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June in Tampa

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June 2016

Meeting

Google Maps & Google Earth

by

Brian Lance

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

6:30 PM

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Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: Brian Lance will give us the details on Google Maps and Google Earth. There is probably a lot more to these two items than you would think.

Merle Nicholson will lead the Windows SIG for the first 30 minutes of the meeting.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Thanks to Dave Palmer and Ron Weinberg for their contributions this month. Now this is important:

The July meeting, not the current meeting, is moved up one week from the usual second Wednesday to the first Wednesday of July 6

I have for the past few months been receiving a tremendous amount of email that have attachments on which I know I do not want to click. I send all of them to the Deleted folder. I have heard from others who are experiencing the same problem. Typical subjects are:

- Photos; attachment Photos
- New Invoice; attachment INVOICE_editor.zip

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July Meeting: Blain Barton from Microsoft - July 6

A Difficult Windows 10 Upgrade

By Ron Weinberg, Member-At-Large,
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We are nearing the end of the time frame (July 29, 2016) wherein the Windows 10 free and automatic upgrade is available. Those who have not so far proceeded and wish to do so should not wait until the last minute as problems may occur. After completing this upgrade and before you read about the difficulties encountered, I would like to offer a recommendation.

For the average person the choice should be: If the automatic upgrade works, fine. If not, unless there is a need for Windows 10 features, which is doubtful, my suggestion would be leave well enough alone and stay with Windows 7 or 8.1. Of course, if there is a known quick fix or minor tweak a competent user could proceed.

The first of the attempts to upgrade the ASUS N61Jq laptop (Windows 7), began in late 2015. Completion took over six months of intermittent work. One must ask why put so much effort into a 6-year-old Laptop? In truth, the average non-technical layman would have been unlikely to complete the task and would have experienced a series of frustrations leading, and properly so, to the abandonment of the project.

I am very experienced, stubborn, and was challenged by the failures involved. The laptop is a full featured i7 model, definitely worthwhile. It was my choice to upgrade mainly to keep it current.

Documenting this upgrade and its failures in detail took over four pages. The following is a summary.

The process was complicated because of the absence of a Windows 10 Compatibility Checker and the presumption that all Windows 7 systems could be easily upgraded.

Microsoft was of little help in dealing with the many issues that occurred, nor was the PC's manufacturer.

All solutions were obtained from Google research of similar issues, User's forums, my own experience, and some luck too.

As I researched each problem, I found that others had encountered the same or similar problems. Many suggestions were offered, some worked, and some did not. In some cases multiple solutions were offered for a problem. It was necessary to guess which might be the best or to try them by elimination.

My first try in late 2015 failed, presumably due to defective Windows Update Utility and numerous hard drive problems. The hard drive was subsequently replaced with a new SSD (purchased Jan. 3, 2016). Windows 7 was completely reinstalled from a clean copy and programs reinstalled.

The second attempt also failed for reasons unknown. I was able to access the recovery menu and return to Windows 7.

For the third try after which, if it failed, I did consider keeping Win 7. I decided to try the Media Creation tool. It appeared to be installing well and then it stopped leaving a blank black screen. I tried to reboot several times, to no avail. I couldn't get to the recovery menu to recover Win 7 nor could I get into Safe Mode no matter how many times I tried. Google revealed blank black screen was a frequent issue, generally device related. It was suggested there might be a new second video driver that should be removed with Device Manager (which was inaccessible). My only hope was to restore Windows 7 with the backup image and Win 7 recovery disk.

This Laptop always operates on AC as the battery is worn out. In order to move it to the location of my backup external hard drive, I unplugged the AC adapter. And the screen came alive and said "Hello Ron" indicating the upgrade was almost complete. I plugged the power back in and the screen went black. I repeated this several times realizing that it was a power issue. I ruled out connection or power supply problems since the disconnect worked. I took a chance, and went into Control Panel Power Options

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and switched from High Performance to the “Recommended” selection. This mysteriously woke the system. Still, the upgrade did not work properly. The next day there were many “Machine Check Exceptions”. These were supposed to cause a restart but didn’t. No error numbers were indicated.

A “Machine Check Exception” is accompanied by the blue screen (BSOD) and indicates some kind of hardware error but is not very specific. It can result from Device drivers, Registry corruption, or damaged system files.

I had to manually restart. I also encountered locked up conditions where mouse and keys did not function. Finally restored again to Windows 7 from disk image backup.

Later, I found that the black screen problem was caused by the upgrade’s change to generic AMD-ATI driver instead of a customized ASUS driver. Pressing (FN+F6) turns the screen back on. Several failures occurred because when the screen went black I assumed it was processing but when after a prolonged period it did not come back I rebooted, thus aborting the upgrade.

The next try encountered Windows Update Error 0x80070057. I ran Windows Update Troubleshooter, Windows Update Diagnostics.diagcab, Fix Windows Update-setup.exe, and Microsoft Fixit 50123.msi. After which there were “Machine Check Exceptions”. Again, they were supposed to cause a restart but never did. Reboot was required. Thereafter, locked up conditions occurred where mouse and keys did not function. Each time I had to manually restart. Reluctantly I restored again to Windows 7 from disk image backup.

Drivers are most frequently the cause of failures in the upgrade and I located an independent European site that listed all the Windows 10 drivers for my model. Not every driver listed was needed.

April 26, after several weeks passed, I Installed most optional Windows 7 Updates, Created Windows 7 Image Backup, Uninstalled ASUS Control Deck, Performed Disk Clean and updated Drivers for: ATK

Package (which controls function keys), Realtek Audio, (LAN) Atheros AR8131 Gigabit Ethernet, and Elan Touchpad. Next I disabled Avira Antivirus Program during the upgrade and upgraded via Media Creation Tool. When the black screen appeared, FN+F6 immediately turned it back on. The Upgrade completed successfully. Avira AV required an update. Then I ran Windows Update too.

The next day there were continual lock ups; the System froze completely. Research found a fix that seems to have corrected the issue: Control Panel-Power Options-PCI Express-Turn Link State Power Options OFF

Day 3, Start menu stopped working and Search box frozen. This too was a known problem, fixed using Windows PowerShell and it reinstalled Windows Apps quickly and automatically after entering the proper command line.

April 31, (Next day) Start Menu and Search box stopped working again. I performed a system reset which supposedly kept files but removed many programs including all the vital ones needed. System Reset produced a report “Apps removed while refreshing your PC.” After reset completed, I ran Windows Update again.

May 1, I was preparing to reinstall missing programs but system failed again “Machine Check Exception” with BSOD. Completely unusable. Suggestion was to disconnect hard drive. So I opened the case and disconnected the Hard Drive and reconnected. This seemed to alleviate the lock up. Then I installed the missing programs: Avast AV (replacing AVIRA), Acrobat Reader DC, Chrome, IncrediMail and Contact List, LastPass Chrome Extension, Skype Desktop, LibreOffice. The Ethernet controller was missing so I downloaded and installed Qualcomm Atheros AR9285 Gigabit Ethernet Driver.

Many items, particularly bloatware ASUS proprietary programs, were left uninstalled as some may have contributed to the earlier problems. I decided to wait and see, watching carefully for the next few days.

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Internet Picture of the Month



Beaches

From the Wall Street Journal, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/beach-party-1464359770>, we have a selection of photographs of beaches from Gray Malin's new book *Beaches* that he took from a helicopter.

"Flying over this beach in Barcelona, Mr. Malin directed the helicopter toward a cluster of bright umbrellas, only to discover there were no people there. It turned out to be a film set." That is the photo pictured above.

June's Links

The Links item is being discontinued, as discussed in the Comments section. It has run for 20 years and four months. Look back on some of the old newsletters starting in January of 1996 to relive the past by seeing the 20 or so new links listed each month. Do many of those sites still exist? I don't know because I have not checked. But I think that would be an interesting historical exercise to check. Goodbye Links!

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May 2, System won't Wake from sleep mode. Tried changing power settings, but before I could complete them the system began freezing completely.

It will freeze as soon as you reboot, even in sleep mode. No way to add drivers or any other repair without reset or retuning back to Windows 7. System seems to be running hot. Shut down and allowed to cool. Problem continued when cold. Had to perform another reset. Created Restore Point before adding back programs. Added ATK Package, Intel Driver Update Installer, which I ran, and the appropriate AMD VGA Windows Driver.

May 3, Removed Sleep Button from Start Menu Power section and through all settings of the active power plan. Reinstalled Avast, IncrediMail, Chrome, and ran Windows Update. Created another Restore Point and reinstalled LibreOffice and Skype Desktop.

May 5, Chrome would not connect. There have been some reported problems with Chrome and Windows 10. I considered uninstalling Chrome and using Microsoft Edge but before I could on **May 6**, the System completely froze again with "Machine Check Exception" as on May 1. Both times the exception was to restart after collecting some information but did not. I had decided enough was enough.

In a last and final effort? on **May 7** I re-flashed the system BIOS. Voila! Everything worked! But, on May 19 the system froze again.

I restored it to **May 12** (Restore Point) and installed Chrome again making sure it was the 32 bit version as the 64 bit had been reported troublesome. Everything now seems to be working properly.

After all of the above I cannot claim complete success, but I am cautiously optimistic. It has truly been a learning experience. ♦

Cleaning, Scanning & Backing Up Your Computer

*By Dave Palmer, Baord Member,
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Like many others, the process of backing up my data didn't interest me greatly until I lost a lot of data. It was a traumatic experience. I found my religion pretty quickly after that. That was nearly 20 years ago. Since then I've been on a quest to create a backup system that would protect me from such losses ever again.

Over the years, I've been part of a number of discussions on the topic. Many have been one-on-one and some have been in small groups, like the one at the TPCUG meeting in May. It turns out many others have been through traumatic experiences similar to mine. Some of them are on a similar quest.

Many people don't back up their data at all. I can understand that. They may have never lost valuable data. Or they may have looked into backing up their data, and found that it can be difficult, as well as complicated, to do it well.

I found Merle's backup system quite interesting. He's applied a lot of thought, and a lot of technology, to the problem and come up with a system that works well for him. His backup system is based on the configuration of his computer system which is a bit unconventional. That's worth an article all on its own.

William has a system too, quite different from Merle's but it works for him. I've spoken to people who are minimalists – they use the online Carbonite system, and nothing else. While it seems a bit inadequate to me, it works for them. That may be the key, to find a backup system that works for you.

I think there are several basic principles involved in any backup system.

- 1. Only backup data that has significant value.** If losing last year's episodes of the Walking Dead wouldn't shake your world, why spend the time and effort to back them up?
- 2. Don't backup data that doesn't need to be backed**

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- up.** This is Rule 1 from a different perspective. Computers accumulate a lot of temporary files and other useless data. Why spend time and energy backing that data up?
3. **Don't backup the same data again and again.** Data that changes frequently needs to be backed up frequently. Data that does not change ('static' data - like last year's tax returns) should be put in an archive and only backed up infrequently.
 4. **Don't back up any data that you aren't sure is 'clean'** (uninfected).
 5. **When you do backup, make multiple copies.** The general rule is 3-2-1, make 3 different copies, in 2 different formats, and keep 1 copy off site. Redundancy is the key to successful backups.
 6. **Verify that your backup copy is good, or that it can be restored.** In an emergency you need to have confidence your data still exists and can be restored. A backup that cannot be restored is worthless.
 7. **Automate the backup process wherever possible.**

Here's a brief explanation of my backup process. At the end of the article I've listed some resources to help you find and download these programs safely.

I start with preparation. I like a clean house so I dump the trash and uninstall programs I'm not using. If I have accumulated any 'static' data, I move it to my archive. I then use **Ninite** to update all my major programs - why backup an out-of-date program? Next I run the free version of **CCleaner** to clean out temporary files both in Windows and in various applications. Now, with some confidence that I've minimized the amount of data to backup, I use multiple scanning programs to search out any malware and PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). I currently use the free version of **Avast!**, a paid version of **SuperAntiSpyware**, and a paid version of **Malwarebytes**. These choices change occasionally. Once I have some confidence the computer is relatively clean, I create a restore point and run **MozBackup** which backs up my data and configuration of both Firefox and Thunderbird. To back up data I currently use **FreeFileSync**, to sync 2 copies of my current data. My last step is to use **Acronis** to create multiple images of my system. Luckily I still run the 2014 version so I haven't run into the problems Merle and William have. I don't run validation on these images as it would take twice as long. To compensate, I keep the 3 latest past versions of the image. This is certainly not ideal, but then my backup system is a work in progress. I think the next step in the evolution of my backup system will be to clone my hard drive rather

than use Acronis. I may also try to emulate some features of Merle's backup system.

While many people use online or 'cloud' services as backups, I share William's concerns about corrupted data. I use Dropbox and once saved a file that somehow got corrupted. When I went to my other devices and the cloud to retrieve an uncorrupted version, it turns out all of the current copies of that file were corrupted. That surprised me for a moment. But then I realized that the purpose of Dropbox, and other similar cloud services is to 'sync' files, not to serve as a backup system. While Dropbox keeps 'previous versions' of files, the previous version of my corrupted didn't contain the most current data.

As for an offsite copy of my data I currently use an encrypted 4TB SSD. On it I keep a current copy of my data and a current copy of my system image. I keep that drive in a backpack in my truck.

Resources

Proceed cautiously when downloading programs. Read everything. Watch for checkboxes associated with unwanted toolbars and other programs. Unless downloading programs from major, reputable websites, check the website or .exe file through VirusTotal.com

Ninite - An easy way to install and/or update multiple programs all at once. <https://ninite.com/>

CCleaner - Utility that can delete temporary or potentially unwanted files like browsing history, cookies, recycle bin, memory dumps, file fragments, log files, system caches, application data, autocomplete form history, and various other data. Unless you are an experienced user, use with caution, especially with registry files. <https://www.piriform.com/ccleaner>

Avast - An anti-virus, anti-malware program. It can be set for 'silent mode' to show no ads. Although it comes with many features, I have not used any of them. <https://www.avast.com/en-us/index>

SuperAntiSpyware - An anti-virus, anti-malware program. I use the Professional (paid) version and keep it running in the background. <http://www.superantispyware.com/>

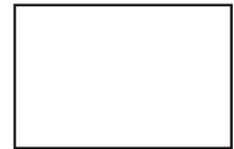
Malwarebytes - A highly recommended anti-virus, anti-malware program. I use the paid version and keep it running in the background. <https://www.malwarebytes.org/>

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First Class Mail

Member: Your membership is up for renewal

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[antimalware/](#)

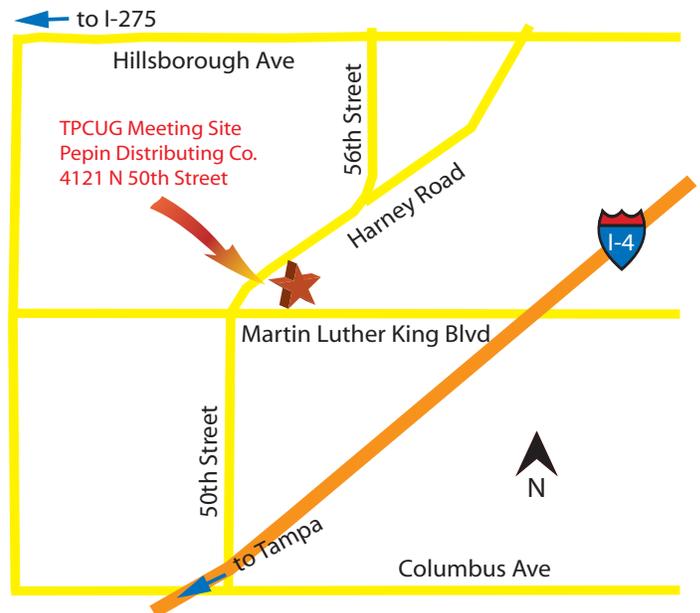
MozBackup - This is a utility for creating backups of Mozilla products including Firefox, Thunderbird and many others. It allows the backup and restoration of bookmarks, email, contacts, history, extensions, passwords, cache etc. Developers site- <http://mozbackup.jasnapaka.com/> More info from Mozilla - <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/questions/985211>

FreeFileSync - Helps synchronize files and folders for Windows, Linux and Mac OS X. Developers site - <http://www.freefilesync.org/>

Acronis - A utility that creates an 'image' or snapshot of the entire computer system that can be restored after a catastrophe. <http://www.acronis.com/en-us/> ◆

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around the world wide web as much as I used to. I basically read three news sites, the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Bloomberg News* and go wherever they may take me I do no Social Media.



Furthermore, when I started the Links item, there was no Google, which was founded in 1998. There were search engines, but they were manually updated and not all that helpful. Now if you want to find a site for a particular topic, you simply do a Google or Bing search for it. So I think it the Links item has served its purpose and needs to be retired. ◆