



# The Cursor

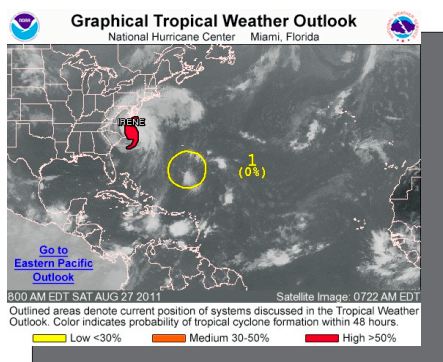


## Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Area Computer User Group

**Meeting Location:**  
OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road  
Fairfax, VA



**Next Meeting:**  
September 17, 2011



### NOAA Tracks Hurricane Irene, August 27, 2011

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### Presidential Bits

*by Geof Goodrum*

*President, Washington Area Computer User Group  
president (at) wacug.org*

Lorin Garson graciously offered his time to give the main presentation on “Nifty Bits and Pieces” at the August meeting. This was an enhanced version of the presentation he gave recently to our friends at the National Capital Technology Computer User Group (NCTCUG). As the title implies, Lorin covered a variety of computer topics, from system backup schemes, hard drive prices (I particularly liked the analogy with the price of a new Mercedes Benz), security software, and lots of handy utilities (most free).

I gave a timely Learn 30 tutorial about interesting web sites for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), including ocean exploration, space weather (e.g. solar storms, auroras), undersea acoustics, the NOAA Officer Corps (one of seven US Uniformed Services), satellite products, and, of course, weather forecasts. We also visited NOAA’s National Hurricane Center site, which was certainly handy when Irene came to visit!

Lorin’s presentation and my list of NOAA web sites, both with embedded active web links, are already posted on the WAC Recent Meetings web page, <http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>. Paul Howard also posted MP3 podcasts for each talk. Let us know what you think!

For the meeting on September 17<sup>th</sup>, Kathy Jacobs, current President of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), will share (live online, via Skype) some of her best tips and tricks for creating and presenting presentations using Microsoft PowerPoint 2010. As a PowerPoint expert, she guarantees that if you use PowerPoint, you will learn from this presentation. Topics to be covered include images, video, animations and effects, where to find great templates and themes, and much more. Who knows, you may even get to be a participant in “Stump the Expert!” Not on Office 2010 yet? This presentation will likely convince you to convert!

*Continued on page 3*

## Lloyd's Web Sites for September 2011

by Lloyd Johnson

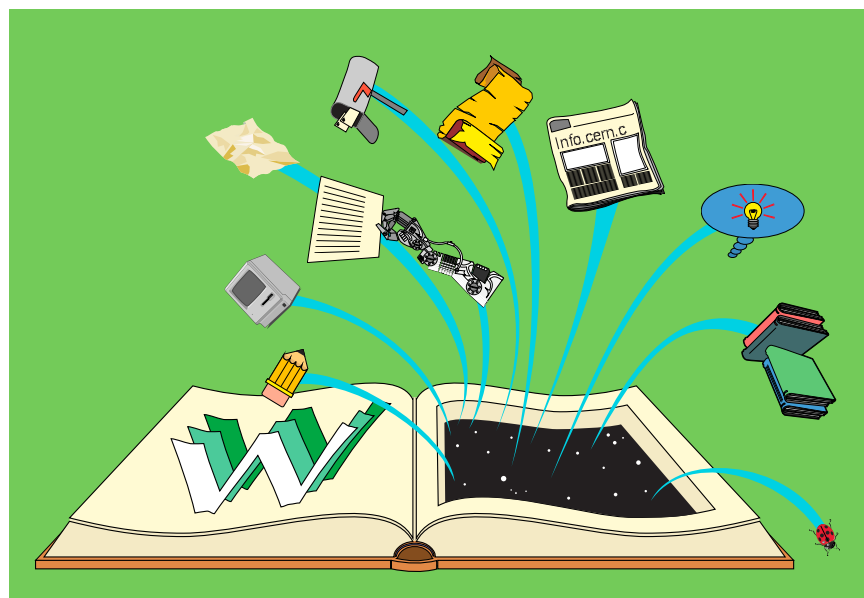
Columnist, Washington Area Computer User Group

Visit [www.wacug.org](http://www.wacug.org) for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks.

1. Library of Congress: Ask a Librarian — [www.loc.gov/rr/askalib/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/askalib/). An online reference service from the Library of Congress that allows researchers to submit reference questions to Library of Congress reading rooms and receive expert research assistance.
2. Help fix the US Budget — <http://crfb.org/stabilizethedebt/>.
3. Useful US Government site — <http://answers.usa.gov>.
4. Ready for some football? [www.jt-sw.com/football](http://www.jt-sw.com/football).
5. Official Site of Guinness World Records — [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com).
6. 50states.com — [www.50states.com](http://www.50states.com). "State information resource links to state homepage, symbols, flags, maps, constitutions, representatives, songs, birds, flowers, trees, and more."
7. Houzz — [www.houzz.com](http://www.houzz.com). "The largest collection of interior design and decorating ideas on the Internet."

New goodies we will be seeing in our local food markets:

8. Stonewall Kitchen Korean Barbecue Sauce — \$7.95 for an 11 ounce bottle — [www.stonewallkitchen.com](http://www.stonewallkitchen.com) or 800-826-1752.
9. Gracious Gourmet Spiced Sour Cherry Spread — \$9 for 8.3 ounce jar — [www.thegraciousgourmet.com](http://www.thegraciousgourmet.com) or 860-350-1213.
10. Crispy Green real fruit slices freeze-dried — \$1.59 for a single 0.36 ounce bag — [www.crispygreen.com](http://www.crispygreen.com) or 866-582-5577.



## NCTCUG

Visit our "sister" user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

<http://www.nctcug.org/>

Meetings start at 7:00 PM

Washington Area User  
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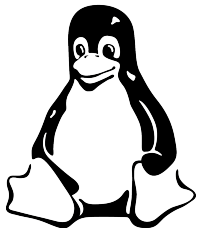
OPCUG

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*Continued from page 1*

Gabe Goldberg will bundle four essential topics for the September meeting's Learn 30 session based upon articles he wrote for Slickdeals.net: The Slickdeals Approach to Cable Company Negotiations; Negotiating with your ISP – speeds/features/software myths vs. realities; Dealing with customer support, reporting problems, getting answers; and Creative Gripping Makes Friends and Brings Rewards.

See you there!



## Linux and Open Source News

*by Geof Goodrum*

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### GNU/Linux Distribution Releases

GNU/Linux distributions are bundled collections of software including a set of applications and an operating system built on the Linux kernel. Some distributions include general applications such as office suites, music players, and web browsers, while others may have specific purposes such as computer system recovery, network firewall, media center, or gaming. Individuals, community projects, or businesses create distributions. While some distributions are commercial and include fee-based technical support, other distributions are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost.

WAC can provide CD-R and DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora, Mandriva, Ubuntu, Debian, Knoppix). Please note that free download distributions do not include official technical support nor printed documentation. Single CD-R discs are available with a \$3 donation; GNU/Linux distributions on multiple CD-Rs or single DVD±R are available with a \$6 donation. Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by e-mail ([linux@wacug.org](mailto:linux@wacug.org)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information.

The following list summarizes distribution release announcements from [Distrowatch.com](http://Distrowatch.com) for the period August 7–30, 2011.

ALT Linux 6.0.0  
Arch Linux 2011.08.19  
BackTrack 5 R1  
BlankOn Linux 7.0  
Chakra GNU/Linux 2011.09  
ConnochaetOS 0.9.0  
Dream Studio 11.04  
Frugalware Linux 1.5  
Gentoo Linux 11.2  
IPFire 2.9 Core 51  
Linux Mint 11 “LXDE”  
Mandriva Linux 2011  
Monomaxos 6.0  
Network Security Toolkit 2.15.0  
Parsix GNU/Linux 3.7  
Plop Linux 4.1.2  
Puppy Linux 5.1.3 “Wary”  
Puppy Linux 5.2.8  
Rocks Cluster Distribution 5.4.3  
Salix OS 13.37 “LXDE”  
Toorox 08.2011 “Xfce”, “Lite”  
Tuquito 5  
Ultimate Edition 3.0 “Gamers”  
Vyatta 6.3  
wattOS R4  
Zorin OS 3.1  
Zorin OS 5 “Educational”

### Featured Linux Software of the Month: September 2011

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

**FlightGear** – v2.4.0. <http://www.flightgear.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code by the FlightGear development team and executable packages for Ubuntu, Gentoo, and Slackware. The Flight Gear Flight Simulator project is a free, open-source, multi-platform, cooperative flight sim development project. The 2.4.0 release features: an

*Continued on page 4*

overhauled weather module that applies physics to custom or downloaded weather reports to create realistic terrain effects; enhanced graphics for highly realistic mountain surfaces, 3D cityscapes, and metallic surfaces; improved autopilot stability; and a built-in option to download scenery on-the-fly. With a choice of nearly 500 different aircraft, from historical to bleeding edge, from ultra-lights to the ultimate flying heavy metal, there is something to cater to each one's taste. In FlightGear 2.4.0 it's no longer the sky that is the limit; it's the imagination.

**PdfMasher** – v0.6.1.

<http://www.hardcoded.net/pdfmasher/>. Free GNU General Public License Python script and C source code, and executable Debian package by Hardcoded Software. PdfMasher is a tool to convert PDF articles (newspaper, academic) to MOBI or EPUB documents. Most ebook readers support PDF files natively, but it's often a real pain to read those documents because we don't have font size control over the document like we have with native ebooks. In many cases, we have to use the zooming feature and it's just a pain. Another drawback of PDFs on ebook readers is that annotations are not supported. Enter PdfMasher. PdfMasher asks the user about the role of each piece of text, and does it in an efficient manner. Your PDF has a header on each page and you don't want them to litter your text? Sort text elements by Y-position (thus grouping them all together), shift select the elements and flag them as ignored. They will not appear on your final HTML. Your PDF has footnotes on many pages? Sort your elements by text content (thus grouping all elements with the text starting with a number together) and flag them as footnotes. They will be moved to the end of the document, and PdfMasher will try to create hyperlinks to footnote references. PdfMasher does not preserve style and images. Although in early development, it is quite capable already.

**Piggydb** – v5.0-dev5. <http://piggydb.net/>. Free Apache 2.0 License Java executable and source code by Daisuke Morita. Piggydb is a Web notebook application that provides you with a platform to build your knowledge personally or collaboratively. With Piggydb, you can create highly structural knowledge by connecting knowledge fragments to each other to build a network structure, which is more flexible and

expressive than a tree structure such as those used in mind map applications. Fragments can also be classified with hierarchical tags. Piggydb does not aim to be an input-and-search database application. It aims to be a platform that encourages you to organize your knowledge continuously to discover new ideas or concepts, and moreover enrich your creativity.

**Wine** – v1.3.27. <http://www.winehq.org/>. Free GNU Lesser General Public License source code by Alexandre Julliard and the Wine Development Team. Wine is a compatibility layer that allows software written for Microsoft Windows (and DOS) operating systems to install and run under Linux and other operating systems without requiring a Windows software license. While there are native Linux applications that replace the functionality of most Windows applications, there are many niche Windows products with proprietary file formats and PC games not available for Linux. Not all Windows software runs perfectly under Wine, but the list is substantial (see the Wine Application Database, <http://appdb.winehq.org/>, for user submitted test reports). Wine v1.3.27 is a development release with improved application support and bug fixes.

**Kernel Source** – v3.0.4. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

### Linux Screenshots on Page 5







**Above: FlightGear - Eurocopter Exterior View**

**Below: FlightGear - Cockpit View**



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## Excel Tips: Setting Cell Width and Height Using the Keyboard

**Summary:** Hate to take your hands off the keyboard? Here's a couple of ways you can reject the mouse and still adjust the height and width of a cell. (This tip works with Microsoft Excel 97, Excel 2000, Excel 2002, Excel 2003, and Excel 2007.)

Sawan wonders if there is a way to adjust the height and width of a cell by using the keyboard, without using the mouse. (Some people are really adverse to using the mouse!) The answer is yes, there is a way. The problem, however, is that it isn't a terribly intuitive way. If you are using a version of Excel prior to Excel 2007, then you can do the following to change the row height:

1. Press **Alt+O**. Excel displays the Format menu.
2. Press **r**. Excel chooses the Row option and displays a submenu.
3. Press **e**. Excel chooses the Height option and displays the Row Height dialog box.
4. Type the value you want for the row height.
5. Press **Enter**.

The method for changing the column width is equally obtuse:

1. Press **Alt+O**. Excel displays the Format menu.
2. Press **C**. Excel chooses the Column option and displays a submenu.
3. Press **w**. Excel chooses the Width option and displays the Column Width dialog box.
4. Type the value you want for the column width.
5. Press **Enter**.

Of course, in Excel 2007 the menus were done away with and you are left to use a new obtuse key sequence for setting the row height:

1. Press **Alt**. This kicks Excel into a "shortcut key mode" and you should see the shortcut keys appear above each tab of the ribbon.
2. Press **H** to indicate you want to use the Home tab. New shortcut keys appear above each tool in the tab.

3. Press **O** to indicate you want to use the Format tool in the Cells group. Excel displays a drop-down list of options.
4. Press **H** to choose the Row Height option. Excel displays the Row Height dialog box.
5. Type the value you want for the row height.
6. Press **Enter**.

The only difference in these steps when you want to specify the row height is that you should press **W** in step 4.

Here's a different method of changing the row height that will work in any version of Excel:

1. Press **Shift+Spacebar**. Excel selects the entire row.
2. Press **Shift+F10** to display a Context menu. (This is the same menu you see if you were to right-click on the selection.)
3. Press **R** to indicate you want to change the row height. Excel displays the Row Height dialog box.
4. Type the value you want for the row height.
5. Press **Enter**.

A similar sequence will work for setting the column width:

1. Press **Ctrl+Spacebar**. Excel selects the entire column.
2. Press **Shift+F10** to display a Context menu. (This is the same menu you see if you were to right-click on the selection.)
3. Press **C** twice to choose the second "C" command in the Context menu (Column Width).
4. Press **Enter**. Excel displays the Column Width dialog box.
5. Type the value you want for the column width.
6. Press **Enter**.

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## Word Tips: Repeating Rows for a Table Footer

When working with longer tables in a document, you may wonder if there were a way to repeat rows at the bottom of a table that spans multiple pages, the same way you can repeat rows at the top of a multi-page table. The short answer is that Word doesn't provide such a capability. If you are willing to experiment a bit, you can try to come up with a workaround that may do the trick for you.

What you want to do is create a document section that contains just your table, and then use the page footers to contain the rows you want repeated from the table. Follow these general steps:

1. Just before the start of your table, insert a continuous section break.
2. Do the same thing just after the end of your table.
3. Select the rows you want repeated at the bottom of the table and copy them to the Clipboard.
4. Choose View | Header and Footer to display the headers and footers of the document. (If you are using Word 2007 or Word 2010 display the Insert tab of the ribbon, click Footer in the Header & Footer group, and then click Edit Footer.)
5. Switch to the footer. (You don't need to do this in Word 2007 and Word 2010, since you are already editing the footer after step 4.)
6. Make sure that the Link to Previous option is turned off for the footer.
7. Select anything that already exists in the footer.
8. Press **Ctrl+V** to paste the copied rows into the footer.
9. Use the controls on the Header and Footer toolbar or, in Word 2007 and Word 2010, the Design tab of the ribbon to advance to the next section. (You should be looking at the footer for the section following the section in which the table resides.)
10. Turn off the Link to Previous option for this footer.
11. Delete the table row from this section's footer.
12. Close the Header and Footer toolbar (click Close)

or, in Word 2007 and Word 2010, click Close Header and Footer in the Close group.

You are now ready to place the final touches on your workaround. Position the insertion point somewhere in your table, then use the various tabs in the Page Setup dialog box to adjust the relationship between your table and the footer. You'll need to play with the settings on both the Margins and Layout tabs to position the rows in the page footer, and you'll want to make sure that the Apply To drop-down list applies the changes to only the current section (the one with the table in it).

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## Free Online Proofreading Tools

by Ira Wilsker

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### WEBSITES:

<http://www.paperrater.com>

<http://www.afterthedeathline.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>

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.

*Continued on page 8*



*Continued from page 7*

I was impressed with PaperRater ([paperrater.com](http://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.

available. Immediate feedback. Free to use.” I was disappointed 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



After the Deadline ([afterthedeathline.com](http://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 proofreading website at [www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck](http://www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck), which describes itself as, “Most advanced grammar checker

it can process at one time, I would only recommend it for short blocks of text.

SpellcheckPlus ([spellcheckplus.com](http://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.



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## When Digital Disaster Strikes, Smile! ...because you will be OK.

by Gregory West

Member of Sarnia Computer Users' Group ([scug.ca](http://scug.ca)) and Port Huron, MI Computer Group ([bwcomp.org](http://bwcomp.org))

For more tips visit his Blog: <http://gregorywest.wordpress.com>  
Gregory (at) alternatcloud.com

Have you ever deleted photos from a camera or computer by mistake?

A friend of mine called me recently after going through a "catastrophe," as he called his situation. It happened about midway over the Atlantic Ocean, thirty-seven thousand feet up. He was sitting in his seat with not much to do so he decided to check the photos on his digital camera. All these photos were from this trip to Portugal, a trip that involved hiking in the wilderness and visiting old buildings. You can only imagine some of his prized photos.

I think you know where I am going with this... Yes, while looking at the photos, clicking from one to the next, he inadvertently deleted not just a couple of photos, every photo from his trip was gone in one simple click. After checking and double checking he knew it was fruitless to look further; the photos vanished.

When he got home he called and told me about this situation.

"That's no problem," I tried to reassure him. I explained that there is a software recovery program that people use in such cases with much success. The voice at the other end of the line was silent. I knew he didn't think this process was possible. After he recovered every single photo from his vacation he couldn't thank me enough.

However, my tale doesn't end there. I had a similar problem where a new SD (photo storage card in camera) failed to produce 250 pictures and some video clips. After taking a deep breath I remembered the advice I had doled out and quickly downloaded a copy of Recuva, a recovery program that is free and works. Within no time I had all my pictures and video clips stored on my computer, thanks to Recuva.

The moral of this story is when you delete photos, music from an MP3 player, or data from your computer, remember that it is possible to recover the

data. Don't say it will never happen because you are careful. I am sure it has happened to the best of us.

To avoid a similar "catastrophe" you need to have a recovery software program installed on your computer. One of the best recovery programs around is called: Recuva. As an added bonus this program is free and it comes "highly" recommended.

You can read the reviews here: <http://cnet.co/filehelp>

How does it work? Recuva scans your drives for the files you need and "recovers them in a flash" ([www.piriform.com](http://www.piriform.com)). Even if the files are partially damaged "Recuva will show you a list of files it has found on the drive, and give you an estimate of the likelihood of success of recovering them." You can't ask for much more.

Let's not forget when we delete those important emails. Yes you can recover them too. Recuva says that "The email program doesn't delete the email or emails to the Windows Recycle Bin, but rather empties its own internal trash or Recycle Bin."

I use word processing software every day. And yes I have lost documents that I have spent hours working on and never got them back. That is until I discovered Recuva. They assure us that their software "can intelligently rebuild Word documents from their temporary files."

We all can agree for the most part that weddings, graduations, and other such special events are best remembered with lots of photos. Music downloaded to your MP3 player is a treasure chest to cherish. While those word documents on the hard drive on your computer are from hours of work, you dare not lose them anymore.

To find out more and to get your free copy of Recuva, go to this website: [www.piriform.com/download](http://www.piriform.com/download)

Here's a comment Greg received on his blog. Recuva is an excellent program, like most of the software from Piriform. However, there is a caveat. Once you realize that you may have inadvertently deleted data, whether it is on your computer, thumb drive, or flash card, it is imperative NOT to use the device!

Recovery IS possible, but if your operating system writes over what has been deleted, you may not be able to "recuva" what's been deleted. 2 PC Geeks Computer Repair, Virginia

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## Tracking the Latest Information on Anything

by John Weigle

Editor, Channel Islands PCUG, CA

August 2011 issue, *The Outer Edge*

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If you want to keep track of the latest news and Web postings on specific subjects, give Google Alerts a try.

I've been using the feature for some time to track three subjects I'm interested in: UFOs, Annette Funicello and Sally Field. I've been interested in UFOs since the early 1950s, a fan of Annette since the Mickey Mouse Club Days and a fan of Field since her first TV appearance as Gidget. So now you know three of my not-very-secret "secrets."

Google explains its alerts this way at <http://www.google.com/alerts>: "Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic."

"Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- monitoring a developing news story
- keeping current on a competitor or industry
- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams."

When you create an alert you'll be asked to choose the topic for it, the type of information you want (everything, news, blogs, videos, discussions); how often you want alerts (as-it-happens, once a day, once a week); volume (only the best results, all results); and your email address so you can get the alerts. The fault choices are everything, once a day and only the best results. Consider starting with the defaults and then tweaking them if the results you get aren't what you expected.

You might also have to tweak your selected topic. My search for Annette is "Annette Funicello" (in the quotes). That limits results to items with her full name. On the other hand, my Sally Field search is just that (no quotes around the name), so I get

everything with Sally and Field, which results in a few unexpected results. My UFO search results in news about unidentified flying objects, my intent, and the musical group UFO.

I haven't set up searches for computer-related items because I get several electronic newsletters that keep me informed about most of the technical subjects I'm interested in, but it's easy to establish queries for any subject you're interested in. For instance, you could use "Linux, Ubuntu," Microsoft, "Steve Jobs," "Bill Gates."

Or you could try your own name or the name of your business if you wanted to know what people are saying about you or your business.

And if you're a sports fan, you might want to track everything said about your favorite team(s). You'd need to set up a separate alert for each team name.

The site lets you set up an alert and then shows sample results for it. Just for kicks, I tried my first and last name (in quotes) and got references to my Facebook page, an obituary for a John Weigle of Augusta, Ga. (I still get spam about real estate deals in Augusta), and the Weigle Music Ministries, which I had never heard of.

A search for CIPCUG showed only the CIPCUG Web site.

Not surprisingly, a search for "Los Angeles Dodgers" resulted in more hits than any of my other test searches. Topics that get lots of news coverage, such as the Dodgers, are obviously going to have more results than people or topics that are seldom in the news.

All the results have live links to whatever the alert finds.

The alerts tool isn't for everyone, but it's useful if you have any interests you want to track regularly.



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## The 2011 WACUG Board of Directors and Volunteers

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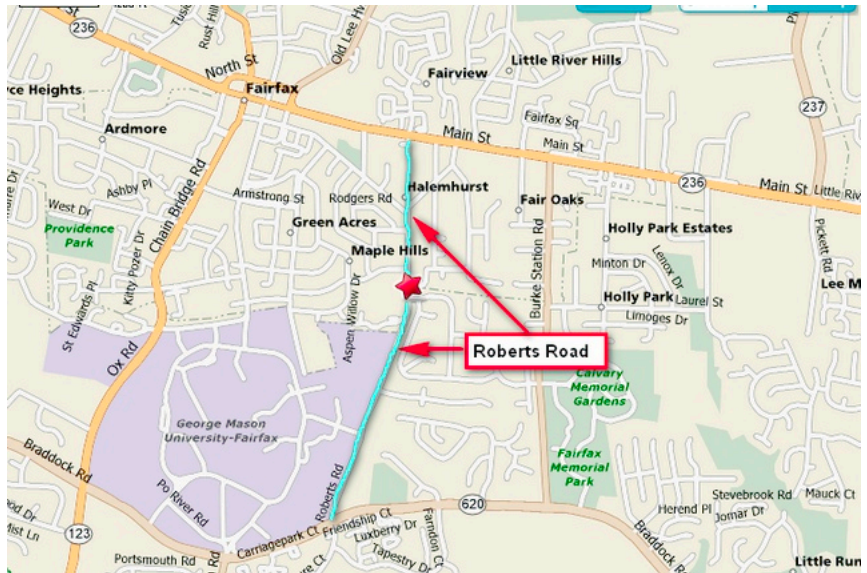
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## TrueCrypt Free Open Source Data Encryption Software for Windows 7/Vista/XP, Mac OS X, and Linux

by John Langill

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Southern Tier Personal Computing Club, NY

August 2011 issue, Rare Bits, STPCC Newsletter

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The May 2011 issue of Rare Bits contained an article by Dick Maybach titled “Cloud Computing” in which he pointed out the necessity of securing your data via encryption when it “...is stored on the same disks, uses the same memory, and passes through the same processors as everybody else’s.” And I recall Dave Bilcik voicing a similar warning at the May meeting and also mentioning the program TrueCrypt. It just so happens that I am currently using TrueCrypt and I believe it to be very satisfactory solution whether you need relatively modest security or very tight and sophisticated protection.

TrueCrypt is a software system for establishing and maintaining an on-the-fly-encrypted volume (data storage device). “On-the-fly” encryption means that data is automatically encrypted or decrypted right before it is loaded or saved, without any user intervention. The entire file system is encrypted; e.g., filenames, folder-names, contents of every file, free space, meta-data, etc. No data stored on an encrypted volume can be read (decrypted) without using the correct password and/or key file(s), or correct encryption keys.



I’m not sure how unique TrueCrypt’s approach is but I was nevertheless intrigued by it. The first step is to create a “container;” otherwise known as a TrueCrypt

“encrypted volume.” To my mind, this is somewhat like obtaining a safety-deposit box at a bank.

TrueCrypt provides a “wizard” to assist with the task. As at a bank where safety-deposit boxes of various sizes can be rented, the encrypted volume can be created to have as much capacity as you need. For example, it can be a specific portion of a hard-disk, or an entire flash drive or other storage device. Unlike a safety-deposit box, however, you hold the only key... so you need to remember and protect it. And, into the container (the volume) you can store any number of files. If the capacity of the volume is exceeded, you simply create a bigger container.

One of the interesting facets of a TrueCrypt volume is that it has most of the characteristics of an ordinary file. That is, the volume can be moved or copied within the storage areas of a given PC, or to a different PC. The name of the volume can be changed; and the volume can be included in routine backups. It can be transmitted across the Internet; and even into the wild-blue yonder, if you’re so inclined. And, even if you have no intention of salting “the cloud” with your personal data, what about that minuscule 8- or 32GB flash-drive you carry around in your pocket. The smaller they get, the easier they are to lose. Wouldn’t it be reassuring to have made it an encrypted volume so that whoever finds it won’t have an easy time of it when they try to discover the contents of your personal data?

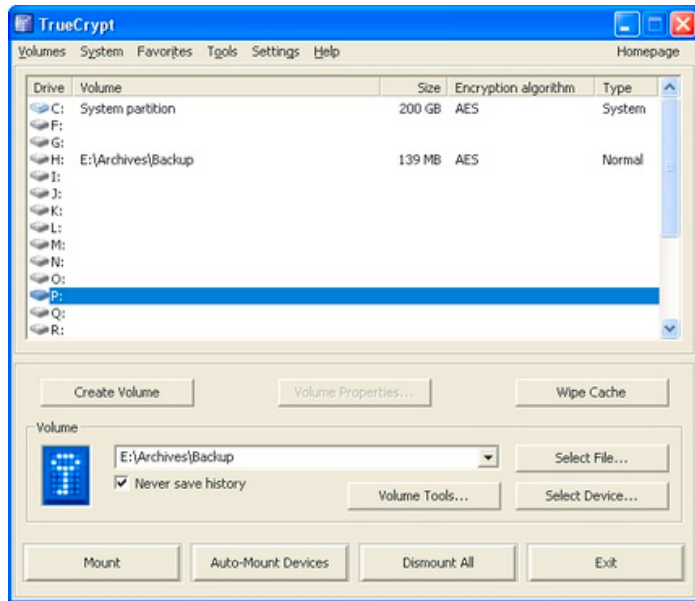
The downside of the file-like characteristics is that, like any file, an encrypted volume can also be deleted and all its content lost (...thank goodness for the Recycle Bin). That would be very bad if done unwittingly. But that’s why we do back-ups! Yes? Once a TrueCrypt volume is mounted, the data files it contains can be copied to and from the volume just like they are copied to or from any normal disk; for example, by simple drag-and-drop operations.

Files are automatically decrypted on-the-fly in RAM (Random Access Memory) while they are being read or copied from an encrypted TrueCrypt volume. Similarly, files that are being written or copied to a TrueCrypt volume are automatically encrypted on-the-fly in RAM right before they are written to the volume. Note, however, this does not mean the whole file that is to be encrypted/decrypted must reside in

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RAM before it can be encrypted/decrypted. That is, there are no extra RAM requirements for TrueCrypt. The following paragraph explains how this is accomplished.



Let's suppose that there is an .avi video file stored on a TrueCrypt volume; that is, the entire video file is encrypted. The user provides the correct password and/or key file and mounts (opens) the TrueCrypt volume. When the user double-clicks the icon of the video file, the operating system launches the application associated with the file type — typically a media player. The media player then begins loading a small initial portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM in order to play it. While the portion is being loaded, TrueCrypt is automatically decrypting it in RAM. The decrypted portion of the video in RAM is then played by the media player. While this portion is being played, the media player begins loading next small portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM and the process repeats. This process is called “on-the-fly” encryption/decryption and it works for all file types, not just for video files. The process also ensures minimal impact on processing performance.

Note that TrueCrypt never saves any decrypted data to a disk — it only stores it temporarily in RAM. Even when the volume is mounted, data stored in the volume remains encrypted. When you restart Windows or turn off your computer, the volume will be automatically dismounted and files stored in it will

be inaccessible and encrypted. Even when power is suddenly interrupted (i.e., without a proper system shut-down), files stored in the volume are inaccessible and encrypted. To make them accessible again, you have to mount the volume by providing the correct password and/or key file.

Of course, as with any unintended power interruption or shut-down, unsaved changes to files are lost because re-encryption of changes occurs only when files are saved to the volume in a normal fashion.

I've only touched on a few of the main facets of TrueCrypt. In addition, TrueCrypt offers a choice of encryption algorithms from which you can select one that will give the degree of security you feel you need. This and other aspects of TrueCrypt are fully documented in an excellent User Guide. The latest version of the free software, Release 7.0a, can be downloaded from the product's home Website at <http://www.truecrypt.org>, as well as from CNET's <http://www.download.com>, and other sites on the Web.

The User Guide PDF and a more detailed description of TrueCrypt can be found at the product's home web-site.

TrueCrypt is one free program that is, in my opinion, an exception to my general perception of the breed. Of course, the developers gratefully accept donations. In this case, I think they are well deserved.



## Buying a New Windows PC

*by Dick Maybach*

*August 2011 issue, BCUG Bytes*

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Sooner or later, you'll be looking for a replacement for your PC. What requirements must the hardware satisfy? This article will assume you will be using the Windows 7 operating system, although almost any PC that supports Win 7 will also support any Linux distribution. If you purchase your PC from a well-established vendor, it will arrive with Windows already installed and well checked-out. However,

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most of us keep our PCs for several years, which means that their performance should exceed what is needed today. Software vendors know that to sell new versions of their products, they must add new features, and these require more from the hardware. Moore's Law, which says that integrated circuit performance doubles every 18 months, has been true for 30 years and shows no signs of changing in the near future. As a consequence, six years from now, PCs will be eight times as powerful as today's models, and software designers know and depend on this. Buying a barely adequate PC means that it may not adequately run any software on it that it wasn't delivered with.

Let's begin by looking at what hardware Microsoft recommends as a minimum for Win 7.

- 1 gigahertz (GHz) or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit processor
- 1 gigabyte (GB) RAM (32-bit) or 2 GB RAM (64-bit)
- 16 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
- DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

We see that the first choice is between a 32-bit and a 64-bit processor. At present, most home applications are available only in 32-bit form, and while these will run in a 64-bit environment, doing so provides little advantage, except that 64-bit CPUs can handle more RAM (see the RAM discussion below). This will probably change, perhaps as early as the next release or so of Windows. You might be tempted to go for a 64-bit processor, thinking that you will be able to upgrade to Win 8 or 9; however, don't forget Moore's law. When the time comes to upgrade, you will certainly find that your PC is hopelessly under-powered. A 32-bit processor is the correct choice, unless you have special requirements.

Processor clock speeds can now exceed 3 GHz, but processor architecture also greatly affects its computing rate, with the result that clock speed is not as good an indication of computing power as in the past. Indeed, AMD has stopped using clock speed to characterize its processors. Manufacturers achieve

higher performance by putting multiple processors (called cores) on a single chip. Get at least a 2-core processor and preferably a 4-core one. You may not see much advantage initially, but Windows slows down as the number of updates increase, and you probably will add new applications, which become more resource-hungry with each release. Note the important difference between multi-core processors and multiple processors. The former are single packages with more than one computing component; the latter are multiple packages, each with its own stacks, cache memory, and input/output. Only the Professional, Enterprise, and Ultimate versions of WIN 7 can make use of more than one processor, although all 32-bit versions of WIN 7 can use up to 32 cores.

Finally, consider getting a CPU with a Intel-VT or AMD-V supported and enabled. Without this, you can't run Windows Virtual PC, <https://www.microsoft.com/windows/virtual-pc/default.aspx>.

RAM is cheap, which means you should get as much as you can use. However, a 32-bit processor, can access a maximum 4 gigabytes of memory, and memory includes not only RAM, but also video RAM. If you have a high-end graphics controller with 1 GB of video RAM, your processor can use only up to 3 GB of RAM. Remember though, that many people use just a video controller on their motherboard, and such units use regular RAM for video storage. Once your system fills RAM with data, it begins to use swap space on your disk, and this drastically slows performance. I recommend you install as much RAM as your processor can address, 4 GB if you use an integrated video controller, perhaps somewhat less if you have a separate one. You can see a problem developing here; because the recommended RAM is at the limit of what the processor can see. To use more RAM, you have to use a 64-bit CPU and operating system, which is why I think that we will soon see a move to this configuration.

I recommend at least a 2000 GB (2 TB) hard disk. You do not want to run out of disk space and have to port all your software and data to a new one. Faced with this, most home PC users would decide to

purchase a new PC. A competent PC shop can do this for you, and while the cost is reasonable, it will certainly exceed any savings you realized by skimping on the original disk size.

Most home PC users will find that the minimum video controller specified by Microsoft is adequate, but if you play action games or have specialized needs, such as photo editing or computer-aided design (CAD) you probably need a separate high performance video card, perhaps one compatible with DirectX 10 or 11. Graphics cards have faster processors than those mounted on motherboards and their video RAM is separate from that on the motherboard. You will have to do some research into the recommendations of your software vendors, not just for what you now use, but also for what you may soon install. However, replacing your video controller is much easier than changing disks, so you can upgrade later if needed. Pay attention to the connector for the display; although VGA is still common, many high-performance controllers use Digital Visual Interface (DVI), High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI), or Display Port.

Besides the basics above, you also need some peripherals, and the most important of these is the display. You will probably follow the recommendations of the PC vendor, but consider getting a larger one than standard. As we age, our vision dims and blurs, and more visual real-estate allows us to magnify images, which makes computer time more comfortable. Be a little careful here, and be sure the display interface is compatible with your video controller. Of course, you need a read-write DVD drive, and you may want to get one that handles Blu-ray. If you have a pile of diskettes, you may also want a floppy drive, but the need for these is fading fast. Get as many USB ports as you can (version 2.0 or later), and at least two should be on the front panel. If you run out of ports, you can add USB hubs, but the result is a tangle of cables, power cords, and power supplies. (This will happen anyway, but try to avoid making it worse.) Keyboards and mice are cheap commodities and are easily upgraded. Current PCs use USB ports to communicate with keyboards and mice, so you may not be able to transfer these from your old system.

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## Outlook Express to Outlook Tip

*by Gordon Giles*

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Just a small, tip for those people having problems migrating from Outlook Express to Outlook:

1. Open Outlook Express on the desktop
2. Drag the left edge to the right about ½ of the screen.
3. Right click on the clear area on the screen and create a new Folder. Call it “My mail files.”
4. In the “My mail files” folder, create a matching folder name for the each one in OE Look at all the folder names in OE.
5. When you have completed this go back to OE and start at the top of the folders list and open the first one, click on just one email.
6. Hold down the CTRL key and press the letter A on the keyboard. This will highlight all the emails in this folder.
7. Using the left mouse button drag the blue highlighted files all together and place your mouse pointer over the corresponding folder on the left and let go.
8. After a few seconds open the new file and all the emails from the OE folder will be in the new folder
9. Do this for all your OE folders including your address box. Save it to a thumb drive and when ready to run Outlook do the same in reverse if you have personal folders in OE you will need to make the new folder in Outlook.

You can only drag and drop the emails themselves you can't copy and paste.

I have never managed to master Import and Export from Outlook Express to Outlook but have used this method so later I can open the file and know I have an exact copy of all my emails. It will work when going from Outlook Express to Outlook and the other way.

