

Bowie Seniors Computer Club

Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for July 18, 2019

Attendees: Bob Blum, Joan Ann Dubbs, Samuel Duff, Dennis Edgington, Dennis Evans, Dale Grant, Dave Hackenberg, Barry Hammond, Eric Hein, Dick Henthorn, Victor Kiviat, James Kozura, Steve Krulik, Mark Laster, Bill Long, Dan Lee, Bill Macri, Irv Salzberg, Dan Searing, Doris Smith, Flo Strawser, George Vincent.

Dan Lee opened the meeting at 12:30. Various freebie items were made available for taking.

Dan asked for volunteers to replace club officers that are unable or unwilling to continue.

Dan passed around information (copy attached) about use of the Chrome browser vs. the Firefox browser.

Eric Hein gave a presentation discussing the BSCC's "Freeware" webpage, providing a discussion of the usefulness of the applications. A PDF copy of the complete webpage is attached. Irv Salzberg asked about what freeware or other means could be used for organizing hard drive directories containing large numbers of music and photograph files. This led to an extended discussion of metadata and metadata tools.

Bill Long

Secretary

Bowie Seniors Computer Club

The Washington Post

Consumer Tech Review

Goodbye, Chrome: Google's web browser has become spy software

Our latest privacy experiment found Chrome ushered more than 11,000 tracker cookies into our browser — in a single week. Here's why Firefox is better.

By Geoffrey A. Fowler

You open your browser to look at the Web. Do you know who is looking back at you?

Over a recent week of Web surfing, I peered under the hood of Google Chrome and found it brought along a few thousand friends. Shopping, news and even government sites quietly tagged my browser to let ad and data companies ride shotgun while I clicked around the Web.

This was made possible by the Web's biggest snoop of all: Google. Seen from the inside, its Chrome browser looks a lot like surveillance software.

Lately I've been investigating the secret life of my data, running experiments to see what technology really gets up to under the cover of privacy policies that nobody reads. It turns out, having the world's biggest advertising company make the most popular Web browser was about as smart as letting kids run a candy shop.

It made me decide to ditch Chrome for a new version of nonprofit Mozilla's Firefox, which has default privacy protections. Switching involved less inconvenience than you might imagine.

My tests of Chrome vs. Firefox unearthed a personal data caper of absurd proportions. In a week of Web surfing on my desktop, I discovered 11,189 requests for tracker "cookies" that Chrome would have ushered right onto my computer but were automatically blocked by Firefox. These little files are the hooks that data firms, including Google itself, use to follow what websites you visit so they can build profiles of your interests, income and personality.

Chrome welcomed trackers even at websites you would think would be private. I watched Aetna and the Federal Student Aid website set cookies for Facebook and Google. They surreptitiously told the data giants every time I pulled up the insurance and loan service's log-in pages.

And that's not the half of it.

Look in the upper right corner of your Chrome browser. See a picture or a name in the circle? If so, you're logged in to the browser, and Google might be tapping into your Web activity to target ads. Don't recall signing in? I didn't, either. Chrome recently started doing that automatically when you use Gmail.

Chrome is even sneakier on your phone. If you use Android, Chrome sends Google your location every time you conduct a search. (If you turn off location sharing it still sends your coordinates out, just with less accuracy.)

Firefox isn't perfect — it still defaults searches to Google and permits some other tracking. But it doesn't share browsing data with Mozilla, which isn't in the data-collection business.

At a minimum, Web snooping can be annoying. Cookies are how a pair of pants you look at in one site end up following you around in ads elsewhere. More fundamentally, your Web history — like the color of your underpants — ain't nobody's business but your own. Letting anyone collect that data leaves it ripe for abuse by bullies, spies and hackers.

Google's product managers told me in an interview that Chrome prioritizes privacy choices and controls, and they're working on new ones for cookies. But they also said they have to get the right balance with a "healthy Web ecosystem" (read: ad business).

Firefox's product managers told me they don't see privacy as an "option" relegated to controls. They've launched a war on surveillance, starting this month with "enhanced tracking protection" that blocks nosy cookies by default on new Firefox installations. But to succeed, first Firefox has to persuade people to care enough to overcome the inertia of switching.

It's a tale of two browsers — and the diverging interests of the companies that make them.

The cookie fight

A decade ago, Chrome and Firefox were taking on Microsoft's lumbering giant Internet Explorer. The upstart Chrome solved real problems for consumers, making the Web safer and faster. Today it dominates more than half the market.

Lately, however, many of us have realized that our privacy is also a major concern on the Web — and Chrome's interests no longer always seem aligned with our own.

That's most visible in the fight over cookies. These code snippets can do helpful things, like remembering the contents of your shopping cart. But now many cookies belong to data companies, which use them to tag your browser so they can follow your path like crumbs in the proverbial forest.

They're everywhere — one study found third-party tracking cookies on 92 percent of websites. The

Washington Post website has about 40 tracker cookies, average for a news site, which the company said in a statement are used to deliver better-targeted ads and track ad performance.

You'll also find them on sites without ads: Both Aetna and the FSA service said the cookies on their sites help measure their own external marketing campaigns.

The blame for this mess belongs to the entire advertising, publishing and tech industries. But what responsibility does a browser have in protecting us from code that isn't doing much more than spying?

In 2015, Mozilla debuted a version of Firefox that included anti-tracking tech, turned on only in its "private" browsing mode. After years of testing and tweaking, that's what it activated this month on all websites. This isn't about blocking ads — those still come through. Rather, Firefox is parsing cookies to decide which ones to keep for critical site functions and which ones to block for spying.

Apple's Safari browser, used on iPhones, also began applying "intelligent tracking protection" to cookies in 2017, using an algorithm to decide which ones were bad.

Chrome, so far, remains open to all cookies by default. Last month, Google announced a new effort to force third-party cookies to better self-identify, and said we can expect new controls for them after it rolls out. But it wouldn't offer a timeline or say whether it would default to stopping trackers.

I'm not holding my breath. Google itself, through its Doubleclick and other ad businesses, is the No. 1 cookie maker — the Mrs. Fields of the Web. It's hard to imagine Chrome ever cutting off Google's moneymaker.

"Cookies play a role in user privacy, but a narrow focus on cookies obscures the broader privacy discussion because it's just one way in which users can be tracked across sites," said Ben Galbraith, Chrome's director of product management. "This is a complex problem, and simple, blunt cookie blocking solutions force tracking into more opaque practices."

There are other tracking techniques — and the privacy arms race will get harder. But saying things are too complicated is also a way of not doing anything.

"Our viewpoint is to deal with the biggest problem first, but anticipate where the ecosystem will shift and work on protecting against those things as well," said Peter Dolanjski, Firefox's product lead.

Both Google and Mozilla said they're working on fighting "fingerprinting," a way to sniff out other markers in your computer. Firefox is already testing its capabilities and plans to activate them soon.

Making the switch

Choosing a browser is no longer just about speed and convenience — it's also about data defaults.

It's true that Google usually obtains consent before gathering data, and offers a lot of knobs you can adjust to opt out of tracking and targeted advertising. But its controls often feel like a shell game that results in us sharing more personal data.

I felt hoodwinked when Google quietly began signing Gmail users into Chrome last fall. Google says the Chrome shift didn't cause anybody's browsing history to be "synced" unless they specifically opted in — but I found mine was being sent to Google and don't recall ever asking for extra surveillance. (You can turn off the Gmail auto-login by searching "Gmail" in Chrome settings and switching off "Allow Chrome sign-in.")

After the sign-in shift, Johns Hopkins associate professor Matthew Green made waves in the computer science world when he blogged he was done with Chrome. "I lost faith," he told me. "It only takes a few tiny changes to make it very privacy unfriendly."

There are ways to defang Chrome, which is much more complicated than just using "Incognito Mode." But it's much easier to switch to a browser not owned by an advertising company.

Like Green, I've chosen Firefox, which works across phones, tablets, PCs and Macs. Apple's Safari is also a good option on Macs, iPhones and iPads, and the niche Brave browser goes even further in trying to jam the ad-tech industry.

What does switching to Firefox cost you? It's free, and downloading a different browser is much simpler than changing phones.

In 2017, Mozilla launched a new version of Firefox called Quantum that made it considerably faster. In my tests, it has felt almost as fast as Chrome, though benchmark tests have found it can be slower in some contexts. Firefox says it's better about managing memory if you use lots and lots of tabs.

Switching means you'll have to move your bookmarks, and Firefox offers tools to help. Shifting passwords is easy if you use a password manager. And most browser add-ons are available, though it's possible you won't find your favorite.

Mozilla has challenges to overcome. Among privacy advocates, the nonprofit is known for caution. It took a year longer than Apple to make cookie blocking a default.

And as a nonprofit, it earns money when people make searches in the browser and click on ads — which means its biggest source of income is Google. Mozilla's chief executive says the company is exploring new paid privacy services to diversify its income.

Its biggest risk is that Firefox might someday run out of steam in its battle with the Chrome behemoth. Even though it's the No. 2 desktop browser, with about 10 percent of the market, major sites could decide to drop support, leaving Firefox scrambling.

If you care about privacy, let's hope for another David and Goliath outcome.


Read more tech advice and analysis from Geoffrey A. Fowler:

Don't smile for surveillance: Why airport face scans are a privacy trap

What's new from Apple? 'Dark Mode' on iOS, the end of iTunes and privacy tweaks.

Help Desk: Stop online 'sextortion,' maximize laptop battery life and protect secret Word docs

Geoffrey A. Fowler

Geoffrey A. Fowler is The Washington Post's technology columnist based in San Francisco. He joined The Post in 2017 after 16 years with the Wall Street Journal writing about consumer technology, Silicon Valley, national affairs and China. Follow 

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Bowie Seniors Computer Club

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Freeware - Windows software used and/or recommended by members of the [Bowie Seniors Computer Club](#).

☺ = good for beginners; ☼ = for advanced users; also available for [LINUX](#)  Android  and MacOS .

Decent sites for software downloads in general:

- [FileHippo](#)
- [FileHorse](#)

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Web Clients / Browsers:



- [Chrome](#)  from Google
- [FireFox](#)  from Mozilla

Email:

Web-based email can be viewed & sent from any web browser. For other email protocols & for more features, consider dedicated email clients.


- [Thunderbird](#)  - IMAP/POP support, a built-in RSS reader, support for HTML mail, powerful quick search, saved search folders, advanced message filtering, message grouping, labels, return receipts, smart address book LDAP address completion, import tools, and the ability to manage multiple e-mail and newsgroup accounts.
 - Backup all Thunderbird e-mail messages with "[MozBackup](#)". It also backs up all Firefox settings.







Website Tools:


- [Apache](#):  More than 70% of the web sites on the Internet are using Apache.
- [HTTrack Website Copier](#):  allows you to download a World Wide Web site from the Internet to a local directory, building recursively all directories, getting HTML, images, and other files from the server to your computer.
- [Xenu](#) - checks Web sites for broken links.
- [Notepad++](#) : handy for those times when you have to edit HTML directly
- **FTP Clients:**
 - [WinSCP](#) – has many features including the Secure Copy Protocol for which it's named, but you can just use the FTP feature
 - [WS_FTP LE](#)
 - [Classic FTP](#)

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System Tools:

- **Disk Image Backup:**
 - [Macrium Reflect](#) Disk imaging software with bootable recovery options. Create a disk image while running Windows. Image to Network, USB, FireWire drives and DVD.
 - [Acronis True Image for Western Digital](#): True Image by Acronis is a very popular (and not free) backup utility. However, this is a full-featured & free version of True Image with the caveat that it only works on Western Digital hard drives.
 - [EaseUS Todo Backup](#) Safe and reliable backup & disaster recovery software for home users (disk clone, disk upgrade and SSD migration solution).
- **File Backup:** Though Windows now has rudimentary ZIP support, you still might consider these packages.
 - [7-Zip](#): a tiny package [1 MB], it supports (packing / unpacking) 7z, ZIP, GZIP, BZIP2 and TAR formats; and (unpacking only) RAR, CAB, ISO, ARJ, LZH, CHM, Z, CPIO, RPM, DEB and NSIS formats. It has self-extracting capability for 7z format, integration with Windows Shell, a powerful File Manager, and a command line version.
 - [WinRAR](#): [1.7 MB] provides complete support for RAR and ZIP archives and is able to unpack and convert CAB, ARJ, LZH, TAR, GZ, ACE, UUE, BZ2, JAR, ISO, Z, 7-Zip archives.
- [Belarc Advisor](#):  Builds a detailed profile of your installed software and hardware, missing Microsoft hotfixes, etc., and displays the results in your Web browser.
- **Hex Editor:** [Cygnus Hex Editor](#) is a free binary / hexadecimal editor.

-  **Partition Tools:** Good for creating, reorganizing, and deleting partitions. [ Note: these usually run "standalone" from their own boot DVD/USB, and technically are LINUX applications]
 - [GParted](#) (Gnome PARTition EDitor)
 - MiniTool [Partition Wizard](#)
- **File /Disk Shredding:** [Note: A "Drive Wiper" is part of CCleaner]
 - [File Shredder](#) has 5 different shredding algorithms, and also an integrated Disk Wiper to wipe unused disk space. [Online Help page](#) [see Smart Computing - Aug 2010, page 46].
- **File & directory comparison:**
 - [WizTree](#) Finds the files & folders using the most space on your NTFS drives. Sorts by folder size and optionally deletes.
 - [WinDiff](#) [see Smart Computing - July 2011]. Download from [Grig Software](#).
 - [WinMerge](#)
- **Windows User's Interface:**
 -  [Classic Shell](#): the main benefit is to make the top-level interface to Win8 appear just like Win7.
- **Bootable USB:**
 - [Rufus](#): a utility that helps format and create bootable USB flash drives from *.iso file
- **Application Migration:** Move an app to another computer – use when you no longer have the ability to install.
 - [CAMEYO](#): Cameyo's application Platform as a Service (aPaaS) cost-effectively and securely delivers Windows applications to users on any device. It is the only solution that is built for the cloud and runs in any customer environment – public or private cloud, hybrid or on-premise. [*Trial version*]
- **Multi-purpose System Tools:**
 - [CCleaner](#):  Registry cleaner, disk cleaner, startup cleaner, drive wiper, uninstaller, ... A lot of functionality for one small, easy-to-use application.
 - [Puran Utilities](#): A comprehensive suite of tools, each one of which can be separately downloaded.
- [Slim Cleaner](#): a PC Optimization tool that uses feedback from its vast user community to improve your system's performance. [see Smart Computing - Aug 2011, page 60]
- [Windows System Internals](#): A superb set of system tools - but not for the beginner. Some particularly useful tools are:
 -  [Autoruns](#): This utility, which has the most comprehensive knowledge of auto-starting locations of any startup monitor, shows you what programs are configured to run during system bootup or login, and shows you the entries in the order Windows processes them.
 - [Process Explorer](#): Find out what files, registry keys and other objects processes have open, which DLLs they have loaded, and more. This uniquely powerful utility will even show you who owns each process.
 - [Process Monitor](#): Monitor file system, Registry, process, thread and DLL activity in real-time.
- [NirSoft](#) Another good set of system tools. Some useful tools are:
 - [AdapterWatch](#): displays useful information about your network adapters: IP addresses, Hardware address, WINS servers, DNS servers, MTU value, # of bytes received or sent, current transfer speed, ...
 - [UninstallView](#): an alternative utility to the standard Add/Remove applet of Windows.
-  [Hardware Monitor](#): HWMonitor is a hardware monitoring program that reads PC systems main health sensors : voltages, temperatures, fans speed. The program handles the most common sensor chips. It can read modern CPUs on-die core thermal sensors, as well as hard drives temperature via S.M.A.R.T, and video card GPU temperature.
- [Hard Disk Sentinel](#): Hard Disk Sentinel (a multi-OS SSD and HDD monitoring and analysis software) monitors hard disk drive / HDD status including health, temperature and all [S.M.A.R.T](#) values for all hard disks. Also it measures the disk transfer speed in real time which can be used as a benchmark or to detect possible hard disk failures, performance degradations.
- [EMCO](#) ...and still another good set of system tools.

- [MoveOnBoot](#): A tool for handling files and folders, locked by Windows, system services or other applications. Using it, you can rename, move or delete any locked file or folder at the next system restart.
- Software UnInstallers:
 - [UninstallView](#) (see above)
 - [Revo Uninstaller](#)
- [WireShark](#):  a network packet analyzer. Wireshark can capture traffic from many different network media types including WiFi (despite its name).

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Security:

- Microsoft's [Maleware Protection Center](#)
- Anti-Virus:
 - ☺ Windows Defender [Win10] or [Microsoft Security Essentials](#) [Win7 & Win8]: provides real-time protection, guarding against viruses, spyware, and other malicious software (we use it on the Senior Center's Computer Lab and on the "Common Access Computers").
 - [AVG](#) This freeware product uses the following technologies to detect computer viruses: **Scanning** - searching for character strings that are characteristic of a given virus; **Heuristic analysis** - dynamic emulation of the scanned object's instructions in a virtual computer environment; and **Generic detection** - detection of instructions characteristic of the given virus/group of viruses.
 - [AVAST](#): Avast! Free Antivirus is an efficient and comprehensive antivirus program. It is one of the most popular antivirus programs available.
- Firewall:
 - [Zone Alarm](#) - includes four interlocking security services: a firewall, an application control, an Internet lock, and Zones. Zones monitor all activity on your computer and alert you when a new application attempts to access the Internet.
- Other Malware Tools:
 - ☼ [HijackThis](#): HijackThis inspects your computers browser and operating system settings to generate a log file of the current state of your computer. Using HijackThis you can selectively remove unwanted settings and files from your computer. Because the settings identified in a HijackThis log file can belong to both legitimate software and unwanted malware, it is important to use extreme caution when choosing to removing anything. HijackThis also comes with a process manager, HOSTS file editor, and alternate data stream scanner.


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Genealogy:

All these genealogy programs are totally free, have graphical interfaces and GEDCOM import/export.

- [Ancestris](#): This program requires a JAVA Runtime Environment ([JRE](#))
- [Gramps](#): Gramps is a community project, created, developed and governed by genealogists.
- [RootsMagic Essentials](#): This is the little brother of RootsMagic (\$30)

Image Editors:

- [XnView](#):  Includes a batch processor for applying the same changes/filters to many files.
- [IrfanView](#): IrfanView is a fast, compact and innovative graphic viewer for Windows

- [GIMP](#):   GNU Image Manipulation Program
- [Google Photos](#): an online app, this is the replacement to Picassa.
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MultiMedia:


- Players:
 -  Windows Media Player: plays a variety of multimedia files. Older versions were 'extensible' (i.e. you could download 3rd party extensions to add functionality). Version 12 is not extensible, and does not play DVDs.
 - [VLC Media Player](#):    VLC Media Player is the most popular and robust multi format, free media player available. It plays standard DVDs (not Blu-Ray).
 - [iTunes](#): Apple's multimedia player that runs on Windows and is required if you have an iPod. The installation will require Apple's QuickTime.
-  Codecs: Compressors/DECompressors may be needed to increase the functionality of a multimedia player. For example, the Windows Media Player released with Windows XP (and with Vista Home Basic) can't play DVDs! However, you can add the necessary codecs from [K-Lite Codec Pack](#) (and we suggest "Profile 4" for use with Windows Media Player).
- Sound Editors:
 - [Audacity](#)  
- Video Editors:
 - [ShotCut](#):   a free, open source, cross-platform video editor. A surprising amount of functionality for freeware.
- Tools / Converters:
 - [WinFF](#):  a GUI for the command line video converter, FFMPEG. WinFF does multiple files in multiple formats at one time. You can for example convert mpeg's, flv's, and mov's, all into avi's all at once. It is also useful for extracting just the audio from a video file.
 -  [LosslessCut](#):   a cross platform GUI tool for lossless trimming / cutting of videos. It lets you quickly get rid of the unwanted parts. It doesn't do any decoding / encoding and is therefore very fast and has no quality loss. Also allows for taking JPEG snapshots of the video at the selected time.
- Metadata Tools:
 - [Tag Scanner](#): Edit metadata tags of most modern audio formats
 - [EXIF Date Changer](#): Modifies the date and time attributes of the EXIF data stored within your digital photos. This allows you to compensate for incorrect camera settings, or different time zones within seconds across an entire folder of images. You are also able to rename all photos to include the time taken in the filename, add caption etc., making it even easier to sort and view your photos.

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JAVA:


- [JRE](#) (Java Run-time Environment):  Java software from Oracle allows you to run applications called "applets" that are written in the Java programming language. [More About Java Software](#)

Office Suites:





- [Libre Office](#):  The standard in free office suites
- [Google Docs](#): A web-based office suite.
- [Zoho Docs](#): A web-based office suite.[see Smart Computing - July 2011]
- Optical Character Recognition: [SimpleOCR](#) - If you have a scanner and want to avoid retyping your documents, SimpleOCR is the fast, free way to do it. The SimpleOCR freeware is 100% free and not limited in any way.

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PDF Tools:

- PDF Virtual Printers: The recommended method for creating a PDF is to create / edit the content in a Word Processor (e.g. Word or Writer), and then "Export to PDF". However, to create PDFs from any program that is able to print, use a PDF virtual printer. Note: a PDF virtual printer is included in Windows 10.
 -  [PDF ReDirect](#): (virtual printer) Also performs PDF file merging.
 - [PDF995](#): (virtual printer)
- [PDFfill PDF Tools](#) merge, split, reorder, delete, encrypt, decrypt, rotate, crop and reformat PDF pages; add information, header, footer and watermark; convert images to PDF, PDF to images or PostScript to PDF; delete, flatten and list form fields; scan to pdf, create transparent image, and more.
- [PDF Converter](#) - (web app) No software gets installed on your computer. You send a file to this site, and they email you back the converted PDF.

Video Conferencing:



- [Skype](#):   
- Google Hangouts: just a [browser plugin](#). 

Readers / Viewers: (can't edit)

- [Adobe Reader](#)    (Be sure to un-check the extraneous 'Optional offers' before downloading)
- Microsoft [Word Viewer](#)
- Microsoft [PowerPoint Viewer](#)
- Microsoft [Excel Viewer](#)




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CAD (Computer Aided Design)

[SweetHome 3D](#):   a free interior design application that helps you place your furniture on a house 2D plan, with a 3D preview. It is aimed at people who want to design their interior quickly, whether they are moving or they just want to redesign their existing home. Numerous visual guides help you draw the plan of your home and layout furniture. You may draw the walls of your rooms upon the image of an existing plan, and then, drag and drop furniture onto the plan from a catalog organized by categories. Each change in the 2D plan is simultaneously updated in the 3D view, to show you a realistic rendering of your layout. [see Smart Computing, Aug 2010 page 35, or the [Video Tutorial](#)]

Remote Desktop Sharing - Remote Access:

☀ Remote control software allows you to view and fully interact with one computer desktop (the "server") using a simple program (the "client" or "viewer") on another computer desktop anywhere on the Internet.

- [Teamviewer](#):  - establishes connections to any PC or server all around the world within just a few seconds. You can remote control your partner's PC as if you were sitting right in front of it. Teamviewer is used in our computer lab.
- [VNC](#) (Virtual Network Computer):  The two computers don't even have to be the same type, so for example you can use VNC to view a Windows Vista desktop at the office on a Linux or Mac computer at home. For ultimate simplicity, there is even a Java viewer, so that any desktop can be controlled remotely from within a browser without having to install software.
- [Mikogo](#):  a cross-platform desktop sharing tool, ideal for web conferencing, online meetings or remote support. See [tutorial](#).

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Revised: 7/2019