Radio Days – 2013-10-26

Tip of the Week – More Data Lost

During the week I had a normal call. It was from a client who had bought a new computer to replace an old, and dying, Windows XP computer. This new computer needed an anti-virus program to keep it safe on the internet and some other programs installed: programs like Skype.

Then there was the need for an email program. The program we settled on was the free email program from Microsoft called Windows Live Mail. After downloading and installing this program it was almost easy to access his emails and download all 1,391 emails. This took him back to his old computer and he asked me to copy all the data from his old computer to his new computer.

This was easier said than done!

His old computer would boot up but then freeze most of the time. Once we did manage to get it working for long enough to actually get it to start installing the driver for the USB stick which I was planning to use to copy his data. After that I suggested that he take the computer to a good repair person who would be able to remove the hard disc from his old computer and install it into a new computer as a slave drive. This was needed because Windows was so corrupt that it would not run for very long before freezing.

I asked him if he had a backup and he stated, as so many have stated before, that he had been intending to install a backup program. Unfortunately his intentions had not been converted to actions and his data was still quarantined on his old computer. With any luck the hard disc from this computer would still be working (its sound suggested that it was in good condition) and would work long enough for a technician to remove all the data and place it on another, external, hard disc.

This data could then be copied from the external hard disc to his new computer and the external hard disc could then be used as a back for all his new data which would accumulate on his new computer.

The missing data? This was the usual collection of photographs (both business and private) plus all his study notes and essays. Plus, of course, all his old emails which had been created during his business and study life.

More than six years' worth of data is now hanging in the balance. Will he get his computer to a technician in time? Will the hard disc still be rotating at the technician's premises? If so, then I fully expect that he will recover all his data and have it available.

All this trauma could have been saved easily if he had just installed and used a free backup program to keep a copy of his data!

Opening Files Automatically

This is a problem which affects far too many people, and appeared twice in the last week. You receive an important file in an email but you cannot open it. Another common problem is that you receive a link to an important website but, again, you cannot open this website.

Windows has what are called *default programs*. A default program is the program which is set to do certain actions when you click on a certain type of link.

Default Web Browser

If you receive a link to a website in an email or another document like this one, you should be able to just click on the link and have your web browser open that page on your screen. For some people, and it happened twice this week, this action does not happen. The cause is

simple: somehow Windows has lost track of which program is supposed to open when you click on an internet link.

This program is called your *default web browser*. For this you should use your favourite web browser: mine is Opera. Opera does many things well, and the main thing that it does not do which I would like is that it will not let you create a new set of open pages; this is a feature of most of the web browsers which are worth using.

For far too many people their only web browser is Internet Explorer. This is the web browsing program which comes with Windows and, unfortunately, is the worst web browser that I know of. There are a number of browser add-ons which place a skin over Internet Explorer's usual face so that it appears to be a new browser, but these cannot make IE a better browser because Microsoft has for far too long ignored the need for internet security.

This is yet another case of putting lipstick on a pig!

To make your favourite browser your default browser it is a matter of opening that browser then finding the button which allows you to configure it to your taste. This is often a small button on the right-hand side of the top of the browser's window. Click on this button then find the way to set this browser to be the default browser. Then click on *OK* to complete the action.

This will solve your problem with internet pages not appearing when you click on a link.

As an aside, I well remember a client from many years ago who did all the correct things when setting-up a program on his computer. After all the settings were correct he presses *Cancel* to close all the open windows. Unfortunately this lost all his hard-won settings so he had to do it over and over again until he followed my advice to click on *OK* to complete his task.

Please remember to click on *OK* to complete this task as clicking on *Cancel* will always ensure that your new settings do not take effect!

Default Programs

There are many default programs for many actions, and most people do not even realise that they have used a default program until it is pointed out. They just expect that when they double-click on an attachment in an email, for example, it will open and they will be able to read it without any problems. This is usually true.

The problems occur when an expected action does not occur.

During the week a client did have this problem. She received a daily email from an important source which she needed to be able to read early in the morning. The email was in pdf format (Portable Document Format) which has become the most common way of sending important documents over the internet. You will find that this document is printed in pdf format because (almost) everybody can open pdf documents.

Everybody, that is, except my client.

She had an old copy of Adobe's Acrobat Reader which had become corrupted. Because it was corrupted I uninstalled the program the downloaded and installed the latest version of Foxit Reader. This free program is the best pdf reader that I know of, so it is the one which I always use and install on my clients' computers.

It is a free download, and I downloaded and installed it on my client's computer. She then went to her email program and tried to open one of these important attachments and, lo and behold, there it was on her screen in all her glory.

What is the Default Program?

If you are having a problem finding the correct program to open a particular file type look for the file extension. This is, typically, three or four letters at the end of a file's name, after the full stop at the end. If you cannot see the file's extension then right-click on the file's name and select *Properties* from the pop-up menu. This will tell you the extension and, if possible, the program used to open this type of file.

If you do not see the name of the default program for opening this type of file it means that you do not have a program registered as the default program. to find which programs will open files of this type you can go to a number of websites which let you know what each file extension is used for and which programs will open it.

Once you have this information you can then download and install the appropriate program and all your problems will vanish into thin air. Well, that is the hope!

For most people with new computers the manufacturer will have installed a program to open all the most common file types so there should be no problem. For those of you with older computers there may be more problems. One problem which I often come across is the need to open files created in Microsoft's Word, Excel or PowerPoint.

Microsoft has fixed this problem with free programs which allow you to view and print documents created in any of these programs. Just search for *free word/excel/powerpoint viewer site:microsoft.com* and you will see the appropriate site towards the top of the list. Download and install this program and, again, all your woes will be over!

Further Information

Skype	www.skype.com
Windows Live Mail	www.microsoft.com/windows-live
Free backup program: SyncBack	www.2brightsparks.com
Foxit Reader	www.foxitsoftware.com
Finding File Extensions	www.fileinfo.com
	www.filext.com