

\$3.00

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The Digital

Viking



Twin Cities

PC USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER

Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota USA • Vol. 35 No.6 • January 2015

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

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General Meeting

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

7:00 PM

Continuing 3D Printing Adventures

With Jack and Bill

******Changed Location: ******

Community Involvement Programs

1600 Broadway St NE (at Johnson St NE)

Minneapolis, MN 55413

Jack Ungerleider and Bill Ryder have been pioneers in building and using 3D Printers and then sharing their first efforts with our members. Back by popular demand, they will bring us up to date on the progress they are making using their 3D printers and what they've learned. They will give us a demo and offer tips on what the latest models are featuring, what the current costs are, and where to get printers and supplies. [See driving directions at www.tcpc.com]

Jack Ungerleider will be presenting the Web SIG at 6:00PM before the General Meeting. Topic: Streaming media in general, Chromecast in particular 

TC/PC is a Member of



24-Hour Information • 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.

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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 2013-2014 Board of Directors

Meets once or twice per year. All members welcome to attend.

Visit www.tnpc.com for meeting details.

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Annual Board Meeting Results-Bill Ryder Named President

TC/PC's annual board meeting was held on Tuesday, December 9, 2014, at the Caribou Coffee Shop in the Mall of America. A quorum of board members was met. The most significant change was the nomination and unanimous confirmation by voice vote of Bill Ryder as the new President of TC/PC. Sheri Trout, Treasurer, reported that our finances are in good shape. Discussion was held of proceeding with gaining 501(c3) status for the club. 

Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, February 10, 7PM - Computers I Have Known (many of which I owned). Jack Ungerleider takes a random walk through the history of PCs and other computing devices with the help of the Museum at old-computers.com and other web sites.

Tuesday, March 10, 7PM—How To Fight City Hall with Today's Technology Tools. Jim Grotz has been “fighting City Hall” for over a year and has found some very effective tools to aid his efforts. He will show us how to use a tool called “Tube Chop” and other software. 

January Prize Drawing: Book: Getting Started with Raspberry Pi

What's New in Avast Antivirus 2015?

By Bob Rankin, Ask Bob Rankin, December 8, 2014 Column, Reprinted with Permission

The holiday shopping season starts earlier each year, and so does the release of major annual updates of security software. The 2015 edition of Avast Free Antivirus arrived before Thanksgiving, for instance. Avast 2015 contains some features never before seen in Avast. Read on for the full story, and learn how you can get the paid version for free...

First off, there's a home network scanner in Avast 2015 that I have not seen in any other security suite. When launched, the network scanner checks your router's administrator username and password, warning you to change them if they're still set at factory defaults.

It warns of unencrypted Wi-Fi connections, or those encrypted with the easily hacked WEP protocol. It checks to make sure your DNS has not been redirected and that your router is not accessible from the Internet. If there is a problem, Avast 2015 will display step-by-step instructions for solving it – if your router model is one that Avast supports. Otherwise, you'll have to consult the user manual or Google it.

These are “front door” security precautions that many users miss, so I applaud Avast for these additions to the already comprehensive protection that this free security suite provides.

Avast 2015 Review

With the 2015 edition, Avast seems to be morphing into an all-in-one system maintenance and security suite, much like Advanced System Care, PC Matic and other utility suites. Avast's emphasis is on maintenance issues that affect security, but they may also improve system performance.

Avast's “Browser Cleanup” feature is not what its name implies to most people. Instead of clearing the browser's file cache, browsing history, etc., Avast cleans up unwanted toolbars and plugins, eliminating points of vulnerability to hackers and places where malware likes to hide.

Keeping all of one's software up-to-date is another security issue. Avast 2015's "Software Updater" makes it a breeze. You can set it to notify you when updates are available or just install them automatically. This module checks for updates of operating system, browser, and popular applications, but if you don't see some of your apps in the tool's list you'll have to update them on your own.

Free or Paid Version?

"Avast Free Antivirus" is the name of the free version of the Avast suite. "Avast Internet Security" is a paid version that offers extra features such as Anti-Hijack Protection (to secure your online banking and other sensitive accounts), a Silent Firewall (to shield you from hackers) and an Anti-Spam module. The cost is \$39/year, but there's a way to earn a free copy.

Want to get a free copy of Avast 2015? You can, with Bob's Avast Friend Referral Link.

<http://www.avast.com/en-us/get/6Y7QxHvD> You can even get the PAID VERSION FOR FREE by earning Avast Karma Points with your own referral link. What's this all about? Full details are at the end of this article.

Avast Free 2015 also includes demo versions of premium security tools. The SecureLine VPN option is a free three-day trial of a fully encrypted proxy service; using it hides your IP address and Web surfing activity even from your own ISP. A one-year subscription costs \$60. "GrimeFighter" analyzes your system for junk files, bad registry entries, and other junk that can slow your system; but to fix the problems you'll need to pay \$20. (Or you can use Privazer, the free cleaner-upper I recommend.)

The free Mobile Backup trialware comes with a 2 GB Dropbox account and stores your mobile device's data in the cloud; the premium version costs \$15.

The main Avast interface screen includes a "Store" button that reveals a host of premium and freemium products, an indication that competition in the Internet Security marketplace is heating up, or that profit margins which rely on converting free users to paid customers are getting tighter.

I've been using Avast for over a year since switching from AVG, and I'm giving the new Avast 2015 version a big thumbs up for some innovative new features and continued comprehensive protection from malware threats.

Karma Points and Free Avast Software

If you have registered as a member of the Avast online community you will see in the upper-right corner of Avast Free's main screen your registered email address and a notation such as, "540 karma." So-called "karma points" are awarded for various acts of participation in the community, and even for being a user of Avast Free for a long time. Referring friends, posting to forums, trying a demo feature, buying a premium feature, etc., all earn you more karma points and "status" in the community.

With enough Karma points, you can earn a free copy of Avast Internet Security. Here's the fastest way to do that. On the Avast main screen, click the ACCOUNT tab. Login to your Avast account (or create one if needed). Next, click on the colored circle under the Logout link at the top right. On the next screen, you'll see a gray box that says "Recommend Avast and earn Karma". Click that link, and you'll be given your own referral link, which you can use to invite friends via Email, Facebook, Twitter or Google+. Recommending Avast to 7 friends can earn you a free year of Avast Internet Security (14 friends, two years; 21 friends, three years). Your friends must download and install Avast via your referral link. 

[Go to Page 1](#)

edX Linux Course

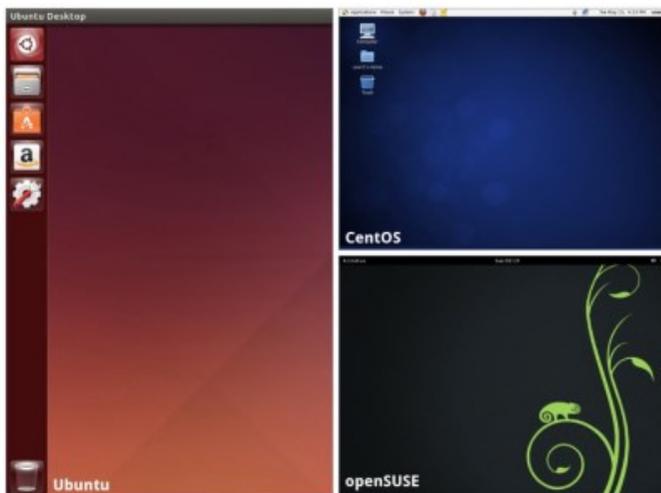
by Cal Esneault, Former President of CCCC; leader of many Open Source Workshops & SIGs, September 2014 issue, CCCC Computer News, Newsletter (at) clickers.org, www.clickers.org

edX hosts online university-level courses in a wide range of disciplines to a worldwide audience at no charge. It was founded in 2012 by Harvard and MIT and uses open-source software that it makes available to other schools to develop similar courses. The Linux Foundation is a nonprofit organization that promotes and protects Linux and seeks to advance its use. It also sponsors Linus Torvalds.

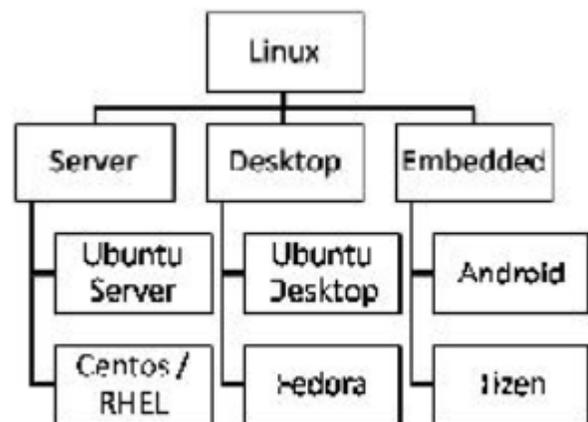
I signed up for "LFS101x: Introduction to Linux", an edX course co-sponsored by the Linux Foundation. The course was divided into many small modules. Included were text explanations, videos, "lab" work using browser sessions, and short quizzes at the end of each topic. It was essential to have a working Linux system available to test the concepts. The course gave specific instructions assuming you used one of the following systems in a GNOME environment:

Debian Family Systems (such as Ubuntu) SUSE Family Systems (such as openSUSE) Fedora Family Systems (such as CentOS)

Examples of screenshots from each of these types are shown below. I followed along with a separate computer running Ubuntu 14.04 LTS.



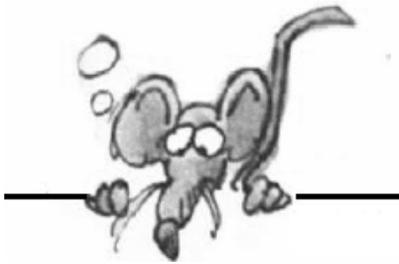
Frequently within the text portion, there were - schematic diagrams to show relationships between Linux components. For example, see below the explanation for the different types of Linux systems: server, desktop, and embedded.



While I have used Linux systems for ten years, I have never had any formal training. This was an opportunity to get a more detailed understanding in a coordinated manner. While the approach and pace were excellent, the amount of information covered was extensive. This course is not recommended for the casual Linux user as it requires about 60 hours to complete. Every time you log-in, the software takes you back to the point in the course where you were when you last logged-out. You can also go to any previous point in the course to refresh your learning.

You can take the course at no cost if you register under the "audit" category. If you need to document that you successfully completed the final test, you can apply for a "Verified Certificate of Achievement" for a fee. edX offers many other courses on a wide variety of subjects. Examples include: Introduction to Game Design, Solar Energy, Circuits and Electronics, and Mechanical Behavior of Materials.

This Linux course is an example of the modern trend using on-line learning. Public library systems also have many similar programs for their patrons. The key advantage of a "course" is organization of information in logical order (versus the fragmented approach using search engines). Do a little exploration to see if you can find a course of interest.  [Go to Page 1](#)



NIBBLERS

By Jeannine Sloan

TFC

TFC, or Temp File Cleaner, is a small utility that will clean out all the folders on your computer that house temporary files. The temp folders that TFC will clean are the Java, Windows Temp Folder, and the Internet Explorer, Opera, Chrome, and Safari caches. This tool will clean the folders for all accounts on the computer including the Administrator, NetworkService, and LocalService accounts.

<http://www.bleepingcomputer.com/download/tfc/>

You Can Control Windows 8 with Your Voice

The easiest way to fire up Speech Recognition for the first time is to open the Start screen. Type speech. In the search results, click Windows Speech Recognition. The first time you open the program, you arrive at a tutorial/introduction. Just follow the on-screen instructions to get up and running, and then work your way through the tutorials and practice screens if you wish. <http://tinyurl.com/noywurt>

Recycle Bin

The Recycle Bin is just that! It lets you recycle deleted items. Once you delete any file or folder from the Windows File Explorer, it is moved and placed into this bin. It is not deleted as such. To delete an item you right-click on it and select **Delete**. This will move the file or folder to the Recycle Bin. If you press **Shift key and Delete**, then the item will not be moved into the Recycle Bin. It will be directly **deleted permanently**. More tips here: <http://tinyurl.com/qzwqyzd>

Blackphone

A Phone That's More Than Just Smart, it is Secure

With the seemingly endless headlines about data loss and thefts, maintaining your privacy can feel overwhelming. That's why we created Blackphone to be a secure starting point for your personal and proprietary communications. <https://www.blackphone.ch/phone/>

Photoshop Tip

If you want to take a picture of a landmark and people are in your shot, you will likely spend the rest of your adult life cloning people out of the shot unless you try this technique.

Step 1: Set your camera on a tripod.

Step 2: Take a picture about every 10 seconds until you have about 15 shots, depending on how fast people are walking around.

Step 3: Open all the images in Photoshop by going to File > Scripts > Statistics. Choose "median" and select the files you took.

Step 4: Bam! Photoshop finds what is different in the photos and simply removes it! Since the people moved around, it fills the area where someone was standing with part of another photo where no one was there. If that setting is not in your version of Photoshop try you can get a somewhat similar effect in recent versions of Photoshop Elements by going to Enhance > Photomerge > Scene Cleaner.

Desalination out of Desperation

Severe droughts are forcing researchers to rethink how technology can increase the supply of fresh water.

<http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/533446/>

Passwords Again

Great video to help create a good password.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMPhBEoVuIQ>

Safe Downloading

Use this link to be sure you are getting safe Windows downloads:

<http://www.thewindowsclub.com/list-freeware-releasesfrom-the-windows-club>

Pictures Not Showing In Email

There are three common reasons why pictures may not show in an email.

- 1) Issues relating to how, and whether, images accompany an email message
- 2) Problems converting between email formats
- 3) Settings in your email program

Find out more about each and some possible solutions here:

<http://tinyurl.com/lD2us9v>

3M Cloud Library Reading App

Incorporating this app into your reading software will increase the number of eBooks and audio books available to you. Download the 3M Cloud Library App from the Apple App Store, Google Play, NOOK Storefront or install the PC or Mac 3M Cloud Library Apps. Step 2 Log into your library. Using the drop down menu, select your state, library, and enter your library ID and PIN (if required). Click agree to terms and log in.

When I Retired

I thought when I retired,
There'd be nothing left to do.
But I've a little story,
That I'll pass on to you.

The 'Golden Years' have come to pass,
They'll come to one and all.
You can sit and waste away,
Or have yourself a ball.

I found this new, 'Lectronic Toy'
It's become a part of life.
And now I travel everywhere,
Without the fear and strife.

The computer opens up a whole New World,
No boundaries hold me in.
Now I can fly around the world,
And visit all my kin.

I've been to art museums,
I've soared beyond the moon.
There are new things to learn each day,
A fact, a myth, a tune.

Every thing you want to know,
Is at your finger tips.
You type and search and look around,
And go on cyber trips.

You ride this magic carpet,
To places near and far.
You can tour your neighborhood,
Or ride a shooting star.

So let me tell you OLD folks,
There's a whole New World out there.
You can enjoy these wondrous things,
If you get off your rocking chair!

Author Unknown

Step 3 Now you are ready to browse, check out and read e-books from your local library. Its necessary to use this app with any book that has the “Go to 3M Cloud Library” button associated with it. http://harringtonlc.org/3/Training/Patron_App_User_Guide.pdf

3D Printed Plastic Dress Flows Like Fabric

The design studio Nervous System has created a novel process that allows a 3-D printed dress to move and sway like real fabric. The bespoke software behind it, called Kinematics, combines origami techniques with novel approaches to 3-D printing, pushing the technology's limits. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/17/tech/innovation/3d-printed-plastic-dress/index.html?c=tech>

Dog Runs For First Time In His Life, Thanks To 3D-Printed Legs

Derby was born with underdeveloped front limbs, and although he was otherwise a healthy dog, that one difference nearly caused him to be put down. ... Fortunately, Derby soon met someone who was not only compassionate enough to save his life, but also equipped with the know-how to improve it too.

<https://www.thedodo.com/dog-runs-first-time-3d-print-881600572.html>

Defying Feds, MS Tries To Keep User Data Private

Microsoft is currently fighting a federal search warrant demanding that the company release emails stored in Ireland. Here's why you should be extremely concerned by a U.S. court's actions — and what you can do about it.

<http://windowssecrets.com/top-story/defying-feds-ms-tries-to-keep-user-data-private/>

Erasable Internet

This article gave me food for thought. Snapchat is an app that sends pictures and messages **that disappear after the recipient receives them**, One commentator believes that: “Erasing all the digital effluvia generated by our phones and computers can be just as popular a concept as saving it,” Another comment: “Everyone is so excited about the cloud, but the cloud is really a drunken Xerox machine making copies of pretty much everything that everyone has said anywhere and spewing it all over the place,” Read here:

<http://tinyurl.com/mz4afyw>

A Quote From Google's “Security Princess”. That Is Her Actual Title

“Some people in other parts of the industry, they introduce themselves as, like, ‘vice president,’ with all of these certifications,” she says, amused. “I couldn't give a shit. You could be Code Monkey Number 507, but if you're doing cool stuff, I'm much more interested in talking to you than to whoever's senior vice president.” <http://www.elle.com/life-love/society-career/google-parisa-tabriz-profile>

5 Tips To Make Your Facebook Account Safer

Facebook likes to change things, and some of the old security tips are a bit outdated. Naked Security has printed an article with detailed and illustrated instructions on how to set you Facebook security settings. Make sure only your friends can see your timeline posts Control who can contact you on Facebook Set up login notifications Turn on login approvals

<https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2014/05/27/5-tips-to-make-your-facebook-account-safer-updated/>

A Nice Little Image Viewer

nomacs Image Lounge is a free image viewer for windows, linux and mac, which is licensed under the GNU General Public License v3. nomacs is small, fast and able to handle the most common image formats including RAW images. <http://www.nomacs.org/>

Bundleware: Definition, Prevention, Removal Guide

Bundleware got its name from people ‘bundling’ different programs into one single installation program. The one installation for bundleware installs the main program that you want along with some other programs that you do not want. To prevent installing programs that you don’t want, go through each screen of installation carefully. Select custom install against “express” or “recommended” install as you will be in a better position to identify and DECLINE or DESELECT unwanted programs to install only what you want.

<http://tinyurl.com/kojmn9h>

Responsible Electronics Recycling

The two independent standards bodies that monitor recyclers for responsible practices: eStewards and Sustainable Electronics Recycling International, whose certification program is called the R2 standard. Both groups let you search their websites for local options. <http://tinyurl.com/o46aq8o>

The words written on Twitter every day would fill a 10-million-page book.

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Visit www.tcpc.com for more articles....

Each quarter I receive some very good articles from other user groups but the articles are simply too long for the TC/PC Viking. We are going to put the articles on the TC/PC website instead.

Here is the first one:

Asymmetric Encryption by Dick Maybach

Asymmetric or public-key encryption uses a pair of keys, a private one that you keep secure and a public one that you publish. A file encrypted with one of the key pair can be decrypted only by using the other one. It is difficult (that is, it would require many years of computer time) to find the private key even if you know the public one. Dick’s article includes information about a standard open-source asymmetric encryption program – GNU Privacy Guard. Click here to read the article: <http://tcpc.com/asymmetric-encryption> 

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

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

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

Confirm with a SIG group if they meet elsewhere.

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

Get SIG announcements!

Link from www.tpc.com

Board of Directors*

All members are welcome! Check www.tpc.com for location.

Selected Saturday mornings

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

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

January

February

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3 Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 Gen Mtg 7:00 PM 3D Printing Adventures-Bill & Jack 6PM Web SIG	14	15	16	17 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7Linux and Open Source on Saturdays 9:00—Noon
8	9	10 Gen Mtg 7:00 PM Computers I Have Known Jack Ungerleider 6PM Pic Perf SIG	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Windows & MS Office (including Access) 9:00-Noon
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

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How to Recover a "Crashed" System, Windows 7 and 8

by Ira Wilsker, iwilsker(at)sbcglobal.net

WEBSITES:

<https://support.microsoft.com/kb/929833>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-security-list-part4.htm?page=0,2>

<http://www.ultimatebootcd.com>

<http://www.technibble.com/large-list-of-useful-computer-repair-cds/>

<http://www.sevenforums.com/tutorials/1538-sfc-scannow-command-system-file-checker.html>

<http://www.sevenforums.com/tutorials/139810-sfc-scannow-run-command-prompt-boot.html>

<http://www.eightforums.com/tutorials/3047-sfc-scannow-command-run-windows-8-a.html>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/create-bootable-rescue-cd.htm>

<http://falconfour.wordpress.com/tag/f4ubcd/>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/how-create-recovery-discs-or-usb-keys-windows-8.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/keep-bootable-cd-handly-troubleshooting.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/two-new-ways-boot-safe-mode-windows-8.htm>

Yesterday I received a frantic phone call from a distraught individual. He had a fairly new Windows 7-64 desktop PC not covered by warranty, and it would not properly boot up. It would briefly show that manufacturer's splash screen, and then nothing else; the screen was black. After a period of time, the power saving feature appeared on the otherwise black screen and stated that the computer was going into hibernate mode. Nothing typical could bring the computer back to life; a full repeat of the "power on" cycle only produced a repetitive black screen and shutdown. The computer would not even boot into safe mode using the F8 key, and it took several boot attempts to get to the BIOS setup using the F10 key (this varies by computer model); the BIOS appeared to be properly configured. There was no practical way to get to the "System Restore" function, and rollback the PC to an earlier date and time.

Immediately prior to this boot failure, the individual had installed a new paid (renewal) version of a popular system maintenance utility which he allowed to perform a full diagnostic. Intentionally selecting the "Power down if no problems are found" function, the diagnostic utility went through a lengthy series of tests, found no errors, and dutifully shut down his computer. That was the last time it ran satisfactorily.

Fortunately, he had another Windows 7-64 desktop in his home, so he had the ability to research his predicament, and create some bootable rescue CD discs. If we can remember the joy and excitement of setting up a new PC, one of the procedures presented during the setup, but still available later, is the creation of a set of bootable recovery discs or with newer computers, a recovery bootable USB flash drive. While this bootable rescue disc set is often vital in recovering and restoring what many call a "crashed" computer, very few PC users ever create the set, even when prompted during setup, and at other times by the integral "PC Action Center".

If you are one of the majority who has never created a Windows bootable recovery disc utilizing the function built into Windows 7 and 8, the process is relatively fast and easy. In Windows 7, the bootable recovery disc can be created by going to Control Panel - System and Security - Backup and Restore - Create a System Repair Disc. A window will open instructing the user to insert a blank

CD, which the system will use to create a bootable recovery CD. In some cases it may take several CD discs to create a complete recovery set, so be sure to have several blank CDs available. Windows will proceed to create the bootable set. When completed, label the discs with a permanent marker (I use a "Sharpie"), put them in a case, and store them somewhere safe where you can quickly find them if needed. Most modern factory built Windows computers do not come from the factory with recovery or system CDs (or DVDs), but instead have a second partition on the hard drive with all of the critical operating system files; it is many of these files that will be used to create the recovery set. In some cases, where this second partition was never created, or it was deleted (some users do this to get more space on the hard drive), it may be necessary to insert an original Windows 7 installation disc. To use the system repair or recovery disc, insert the bootable CD in the drive, and then reboot the computer, following the on screen prompts to run the restore and recovery.

The process of creating a set of restore bootable discs in Windows 8 is similar to that of Windows 7, except some of the instructions are worded differently. Using the keyboard shortcut "Winkey+W" to open the Start screen Settings search, and type "recovery". One of the choices will be "Create a recovery drive". Windows 8 supports creating recovery media on a USB flash drive (minimum of 256MB free space required, much more if a backup partition is created), or blank CD or DVD discs can be used. Follow the onscreen prompts, and the rescue media will be created. Label the media, and store it in a safe place where it can be readily found when needed. If needed, simply insert the USB or DISC, and reboot the computer, then follow the on screen prompts.

While the "official" system recovery discs may be very useful in recovering and restoring a system that will not boot, or boots with significant errors, there are also several third party bootable discs (mostly free) that can be created to detect and repair most common errors, or to scan and delete most malware that may have taken over the computer. Detailed instructions and recommendations on resolving most of these crashes are available from Gizmo's TechSupportAlert.com at techsupportalert.com/best-free-security-list-part4.htm?page=0,2. Another very large list of recovery and repair utilities that can create bootable CDs or USB flash drives is at technibble.com/large-list-of-useful-computer-repair-cds. One of my personal favorites is the "Ultimate Boot CD" available for free download from ultimatebootcd.com. This "Ultimate Boot CD" when burned to a bootable CD using an ISO burner (another readily available free utility) or to a USB flash drive (instructions are included in the download), contains dozens of utilities to diagnose and repair hard drives, memory tests, BIOS diagnosis and repair, CPU diagnosis, hardware diagnosis, video and keyboard diagnostics, malware scan and removal, and many diagnostic and repair utilities. For those who like a variety of competitive utilities, another free comprehensive bootable CD or USB flash drive containing several dozen diagnostic and repair utilities is the Falcon Four Ultimate Boot CD, available for direct download at falconfour.wordpress.com/tag/f4ubcd. It should be noted that the latest build of Falcon Four Ultimate Boot CD works fine on Windows 7 and Vista, but does not currently work on Windows 8 systems.

Gizmo's TechSupportAlert.com recently had an updated feature containing detailed but easy to follow instructions for creating a bootable recovery CD or USB flash drive. These instructions can be viewed at techsupportalert.com/create-bootable-rescue-cd.htm. Included with these directions are links to six of the most popular (free) bootable recovery discs.

While apparent "crashes" do occasionally happen, it is more common that an error may appear on the Windows screen while running indicating that one or more critical system files may have been corrupted or cannot be found. To remedy this situation, all recent versions of Windows have a built in "System File Checker" that can check for missing or corrupted system files, and quickly and easily replace most of them.

Probably the most efficient way to detect and repair almost any necessary system files is to do it from a command prompt in safe mode. Getting to safe mode in Windows is simple; starting with the

computer off (turned off, not hibernating or sleeping), turn on the computer with its power button then immediately start tapping the F8 key in the top row of the keyboard. Keep tapping the F8 key every second or two until the computer opens a black screen with white fonts; one of the choices will be to boot into "command prompt" which can be reached with the up and down keys on the keyboard. The computer will rapidly complete its very limited boot process, and when done, will only show a single command prompt on the screen, such as "C:\". At this prompt type, "SFC / SCANNOW" (no quotes). It can be in upper case or lower case, and will check the system files. While the SFC /SCANNOW function can normally detect and repair most missing or corrupted system files with the first pass, there are cases where the command must be run several times in order to repair or replace a badly damaged system. Alternatively, the SFC /SCANNOW command can be run from within Windows, while Windows is running. Click in the menu on "RUN" and then enter SFC /SCANNOW in the box; be sure that it is being run with "administrative privileges". The process of running SFC /SCANNOW in Windows 8 is very similar to that of Windows 7, with both Windows 7 & 8 specific instructions available from Microsoft at support.microsoft.com/kb/929833.

For most of us, it is not the proverbial question of if we will suffer a computer "crash", but more likely "when" we will have that problem. Computer crashes are often different, and mostly unrelated to hard drive crashes, as computer crashes are mostly software based, but can also include the failure of hardware components. At a minimum, we should all have a set of bootable recovery discs (or USB drives) created by our operating systems. It would also be a wise idea to periodically create one or more (I have several) of the free third party repair and recovery discs. By personal choice, being cognizant that utilities are often frequently updated, I periodically download newer, updated versions of the third party products, and burn them to CD, discarding the older versions. Blank CDs (and new USB flash drives) have become very inexpensive, so cost is not an issue. While it may take several minutes to download or create a set of bootable recovery media, the investment in time and money is but a shadow of the fiscal and emotional cost we pay if our computer crashes, and we do not have appropriate recovery media. Along with good contemporary backups, both of our data and "shadow" or "image" (complete) backups of our hard drives, it is better to have them than not. 

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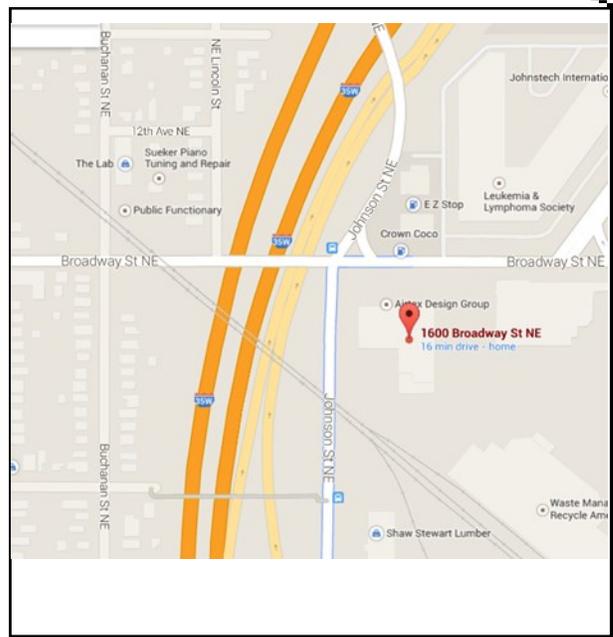
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