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Northeast Wisconsin Personal Computer Users Group Newsletter

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APRIL MEETING

April 20, 2017

7 pm.

Fox Valley Technical
College

Bordini Center Room BC 143



Print Shop

By

Sharon Wichman

RAMblings

By Sharon Wichman, NEW PCUG President



Hi All, I hope everyone had a great Easter. The weather is warming up nicely, my flowers are blossoming beautifully, and I love spring.

So, this coming Thursday is our meeting and I will be doing a presentation on Photo Editing. I was specifically going to do Microsoft's Digital Image Pro which I have used since it came out in about 2006 with version 6 and on up till version 10. I know Microsoft no longer supports it since, I think, 2012 but there are a few places on the web you may be able to order it, although there's very few websites I could find.

I'm not sure if doing a presentation on it would even be worthwhile if you can't get the program any more, and it's a shame since that's the only image editing program that would add a flash to a photo if you forgot to turn the flash on.

So I guess we can either discuss other image editing programs that you can find free Orrrr I can just move on to Broderbund's "The Print Shop" that I was gonna do in May.

It's a program for creating Invitations, Greeting Cards for any occasion, Banners, Booklets, Business Cards, Calendars, Envelopes with mail merge, labels, Newsletters, postcards, Signs, Transfers, and that's only part of what you could make. The possibilities are endless. This program is not free but it's not expensive either. It sells for \$39.99 at Broderbund's website.

I have been using this program since it first started back in 1993 when it only had black and white graphics; it's the best program ever. So we'll see on Thursday what everyone would like to see. And we'll see you all on Thursday.

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Articles in this newsletter are provided as a service of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which our group is a member



Recover, Restore, Backup, Clone, Image?

By Carol Picard, Editor / Webmaster, Midland Computer Club, MI
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The most important steps for recovery need to be completed before a problem occurs. First step is to create a recovery drive. Depending on the computer, this could require a 16Gb or 32Gb flash drive. My suggestion is to use a 32 Gb flash drive. Everything on the flash drive will be deleted and you cannot use the drive for anything else. Well-known brands, 32 Gb flash drives, were recently on sale for less than \$10.00.

To create a recovery drive on a Windows 10 computer, connect the flash drive to the computer, search for recovery, click Create a recovery drive. Follow the prompts to create the drive. Make sure “Back up system files to the recovery drive” is selected. The minimum size of flash drive needed will be indicated.

A flash drive has less usable space than the amount of space indicated on the label, so, if it indicates 16Gb needed, you will actually need a 32Gb flash drive. It could take an hour or more to create the recovery drive. During the process, you will see a prompt to “Delete the recovery partition from your PC”.

Do not click that option, so you still have the ability to run recovery from the hard drive. Make sure you get the message that the recovery drive was successfully created. If not, try again. After safely removing the flash drive, label it and store it in a safe place. The flash drive is bootable. When you need to use it, insert it in the computer, turn on the computer, and it should automatically boot from the flash drive. However, depending on the computer, you may have to access startup or bios options to boot from the flash drive.

The recovery drive offers more than one recovery option. Depending on what is wrong with the computer, you may be able to save personal files, or may only be able to reinstall the Windows operating system and any programs that were installed by the manufacturer, which is why it is important to have a good backup.

The next step is to back up personal data, e.g., documents, photos, videos, etc. If you are using an email client installed on your computer, such as Outlook or Thunderbird, find out how to back up contacts and emails. Other software programs may store data in special locations, so you will need to find those as well.

Backing up personal data is not a one-time event. Develop a backup plan and follow it because the time that you miss creating a couple backups is when you are going to need them. One of our members mentioned he uses five flash drives for backing up data, backing up once a week, rotating through the flash drives. Based on your use of the computer, you may decide to back up more or less often. Why have more than one or two backups? If you accidentally delete a file, you may not realize it right away and, if you only have a couple backups, by the time you realize the file is missing, you may have written over the last backup that contained that file. Store backup drives in a safe place, e.g., fireproof safe, or at least in another area in your house, away from the computer. For pictures, videos, really important documents, you might want to copy them to an additional flash drive and store that drive at another location.

Most software programs are downloaded directly to our computers so we don't have CD/DVD drives to reinstall from. Generally, if you need to reinstall the software, you can go to the vendor's website and download it again. However, there may be restrictions on downloading the software more than once, or there may be a charge to upgrade to a more current version. After downloading new software, copy the installation files to a flash drive or external hard drive. When software comes with activation codes, I print that information to a pdf file and save the pdf file on the same drive as the installation files.

You can manually back up files by copying them from your computer to your flash or external drive. Or you may decide to use a software program to manage the backup process. Both free and paid backup programs are available, although some free ones have limited functionality. When purchasing a new external hard drive, it may include backup software. Backup software lets you specify what to back up and to set a schedule for automatic backups. Some have the option to schedule an initial full backup and subsequent smaller backups, called incremental backups, backing up files that have changed since the last full backup. One caution is that viruses can spread to attached drives. Instead of automatic backup, which requires the backup drive be connected at all times, you can run manual backups, connecting the drive only while running the backup.

Online backup and cloud storage are other options to consider. There is generally a charge for online backup service and may be a charge for cloud storage, depending on how much data you have. An advantage is that you can generally access your data from another device, e.g., computer, tablet, smartphone. Online/Cloud storage may not prevent loss of data if your computer is locked by ransomware.

With any backup solution, you should occasionally check to make sure the backups are running successfully and that you can recover files. Consider using a program that allows you to restore select files without using the software that was used to create the backup. You may find you need a file while your computer is out of commission and you want to be able to connect the backup drive to another computer and access files without having to install software on that computer. Also, if you only need one or two files, you don't want to have to restore the entire backup.

Whatever backup strategy you use, make sure it is backing up everything you need. I installed a new hard drive for someone whose hard drive had failed. He was using online backup so was confident he would recover all of his data but, the default settings for the service he was using did not include videos, so they were not being backed up and we were unable to recover the videos from the failed hard drive.

Another backup/recovery option we discussed was creating an image (also called system image) of the hard drive. If necessary to wipe/format a hard drive, an image can restore the entire contents of a hard drive; the operating system, programs, and personal files. Some backup programs also provide the option to create an image.

While the terms image and clone are often used interchangeably, the exact definition of clone is when two hard drives are installed in a computer and data is copied from old to new, which requires that the original hard drive is still working. The last time I purchased a new hard drive, it came with a version of True Image software that provided this capability and I was up and running in a short period of time with all of my user ids, programs, data and settings.

When creating a system image most flash drives will be too small so you will need an external hard drive. Depending on the size of the external hard drive, multiple images can be saved to the same drive. Name the image (or the folder you save it in) so you can identify when it was created and, if you have multiple computers, which computer it was created from. The program used to create the image prompts you to create a bootable flash drive, which only has to be done once. You boot the computer from the flash drive and it contains the software to restore the image from the external drive. If you have multiple computers, you may need to create a bootable flash drive for each computer. In most cases, an image or clone can't be used to restore to a different computer, although some software may support this.

Another term discussed was System Restore. This option usually requires being able to boot into Windows. System Restore can be used if the computer isn't working correctly and you suspect recent changes caused the problem, or as an initial troubleshooting step, before resorting to recovery. Make sure system restore is turned on. After upgrading from Windows 7 to Windows 10, I discovered that system restore had been turned off. Windows automatically creates restore points before performing certain actions. You can manually create a restore point, e.g., before installing new software.

To access system restore, search for system and click create a restore point. It should open System Protection under System Properties. Under Protection Settings, it will list the drives on the computer and whether protection is on or off. Normally, you just want protection on for (C:). If it is not on, click Configure and turn it on. Make sure the percentage of disk space available for system restore is set to something other than 0, 10% should be good in most cases.

To create a restore point, click Create and follow the prompts. To revert to a previous restore point, click System Restore... , click Next. To see more restore points, click to place checkmark in box to left of "Show more restore points". Click the restore point you want to use and click Next. If you know when the problem started, chose the restore point just before that date/time. If you don't know which restore point to use, start with the most recent and, if that doesn't fix the problem, run System restore again and choose a different restore point. System restore is not supposed to affect your personal files, but make sure your backup is current, just in case.

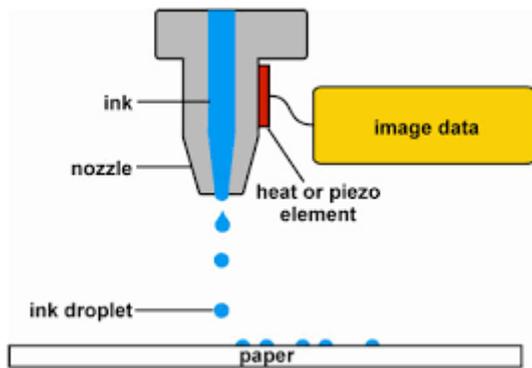
In some cases, system restore fails and Windows automatically returns the computer to how it was before system restore ran. There is also an option to undo a system restore. After restoring to a date prior to a Windows update or a software installation, it may be necessary to reinstall the update or software.

Inkjet Printers

By Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ
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The inkjet is the most common type of printer used at home. These are inexpensive (although the ink is relatively costly), and they print color, including photos, with high enough quality for most users. The other common type for home use is the laser, which is more expensive (although the per-page costs is lower because toner is less expensive than inkjet ink) and require more power. For example, most UPSes won't power them.

Typically, inkjets use four inks, cyan, yellow, magenta, and black, with separate cartridges and print heads for each. The ink is ejected, one drop at a time, by either thermal or piezo-electric means. Thermal heads heat a tiny amount of ink and the resulting steam propels a single drop, while piezo-electric ones change shape slightly to propel an ink drop mechanically. The great majority of consumer printers are thermal, but they require compromises in the ink design, since it must endure high heat. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inkjet_printing for a good introduction to the technology.



If you print only on letter paper, use Windows, and connect to a PC's USB port, almost any inkjet will give satisfactory service. Linux and Mac users and those networking their printer or printing on other media have to be more careful.

Printers are remarkably inexpensive, but my experience is that they have fairly short lives, and a printer is the PC component most likely to fail. Expensive models don't appear to last any longer than cheap ones, so unless you have special needs, buy something cheap. My inkjets always wait to fail until I've purchased a large supply of ink cartridges, which are never usable in the replacement, even a similar model from the same manufacturer. The defense strategy is obvious; keep only a small supply of cartridges on hand. Although a set of ink cartridges will often cost more than the printer, you should buy a replacement set soon after you get a new printer, as many printers are shipped with only partially-filled cartridges.

The quality of off-brand cartridges varies, and some I've used tended to clog or fail in other ways. Refill kits seem to be disappearing, probably because printer manufacturers have devised schemes to discourage their use. You can buy refilled cartridges, but here too the quality varies. Considering the low cost of printers and the high cost of name-brand ink, you may wish to explore here. Using other than your printer manufacturer's cartridges usually voids the warranty, so it would be wise to wait until the printer warranty has expired to experiment; after that you have little to lose. I do relatively little printing, and the frustrations of dealing with cheap cartridges are not worth the savings for me.

Be careful when buying other than letter paper, such as business cards or labels, as many are printer specific. Using laser stock in an ink-jet guarantees smearing. Download the manual before you buy a printer and check that it will do what you need, especially if you will be using other than 8 1/2 by 11 letter paper. Despite what the manual says, non-standard paper sizes may not feed properly. I recently tried to print name-tags that came in 4 1/4 by 11 inch sheets. Although envelopes of about the same size printed fine, the name tags sheets would not feed. I had to fashion a custom guide, and even then, the feeding was far from reliable. My printer also would not feed card stock when I first got it, but this improved after a few days. Apparently, the feed rollers needed to be roughed up to work properly. Some printers don't like mixed paper in the tray. I've had problems mixing card stock and letter paper, even though both were the same size, but the manual warned against this. Many printers include a duplexer that implements double-sided printing. However, these often work only with standard-weight letter paper.

The most common problems are clogs and paper jams. Clearing an ink clog generally requires no more than running the printer's cleaning routine. (Again, see the manual.) This can sometimes be started by the proper dance on the printer's buttons, but may require a maintenance utility that you can install from the CD supplied with the unit. Unfortunately, these may not be available for OS X and are never available for Linux. Many Mac and Linux users have Windows available on a virtual machine or can dual boot to it. If you don't, do your research before you buy.

If you do experience a paper jam, don't yank, as this will almost certainly break something, and printer repairs are seldom economical. Instead, get on the Internet and find how to clear it. Similarly, do some research if you begin to experience paper misfeeds; often, this can be cured by a proper cleaning of the feed mechanism.

Some years ago, Windows-only printers were common. These had non-standard interfaces and required proprietary drivers, which were available only for Windows. The switch to USB has eliminated most of these, except for Canon. My experience is that no new Canon printer is usable with Linux. After a while, Linux developers may manage to reverse-engineer the interface, so that many older Canons are usable, but each new model requires a repeat of the process. At the other extreme, HP has traditionally been Linux friendly. If your operating system is not Windows, you may not have support software to do such things as checking ink supplies and trouble-shooting. However, printers are now beginning to include status displays and control panels to make them more OS agnostic.

All-in-one models that combine a printer with a scanner and a fax are common. Fax is quickly going the way of the dial telephone, which makes it, at least for me, a useless feature. I also prefer a separate scanner as I use this much less than the printer, and I feel it adds enough mechanical complexity to make an already failure-prone device even more so. Again, scanners are a problem area for Linux, and finding a compatible printer-scanner is more difficult than finding just a printer.

With respect to the interface, USB is almost universal, but many models also include Ethernet and/or wireless ports. The last two allow more than one computer to share a printer; however, the configuration is sometimes not trivial. In particular, encrypted wi-fi can be troublesome (and you are foolish if you use non-encrypted wi-fi). WPS can make this easier, but be sure to disable it after you configure your printer, as it makes your network less secure. These networking ports are cheap to add and are unlikely to present a reliability problem, but unless you have some network configuring experience, you may find them unusable.

Again, read the manual, even if you print only on standard paper. For example, many printers must be shut down with their power switches. Turning off using the outlet strip into which they're plugged may lead to problems, such as ink clogs.

The promise of a paperless world has proven to be false, and few of us would be comfortable without a printer attached to our computers. However, their mechanisms are complex and subject to malfunction and failure, and they require more care than most other computer components. Spending a few minutes with the manual can extend the life of yours and will probably reveal new abilities.

Backup, Restore

(Continued from Page 3)

If you suspect you have a virus on your computer, and don't know whether any of the images/backups contain the virus, it is probably best to use the Windows recovery drive to reinstall Windows and then manually restore personal files. If you don't have a recovery drive, but have access to another computer, you can create recovery media for Windows 10. (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows10>). Previous versions of Windows required entering a code to activate.

However, once Windows 10 has been installed and activated, you don't need to enter a code when reinstalling Windows 10 on that computer. When restoring from a backup that may contain infected files, don't restore executable files (.exe) as they are more likely to contain viruses.

With the recovery drive and good backups, you will be prepared when a problem occurs.

Where to Get Tech Today

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It seems we have more and more technology available in the products we buy. Almost everything is getting networked these days, and the categories of products where electronics now play a major part continue to increase. This has expanded the number of places to get tech far beyond the traditional sources of a decade ago. A lot of stores that used to be the traditional sources for computers and technology have gone away, while a lot more shopping for the devices we need is done online.

It seems you can't swing an HDMI cable in practically any room in the typical house these days (including the garage and often the back yard) without hitting something containing electronics. Never mind the TVs, computers, game systems, tablets and phones - electronics and connectivity have worked their way into almost every device and appliance you see. Practically every kitchen appliance has the strong possibility of being connected to the Internet, controlled by a timer or digitally enhanced. Refrigerators, microwaves, stoves and dishwashers are now loaded with tech. Even the lowly meat thermometer has gone digital.

Digital thermostats keep the house temperature comfortable while saving energy. Wi-Fi reaches into every corner of the house and even out onto the patio, through repeaters and extenders. Voice-operated assistants like Amazon's Echo and Google's Home Assistant provide information and control anywhere your voice can be heard. Lights, camera, action - home control and alarm systems control lights and appliances, allow remote monitoring and signal when security has been breached. Even the laundry room gets into the act with efficient washers and dryers with sophisticated features. With so much electronics in a modern automobile, you might have as many processors in your garage as in the rest of the house.

With all this technology spread throughout the items in your home, practically every store has had to become a technology store. Home improvement stores like Home Depot and Lowe's are now much more than lumber yards; since they sell so many smart appliances and smart home devices, their employees have to know more than just nails and screws. The trick is getting good tech advice from all those diverse stores that now sell smart stuff. You can expect the Sprint, Verizon and ATT stores to have tech-savvy employees, but what about Walmart, Target, Costco, Ace Hardware and O'Reilly Auto Parts?

Ghosts of Tech Stores Past

A few decades ago, there were specific places to go to get high tech items, places like RadioShack, CompUSA and Fry's Electronics. There used to be lots of small independent computer stores in San Diego, mostly in the Kearny Mesa area. Maybe it was the decline of the computer, the rise of tech in everything or competition from the Internet, but many of those tech stores are long gone, and the ones remaining are struggling.

Many RadioShack stores have closed, and most of the remaining stores are branded as "Sprint" stores. Remember CompUSA, Circuit City and Incredible Universe? All of those chains couldn't make it and closed down. Best Buy and Fry's Electronics have managed to survive, but are having to work hard to compete with online retailers and all the big box stores selling electronics. Apple and Microsoft have established their own stores, but only in very limited markets.

The real battle in tech retailing is probably in online sales versus brick and mortar stores. Amazon not only sells technology, but with their Kindle e-readers and tablets, Echo / Dot / Tap assistants and their warehouse automation to speed up order fulfillment (and maybe even delivery drones), they are also developing technology. The irony is that while brick and mortar stores are working hard to push their own online sales, Amazon is starting to open physical stores.

So, where will your next tech purchase come from? Will it be from Amazon, Fry's, the Apple Store, the Toyota dealer or REI?



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Membership, Dues And Renewals

All personal computer users in the Valley are invited to join the Northeast Wisconsin Personal Users Group. Membership entitles you to the monthly newsletter, special discounts, and more.

Annual dues are \$15 for single person memberships and \$20 for family memberships. You may pay your dues at the meeting or by mail to Nan MacDonald, 2440 Parkside Drive, Oshkosh, WI 54901. Her email address is macduks@att.net.

Members are reminded to renew their annual memberships as above.

Date of renewal is November of each year.

