

Bits & Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club



November 2025

The Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd Suite 208 (lower level), Bella Vista, AR 72715

Website: <http://BVComputerClub.org>

Email: BVCCeditor@bvcomputerclub.org

MEETINGS

Board Meeting: November 10, 2pm, in John Ruehle Training Center, Highlands Crossing Center.

General Meeting: November 10, 3pm.
Program: "Ways Your Computer Can Be Comprised", presenter Joel Ewing: a look at various ways Internet criminals may try to attack your computer or trick you into taking inappropriate actions to steal your information and/or money.

We will meet in-person in **John Ruehle Training Center**, Highlands Crossing Center, lower level, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Bella Vista, or you may attend the meeting on-line via Zoom. Zoom access information is published on our website.

Visitors or Guests are welcome.

Consider attending by Zoom if you are unable to attend in-person.

HELP CLINICS

November 1, 9am - noon at John Ruehle center

November 19, 9am - noon at John Ruehle center

Members may request Remote Help on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Member Benefits ► Remote Help .

MEMBERSHIP

Single membership is \$30; \$15 for each additional family member in the same household.

Join on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Get Involved ► Join/Renew, by mailing an application (from the web site) with check, or complete an application and pay in person at any meeting.

CLASSES

(At BVCC Training Center)

"Why, When and How to Backup Your C Drive", Wednesday, November 12, 9am - 11am, with Pete Opland.

Advance sign up required for each listed class: For reservations: email to

bvccedu@bvcomputerclub.org, or sign up at the General Meeting. Classes are free to Computer Club members.

Check the monthly calendar and announcements for any last minute schedule changes at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> .

NEW OR RETURNING BVCC MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members or members returning as BVCC members after an absence:

Gina Uskert

Margaret Washburn

David Kleebe

Sara Denning

Jeanne Reif

Susan Brumbaugh

Gail Hobson

Bonnie J. Sisemore

Mitch Phillips

PHOTO RESTORATION

By Lynda Buske

Ottawa PC Users' Group (<https://opcug.ca/>)

Lynda.buske (at) opcug.ca

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How many of us have a big Rubbermaid bin of old photos from parents and our own past? Well, I'm happy to say that the bin I have has been greatly reduced but it definitely took some time. Scanning old photos is such a tedious process that if you don't break it into chunks, it is easy to get discouraged. My strategy was to break down my family history into manageable sections. I scanned (1200 dpi is best) about 30 images dating from 1899 to 1930. After editing them, I created a hard copy photo book using Shutterfly. The following year I tackled 1940s to 1960s and the third year I did late 60s to early 80s. These made perfect gifts for my sisters and did not take up much space on their shelves.

I've written many articles on editing digital photos using free PhotoScape X (PSX) software. Please refer to archived articles at <https://opcug.ca/digital-photography/>. This article will highlight some of the techniques that are particularly useful when restoring scanned family photos.

Many old photos, both black/white and colour, fade over time. A good place to start with restoring images is to add some contrast to provide, in the case of a black/white image, some pure black and pure white areas rather than a sea of soft grey (<https://opcug.ca/Photography/PunchUpPhotos.pdf>).

Often old print photos have signs of wear. There may be spots or lines that will show up in the scanned version. To remove these, use the spot healing brush (under *Tools* tab) in PSX. You can drag the mouse over more than one spot at a time if the background is relatively homogeneous since the program will be looking for pixels in the area to use as a replacement for the dot or scratch line. With complex backgrounds, I find I get optimal results by doing a small area at a time. You can also use this tool to remove acne blemishes or reflections off eye glasses. In the paid version of PSX (\$60 CDN), there is a clone brush that allows you to remove unwanted objects (e.g. pop can in image below)

While you can sharpen the whole image (Adjustments/Sharpen), you may wish to concentrate on certain areas such as faces. Sharpening or whitening eyes can have a great impact as the viewer is drawn to faces first and then eyes. To whiten, click on *Colour* tab, then *Mask* to select a certain area (by dragging your mouse) that you wish to change. Then use the brighten slider bar. Teeth can also be whitened with the same process. To sharpen just the eyes, go to *Adjustments/Sharpen*, paint a *Mask* and then adjust the sliders.

For old coloured photos, it is sometimes difficult to restore the original hues and saturation adjustments can cause the image to look phony. My preference is to convert them to a black/white image so that people are focusing on faces rather than distracting clothing colours (see sample image below).

Consider cropping all images to something tighter to focus on the importance of the people of your photos.

Original photo

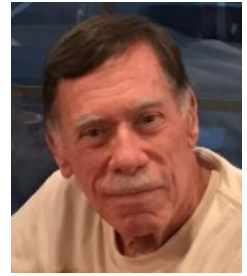


Restored photo



APPLICATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD NEVER, EVER, INSTALL

By: David Kretchmar, Hardware Technician
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
<https://www.scscc.club> dkretch (at) gmail.com



A program, an application, and software are the same thing; a set of instructions telling the computer how to perform in response to different inputs from the user, to provide something that the user wants to experience. The term application (or “app”) has more recently gained a connotation of being a program developed for smartphones, but that is not always how they are used.

Many questionable programs are offered that promise some benefit, to tempt the user into downloading and installing them. Often the cost of these programs in device performance, security compromises, and money far outweigh any benefit.

You can get 10 or more contradicting opinions on this topic from 5 different computer geeks, and my ideas are no less unassailable. I know I will be stepping on a lot of toes, but if some users can be persuaded to reconsider some program choices, this article will be worthwhile.

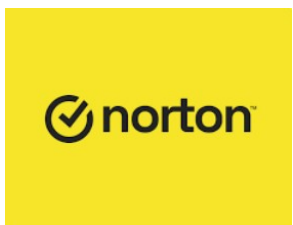
America On Line – AOL



The core technology is about as clunky and outdated as any you are likely to find. There are performance issues, security issues, mail issues, and customer service issues. AOL would not mind keeping you in its own little world, so much so that it has never learned to play very well with some other parts of the internet. AOL’s ancient technology is very susceptible to hacking, putting your entire device at risk. Users report issues with email delivery and spam and fraud filtering on AOL more often than compared to other providers. There are just much better options for anything AOL gives you. One exception: If you are accessing the internet through a dial-up modem, you are probably OK sticking with AOL.

Many AOL users, including myself, have had horrendous customer service issues. At one time it was impossible to cancel an AOL account. I had to cancel a credit card and deal with calls from a debt collection agency when I ended my relationship with AOL over 20 years ago.

Anything from Norton



You should never install Norton antivirus (NAV) on your device. It takes up excessive system resources and even when it is current, it is weaker than most other antiviruses. I have seen NAV slow down a system so much it was unusable. NAV provides poorer

protection than Microsoft's built-in and free anti-virus and firewall software, Windows Security, and the first thing NAV does is turn off Windows Security. If it were not for kickbacks from Norton to retail computer assemblers and vendors, even these companies wouldn't use it.

If you feel the need for extra protection Malwarebytes and McAfee seem to work well with Windows Security. Malwarebytes is expensive and overkill for most individuals, and McAfee is not very robust software, probably adding nothing to Windows Security.

A problem with Norton and McAfee is that they are frequently used in online scams, which probably have nothing to do with Norton and McAfee. If someone has used one of these, they are more likely to respond to a bogus email or text stating an account has just been charged \$400 for renewal. This is true even if the "use" was simply uninstalling bloatware from a new system.



LifeLock is Norton's identity theft protection product. LifeLock has been controversial over many years, facing allegations of deceptive advertising and data breaches. Disturbingly, the data breaches have come from within the company as well as from outside sources.

In 2010, the FTC fined LifeLock \$12 million for making deceptive claims about its identity theft protection services. The FTC also alleged that LifeLock claimed to protect consumers' sensitive data with the same security as financial institutions when this was untrue. The FTC further alleged that LifeLock falsely claimed to protect consumers' identity around the clock. In December 2022, LifeLock disclosed that its servers were attacked, compromising thousands of user accounts.

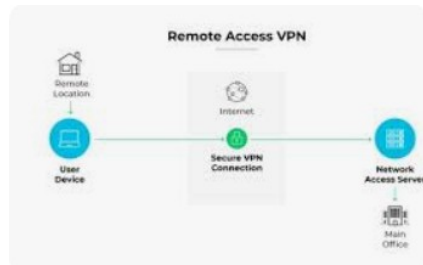
LifeLock, and other identity-theft protection companies don't do anything to protect your identity that you could not do just as well or better on your own.

Are you really concerned about identity theft? Then freeze your accounts at the three major credit reporting agencies. I have done this for years, and when I bought a car a couple of years ago, I just unfroze my account for 24 hours at the agency used by the dealer.

The federal government now allows you to "lock" your own Social Security Number. This will hopefully not allow any new accounts to be established by anyone using your SSN. Go to e-verify.gov, "self lock." This helps prevent anyone else from using your SSN for E-Verify. If an employer, financial institution, or any other entity enters your locked SSN in E-Verify to confirm authorization, it will return an E-Verify Tentative "Nonconfirmation" (mismatch). Like credit reporting account freezes, the owner can lift the "self lock" when necessary.

A Virtual Private Network (VPN)

A VPN allows you to "tunnel" through a server in another city or country to hide your location. VPNs also claim to protect your data by encrypting it on both ends.



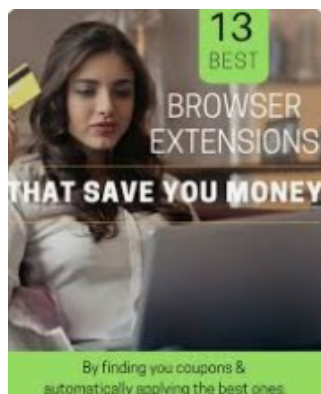
I have used a VPN in the past to watch a baseball game that was blacked out because I was too close to California or Arizona markets. Sadly, the broadcast was difficult to watch, being slowed down by virtue of routing through a remote server plus the encryption overhead.

Internet service providers (ISPs) such as Cox and CenturyLink have learned about VPNs and will often throttle or simply block an identified VPN connection. Use of VPNs sucks up a lot more ISP system resources than would otherwise be necessary.

VPNs have recently been identified as being more vulnerable to hackers, because of the additional access points their protocol requires.

Any browser shopping extension

Users are often offered free browser extensions, which promise to save money by searching out better deals on items purchased on the internet. Some offer a cash-back feature. Sounds like a great deal, yes? The answer is a loud NO!



Browser extensions are bits of software that are added into browsers, such as Edge and Google. Browser extensions are an extremely critical and vulnerable part of the browser and bad extensions can hijack a browser and/or make it do weird things.

Also concerning, these extensions are operating around an extremely sensitive area of the internet, where the buyer initiates payments. There is a lot of critical data: names and addresses, credit card information, and even banking data exposed in this area; why create another possible exposure?

I tested a shopping extension a couple of years ago and could not wait to uninstall it. When I shopped and found an item I liked, the extension invariably advised me I could buy that same item for less. Unfortunately, the alternative purchase was always for a used or refurbished item. I know I can always buy a refurbished item for less than new, so these pop-ups were annoying and less than worthless.

A performance booster or driver updater

Sorry, there is no such thing as a USB stick or program you can just put into your device to make it run like a new machine, or any better at all. Often these programs will slow your system by running in the background, hogging resources, doing nothing worthwhile.

At one time, when devices used much slower mechanical hard drive storage, a major cause of a slow system was fragmented files and useless registry errors. With much faster systems today, with much better seek times, fragmented files and unnecessary registry entries are no longer bottlenecks for your system.

Driver updaters are a total waste of system resources and money. I regularly research technology questions on the internet and inevitably find suggested fixes that do not work. Then a software fix, often involving registry

cleaning or driver updates is offered for sale. These are worthless, since Microsoft does the work of keeping its drivers up to date.

An alternative to buying a performance booster is to just keep your system as clean as possible. Uninstall any programs you no longer use with a free program such as Revo uninstaller. Revo does a good job of cleaning registry entries of little pieces of programs that might be floating around your system.

Some programs you probably will want to install

There are plenty of useful programs you will want to download and install on your device. The first third party (non-Microsoft) applications many users install are browsers such as Google Chrome/Safari, which manage over 85 percent of searches the U.S. Some users prefer Firefox or DuckDuckGo, feeling they afford better privacy protection.

You are also probably going to need “productivity software” such as Microsoft Office or OpenOffice, and software (AKA drivers) that carries communications between your device and your printer.

Be careful out there. Always carefully note the source of any software offered on the internet. For instance, make sure you are downloading software for you HP printer from HP.com, or you are likely to be extremely disappointed.

Pictures are from Google Images