



PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP, INC GAZETTE



October 2011

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October 2011

“JOIN US FOR FUN AND LEARNING AT CROSSVILLE’S COMPUTER CLUB”

Volume 17, Issue 10

This Month’s Meetings

**October 7 at 1 p.m.
At FFG Community Church
Photo Editing Workshop**

**October 17 at 3 p.m.
At 127 S. Senior Center
General Meeting**

**October 15 at 10 a.m.
At 127 S. Senior Center
Investment SIG**

**October 27 at 1 p.m.
At FFG Community Church
Photography Club**

October Program

“The Cloud”

Cloud computing is accessing software that you want to use via the Internet, as opposed to having the software installed on your computer. This means that you can access the software and use it from any computer thru the Internet. You never have to update the software as it is done for you by the “Cloud Provider”. Data that you generate is saved externally on the Cloud Server. Security is provided by the “Cloud Provider”. Carl Nordeen will present this program and discuss the pros and cons of Cloud Computing.

Tip of the Month

This bit of freeware is very good and the price is right:

Duplicate Cleaner is a great way to help keep your files in order. You can scan your folders (documents, pictures, music, movies, anything) and it will detect anywhere where you have duplicate copies of your files. Not only this, but it will also assist you in selecting the copies to delete. It's free, and it is very fast.

<http://www.duplicatecleaner.com/>

Submitted by Bob Mohar

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“FREE” Table

We have set up a table at our member meetings to share our “extra” goodies with other club members.

If you have something to give away, bring it in and put it on the FREE table. It's first come, first served. If you see something you want, help yourself.



Membership Dues and Expiration Dates

Membership dues are \$25 a year for a family, \$20 a year for an individual, and \$10 a year for a student 21 years of age or under. Your membership is valid for 12 months from the month you join (or renew your membership). Please pay your dues to the treasurer before the last day of your anniversary month. Anyone who is 30 days or more in arrears with membership dues cannot participate in the door prize drawings.

Corporate memberships are \$25 a year for the first two memberships and \$10 a year for each additional membership from the same company.

Our Club cannot exist without you, the members. Remember, you and your membership dues are important to keep the club functioning!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DISCLAIMER

All members of the Plateau PC Users Group are willing to help one another in the area of advice and tutorial instruction over the phone. If you should require more involved services or instruction, we have a few members who are very knowledgeable in several areas. As a responsible consumer, it is up to you to discuss, before retaining a member, any and ALL charges for repair services and time consuming tutorial activities.

It is not the desire of this Board of Directors to set fees for individuals for services rendered, nor the responsibility to intervene between members who enter into a contract among themselves

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Investment Club	Bob Mohar	(931) 707-0434
Photography SIG	Jim Mansfield	(931) 484-6920

Up Coming Meeting

The next General Meeting of the
PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP
Will be on **November 21, 2011 at 3:00 P. M. at**
127 S. SENIOR CENTER

Staples will present a program highlighting new equipment available for Christmas stocking stuffers.

New Members

Richard Albins
Kevin Coyne
Linda Cox
Dick Del Frate

Classes

Please send ideas for new classes to Alan Baker
(ambaker@citlink.net)

Cool Sites

WIMP.COM

An aggregator of videos from various sites all over the world. Funny commercials, youtube stuff, tv shows and, of course, cute kittens.

Submitted by Steve Rosenstein

News of the Special Interest Groups

The PPCUG sponsors several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) tailored to meet the varied needs of our many members. Each SIG is a small group whose leader prepares material for presentation and encourages open discussion and questions. We urge you to attend the SIGs and hope you will find one or more of interest to you. Ideas for additional groups are welcome, as are volunteers to form and lead new SIGs.

Investment Club

Meets the third Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. at the 127 S. Senior Center. The leader is Bob Mohar . Anyone interested should contact Bob at 707-0434”.

Pleasant Hill Group

The Pleasant Hill group meetings will be announced by the SIG Leader, Dick Riesz. Meetings are held in the Pleasant Hill Community House on Main Street across from the Pleasant Hill Post Office. All members are welcome and visitors from the Pleasant Hill area are especially encouraged to come.

Photography Club

The Photography Club, a PPCUG SIG, meets the fourth Thursday of each month at the Fairfield Glade Community Church at 1:00PM. Topics vary each month but we show and discuss member's photos each month. One or two "People's Choice" photos are submitted to the Glade Vista each month for publication. The SIG leader is Jim Mansfield.

A photo editing workshop is held at 1PM at the FFG Community church on the first Friday of each month.

PPCUG ISP

We wish to thank the following for providing ISP connections:

- Frontier for DSL at the 127 Senior Center and Fairfield Glade
- Multipro for dialup at Pleasant Hill

PPCUG Website

Visit our website at www.PPCUGinc.com. The Learning Center class schedule and Gazette are all available on our web site.

Send your comments and suggestions to the
Webmaster, Don Lewis
Webmaster@ppcuginc.com (931) 456-5352

General Meeting Minutes

PPCUG 09/20/2011

The meeting was called to order by Alan Baker at 1500

Carl Nordeen began Q and A session with information on recent plague of “root kit” problems. By the nature of this problem it is difficult to detect. These programs are used to steal information from user usually for illicit purposes. This will most likely need tech help to correct. Some of many tools which may be used are GMER, RKR (root kit reveal-er), and bleepingcomputer.com.

Do all email programs have “out of office”reply type capability? Most do, usually found in options/tools/settings menus. Caution should be exercised in using these since vacation notices to the wrong people may be an invitation to burglary or mischief.

One member had intermittent problem attributed to “loose” components inside computer. Carl explained how this occurs due to temperature cycling within unit causing expansion and contraction. Most components are held in place by clips, dogs or screws to hold in place.

Are anti-virus programs important and how do they work? Indeed anti-virus programs are very important and several free programs are very good. MS security essentials is one of the free downloads which works well. These programs look for file names known to be virus files. These file name lists are continually updated. No anti-virus program is 100% successful. Only one anti-virus program should be active at one time.

A question about forwarding or replying to emails without removing the address lists on the original message can cause problem was brought up. This kind of situation is ripe for mining email addresses for sellers and mailers of spam. Please remove addresses before forwarding.

After break president Steve Rosenstein opened program portion with show of hands of guests and a brief explanation of benefit of becoming a member. Steve empathized that this club is for the benefit of pc users of all levels of expertise or lack thereof.

Bonnie Parrish, our presenter, was introduced and began program with an introduction to VOIP. Bonnie initially used Vonage but later found that for her, Skype was a less expensive and more useful product.

Bonnie also introduced group to MagicJack. MagicJack is a device which allows an ordinary analog phone to be used through an internet connection to call anywhere in the world for free once the initial purchase of the device is made for the first year, plus a small annual fee in following years. The initial purchase is approximately \$40 and subsequent annual fee of \$20. Most common phone features are available with MagicJack. Pros of the MagicJack are low cost entry and ongoing service, with unlimited calling to any phone and receiving calls from any phone. Convenient portability for travel much like cell phone at lower cost. Setup is almost automatic as in a plug-n-play operation with self contained software which assigns new number after customer selected area code.

Cons of the system are that a PC with high speed capability must be left on in order for phones to work, 911 service may not be available, an inability to keep current phone number and no tech support for problems.

One of the most widely used VOIP services is SKYPE. Bonnie arranged a live demonstration of a SKYPE voice/video call with a friend in Florida to show the ease and clarity of the network. During the call each party was able to

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see the other at their individual discretion via an inexpensive portable camera in Bonnie's case.

Equipment necessary to use SKYPE for VOIP with video is a PC with adequate speed and memory, webcam, speakers and microphone along with a high speed internet capability. Usually peripheral equipment can be purchased at Radio Shack WalMart Staples etc. Dial up will not work for these applications. To get setup download software from the skype.com website and follow directions. A great deal of information on VOIP is available at about.com Voice over internet website. Once software is downloaded it is important to carefully go through the menus to customize the settings and contacts to suit your individual needs and preferences.

Calls from a SKYPE user to another SKYPE user anywhere are free. World wide there are about 500 million SKYPE users. Calls to non-users are charged at rates much lower than normal landline calls. The extra charges can be paid through a prepaid credit card account setup for this purpose.

Before adjourning Alan Baker announced to the membership that Don Lewis the club Webmaster who has served in that capacity for many years has asked to be relieved of that responsibility. With regret and the thanks of all members present, Don received a hearty round of applause and thanks for his service to the club. Alan Baker has agreed to take over web responsibilities from Don. Alan is asking for volunteers to assist him in updating and incorporating additional features into the site.

Audience suggestions for future meeting programs mentioned Facebook and free TV over internet as two possibilities.

Next months program will be hosted by Staples talking about wish list items available for Christmas as well as what's new in tablet computers.

Door prize winners were Mary Jane Gradle (USB computer light) and Bob Willis (pack of CDRs).

Meeting adjourned at 1715.

Submitted by:
Dick Del Frate
Secretary

Batch Image Converting with FastStone

By Constance Brown, President, Canton/Alliance/Massillon Computer User Group, Ohio
June 2011 issue, The Memory Map
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Last week I started a new blog where I am posting articles for quick reference with a special emphasis on free software. Our 6:00 special interest groups, also known as SIGS, are focusing on a range of free software this year. In May we discussed information on how to use FastStone to prepare a picture for print. Some of you may wish to review that information. Visit www.stepcotraining.wordpress.com and look at the May archives. As we discussed in the SIG and on the blog, commercial prints must be 300 dpi or more. However, email and websites present pictures entirely differently. In both cases you will want the smallest size picture possible that shows up attractively on a screen. Using 72 dpi is perfectly acceptable in these cases. A small picture size is also desirable. Let us take a look at some ways FastStone gives us the capability of resizing to smaller print sizes.

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Often I wish to send or post several pictures at the same time. In order to do this quickly, I use “batch image convert” in FastStone. First I select all the pictures I wish to post to my web site, Facebook, or send via email. I like to copy all of these to one folder which, for sake of illustration, we shall name Web Selections May 2011 .

Then I create a folder inside the one I just created which, in this example, I will name Web Ready May 2011.

In this case there are three things I wish to accomplish: 1) Renaming each picture so that I lose no data from my original picture, 2) Resizing my picture for the purpose I wish to use it, and 3) Placing the re-sized pictures into their own folder. All three things can be accomplished quickly with FastStone. I will highlight all the pictures inside the folder titled Web Selections May 2011. Now I will click on Tools in the menu or on F3 and select Batch Convert Selected Images. The right half of the window that opens shows the images I have selected. Underneath this listing I can select the output format. When I am posting to the web I always use jpeg, not jpeg 2000. Underneath the output format, I can choose the output folder by browsing to the folder I have already created—Web Ready May 2011.

Next I check the box titled, Use Advanced Options and click on the Advanced Options button. I check the box titled Resize and select a size. Using the drop down menu, I can pick a standard size. Usually 640 x 480 pixels is very good for email or Facebook.

Sometimes I have the need to resize based on a predefined side. To do that, click on the radio button titled Resize Based on One Side. Using the drop down menu, you can choose to have the long side or the short side of the picture resized to whatever you choose. This is really convenient when you are working with both portrait and landscape pictures. You can choose for the long side to be 640 pixels. That makes all the prints the same size regardless of which way they present.

Several other options are also available as you click the tabs across the top. Remember that whatever you select will be applied to all the pictures in the batch. If you choose to add text, all the pictures will have the same text applied to them. If you choose to rotate, all the pictures will rotate. The same thing applies to borders and watermarks. Once you have made your selections, click OK.

Now you are ready to rename the pictures. Underneath the box you checked to Use Advanced Options is a box to check to Rename. This feature is great. It allows you to name the new pictures so that nothing happens to the originals, which in this case, are larger files with much more captured information that you will need when you decide To make prints and enlargements. When you check Rename, the first option is Image#####. I usually replace the word Image with something else but leave the # signs so that the images will be numbered. Suppose I were posting pictures from a trip to Canada. I could rename as CANweb##### or Canada#####.

Now I am ready to click on Convert. My pictures will be renamed, resized, and placed in the folder that I have selected. What a time saver! I used to go through this process on each individual picture. When I needed many pictures for a web site, the process took hours!

Let me point out a few more of many really great features in FastStone. Printing contact sheets has always been a bit of a challenge. Not anymore! Suppose you just finished a photo shoot for your grandparents’ 50th anniversary. The family wants to order photos and you need a contact sheet so they can select the photos they want. Voila!

Click on Create in your tool bar and select Contact Sheet Builder. You need to pay attention to all three tabs. The first one lets you select pictures from multiple folders. FYI, the name that is automatically assigned to the contact sheet is the name of the first folder that you select from which to pull pictures.

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The second tab lets you determine background color, how many thumbnails you want to place on the page, and whether you wish to start a new page when you pull from a separate folder.

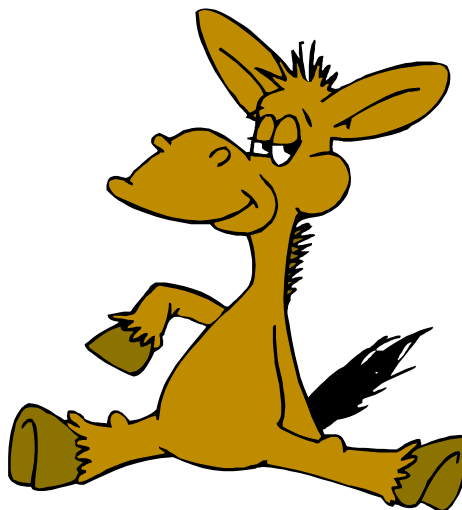
The third tab lets you preview the sheet you created. By the way, the output format is pdf, one of the file types that anyone can open if they have a free pdf reader.

Another option you will discover when you click on Create is the Slide Show builder. This is probably the easiest builder you will find anywhere. Just select the pictures by clicking Add File or Add Folder (perfect if you have your pictures organized), select a background color, select Loop if you want the slide show to play over and over again, choose to stretch small images if you wish—probably a good idea, either show or not show text (depends on how you have named the files), select from 156 transition effects or click on the three little dots and select ALL so that the effects change from pictures to picture, browse to the music file you wish to play while the slide show runs, and select the quality and size of the pictures. Standard sizes are available at the click of the button and should be the same, if possible, as the screen you will use to view the show. Remember that projectors have size limits. If your projector has only an 800 x 600 and you will be presenting to a group using it, make the pictures for the slide show that same size.

Much more is available in this program, including cloning (copying from one part of a picture to another), shadow and highlight adjustments, as well as color, general lighting, and histogram adjustments, adding text to pictures, shrinking pictures to extremely small sizes or enlarging them beyond the size the camera actually took while maintaining excellent quality, special effects, and more.

I am pleased to tell you that you can download an excellent tutorial by visiting <http://www.faststone.org/FSIVTutorial.htm>.

The folks at faststone.org who continually improve this software are doing a fabulous job. I believe that this one piece of software will accomplish 85% of what the average user wants. Oh yes, it is also available as a portable program that operates from a flash drive. Now you can take the program on vacation and use it from the computer in your Favorite hotel without installing it on any computer!



Choosing a Mouse

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS Newsletter
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sandy (at) compukiss.com

The mouse is a useful computer tool. Here's a little history combined with information on the many different types of mice available today.

Many people seem to be curious how the mouse got its name. In the early 1960's, a man named Douglas Engelbart was fascinated with a theory he called "human augmentation technology," an idea that the computer should be used to enhance human performance. Up to that time, computers were useful only to military and scientific communities. In 1968, Engelbart made an input device to help people interact with the computer. The original mouse was a small rectangular wooden box with a cable running to the computer. Since the cord looked like a tail and mice are known for scurrying along a surface, this new device quickly became known as a mouse. The mouse turned out to be one of Englebart's most ingenious ideas. Yet, Englebart's original ideas were rejected, only to be resurrected later by others who took both the credit and the financial rewards. Because it frees the user from having to exclusively use the keyboard, the mouse is recognized as one of the great breakthroughs in computing.

The basic functionality and size of the mouse that we use today has changed little since 1968, but there have been changes in the technology behind the mouse. Older mice worked by a tracking ball on the bottom of the device. If you are still using this type of roller ball mouse, it is time for an upgrade.

The newer type of mouse is the optical mouse. The optical mouse uses a tiny camera to take thousands of pictures every second. It employs a light-emitting diode (LED) that bounces light off the surface on to a CMOS sensor that is similar to the sensors used in some digital cameras.

Optical mice have several advantages over the traditional roller ball mice:

- They have better tracking and a smoother response.
- There are no moving parts to wear out.
- While dirt gathered inside of the ball and roller bars of traditional mice interfering with the tracking, the optical mouse is sealed and there is no way for dirt to get inside the mouse.
- They can be used on most surfaces without a mouse pad. The only exception is a mirror, glass, or extremely shiny surface.

Most optical mice have a red light that shines through the bottom of the mouse. The light can actually be any color. I have even seen a few that cycle through various colors, although I don't really see the point in that because the bottom of the mouse is usually not seen.

One of the newest types of mice is the laser mouse. This is a type of optical mouse that uses a laser beam instead of an LED light. The laser beam is invisible, or nearly invisible, to the human eye. The laser mouse is more precise and accurate, but also more expensive. It's great for professional graphic designers and some gamers might find them useful, but the average computer user won't see enough difference to warrant the increased cost.

So if you are still using a mouse with a roller ball on the bottom, you might want to upgrade to an optical mouse. Or buy a new computer, most of which now come with optical mice. You will see a difference.

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Oh, and when you get to the store, be prepared to spend a little time in making a decision. You will find designer mice in red, green, blue, purple, and other colors. You will also see mice in many different sizes with a large variety of finishes. The most important thing, however, may be for you to choose a mouse that fits your hand and feels comfortable.

Also remember that there are other input devices that can be substituted for a mouse. There are trackballs, joy sticks, and touch pads that can be used if you don't find a mouse comfortable. There are also specialized devices that can be used for people with disabilities. Some of these devices can even adjust for shaky hands and other dexterity problems. I use a specialized mouse called an Aerobic Mouse (www.aerobicmouse.com) that is especially designed for people with arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome. It's a big, ugly mouse, but I love it. It keeps your hand in a handshake position that alleviates the twist in your wrist that can cause pain if you use the computer a lot or have carpal tunnel syndrome. It also steadies the hand, making using the mouse easier.

So take your time and find the mouse or input device that is right for you. Today, most mice attach to your computer through the USB port. This is a nice feature since it means that if you and your honey want to use different mice, they can both be plugged in at the same time and each person can have constant access to the mouse of their choice.

"Best Free Software" Lists from Gizmo Now Include iPad and Android

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/top-freeware-picks-category-editors.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-ipad-apps.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-android-apps.htm>

I am frequently asked about information and sources of free software, and my most frequent response has had something to do with Gizmo, and his comprehensive website techsupportalert.com. Gizmo, also known as Gizmo Richards, is really Ian Richards, an Australian, who has been active in the hardware and software industries for many years, and has developed an enviable reputation as the senior editor of a major computer publication. Gizmo compiled a list of 46 free software programs as a lark, and intended it for internal use, but when his list went viral, Gizmo attained celebrity status.

Now, Gizmo's TechSupportAlert.com lists over 200 categories of free software, each product rated by his sizeable community of volunteers. According to Gizmo on techsupportalert.com/about-this-site, "Gizmo's Freeware is a non-commercial community website staffed entirely by volunteers. Our primary function is to help you select the best freeware product for your particular needs. The best freeware programs are as good as or better than their commercial counterparts, but finding the most appropriate program can be challenging. Sure, there are dozens of freeware download sites on the web, but few of these actually help you select the best program for your needs. That's what we do here. No downloads, just honest advice and useful guidance. It's honest because this is a community-based site staffed by volunteers and we have no commercial affiliations."

TechSupportAlert.com is continuously revised, with new and updated categories of software appearing on a daily basis. I personally use Gizmo regularly to locate software for my own use, as well as make recommendations to others seeking free software solutions. One section that I visit several times a week is Gizmo's "The Editors' Choice List: Our Selection of the Best PC Freeware" at www.techsupportalert.com/content/top-freeware-picks-category-editors.htm. According to Gizmo, "This really is a "best of the best" list. Most of the products in this list have been

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awarded the coveted "Gizmo's Top" pick award signifying they are the best free product in their class." The top pick awards are decided not by Gizmo personally, but the sizable community of volunteers who evaluate the software. On this page is a searchable menu, sorted by type of software, which makes it easy to locate the best of any category. Several of the categories not only list the top picks along with links to the latest review, but sometimes also discusses close finishers that have some substantial benefits or advantages. Gizmo is not a download site, but has the links to the software publishers' websites where the software can be safely downloaded. This listing of "best" free software may be a wise choice to peruse prior to purchasing any commercial software, as many of the free products are very competitive (and sometimes superior) to their commercial counterparts.

With the expanding of popularity of Apple iPads and Google Android devices, Gizmo has expanded its ratings to cover those platforms. The Gizmo "Best Free iPad Apps" list at www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-ipad-apps.htm offers the user a wide selection of top-rated apps, along with instructions for downloading and installation. Similar to the PC directory of top rated free software, this "Best" list is both menu driven and searchable. According to Gizmo, "... here at Gizmo's Freeware, we only select the best from the free ones that work best on your iPad." The menu for the free iPad apps is divided into 10 broad categories, with each category divided into a more detailed directory of the best apps. Each of these apps in the "Best" category have been tested and evaluated by Gizmo's iPad community, and rated as the best app in their respective categories.

While the iPad apps listed were explicitly tested and rated for iPads, many of the listed have a blue plus sign on the bottom-right corner of their icon or logo, which means that particular app is "... designed for or compatible with not only iPad, but also iPhone and iPod touch." I just checked, and the Apple App Store currently lists nearly 400,000 available apps, but by utilizing the Gizmo "Best Free iPad Apps" list, the user is likely to find the best free apps for his purposes.

Google's Android operating system is showing up on smart phones, tablets, and other mobile devices. Google currently lists over 200,000 Android apps in its Android Market, but many of them are not free. Gizmo says, "To help you get the best of the free ones, we have selected some gems in each category and added them here in a single convenient list with clear and brief descriptions of each application item." The Gizmo "Best Free Android Apps" is online at www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-android-apps.htm. The searchable menu is divided into 11 categories, with each category having a list of sub-categories, making the best apps easy to find.

To download and install one of the listed "Best" Android Apps, "Move your mouse over the program icons and scan the QR Code images on this page with your device's barcode scanner; or click the program titles below in your PC's browser or tap them in Android's browser, then install the apps from the Android Market." Using a browser on my desktop computer, when moving my mouse over the logo or icon for a selected Android App, a large QR (Quick Response) code appears on the screen, which can be read by the camera in the Android device, which connects directly to the site to download the app. It sounds complicated, but is actually very fast and easy, and makes downloading the "Best" free Android apps an effortless activity. For those who may not be comfortable with using optically scanned QR codes, simply clicking on the selected program icon will take the user directly to Google's Android Market where the "Install" button will start the installation process.

I have found Gizmo's TechSupportAlert.com to be an invaluable resource, and can strongly recommend it not just for PCs, but for iPad and Android devices as well.



Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 Ultimate

A software review by Sharon Rump, Member, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

July 2011 issue, Sarasota PCUG Monitor

www.spcug.org

pcugedit (at) verizon.net

I have been using other products for years to edit photos. When I was given the opportunity to check out Corel's latest offering, PaintShop Photo Pro X3 Ultimate, I eagerly jumped in to learn something new. I was very excited to open the box and find two small books included. The first one was the *Getting Started Guide* which just walks you through what you can do with this program. The second, the *User Guide*, while small, packs a lot of helpful information to get you on your way to working with all of the features offered in this program. Little software comes with a printed guide and that is what I find the easiest to use when you have a particular issue you want to find out about.

Installation was very simple with no problems. When I opened the program I was a bit disappointed as the work area was black which I really do not prefer. But, the program that I have used for a long time has gone to a dark background so I guess it must make the image that you are working with stand out more and after a while, you get used to it.

The program includes the Organizer, Express Lab and Full Editor.

Corel PaintShop Photo Organizer allows you to look at all of the photos on your computer and you can choose the size to view, the order in which to view (time taken, file size, name, format), the EXIF information and the ability to rate your images. Here you will find everything you could possibly want to know about an image.

The Express Lab presents many tools to quickly make edits to an image, many of them with one simple click.

Upon opening the Full Editor the first thing that I noted was "The Learning Center" which is a pallet down the left side of the workspace. There are lots of options which include *Get Photos, Adjust, Retouch and Restore, Collage, Text and Graphics, Effects and Print and Share*. Clicking on each of these options opens up a more detailed listing to give you more content to help with your learning. There is also a *Corel Guide* which is available from the Help menu or by clicking a small round red button on the right hand side of the screen. This opens up a window that has lots of hyperlinks to tutorials that are being added to the Corel website, templates and new styles available for download as they become available, trial software available from Corel and updates and improvements to the program. I was very impressed with all of the learning tools available.

There are lots of automatic things that you can use on an image when you aren't quite sure how to tweak or enhance an image and then if it isn't exactly what you want you simply use the History Palette to undo that step.

Palettes of the features available are simply turned on and off with a simple click so that you can set up your work area to meet your specific needs. Sometimes I seem to click the wrong place and things disappear. That is another learning opportunity as when I search to find out how to undo something that I lost, I generally find some new things.

One of the new features is the Object Extractor which makes it easy to take something out of a picture and place it somewhere else. Since working with photo editing programs, I have learned that you should never rely on what you see in a picture as these programs make just about anything you can imagine possible.

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The Smart Carver tool will let you also remove an object from an image and then you can change the scale of an image. It did a good job to make me look a lot thinner with no one else the wiser.

There are batch processing options that allow you to change the type of images you have or simply rename them with options you prefer. Most of the time an original image from a camera has a name that you would not be able to use to identify your image and these tools make it much easier.

There is a monitor calibration wizard that will help you adjust the contrast, brightness and color so you are seeing your work in the closest to natural colors as possible. You can pay big bucks to do this and Corel includes it in this program that is packed full of possibilities.

Also included on the CD is Project Creator that will guide you creating a photo book, greeting card, collage, calendar or slideshow. I had so much fun creating a few projects and it really makes you look like a pro with all of the included templates. You can print these yourself or order them online directly from the program. There is also the capability of posting your photos or video that you create on Facebook, Flickr or YouTube.

There is so much packed into this one little box that I can't believe it retails for only \$39.99 directly from the website at corel.com.

Free Online Proofreading Tools

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.paperrater.com>

<http://www.afterthedeadline.com>

<http://www.spellchecker.net>

<http://www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck>

<http://spellcheckplus.com>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/some-free-browser-based-online-proofreading-tools.htm>

In the 11 years that I have been writing this weekly column (over 500 columns), I know that I have had some spelling and grammatical faux pas. I have used several versions of Word, Google Docs, Open Office, and Libre Office as my word processor, and all have a reasonable spelling and grammar checker, which I have never failed to run, but still some errors slip through. I am fortunate to have an educated and competent wife as a proofreader after I peruse the column, and she almost always catches some composition errors that both the software and I missed. I have noticed that the outstandingly fine editors at the Examiner have occasionally made some minor changes and corrections, as they practice their editorial art.

In the decades that I have been teaching college classes, it no longer amazes me what college students can turn in as a finished written product. It is uncommon that a paper or project has proper spelling and grammar, and some students get belligerent upon being shown their written (word processed) errors, often blaming those errors on their "stupid computer". In the many years since the advent of the word processor, first as a glorified typewriter (remember those?), then as a dedicated hardware word processor, and now as sophisticated software on a modern computer, the capabilities of the software to correct spelling and grammar errors have greatly improved.

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Recently several free, browser based automated proofreading services have become available for anyone to use to provide a level of spell checking and grammar corrections typically superior to the similar services incorporated in the contemporary software based word processor. By using these free services, anyone, including newspaper columnists, newsletter editors, and students, can now have an additional layer of proofreading of their documents, providing a better quality of written output. These online utilities will not create an original document, but can substantially provide the user with enough reputable assistance to produce an enhanced quality of output in terms of spelling and grammar, but not necessarily superior content - that is still the responsibility of the writer.

I was impressed with PaperRater (paperrater.com), which was a feature rich and totally free service. According to its website, "PaperRater.com is a FREE resource, developed and maintained by linguistics professionals and graduate students. We may offer a premium service for those who are interested, but for now we are content offering a high-quality service at no cost to writers." This service offers comprehensive spelling and grammar checking, plagiarism detection (notifies the student before the teacher finds out), and writing style suggestions. After pasting the text for this article, PaperRater inquired about the usage of the document, the educational level it is being used for, and the option to detect any potential plagiarism. In a matter of seconds, PaperRater produced a color coded list of questionable words, suggested grammar corrections, and even a "Vocabulary Score". My Vocabulary score was displayed as, "Excellent work! Your usage of sophisticated words is on par with other well-written papers!" While I am not an English teacher, I found PaperRater to be an excellent and very capable resource, and will recommend it to my students.

After the Deadline (afterthedeathline.com) is a "free for personal use", open source, comprehensive proofreading utility. Unlike most of the other web based proofreading utilities, After the Deadline requires the downloading (free) and installation of one or more of 11 different utilities. These distinct utilities can be added to web pages (allows users to check spelling and grammar), WordPress software, plug-ins for Firefox and Chrome, add-on for OpenOffice, Windows Live Writer, and free standing utilities for other popular blogging and social networking services. Once installed, After the Deadline can be used as a comprehensive grammar and spell checker for use with those products, and for online services such as blogs, WordPress, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Google Docs, Windows Live Writer, any webmail utility, and virtually any other form of online text input. I downloaded and installed the Firefox plug-in, which adds features more substantial than Firefox's built in spelling checker. In addition to a simple spell checker, After the Deadline adds proper spelling in context (to, too, two; there, their, etc.), grammar checking, style recommendations, and fixes for a variety of other writing errors. In evaluating After the Deadline (the Firefox plug-in), I found it exceptionally easy to use and very powerful. I now use it universally when entering any text using Firefox (my browser of choice). I can strongly recommend After the Deadline as a comprehensive spelling, style, and grammar checker for any products or services that it is designed to work with.

The next web based proofreading utility that I tried was SpellChecker.net, where I simply copied and pasted my text into the box at the top of the web page, and then clicked on the yellow "Spell Check" button on the bottom-left of the text box. Almost instantly (it took 1.51 seconds to spell check this entire column), a second browser window opened displaying possible spelling errors, and a list of possible corrections. At the top of this correction window is a "Grammar" button which will rapidly run a grammar checker (1.12 seconds), clearly showing any questionable grammar, and some recommended corrections. A fully functional interactive thesaurus is also provided, which can almost instantly come up with synonyms for a selected word. Once completed, the corrected text can then be copied back on to a blank page, and then saved and printed as appropriate. One tactic that I have found useful, which applies to all of these online services, is to repeat the entire process a second time in order to catch any newly created syntax errors.

I then tried the free Ginger online proofreading website at www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck, which describes itself as, "Most advanced grammar checker available. Immediate feedback. Free to use." I was disappointed

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when I tried to copy and paste this column into the top "Ginger" window, and was brusquely informed that "Your text has exceeded the allowed number of characters". Since this free web based utility is very limited in the amount of text that it can process at one time, I would only recommend it for short blocks of text, although multiple blocks of text can be checked sequentially by clearing the box, and then copying and pasting the next section of a document, which is an inconvenience. The text that was entered in the top window of Ginger was displayed with recommended corrections in the bottom half of the browser window. This corrected text could then be copied and pasted back in the original or new document. Ginger offers a more capable premium (paid) product which can be downloaded and installed, and works with Word 2003/2007/2010, Outlook 2003/2007/2010, PowerPoint 2003/2007/2010, Internet Explorer version 6.0 and higher, and all contemporary versions of Firefox.

SpellcheckPlus (spellcheckplus.com) seemed very capable and easy to use, but the free web based version is limited to 2000 characters (about 1/2 of a single spaced typed page) per proofread session. Unlimited access requires paid registration (9.99 Euros, or about \$15 per year) and can process unlimited text of any length, and includes a lengthy list of writing tools. SpellcheckPlus explains itself as, "... a grammar checker that finds common spelling errors and grammatical mistakes in English. Simply type (or paste) your text into the window below and hit the "check text" button." Despite the short length limitations of the free version, SpellcheckPlus did a very good job of detecting potential errors and offering suggested corrections.

With proofreading utilities like these, there is little reason for anyone, using a computer with internet access, to produce a document with spelling and serious grammar errors.

Testing Memory

By Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
July 2011 issue, Sarasota Monitor
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From a strictly technical perspective, memory is any form of electronic storage. You probably know the computer you use every day has memory. Other everyday devices also use similar types of electronic memory. Your TV, car radio, washing machine, wrist watch, and cell phone are a few examples. Physical memory is both a necessary and useful component of modern computers. If your computer's CPU were compelled to access the hard drive for every piece of data it wanted, its speed would be glacial. Memory is so useful that when something happens to affect it we notice it immediately. It's a little like atmospheric oxygen, unobtrusive and invisible. Take it away and we know instantly that something has gone horribly wrong.

Memory failures can be among the most difficult hardware problems to diagnose because so many other things can act like memory malfunctions. If your system was put together with a motherboard populated with less than first-class components like low quality liquid fueled capacitors, they might swell and burst even under normal usage. Lockups, USB ports which refuse to work for no apparent reason, blue screens of death, and error messages pointing to memory failures are among some of the breakdowns that can occur. Video pauses and application crashes are additional symptoms that can afflict your PC, and their cause may not have anything to do with a memory crash.

Excess heat can cause the CPU to malfunction in ways that generate error messages flatly stating that memory is the culprit. The CPU will inexplicably drop pages from memory after the CPU just asked for those pages. The CPU gets confused and produces an error message accusing the memory chips of causing a "Fatal Exception". If that's not misleading enough, messages stating that certain memory pages were never received can appear on the screen.

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Strange behavior alone is not proof of a memory problem, but don't be hasty to dismiss the possibility. Memory problems do cause lockups and blue screens of death for no apparent reason. How can one differentiate between a memory crash and something doing a plausible imitation?

Sometimes the BIOS can help. Your BIOS should tell you how much memory you have installed. Many memory failures show up in the BIOS as a loss of installed memory. A high-quality motherboard will have a BIOS that will report the amount of memory in each slot. With some careful sleuthing you can easily calculate how much memory should be in each slot and use that information to find the memory module that's causing the problem.

There is a free advanced memory test available based on the original Memtest86. Download it from www.memtest86.org. This is probably the best memory testing tool you could hope to find, free or otherwise, but with all things that seem too good to be true, there are trade-offs. Some of your computer's memory must be accessed by the utility while the tool is running and that range of memory can't be tested. Another downside is that the tool requires you to shut down the computer and run the test from a boot disk. Don't let that stop you from using Memtest86. Use it according to directions and you will resolve problems that would otherwise be beyond the capabilities of ordinary mortals.

Memory failures can prevent the system from starting up completely. Your machine may attempt to help you by issuing a series of diagnostic beeps on attempted startup. There is no standard for diagnostic beeps so they vary with each manufacturer. You will have to access the manufacturer's web site to translate the series of beeps to meaningful information. It's essential to read the documentation for the motherboard and the BIOS. Some machines don't beep at all; with others a single beep indicates a memory refresh failure.

In a surprising number of cases a memory module has merely worked its way loose over time and is no longer seated properly in its slot. It takes only a few minutes to reseat the memory. If that doesn't help, remove one of the memory modules and turn the machine back on. If the problem persists, replace the module, remove a different module, and repeat until the system starts again. The module most recently removed is the guilty party. You may not be able to use this method if your machine insists that the modules be installed in pairs.

Lastly, don't over-clock your PC without proper ventilation or a reliable method to keep your vital components cool.
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November 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 1 PM Photo Editing Workshop	5
6	7	8	9 2 pm Board Mtg	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 10 am Investment SIG
20	21 3 pm Q & A Session Followed by General Mtg	22	23	24 1 pm Photography Club Mtg	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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I have used PCs since (year): I have belonged to a Computer Club before. Yes No

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