The Space Coast PC Journal

Those Nasty Pop-Up Ads

By Jim Cerny, Help Desk Host, The Saratoga Users Group
August 2020 STUG Monitor

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You're going along just fine, enjoying a fun game on your device, you don't know how it happened or maybe you touched the screen just a teeny bit out of place, and BAM, there is a pop-up add or window! It overlays part of your screen and now you are playing a new game you didn't download called "try to get rid of this ad!"

I guess it is pretty standard now that all "free" games on your device come with ads, so here are some tips on how to get rid of them and get back to your game or app.

Naturally, no one way will always work, they are always trying to fool you!

Simple notice box – a short message in a small box that, thank-fully, has a small "X" you can touch to get rid of it. It may be an important notice, however, so read it in case you have a problem. Usually, these notices appear in the middle of your screen or the lower right corner "notification area" on your Windows computer.

Larger ad – behold a company catalog page offering clothes or shoes or whatever. Look carefully – where is that "X"? Is it missing? Well, it could be hidden out of sight. Try touching the upper right corner (and if that doesn't work, try EVERY corner) to see if an "X" appears. If so, you "win", now you can touch the "X" and get rid of the ad.

Touch screen ads to swipe away – Ok, some ads do NOT have an "X", these people are getting more clever every year! Try putting your finger on the ad and "swiping" the ad (up, down, left,

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All work on the Journal is performed by unpaid volunteers.

Submitting Articles to the Journal

We encourage all of our members to submit original computer-related articles for publication in
The Space Coast PC Journal.

Writing a Product Review

It is really not that difficult to write a good review for *The Space Coast PC Journal*. These guidelines will help you get started:

Product information
- List the product name, release level, and manufacturer.

Use
- What does this product do?
- How easy is it to learn and use? Is it for beginners or does it have advanced features?
- List and describe some of the features. If this is an upgrade, what is new to this version?
- What did you like or dislike about it?
- Did you have to call Customer Support? What for? Were they helpful?

Installation
- How much disk space did the product take?
- How long did it take to install?
- Was it difficult to install?
- Specify requirements such as: DOS level, Windows level, Windows type, etc.

Recommendations
- Would you recommend this product?

Remember these are guidelines. They are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor should they limit your creativity. But all of them should be included as part of your article. Then the review will practically write itself!

Preparing Your Articles

To assist us in incorporating articles into the *Journal*, it would be helpful if certain minimum standards were followed. Use this quick-step guide:

Format: The preferred format is ASCII text files.We can also work with other formats, but check with the editor before using them.

Text: Single-space the text—even between paragraphs. Don't indent paragraphs. Use hard returns only at the ends of paragraphs.
Use only one space after periods, colons, and question marks. Follow standard capitalization rules.
Use left justification only. Do not right justify or block your text. (Word processors add extra spaces between words to justify the text and each of those extra spaces must then be removed.)

Graphics: The preferred format for graphics accompanying your text is TIFF—in separate files from the text. Embedded graphics are not useable. Most image editing programs have a "resize" option to alter the size of graphics. Please try to keep your graphic file sizes to around 1 meg in size. Call the editor if you have questions.

Be sure to include your name and phone number so we may contact you if we have any questions. Anonymous articles will not be published.

Submit your article by uploading the file to ringram728@earthlink.net or bring your disk and hardcopy to the Monday meeting or mail to:
Editor, SCPCUG Journal
Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.

1360 Mayflower Avenue

Melbourne, Fl 32940-672

3Articles must be received by the 28th of the month to appear in the next issue, and all are, of course, subject to editing.   □

From The Editor

Attendance at the last Learning Center Meeting was a disappointing 10, 5 of them club officers. These numbers have been declining for some for some time now. If they don't pick up soon, perhaps we should just discontinue them altogether.

I suppose that this may be a reflection of the increased skill level of the members, which I believe has been responsible for the drop in general club membership. We simply do not offer them enough new subject matter to make attendance worth their while.

I've mentioned in the past that a large number of groups around the country are shuttung down - assumedly for the reaons cited above.

The one thing that I observe at the Learning Center is that most of those present are seeking assistance with various devices, laptops, occasional desktops, phones and printers. Obviuosly, once their problem is solved we won't see them again.

It was discussed and pretty much agreed upon that we should cancel a Christmas party this year. It wouldn't be much of a party without the delicious potluck meals we have been accustomed to. The 25 members who responded to Linda's survey were 13 for,12 against cancellation - 15 would attend, 10 would not. Maybe next year. Any other opinions?'"

Ron Ingraham, Editor

Those who have listed an e-mail address would prefer to be contacted by e-mail rather than by phone whenever possible.

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yjm1938@yahoo.com.

If there is a progam not listed that you feel comfortable with, let us list you as one of our helplines contact ringram28@cfl.rr.com

The SCPCUG Home Page is at:
http://www.scpcug.com
Check it out!!!!!

IN THIS ISSUE

Feature Articles

Regular Articles

Notices

Presentation
November19, 2020

Meet in the Auditorium
2 PM
Get together welcome
meeting
Discussion, Q&A

Bring Some Friends

Those Nsaty Pop-Up Ads................from page 1

or right) to get it off your screen. I had a nasty one the other day which appeared on the far left on my iPad and the only way I could get rid of it was to swipe it all the way to the RIGHT to get it off.

An unwelcome web page – Somehow you must have touched on something to open up (or "go to") a web page. Yes, they can do this to you without you opening up your web browser. Good luck finding an "X" on this one. On a touch screen, try swiping up and hope the window goes up and off your screen. Otherwise, hit your "home" button twice (on your device) or swipe HALFway up on your iPhone from the bottom to get all your open apps. Find the one you want to delete and swipe it up to get rid of it. It is a very good idea to do this often on your device to delete all your apps that are remaining open and perhaps slowing up your response on your device.

Timed ads – These, at least, are almost expected. An ad appears (if they are nice they will warn you first) and these ads are "timed" to run for several seconds or a minute. Look for a moving blue bar at the bottom of the ad to see it countdown the clock. Sometimes no bar or timer appears. Sometimes it is hidden in the corner and when you touch on it only then will it show you the time remaining. As far as I know, there is nothing you can do with a timed ad other than wait until the time runs out – even then you will still have to look for an "X" or something to touch to get rid of it.

Your anti-virus software app on your Windows computer may already have an ad blocker as part of it, so look and see what options are already available for you. Apple products do not have anti-virus apps as they are already part of the iOS (operating system).

Ad blockers. Now having said all that, there are many ad "blockers" and "removers" that are available on the internet. Some are "free" (with pop-up ads of their own!). I would be a little careful here – it would be best to ask someone who is already

using the blocker tool before you download it and start using it. Will it work on your device? Will it work on multiple devices? Will it block all ads? Will it work only with your browser (i.e. Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Safari, Firefox, etc.)? Nothing is perfect and those company marketing people are working hard to get you to see their ads. Always look up any ad blocker, or any app for that matter, on Google and read what others have experienced. Pretty soon ads will be popping up on our car screens. Imagine driving along and having an auto insurance ad popping up over your speedometer! Well, I suppose that is a bit better than driving through a billboard! ❑

From the Cashier's Cage

+

Financial Report for Month
Ending October31, 2020

CHECKING

Beginning Balance	419.87

Ending balancee - includes $8.41 snack fund

419.87

SAVINGS

Beginning Balance	305.21
Transfer to Checking (100.00)	
Interest	.01
Ending Balance	305.22

TOTAL ACCOUNTS BALANCE

725.09

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Club Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2020

The meeting was opened at 2:09 p.m. by President Dan Douglas. Present were 3 board members, 7 members. Board members present were President Dan Douglas, Journal Editor/Library & Learning Center Manager Ron Ingraham, and Secretary Barbara Mead. Absent were Vice President Larry Bennett , Treasurer Irene Nelson, Webmaster Curt Potsic and Membership Chairperson Linda Glassburn.

Dan welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Barb read Irene's updated Treasurer's report. The financial report for August 2020 has a beginning balance in checking of 329.87, a deposit for USB sticks of 40.00, a deposit for new member Mamie Kington of 25.00, gives us an ending balance (including 8.41 snack fund) of 394.87. Our savings account had a beginning balance of 305.17 and added interest of .03 for and ending

balance of 305.20. The total accounts balance is 700.07.

Dan read highlights from Curt's Webmaster report. Curt's report included the APCUG Fall Online Workshops about home automation for seniors and Curt's update of the website to include the last 12 issues of the newsletter available on demand as was voted in during the August meeting.

Ron noted that the newsletter would go out as soon as he and Dan finished the items they were working on for the newsletter.

Tom Marr asked about the pros and cons of Malware Bytes and Spybot and the changes in Facebook apps and the Facebook website. He also asked about the Dashline Password manager and other password managers. Dan elaborated on the advantages of each.

Rick Stasik asked about how to find which browser extensions are installed and how they work together.

Marilyn asked the best way to copy something from an article on her laptop and Dan suggested the app Snip & Sketch; also the use of the print screen key to copy items.

Ron spoke up about the benefits to the members of APCUG that are available to us on the APCUG2.org website including YouTube videos and lots of tips and tricks that we could find useful.

Pete Vander Houghton talked about video editing apps and his positive experience using the free download Shotcut. Pete also asked about backup techniques not using the cloud. Dan discussed various systems going back to the RAID systems used on mainframes.

Members were encouraged to attend the Saturday meetings, particularly the one this coming Saturday, September 19 from noon to 3:30 as usual.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. ❑

Dan's Desk

A month or so ago, I promised a discussion on Network Attached Storage (NAS) and how that is related to RAID, so here goes.

Everyone is familiar with the concept of having data sources physically attached to your device, let's call them LOCAL drives, such as hard drives / solid state drives, USB memory sticks, external USB drives or SD / SD Micro memory cards. What happens though when local drives are not suitable for the task at hand. For example, a locally attached backup drive on one PC, is not really adequate if it can't store all of the image backups and file histories of all of your devices. To solve this issue in a business environment, vendors developed the idea of a common device that could be shared across multiple users' PCs and address all of their backup requirements. Since everyone, and all of the PCs were on the same network, it was as easy to access this common device as any other network device, say a work group printer. This became known as Network Attached (or Accessible) Storage or NAS.

It is very common today for home routers from companies like Netgear, D-Link and most others to provide a USB port for attachment of an external USB drive. This can function as the simplest form of a NAS, although without many of the characteristics of a true NAS device. To really meets the needs of a NAS box, it must incorporate hardware functions that provide for the best data protection and availability possible. This means that the device should support a RAID level appropriate to the risk and value of the data being stored on it. It should also contain multiple network connections so that if one pathway to the network failed, a second connection would automatically occur.

The most common brands of consumer NAS devices are Netgear, D-Link, QNAP and Syslogic. An NAS device may vary in the number of drives it can hold. Most home users can choose from models that range from a single drive to more than 3 drives. The single drive model does not support RAID and is simply a network version of the typical USB backup drive.The devices that support 2 or more drives, offer true RAID capabilities. Please take a look at my journal article two months ago for a discussion and explanation of RAID.

At my house, I have a 4 drive model using RAID 3 for full data protection. I have an extensive collection of photos, music and movies that would be impossible to recreate, so the expense of storing that data in a secure manner is worth the cost to me. I have 4 x 3TB NAS drives so the total of 12 TB, in a RAID 3 configuration, provides about 8.5 TB useable data storage. This setup allows all devices on my network to easily access any of the files stored on the NAS (even from my smart TVs), and any PC can be backed up to the NAS. With RAID 3, if a drive fails, I can replace it with a drive of the same capacity, without turning the NAS off, and the drive contents will be automatically rebuilt.Hard disc drive (HDD) manufacturers, such as Western Digital (WD), market and design a line of drives specifically for NAS devices where they are powered on 24x7x365. Solid State Drives (SSDs) which are designed, I believe, for this kind of environment from the start. I have used both and found that both types hold up well. My advice would be to invest in a proper NAS HDD or a large capacity set of SSDs for best results.

If you have suggestions for topics that you would like to see explained, please let me know! ❑

Webmaster Wanderings

Face Masks Are Now A Mandatory Requirement to attend our meetings.

Jere's Tech Tips

Windows, Android, Linux tips from Jere Minich, APCUG Advisor, Region 5 (AL, FL, GA, SC).

New items include:

Android vs. IOS: Which Mobile OS is Best?
The Best Android Antivirus Apps For 2020
How to Make Your Screen Stay On in Windows 10
How to Adjust Video Quality on Netflix
 9 Amazon Fire Tablet Tips You Must Try
How to See What Packages and Mail You Have
 Coming Before It Arrives
 15 Best Free Android Games Available Right Now! /
How to Block Robocalls and Spam Calls (Apple & Android Phones).
https://apcug2.org/jerestips

APCUG 2020 Contests

APCUG 2020 Contest categories were eBulletin, Digital Photography, Newsletter, and Website. All contests began Sep 7 and ended Sep 30. Winners will be announced at the Annual Meeting following the Nov 7 Virtual Technology Conference.

APCUG 2020 Fall Online Workshops

These four workshops are on "Home Automation for Seniors" and take place the second Wednesday of the month starting in September. The Workshops explain why home automation is important to Seniors.
Sep 9 Completed – Why do I need it? Products on the market, costs, security, & some real-world testimonials.
Home Automation Workshop #1 Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPLaU509HI
Oct 14 Completed – Where do I start? Planning your home automation project & best practices.

Nov 11 – Lights, doorbells, locks, and cameras. Applications using lights, doorbells, locks, and cameras.
Dec 9 – Doing it myself vs. Having it done. The benefits of a DIY project or having a professional install.

APCUG 2020 Password Manager Workshop

This workshop was completed on Oct 1. You should have learned how to solve password management problems using an open-source solution called Bitwarden. Password Manager Workshop, Part 1 Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE5V_DZHneM

APCUG 2020 Linux Wednesday Workshop

12 PM ET Oct 28 This Workshop will introduce you to many Linux distros (short for distribution), a term used to describe a specific distribution of Linux that is built from the common Linux operating system and includes additional applications. Unlike Windows or Mac, you can choose a distro that meets your needs.

Best Resources for Free Books, Movies, and Games

Lists a Variety of Sources for Free Books, Movies, and Video Games plus Under $10 Options from Review Geek which also has Buying Guides, Reviews, Explore, and a Daily Newsletter. https://www.reviewgeek.com/38021/the-best-resources-for-free-books-movies-and-games/

Review Geek

Review Geek is a technology and gadget website with a singular focus: saving you time and money. They spend hours researching, testing, breaking, fixing, and re-testing a mountain of products, so you don't have to. Whether you're standing in a store aisle debating between products on the shelf or shopping in bed with your phone, they are here with the best recommendations, tips, and guides. Review Geek is part of the How-To Geek family of websites. How-To Geek is an independently owned company founded by Lowell Heddings and Erik Wang, based out of Virginia. How-To Geek and Review Geek were built without outside funding and remain independent organizations to this day.

Google Can Now Control Some Apps

People on Android can now control many apps with their voice. An Assistant-enabled Android phone or tablet is needed and the relevant apps installed. Note this does not work with the normal Google Search. You

Webmaster Wanderings................from page 7

must have the Assistant App installed. This new Google feature works with over 30 apps. Google says more are coming. The present apps list includes Spotify, Twitter, Postmates, Walmart, Snapchat, MyFitnessPal, and more. As an example you can say, "Hey Google, play Roger Williams on Spotify." You can even create shortcuts to make a command even easier to use. Free Roku Shows and Movies on Fire TV

The Roku Channel offers free ad-supported Movies and TV shows on it's Roku devices. Now it's coming to Fire TV devices. That includes the Fire TV stick, Fire TV soundbars, Fire TVs, etc. Download the Roku Channel App and you're set. The easiest way to get the channel on your Fire enabled TV is to tell Alexa to do it for you. Just say "Alexa, find The Roku Channel app." You don't even have to create a login to start watching free shows and movies. The Roku Channel is also available as an app for iOS and Android if you want to watch the flicks on your mobile device. For Android, download the Roku Channel App from the Google Play Store.

PC Market Growth In the 3rd quarter of 2020 the global PC market grew 13% vrs. Q3 of 2019. That is the highest growth in the last 10 years. Shipments saw a weak Q1, followed by a stronger Q2 which continued into Q3. Laptop and mobile workstation shipments rose 28.3% year over year. Lenovo had the Q3 top spot of 11.4% growth with shipments reaching beyond 19 million. HP saw 11.9% growth with 18.7 million shipped units. Dell was in 3rd place with a 0.5% drop in shipments compared to last year. Apple & Acer were in 4th and 5th place, respectively, with 13.2% & 15% growth.

When Is A Smart Home Not So Smart - Part 2 As a follow-up to my July 16 Web Master Report Miscellaneous Item by the same name I hereby submit Part 2. We apparently had a temporary Internet outage the night of Oct 7, 2020 which caused the Google Assistant and Amazon's Alexa to not respond to commands when we woke up in the morning. In an effort to find out what was going on I tried asking the Insignia Google Assistant smart speaker, Amazon Echo, and Amazon Dot to turn on various lights. I always got the same response that the light was not available. Also none of the smart power strips were available for things like turning on the Fire TV 4K stick, the wife's recliner motor, etc. After some thought I rebooted the AT&T Router

and that fixed the problem. Everything worked again! But what if you were on vacation. I know of no way of remotely rebooting the Router. ❑

The STUG Monitor

MICROSOFT'S NEW EMOJI KEYBOARD
By Nancy DeMarte, Vice President
The Sarasota Technology User Group, FL
The STUG Monitor

www.thestug.org
vp1 (at) the stug.or

If you are an Apple user, you probably know about emojis. These little head icons express moods by the looks on their faces. They can be part of emails or text messages or any place where text can be typed. The emoji collection on my iPhone has over 100 faces, each with a recognizable facial expression, but the gallery goes way beyond faces. You can send emoji animals, objects, groups of people, plants and flowers, phases of the moon, food and drinks, sports, and many more.

The Japanese created the Emoji. The term was formed from combining the Japanese words for "picture" and "character." In Western countries, Emoji was originally called Pictograph. Emojis became so popular that a reference site, Emojipedia.org, was created in 2013. It is a search engine for emojis and is worth a visit.

Emojis can be used in all the big social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as email programs and other Internet places where you can type. Microsoft has included a traditional On-Screen Keyboard (OSK) without emojis since the debut of Windows 7. Perhaps noticing the popularity of emojis, Microsoft created its own gallery of emojis and put them in an emoji onscreen keyboard. This keyboard was one of the feature updates Microsoft included with the Windows 10's Fall 2017 Creator Update. It was improved in April 2018 and is now featured among the Ease of Access group of tools in Settings.

To use this keyboard, you are encouraged to enable it, but if you are current with Windo updates, you may be able to skip these steps.

The enabling steps begin by clicking the Start button> Settings> Ease of Access. Then scroll down to Keyboard and drag the Off dot to the right under the heading, "Use your device without a physical keyboard."

Today, most users can easily open the emoji keyboard on their screens by pressing the Windows key while clicking the period or semi-colon key. This works for touch screens, too.

The keyboard contains three major categories along the top. Emoji, Kaomoji, and Symbols. The Emoji category includes the smiley faces and other objects like those seen in Apple products. Kaomoji includes facial expressions made of punctuation marks and other odd lines, some of which are Japanese. The Symbols category includes Latin symbols, international currency, the copyright mark, and others. Each category can be scrolled down for more choices.

Four Kaomojis

Below are a few tips for using the Windows emoji keyboard:
1. To open the keyboard, click or touch the Windows key and the period or semicolon.
2. Drag the emoji keyboard anywhere within the window.

3. To close the keyboard, click the X or the ESC key.
4. The magnifying glass symbol is a search engine for emojis.
5. The clock with hands set at 3:00 shows the most recently used emojis.
6. Emoji categories are pictured across the bottom of the keyboard.
7. There is a scroll bar on the Emoji keyboard, but it isn't obvious. It is a short, thin vertical line on the right edge of the keyboard. See the red box around the scroll line in the illustration on page 5. Move your mouse over the line to enlarge the scroll bar and scroll for more emojis. You can pin the emoji keyboard to the taskbar to make it larger and easier to see.
First, right-click the taskbar and left click the "Show touch keyboard" button. That will add a small keyboard next to the time and date at the right end of the taskbar, as shown.

Click this keyboard to open the traditional onscreen keyboard, which now includes the emoji icon. (See the top of the next column) Click the face and scroll horizontally to see large versions of all the emojis for each
category. (It too is a fine horizontal line below the emojis.)
Then try out a few emojis on friends. They usually bring a smile.   ❑

Mailmask

By Larry Piper, Midland Computer Club, Midland MI

Have you ever seen an offer that looks too good to pass up? But you have reservations about giving out your email. Yes, you know you could create a second email address which is only for such times as these. But you would have to set up a separate account on your email client in order to read your junk email. Even worse you might have to go to a special website to read your junk email. You might even have to pay for this junk email service. I have a deal for you. Check out Mailmask (search with Google). It is free to use, but a bit tricky to use. Stick with me, and I will lead you through the steps.

First you have to select one of your existing email ac-

Mailmask.......................................from page 9

counts. It could be your only email account. I would suggest you use a secondary email account you already are checking, if only occasionally. This way you won't clutter your main email account with probably junk emails. As an example let's say your selected email is "batman123@gmail.com".

Secondly, you go to the Mailmask website. You will find you are at https://msk.sh. (I learned the sh domain is from Saint Helena island. which is a 45 sq. mile dot in mid-Atlantic with a population of 6,600.) Next you need to come up with a key word--nothing fancy because it will be used as part of your new email address. Let's choose "bruce" to stick with the batman theme.

Next you create an account at msk.sh with the above information. They send a code to batman123@gmail.com to verify it is really you. You confirm the code (a four digit number). Now you can send a test email from the msk.sh website. The site will suggest the word "funkymonkey" or it may also use the word "test". The email you send will say it is from "funkymonkey@bruce.msk.sh" or "test@bruce.msk.sh".

Finally, you go to your email client and check ba man123@gmail.com. Sure enough you have an email from funkymonkey@bruce.msk.sh or test@bruce.msk.sh. I use Thunderbird as my email client, but I see no reason why Windows 10 Mail or Outlook would not work. I also believe Mailmask would work at Google or Yahoo website; you would just have to sign in to the correct account.

There is one more surprise benefit. Mailmask allows the use of aliases. Instead of an email address that says text@... or funkymonkey@... ,you can selected any word you want. And you can change this word with every email. And you do not have to tell Mailmask ahead of time what these alias words are. Say one evening you write three emails you don't want traced to you. The emails are about possible donations. The first is to a Republican candidate, the second is to a Democratic candidate, and the third is to the Church of Scientology. So you use the keywords demo, repub and scientology in your three emails. Sure enough the next day when you check your batman123@gmail.com email account, you have three confirmation emails, one addressed to demo@bruce.msk.sh, one addressed to repub@bruce.msk.sh, and one addressed to scientology@bruce.msk.

sh. You continue to receive further emails, all unwanted, from these three addresses. So now you go back to your account on https://msk.sh. You sign-in with the email batman123@gmail.com. They send this email a code, and you confirm the code. Now you go to the dashboard which shows all these aliases in alphabetic order: demo, funkymonkey, repub, scientology, and test. All are enabled. You take your mouse and disable all but "test". From now on you will not have any emails forwarded to batman123@gmail.com from the other four aliases.

Pretty neat. There are no passwords to remember at Mailmask. You use your selected email address to sign in, and then respond with the code which they send to this address. I also discovered that my test messages forwarded through Mailmask actually reached my Thunderbird account faster than a duplicate message sent directly to batman123@gmail.com. Go figure. One final comment about Mailmask is that it is free. Yes, they have a paid version, $3/mo, if your email load gets too large.

I would concede that you could forward any or all of your email addresses to one main email address--if you take the time to figure out how to do this. But spam may ruin one or more of these addresses, and the only way to halt the spam is to delete this email address. With Mailmask, you just kill the alias, and no more spam is forwarded. ❑

Are You Asking Too Much of Your Computer?

by Leo A. Notenboom

It's very common for our usage and expectations of our computers to grow over time. Unfortunately, that means we'll eventually run into its limitations.

With each computer I buy, I end up doing more with it over time.

For example, I now regularly run virtual machines, record and edit video, and run applications such as Adobe Photoshop. Each of these things have two important characteristics:

☐ They're not things I did a few years ago.
☐ They place an additional load on the computer. I've been asking my computer to do more and more — and I suspect you have, too.

Is it any wonder it seems slower?

Upgrading a machine can only get you so much. Before replacing a machine with a newer, more powerful one, it's worth examining our usage, and seeing if our expectations have exceeded the machine's capabilities. Perhaps changing what we do or how we do it can lengthen its usable lifespan.

Upgrades only go so far

Most of my machines have been upgraded — repeatedly, and in various ways — and yet over time, they still slowed down. The slowdown wasn't due to anything inherently wrong with the machines or the software. I simply continued to push each to its limits by virtue of the things I asked it to do.

And there are limits. If I asked one to do too much, such as running too many virtual machines at a time, the machine bogged down. One of the most common symptoms is increased virtual memory use. Since disks are slower than RAM, my computer slowed down.

So I stopped doing that. Once a machine is maxed out in terms of hardware, I choose not to do some things I would otherwise.

Of course, if that goes on long enough, I replace the machine with something more powerful. That, too, is a choice.

It's easy to ask too much

When you've had a computer for a length of time, it's not uncommon to be in a similar situation, often without realizing it.

You don't really have to be running new applications to be "doing too much". It can be as simple as your own habits slowly changing over time. For example, how many tabs do you typically have open in your browser at the same time? I wager it's more than you usually had open five years ago.

One of the things that has changed dramatically over time is the amount of time we spend online and the number of different online services we use. As a result, we are multi-tasking more than ever, and we're doing it all within our browser. Each open tab takes more of your computer's resources.

Thus your own change in behavior — keeping more tabs open in your browser, in this example — has the side effect of demanding more from your computer than you may have in the past.

I use browser tabs simply as an example. It's very possible that, like me, you're now running more (and/or more powerful) applications, or using existing applications in ways that use more resources.

What to do

So, what do you do about it all?

☐ Review how you use your computer. Are you asking it to do too much? Are you trying to do too many things at once?
☐ Rather than leaving programs running or tabs open, consider closing them when you're done to free up resources for what you're actually doing.
☐ Consider doing things — and thus running the applicable programs — in sequence, rather than simultaneously.

Eventually, as I did, you'll probably end up getting a newer, faster, and more capable machine. But by being aware of and managing your own use of your system, you can delay that necessity as long as is pragmatically possible. ❑

Leo

Here's why unordered Chinese seeds may show up in your Mailbox:

by Scambuster Keith
Internet Scambusters #921

Everybody's talking about those mystery packages of Chinese seeds that many people have been receiving, unsolicited, in their mail deliveries.

Most security and consumer experts think they're probably part of a "brushing" scam. If so, we'll tell you how it works and why your online shopping accounts probably haven't been compromised.

We also have a timely warning about why you can't always trust ads and promotions that claim independent testing proves the effectiveness of a product.
Let's get started

Those Chinese seeds. You'd have to have totally ignored the news in recent weeks if you haven't seen reports about unordered mystery packages of seeds, mailed from China, that have turned up in hundreds of mailboxes.

Consumer experts suggest that the mailings are part of a "brushing" operation, although some believe they could also be a sinister attempt to cover the US with noxious weeds!
We've written about brushing in the past (see "Brushing" Scam Delivers Unwanted Products). It's a trick in which suppliers send unsolicited products to people and then pose as the sender or recipient to write a "verified purchase" review on retail websites like Amazon.

But, seeds? If brushing is behind them, here's how the trick likely works:

The originator, most likely in China, actually sells cheap jewelry or other products online. They operate in the "marketplace" sector of retailers like Amazon, which means they do all their own shipping.

They use a ghost account they've set up with the retailer and order their own products, sending them to random addresses in the US. This then entitles them to write a "verified purchase" review.

But why send out jewelry or any other consumer product, even if it is cheap, when they can just stuff the package with worthless seeds?! They can still write a review about the jewelry since Amazon, or whoever, has no idea what's been sent.
So, if you receive one of those packages, there's almost certainly nothing to worry about.

For the same reason, you're advised not to just pitch them in the trash. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued guidance on what to do if you receive the seeds in the mail.

And don't worry that your Amazon or other account has been compromised. It probably hasn't. The scammers on the other side of the Pacific don't need your account details to target you. They simply send them as a "gift" to addresses they gather at random.

It's the same as when you send a gift to someone; you don't need their account details, just their address.

In fact, if you check the address label on these "brushing" packages, it may not even have your name, just your street address. And what should you do if you actually receive some real jewelry or another consumer product that's unsolicited?

While we're not legal experts and can't provide legal advice, the weight of opinion seems to be that you can keep them.

In fact, one member of the Scambusters team has been on the receiving end of brushing shipments for the past few months. He plans to store the items for a year and then put them in the trash.

Why not keep them? The most valuable item he's received so far is a bunion protector. And he doesn't have bunions.

Now, on with our second topic of the week…

Putting the Brakes on Dubious Claims
Most of us are used to seeing claims that this or that product is the best on the market or that it's simply effective. Generally, we take them with a pinch of caution. But what about when a supplier claims it has proof?

We're talking about claims like "clinically proven,""independently tested," and other phrases meant to imply a product's effectiveness is backed up by the results of research or consumer surveys. And we don't just mean claims relating to potential virus cures or treatment.

In fact, the subject has recently surfaced in the context of car brake pads.

A supplier claimed that independent tests showed that its brake pads could stop an auto faster than some others. That's quite a claim when you think about it because it could make the difference between life and death.

A consumer investigation showed that, while tests were truly carried out by a third party, the way they were conducted didn't line up with what would happen in a realworld emergency braking situation.

The US Federal Trade Commission has stepped into the debate, with this warning: "Comparative safety claims can be highly material to consumers, especially for products people can't evaluate for themselves.

"When making express or implied representations – especially if you're saying your product is objectively superior to competitors – don't put the pedal to the metal unless you have sound proof… Companies should make sure their tests reflect real-world conditions."

That's what they're warning product marketers. But for us consumers, the message is to be wary of claims that suggest a supplier has proof their product is the best or most effective.

As always, find out what others have to say first. ❑

Four solutions to four computing problems

by Fred Langa

AskWoody subscribers are an eclectic bunch, as evidenced by this quartet of interesting — and exceptionally wide-ranging! — reader-submitted questions.

This week's topics include using a command-line trick to reveal a PC's digital license, preserving system data through a UEFI/BIOS reset, managing a PC with dual SSD/HDD drives, and calculating a system's total power draw. Wow! Let's dive into them.

Easiest way yet to reveal a Win10 digital license

After reading my two articles on reinstalling Windows 10 ("Updated: A textbook-perfect Win10 reinstall," 2020-10-05, and "A post-reinstall checklist for Windows 10," 2020-10-12), AskWoody Plus member Tom Linton was ready to take the plunge and clean up his PC with a 100 percent fresh reinstall.

But there was a snag.

"OK, I read your articles in the AskWoody newsletter, but what if the PC is a custom-built, local-account machine?
"I've lost the original documentation that came with my copy of Windows 10. Is there a way to recover the product key information I might need for a complete reinstallation, before making the attempt?"

Sure, and it's now easier than ever!

Win10 offers a built-in method to reveal any PC's license key — no third-party software needed!

It's just as well, because Microsoft seems to be slowly reining in those key-finding apps. For example, Windows Security now flags Nirsoft's venerable — and harmless — **ProduKey** utility (download page) as "high threat" malware and prevents it from running!

Here's how to use the built-in method:

Open an admin-level command window (i.e., type **cmd** into the Windows search box and select the **Run as administrator** option when offered). Next, type or cut-and-paste the following command:

wmic path softwarelicensingservice get OA3xOriginalProductKey

Press **Enter,** and you'll see your product key displayed. It's as simple as that!

If the built-in method doesn't work, or you want to try something different, there are still some working third-party key-sniffer tools available. The Lifewire.com article "20 Best Free Product Key Finder Programs" offers a pretty good roundup, although I don't know how much longer Microsoft will tolerate products of this type.

And by the way, while we're on the topic of reinstalls, you might find these related articles helpful: "Activation issues after a Win10 reinstall" (AskWoody Plus, 2020-10-19) and "Win10's ever-changing Reset functions" (AskWoody Plus, 2020-09-28).

Data safety during a UEFI/BIOS reset
Nelson Vidinha's PC needs a different kind of reset — and he's worried about losing data.

"Does a UEFI/BIOS reset erase data?"
No, a UEFI/BIOS reset normally doesn't touch the user-added data on a hard drive, though there is one potential gotcha.

A PC's UEFI/BIOS controls the initial startup of a PC, up to the point where the installed operating system can take over (Wikipedia UEFI info).

If the UEFI/BIOS data is incorrect due to hardware changes, software malfunction, or user error, the PC may not be able to start at all — or it might start but run poorly. When that happens, a UEFI/BIOS reset can restore normal operation by returning the PC's low-level firmware settings to the usually safe and reliable factory defaults.

A reset targets just the system's low-level firmware, so

user files, programs, documents, and so forth stored on the hard drive(s) should remain totally unaffected.

Here's that not-very-likely catch: If you manually introduce bad UEFI/BIOS settings, the PC might temporarily lose communication with its drives. Your files are still intact, but the firmware can't access them and pops up an error message such as "Insert boot disk" or "Operating system not found."

The good news? Resetting the UEFI/BIOS to its defaults usually resolves this issue. Most PCs and hard drives built anytime within the past decade or so can properly reconfigure themselves — no manual intervention or setup needed.

Better still, before making any changes to your PC's UEFI/BIOS, record the current settings — when everything's working properly. Your smartphone can make that really easy; just take a snapshot of each UEFI/BIOS settings page or screen.

Then, in the event of UEFI/BIOS trouble, you can compare the current settings to the images in your phone's gallery. Change any errant settings as needed. Simple!

The care and feeding of SSD/HDD-combo setups
Subscriber Gerald Good is considering a two-drive setup.

"Fred, many desktop vendors now offer dual-drive configurations: one solid-state and the other spinning-disk. What's the best way to set up and use this arrangement? It depends on exactly what you mean by a "dual-drive" setup: two separate drives or a single combined (hybrid) SSD/HDD unit.

Systems with **two separate drives** are easy to manage. The basic concept hasn't changed in … well, forever. Put the most heavily used data on the fastest drive. In most cases, that means installing Windows and storing your most-important/most-accessed files on the SSD (typically drive C:). Less-important, less-used, and archival items should be kept on the slower HDD (usually drive D:). No special maintenance is needed; Windows knows how to properly maintain both types of drive.

Hybrid drives are devices that combine a small

amount of solid-state memory and a large HDD in one physical unit. These are a whole 'nother animal. There's no standardized way of setting up these drives; some present themselves as a single SSD or HDD.

Complications ensue because the proper care of an HDD requires defragmentation (Wikipedia info), which can actually damage an SSD. On the other hand, SSDs require a completely different maintenance technique called TRIM (info), which does nothing at all for HDDs.

There's no simple and universal how-to solution for hybrid drives. Their vendors might provide software tools for maintenance. Also, two older articles could possibly help: "Proper maintenance of hybrid SSHD drives" (Windows Secrets, 2016-05-10) and "What maintenance do solid-state drives require? (Windows Secrets 2016-02-09).

Calculating PC power draw

It appears that subscriber Les Spearman is trying to figure out what size battery backup or other alternative power source his PC requires.

"What is the easiest way to total up all power draw from a computer, including components and everything plugged in via USB?"
The easiest way? Read the electrical specs on the back of the PC's original charger brick or power supply.

Assuming the PC was designed by a competent electrical engineer (and brand-name PCs almost always are), its OEM charger/power supply will be sized to safely provide the maximum likely power draw for the device, with all its ports and components active and working full-bore.

This won't give an absolutely precise answer, of course — chargers and power supplies are usually slightly oversized, and there are other fudge factors involved. But it'll get you in the ballpark.

A more precise answer takes a little longer and some expense. You can purchase automated energy-monitoring devices such as the "Kill A Watt" or similar gear (Google search).

Or you can go full diagnostic: Use a clamp-on ammeter (examples) and patiently note/record your PC's moment-to-moment energy use with various add-ons

and peripherals plugged in and running.

Either way — a rough but fairly reliable estimate or a precise electronic measurement — you can easily figure out how much electricity your setup consumes. ❑

Send your questions and topic suggestions to Fred at fred@askwoody.com. Feedback on this article is always welcome in the AskWoody Lounge!

Fred Langa has been writing about tech — and, specifically, about personal computing — for as long as there have been PCs. And he is one of the founding members of the original Windows Secrets newsletter. Check out Langa.com for all of Fred's current projects.

Surprising Identity Theft Facts

by Scambuster Keith, Scambusters Newsletter

Facts you really need to know about identity theft: Internet ScamBusters #117

Today's issue is about a very surprising aspect of identity theft. We suspect you don't know who commits the most identity theft — and why it's so important that you do know. So, let's jump right in…

Identity Theft Often Begins the Same Place Charity Does — at Home

You'd almost have to live in a cave not to know about identity theft. It's in the news on a regular basis. In addition, you may have already been a victim — or know someone who has been victimized.

We've also written about identity fraud a good deal. If you missed our two best articles on identity theft (id theft), you can visit these pages.
Everyone also seems to be aware that electronic identity theft — through email, online banking or using credit cards online — costs consumers millions of dollars every year, and the numbers are escalating.

For the fifth year in a row, identity theft topped the list of complaints reported to the Federal Trade Commission in 2004, accounting for 39% of all complaints received annually by the FTC. It also tops our Scam-Busters prediction list of the worst Internet scams for 2005.

Identity Theft............................from page 15

The consequences of becoming a victim of identity fraud include: having a scammer open up accounts in your name (and running up debts to those accounts), losing your job, being denied insurance, or even being arrested for crimes you didn't commit.

However, what you may NOT be aware of is that fully 50% of reported identity fraud is perpetrated by relatives, friends and neighbors, or acquaintances of the victim.

That's a truly amazing statistic. And whereas many people think that computer crimes account for most identity theft, computer crimes, in fact, only accounted for 11.6% of all identity theft where the cause was known in 2004.

According to a survey done by Javelin Strategy & Research, these 'close encounters' by friends and family are costing much more money — and time to resolve — than 'stranger' fraud would.

Here's an example: the median loss from phishing scams is $2,320. But when the identity theft is a result of fraud by family and friends, the median loss is $15,607!

So how do you decrease your chances of your identity being stolen by a neighbor or a nephew?

Here are 5 identity theft prevention tips:

1. Don't give ANYONE access to your PIN #s.

2. Don't leave financial mail or statements lying around your house or your car — you'd be appalled at how much information can be gleaned from your checkbook, bank statements, credit card account statements and tax records.

3. When you are discarding things, shred any personal documents that may contain personal or financial information.

4. As much as possible, sign up for electronic banking and account monitoring, and then review your accounts regularly. Any fraud will be detected sooner — and more easily — than if you wait for monthly mail.

5. Review your credit report, bank accounts and credit card bills frequently. Self detection is the best way to find out about identity fraud early.

For more tips on how to prevent and detect identity fraud, visit: http://www.javelinstrategy.com/reports/JavelinsTipsForProtectingAgainstIDFraud.html

Action: Follow these tips and be vigilant to protect yourself from identity theft from people you know. And also follow the tips from previous issues to protect yourself from identity theft from strangers.

That's it for now. See you next week ❏

About Internet Scambusters
Unfortunately, as we hear every single day, being smart is NOT enough to protect yourself from dangerous Internet scams, frustrating spam, or devious identity theft

My name is Kent Crawford, and I'd like to welcome you to Scambusters.org, a public service website and email newsletter that has helped over 11 million people protect themselves from Internet scams, identity theft and spam since 1994.

You'll find lots of great free resources here on how to avoid the most popular scams, identity theft threats, and urban legends making the rounds.
So take a look around and share your thoughts and ideas with us. We're glad you came.

Software Review: Smart Launcher for Android

BY RICHARD CORZO

An Android phone or tablet, whether it runs stock Android or more likely a customized skin from the manufacturer, has a default launcher that determines how the home screen looks and works. For instance, Samsung's Android skin is called TouchWiz, and HTC's is Sense. The launcher gives you a way to organize your apps and widgets. You can replace your Android device's launcher with one from the Google Play store.

I ran across a YouTube video "The Best Android Launcher of 2016?" which describes ten different launchers. You might prefer one of the others, but the first one mentioned, Smart Launcher, caught my eye. There is a free version and a paid version, Smart Launcher Pro.

To understand where I'm coming from, you should know that I have an iPhone and iPad, and a Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 NOOK tablet. The iPhone and iPad have app icons arranged in rows on multiple home screens, with no gaps between the first and last app on each home screen. You can drop one app icon on another to create a folder and then add more apps to that folder, thus packing more icons into fewer home screens. You can move the app icons around to your liking, and when you move one to a spot on the home screen, it shoves the one previously in that spot, and all others following, to the right, to the next row, or to the next screen as space requires. Although iOS has widgets—small windows of information associated with some apps—it doesn't allow them on the home screens, but does allow them to be added to the notification and lock screens.

Samsung's TouchWiz does allow widgets on the home screens, and app icons can fill the remaining space in a grid pattern. Unlike iOS, you can leave empty spots in the grid. When you move an icon to a spot that's already taken, it will shove the existing icon out of the way to some other spot, and it may disturb another icon or two, but otherwise the other icons on that screen don't flow nicely in a predictable manner. You don't have to fit all your apps on the home screens, since there is an Apps list icon that

opens to another set of screens with all your app icons, in a grid with no empty spots, on as many screens as are required to hold all your apps. I never found an arrangement of the main home screens that was particularly pleasing or made me feel especially well-organized.

I downloaded the free version of Smart Launcher from the Play store. It provides a single QuickStart home screen with a ring of "bubble" app launchers (the "flower" arrangement), or you can choose a two-row grid layout. You can also specify a different app to launch with a double-click of a button. The "drawer" button in the lower left corner of the screen gets you to all your other apps. There are predefined categories of Communication, Internet, Games, Media, Utility, and Settings. It does a nice job of categorizing all your apps into those categories, listing the apps in alphabetical order within category. To me this made things much more manageable. Only in a few cases did I need to reassign an icon to a different category. The category icons are in a column on the left of the screen, making it easy to switch categories and find another app to launch.

There is no widget support in the free version. For that you need the Pro version. You can upgrade directly from the free version. You'll then be able to launch widgets from the QuickStart buttons, and will get additional home screens on which you can arrange your favorite widgets. You'll also get 19 or so additional categories to choose from, plus the ability to create your own custom category. For example, from the large Media category you can split off one or more of the Photography, Reading, Music, and Entertainment categories. When you add one of the new categories, the relevant apps are moved from their prior category. I did decide to upgrade, and I feel better organized and efficient in accessing my apps. ❑

Are You Familiar With APCUG?

by Ron Ingraham, Editor Space Coast PC Journal

During a recent Learning Center Session it was apparent that the majority of those present were not familiar with APCUG. They suggested that an article on this would be helpful.

I quote –"The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) is a worldwide organization that helps groups devoted to the world of technology including computers, tablets, smartphones, digital photography, genealogy, etc. by facilitating communications between member groups and industry vendors.
APCUG's mission is to:

- Encourage, promote, and enable communications and the exchange of information among its member groups;

- Assist member groups in the fulfillment of their educational and charitable missions and other activities

    that support those missions;

- Promote the awareness of the value of user groups to the community and the technology industry; and

- Facilitate communication among member groups, the community and the technology industry.

APCUG itself is not a user group; only user groups themselves are members. APCUG's products and services are offered to group leaders, who can then share them with their members."

As a Group member, you may access their website by logging on to **www.apcug2.org**. Here you will see the home page which has a tremendous amount of information which I'm sure you will find helpful. The "Member Benefits" tab I feel is the most useful for you. You'll see Contests, Discounts and Special Offers, Hosted Websites, Newsletters Online- my favorite,, PUSH articles, Reports, Grant Program, Speakers
Bureau, and more.

In Newsletters Online   you'll see states listed in 11 Regions, plus the International (Australia and Canada). Pick Region 5 Florida, and you'll see 4 users groups. Click on one and you see their website, from which you can access their newsletters, some deeply archived for years. I find this extremely helpful as a source for articles which I include in our Journal.

PUSH articles is a list of articles Judy Taylour has sent to editors. The list provided is just titles, not readable

articles.

Reports includes the APCUG Quarterly Reports with articles from all Regional advisors.

The Grant Program Objective To aid user groups who need money to fund a project to help their members or user group community with the use or understanding of technology.

The Speakers Bureau
 If your group is a member of APCUG and you are looking for new speakers with fresh ideas, the Speakers Bureau features almost 100 Webinar presentations in 20+ categories. Choose your presentation, complete the form and the presenter will get in touch to book it.

Virtual Tech Conference
Here you have access to all the Tech Conference presentations which you can click on to view the presentation in its entirety. You could spend endless hours learning from these presentations, Check them out!

Finally, There is the Locate a User Group Tab . If you know the name and location of a particular group, you can enter it to get details about the group.

I've just skimmed the surface of this website. I hope you may have been encouraged to explore it more fully on your own. ❑

Wi-Fi 6 – What happened to b, g, n, ac?

By Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer, Sun City Center Computer Club

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Ever since Wi-Fi appeared way back around 2005, the Wi-Fi version has been described by a letter because of the letter reference used in the 802.11 Local Area Network standard. Initially, there were 802.11a and 802.11b. Most of us became familiar with the "b" version because this version used the 2.4 GHz frequency band which had better coverage than the "a" version that used the 5 GHz frequency band. (Today many Wi-Fi routers provide networks at both 2.4 and 5 GHz.) So, until recently the version of the standard has been used as the version for the Wi-Fi router product. When there was only a and b, that was easy enough, but as time went on, faster and more capable standards were developed and each had a new designation, and now the standards are using multiple letters for the designation like ac, and ax (the latest).

To simplify the designation for products, the Wi-Fi Alliance (the group responsible for certifying Wi-Fi products) decided to use numbers to designate the version. The newest standard 802.11ax is to be known as Wi-Fi 6. Earlier versions will be called Wi-Fi 5 (previously ac) and Wi-Fi 4 (previously n), but you will probably never see those designations in practice. This may initially cause some confusion but eventually, it should be a simpler way of determining Wi-Fi product capabilities. Eventually, we'll all know exactly what the 6 in Wi-Fi 6 indicates; well, at least as well as we know what the "n" indicates in the n version of Wi-Fi.

Unlike many of the earlier Wi-Fi updates, Wi-Fi 6 is not just an increase in speed, it also provides the groundwork

Wi-Fi 6...from page 19

for future improvements that will ensure that Wi-Fi speeds continue to increase in the future. Wi-Fi 6 is just starting to arrive this year. There is a good possibility that it will be in your next smartphone or laptop. At some time in 2021, new Wi-Fi 6 routers will start to include 6E which will be the use of a new 6 GHz frequency band (I guess the E indicates an e̲xtension into the 6 GHz band).

So, what is Wi-Fi 6? Wi-Fi 6 is just the next generation of the Local Area Network standard that will do the same thing past Wi-Fi standards have done - it will connect your many devices to the internet, but it will do that at faster speeds, and it will introduce new, faster and more efficient technologies into the router. Wi-Fi provides the critical link between our Client Apps and the internet Servers (remember Client-Server Technology?). Much of the improvements with Wi-Fi 6 are aimed at handling the demands of the Internet of Things (IoT). (In fact, very small networks might not even notice much of an improvement. A single Wi-Fi 6 device connected to a Wi-Fi 6 router may only be slightly faster than a single Wi-Fi 5 device connected to a Wi-Fi 5 router.) Another benefit of Wi-Fi 6 will be the fact that all Wi-Fi 6 certified devices will include WPA3, a new, stronger, Security Protocol that improves on WPA2 making it harder for hackers to infiltrate a network.

Many of our homes now have many devices that need to be connected to the internet. Think about it, there are smart bulbs, smart plugs, smart assistants (Alexa comes to mind), indoor and outdoor cameras (Ring doorbell camera comes to mind), door or garage locks, smart thermostats, door or garage door magnetic sensors, as well as laptops, desktops, smartphones, streaming devices (Amazon fire stick comes to mind), and tablets. The last time I had to change the password on my router, I had to change it in 23 devices before I was finished, though the number for an average house today is about nine. (I have seen predictions that the average home in the future may have up to 50 devices.)

Wi-Fi 6 introduces some new technologies to help mitigate the issues that come from putting tens of Wi-Fi devices on a single network router. Wi-Fi 6 has been designed to handle many devices efficiently, by splitting up the available bandwidth so that many devices can be serviced simultaneously. Without getting into any technical detail, Wi-Fi 6 will let routers communicate with more devices at one time, let routers send data to multiple devices in the same broadcast, and let devices schedule check-ins with the router, all features that will allow more devices to be serviced. Where current routers might start to get overwhelmed by requests from a multitude of devices, Wi-Fi 6 routers will keep all those devices up to date with the data they need.

Without the improvements that Wi-Fi 6 will bring, the performance of your future network would slow down as you increased the number of devices on a given network. You may even want to use the fact that things may slow down with your old router to your benefit and wait till you notice your internet connection "seems to be a little slow" before you take the plunge into Wi-Fi 6.

To get Wi-Fi 6, you'll need to purchase a new Wi-Fi 6 router. Without a Wi-Fi 6 router, all the devices that may be Wi-Fi 6 compliant will not have any advantage. To take full advantage of Wi-Fi 6, all the devices connected to your Wi-Fi 6 router will have to be Wi-Fi 6 compliant. So, the improvements we get from having Wi-Fi 6 will probably only slowly be incorporated into our internet experience, but it eventually will be worthwhile. New devices will slowly appear with Wi-Fi 6 incorporated, but it will probably take a few years to get to the point where your whole network is compliant with the Wi-Fi 6 standard (and by that time we'll probably be talking about Wi-Fi 7).

Just a brief review of the new technologies. Two technologies are helping speed up Wi-Fi 6. One is "Multi-user, Multiple-input, Multiple-output" (MU-MIMO), which is already in use in some high-end routers and devices, which allows the router to communicate with multiple devices at the same time, rather than broadcasting to one

device, and then the next, and then the next, etc. Current high-end MU-MIMO routers can communicate with four devices at a time, Wi-Fi 6 will increase this to 8. (You have probably seen routers that incorporate MIMO because it involves multiple antennas, which let the router talk to multiple devices at one time.)

The second technology is "Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiple Access" (OFDMA) which allows one transmission to deliver data to multiple devices at once. Both of these technologies are used to get more out of each transmission from your router to your devices. Most of the details of these technologies will probably never become too apparent to most of us, but we all will benefit from them in that we will be able to attach more and more devices to our router, without slowing it down, so we can enjoy the benefit of all the features provided by all of those wonderful internet servers. ❑
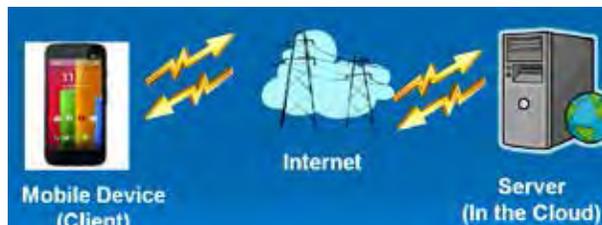
President's Corner

Why Can't Standards be Standard?

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group

November 2020 issue, Drive Light

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Part of what makes our technology work so well is that it follows standards. There are both rules established and items held up as an example in common use. All of our electronic means of communication are successful only because of standards. Without accepted rules for operation, cell phone calls wouldn't connect, and text messaging wouldn't work. Without established standards for interfaces like USB, Ethernet, Wi-Fi – even 120VAC power – we would not have the tech capabilities we enjoy today.

That does not mean that everything must be done in the same way. Innovation is often the result of new methods being introduced; if these prove beneficial and become popular, they can become the new "standard" for use. Sometimes multiple factions will solve the same problem or provide the same basic capability in different but incompatible ways. Remember the VHS vs. Betamax videotape war of the 1980s? Even though both followed standards, VHS eventually proved to be more popular and became

Why Can't Standards....................from page 21

the usage standard, forcing Sony to abandon the production of Betamax. These battles to become the popular standard can improve the technology available, but they also cause grief for the user that found their adopted version became the loser.

Unfortunately, while some tech changes have merit, others appear to be changed for the sake of change. Some changes to long-held ways of doing things seem to be for the benefit of tech companies (and their ability to market and sell new products), rather than tech users. User interfaces are especially susceptible to the change for marketing's sake syndrome. I am so tired of Microsoft Office changing their user interfaces while providing little substantive or beneficial change.

Sometimes it is the competition that forces there to be differences. Manufacturers need differentiating factors and features to be able to gain market share over something other than price. Companies will often litigate with competitors that "copy" their key attributes. This usually forces multiple standards on the marketplace, as with Microsoft's Windows and Apple's MAC, or Apple's iPhone and Android phones. This can also result in different interchange formats between competing device families. Fortunately, in most cases, the basic governing standards within product types are still followed by all competing vendors. You may not be able to use Facetime on an Android phone, but at least it can call and text with an iPhone. It is bad enough that few accessories are interchangeable between Apple and Windows computers; imagine if you couldn't send an email between them?

The interchange of files between tech camps can be a tricky problem. Fortunately, there are some formats, like PDF (Portable Document Format) that are universally supported and recognized on all platforms, be they computers, tablets, or smartphones. Most Microsoft Office files are at least viewable on most platforms. Many image and video file formats are easily interchangeable, but unfortunately, there are quite a few that are not.

My wife and I recently went on a one-week driving vacation to a cabin in Idaho. Though we were kind of isolated from technology (off the power grid with solar/battery and no cell coverage), we brought along a lot of our tech devices. These included five image/video-capturing devices: a camera and smartphone each, plus my action cam. When we returned, I collected all the photo and video files on one USB Flash drive and sorted them chronologically. This was a bit of a task, as it amounted to 23GB of data in over 2000 files. The fact that there were different file formats and different hardware platforms involved didn't help.

Being on vacation, my wife and I both took a lot of photos, but I took the majority – over 90% of them. She has fancier equipment but takes fewer shots, often looking mostly at artistry and composition. I have

more modest equipment, and I've always taken lots of photos. I am concerned about good composition, but also tend to think of my photography as an augmentation of my memory. I take a lot of photos and videos of trips and family events simply to help me remember them.

My photos and videos were pretty easy to compile and view. I have Panasonic Lumix "bridge" camera; this type of camera has the large body and lens of a DSLR (Digital Single-Lens Reflex) but with the smaller sensor (and lower price) of a point and shoot camera (it is a bridge between the point and shoot and DSLR). It also has a fixed (non-removable) lens like a point and shoot camera. My camera takes JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) photos (.JPG file extension), which is a lossy file compression format and is probably the most popular photo image format. It takes MPEG-4 (Moving Picture Expert Group-4) videos (.MP4 file extension), which is probably the most widely-used video compression format. My Samsung Android smartphone takes photos and videos in these same formats. My small off-brand action camera also takes MP4 videos. All in all, they are pretty standard and universally compatible.

My wife has the fancy (or at least more expensive) hardware – a Canon premium DSLR and an iPhone. She has the Canon set to save photos as both JPG and raw (.CR2 file extension). The raw file format consists of the unprocessed or minimally-processed camera sensor data ("raw" data) and is a much larger file. It is the highest quality format and is the best to use if photo editing will be done. I copied only her JPG files from our trip, as that's all I wanted. Though I didn't use them, I was impressed that the Windows 10 photo viewer (Microsoft Photos) could view them.CR2 files she had taken, as I'd never been able to see them on my Windows 7 laptop.

The iPhone proved to be the biggest challenge and the most incompatible with my computing infrastructure. My first difficulty was in getting the photo and video files off of the iPhone and onto my Win10 computer. You can't just connect the two devices, and I would not know how to find the files I wanted on the iPhone if I could. Fortunately, I already had a solution to this problem. A few years ago I'd purchased a SanDisk iXpand 32GB Flash drive, which can act as an intermediary between the Apple and Windows worlds. This is a special Flash drive with both a USB type A connector and an Apple Lightning connector. It also contains an internal battery; this may be necessary because, unlike USB, Lightning peripheral devices can only provide power, and not receive it. Through the SanDisk app downloaded from the Apple Store, photo and video files can be located on the phone and then copied to the Flash drive from the iPhone, through the Lightning connector. The Flash drive can then be plugged into a Windows PC through the USB interface so that the files from the iPhone can be accessed and copied.

Why Can't Standards...............from page 23

Even with the iPhone files on my Win10 computer, the compatibility battle was not over. The iPhone video files are .MOV (Apple QuickTime) compressed video files, which are compatible with Windows. The photo files, however, are.HEIC extensions, not immediately recognized by Windows. These are High-Efficiency Image Format files, a new MPEG format that Apple has adopted. Microsoft did provide an ac solution, however. Double-clicking on one of these files on my Win10 PC brought up a message to download an app from the Microsoft Store. Once I had downloaded and installed the HEVC Video Extensions app ($0.99), my computer could view these photos.

In addition to this new file format, new iPhones also take photos in a mode called "Live Photo". In addition to the.HEIC image, the phone also captures a video running 1.5 seconds before and after the image, so each photo was taken results in two files. Since now I could see both, I decided to keep both.

After a bit of manipulation, I finally had all of the trip photos and videos I wanted in one place, all visible in Windows. Though Apple may keep changing up their file formats, it appears Microsoft is providing ways to keep up and view their files in Windows 10.

Now if only my Chromebook could open all these files. I've had poor luck with video files on my Samsung Chromebook, and none of the ones we took on the trip could be opened. It turned out the only thing it could see was the JPG files. It seems the Google Chrome OS needs to update its standards.

The Most Photographed Spot – I've been ordering a lot from Amazon since the pandemic, and a lot of the time the email I get from Amazon asking how my package delivery was, includes a link to a photo of the delivered package sitting on my doorstep. Apparently, the delivery person now takes a "proof of delivery" photo. This may soon make my doorstep the most photographed location on my property. ❑

"No,no, sweetie. Daddy harvests people's personal information from another cloud."

off the mark.com   by Mark Parisi

ATTENTION: You've been changed an excess baggage fee.

ROBERT GETS HIS THERAPY BILL
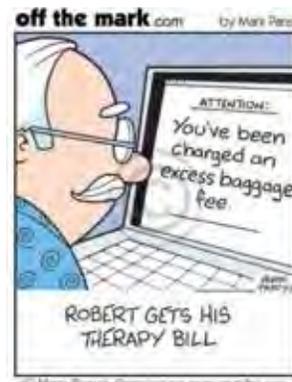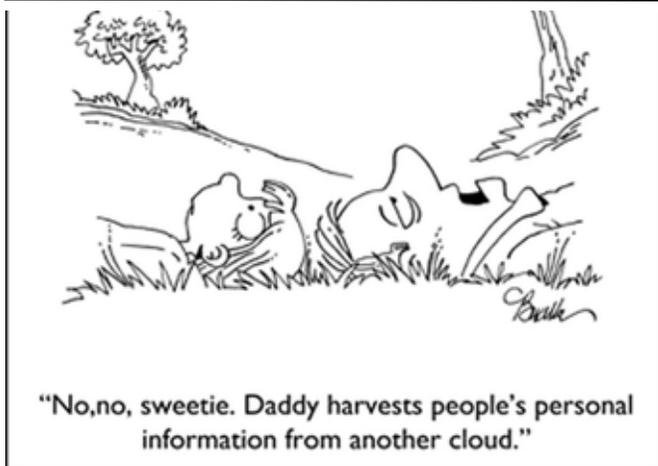
By Dick Maybach, Brookdale Computer User Group

August 2020 issue, BUG Bytes

www.bcug.com
n2nd (at) att.net

Creating attractive posters can be a challenge for those of us with limited artistic talent, and while using clipart is quick, often the result is poor. An alternative is, to begin with, a photo and use image-processing software to convert it to a graphic. In this article, I'll use GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP), https://www.gimp.org/, but most similar programs have equivalent features. As a result, I'll concentrate on the general processes, rather than the details to execute them. Although GIMP and Photoshop have similar capabilities, their operational details are quite different, and moving from one to the other can be difficult.

Figure 1 shows an unprocessed photo imported into GIMP. The large dark area and the expanse of pavement will have to be removed to make this suitable for my poster.
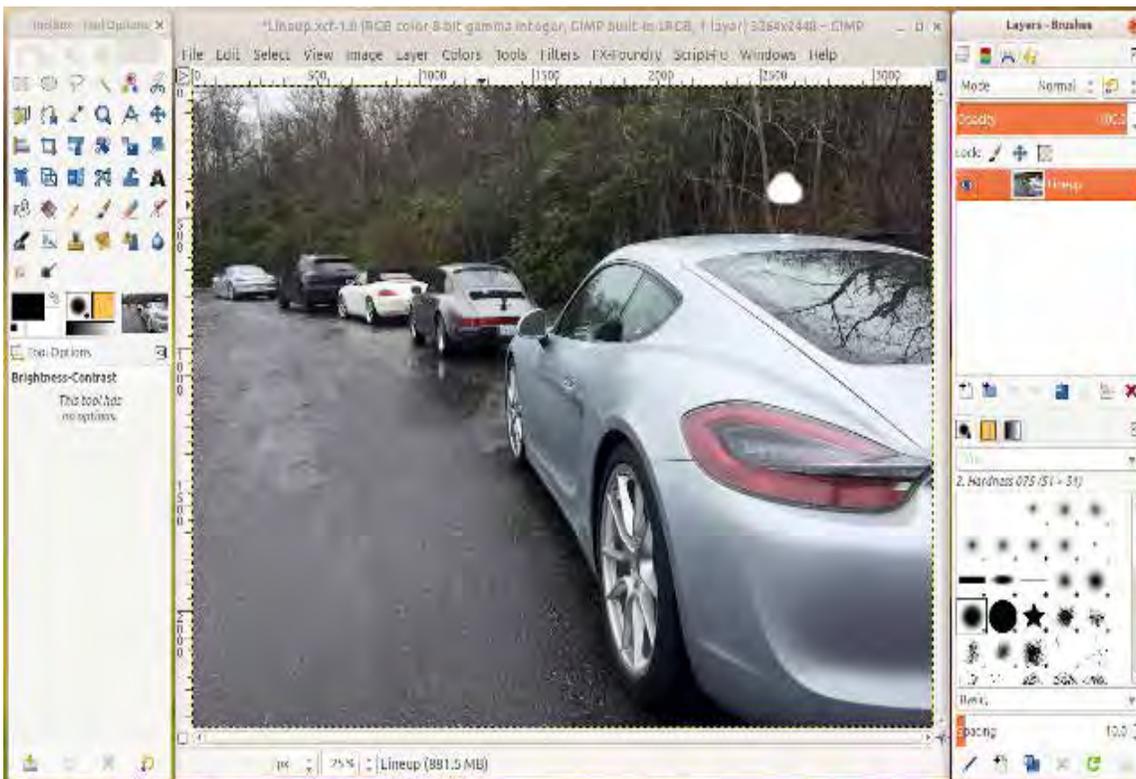
Figure 1. Unprocessed Photo.

In Figure 2 I've initialized GIMP to begin the processing. Note that the right panel now shows two layers, a white background below and the photo above. Note also the second thumbnail on the right in the top layer. This is a mask, on which I can draw black areas to hide portions of the photo. I could instead erase these areas on the photo, but such changes would be permanent. If I hide too much using a mask, it's easy just to erase the excess marking. I've also added an alpha channel to this layer, which means that any areas I mask are transparent rather than being white. This will allow me later to use more than one layer at a time to combine the effects.

Creating Poster Art.....................from page 25
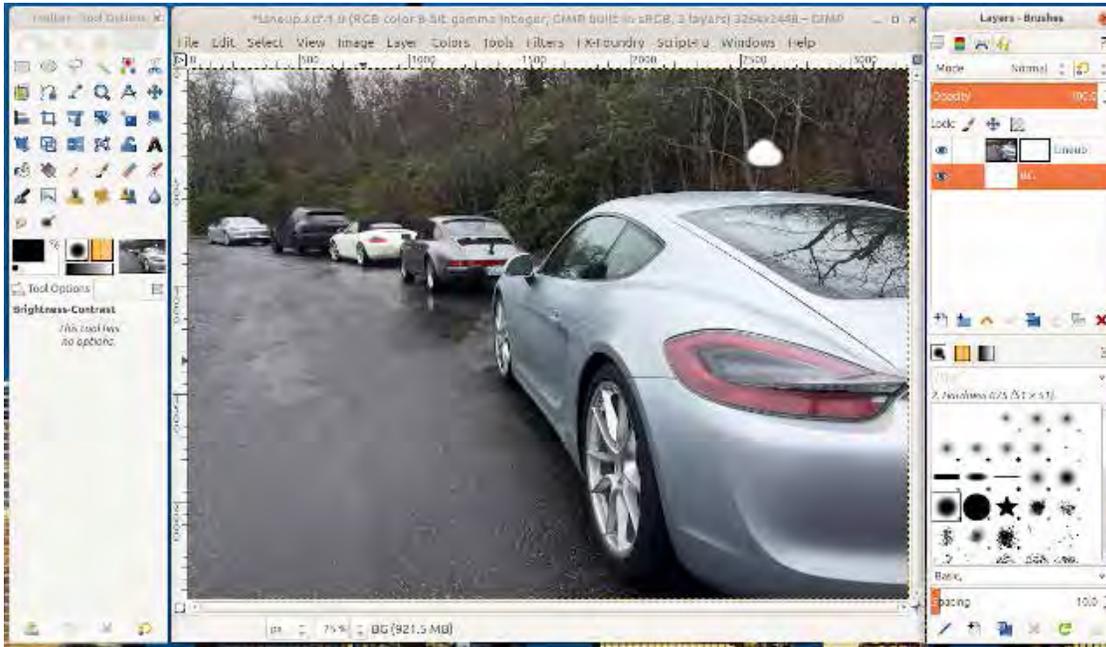
Figure 2. Photo Processing Initialized.

Figure 3 shows the effect of masking. Since the graphic will be used for a car show, I've removed everything but the cars and added some vignetting to soften the sharp edges on the right. I've also duplicated the layer several times, so I can try different processing on each one. Masking is done by hand and is quite tedious, almost impossibly so with a mouse, but far more tolerable with a graphics tablet. I use one by Wacom, which is small (about six by eight inches) and available for $70. Before duplicating the photo layer, be sure you have completed the masking, as you don't want to repeat this time-consuming process.
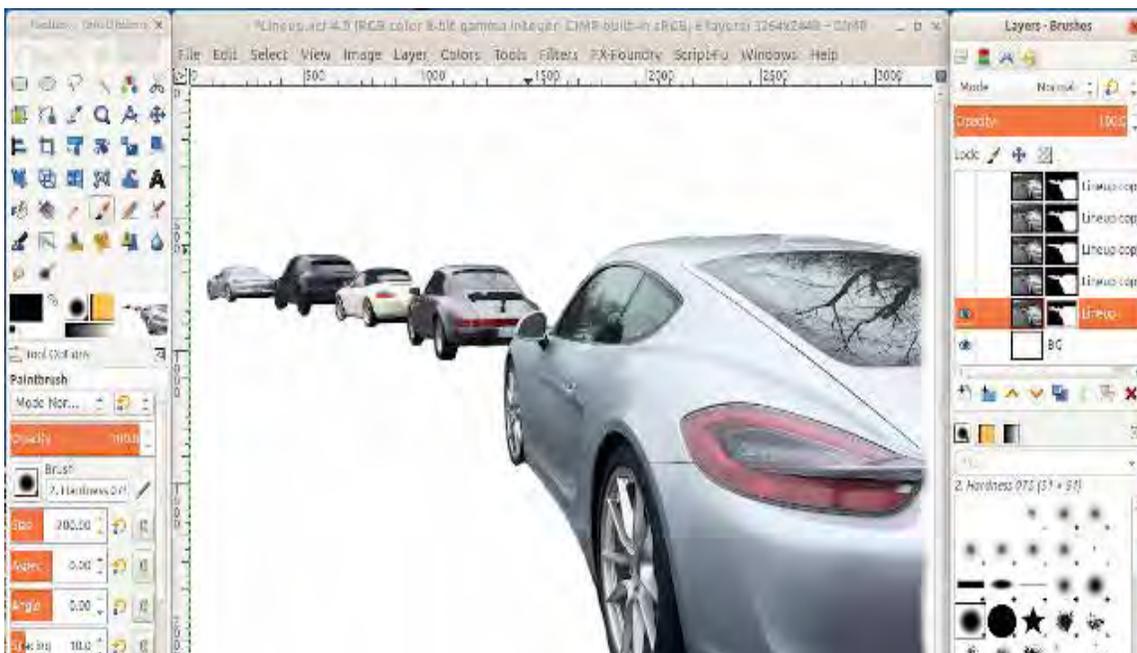
Figure 3. Masking Complete.

I used effects from the Grey's Magic for Image Computing (G'MIC) add-on for GIMP, http://gmic.eu/gimp.shtml;

other high-end graphic processors have similar utilities. Figures 4 through 7 show the effects of some of its filters.
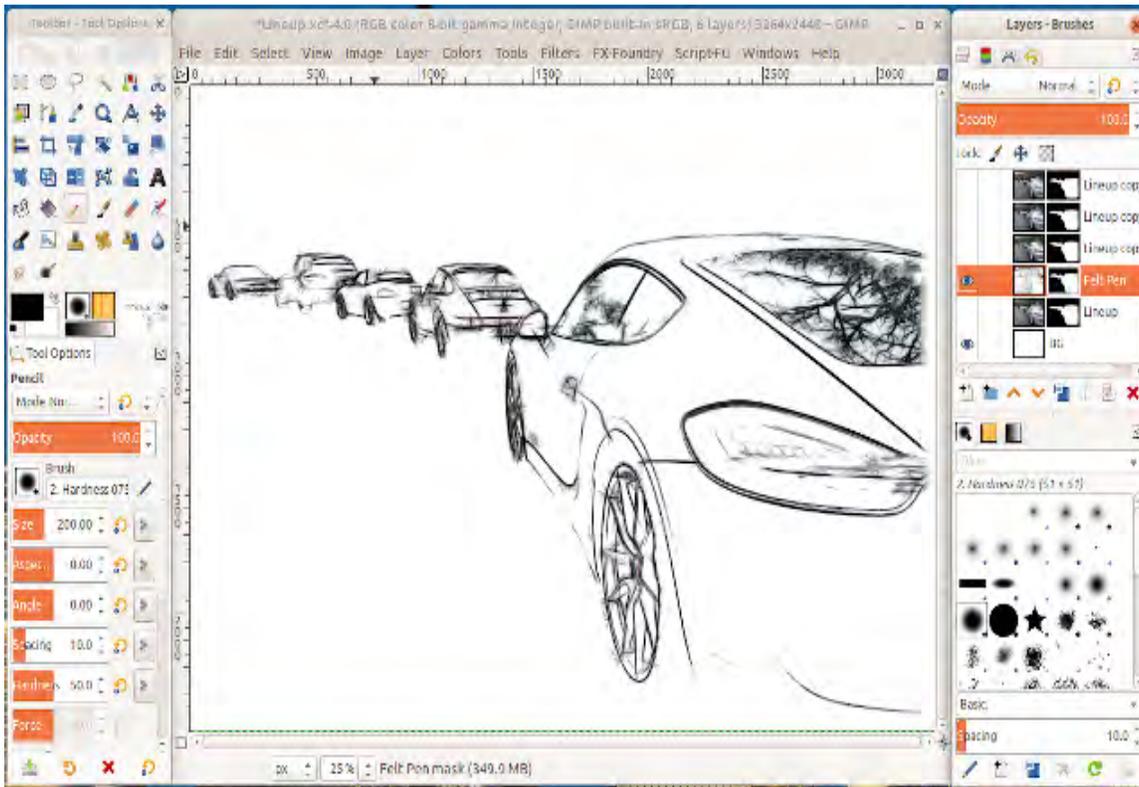
Figure 4. G'MIC Felt Pen Filter.
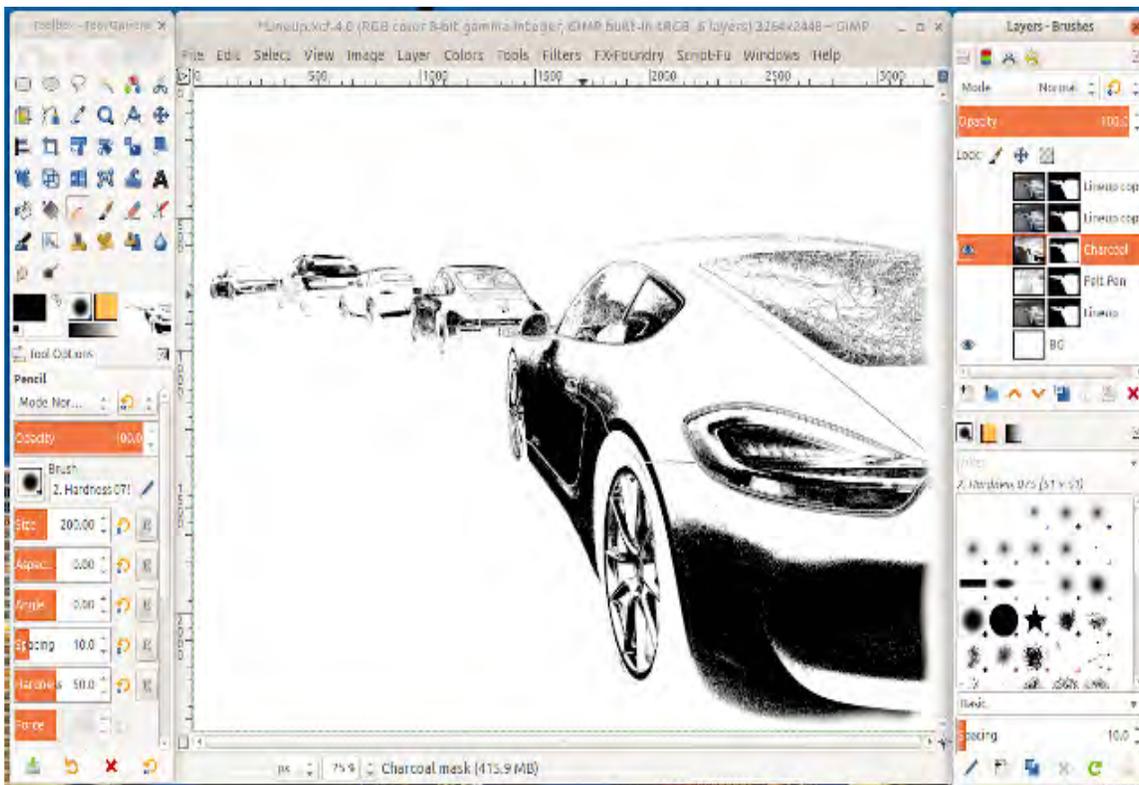
Figure 5. G'MIC Charcoal Filter.

Creating Poster Art......................from page 27
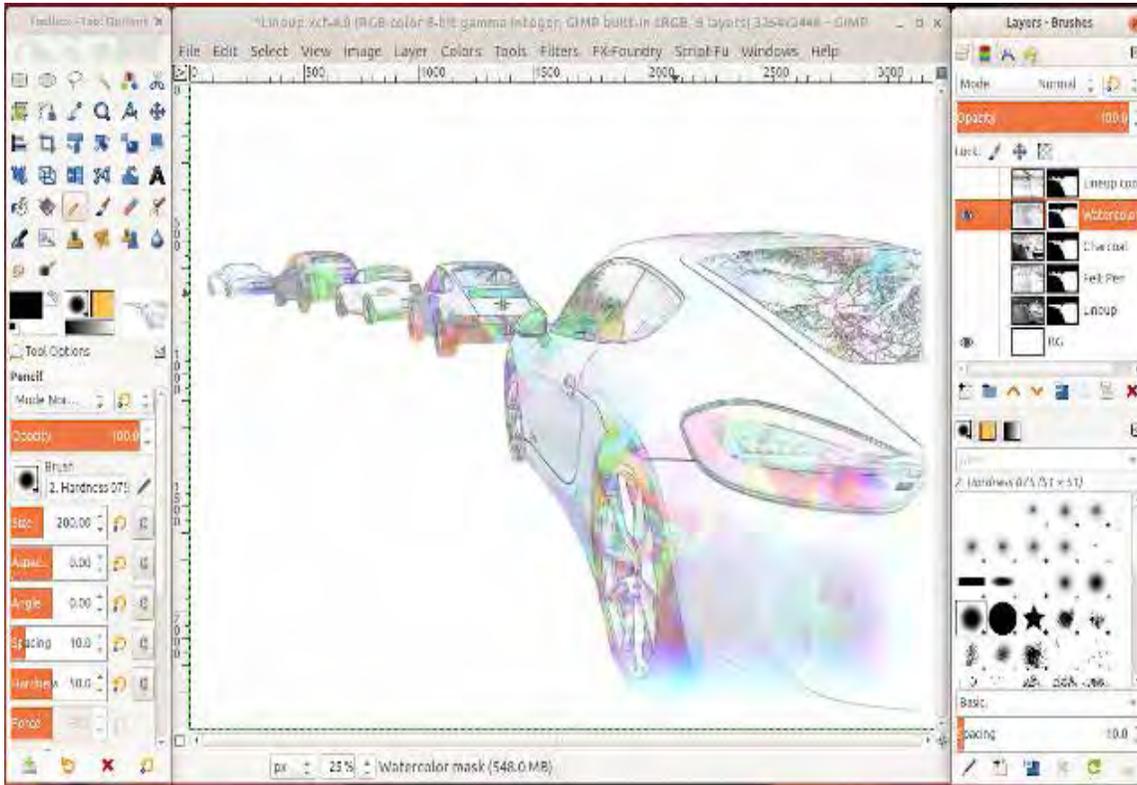
Figure 6. G'MIC Watercolor Filter.
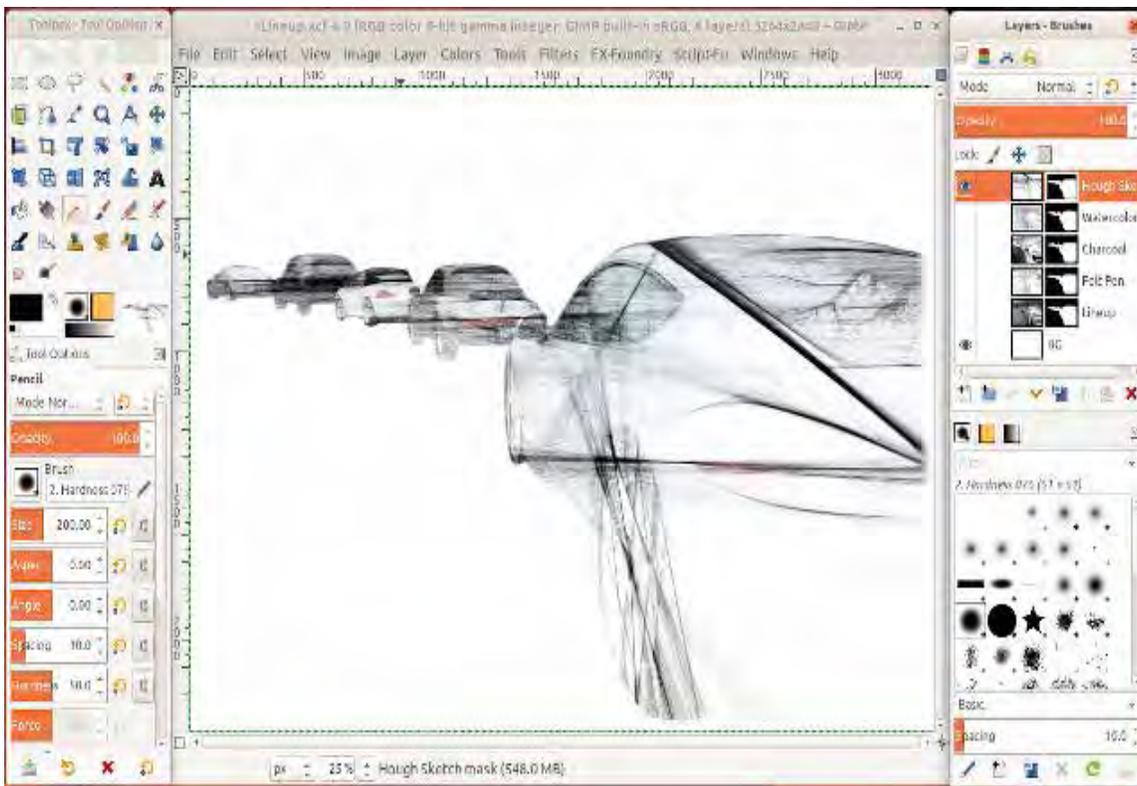
Figure 7. G'MIC Hough Sketch Filter.

Note the layer titled "Lineup," which is the image of Figure 3, the photo after applying the mask but without an effect, filter applied. The filters are destructive, that is their effects can't be undone. You will likely want to make some image processing adjustments after seeing the completed poster. By retaining the original image with masking, you can do this without having to repeat the tedious and time-consuming process of making another mask.

Often you will want to use the processed image as a background, meaning you'll have to fade it to avoid obscuring the material that overwrites it. In Figure 8 the opacity of the layer has been reduced to 60 percent, and while this would keep any foreground text legible, the details of the image are now hard to discern.
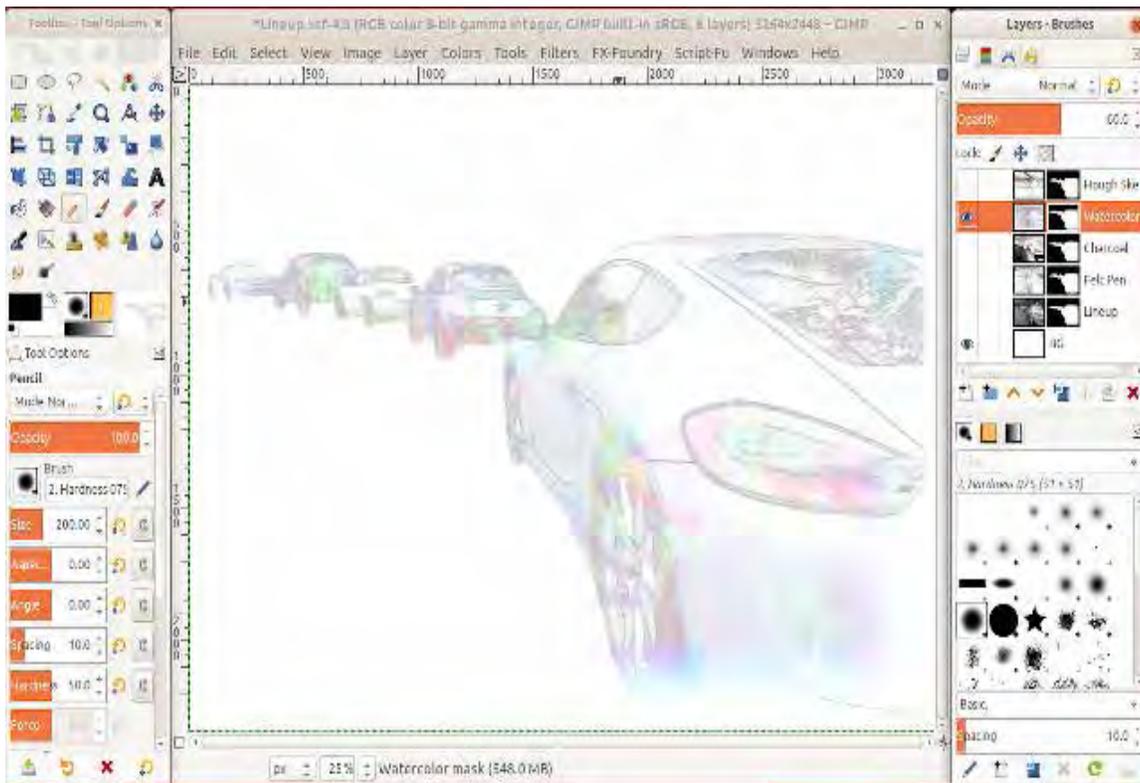
Figure 8. G'MIC Watercolor Filter with Reduced Opacity.
A solution is to combine the watercolor layer with the felt pen one by making both layers visible as shown in Figure 8.

This preserves the cars' outlines while keeping most areas of the image muted. Of course, after seeing the complete poster you'll likely make some final adjustments. Posters are only one place where you can use graphics. After completing this project, I used a variant of the result as a background on a Website.

I've used GIMP here to illustrate what's involved, but it's similar to any high-end image processing program. As you probably have gathered, the procedures are involved, and you should be familiar with image processing before beginning something similar. Don't make a project involving multiple layers and detailed masking your first graphic project.❑

BREVARD USERS GROUP

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Brevard Users Group Secretary's Report

By Bill Middleton

Monthly General Meeting Report, October 12, 2020

1. The meeting was called to order by President, Bill Middleton at 2:00 PM.
2. Members were urged to pay their dues and make sure their registration details were up to date.   Dues may be paid at any meeting or mailed to the BUG Club, PO Box 2456, Melbourne, FL 32901. Please make sure your current email is included with any mailed-in dues.
3. The Covid19 safety requirements for our three meeting venues were reviewed. One Senior Place has seating pre-positioned for proper distancing and requires all participants to wear masks. Up to 10 participants +2 at the front table are allowed. Fee Avenue library also requires the use of masks. The main meeting room at Fee has been temporarily closed to the public to allow for some "Maintenance" to
4. the public to allow for some "Maintenance" to

be accomplished. Our meetings will therefore be in the small, inside conference room which will limit us to about six participants. Eau Gallie library's main conference room is also temporarily closed to the public – for lobby reconstruction. Our meetings have been relocated to the quiet, northeast corner of the library which has a large screen TV in lieu of a projection screen. Eau Gallie also requires masks, but allows us to set up our own seating configuration, but keeps an eye on us to make sure we've allowed proper distancing. This allows about 15 participants.

5. The new Microsoft Snip and Sketch tool was revisited and demonstrated. It was found to be pretty much functionally the same as Chuck's favorite formerly freeware app. It was

discovered that the Snip and Sketch Tool did <u>not</u> replace the old Snipping Tool, but has been added to Windows 10's apps. The old Snipping Tool remains available for simpler snips.

6. Some previously discussed Windows 10 and email issues were revisited.
7. The meeting was adjourned shortly after 3:00.
8. Respectfully submitted by Bill Middleton, Secretary. ❑

Interesting Internet Finds July 2020
by Steve Costello

scostello (at) sefcug.com

Why Am I Getting Calls When Do Not Disturb Is On
https://www.guidingtech.com/why-getting-calls-do-not-disturb-on/
This is a question I had myself. After reading this post and applying what I learned, it is no longer a problem for me. If you keep getting calls while do not disturb is on, check out this post for a solution.

The Ultimate Guide To Privacy On Android
https://www.computerworld.com/article/3545530/ultimate-guide-to-privacy-on-android.html
If you are an Android user, like me, you should check out this post. About every six months, or so, I run checks on most of the items outlined here. I use a paid VPN whenever I am not using my home Wi-Fi, and I encourage others to do the same.

Why Am I Connected To Wi-Fi But Not The Internet?
https://www.howtogeek.com/676918/why-am-i-connected-to-wi-fi-but-not-the-internet/
I am sure that at one time or another you have shown to be connected to Wi-Fi but not connected to the internet. If you would like to know more about why that happens and what might be a solution, check out this post.

Vivaldi Browser Tips And Tricks
https://www.thewindowsclub.com/vivaldi-browser-tips-and-tricks/

I have been using Vivaldi (on both Windows 10 and Linux) off and on for a few months now, and I like it. This post gives some tips and tricks, that should make using it a better experience.

Can You Use Bluetooth Speakers If Your TV isn't Bluetooth Ready?
https://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2020/06/22/can-you-use-bluetooth-speakers-if-your-tv-isnt-bluetooth-ready/
I have two TVs that are over 10 years old but work fine. I have plenty of Bluetooth speakers and headphones, but neither TV supports Bluetooth. (Note: I have a soundbar hooked to the main TV now, and it supports Bluetooth.)

How To Reduce Microphone Background Noise On Your PC
https://www.maketecheasier.com/reduce-microphone-background-noise-on-pc/
I have been attending a lot of Zoom conferences since the COVID-19 crisis started. There are sometimes where participants have a lot of background noise in their audio. So, I thought this would be good to post for those having problems.

****

Calendar
of Events

**Going North for the summer
or coming back?**

Don't miss a single issue of your

Space Coast PC Journal

November 19, 2020 - Club Meeting, 2 PM
Auditorium, Merritt Island Library

If your email address will be different

Please give us the correct email

November 30, 2020 - Deadline for Journal Input

For your temporary location

Reminder
We need your e-mail addresses!
We'd like to keep in touch with you,
especially if there is a last minute
change in venue for the club meeting.
Please send e-mail addresses and changes to
Linda Glassburn glassburn@earthlink.net

**Are you having problems with your
hardware or software?
Did you find the solution yourself?**

How about sharing that information with your
fellow club members? Sit down for a few minutes
open up that word processor and put your ideas
to paper. Aside from the value to the members,
you'll get your name in print!

**Don't worry about the details, we'll
edit it for the best appearance and
presentation.**

Presentations Schedule
November 19, 2020

Meet in the Auditorium
2 PM
Get together welcome meeting
Discussion, Q&A

Bring Some Friends or Neighbors

Beginners or Advanced
Bring Your Questions
Get Technical Help
Share Your Knowledge

at Your SCPCUG

Learning Center

Open 1st, 3rd, 5th Saturdays,
12 to 3:30 p.m.
Merritt Island Library
Conference Room

Please restrict your visits to
these times.

Bring your hardware or
software problems,
We'll do all we can to help.

If you bring a desktop computer
please bring the keyboard, mouse,
and power cord

Call Ron Ingraham, 321-777-2578,
for more information.

The
Space Coast PC Users Group
Journal

is produced using

Adobe InDesign CS3

*All SCPCUG club members are entitled to
receive the electronic version of the Journal
in pdf format. You'll need Adobe's widely
available Acrobat Reader X.X (free) to view the
eJournal.*

Contact Ron Ingraham
ringram28@cfl,rr,com to get on the
eJournal mailing list

Space Coast PC Users

Group is proud to be a

Charter

The Space Coast PC Users Group's

Computer Doctors

Make   House Calls

Free **to**
SCPCUG Members!

Dan Douglas, owner of
DataDan Computer Services,
will accept phone requests
for computer assistance
(321) 301-1075
After a phone call, a house call may be
made within 5 miles of Merritt Island

Free Remote Support
For those using Windows 10
Quick Assist

The above member will help you with *a particular* computer glitch on your personal (not business) computer. In some cases, he may even make a house call. But, please do not expect him to install your computer nor teach you how to use it. If you have continuing problems or need additional help, please take a class, or check the ads in the *Journal* and hire a consultant, etc.

Computers 4 Kids

C4K Volunteers Need

Donated

Computers, Keyboards, Mice

etc

for

Building PC Systems

complete with software

for

Needy School Children

Call

Ken Clark @ 223-7402

To arrange pickup

Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____ [   ] New [   ] Renewal

ADDRESS _____ Date _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone (Optional) _____

E-mail _____

Would you like to attend: a class for BEGINNERS?   [   ]
                  an ADVANCED DOS class?   [   ]
                  a WINDOWS class?   [   ]
                  an ADVANCED WINDOWS class? [   ]

What other topics would you like covered in a class? _____

Do you have expertise that you would like to share? Please describe.
_____ ☐

Would you be willing to be listed in the Helpline of the *Journal*?
If so, what subject? _____ Calling hours: _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

Would you like to help the Club in the following areas?
Resource Center Staff _____ Journal Staff _____
Computer Doctor _____ Room Setup _____ Teach Class _____
Other _____

What topics would you like to see for monthly programs?

What can the SCPCUG do to help you and others?

If you were told about the SCPCUG by a club member, write that member's name here _____

Make check payable to: Space Coast PC Users Group
Mail to: SCPCUG , 801 Del Rio Way, #304, Merritt Island, Fl 32953

SPACE COAST PC USERS GROUP, INC.
801 Del Rio Way, #304,
Merritt Island, Fl , 32953

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Space Coast PC Users Group is an independent, not for profit, computer group open to anyone interested in computers. It is not affiliated with any business. Our purpose is to serve as an educational, scientific, and literary organization designed to enhance computer literacy.

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Initial Membership $25 . Annual Dues have Been Suspended

BENEFITS: Members get the monthly   *Journal*. In addition, <u>only</u> members can:
· copy from the Shareware library
· participate in meeting drawings
attend special seminars/workshops
talk to one of our computer 'doctors'
· use the Helplines

NEXT MEETING
November 19, 2020

Merritt Island Library Auditorium   1185 North Courtenay Parkway, Merritt Island, FL

To get to Auditorium after entering the front door, go to the seccond door on the left.

Guests are always welcome at the Space Coast PC Users Group meeting.