when started, the machine will boot directly into the Windows 7-style desktop view.
http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/sep/18/windows-8-1-start-menu-17-october

Windows Update

Is Windows Update enabled on your PC? If you don't know the answer to that, you should — Windows Update keeps Windows, Internet Explorer, and Microsoft Office up-to-date with the latest security patches and bug fixes; ensuring your computer is as secure as possible. Read this article to customize Windows Update for your situation: http://tinyurl.com/n76fwqn

Correction

Last week the NIBBLER published this hint: "Clipboard history The Clipboard keeps a copy of the past 24 items you have copied. To view (and paste) any of these items, from the Home tab, click the down arrow icon in the lower-right corner of the Clipboard group." The question was raised "What program is being used?" The answer is "Any program with a ribbon interface such as Word, Excel, Etc."

Better People Pictures

Use these guidelines to make the people in your pictures look their best. Read more about each here: http://tinyurl.com/k9z759w

- Hair is behind one shoulder, in front of the other
- Chin is forward to create a strong jawline
- Arm is lifted from the torso
- Waist doesn't have any visual extenders
- Shoulders are turned
- Iris is seen over the whites
- Nose doesn't break the line of the face

The Internet

"There's no such entity as "The Internet." The "internet" is simply a term that's used to describe this vast global network of interconnected computers. http://tinyurl.com/mok4l2r

Start-Up Reinvents the Bicycle Wheel

The Copenhagen Wheel replaces the rear wheel of a bicycle. It includes a motor powered by a built-in battery and sensors. http://tinyurl.com/mqfn743

Microsoft's new Windows Update Cleanup tool

It is integrated in Windows 8.1 but can be added to Windows 7 and 8. The way to launch it is the same as under Windows 7. The Windows Update Cleanup tool has been designed to remove no longer needed Windows Updates from the system. Once you have it installed, run Disk Cleanup and click the "Clean up system files" button to find the new Windows Update Cleanup option. http://tinyurl.com/pnox6fr

Magnifier in Windows 8.1

Open the Magnifier tool using the keystroke Logo plus the plus key. Mouse over the magnifying glass & click to get the settings dialog.

How do Anti-malware Companies ID Bad Guys?

The company must "… mine incriminating data about the purveyors of spam, phish, and malware from their own email campaigns, and provide authorities with actionable intelligence that could lead to putting the bad guys out of business before their handiwork can do any harm." This article helped me get a glimmer of how that is done: http://tinyurl.com/mw9m7og

Search Has Changed in Windows 8.1

In Windows 8.1 the keyboard shortcut Logo+q does not open the "all apps" screen but instead opens the search screen. Search looks everywhere; on the local computer and on the web; to limit the search click on the dropdown arrow beside the word "everywhere".

If All the Ice Melted

Explore the world's new coastlines if sea level rises 216 feet. http://tinyurl.com/k8q3ra6

Customize Start Screen in Windows 8.1

Right-click on the task bar, then left-click on Properties and left click on the Navigation tab to make changes.

Shut Down or Sign Out of Windows 8.1

Just press Win+X or right-click on the Start button and choose "Shut Down or sign out" from the menu.

How to Ensure You Never Lose Your Parked Car Again

Take a picture of identifying signs near your car—ie: street signs.
Take a video from behind yourself as you walk out of a ramp. Scrub it backwards to return.
Put a flag or marker on your antenna to make it noticeable.
Make an effort to park near an exit or landmark.
If you park where a GPS works, make a waypoint before leaving the car; or turn on the tracks feature and backtrack when returning.

Bluetooth Smart or Airdrop

Latest version of Bluetooth, technically Bluetooth 4, is preinstalled in many of the latest devices. It can be used for much more than wirelessly connecting speakers or keyboards. To see the
list of devices go here: http://www.bluetooth.com/Pages/Bluetooth-Smart-Devices.aspx. How it works:
http://www.bluetooth.com/Pages/Bluetooth-Smart-Devices.aspx

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Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

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 develop-
ers within the group and by MS reps.
Third Saturday 9:00 AM—Noon
Note: No Meetings June-August

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

Microsoft Office
Addresses the use, integration, and nu-
ances of the Microsoft Office applications.
Combined with Systems on Saturday
Third Saturday of the Month
Note: No Meetings June-August

Steve Kuhlmey   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

November

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 **Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon**
10	11	12 **General Mtg Selling Online with Anne Simp-son 7:00 PM 6:00 Pic Perf SIG**	13	14	15	16 **Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon**
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 **General Mtg Tour of Fab Lab at Century College, White Bear Lake 7:00 PM**	11	12	13	14 **Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon**
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 **Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon**
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31			[Go to Page 1](#)	

Free Internet Faxing Services: No Fax Machine Required!

by Bob Rankin, Ask Bob Rankin, www.askbobrankin.com
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Dump your fax machine, the Internet has made this dinosaur obsolete. Think of the savings on toner, paper, and time when all you really need these days is a cell phone, PDA, or PC. I have a big list of sites for you that offer free Internet faxing services. Some of them are completely free, while others offer free or limited trials. Pick the online fax service that suits you best...

FaxZero lets you send free faxes from a simple web-based interface. Just enter the sender and recipient info, type in your message, and hit the "Send Free Fax Now" button. The rich-text editor lets you add basic formatting, highlighting and fonts to your text. You can also fax a file from your hard drive. Supported file formats include PDF, Microsoft Word (DOC, DOCX or RTF), Excel spreadsheet (XLS or XLSX), image files (PNG or JPG), TXT, HTML, and PowerPoint (PPT). You can attach multiple files, but the combined size of all attachments must be 20MB or less.

And yes, it's really free to send a fax to anywhere in the USA or Canada. You can send five free faxes per day, each with a maximum of three pages. No ads are inserted on your faxed pages, but the FaxZero logo will appear on the cover page of your outgoing fax. You can even use FaxZero to fax your U.S. congressperson or senator. I've written more about FaxZero in my Send a Free Fax article.

GotFreeFax is basically a clone of FaxZero, with some minor differences. You can send 2 free faxes daily to the USA or Canada, with a 3 page per fax maximum. No ads or branding appear on the cover page. GotFreeFax supports PDF, Microsoft Word, OpenDocument Text (.odt), and Rich Text (.rtf) file formats only. One unique feature is the ability to substitute tokens in the message, such as {RECEIVER_NAME}, {RECEIVER_COMPANY}, and {RECEIVER_FAX}.

PamFax is another free faxing service that offers 3 free outgoing pages (after signup) with no ads. You can also get a free fax number for inbound faxes. PamFax has an address book for convenience, integrates with Outlook, and works with popular cloud services such as DropBox, Google Drive, and SkyDrive.

PopFax is yet another free fax sending service. Like the others, you can input a brief text message, or upload a document from your hard drive. But I can't recommend PopFax for several reasons. In the Terms of Use on their website, it says that PopFax does not guarantee "the possible alteration of the data sent by the User nor the service availability." It also says they are not liable for damage "following to an alteration of the User data transfer." This could be badly translated legal mumbo-jumbo, but yikes! Also my Chrome browser crashed when trying to send a DOC file with PopFax. On another attempt, it said my fax number was "invalid." After sending a test fax to another number, it never arrived. Of course, your mileage may vary, but with so many other choices, I'd steer clear of PopFax.

Sign up with K7, a messaging system that will send free faxes and voicemail to your email address, with an option to view or listen to your messages via the web. You get a free fax/voicemail number which you can give to your family, friends, and business buds. Just sit back and wait for the faxes to start dropping into your inbox as email attachments. If a K7 number is inactive for 30 days (no incoming voice or fax messages), it will be terminated. K7 cannot be used to send outgoing faxes. My companion article Free Inbound Faxing goes into more detail about Faxaway, an almost-free service that forwards incoming faxes to your email.

eFax claims that they are the largest online network on the planet with over a million subscribers in 2,500 cities and 27 countries. Also known as Zipfax, you can send and receive faxes as email attachments. You simply use the recipient's fax number and eFax's address. The 30-day freebie allows you to send or receive up to 150 pages. If you don't cancel during the initial month, you will be charged $16.95 per month. See also Free Inbound Faxing for more details on eFax Limited Accounts, a free service that forwards incoming faxes to your email.

Nextiva Fax offers a 30-day free trial, including 500 free faxes. Send a fax by email, or send and

receive faxes from Microsoft applications. Instead of hitting the print button, simply select "fax" right from Word, Excel, etc. Nextiva also lets you send and receive faxes from mobile devices. After the trial period, you'll be $8.95 per month, unless you cancel.

RingCentral is designed for small businesses, not only can you receive and send faxes via email, they can supply you with toll-free fax numbers, custom greetings, an auto-receptionist, voicemail, and multiple extensions. The company offers a 7-day free trial, during which you get 500 free fax pages. After the trial period, you'll be $7.99 per month, unless you cancel.

I couldn't find a smarphone app that sends free faxes. There's an app called scanR that's supposed to do that, but apparently it's defunct. CamScanner is a free app that turns your iPhone or Android smartphone into a scanner, fax machine and PDF creator. Take a picture of a document, receipt, business card, etc. CamScanner turns it into a searchable PDF that you can fax, print or upload to various cloud storage services. Faxing costs 99 cents per page.🖥️ [Go to Page 1](#)

How to Write, Publish and Promote Your Book for Free Using Technology
By Bohdan O. Szuprowicz, Member, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL, July 2013 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, editor (at) spcug.org

Millions of people all over the world want to write and publish a memoir, a novel, or share their grandmother's favorite recipes. They spend months and years chasing agents and publishers only to face endless rejections.

But times have changed. The latest technologies make it possible for anyone who can get on the Internet to become an author, publisher, and promoter of anything he wants to write, whenever he wants to do it, and all without spending any money in doing so.

All you have to do is write your stuff, edit it, and follow instructions of various services to format your text, design a cover, price the book, select a publicity program, and boast about your achievement to book review editors, on Facebook, Twitter or your own E-mailing lists.

Yes, all those functions are being offered to would-be authors at a price by masses of editors, agents, consultants and promoters. They took the trouble of reading the instructions and now they try to cash in on it. You do not need them if you follow the instructions yourself.

The simplest way to start is to go to Amazon's website, which is the largest online seller of books. You are looking for Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) which will provide you with a free instruction booklet how to format your manuscript in Microsoft Word for publication by Amazon as a digital book. So you just write your book in Word and follow simple instructions about spacing, page ends, chapters etc. Once your manuscript is finished you follow the instructions how to publish it on Kindle and that's all there is to it.

You also set the price that you may vary at will as time progresses. Amazon sells your book and you get a royalty of 35% to 70% depending on arrangements.

There are close to 2 million titles on Amazon so it's important that your book has a cover that is distinctive and attractive to readers. You can design your own cover using Picasa collage functions which is also free. It offers hundreds of fonts and colors and you can include any photographs or images you like. The important thing to remember is the fact that on the screen of a tablet or an E-reader these covers are thumbnail-size. As a result you should make sure that the size of title lettering and colors are contrasting and show up clearly in black & white on many E-reader devices.

Once your book is on Kindle you want to let the world know that it has been published and where to find it. If you stick to digital publishing there is no problem of distribution or costs of sending the book by mail. It is delivered via the Internet to the buyer who can read it on about a dozen devices such as E-readers, iPads, PC's, iPhones, and various smart phones.

There are several publicity websites that can be used to announce the publication of your book. Most

offer a basic free service as well as paid versions depending on distribution requirements. Once you follow instructions of a press release site you can also include the image of your book cover and send the whole package to book review editors, TV or radio talk show producers, and your personal E-mail lists completely free of charge.

Better still, the URL's of such press releases can be copied and simply pasted into other messages you are sending out. PRLOG is such a service used by the author and examples can found at http:// www.prlog.org

Twitter and Facebook are the two most popular social media services that you can use freely to promote your book. Although Twitter allows only 140 characters per twit, you can easily include the URL of your press release and also another link to an image, which may be a Picasa collage of your book cover, prices and reviews, as well as author biography and a photograph of yourself with your pet alligator. You can also use the Twitter search window to send such promo packages to selected recipients like your preferred talk show hosts, and book review editors, many of whom maintain distinct Twitter accounts.

Similarly, Facebook can be used to introduce your memoirs or novel with all the publicity materials to your friends and family. Other social media like LinkedIn, Pinterest and such, can also be used in providing free publicity for your book depending on type of audience you are seeking.

In short, the technology is here to be used and most of it is free. What it means is that anyone can become a published author literally overnight. 🖳

Windows 8.1 Update Unveiled
By Rosita Herrick, Director, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL, August 2013 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, editor (at) spcug.org

Well, the Web is alive with blogs, videos, and general information about Microsoft's first large update to Windows 8.

Initially called "Blue" and now officially called Windows 8.1, it is a major update with quite a few modifications. The software available now for free download is a "Review" or "Beta" version. It is free to download from the Windows web site. However, unless you like experimenting, have good backups and are willing to possibly restore your old system, I advise to wait until the final version is available.

From what I understand, the final version will be available for free as an update from the Windows Store. You would need a Microsoft ID to download it.

Here are some of the changes:

The "Shut down" option in now available from the Start Screen. Just right click on the lower left corner of the Start Screen. The menu that pops up has the Shutdown command listed toward the end.

There are changes on the Start Screen itself.   Two new tile sizes are available. The larger size can be used by the Weather app to show more weather, or smaller sizes can be grouped together. For example: the Microsoft Office's Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Note.

In the screenshot here you can see the new sizes. In the upper right corner are 4 apps grouped together while in the middle is the large weather tile.

Internet Explorer has also been updated. The version downloaded with 8.1 is IE11. And last but not least, the screens can be resized to different sizes, up to four screens instead the only two ways the Windows8 has.

The Start Button that shows up in lower left corner of the desktop screen just lets you get back to the Start Screen.

I have just successfully installed Windows 8.1 on my lap top as a dual boot so stay tuned for next month's more detailed information and personal experiences. 🖳

Twin Cities
PC USER GROUP

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As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits
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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.
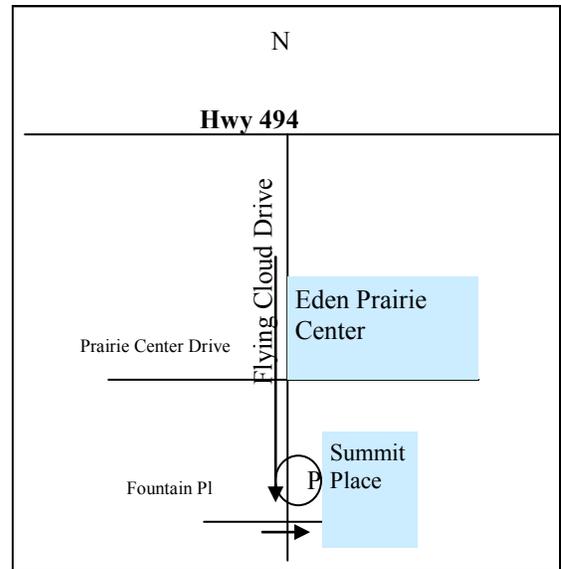(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

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