

Carl Bulger presided.

Visitors/New Members

Nilo Gonzalez is a retired programmer

Dan Searing

Janice Holland

Gus Sears

Computer Problems:

We had a good, wide ranging discussion of security threats, anti-virus programs, anti-spyware, operating systems (especially the now unsupported Windows XP and what to replace it with), backup choices, cloud storage, writing CD's, etc.

More than half of us raised our hands when Carl Bulger asked how many were still using Windows XP. When he asked if we ONLY used XP, only a few hands went up. Carl called our attention to several articles that recommended that if we were going to use a computer with the Windows XP operating system, that we disconnect it from the internet.

Not only is the XP operating system vulnerable to hackers, but Internet Explorer 8 (which is the highest version compatible with XP) is especially vulnerable. A recent "zero day" vulnerability to having your computer taken over by hackers was just discovered in IE8. So, for the fearless among us who still use XP computers on the internet, we are advised not to use the Internet Explorer browser. Many of us are uninstalling it. Most of us are using Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Opera.

The question was then asked if any of the Internet Security or Anti-Virus programs were good enough to protect our XP computers from hackers and malware, especially if we have a good router between that computer and the internet. There was no definitive answer. Dennis Evans believes that there is no perfect anti-virus program or security setup. Results of tests on the top anti-virus programs bear him out: www.AV-Comparatives.org

Tom McCabe said that he likes to have Avast, the free anti-virus program, plus MalwareBytes and SuperAntiSpyware resident on his computers. Each has a free version, although you may be bombarded with ads asking you to upgrade to a paid version. They are not limited to Windows XP. They'll handle Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8/8.1.

Bob Blum and Dennis Evans pointed out that Microsoft Defender is now integrated into Windows 8/8.1 and it is much more robust than earlier versions. But it is often turned off by computer vendors who load their new computers with trial software including programs like Symantec's Norton Internet Security.

What do you do if you have an old computer that can't be upgraded to Windows 7 or 8/8.1? Bob Blum suggested PCLinuxOS with the Mate desktop. For him, this is a new recommendation. Last month he recommended the Xubuntu distribution of Linux. He thinks PCLinuxOS is less of a hassle with fewer updates. He cautions that there are certain applications that are incompatible with Linux, for example, Microsoft Office (use Libre Office instead); Intuit's Quicken (and I would assume that Intuit's Turbo-Tax would be incompatible also). Tom McCabe asked if Acronis backup software is compatible with Linux. Bob didn't know.

We then discussed ways to backup. Bob likes Clonezilla, a free application for backing up. This is another change for Bob. In the past, he preferred Macrium Reflect. That's what we like about Bob: he is usually out there on the proverbial "cutting edge".

What about backing up to the cloud? Dennis Evans likes the fact that the contents of most cloud backups are encrypted. I asked if the CryptoLocker virus could lockup your cloud storage as well as your

computer. No one knew. Also, what prevents malware on your computer from being backed up to the cloud?

Someone asked what are the advantages and disadvantages of storage in the cloud. Advantages: extra security in case of fire, hard drive breakdown, etc.; ability to allow friends access to your photographs or documents; ability to use Google Docs without having the software resident on your computer.

Disadvantages: There is a charge if you store more than a certain quantity of data (2GB, 5 GB, 10 GB).

Submitted by Barry Hammond, Secretary