The Computer Link

January 2011

Holiday Gadgets and Software

As the holiday season approached, members of the NNCUG demonstrated some of their favorite gadgets and smaller software programs that not only were interesting, but could make nice last minute gifts for those who like to play with computers or work more efficiently.

Betty Lehman showed her **small external hard drive** with a capacity of one terabyte. The device is about half the size of a small paperback book. This unit is significantly smaller than external Western Digital hard drives that are not designed to be portable. She found it very useful for backing up her system drive and its portability. The unit came with backup software. However, Betty recommends using the **EASEUS Partition Master Home Edition** partitioning program (obtain it from www.easeus.com) to partition the drive for various purposes such as storing photographs, data files, etc. The program is similar in concept to Partition Magic. Partition Master is a free download, and runs on Windows 2000/XP/Vista/Windows 7. It allows simple partitioning of a hard drive, copying of disks and partitions, resizing, splitting or merging partitions and partition recovery and labeling. The company also has EASEUS Todo Backup Home that is a free backup and disaster recovery program that it claims will perform full system backup including the operating system and installed applications.

Betty concluded her demonstration by creating and removing a partition using Partition Master.

In discussing this program one member noted that a major benefit of partitioning was to keep corrupt applications in a partition from infecting an entire hard drive, thus protecting data or information in other partitions on the hard drive.

B.J. McMillan demonstrated her favorite substitute for a traditional mouse -- a **Fellowes Micro Trac Handheld Track-Ball**. This gadget looks like an egg with a hole in the center and a clicker inside the hole. To hold the device, one inserts a forefinger into the hole, using the clicker as the left-click on a mouse. The screen cursor's movement is controlled by the user's thumb on a small trackball on the top side of the "egg".

Condolences to Phil Allan

With deepest sympathy, the NNCUG Board and members extend their condolences to NNCUG Vice President Phil Allan upon the passing of his wife, Shirley, on December 14, 2010. Phil, our thoughts are with you during this time. **Ed.**

Acronis True Image Home 2011

By Dr. Herb Goldstein

This article was obtained from AP-CUG with the Author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Sarasota PC Users Group - www.spcug.org

Nightmares can come in abundant varieties, but the day you turn on your computer and nothing happens you are in for a whole new meaning of the word. As your heart sinks somewhere around the level of your shoes, visions of years of accumulated files, data, and software flash before your eyes as the sudden realization that maybe it's all gone nauseatingly sinks in. Are we talking about a rare occurrence? Unfortunately, it's a lot more common than you might think. Computers and their component hard drives are, after all, man-made electronic devices that are subject to an enormous variety of glitches. Preparing yourself for the inevitable day they visit you is the name of the game called *BACKUP!*

Yes, decent backup software used regularly needs to be the very first thing installed on your computer after its operating system! To do otherwise is an invitation to the disaster that time alone will inevitably visit upon you!

Backup software comes in a variety of types but it is commonly recognized that "imaging" is the most complete and accurate. Only imaging produces a byte-for-byte true reproduction of the contents of your original hard drive. Leading popularity today in the world of imaging backup software today is Acronis True Image Home 2011. My True Image backups have on at least 5 occasions for me over the years restored dead computers/hard drives to full functionality from an otherwise total loss. A veritable electronic lifesaver!

Acronis True Image Home 2011 is currently available for free trial download at acronis.com. You are urged to try it and put it through its paces before purchasing. Some careful reading and using is necessary to employ it properly. In addition, it comes with a "Swiss-army knife" of extra utilities that greatly increase its functionality when properly used. Acronis offers enough trial time for you to familiarize yourself with the software.

To use True Image Home 2011 most effectively you should setup a regular schedule of automatic backups. Personally, I have elected to perform a full backup every 14 days implemented with a regular differential backup daily. Regular scheduled differential or incremental backups take

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hardly any time at all and can keep your backups current on a daily (or whatever interval you elect) basis. It is essentially a simple "set it and forget it" automatic procedure. Once your backups have been created, you can easily restore any part or all of it as necessary. Although you can elect to backup only your email or other specific data files, it is highly recommended that you backup your entire hard drive which allows you to restore its entirety or individual files as necessary.

Your backups should be placed on an external USB-connected hard drive of more than adequate size to accom-

modate them. Such drives are readily available today at relatively modest expense. For safety's sake, you can also easily disconnect and store them at a different location from your computer if you so desire.

If you were to use True Image Home 2011 only for routine backups and restores it would be worth its entire cost, but its passel of new and improved utilities make it an easily worthwhile investment.

Predefined backup schemes designed for specific user needs - from a disk space-efficient scheme suitable for users with limited backup storage capabilities to a scheme for those users who need higher security for their data and system. The program offers different backup schemes for disk and file type backups. You just select a scheme and the program automatically manages your backups. In addition, you can create a custom backup scheme which will exactly suit your needs.

Check points - The Acronis Backup Explorer timeline shows Windows and software installation and update dates. Moving your mouse over a check point opens a balloon with information about the update or software. With check points you can check the changes to your system and recover the system to a specific backed up state.

A Non-Stop Backup feature automatically creates incremental backups every five minutes, allowing users to roll back their system, files, and folders to any point in time. In addition, you can now use the Acronis Secure Zone as Nonstop Backup storage. This may be desirable for notebook users with a single hard disk drive,

Acronis True Image Home 2011

however it defeats the purpose of keeping your backup separate and apart from your current hard drive in case it fails.

A Try-And-Decide feature allows temporary trial installation of new software which permits you to consequently completely eliminate it before any system changes are made.

Acronis Online Backup permits offsite continuous backup online to an Internet location.

A new and attractive graphical interface makes for easier program manipulation. Windows 7 is fully supported in all program aspects. A Plus Pack option, which allows you to restore your PC to dissimilar hardware regardless of make, model, or installed components, or to a virtual machine.

While the software contains a "cloning" feature to copy your hard drive contents to a new drive, you are advised instead to restore a backup image of your old drive to a new one. The cloning feature can get somewhat "sticky" and is best avoided.

An Erase feature allows to completely and permanently erase the contents of your hard drive. This is a must for safety sake before disposing of a hard drive.

Automatic update notification. By default, True Image Home 2011 will automatically inquire about the availability of a program update at every program start. When an update is available, Acronis True Image Home 2011 will offer to download and install it. You can also check for availability of updates manually through the Help menu. This current highly useful feature makes updating a much easier and more convenient process.

New Backup Explorer. Now you can use the Acronis Backup Explorer's time line for exploring not only Acronis Nonstop Backup and Acronis Online Backup contents, but contents of all other backups as well. Clicking My Backups

Gene Barlow of User Group Relations recently indicated that NNCUG members who wish to purchase Acronis True Image Home 2011 should check his web site (see below for URL and order code) for the latest discount price. Ed.

in the main window will show all your backups on the time line. In addition, you can start recovery of disks and partitions right from the time line.

Enhanced scheduler. The completely redesigned scheduler makes scheduling much easier. In addition, it now allows you to wake up the sleeping/hibernating computer to perform a backup. The "At system shutdown" and "At user logoff" options are now available to users of Windows Vista and Windows

7.

Drag & Drop functionality. You can recover backed up files by dragging them from Acronis Time Explorer to your Desktop or a folder of your choice. In addition, you can create shortcuts for backups by dragging their boxes from the My backups area on the main screen to your Desktop. This will allow you to run a backup by simply double-clicking on its shortcut. You can also create shortcuts for frequently used Acronis tools by dragging their icons from the Start menu to the Desktop.

Integration with Windows 7 Control Panel. True Image Home 2011 replaces Windows Backup in the Backup and Restore item. The Backup and Restore window will show the Nonstop Backup and your oldest disk or partition backup. You will be able to recover the backed up data, refresh the backups, and pause/start Nonstop Backup directly from the Control Panel.

Over a period of many years, SPCUG has been served by our backup guru and Acronis representative, Gene Barlow and his wife Linda. They have provided us with backup presentations, advice and assistance and Acronis software at substantial discount. You can purchase this excellent product from Gene for about half the normal list price by going to his secure web site at www.ugr.com. Use the following order code (UGTI2011) when placing an order to get the discount price of $29.

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Two other control buttons are included. B.J. liked this gizmo so much that she received four of them for Christmas one year. She noted that these gizmos can be held in one's lap and are marketed as laptop devices. However, when used with desktop computers, they free up desk space, allow one to sit at differing positions without having to lean over to reach a traditional mouse, and minimize repetitive strains on fingers, wrists, neck and shoulders. Unfortunately, this Fellowes model may no longer be made. However, if one looks on "Amazon.com" for "Finger mouse with trackball" or "finger trackball" a comparable item may be purchased for $12 to $14. B.J. noted that the one drawback to this trackball is that the internal mechanism that translates trackball motion to the computer wears out within a couple of years. Hence, the gift of four of them for Christmas.

B.J. also briefly demonstrated her **Samsung NP-N120** netbook. This particular one has the usual specifications of a 10.1 inch screen, a 160 gigabyte hard drive, one gigabyte of memory, (upgraded to two megabytes) and running the Windows XP operating system. As with most netbooks, a DVD burner/reader is not built in. She indicated that one of the strongest selling points of this model was that the keyboard size and spacing was about 92 % of a desktop keyboard and very easy to adapt to. B.J. indicated that she liked the portability of the unit for traveling, especially that it fits easily in a carryon. When recently visiting her mother, B.J. used the netbook to catch up on editing

photographs from recent trips using her favorite freeware photo viewer and light duty editor, Faststone Image Viewer 4.2 (www.faststone.org). The N120 has been discontinued, but comparable Samsung models are about $310-$350.

Bruce Mc Millan gave a demonstration of the **Liberkey Software system** (www.liberkey.com) that runs from a flash drive. Basically, one can run up to 300 free programs including system utilities, Internet programs, office suite software and photo editors from a flash drive that can be used on any computer with a USB port. One just inserts the flash drive and runs the desired program. When finished, the user closes the program and removes the flash drive. (Please see the LiberKey article in the December issue of the Computer Link for additional details.) Bruce indicated that this is an inexpensive gift for those technically inclined computer users inasmuch as an 8 gig flash drive can be purchased for $10-$15 and the software is free. He likes to carry the supplied programs, additional virus checkers, and other hardware testing programs when he helps friends solve problems with their computers. Bruce also indicated that playing with and learning the programs could possibly be the biggest "time alligator" since the game Tetris.

Chris Christensen demonstrated a program from IObit (www.iobit.com) which is a relatively new systems utility software company. The program, **Advanced System-Care Free 3**, is freeware and will run on Windows 2000/XP/Vista/Windows 7. Basically, the program provides simple-to-use registry clean-

ing, disk defragmentation, spyware/adware detection and removal, as well as other system tune up functions. Chris indicated that the program helps to keep a computer running fast. CNET ranked this free program number 7 among its top 10 downloads for 2010. The company also sells **Advanced SystemCare PRO 3, currently for $12.95** for a download version. Chris indicated that many of the functions that have to be run manually in the free version will run automatically in the background when using the paid program. It was noted that newer versions of Windows can do all of the above. Chris prefers this program since all of the functions are in one place, and that it also speeds up a personal computer.

Chris also demonstrated Snap 4, a screen capture program from Ashampoo (www.ashampoo.com). Chris indicated that one can select a computer screen image to be saved or printed. This program also can be used to edit captured screen shots and send several screen shots as a PDF file via e-mail. The current cost is $19.95; however, check the web site for the latest price.

Finally, **Jim Sapione** described his unfortunate experience with three failed Targus CF/SD memory card readers. He indicated that he had good luck with a borrowed Sony model, and purchased a GE brand at the local Walgreen's that has worked well. At least, we know of a local source for these useful devices.

Many thanks to all of the presenters!

Ed. and Anne Moss

December 18 Meeting Notes

MEMBERS ATTENDING: 28 and two visitors.

TREASURER'S REPORT: 108 active members.

President Chris Christensen reminded those present that an e-mail list will be established for those who wish to receive the COMPUTER LINK electronically. After the transition, members only will receive a hard copy by positively requesting that a hard copy be sent to them. This will significantly reduce mailing costs. The NNCUG website will have copies of the prior year's COMPUTER LINK to peruse. He expects the change to occur after the New Year.

Chris also reported that at the December PHOTO SIG meeting the projector fell on the floor and was severely damaged. He did an extensive search, and was unable to find a new replacement for a moderate cost. Replacement for the damaged lens alone is about $1800.00. He was able to purchase a used InFocus LP70+ projector (identical to the damaged unit) in excellent condition through bhphotovideo.com for $491.60 including a new zero hour's lamp. (New lamps cost approximately $365.) The Board approved the purchase.

SIG REPORTS:

PHOTO SIG: Jim Sapione encouraged all who are interested to attend. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 09:30 am at the Lancaster County library in Kilmarnock. Bring a laptop and participate in a problem solving approach to photo editing using Adobe Photoshop Elements. All levels of experience are represented. The January 11 session will be using techniques to add the appearance of motion to pictures that were not shot that way.

GENEALOGY SIG: Will meet on Thursday, January 13 at 1:00 pm at RWC. Ann Thompson will speak on "Google Your Family". Contact Ann at athompson@kaballero.com if you have any questions.

SPEAKERS: In order to give attendees some holiday gift ideas, several NNCUG members demonstrated their favorite hardware gadgets and software that they often use. Please see Page 1. Question and Answer Time was included in the discussion of the presentations.

RAFFLE WINNERS: Linda Gray - Sandisk 16GB Flash Drive with a Caselogic Flash Drive Case; Bruce Mc Millan - PNY 4 GB Micro Swivel Flash Drive; and Peter Kane - Mahogany Writing Desk, stationary, markers, and a canvas storage/file box.

Anne Moss, Secretary

Membership Report - December 2010

Welcome- Linda Enders-Bailey.

RENEW *January 2011 - Maricel Baker, John Bowles, Carol Hallett, F. N. Lee, Anne Moss, Bill Pregnall, George VanSant.*

RENEW *December 2010 - Bob Butts, Peter Kane, Mary Stewart.*

Membership dues are $20 annually. Please send to:
George Cadmus, Treasurer, NNCUG, 150 Pine Drive, White Stone VA 22578

Charlie Wrightson Returns!!

Charlie will return to the NNCUG General Meeting at RW-C on Saturday, January 15 at 10:00 a.m. to give a presentation on a "mystery" computer related subject! (Even we don't know what it is.) Always interesting and educational. Don't miss it!

Ed.

Google Family History

Ann Thompson will give a presentation to the **Genealogy SIG on January 13 at 1:00 p.m. at RW-C** on using Google to obtain family history information.

Ann Thompson

The Computer Link

Northern Neck
Computer
Users' Group
150 Pine Drive
White Stone, VA 22578

NNCUG Meeting Dates

NNCUG GENERAL MEETING
Third Saturday, 10:00 a.m.
Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room

BEGINNERS SIG
Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666

GENEALOGY SIG
Meets bi-monthly, 2nd Thursday, 1:00 p.m.—RW-C
Contact Ann Thompson at athompson@kaballero.com
to get on the mail list for announcements.

PHOTOSHOP SIG
Second Tuesday, every month, 9:30 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831
or message Bird@kaballero.com

For a photo treat visit
www.rapptapp.homestead.com

Computer Help available by appointment. Call Betty Lehman 435-2011 or B.J. McMillan 580-8666

Coming Attractions

Membership - Jan. 15, 10:00 am, Charlie Wrightson
Genealogy SIG - Jan 13, 1:00 pm, Google Your Family History
Photo SIG - Jan 11, 09:30 am, Kilmarnock Library