



January's Program

iTunes on Your PC

presented by

Judy Callender & Larry Mobbs

Like a lot of people, I always thought of iTunes as a program designed just for music. But after getting an iPod Touch, I had to use iTunes to sync it to a computer, and I discovered something. iTunes is not just for music, and is not just for Macs and other Apple products - it offers a lot for PCs as well!

For our January meeting I will be showing you iTunes, which is a free download from Apple.com. I will demonstrate how iTunes works on a PC—for Music, Movies, TV Shows, Podcasts, and Radio—along with some of my favorite podcasts. Then Larry Mobbs will follow-up by demonstrating iTunes University, an unknown but phenomenal education component that is part of iTunes.

NEXT MONTH:

Jim Sanderson will be doing a demo on EXCEL for our February meeting.

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President's Column

by Larry Mobbs

Two Paths of Evolution

The world of computers isn't following a straight evolutionary line. Over the last twenty years we saw desktop computer getting more powerful with each generation and often more than two generations in one year. The laptops, once seen as baby brothers, are now the equals of most desktops in capability. In 2008 the laptop outsold the desktop for the first time and the trend continues to this day.

But recently the trend line has done a 180 degree turn with the introduction of the e-readers and the tablets. Buyers are foregoing powerful units for simple dedicated tools with much less capability that are much quicker to turn on and off and are much smaller. The Amazon Kindle was the first dedicated tool for readers. Though books had been available for computers since the days of DOS they never truly caught on as a serious use for desktops or laptops. Enter the dedicated reader that can hold thousands of books and fit in a pocket or purse and last for days of heavy use on a single charge.

Suddenly, the publishing world is rocked by owners of millions of Kindles and Amazon is selling eBooks like hotcakes. It didn't take long for Apple to join the ranks with the iPad and it's dedicated reader, iBooks, and a matching online bookstore. Though the Apple bookstore had only a fraction of the titles offered by Amazon the iPad took off for a lot of other reasons and using it as an e-reader went along with it.

The interesting point of this story is that people are finding that their use of computers in many cases is limited to a few daily tasks, such as browsing, email and as a media player. For those people, the iPad was a dream device and like the Kindle, sold by the millions. Amazon responded to the iPad with the recently released Kindle Fire. The Fire has a color screen and offers web browsing and other iPad-like functions running on the revised Google Android operating system. The Fire has a 7 inch screen versus the iPads 10 inch, but critics point out that 7 inch screens are too small for web browsing; it is also noted that the 10 inch devices are too heavy for e-reader as they are a problem to hold in one hand. So here we have another divergent path based upon what functions the buyer treasures most.

Google followed the iPad with the Chrome Books which were dedicated internet devices counting on the user availing themselves to Google Docs online and not be bothered by internal devices like hard drives and having media capability. The Chrome Books never really caught on - I think the idea had merit but got caught between the iPad Goliath and the traditional laptop user.

But a new focus is setting out a different evolutionary path and that is the world of the high-end tablet. Tablets have been around for about 10 years, just as Bill Gates predicted years ago but they have always been a very small niche market and were very expensive. But improvements in technology, the low power ARM chips instead of Pentiums and Core 2 duos, and greater battery life have allowed manufacturers to put powerhouse performance into a trim package less than a 1/3 of an inch thick.

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2011/2012 Executive Committee

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Microsoft is planning Windows 8 for release in 2012 and promises it will run on desktops, laptops and tablets and offer full functionality of dedicated computers in the tablet format. Some pundits are predicting this will be the tablet of the future while others claim that Microsoft was too late to the party. It will be interesting to watch. Maybe next January we'll have our first assessment of the trend.

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Publisher 2003
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How to Design Cool Stuff
Color Management without the Jargon DVD
Adobe Photoshop CS5 Classroom In a Book
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Microsoft Office 2010, Visual Quickstart Guide
Photoshop for Video
Getting Started with Camera Raw
Adobe Photoshop Elements 9: Learn by Video
Mastering Exposure in Digital Photography: Video
Get Your Photography on the Web
Understanding Adobe Photoshop CS5
Microsoft Windows XP (for home users)

Too Many Choices

By Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, California
December 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes

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Choosing a computer used to be relatively easy: Do you want a desktop with a tower or a flat unit that fits under your monitor? This is no longer true. Now we have a plethora of choices: Desktop, Laptop, Notebook, Tablet, Smart Phone, and smart e-Book Reader. Perhaps I have missed a late comer; if so, forgive me. Let's review the features, pros and cons of each.

Desktop

For a fixed location, non-portable computer a Desktop is the best choice. It is the least expensive computer and can be easily customized to whatever your computing needs might be. It is a necessity for gamers and heavy-duty computing such as photo and video processing, CAD (computer-aided design), and data processing. There are wide choices of software and hardware which results in lower costs and greater availability of these items. Larger displays, multiple ones if desired, are available along with specialty multi-function keyboards and a variety of mice, all of which can be easily attached. More powerful computer chips, memory chips, video processors, large, multiple hard drives and powerful wireless adaptors are choices only available with Desktops.

The choice between proprietary brands such as Dell or HP vs. a "plain vanilla" custom machine depends upon your budget and how much technical support you may need.

Laptop

Portable laptop computers come in a variety of sizes, prices and features. Many of the more expensive ones rival some Desktop machines in capability. The display screens are smaller than Desktops and the keyboards with the integrated touchpad mouse are not as user friendly as those on Desktops. Newer models have built-in Wi-Fi for connection to the Internet, whereas older models required a USB Wi-Fi adapter. Most Laptops have a built-in video camera for video messaging with friends via Skype. For equivalent features, Laptops are always more expensive than Desktops as are any repairs or upgrades. However, if portability of a powerful computer is a requirement, a Laptop is a good choice. An auxiliary USB external hard drive or large thumb drive (flash drive) is useful for backup and storage for Laptops.

Notebook

The Notebook is just a smaller, lighter version of a Laptop with a smaller screen and keyboard. It is not recommended for heavy duty use, but is fine for travel and is less expensive than Laptops, Tablets or Smart Phones. Most of the Laptop features are also found in Notebooks. Some Notebooks come with electronic memory instead of hard drives. This memory is faster and lighter, but holds much less data than hard drives. The Chrome by Google is a Notebook that utilizes the Cloud for much of its power and capability.

Tablet

A Tablet has no external keyboard, but the screen is touch sensitive so a virtual keyboard on the screen is provided instead. However, the touch-screen eliminates much of the standard keyboard activity. The availability of software for Tablets is growing rapidly, but there is nowhere near the number of titles available for the computers described above.

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For casual use, Tablets are fine for email, Web browsing, limited word processing and spreadsheet work. Most Tablets are less expensive than Laptops, but often cost more than Notebooks. Tablets also have e-Book reading capability. They have no hard drive but Cloud storage via the Internet somewhat replaces this function. The iPad by Apple seems to be the leader in Tablets, but many competitors are coming on-line with similar features at lower prices.

Smart Phone


There are two major varieties of Smart Phones: iPhone and Android. The iPhone is a proprietary operating system by Apple and is more expensive than other Smart Phones, but is claimed to be more user friendly. The Android phone is an "open source" operating system developed by Google and as such has many more Apps, (software applications). The major drawback to these phones is the small display screen. They have touch screens in lieu of a keyboard. However, they are cell phones, which none of the above are. They are also connected to the Internet for email and Web browsing and can play music and video. The phones can be quite inexpensive because the carriers (Verizon, ATT, etc.) require signing a two year contract for the reduced cost. Breaking the contract early can be very expensive. There is a basic cost for the phone service and an equivalent monthly charge for Internet service. There also can be an additional service charge for data usage. Look for unlimited data-use contracts, if available.

Smart e-Book

Older e-Book readers were just that — monochrome digital book readers, e.g., early models of the Amazon Kindle. Newer Readers such as the Amazon Fire and Barnes & Noble Nook have full color touch screens with Wi-Fi along with their e-Book reader function. The Fire also has free Internet connectivity via Sprint. So the e-Books are now competing with the Tablets, having similar features but with a display size intermediate between Tablets and Smart Phones. Look for e-Book Readers to become even smarter in the near future.

So what's next? I predict expanded speech recognition and generation will soon be incorporated in most computers, as an alternate to touch-screen, mouse and keyboard. A larger selection of Apps will become available as software programmers jump on this lucrative bandwagon. Faster Internet connections are already available in selected locations and will come to your area soon. Look for LTE, 4G, 5G and even faster connections. Better displays that don't wash out in sunlight are being developed and we should see them soon. Lower prices and enhanced features due to competition favor the consumer and should happen very quickly. Decisions, decisions...

Stay tuned!



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Special Interest Group News

SIGs are geared for members to share their interests and abilities in areas that range from intense study to coffee, donuts and conversation. Don't miss the opportunity to come early for dinner and tech talk.

Read this month's Executive Committee Report for info on the SIGs.



Photo SIG

The Photo SIG meets at the home of Paul Cannon. Bring photos or tips to share. We will continue to look at what photo editing programs can do. Bring your dinner at 6 PM or come for the meeting at 7 PM. For directions or more information contact Paul at pauca@comcast.net.

Video SIG

The Video SIG meets at Norb Demmel's home. Creating, and editing skills are covered. Bring your own dinner and come at 6:00 PM. The meeting starts at 7 PM. For additional information email Norb at dasboot@comcast.net.



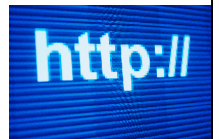
Explorer SIG

The Explorer SIG is hosted by Ron Walters. Topics vary to meet the groups needs. Meet at Croswell Computers N' Vacuums by 6pm to go out to dinner. The meeting starts at 7 PM. (Enter through the front door.)

To request program topics and location, contact Ron at ronaldw152@sbcglobal.net.

Web SIG

We will be taking our laptop computers to meet during the day at Vantage Point in Port Huron. Time will be scheduled on an as requested basis. If you are interested in joining us, contact Pam Raisanen at compinfo@greatlakes.net.

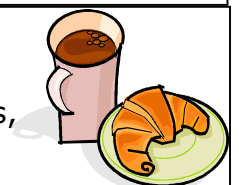


Pig Sig Dinner

This social event meets at 5:30 PM before the club meeting. This SIG is located at Tony's Food Paradise, 502 Huron Avenue, in downtown Port Huron.

Donut SIG

Come for coffee and donuts or just to chat after the club meeting at Tim Horton's, 3829 Pine Grove Ave, Fort Gratiot, MI 48059.



Stellarium

By Cal Esneault, President of the Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA and leader of many Open Source Workshops & SIGs

December 2011 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News

<http://cccclinuxsig.pbwiki.com>

www.clickers.org

ccnewsletter (at) cox.net



In my youth, I would take a copy of my uncle's *Star and Telescope* magazine and go to the center section to use the two-page star map guide. Twisting and turning the map to match my view, the many constellations and other night-time wonders of the universe could be identified. Today, we can use vastly superior computerized versions to guide us through the night sky. One excellent program is *Stellarium*, an open-source program available for *Windows*, *Mac OS X*, *Linux*, and *BSD* operating systems. Although there are more sophisticated programs designed for professional and advanced amateur stargazers, *Stellarium* fits in the "fun" group by providing simple but detailed functions in a user friendly manner. The essential concept is to get an annotated view of a portion of the sky, adjusted for location and desired viewing time, which can be adjusted horizontally and vertically to match your viewing perspective.

Initial use can be confusing. It starts up in full screen mode with no menu items visible. Move your mouse to the left or bottom border to activate the command tool bars (see below). Those items on the bottom turn on the various viewing items (constellation names, constellation connectors, planet id's, horizon types, etc.). Those items on the left set up the system controls (location, time, item luminosity to display, etc.).



The default location is Paris, France. Go to the "Location window" icon to choose your city from a dropdown list (or input latitude and longitude). Next, go to the "Date/time window" to set your local time. By using up/down arrow controls you can see what the sky will look like at any future or past time (for example, what can I see if I go out tonight at 10:00 PM?).

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Below is a screenshot of a night time view. I have added an azimuthal grid and constellation connectors. If you have a telescope with an equatorial mount, you can also display an equatorial grid. Clicking on any object will display key information (apparent magnitude, hour angle and declination, and azimuthal information updated for passage of time). Using the "ocular" view, you can see any listed object as viewed by a telescope of approximately 80x magnification.



The default system includes 600,000 stars along with a full Messier catalog of Nebulae. The constellations of 10 different cultures are included. Various upgrade modules, plug-ins, and scripts exist (for example, you can expand to view over 200 million stars). Depending upon your needs, you can change the projected view of the sky – stereoscopic, fish-eye, cylindrical, etc. There is a text-entry search window quickly locate objects.

Download a free copy at stellarium.org (Linux users, find with your package manager). Smartphone versions are available for iOS (Android users, use Google Sky instead).

User Group Book Programs



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Flash Drive of the Month(s)

by Norb Demmel

This month the Flash Drive of the Month will contain programs for December and January. Here is a brief description of the programs:

December's Programs

Artweaver

Adobe Photoshop is a professional program, which means it's expensive. Unless you are a full-time designer or business, it is a bit over the top. Luckily, there is a free alternative. It's called Artweaver and it does most of the basic things Photoshop can do. It also has a few of Photoshop's more advanced features like the perspective grid.

Artweaver has a very similar look and feel to Photoshop. You can even create images with layers and save them as Photoshop files. You'll also find very similar tools with each program.

I especially like Artweaver's brush tools. They're geared toward digital artists and painters. You can choose media from Pastels to Oils, then alter their size and appearance with ease. You can even change such things as textures and opacity.

Note that there is a paid and free version of Artweaver. The free version should be more than enough firepower for most people. However, the paid version does offer some nice additional filters, better multi-core processor support and other extras, still for a lower price than investing in Photoshop.

Web site: <http://www.artweaver.de/download-en/>

DBAN

Getting ready to dump that old PC? Hang on just a second. You might be giving away your sensitive personal information. Deleting files using the Recycle Bin is not good enough. Deleted data can hang around your hard drive for quite a while. Anyone can recover it with a free program.

The only way to completely secure your computer is to wipe the hard drive. That's where Darik's Boot And Nuke comes in handy. DBAN will wipe and overwrite your drive several times so nothing is recoverable.

To use DBAN, download the file and burn it to a blank CD or DVD. If you have any questions, visit the site's FAQ <http://www.dban.org/faq> for answers. Once the disc is done, boot your computer from it.

To boot from a disc drive, hold down the F8 key while your computer is starting. This brings up the boot menu. Then select to boot from your CD or DVD drive. Once DBAN starts, follow the directions.

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DBAN securely wipes out the entire hard drive. When it's finished, the computer won't even have Windows. Then you can safely discard, sell or recycle the computer.

Web site: <http://www.dban.org/download>

January's Programs

doPDF

PDFs are a great format for sharing documents with friends or for business purposes. You don't have to worry about file size, computer platform or what programs the recipient has available. That's because PDFs are usually small and you can open them on any computer. The only tricky part is creating them.

You could get Adobe's Acrobat program. They're also easy to convert using InDesign. But those programs come with a hefty price tags and you're paying for many programs you probably don't need. Fortunately, there are ways to create PDFs that are both easy and free.

One good option is doPDF. This program adds a PDF creator to your list of printers. Once it's installed, you simply select the PDF option from the printer list, and you have generated a PDF within seconds. It works with any Windows program.

You'll end up with a file to share that's formatted just the way you want. Your PDF will even have selectable text, meaning you'll be able to search the PDF for specific sections or words.

Web site: <http://www.dopdf.com/>

LibreOffice

Microsoft Office is the gold standard for productivity software. It's used by everyone from students to major corporations. That popularity is definitely reflected in the price tag.

What if you can't afford Microsoft Office? Perhaps you just need something for a short-term project and can't justify the investment right now. Good news: There are several free alternatives to Office. Depending on your needs, some work just as well as Microsoft's productivity suite.

LibreOffice is an excellent alternative. It offers six programs, and you'll find most of them instantly familiar. For example there's Writer, which is a Word clone. Then there's Calc, which is a spreadsheet like Excel. There's also Impress, a presentation program similar to PowerPoint.

Those are the options you're most likely to need. A drawing program, a database program and an equation program round out the offerings. All of these combined make for an excellent replacement to pricier suites.

LibreOffice is also compatible with the most popular document formats. It can read .DOC from Word and .XLS from Excel, for example. That only scrapes the surface of what it offers.

Web site: <http://www.libreoffice.org/download/>



Greg West appointed Region 6 / International Advisor to APCUG

Per APCUG NOOZ:

Greg's experience with APCUG goes back about 10 years, when he was editor for the Sarnia CUG in Canada (scug.ca). He read and reprinted articles from APCUG and user group newsletters. This gave him some insight into what other groups around the globe were doing at meetings, etc. He also followed APCUG news on its website and newsletters. In 2008 he attended the APCUG convention in Las Vegas and it was there he knew he wanted to help out on that "team."

With his background in communications, he is impressed with the progressive route APCUG executive is heading in recreating ties between the organization and its member groups. APCUG has gone over a rocky road and today he says the road is straightening out and is becoming busy once again.

Greg plans on setting up a communications network, with the user groups in Region 6 and International, so that everyone will know what's happening with APCUG and especially ideas that help to make a user group successful.

He looks forward to meeting members in Region 6 and International. He feels one of the most important issues we are facing is how we all can share and prepare user groups for today and the future. We need to look to new and innovative ideas, ideas that not only enhance the user group member's experience, but will invite new members to our groups.

The COMP Computer Club extends its Congratulations to Greg!

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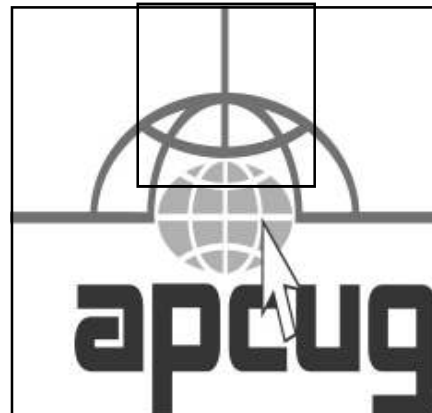
Saturday—9—5

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Port Huron, MI

**COMP is a member of the
Association of Personal
Computer User Groups**



January's Calendar

Wednesday 1/4/12—General Meeting

- 5:30pm—7:00pm Pig SIG at Tony's Food Paradise, 502 Huron Avenue, Port Huron.
7:00pm—9:00pm COMP Club General Meeting at the Acheson Community Resource Center, 514 McMorran Boulevard, Port Huron.
9:00pm—??????? Donut SIG at Tim Horton's, 3829 Pine Grove Ave., Fort Gratiot (the north-end Tim Horton's).

Tuesday 1/17/12—Executive Committee Meeting

- 6:00pm—7:00pm get-together at Jane Wheatly's home before the COMP Executive Committee Meeting (bring your own meal).
7:00pm—??????? COMP Executive Committee Meeting at Jane Wheatly's home, 1952 Harvey Rd, Kimball.

Thursday 1/19/12—Explorer SIG (see Map on following page)

- 6:00pm—7:00pm get-together at Riverside Family Dining restaurant, 27 N. Howard Ave, Croswell before the SIG (dinner is at your own expense).
7:00pm—9:00pm Explorer SIG at Croswell Computers N Vacuums (Ron Walter's home) at 71 N. Howard Ave, Croswell. (In downtown Croswell, next door to Ben Franklin's.)

From Ron Walters regarding the Explorer SIG:

At the January Explorers SIG we will be showing the Kindle Fire. I got one for my wife for Christmas. We will have a discussion of eReaders as well so if you have an eReader or Tablet bring it with you to the meeting. The meeting will be held on the 3rd Thursday in January at my store in Croswell. My store is located in down town Croswell. The address is 71 N. Howard Ave. We are located next door to Ben Franklin's. Take M-25 north out of Port Huron to Lexington. Turn left at the stop light and drive about 4 miles to Croswell. Turn right just before McDonalds. Come north into town and travel about ¾ of a mile or about 2 blocks north of the light on the west side of the street. We will gather for dinner at Riverside restaurant (dinner is at your own expense) at 6pm and the meeting is at 7pm. The restaurant is just past the Methodist church on the west side of the street. Hope to see you there. Please email me if you can make it—ronaldw152@sbcglobal.net.



Deadline

The deadline for submissions for October's Newsletter is Wednesday, January 25, 2012. Submissions can be e-mailed to callenderj2@gmail.com, subject heading: COMP Newsletter.

EXPLORER SIG

Thursday 1/19/2012
at Croswell Computers N Vacuums
71 N. Howard, Avenue, Croswell



Address 71 N Howard Ave
Croswell, MI 48422

