

Greenspring Computer User FAQs

The computer club sent a query to the membership as to what programs they would like to see in the future. When the responses were received it was apparent that some of the issues should be addressed immediately and should not wait until a formal meeting of the Club could be convened. This document in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) often found in many on line subjects was prepared. We will still have the option of convening meetings on the subjects that can go into more detail and answer questions the FAQ may engender. The FAQ has provided guidance to me, and I recommend it to you as you ponder possible upgrades to your computer. Many thanks go to Bob Sinclair working with members of the Club's Board of Directors and others for taking initiative to prepare this timely document.

Hal Langford, President Greenspring Computer Club

Questions Facing GSV computer users

Question: If I have a question about scams or a received email from my bank that is suspicious, where do I go for help?

Resources About Scams and Data Breaches: Federal Trade Commission: www.ftc.gov

Internet Crime Complaint Center: this site provides information from the partnership among the FBI, the National White Collar Crime Center and the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance: www.ic3.gov

Better Business Bureau: they have a blog devoted completely to scams and related information: www.bbb.org

PrivacyMadeSimple.net: **Debra Diener's** blog covers a wide range of privacy, identity management and related issues (debdiener@verizon.net).

Question: Should I use online storage of my passwords?

There is a risk of them being exposed by hackers, but so could hackers get into your machine. If you prefer professional handling of your passwords, here are some references:

Password Management Resources:

1. KeePass: this service has features similar to other services but is a completely free and open source password manager
2. The following services are free unless a consumer wants to sync her passwords across multiple devices, such as between a smartphone and a computer. Doing so is a premium service and we're listing the different fees charged by each service (Note: the fees might have changed but this was information written on August 20, 2014).
 - a. LastPass charges \$12.00 a year for the premium service;
 - b. 1Password charges a one time fee of \$50.00 for premium service for Mac and Windows; \$18.00 for iOS premium service; and \$10.00 for a full version of the app on Android;
 - c. Dashlane charges \$30.00 a year for premium service.

Question: What happens when Microsoft stops supporting Windows XP After April 8, 2014?

Background: There are two schools of thought about the demise of Windows XP. One says that the “Hackers” and cybercriminals are just stockpiling the vulnerabilities they find, and make an onslaught starting on April 9th.

The other side of this discussion says that Windows XP is getting old and tired and will not support new products and applications that are currently being produced. In April it will have been 7 years since XP was a current product, it was officially replaced in November 2006. That being said, there will still be people and businesses using XP for a lot of reasons.

The answer to this question depends on how you expect to use your computer. XP will continue to work but Microsoft will not make improvements, or correct discrepancies discovered by users. This will result in less integral malware protection. The malware protection software provided either by commercial or system user groups will continue to function at least for the immediate future. McAfee, for example, plans to continue supporting XP for a limited time as long as it is technically feasible, and there is no external dependency. If, for example, a McAfee product requires Microsoft to provide a fix and Microsoft does not provide the fix McAfee will not support the product any longer. McAfee strongly advises its customers to upgrade to later versions of Windows to ensure the best level of security coverage, (McAfee Technical Article KB78434). Other software security providers will probably be forced to do the same.

If your main use of the computer is for email, limited surfing on the web, or word processing you will probably not need to make any changes in the near future. Software updates for antivirus programs and Adobe products may be the first to require newer operating systems, but whatever is installed at that time should continue to function normally. To avoid the potential problems from hackers you must be sure to use a security system and keep it up to date. Free malware programs such as Avira, AVG, and Avast are available for downloading, and commercial security suites such as Norton, McAfee, and a whole host of others are available in software aisles of computer support centers and over the internet. If, however, you are a heavy user of the internet and are worried about viruses and other malware contamination, or are not satisfied without access to new or upgraded applications, you may want to consider upgrading to Windows 7 or 8 on a new computer. Upgrading an older computer to a supported operating system is not considered to be a viable solution because of hardware improvements used by the new systems. In the long term, vendors of application software will not be producing new or improved software that runs on XP. Again, use of freeware such as Open Office, Libre Office, Google Docs, etc. may fill in gaps that may occur. **Question:** Will I have to make changes to my computer to use the new PON system?

As far as we know now the only hardware change required is the addition of a Wi-Fi adapter if you do not already have Wi-Fi capability. Wi-Fi adapters contain a built-in radio transmitter and receiver with an antenna that will receive the Wi-Fi signal. You will

have to connect to the VPN assigned to you with an ID and password that they will supply. You can probably change the password if you desire. Software changes are not anticipated and would be handled on a case-by-case basis by the installation crew. Additionally, management has insisted that there be no competing wireless networks in our apartments and that means we will be required to shut down our personal home networks.

Mac Users and others that may have large or complex networks in their home may want to consult the presentation Networks, Wi-Fi and the Mac, Oct. 14 2013 available from the Macintosh User Group page of our web site.

Question: Windows 8 Pros and Cons. Is it worth buying and why?

Windows 8 is designed primarily for touch screen tablets and laptops which have touch screens. Microsoft Has incorporated many improvements in using the software, but it has a reasonably steep learning curve. They claim that viruses and malware will be less of a problem because they have included an improved security system that blocks any non-authenticated software from running or performing any operations during the boot-up process. The boot-up is much faster because it caches part of the system and keeps it in sort of a sleep mode. The start screen is controversial and quite different. Certain apps can display information without actually having to open them. These are called live tiles and display such things as stock market movement, up-to- date weather forecasts, recently arrived email and suggested topics from the Bing search engine. There are a plethora of apps for sale in the Windows Store where you can select from thousands of titles much as those provided by Apple. Underneath this new start menu is a traditional Windows 7 environment called the “desktop” which incorporates the new features of the 8 version and works best with a mouse or touchpad. Microsoft has introduced a whole new range of keyboard shortcuts and the function keys are back in use. It is reported that some people like the convenience of having two types of computers simultaneously, but others find combining the dual usage confusing.

The best way to decide whether to convert to Windows 8 is by determining how you want to use your computer. For most users, staying with your present computer until you are ready or need to buy a new computer will make the most sense. Then the latest version of the operating system will come pre-installed. If, however, you find yourself limited by your present operating system, you must decide whether to upgrade to a Windows 7 or Windows 8 computer. A Windows 7 computer more closely resembles XP and will allow an easier transition. Windows 7 computers are getting harder to find. Windows 8 does have a lot of new capabilities and if you are willing to put up with the changes which will follow the initial version, you won't have to make a “keep or change” operating system decision for a long time. Using the underlying desktop mode is not too different from windows 7 once you become accustomed to the different appearance. Unfortunately upgrading an older XP computer to Windows 7 or 8 is not recommended. Such an installation would require removal of all data and programs from the hard drive and then reinstallation of the old XP disk followed by installation of the new OS and all programs (if the disks are still available) and reinstallation of the data. And you would still be

relying on a 32 bit version of the more powerful OS which is designed to use 64 bits. Some older programs probably won't work and you will have to determine if you can get an updated program from the manufacturer, find a freeware substitute, or procure a new version of the application.

Question: How do I translate programs in MS Works, Spreadsheets and Databases into Windows 7 or 8 on a new computer?

If you are moving Microsoft data files to a new computer you must have the corresponding program installed on the new computer, either the old version if it will still run (you need the activation key), or a new version. The new computer may come with "Starter" versions of Word and Excel that can accept data from prior programs. Any new version of the Microsoft product should be able to read the older versions as well.