

COMPUTER NEWS from the



OCTOBER 2013

Volume 1 NO.10

As found on the web and other sources

This month I thought I would start out with a FREeware program.

Syncios 2.1.0

Looking to quickly and easily transfer files between your iPad, iPhone, iPod, and a PC? Then check out Syncios, a new and free file transfer solution. This program also includes file conversion tools and allows you to manage contact information across multiple Apple hardware devices.

<http://www.techspot.com/downloads/6125-syncios.html>

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Windows 8.1 Disc Release May Cause Confusion

By John Lister on 20130924 in "infopackets.com".

Microsoft is planning to release boxed copies of Windows 8.1, thereby saving new buyers from having to download the first big update to the Windows 8 operating system (OS). However, the boxed version's pricing and installation process may make it both confusing and unattractive for many consumers.

The boxed edition of Windows 8.1 is being aimed at people who don't already own Windows 8 or any previous version of Windows. If you do have Windows 8 installed, you'll be able to download the update free of charge from the online Windows Store on October 18, 2013.

The boxed version is seen as a quiet acknowledgement that this first batch of updates represents a significant change to Windows 8, rather than just a few tweaks.

Windows 8.1 is about giving users the chance to undo some controversial changes to the Windows user interface (UI); for example, it makes it easier to set Windows to always start up in the traditional and familiar 'desktop' mode rather than the 'modern' UI known popularly known as 'Metro'.

Boxed Software Aimed at PC Builders

If you're currently using a previous version of Windows, such as Windows 7, the boxed version of Windows 8.1 isn't for you. The discs are for people installing Windows for the first time, not people looking to upgrade from a previous version of the OS.

That means the package won't be cheap: Microsoft has set pricing at \$120 for the standard Windows 8.1 and \$200 for Windows 8.1 Pro. (Source: windows.com)

That said, Microsoft has acknowledged it will be possible to install the boxed edition of Windows 8.1 on machines already running a previous version of Windows.

However, users doing this will need to backup and reinstall applications and software. The better and cheaper option will be to buy a Windows 8 upgrade disc, install it, then download and install Windows 8.1 for free. (Source: ign.com)

Realistically, then, the Windows 8.1 boxed editions are only worthwhile for people building their own computers or switching from an alternative operating system, such as Linux.

It should be interesting to see how clear Microsoft makes this fact and whether there are complaints from confused customers.

Windows 8.1 Pro Pack Hardly A Bargain.


Microsoft has also said that anyone who buys the standard, boxed edition of Windows 8.1 will have the option to buy a new package later on called Windows 8.1 Pro Pack. That'll be priced at \$100 and will upgrade Windows 8.1 to Windows 8.1 Pro.

It will also add the Windows Media Center feature that normally costs \$10.

Sick and Tired of Windows?

Alternatives to Windows

From "askbobrankin.com"

Windows 8 is attempting to be a better alternative to old-school Windows. But it's scaring off a lot of consumers who see a trusted, familiar face now radically transformed into something alien and confusing. One may as well consider other operating systems if there are going to be a learning curve anyway. Here are several alternatives to running Windows on your desktop, laptop or mobile device...  2

You may have known no other personal computer operating system besides Windows, if you are a typical consumer/home user. But other alternatives are becoming well-established in consumer [computing devices](#) such as smartphones and tablets. People are becoming accustomed to the ways of non-Windows operating systems, and with ease-of-use of alternatives may come the realization that something is actually better than Windows. Or that it just doesn't matter.

Of course, you can always cling to your current version of Windows as long as possible. Microsoft support for Windows XP will end completely on April 18, 2014; that means not even security and vulnerability patches will be provided. Support for Windows 7 will start to be scaled back on January 13, 2015. For complete details on the end-of-support schedules for all Windows versions, see my article, [Still Holding On To Windows XP?](#)



If mobility is the future of your computing, then your alternatives to Windows are [Apple iOS](#) and Google Android. The iPhone and the iPad are Apple's very popular smartphone and tablet offerings. They run the iOS operating system, which is noted for simplicity, but not so much for

flexibility. Android smartphones and tablets are available from a myriad of vendors in all sorts of configurations. Some of the most popular now are the [Samsung](#) Galaxy series, the Motorola Droid RAZR, Amazon Kindle Fire, and the Google Nexus tablet.

Because Android was designed to be open, flexible, and modifiable, it is typically molded or "skinned" to suit the whims (and business goals) of the vendor or wireless carrier that offers the device. For example, the look and feel of the Android OS running on the Kindle Fire is rather different from that of the Samsung Galaxy S4. But under the hood, 99% of the code is the same.

"And in This Corner..."

In the compromise range between mobility and comfort lie laptops and Google's Chromebook. [The Apple](#) Macbook line runs Mac OS X, the older brother of the mobile iOS mentioned earlier. Macbooks get high marks for quality and usability, but command a higher price than similarly equipped laptops that run Windows.

Chromebooks running Google's ChromeOS are designed to be web-centric. They have minimal hard drive storage, relying on [the cloud](#) for both apps and file storage. And they're very inexpensive. Check out my review of the [\\$199 Acer C7 Chromebook](#). I compared a Chromebook's potential performance to that of a Windows 8 laptop in [Chromebook Vs. Windows 8](#).

Windows still reigns supreme on desktop PCs, excluding Apple machines used primarily by graphic-intensive professionals. The Apple iMac all-in-one is a sleek, simple, high-performance desktop machine that takes up hardly any desktop; it runs OS X, like the Macbook series.

And then there are all sorts of Intel-based [desktop computer](#) systems running homebrew and commercially enhanced versions of the free Linux operating system, such as Ubuntu, Linux Mint and Fedora. You can bypass the corporate hegemonies, and dive deep into the world of open-source software. You'll find more free software than you can ever use.

So don't ever say you have no choice but Windows.

Does Anybody Really Know What Time it Is?

I didn't write this article to convince anyone to switch from Windows to Mac, Linux, Chrome or Android. I currently have an assemblage of desktop and laptop computers running XP, Windows 7 and Windows 8. There are also some Apple products and a few Android gadgets in the family. I'm not even down on Windows 8. See my article [Switching to Windows 8 Made Easier](#). I mention all this to underscore the point that you have choices. And I love the fact that competition fosters innovation.

But ironically, operating systems are starting to matter less, as web-based and cloud-based computing become the norm. Cloud services like Gmail, Outlook, [Google Docs](#), and Office 365 run right inside your browser, and they don't care what OS you have.

The bottom line is this: the operating system doesn't matter so much if all you do is standard computing stuff such as web surfing, email, [office apps](#), video viewing, photo management, and so on. You're only stuck if your work or hobby requires a specific program that only runs under Windows.

Far more important these days are the computing device form factor that best fits your lifestyle. Seditary or office-bound folks find desktop PCs comfortable, and it's rarely necessary to move them. They'll choose between Windows, Mac OS X or Linux. Power users on the move favor Windows or Mac laptops with plenty of storage space and horsepower. Mobile students, sales people, and others who have to move fast and frequently may opt for lighter, simpler Chromebooks.

And of course there are hundreds of millions carrying tablets and smartphones running Android or iOS. They may not even be aware that they have an operating system. And that's a good thing.

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/sick_and_tired_of_windows.html#ixzz2eW3bhBWB

Free Tools: Recover Deleted Files

FROM: "askbobrankin.com".

There is almost nothing worse than losing important files when you experience a finger fumble, brain freeze, or computer crash. But never fear, there are tools that can help you recover those lost files, and some of the best ones are free...



How To Recover Deleted Files - For Free

So you lost an important file. Ouch. If you simply deleted the wrong file, you can usually get it back by opening the Recycle Bin (on Windows) and restoring it. On a Mac, you'll look in the Trash Bin. Linux users, check the Trash folder. The happy secret here is that in most cases, deleted files really aren't gone at all. They're just moved into the Recycle/Trash bucket, and can be restored to their original folders with a few clicks. But if that doesn't do the trick, try one of these free tools to do the heavy lifting. Read on and you'll find a crop of tools to recover deleted files.

Piriform's [Recuva](#) (pronounced like "recover" with a Brooklyn accent) will help you to find files and images on your Windows computer that were deleted by human error, including those deleted from your digital camera memory card or MP3 player. [Recuva](#) can also restore files deleted from the recycle bin or those that were deleted by a bug, virus or crash. This is a free

Windows application that includes a support forum and because it is a freebie, Piriform would appreciate a small donation if you like their software. Recuva comes from the same people that developed the popular CCleaner, so the reputation is rock solid.



[PhotoRec](#) is a free undelete utility for Windows, Linux and Mac OS X. Despite the name, it can recover almost 400 different file formats (not just photos) including ZIP, Office (Word/Excel/Powerpoint), PDF, HTML, TXT, and JPEG. Photorec can [recover files](#) from a variety of media, including hard drives, CD/DVDs, digital camera memory cards, and USB flash drives. It can also be used with portable devices (including the iPod) and many digital cameras. Photorec doesn't even require that the drive be partitioned, formatted or mounted with a drive letter.

GlarySoft is a trusted source for free utility programs, and [Glary Undelete](#) is another [file recovery](#) program worth a look. It's easy to use, yet powerful, with support for all versions of Windows, and image recovery from CompactFlash, SmartMedia, MultiMedia and Secure Digital cards. After scanning your disk, Glary Undelete will display a list of deleted files, along with an estimate of the probability of successfully restoring each file.

Losing a file due to an accidental click or keystroke is bad enough. But losing your entire hard drive to a hardware failure, virus, flood or fire can be devastating. And no simple undelete utility will fix that. But backing up your hard drive will help in both the "Oops, I deleted a file" problem as well as the "Oh no... my hard drive died!" scenario. See my article [Free Backup Software Options](#) for tips on how to get the job done.

More Data Recovery Tools

Another popular free file recovery tool for Windows is [Restoration](#). This program will find just about everything you've ever deleted from [your PC](#), including files deleted from the DOS prompt. When the program starts, choose a source drive, then click the "Search Deleted Files" button. If you have a file on your hard drive with the same name, restore the file to a different folder, or flash disk so that your existing file is not wiped out. Restoration can also permanently

delete files, making it almost impossible to restore or undelete them. Restoration has a no-frills user interface, but it's easy to use and does a good job.

One unique feature of Restoration is that you don't have to install it before running. This is a good thing, because installing a program will write to the disk from which you're trying to restore your deleted files, and this could possibly trample the very data you want to recover. I recommend that you [download](#) Restoration to a USB flash drive, then just double-click the .EXE file, and the program will open. Note that on Vista or Windows 7, you might see a message that you need administrator privileges to run Restoration. The fix is simple -- just right-click on the .EXE file and choose "RUN AS ADMINISTRATOR".

[FreeUndelete](#) has no charge for personal usage, although they charge for businesses. The program is spyware and adware free, works on Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7, and can restore files from your Recycle Bin or NTFS, FAT32 or FAT16 hard drives. Once recovered, they will be saved in a new user-selected location to prevent overwriting files.

There are also free tools for other types of data disasters.

[Advanced PSD Repair](#) (APSR) is handy for recovering Photoshop PSD and PDD files and works with all versions.

And if you work with external media, [Recovery Toolbox for CD Free](#) can [recover data](#) from damaged or corrupted CD, DVD, HD-DVD and Blu-ray discs. The same company also makes a variety of other [data recovery tools](#), including Recovery Toolbox for Outlook, Outlook Express, Word, Excel, Zip and other applications to recover damaged or deleted data. They're not free, but you can get a free trial to see if it'll do the job.

Do it Now...

Obviously, all of these tools are most useful if you install them BEFORE you lose the data, because downloading a file can possibly overwrite the very file(s) you want to recover. I recommend that you check out a few and download them to a flash drive or other portable storage, so you'll be ready in case you do need to recover lost files. Oh, and did I mention that if you backup your hard drive, you won't need ANY of these tools? :-)

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/free_tools_recover_deleted_files.html#ixzz2e1sR0x13

A picture is worth 1000 words but what is your picture worth?

Facebook Insists It Can Use Your Pictures in Ads

By John Lister on 20130902 in "infopackets.com".

Facebook is planning to use profile pictures to automatically recognize users when they appear in photos taken by somebody else. The firm has also made it clear to users that it has every right to use members' pictures in its own advertisements without compensating them in any way.

The proposed changes are detailed in a Facebook post that, following a court order, more clearly explains how the site uses data from its users. Facebook already uses facial recognition software but in a more limited manner. Once you have been "tagged" in a photograph (that is, somebody has labeled you as being one of the people in it), Facebook makes a note of your facial details, such as the distance between your main features. It then uses these details the next time you or a friend uploads a picture. If it spots what it thinks is you, it automatically suggests tagging you. The person who uploaded the picture must then confirm the tag before it goes live.

Profile Pictures Used For Facial Recognition.

Facebook will now use your profile picture as one of its main comparison points in identifying you in a picture and suggesting a tag. The theory is that this will make for more accurate identification, though it may be confused by people who, for example, have a picture of their child as a profile picture.

The facial recognition will continue to be switched on by default for all users, though you can opt out through Facebook's user settings. (Source: telegraph.co.uk)

Details of the change come in a post that also sets out more comprehensive details of the site's policies.

That post is the result of a court case in which California Facebook users sued the social networking site after their names and pictures were used in advertisements on the site (known as "sponsored stories") without their knowledge or permission.

Facebook Makes Clear: We Can Use You In Ads

Thanks to the case, Facebook has rewritten its terms to make its policies clearer. It now says this to its members:

"You give us permission to use your name, and profile picture, content, and information in connection with commercial, sponsored, or related content (such as a brand you like) served or enhanced by us. This means, for example, that you permit a business or other entity to pay us to display your name and/or profile picture with your content or information, without any compensation to you." (Source: facebook.com)

Unlike the facial recognition rules, this isn't a substantive change of policy: instead, Facebook is more clearly expressing existing rules. Both sets of changes to the policy have been published for users to review and comment upon. However, users do not have the option to vote on the policy.

No word if or when this will be available in the states..

Updated Google Maps Helps You Avoid Traffic Jams

By Brandon Dimmel on 20130823 in "infopackets.com"

There's nothing more frustrating than ending a long work day by waiting two hours for a traffic jam to clear up. That's why Google has announced plans to update the Google Maps mobile application to provide real-time updates for its users, thereby helping them avoid troublesome traffic areas.

Google made the announcement on Tuesday, August 20, 2013. The update will give mobile Google Maps users real-time alerts about fender benders, new construction projects, and other potential traffic issues.

Real-World Drivers Provide Traffic Updates

Providing the data required for the service will be Waze, a social mapping application that Google acquired just a few months ago. (Source: cnn.com)

Now, this isn't the first time Google has rolled out real-time traffic updates for its Maps service. In the past, that information has been provided by third-party global positioning system firms like TomTom.

However, those systems were based on satellite imagery and sometimes took a little too long to make their way to Google Maps users.

Waze is different. It effectively 'crowd sources' traffic issues, meaning it relies on a widespread network of drivers and pedestrians to relay information about traffic problems.

"This means when Wazers report accidents, construction, road closures, and more on Waze, the updates will also appear on the Google Maps app," Google said in a recent blog post. (Source: cnet.com)

Those who participate in the program are rewarded with virtual badges and, in some cases, real-world prizes.

Google Pays Big For Social Mapping Service

Many industry insiders consider this a new and revolutionary trend in mobile software development. That's why Waze won the award for Best Overall Mobile App at the 2013 Mobile World Congress. It's also why Google paid roughly \$1.1 billion to acquire the firm in June.

Google Maps users accessing the service through Android or iOS devices in the United States, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom should be able to access the Waze-based traffic updates soon.

Where "O" where did my SkyDrive go?

Microsoft Forced to Rename SkyDrive

By Brandon Dimmel on 20130802 in "infopackets.com"

Microsoft SkyDrive is no more. However, it's not a case of Microsoft phasing out its popular cloud storage service -- instead, the firm is simply being forced to rename it after losing a trademark case.

British Sky Broadcasting (or BSkyB, as it's often called) originally filed suit against Microsoft in 2011. It argued that the "Sky" portion of its own name could easily be confused with Microsoft's SkyDrive.

Therefore, BSkyB said Microsoft had infringed on its trademark.

Microsoft fought the matter in the English High Court but lost the case in June 2013. Now, an appeal by the Redmond, Washington-based firm has also failed.

Microsoft Given "Reasonable Period of Time" to Change Name

The consequences: first, Microsoft will be forced to ditch the SkyDrive name. That means completely changing promotional materials and making consumers familiar with a new name.

Second, Microsoft will have to pay BSkyB some kind of a settlement, though no one knows how much money that will involve.

It's expected British Sky Broadcasting will give Microsoft a "reasonable period of time" to phase out the SkyDrive name. (Source: theverge.com)

This is hardly the first time a prominent Microsoft tool or service has been renamed because of a trademark dispute. The firm was also forced to move away from the "Metro" name for Windows 8's new user interface (UI) because of complaints by German firm Metro AG.

Nowadays, Microsoft usually uses the term 'Modern' to refer to Windows 8's UI.

Replacement Name Remains Unknown

Microsoft says the name issue won't significantly affect how SkyDrive operates. However, the firm has yet to announce a new name for the service. "We're glad to have resolution of this naming dispute, and will continue to deliver the great service our hundreds of millions of customers expect, providing the best way to always have your files with you," Microsoft said in a recent statement. (Source: pcworld.com)

Obviously, the biggest challenge for Microsoft will involve introducing a new name without confusing consumers.

Thought for the day:

Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,'

And then proceed to tell you why it isn't.