

\$3.00

(membership includes monthly subscription)

The Digital

# Viking



## Twin Cities

PC USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER

Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota USA • Vol. 34 No.6 • January 2014

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

**January 2014**

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## General Meeting Tuesday, January 14, 2014 7:00 PM

**Printer Tips  
With Bob Brennan  
IOT Solutions, Eagan, MN**

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

Bob Brennan, owner of IOT Solutions, 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; and when to call in the experts for repairs. Bob started IOT Solutions Inc. and has a team of expert technicians that install, troubleshoot, and repair the full range of hardware (printers, copiers, computers, tablets, smart phones, etc.) for area corporations, small businesses, and individuals. Bring your printer questions to the next meeting and gain some helpful tips on buying a printer and on keeping those printers running smoothly. 

6 PM Web SIG—Jack Ungerleider will show us [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) where we can return to those simple games of yesteryear such as Pong, PacMan, etc., and explain how we can run them on today's PCs. 

TC/PC is a Member of



**24-Hour Information • [www.tcpc.com](http://www.tcpc.com)**

Application form inside back cover

## 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.

**Disclaimer:** All opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the TC/PC, its Board of Directors, Officers, or newsletter staff. TC/PC does not endorse, rate, or otherwise officially comment on products available; therefore, readers are cautioned to rely on the opinions presented herein exclusively at their own risk. The Digital Viking, its contributors, and staff assume no liability for damages arising out of the publication or non-publication of any advertisement, article, or other item. All refunds in full or in partial, for advertising, membership or any other item shall be at the sole discretion of the Twin Cities PC User Group Board of Directors.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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:

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 2013-2014 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.

<b>President</b> — Jim Grotz	jim.grotz@raymondjames.com
<b>Vice President</b> — Curt Trout	ctrout@troutreach.com
<b>Secretary</b> - Sharon Walbran	sqwalbran@yahoo.com
<b>Treasurer</b> - Sheri Trout	strout@troutreach.com
<b>Membership</b> - - Open Position - -	
<b>Meeting Coordinator</b> - - Open Position - -	
<b>Newsletter Publisher</b> Sharon Walbran	952-925-2726 SQWalbran@yahoo.com
<b>Web Master</b> Jack Ungerleider	jack@jacku.com
Jeannine Sloan	Ambassador for Friendship Village
Ron Bruncati	612-377-7936 brunron@mtn.org
Joel Hedland	joelh@spacestar.net
Jim Schlaepfi	jschlaepfi@charter.net
Lon Ortner	612-824-4946 csacomp@comcast.net
Steve Kuhlmeier	steve@kuhlmeysystems.com
Gary Grau	oxygary2389@yahoo.com
Ross Held	RHeld3745@aol.com
David Van Dongen	davidvandongen@yahoo.com

## Newsletter Staff

Editor Sharon Walbran

Contributors:

Jeannine Sloan

Jack Ungerleider

## Last Month's Meeting: FAB Lab—3D Printing—at Century College

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

A group of hardy members braved the cold last month to visit the Fab Lab at Century College in White Bear Lake. Scott Simenson, Director of the Fab Lab, gave us the history of Fab Labs and showed us some of the products students produce on 3D Printers in the lab. The Fab Lab project is an outreach program from MIT to promote entrepreneurship and invention in communities throughout the world. In third world countries, these Fab Labs allow local people to produce parts and products that would be hard to obtain and expensive to purchase. These Fab Labs require relatively low-cost but sophisticated tools and can be set up in simple, available spaces.

According to the MIT website, "A Fab Lab is comprised of off-the-shelf, industrial-grade fabrication and electronics tools, wrapped in open source software and programs written by researchers at MIT's Center for Bits & Atoms. Currently Fab Labs include a laser cutter that makes 2D and 3D structures, a sign cutter that plots in copper to make antennas and flex circuits, a high-resolution NC milling machine that makes circuit boards and precision parts, a large wood router for building furniture and housing, and a suite of electronic components and programming tools for low-cost, high-speed microcontrollers for on-site rapid circuit prototyping. Originally designed for communities as prototyping platforms for local entrepreneurship, Fab Labs are increasingly being adopted by schools as platforms for project-based, hands-on STEM education."

We had a chance to tour the lab and to meet some of the students and learn about the projects they were working on. One particular student from Africa was designing and producing a motorized fountain for his home town.

Thanks to everyone who was able to make it to this meeting. Scott Simenson has a portable 3D printer on order and promised that he would bring the 3D printer to one of our future meetings so we can see it in action. 

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### January Meeting Prize Drawing

Members attending our January meeting will have a chance to win the book, "Windows 8: The Missing Manual," (approximate value: \$20). O'Reilly Media has given our club this generous prize. Please visit their website, [www.oreilly.com](http://www.oreilly.com), when you are looking for computer books. 

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### Upcoming Meetings:

#### **Tuesday, March 11, 7:00 PM. Teen Tech Center at the Minneapolis Central Library.**

Bernie Farrell, Senior Librarian at Hennepin County Library and Director of the Best Buy Teen Tech Center will explain what technical services, such as music recording, the center offers area teens who could not afford such services in the marketplace.

#### **Tuesday, April 8, 7:00 PM Social Media: The Journey Continues with Jonathan Freed.**

When Jonathan presented at our October meeting, he just touched the surface of the various social media services available to us. He is coming back to expand on that presentation and guide us through exploring more options.  [Go to Page 1](#)

# Programming with Jack

By Jack Ungerleider, TC/PC Users Group, Twin Cities, MN

Hello World

Every discussion of programming starts with a “Hello World” program, our journey is no different but we’ll begin with getting set up to use our two languages.

## Getting Python

If you are working with Linux, including Raspian on a Raspberry Pi, Python is included and most likely loaded. We will be working Python 2.7.x (where the x is 6 or less). If you are using a Mac with OS X you may have Python already installed. On Windows you’ll need to go to [www.python.org](http://www.python.org) and download Python for Windows. Install Python from the msi file. Then go to <http://sourceforge.net/projects/pywin32/> and download the PythonWin extensions. This provides an IDE that works well in Windows.

## Getting Scratch

Scratch is also included in Raspian. On other Linux it may be available through your package management system. We will be using Scratch 1.4 which is the version on the Raspberry Pi. You can download Scratch from [scratch.mit.edu/scratch\\_1.4](http://scratch.mit.edu/scratch_1.4). There are versions for Mac and Windows at that location. Download the installer and execute it on your computer. This will load the Scratch IDE to your system.

## Working in a Browser

Scratch 2.0 is a web based version of the language that you can try out without loading anything to your computer. It requires Flash in order to use. You can access it by going to [scratch.mit.edu](http://scratch.mit.edu) and clicking on **Try it Out**.

Python is also available online it is one of several languages available at the [repl.it](http://repl.it) site. Go to <http://repl.it/languages> and select Python from the list. You then get an interactive Python console.

## “Hello Python”

Start Python by clicking on the PythonWin entry on Windows or by opening a command line console on Linux and typing **python**. Once in the python console (the bottom frame of the PythonWin window) type the following line at the `>>>` prompt:

```
print 'Hello Python!'
```

Press the **enter** key and the words **Hello Python!** will show up on the next line. That’s what it takes to print anything in python. Let’s extend our python by using a **print format**. Type the following at the `>>>` prompt: (anything in angle brackets indicates a particular key to be pressed or something you should substitute.)

```
me = '<your name>' <enter>
print 'Hello %s, welcome to Python!' % (me) <enter>
```

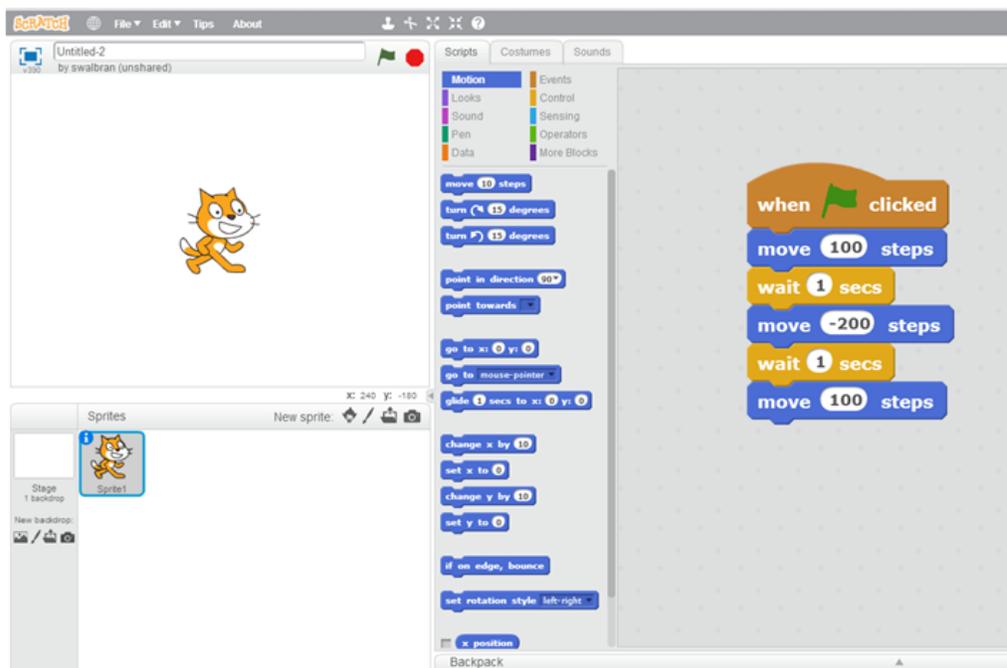
The **%s** is a placeholder that indicates that a **string** value will be printed there. What is substituted is the first element parentheses following the % after the print string. We will discuss these placeholders more next month when we look at variables.

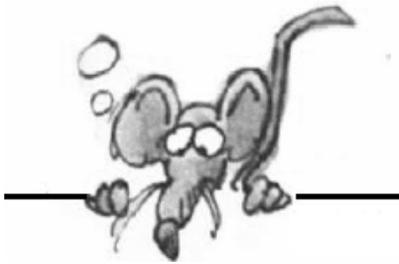
## Starting with Scratch

Scratch is a different kind of programming environment and we will get started with a simple script based on many introductory tutorials. Scratch uses sprites and when you load Scratch there is a sprite loaded. This is the Scratch Cat, the logo/mascot of Scratch. We are going to make the cat move back and forth as an introduction to writing Scratch scripts. Open the Scratch system. The left hand side of the interface shows the various code blocks you can use. The center section is where you layout your script. You can also modify the look of your sprite on the Costumes tab and add sounds on the sound tab. We will only be using the Script section for now. Do the following steps to get the script in place:

1. Click on the **Control** section (gold color, top button, right column)
2. Find the code block labeled **When <Green Flag> Clicked** it should be the top block
3. Drag the block into the Script area
4. Click on the **Motion** section (blue color, top button, left column)
5. Grab the **Move 10 Steps**, drag it to the script area and attach it to the bottom of the first block.
6. Click on the 10 and change it to 100.
7. Go back to Control and find the **Wait 1 Sec** block. Drag it to the bottom of the script
8. Go to Motion and add another Move 10 Steps block. Change the 10 to -200. This will move the sprite backward.
9. Add another Wait 1 sec from the Control section.
10. Add one more Move 10 Steps block and change the 10 to 100.

Click on the Green Flag in the top right of the area with the sprite in it. Watch your cat “dance” back and forth. Welcome to Scratch!  [Go to Page 1](#)





# NIBBLERS

By Jeannine Sloan

## **A Blow Against the Bad Guys**

Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other industry partners have successfully disrupted ZeroAccess, one of the world's largest botnets. Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/nfufn73>

## **Data Mining for the Masses**

Play with digital data. Google has a new tool that counts the use of words or phrases used in the books they have scanned into their books database. The tool allows users to track historic usage. It seems to me the only problem is designing a meaningful search:

<https://books.google.com/ngrams> Instructions are here: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>

## **What's the Government Doing?**

Create an account and read the journal called the Federal Register each day.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/>

## **Set Two Tabs Visible in Modern Version of IE10**

Have two web sites active on separate tabs in the Modern interface of IE10.

Use the shortcut keystroke Alt+d to display the tabs bar at the bottom of the screen.

Left-click on the Tabs Icon to display the tabs.

Right-click on a tab and left-click "open tab in new window"

Each of the tabs will fill half of the screen. Neat, huh?

## **Get the Correct SD Card**

SDXC memory cards must be used only with SDXC devices.

SDXC devices can use SD, SDHC and SDXC memory cards.

SDHC memory cards can be used with SDHC and SDXC devices.

SDHC devices can use both SD and SDHC memory cards.

SD devices can only use SD memory cards.

More information here: [https://www.sdcard.org/consumers/sdxc\\_capabilities/using\\_sdxc/](https://www.sdcard.org/consumers/sdxc_capabilities/using_sdxc/)

Or <https://www.sdcard.org/consumers/videos/>

## **SMB**

SMB means "Small and Medium Business"

## **Webopedia**

**Webopedia** is a free online dictionary for words, phrases and abbreviations that are related to computer and Internet technology. Webopedia provides easy-to-understand definitions in plain language, avoiding the use of heavy jargon when possible so that the site is accessible to users with a wide range of computer knowledge." This is a quote from the site's *About Us* page. Check it out, I think it's worth a bookmark: [www.webopedia.com](http://www.webopedia.com)

## Wireless Power: Three Standards Groups

The Alliance for Wireless Power, A4WP, supports the new Rezence brand. Wireless Power Consortium backs the Qi standard, and the Power Matters Alliance backs the Power 2.0 standard. "The new Rezence brand is much more than an icon; it's a promise to consumers that devices carrying the Rezence logo will be interoperable with one another," See more at: <http://www.ecommercetimes.com/rsstory/79617.html#sthash.yRRpxxVG.dpuf>

## Speech Recognition

Did you know Windows has had Speech Recognition built-in since Windows Vista? <http://www.howtogeek.com/177539/how-to-get-started-with-speech-recognition-on-windows-7-or-8/>

## Windows 8.1 Start Screen (Modern Interface) Shortcut

Use Ctrl+Tab when at the Modern Interface of Windows 8.1 to open the *all apps* screen.

## Want To Continue Running Windows XP

This video shows how to install and use Windows XP on a virtual machine in Windows 7 Pro or better.

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/help/videos/using-windows-xp-mode#tab=desktop>

## Buy A New Computer

Buying a new computer is a big investment. Buying the "right" computer is finding the one that does the things you need it to do, within the means you have to spend on it. Research needs to include these categories: Hardware:, Processor, RAM, Hard Drive, Operating System, CD/DVD, Graphics, Audio, Monitor, AC Adapter, Wireless LAN (802.11), Power Supply, Keyboard. Create a chart listing your needs for each before shopping, or go to this site and borrow the chart created for use by college students. <http://helpdesk.siu.edu/salukitech/recommended-specs>

## Location History

When you set up a new Android device, or install any Google app on your iOS device, you're prompted to share location data. If you say yes, your information goes into a database called "location history". To learn more about it and how to turn it off on your device go here:

<http://tinyurl.com/k6c6h2l>

## Windows 8.1 Keyboard Shortcut

From anywhere in Windows 8.1 simply use Logo+S to open the search field.

## Compare Costs of Generic Prescription Drugs

Find out if you are paying the lowest price for your generic prescription drugs at this site. Compare prices for all FDA-approved prescription drugs at virtually every pharmacy in America. Find pharmacy coupons, manufacturer discounts, generics, comparable drug choices and savings tips all in one place. <http://www.goodrx.com/>

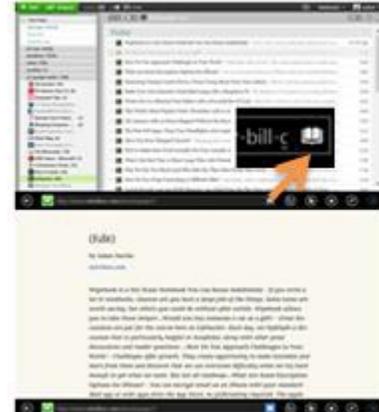
## Wikipedia Books

A Wikipedia Book is a collection of Wikipedia articles that can be easily saved, rendered electronically in PDF, ZIM or OpenDocument format, or ordered as a printed book. Currently there are 17,788 compiled books or users can create their own.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Books>

## VPN in Windows 8.1

Access the VPN setup screen in Windows 8.1. From the Modern Interface type VPN. You will be taken to the search panel. Click on “Manage virtual private networks” and the “Add a Virtual Private Network” screen will appear. The built-in VPN apps are Check Point VPN, F5 VPN, Juniper Networks Junos Pulse, Microsoft and SonicWALL Mobile Connect. You can choose a provider that’s not listed, as well. Do a web search for the one you’re interested in to get more info.



## IE11 Reading View

The thumbnail is a display from my RSS feed screen. In the top view I have the new *Reading View* turned off. In the lower view it is turned on. This is controlled by a toggle switch that looks like a book on the right edge of the address field. When you want to use the toggle click on the three dots at the bottom right of the browser window to unhide the address bar and click the toggle on or off.

## Web Bots

Good bots are certified agents such as search engines and Web performance tools.

Robots check for dead links and find personal Homepages, gather price information automatically from online stores. They collect and index web pages for search engines and have been used to collect html documents for testing automatic abstract generation.

Bots are essentially crawlers sent out from the world’s biggest web sites to index content for their search engines and social media platforms. You WANT those bots to visit you. They bring you more business! Shutting them down as part of strategy to block to bad bots is a losing strategy.

<http://www.incapsula.com/the-incapsula-blog/item/393-know-your-top-10-bots>

## Download From Google Drive

A file hosted on Google Drive has a shared link that looks like this:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/FILE\\_ID/edit?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/FILE_ID/edit?usp=sharing)

When you access this link, it will render the file in the browser but if you can rewrite this URL slightly, the link, when clicked, will download the corresponding file in the user’s browser instead of opening it in the browser. The modified URL would be:

[https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=FILE\\_ID](https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=FILE_ID)

All you have to do is make note of the FILE\_ID in the original URL and use it in the modified URL.

## 2014 Probabilities

Google Glass is launched to the public The first solar aircraft to circumnavigate the globe

Completion of the Panama Canal expansion project 14 nanometer chips are released

The first products to use memristor technology are becoming available

Smart watches are the latest must-have gadget Most telephone calls are made via the Internet now

Increased automation in retail environments More: <http://www.futuretimeline.net/21stcentury/2014.htm>

## This Bears Repeating

Google’s automated email scanning processes are not sinister. Nor are they an uninvited invasion of privacy. Rather, they expressly protect webmail users against spam and malware, and that is a good thing. If folks sign up for free webmail, they should not be surprised by these policies, which are quite clear, and have been publicized in articles and news reports. - See more at:

<http://www.ecommercetimes.com/story/Free-Webmails-Hidden-Price-79702.html>

## The Creator Of The Etch A Sketch Gets His Own Treatment

An Animated Tribute to Andre Cassagnes: <http://www.nytimes.com/video/magazine/10000002613889>

## StopDataMining.me

A directory of Opt-Out links to stop data brokers from selling your personal information.

<http://www.stopdatamining.me/>

## Spam Categories

**SPIT** - spam using internet telephony

**SPIM** - spam over instant messaging

**SPASMS** - spam via SMS

**SPATTER** - spam via Twitter

**SPEWS** - spam through electronic web submissions

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/k6c3q4n>

## GPS

Do you understand how GPS works, who maintains it, who pays for it. Check this simplistic video to get an idea: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdA703IKef0>

## Ten Tips

Tech columnist David Pogue shares 10 simple, clever tips for computer, web, smartphone and camera users. Fun video: [http://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_pogue\\_10\\_top\\_time\\_saving\\_tech\\_tips.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/david_pogue_10_top_time_saving_tech_tips.html)

## Listen to Music through Hennepin County Library

HCL's Alexander Street Press music databases include streaming audio and video, interviews, liner notes, scores, biographies, and cover art. *Subscription purchased with funding from Hennepin County property taxes.*

Log into <http://www.hclib.org/> Go to "reference & research > Databases" and browse to any of these databases: African American Music Reference, American Song, Classical Music in Video, Classical Music Library, Classical Music Reference Library, Classical Scores Library, Contemporary World Music, Dance in Video, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Online, Jazz Music Library, Music Online, Opera in Video, Smithsonian Global Sound for Libraries

## WinSXS

Windows keeps updating its operating environment and resources on an ongoing basis. As a result, additional files keep growing in your computer's hard drive, even though you may have recently performed computer maintenance on it. One of the most prominent of such system folders that keeps increasing at a staggering rate is the WinSXS folder. It is often a large folder that is undeletable and manually un-modifiable, located at C:\Windows\WinSXS. It contains files which have details of all bunch of software installed in your system. Read how to clean this folder here:

[http://tips4pc.com/computer\\_tips\\_and\\_tricks/winsxs-folder-cleanup.htm](http://tips4pc.com/computer_tips_and_tricks/winsxs-folder-cleanup.htm)

## kk.org

Editor of Wired magazine and former editor of Whole Earth Catalog Kevin Kelly now runs a web site that keeps me occupied for hours. Check it out. <http://kk.org/>

## Light Stopped Completely For A Minute Inside A Crystal: The Basis Of Quantum Memory

Light, the fastest thing in the known universe and travels at 300 million meters per second, was stopped dead still inside a crystal effectively creating light memory, where the image being carried by the light is stored in crystals. Read the article here:

<http://www.extremetech.com/extreme/162289>

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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](http://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.

First 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 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](http://www.tpc.com)

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

**January**

**February**

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
			1	2	3	4 Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Gen Mtg: Printer Experts— IOT Solutions 7:00 PM 6:00PM Web SIG	15	16	17	18 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Gen Mtg: 7:00 PM 6:00PM Pic Perf SIG	12	13	14	15 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

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# Alternative Landline Telephone Services

by Ira Wilsker, iwilsker@sbcglobal.net

WEBSITES:

<http://ooma.com>

<http://www.ooma.com/rates>

<http://www.magicJack.com>

<http://www.nettalk.com>

<http://www.skype.com/en/>

<http://www.vonage.com>

<http://obihai.com>

<http://www.basictalk.com>

<http://www.timewarnercable.com/en/residential-home/phone/domestic-international-calling-plans.html>

<http://gigaom.com/2012/12/26/over-half-of-american-homes-dont-have-or-use-their-landline/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2012/12/27/more-than-half-homes-without-landline/1793823/>

It should come as no surprise to followers of technology that newer technologies always tend to replace older technologies; this process has been going on since the advent of mankind. Of the myriad of technologies widely used today, it should come as no surprise that the traditional hardwired landline telephones, using a basic analog technology well over a century old, are already obsolescent. According to a story in USA Today on December 27, 2012 (quoting an original 12/26/12 article from Gigaom), "More than half of U.S. homes don't have or use landline." The article explains how wireless phones have in many cases totally replaced the copper wired analog phones in the majority of homes. This decline in demand for traditional phone service has not been lost on the likes of AT&T and Verizon, major providers of hardwired phone services. The USA Today and Gigaom articles state, "As the FCC begins its regulatory process to change the rules associated with landline access and telcos like AT&T and Verizon try to get out of the landline business altogether, it's clear that the phasing out of copper-based voice lines will have repercussions that go beyond telephone calls."

While cellular (mobile) telephones have taken away much of the market share (and profitability) of the copper based landline services, the rapid rise in the popularity of alternative phone services utilizing "Voice over Internet Protocol" (VoIP) has indicated that there is still substantial demand for a somewhat fixed telephone service for both home and business users. VoIP phone services are digital, utilize the internet to carry calls rather than the more traditional copper lines, generally offer superior voice quality, and utterly lack the domestic long distance charges still charged by the traditional phone companies. For those making international long distance phone calls, either to or from the United States, most of these VoIP services offer either free or very inexpensive international long distance. Several of the VoIP providers also offer a reasonably priced international flat rate calling plan with unlimited international calling for less than just local calling costs from a traditional phone company. Originally, most of the VoIP providers had difficulty sending and receiving traditional analog FAX messages, but that problem has been resolved, with almost all of the digital carriers now handling FAX machines as well as any other connected phone devices.

Watching TV for more than a few minutes will likely expose the viewer with a host of commercials for alternative phone services. Among the most widely advertised digital phone products and services are MagicJack, Vonage, Time Warner Digital Phone (other similar cable company phone services are promoted by other carriers), Ooma, netTALK, and BasicTalk. While not heavily advertised, but widely known and used in technical circles are Skype and Obihai. Major providers of online chat services, such as Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo! offer voice chat services that are encroaching on telephone services,

with the Google Voice service now being used by many users as a replacement for traditional telephone service. Social networking services, such as Facebook, may also be entering the fray.

I will admit that over the years, I have experimented with several of the devices that can be used to simply connect common home phone (corded or cordless) to the internet in order to make virtually unlimited local and long distance phone calls. Originally, my primary intent was to avoid horrendous long distance charges when my daughters started going away to college. Later, when cell phone plans offered a very limited number of minutes, with additional minutes being very expensive, I needed an alternative method to avoid crippling long distance charges when calling out-of-area family. While our current cell phone plan has a large number of (limited) daytime minutes, with unlimited evening and weekend calling, my primary interest in a VoIP system is to be able to totally replace my antiquated but traditional phone company with a much more cost effective (money saving) alternative that includes virtually unlimited local and domestic long distance calling. By noticing the increasing popularity of the VoIP systems for home use (home users may be able to retain their "old" landline phone number while generating substantial savings), and the exploding use of VoIP based office phones (a service offered by several of the digital phone providers), it seems inevitable that the traditional landline carriers such as AT&T and Verizon may be presiding over a dying technology.

After toying around with several voice-chat services, requiring the use of a headset and boom microphone, my first foray into the more modern VoIP services was with the original version of the magicJack, which I reviewed here in the February 19, 2009 edition of the Examiner. My major complaint about the original magicJack, an issue resolved in a later version, was that it had to be connected to a computer that was turned on in order to function; when my computer was turned off, there was no magicJack service. About two years ago (Examiner, December 23, 2011), I reviewed an updated version of the then new magicJack PLUS, a much improved build that did not require an "always on" computer in order to have full phone access. Newer builds of the device, the latest named "2014 magicJack PLUS", now claim much improved voice quality. The new magicJack PLUS device retails for \$69.95, but is widely available for as low as half that price, and usually included the first year of service. Additional years can be purchased for as little as \$19.95 per year with a multiyear subscription. The PLUS version of the MagicJack is very simple to install and setup; the AC adapter is plugged into a standard power outlet, with the magicJack's USB plug inserted into the AC power source. A standard phone is connected with its phone plug to one port on the magicJack, and a standard Ethernet (network) cable is connected another port on the device. Registration is fast and simple, leading to a dial tone on the now connected telephone. To be fair, before having adequate cell phone minutes, the portability feature of the magicJack was handy as I could make and receive phone calls from wherever I had a decent broadband internet connection. As with almost all of its competitors, magicJack offers many of the same services as traditional landlines, including caller ID, voice mail, and 911 service (E911). The magicJack is arguably the best selling VoIP device because of its heavy advertising and promotions, with the magicJack website claiming over 11 million devices sold.

Prior to the release of the PLUS version of magicJack, I was seeking an alternative that did not require an "always on" computer in order to function full time; I found that device, the netTALK DUO, which I reviewed in length in the Examiner on May 4, 2012. The basic netTALK DUO was less expensive than the magicJack PLUS, priced at \$49.95 retail (commonly available for about a third less), had superior voice quality, with better customer service and tech support than magicJack. The first year of virtually unlimited local and long distance service was included in the price, with additional years of service available for \$29.95; a year of netTALK cost about the same as a month of basic landline service from the traditional phone companies. Portable, with almost all of the features of a landline (e911, voice mail, caller ID, etc.) I preferred the netTALK over the magicJack. A new model, the netTALK DUO WiFi (\$64.95), offers the option of connecting to any available WiFi service rather than connecting to a router via Ethernet cable.

Next week [Editor's note: next month in the Viking], in Part 2, read about some of the newer VoIP services including Ooma, BasicTalk, Obihai, Skype, Vonage, and the digital phone services offered by the cable companies.  [Go to Page 1](#)

## Get Plain Text

By Linda Gonse, Editor & Webmaster, Orange County PC Users' Group, CA, October 2013 issue, Nibbles & Bits, [www.orcopug.org](http://www.orcopug.org), editor (at) orcopug.org

It's probably safe to say that everyone has copied text from a webpage at some time and pasted it into an email or into a Word-like program. So, of course, you can relate to my dismay of pasting the type complete with its formatting riding piggyback on it.

I always have to stop what I'm doing and unformat and reformat the type, so it blends in with what I'm working on.

I can hear "old timers" yelling, "Notepad! Use Notepad!"

That's true. And, it's a good option. I'm using Windows XP (still), so I have a shortcut to Notepad on my Start menu. It's very easy to click on Start while I have my browser open and click to open Notepad to paste the web text, then recopy it from Notepad, and repaste the text into a document.

But, I found a simpler method.

Really. There is no learning curve.

I only have to click once after copying from a webpage and then I can immediately paste unformatted text into anything anywhere!

With our typical complicated programs to work with, this just doesn't seem possible. Or, maybe alchemy might be involved!

The short of it is that this is true, no hocus pocus. It is possible with a tiny program called Get Plain Text.

It's only 70Kb and it doesn't add an icon to your system tray or grab any memory when you use it.

It works in less than a second to remove text formatting, including fonts, sizes, colors, and embedded images. It just leaves plain text.

Download the program from the developer's webpage (clipdiary.com) at <http://bit.ly/1bzFuea> or a secondary download site at <http://www.softpedia.com/get/PORTABLE-SOFTWARE/Office/Clipboard/Portable-Get-Plain-Text.shtml>. Save it to your preferred disk location. Click on the program to run it.

Add the icon that launches Get Plain Text to your Quick Launch bar or favorite program launcher.

I keep it on my Quick Launch bar. As soon as I copy something to the clipboard, I click on the Get Plain Text icon. Then, I paste the text anywhere I desire. That's it.

When I use Get Plain Text, no window opens. There are no dialog boxes or preferences to select. There are no flags, bells, or whistles to tell me it is finished. It simply works fast, silently, and unobtrusively.

What else? Oh, yeah. It's free! 

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**You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.**

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As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at [www.tpc.com](http://www.tpc.com).

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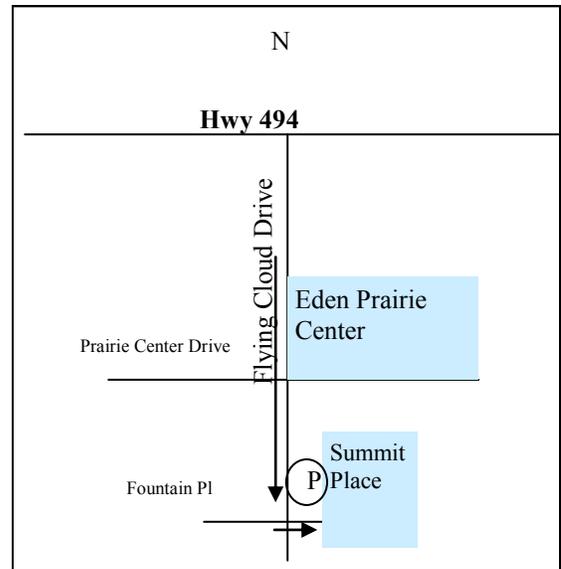
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