



# DACS.doc

A Computer & Technology Newsletter

March 2017

Volume 28, Issue 3

\$2.00

**Next Event:  
Tuesday, March 7,  
7:30 PM**



**Toss that clipboard! . . .  
We'll show you some great  
online tools for taking  
notes and organizing  
your ideas.**



# Directors' Notes

## Danbury Area Computer Society (DACS)

### Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 8, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by the DACS President, Dave Green.

In attendance were board members Richard Corzo, Bert Goff (Secretary & Treasurer), Dave Green (President), and Andy Woodruff. Dick Gingras was not present. The minutes were taken by Richard Teasdale.

(Names in italics denote responsibilities for actions.)

- The Minutes of the 1/4/2017 Board Meeting were accepted.

### Reports

- The Treasurer's report for January was discussed. Bert reported that the month compared favorably to January of 2016. The Balance on Hand is about the same as on 1/31/2016. Andy pointed out a minor error on the Dues income line, which Bert will correct. Fundraising for the Resource Center Capital Campaign continues to do well - the total amount received being \$606.35; donations averaging about \$50 per donor.

- The Membership report was received from Jim Scheef by e-mail:

- o 91 paid-up members (including 4 new), and 10 in-grace, for a total of 101.

- o 22 people attended the February 7 General Meeting, 4 of whom were visitors.

- Press Coverage:

- o Dave reported that press releases for the February general meeting were sent out on 1/25.

- o Andy reported that he posted an announcement of the general meeting on WSHU's website. It was agreed that going forward, this posting will be added to Dave's Press Release distribution routine. *Andy* will send details to Dave.

- o The board also agreed that press release announcements that stay on publishers' websites should be distributed as early as possible. (Distributions to print publishers will continue to go out 2 weeks before the date of the general meeting.)

- Website:

- o Richard mentioned that he added a permission to the Editor role in CiviCRM, so that *Bert* can update the text of acknowledgment e-mails that are sent via Civi.

- o Richard reported that from time to time, compromised files continue to be detected by Wordfence. It was agreed that files in the non-Wordpress folders, e.g. the newsletter archives, should be scanned for malware. *Richard* will take this up with Jim Scheef.

- o Andy asked that two separate backup copies of the website files be kept, one copy in Amazon Web Services, as now, and a second copy somewhere else. *Richard* agreed to take this up with Jim Scheef at the next Membership committee meeting.

- o Bert pointed out that some points made by the February general meeting speaker are relevant to the DACS website:

- Social networking sites on which DACS has a presence, e.g. Meetup, should include links to the DACS website.

- Visitors to the website should have an easy way to communicate with DACS.

- Google Analytics - the board discussed how the information that is collected might be used but concluded that it has no great value to DACS.

- It was agreed that visitors to the website should be encouraged to submit their e-mail addresses by enabling them to sign up for the weekly e-mails. *Richard* will ask Annette Van Ommeren to implement this feature.

### Old Business

- Programs:

- o In view of David Fischer's desire to know who attended the February general meeting, it was decided to ask *Jim Scheef* to query each attendee by e-mail whether his/her contact information may be provided to the speaker. The board agreed that DACS-owned information about meeting attendees will never be shared with speakers (or anyone else).

- o Dave reported that he asked the manager of Best Buy about a possible speaker for the topic of Wearable Devices, but has received no answer.

- o A list of potential general meeting topics was reviewed.

## Membership Information

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### Postmaster

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Drew Kwashnak	Lisa Leifels
Dave Mawdsley	Bruce Preston
Jim Scheef	Annette van Ommeren
Andy Woodruff	

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The editors welcome submissions from DACS members. Contact Richard Teasdale (*dacseditor@dacs.org*). Advertisers, contact Charles Bovaird at (203) 792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*)

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New Milford, CT 06776

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Dick Gingras APCUG Liaison  
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Apple User Group

## Officers

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**MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR:** Jim Scheef ([membership@dacs.org](mailto:membership@dacs.org))

**RESOURCE CENTER:** (203) 748-4330 • **WEB SITE:** <http://www.dacs.org>

## HelpLine

Our former telephone HelpLine has been replaced by our web-based DACS Community Forum at <http://forum.dacs.org>. We have topic-specific forums where DACS members can post questions. Questions may be answered by Workshop leaders or other DACS members. If none of the categories fit your question, just post it to the Ask DACS forum.

### Topic

Linux

Desktop publishing and website design

Mac and iPhone/iPad/iPod touch

Online/small business

Single board computers

Smartphones & Tablets

Social media

Video capture/processing

Windows

### Forum

Linux Workshop

Web Site Design Workshop

Apple Workshop

Online Business

Single Board Computers

Mobile Devices Workshop

Social Media

Video

Windows Workshop

o Bert reported on his follow-up conversation with Steve Harkness after the January general meeting. Bert will contact the manager of a New Milford retailer of hobby-related merchandise, who may be willing to talk on the subject of remote-controlled devices, e.g. drones.

o Andy will speak to John Patrick about the topic of his next address to DACS (mentioning home automation as a possibility).

o Richard will contact the Apple store in the Danbury Mall about speaking at a general meeting.

• Renovation of the Resource Center (RC):

o Bert reported that he and Jim Scheef are awaiting the start of some action on the renovation before they approach potential business donors.

o Andy has not heard recently from his contact at Meadow Ridge about their donation of used carpet. The board agreed to wait another month before starting painting, since the choice of paint color may depend on the carpet to be donated (whose color is not yet known).

o Other prospective renovations were discussed further.

## New Business

• Snacks for general meetings:

o Bert (snacks) and Richard Teasdale (drinks) will make the arrangements in March.

• Dave will mail the March newsletters.

• Richard will contact John Adams (Ridley-Lowell) about holding a (one-time) workshop on the subject of Network-attached Storage (NAS).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

—Richard Teasdale

## Membership has its Privileges!

Become a member and support DACS. Each member has access to the Community Forum, where they can post questions, the online newsletter in PDF form, group related news via email, SIG meetings, online forums, and any group-only related events, promotions, or activities. There is also an option to receive a mailed newsletter. For information on how to join DACS, go to <http://www.dacs.org/aboutdacs/joining.htm>.



# February Meeting Review

## Online Marketing

Review by Andrew Woodruff

**A**T OUR FEBRUARY MEETING, David Fischer spoke to us about "strategies and tools for an effective online presence." David is the founder of Solutions for Growth LLC, a marketing company that provides online marketing services. The company has eight employees, and it has clients throughout the United States and in several other countries. David himself has over 25 years of marketing experience.



David geared his talk toward a small business owner, and he began with a discussion about websites. He pointed out that 47% of small businesses do not have websites, despite the fact that 97% of consumers search online for products and services! Further, "half of the existing websites are 15 years old and look like they were designed by a middle school student". He concluded that a typical small business owner would improve sales by developing a website or improving an existing website.

Before starting development of a new website, David stressed that the owner should be clear about the goal of the website. "You should know your strategic plan; that will drive what you strive to make happen on the website." In some businesses, the website is a direct online sales tool. In others, the website aims to collect email addresses that can function as leads for future sales. For still others, the website simply serves to provide professional credibility for an individual or a company. The owner should not start any website design without first being clear about the desired goal.

David reviewed the ways that owners can create websites, either by themselves or with the help of outside developers. An owner can utilize a preformed system, such as those offered by Squarespace.com or GoDaddy.com. Or the owner can spend more effort and develop a more customized website using tools such as WordPress, Drupal, or Joomla. All three of these tools are free, but most owners will need help to develop the site.

When a prospect looks at a website, he/she will "make a decision quickly about whether ... to buy from a company, soon after starting to read the website." He implied that the owner should treat website development seriously, because the website is typically a company's primary marketing tool and therefore has a strong impact on sales.

David reviewed some general marketing background. The development of a new customer typically goes through five steps, in the order shown:

1. Awareness. Let the prospect know "that you are out there".
2. Acquisition. Begin some contact with the prospect by collecting information such as an email address.
3. Engagement. Communicate with the prospect.
4. Conversion. Convert the prospect to a customer, by selling something to this prospect.
5. Retention. Keep the customer and sell to this customer again.

Small businesses "often fall down on the marketing", either because they don't understand the need for marketing or "they don't find the time". Larger businesses, such as McDonald's, typically do understand the need for marketing and have dedicated marketing departments that spend time and money. Anticipating that we would ask why a company like McDonald's "does so much advertising, even though they already have the awareness", he said their marketing reminds their customers that McDonald's is "still out there". The point here is that a company needs to consistently remind the market that it exists; otherwise the market will forget about it, and competition will grab market share.

David provided a beginner's guide for how to set up a website. You need



three things, in order to have a website:

- o A domain. This is the purchase of a particular url (such as <https://www.mcdonalds.com>).

- o Your files. These computer files provide all words, photos, and details about how your website will be provided to a reader's computer.

- o A hosting company. You need to rent space on a server, where the files of your website are located. The hosting company provides 24/7 access to your files, and it provides many levels of security against outside attacks.

He pointed out that hosting companies vary in price, speed, and safety. As a website owner, consider the page load speed that a hosting company provides. He warned that you should have full ownership of your hosting, so that you can take your files elsewhere if you become dissatisfied with a particular hosting company. Very inexpensive hosting companies charge \$5-10 per month; and hosting companies that provide better speed typically charge \$20 per month.

The look of the website matters, and David made a few recommendations:

- o "Responsive". This means that the website design adjusts itself automatically to appear appropriately on various screen sizes such as a cell phone or a computer monitor.

- o Not cluttered. David showed examples of cluttered webpages, so that we could see what to avoid.

- o Call to action. The website should fulfill the owner's goal, and this usually includes a call to action. Examples of calls to action, depending on the goal for the website, include: "Call us", "Get an esti-

mate", "Like us on Facebook", "Shop now", "Call your members of congress".

After a website is built and appears on the web, there is a need to encourage Google to display it high in the list of search results, or at least on the first page of search results. The effort of encouraging Google to do so is called "Search Engine Optimization (SEO)". The SEO ranking is based on many factors, including relevance to users, spiders and index, content, tags, page titles, structure, and inbound links. David suggested the following steps that a website owner can take to improve SEO:

- o Traffic. Encourage the public to visit your website. Google looks at traffic volume!

- o Incoming links. Encourage other website owners to place links on their websites to your website.

- o Keep adding stuff. Add blog comments or new articles or photos frequently. Google's proprietary algorithm looks at the frequency of updates!

- o Security certificate. Get an "SSL security certificate", which will make the url appear as https rather than http. This improves security as well as SEO.

An owner can also run Google AdWords campaigns in order that Google will show a link to the website in certain searches. David warned that this can be expensive. This is the "world's best way to waste money, if you don't know what you are doing!" Using a professional marketing company is a wise approach.

After a website is developed, the owner needs to plan on continuing steps:

- o Effectiveness Measurements. The owner should strive to measure the effectiveness of the website toward its goals. Google offers a service called Google Analytics that provides visitor tracking data.

- o Continual improvements. The owner should strive to make the website better, so that it better meets its goals.

- o Maintenance. Modern websites require continual maintenance, because website building blocks (such as plugins used with WordPress) are frequently revised to improve functionality or to better handle security threats. The webmaster can download new revisions for free, but effort is required to stay up-to-date.

David moved on to a discussion of social media. As he sees it, "for most companies, the primary reason for social media is to drive traffic to your website". He suggested that a new owner should focus most effort on the website. As justification, he pointed out that

Facebook "does not present all your posts in front of all your customers."

To the extent that an owner participates in social media for the business, he suggested the following:

- o Don't limit your activity to just promoting your product.

- o Be authentic.

- o Share content.

- o Be conversational.

- o Include photos. Display a picture of a happy customer.

He suggested a tool, such as Hootsuite, to manage multiple social media accounts all at once.

David said that many businesses rely on email marketing, and this is based on a list of prospects' email addresses. This list is very important, and marketing success depends on growing this list. There are email market-

ing services that can help small businesses. The services automatically send out professional-looking emails, sometimes at automatic intervals, as specified by the business owner. Two leading services are Constant Contact and MailChimp. An advantage of Constant Contact is that it provides human customer service; the advantage of MailChimp is that it is less expensive.

David uses Constant Contact for his email marketing consulting, and Solutions for Growth is "master certified" by Constant Contact.

There is a link to David's slides on the [dacs.org](http://dacs.org) website, on the Links/DACS Downloads Page.

David invited individuals to contact him at [David.Fischer@solutionsforgrowthllc.com](mailto:David.Fischer@solutionsforgrowthllc.com).

## March Meeting Preview

### Taking Notes

By Jim Scheef

Date: Tuesday, March 7, 7:30 p.m.

Location: Danbury Hospital Auditorium

Presenter: Sean Henderson

SO, YOU'RE SURFING the web and you see something interesting. What do you do? You might be like me, and start looking for a piece of scratch paper, a note pad, or more often, the back of an envelope that happens to be within reach. My other method for web pages is to drag the URL to the desktop and create a shortcut that I intend to use "right away." Neither of these are organized in any way and if a written note is associated with a webpage, all bets are off on how I might keep them together. Would it surprise you that there is a better way?

Our March General Meeting will be on "Taking Notes - Exploring Evernote and OneNote." Sean Henderson is a pro-



grammer, Microsoft Certified Professional, and suburban taxi driver for his kids.. Occasionally, he needs to save a few notes on "stuff."

How do you keep track of bits of information? Real-world sticky notes? Virtual sticky-notes? Scraps of paper? Maybe you have a well-developed system of note taking on your desktop or laptop computer that isn't mobile friendly.

What is a note, anyway? Are calendar appointments notes? Journal entries? Favorite recipes from mom? A list of tire sizes and recommend PSI for you and your wife's car?

Join Sean as he explores the concept of note-taking, and what tools, digital and otherwise, are available to help organize these small bits. Evernote will be the primary demonstration, but Sean will cover other titles like Microsoft OneNote as well.





# Workshops

## Workshop NOTES: March 2017

**Apple.** Focuses on all aspects of the Mac and iPhone operating systems.

**Contact:** Richard Corzo ([applesig@dacs.org](mailto:applesig@dacs.org)).  
Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 7 p.m. at DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar 14

**Jobs.** Networking and jobs search

**Contact:** Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 ([aam@mags.net](mailto:aam@mags.net)). Go to DACS Community Forum (<http://forum.dacs.org>) for job listings.

**Linux.** Helps in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

**Contact:** Dave Mawdsley, [linuxsig@dacs.org](mailto:linuxsig@dacs.org)  
Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** Mar 15

**PC Maintenance.** Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.

**Contact:** Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 ([aam@mags.net](mailto:aam@mags.net)).  
Go to DACS Community Forum (<http://forum.dacs.org>).

**Online Business Workshop.** Informal member gathering sharing ideas on creating an online source of income.

**Contact:** Steve Harkness ([onlinebizsig@dacs.org](mailto:onlinebizsig@dacs.org))  
Meets second Monday in Brookfield, or by Webinar.  
**Next Meeting:** Check [dacs.org](http://dacs.org).

**Single Board Computers Workshop.** Explores small cheap computers like Raspberry Pi, Arduino, Netduino, Beaglebone, and more. Meets at 7:30 p.m. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at the DACS Resource Center.

**Contact:** Jim Scheef (860-355-0034)  
**Next Meeting:** Mar 16

**Video Production.** The Video Workshop explores all aspects of video capture and production, including both inexpensive and professional choices for cameras and editing software.

Meets on the 4th Thursday of certain months, typically at 7:00 pm at the Resource Center. Check the Calendar for details.

**Contact:** Andy Woodruff ([awoodruff@dacs.org](mailto:awoodruff@dacs.org))  
**Next meeting:** Check [dacs.org](http://dacs.org)

**Web Development/Design** This workshop is on temporary hiatus. Would you like to take on the role of workshop leader? It's a great way to share information, learn new techniques, promote your business, and interact with like-minded people. Extensive web knowledge is not required, but a willingness to open a topic for discussion and enjoy the contributions and feedback from the attendees. Contact Annette for more information. Next meeting: Tentative start up again in April 2017.

**Contact:** Annette Van Ommeren ([avanommeren@dacs.org](mailto:avanommeren@dacs.org))  
**Next meeting:** Check [dacs.org](http://dacs.org)

## Let's join heads!

Do you have a special technology interest you would like to share or learn more about? Join a DACS workshop or start one. You don't have to be a nerd or a guru—just have a curiosity for what's out there and an interest in sharing or discov-



ering with others like you. Just send an e-mail to [dacsprez@dacs.org](mailto:dacsprez@dacs.org), or talk to one of our officers at the next meeting, and say something like "I want to start a workshop!" or "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a workshop on . . .?"

# March 2017

## Danbury Area Computer Society

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19	20	21  Web Development and Design Annette van Ommeren 7:00 - 9:00 PM avanommeren@dacs.org On Hiatus	22	23	24	25																																																																																											
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# Safe-Surfing Tips

## What has happened to my system? Browser Pop-up Scams

By David Kretchmar

**W**INDOWS 10 HAS PROVEN itself to be the most secure Windows operating system ever, so hackers seem to be turning to another vulnerability. Browsers (Internet Explorer, Edge, Firefox, and Google Chrome) are becoming a prime target of scammers.



If you are at all adventuresome exploring the Internet, you probably have had a browsing session interrupted by a pop-up visual often accompanied by an obnoxious audio warning to the effect that your computer has been infected and you must call a toll-free 800 (or 8XX) number to prevent something terrible

from happening to your hard drive or data.

This warning is bogus; often this "threat" can be deleted by simply closing your browser.

To protect yourself from serious malware infection, you must be careful about how you close a pop-up window. Specifically, you should never click anywhere in a pop-up window. Even buttons labeled "Cancel" or "Close" or a red-X button in the upper-right corner are dangerous to click; doing so could trigger an infection.

### Safely close a pop-up window

To safely close a pop-up window, locate the button in your Taskbar that represents your browser. Also, look for other highlighted icons on the Taskbar; the button and the pop-up will usually have a simi-

lar name. Right click on the button and select Close.

If that doesn't work, you need to use the Windows Task Manager to close the pop-up. Simultaneously press the CTRL, ALT, and DEL keys, and, from the resulting window, select "Task Manager". In the Task Manager, under the Processes tab, highlight your

browser application and click the End Task button. It is probably a good idea to close all applications except the Task Manager, unless you are comfortable identifying non-problem items.

Occasionally you will have to power down your system to remove the problem, either by holding in the start button on your computer for 10 or so seconds or unplugging your tower. If the problem occurs on a laptop computer naturally the battery must also be removed to completely power down the computer.

**DAVID KRETCHMAR** is Computer Hardware Technician, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club, NV ([www.scscc.org](http://www.scscc.org); [tomburt89134@cox.net](mailto:tomburt89134@cox.net)).

This article appeared in the November 2016 issue, *GigiBytes Gazette*, and is reprinted by permission.

## A Bit of This - A Byte of That

By Greg Skalka

*Though it is our "Lite" edition this month, I feel I should still put a few of my thoughts down for the benefit of our readers. I usually have a few ideas or tech concerns that probably would be of interest to our members, but can't be developed into a full column (at least without some unreasonable padding).*

**U**PDATES SEEM TO BE A constant pain for me. October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month, and one important security tip to protect yourself from cyber threats is to make sure your OS and applications are kept updated. With programs, browsers and operating systems all needing occasional security updates, it is often difficult to keep up. Depending on update settings in the program or OS, it is also sometimes not easy to know when new updates are available. Some software vendors make the update process easy, while for others it is a chore.

Another problem is that I have so many devices that require updates. I currently have two laptops (Win7), four desktop PCs

(two Win7, one Win10 and one remaining XP, which is not connected to my home network, so it does not get updated any more), a Chromebook, a Chromebit, an iPad Mini and two Android tablets. My wife has an iPhone, but its maintenance is her problem. Additionally, I have a number of other tech devices that need periodic software/firmware updates, including smart TVs and GPS receivers. In reality, almost any device that can connect to a computer or the Internet has the potential for an update.



How does one keep up with it all?

I also probably make life a bit harder for myself by avoiding the automatic update settings in Windows. I don't fully trust Microsoft to hold my best interests above theirs, so I subscribe to Ronald Reagan's policy of "trust but verify." I allow Microsoft to inform me of critical updates, but I choose when (and if) they are installed. I do want to keep my OS and Office programs updated, but don't want to be held up while waiting for an update to complete. If I'm in a hurry to turn off my laptop (like I'm getting ready to board an airplane) and I get the message "Updates in progress, do not shut down your computer," I'd be very unhappy. I also may not want every update Microsoft wants to force on me (like Windows 10). I try to check for Microsoft updates once a week, when I perform weekly computer maintenance on my regularly-used computers.

I have noticed a problem with computers that don't get used often, like my wife's laptop. When there are a lot of accumulated updates to install (like more than a dozen), the process can take forever (like days). The best solution I've found so far is to select only a portion of the recommended updates (like 6-10) to install at a time; it seems to be able to choke down updates in smaller batches more easily.



Even though Microsoft's free Win10 update period has ended, apps on my computers are still checking to see if I've upgraded (that pesky GWX, or Get Windows 10, ConfigManager), and Win10 is still listed as an update for my wife's computer. I need to stop this waste of my computer resources, and get rid of these apps and the downloaded but not installed Win10 update on my wife's PC. I recently subscribed to the "Ask Leo!" computer newsletter (askleo.com); a recent issue described how to do this. If only I could find the time.

I have been happy with the update process for the Chrome OS. Google does not offer any options; when an update is available, it is automatically downloaded and installed the next time you boot. I have

noticed the little up-arrow symbol (looks like a little house to me) in the system tray that indicates an update is ready for installation. I've never noticed any additional boot time for the update, nor seen my user experience change. I believe updates for the Chrome browser are handled in the same way.

This type of forced update does potentially put your system at risk, as there does not appear to be a way to roll back a malfunctioning update. At least Microsoft sets a restore point.

It is my understanding that Windows 10 also applies updates unconditionally, but I have not been running it long enough to have seen this. I have read horror stories of Win10 users having their comput-

ers reboot during critical work presentations due to this automatic update "feature." Not something I'd want to endure as a business computer user.

I guess the only way to avoid failed updates (other than not updating) is to have multiple computing devices with different operating systems (massive redundancy). I kind of have that, but then I must accept that performing the update process will be a long one.

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## Your eyes can so easily be deceived!

By Babette Bloch

**W**E'VE ALL HEARD OVER AND OVER not to click at attachments and links in e-mail messages that are suspect. There is less talk about another way to get sucked into trouble either by incurring a big fee or worse, an invasion of your computer. I call it "The Technical UNSupport," or "The Program Support That Isn't." It's the second time I've run into this scam, or worse, and it's well worth avoiding. Case 1: A Quicken SIG member who had a problem thought he was contacting Quicken's Tech Support. He'd googled the very words "Quicken Support" and found this: Quicken® Help 1-800-656-6115, Get 24x7 unlimited quicken support and phone help from quicken tech experts. Quicken Mac Tech Support includes quicken diagnose, install, upgrade and fix <http://quicken-help.com/>

He thought he was talking to the real Quicken Support, and they led him through a long discussion of the problem, plus getting permission to actually look at his program on his computer. And then they came

up with a diagnosis that the whole program was corrupted and would cost \$300 to fix. At that point he hung up and called me. Case 2: When I was wrestling the Windows 10 upgrade and everyone in GGCSI called was not available; my

husband tried to call the Quicken Store in Corte Madera. After 20 minutes on hold, he gave up and turned to Google, looking for "Windows 10 Support Phone Number." He found: Call - +44-800-086-8333(UK) for Microsoft Windows 10 Technical Support. Get Certified Technician for Windows 10 Update Failed, Windows 10 Activation Error Call +61-1800-502-681(Australia), Windows 10 Update from 8, 8.1, 7 Call to Toll Free Number - 1-855-883-1117(USA)

Call 1-855-883-1117 Microsoft Windows 10 Technical Support [www.microsoft.com/windows10technicalsupport.com/](http://www.microsoft.com/windows10technicalsupport.com/) He called the number and then handed me the phone to explain the problem I was having. A man with a slight Indian accent told me they could take care of the whole thing and download Windows 10 from their end to my computer; just give them access! At which point I hung up. And they called back! And I hung up again.

What was going on? The huge, main clue was that neither of these links had a site URL that was any of the following: [quicken.com](http://quicken.com), [intuit.com](http://intuit.com), or [Microsoft.com](http://Microsoft.com). In addition, when I clicked the link with my computer today, running the MalwareBytes program, it would not let me open either site and said each was a "malicious site." So if you're looking for any help by searching the Internet, regardless of what search engine you use, watch those links before you click! The description before the link's notation can be very misleading. Make sure the link is for the company whose product you are searching. If in doubt, use a search for the phone number or name of the suspect in the description. In addition, one has to wonder why Google doesn't

vet such links and puts them so high in the list.

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### DACS Community Forum

Ever wanted to ask a question and get an answer without waiting for the next general meeting? How about sharing news with other DACS members, or communicating with fellow participants in a SIG you attend?

The DACS Community Forum (<http://www.dacs.org/forum/>) is another benefit of being a DACS member, and it's open 24/7. Once you register there you'll be able to post questions, answers, and comments. You can even set up an RSS subscription to be notified of updates to the forums.

Try out the DACS forum today!



# Tools & Apps

## New Programs and Devices

By Dick Maybach

**C**OMPUTER PROGRAMS can be complex and learning to use a new one can be difficult and frustrating.

Further, many hardware devices contain processors, making it easy for designers to add features that can make them equally complex. My primary operating system is Linux, and I like to explore new applications. These are usually free, and there are often several for every task, usually with drastically different approaches. I also love such gadgets as digital cameras and pocket GPS navigators. As a result, I am continually trying to master new programs and devices and have worked out some methods of doing this.

There are many barriers that make the task difficult.

- Every designer has a different idea of how a program or device should work, and trying to use a new one the same way you used an old one can be counter-productive. Sometimes, the most difficult part is unlearning what you think you know, especially for experienced users who may feel they should be able to figure out new software and hardware by instinct.

- Different products can use different vocabularies - for example "uploading" sometime means importing information into an application and sometimes exporting it.

- Except for a handful of very popular applications, good tutorial books don't exist. This is especially so for Linux, OS X, and many cameras.

- The number of brick-and-mortar bookstores is decreasing, and those remaining are continually decreasing the shelf space for technical books. Software is frequently updated, meaning that books quickly become outdated and public libraries can't keep up. As a result, it is difficult to find useful information by browsing books.

- Information on the Internet is fragmented, poorly organized, and often wrong.

- Tech writers seem to fixate on tasks that don't interest me - they go into elaborate detail on things I never do and skip over those I perform almost every day.

- User interfaces are frequently not well designed, and not all products have useful help features.

- Purchased software and hardware usually includes only a small printed pamphlet, containing mostly legal disclaimers in several languages and labeled, "Getting Started Guide," or something similar. Many people assume this is the manual and never look at the real manual, which resides on an included CD-ROM or the vendor's Website.

I have found several ineffective techniques.

- Calling a friend - while this is occasionally appropriate, you will soon run out of friends if you overuse it, and some friends have more confidence than expertise.

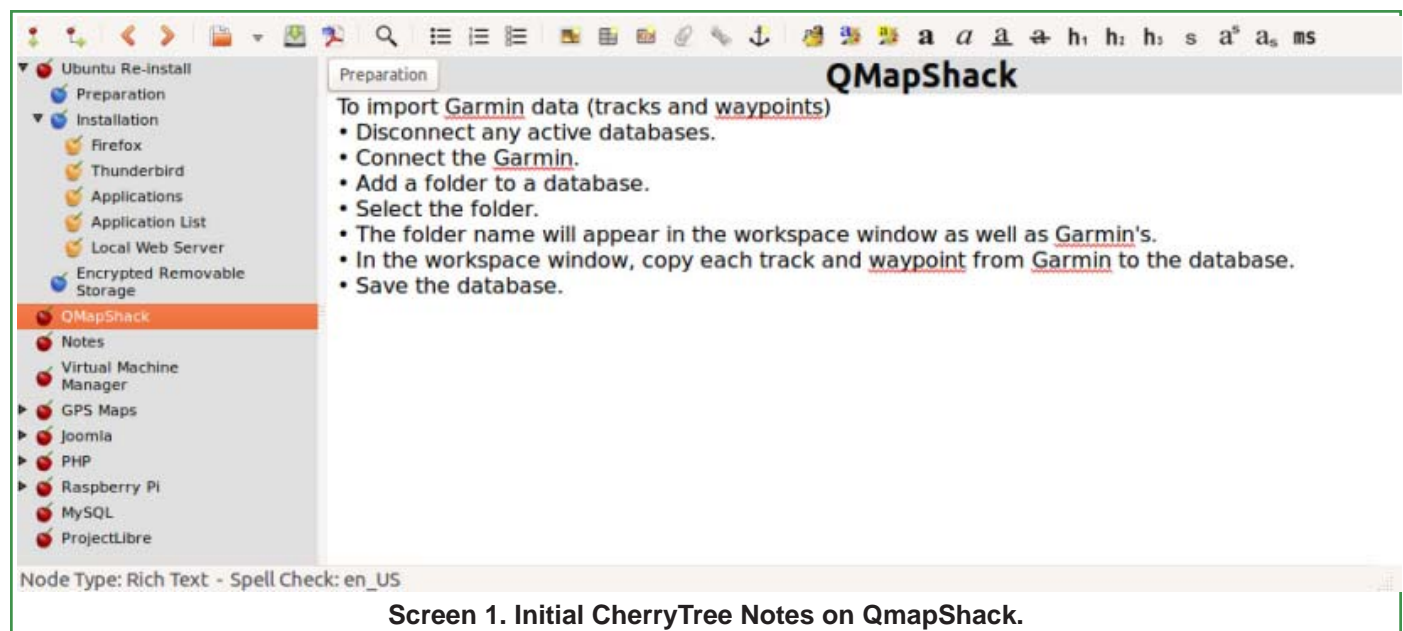
- Taking random screen shots - unless you organize these and add comments as soon as you take them, you just end up with directories full of useless graphics.

- Handwritten notes - unless you organize these you end up with stacks or useless paper.

- Working by analogy from similar products - every program is different, and few are clones. New ones appear because their developers felt previous ones had fundamental shortcomings; few are just old ones with bug fixes.

- Using a new program to work with valuable data - making a mistake here could mean you lose the data.

Before you install the software or turn on the device, gather the available information about it that appears useful, including: the full manual (if only an on-line version is available, get its URL) not just the getting started guide, reviews (which frequently provide helpful overviews), and Internet articles (or their URLs). If this is software, make a complete backup of your computer. This is important if you downloaded the software, especially for Windows users. Linux users can install new software on a virtual machine, which isolates any problems. Read the reviews and articles you gathered and at least the introduction and installation sections of the manual. Create a sandbox in which to experiment. This can be as simple as a directory with a few files you will manipulate with the new software or as complex as a virtual machine. Set up means of recording notes. I use CherryTree, <http://www.giuspen.com/cherrytree/>, which is free, but available only for Linux and Windows; Mac users can find equivalents at <http://alternativeto.net/software/cherrytree/?platform=mac>. Screen 1 shows my complete CherryTree notes on QMapShack after an hour or so of use. (This is a mapping program that works with a GPS.) As you can see, these fit on a single page, and at this point I had a lot yet to do.



Screen 1. Initial CherryTree Notes on QmapShack.



By contrast, Screen 2 shows a portion of my notes on installing Ubuntu Linux, which have been refined for several years. Note from the outline view in the left panel that these now extend over several pages. I modify these notes again with every new installation.

Now you're ready to begin. Open the manual, or equivalently open its file or URL on your desktop, and open your notes program. As a result, you may have three open windows on your desktop, the manual, the notes program, and the new software. You may have less if you have a full printed manual or if you are working with new hardware. Follow the instructions to install the program or set up the hardware, making notes as needed. (Do this as soon as you perform the action. Don't wait until the end of the session.) Work your way through the manual, making notes about what you do, especially if something surprises you or works differently than you expect. On the first pass, cover only the basics and skip over those features that don't interest you. At this point you're looking for only the features that you are likely to use initially. Take screen shots as appropriate and include them in the notes (although I sel-

dom find this necessary). Note especially any configuration changes and the locations of the files used. Repeat this until you don't have to refer to the manual, but only your notes.

By now, you should have captured the features that are important to you. I often find that my notes fall into two areas, configuration and work-flow (the process you follow as you use the program or device). A complex program may require several of these. They need not be polished, after all no one but you will ever see them, but they should be complete enough to guide you days or weeks in the future.

Every time you use the software or device, open the notes, as you will want to revise and augment them as you correct early misinterpretations and learn more. This is especially important for things you use infrequently.

Your notes should contain everything you need; that is, you shouldn't have to rely on any other material to use the program or device they cover. This should include:

- the URLs of any on-line material, such as manuals, reviews, tutorials, and newsletters,

- configuration data at install time,
- work-flows,
- contents of configuration and profile files, and
- annotated screen-shots.

Place a copy of these notes on all the PCs with which you will use the program or device. For example, if you take a laptop on vacation, it should have the notes for your camera. Consider making such notes for your operating system, your complex applications, and your hardware, including peripherals. Without them, such jobs as reinstalling an operating system will take far too long and may require several attempts. You will find that they make using and maintaining complex products much easier and maintaining them far less frustrating, especially for those you don't use every day.

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**Preparation**

Backup and save the Firefox bookmarks and Thunderbird address list, although they should be saved in the Firefox configuration directory. Record the Firefox, [LibreOffice](#), and Thunderbird add-ons.

Export and save the [gpg](#) public key using Seahorse. Export the [gpg](#) private key with `gpg --export-secret-keys --armor --output private-key.asc`.

Create a list of all the programs installed since the original installation. (This requires [aptitude](#), which won't appear in the generated list.)

```
cat /var/log/installer/initial-status.gz | gzip -d | grep '^Package:' | awk '{ print $2}' > tmp.txt && aptitude search -F %p '-i!-M' | awk '{ print $1}' | grep -v -F -f tmp.txt > packages.txt && rm tmp.txt
```

This creates `packages.txt` in the current directory. Binary packages usually install to their own directory in `/opt`, so a listing of the contents of `/opt` will cover this. ([Calibre](#) seems to be the only example.)

```
ls -l /opt > binary_packages.txt
```

Save `/etc/apt/sources.list` and the contents of the directory `/etc/apt/sources.list.d` as the latter has all the [ppa](#) sources.

Save `/etc/fstab`.

Before doing the install, remove the external backup disk. This will make it necessary to edit `fstab` so that it's mounted at `bootup`.

Run the command

```
df > df_output
```

to record the mount points. This [doesn't](#) show everything though. Also use [gparted](#) to record for each partition the partition, its file system, its label, and its size. Print this so it's available during the install.

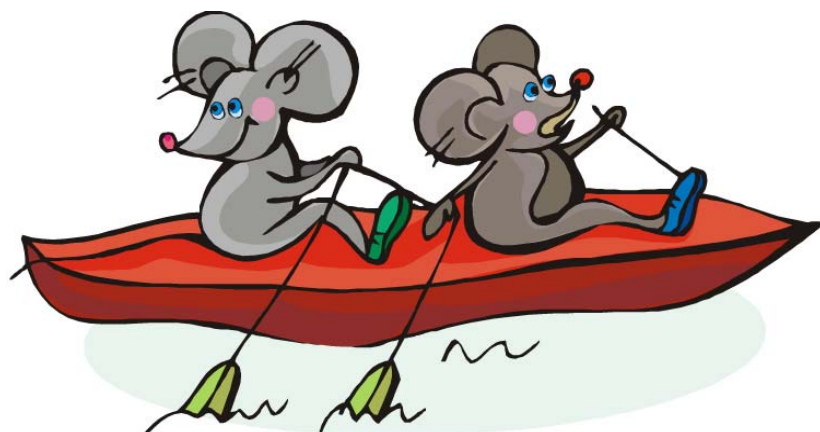
Node Type: Rich Text - Spell Check: en\_US

Screen 2. CherryTree Notes on Ubuntu Linux.



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When you come to the next DACS meeting,  
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## Future Events:

**March 7**

Sean Henderson  
Taking Notes

**April 4**

TBA

**May 2**

TBA

**June 6**

TBA