



Computers Are Easy User Group

Abort,
Retry,
Ignore....

Founded 1984 ARI is the
Official Newsletter of
Computers Are Easy User Group

Jan 2025
Volume XLI Issue 1

PER GLENSIDE Library (Masks are optional)

Confirmed
meeting dates

2025

INFORMATION for Saturday January 25 start time in person at
Library Board Room is 9:30am or at home Zoom is 10:00am.
This will be a hybrid meeting.

January 25

There will be a meeting invitation e-mail Thursday evening
before the Saturday meeting.

February 22

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Our January presentation various
We will have various consumer fraud videos involving
computers and phones.

Hybrid
Board Room
in person
OR Zoom

CAEUG, P.O. Box 3150,
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

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***Thank you! to all who paid the
low \$20.00 dues for 2025!***

Check
website for
dates and
meeting info

***Your support helps pay for our PO Box and
APCUG membership and CAEUG website***

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Mailing address:
CAEUG
P.O. Box 3150
Glen Ellyn, IL
60138

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Join CAEUG meeting in Library or from Home,
Stay Safe! Update information on our website at

<https://www.CAEUG.net>



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The Glenside Public Library address is at 25 E Fullerton Avenue, Glendale Heights, Illinois. The meeting(s) are not library sponsored. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this program and who require certain accommodations in order to observe and / or participate in the program are requested to contact CAEUG president, at least five (5) days prior to the program, so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

Members Helpline

Any member can volunteer to be on the Members Helpline.

Hardware problems, Win 7, Win 10, Linux and Virus Removal

- John Spizzirri

About DVD of the Month

Unfortunately, the DVD of the Month is no longer creating an income center for the club. August 2022 will be the last issue of the DVD. Starting in September, I will feature a review of a freeware program in the ARI... Some of these programs may be elaborate and complicated others may be very simple. I may include screen shots if that can be accommodated.



Lamp Post 275 January 2025 by John Spizzirri

By the time our January meeting happens the Decorah bald eagles may be starting to rebuild their nest (**1**). They have to have the nest completed by the third week in February because egg laying starts at the end of that week. With longer night time hours, now is the time to keep the Aurora cam sites in your favorites. The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) cam at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada (**2**) is in the Central Time zone as is the polar bear site (**3**). If you stay up really late or get up early, try the Alaska Borealis cams (**4**). Two places to try offer various cams from around the world (**5**, **6**). To check on the space weather (for aurora forecasts) try here (**7**) and NASA (**8**).

- 1) <https://is.gd/0YqTVG>
- 2) <https://is.gd/3RjcRQ>
- 3) <https://is.gd/7PDEvO>
- 4) <https://auroranotify.com/?p=63>
- 5) <https://seetheaurora.com/webcams>
- 6) <https://lightsoverlapland.com/?p=79>
- 7) <https://www.spaceweather.com/>
- 8) <https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/>

With the House and the Senate under Republican control, the Trump (47) administration policies at the Federal Communications Commission (**FCC 1**) will probably include a fall back to previous deregulation of broadband and an increase of influence of favored large tech companies. This explains why Bezos (**2**) and Zuckerberg (**3**) are included. Brendan Carr (**4**), a Republican FCC commissioner and author of the communication section of Project 2025 (**5**), is expected to be nominated as the new FCC chairman. Carr, who served as general counsel to the FCC under the Trump (45) administration, has been a critic of the current FCC's policies. The Trump FCC wants to repeal net neutrality (**6**) regulations reinstated by the Biden administration. Carr can do this in one of two ways. First, he wait for the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to strike down the reinstated rules. Second, he can (with Trump's help) get Congress to use the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to overturn these regulations. Carr will go after broadcast networks for media bias using FCC rules such as the "news distortion rule" and the "equal time rule." Those were rules that Trump complained were not applied when Harris (**7**) appeared on Saturday Night Live (**8**) a week before the election. Carr will be lenient on mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in the telecom and media sector except on companies that Trump does not like. Biden had a program for the expansion of rural broadband. It was called the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (**BEAD 9**). It provided money for companies to hard wire rural areas with broadband. It did not provide any money for satellite broadband. Trump will change that to fund the Starlink satellites (owned by Musk **10**). The Trump FCC will probably reduce regulatory oversight, foster private investment, and address the growing influence of big tech companies. Deregulation and industry consolidation will rule. Media bias, broadband access, and the influence of social media platforms will suffer. Trump's goal of economic expansion and reducing federal regulations, set the stage for a new era of telecommunications and media policy that may or may not be good for the regular computer / Internet user.

- 1) <https://www.fcc.gov/>
- 2) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Bezos
- 3) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Zuckerberg
- 4) <https://www.fcc.gov/about/leadership/brendan-carr>
- 5) <https://bitl.to/3jaG>
- 6) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_neutrality
- 7) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamala_Harris
- 8) <https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live>
- 9) <https://is.gd/mcpUjH>
- 10) <https://is.gd/JY66IU>

The United States Government Accountability Office (**GAO 1**) produced a 54 page report (**2**) outlining how it has asked federal law enforcement agencies in U.S. Department of Homeland Security (**DHS 3**) to better observe civil rights and privacy while using drones, closed circuit TV, license plate readers, and facial recognition. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (**CBP 4**) took the DHS caution to heart. Secret Service (**Secret Service 5**) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (**ICE**

6) ignored the caution. The report is loaded with legalese and other gibberish. It does acknowledge the fact that facial recognition does not work on black people and violates everyone else's civil rights.

- 1) <https://www.gao.gov/>**
- 2) <https://bitl.to/3jaK>**
- 3) <https://www.dhs.gov/>**
- 4) <https://www.cbp.gov/>**
- 5) <https://www.secretservice.gov/>**
- 6) <https://www.ice.gov/>**

One of our members wrote me an email asking about a presentation where there was a discussion of companies that charge a fee to delete personal information from the dark web. I found some information for him and responded to his email. I thought that it might be of use to the rest of the membership so here is what I found. PC Magazine (**PCMag 1**) and ZD Net (**2**) both had web sites that reviewed various companies that remove personal data. I, also, asked ChatGPT (**3**) that responded in about 20 seconds with the names of four companies with explanations of what they do and how much they charge. PCMag came up with Optery (**4**), PrivacyBee (**5**), Incogni (**6**), IDX (**7**), Canary (**8**), DeleteMe (**9**), Mozilla Monitor (**10**), and Aura (**11**). ZD NET came up with some of the same sites as PCMag plus Reputation Defender by Norton (**12**). ChatGPT found IDShield (**13**), LifeLock by Norton (**14**), Dark Web ID by Experian (**15**), and PrivacyGuard by Trilegiant (**16**). ChatGPT's selection is completely different from the mainstream press. ChatCPT's info is not made up. ChatGPT's responses were much more expensive than the ones reported by ZD Net and PCMag. Some of these services can cost from \$10.00 a month or a lot more. It can get expensive. Some may be more thorough than the others, but is there any way to really know?

- 1) <https://is.gd/ixCKsr>**
- 2) <https://is.gd/spQ9SO>**
- 3) <https://chatgpt.com/>**
- 4) <https://www.optery.com/>**
- 5) <https://privacybee.com/>**
- 6) <https://incogni.com/>**
- 7) <https://www.idx.us/>**
- 8) <https://www.kanary.com/>**
- 9) <https://joindeleteme.com/>**
- 10) <https://monitor.mozilla.org/>**
- 11) <https://www.aura.com/>**
- 12) <https://www.reputationdefender.com/>**
- 13) <https://www.idshield.com/>**
- 14) <https://www.lifelock.com>**
- 15) <https://www.experian.com/>**
- 16) <https://www.privacyguard.com/>**

Between you, me and the LampPost. That's all for now.

Freeware & Donations

By Larry Bothe
12/26/2024

If you have read my earlier comments on using freeware computer programs or other services, you know that I advocate making some sort of payment to the developers. Nothing is truly free, and developers have expenses. If you want the developers to continue to support and update their software or service, you should chip in and help pay for it.

Payments for freeware come in several forms; the two most common of which are donations, or a "Pro" version you must buy. Donations for freeware are not usually tax deductible, so be careful here. Only donations to federally-recognized 501.c.3 charities are tax deductible. Most software developers are not valid charities, so payments to them cannot be deducted on your federal income tax. But it doesn't matter. If you use their program regularly, you should send them some money. A subset of donating is buying raffle tickets. Buy some tickets.

The other form of payment for freeware is to step up and buy the Pro version. That may get you some enhancements. Most common are automatic updates (so you don't have to go after them manually), enhanced support (which you hopefully don't need), or some other functionality, which you may or may not use. Here again, it doesn't matter; buy the Pro version as a vehicle to send the developers some cash.

OK, you have decided to, one way or another, send money to freeware developers or other "free" computer service providers. Good for you! But over time, a new problem comes up. Often, as soon as you give money to an organization, they turn around and ask for more. Or, maybe not right away, but later in the year, hoping you have forgotten that you already gave. Now you have to research to find out if you want to give again. That takes you to your check register, and/or your credit card statements, to hunt for payments. I go through this all the time. It's annoying.

I have decided for 2025, every time I give money for freeware or a free service, I'm going to make an entry in a spreadsheet. In order to make sure I don't donate in early 2025 to something I just did in late 2024, I created a spreadsheet for 2024 "donations". See the table below.

Date	Name	Amount	Notes
03/16/2024	Consumer Reports	\$20.00	Raffle tickets
05/09/2024	Consumer Reports	\$20.00	Raffle tickets
07/10/2024	Mozilla - Thunderbird	\$20.00	Email client software
09/24/2024	Older Geeks (Home Computer Repair)	\$20.00	Computer questions
10/06/2024	Older Geeks (Home Computer Repair)	\$20.00	Computer questions
10/12/2024	Ask Woody - Pro	\$20.00	Computer info newsletter
11/24/2024	Mozilla - Thunderbird	\$20.00	Email client software
12/13/2024	Kurt Zimmermann - HDCleaner	\$20.00	Maintenance software
12/15/2024	Wikipedia	\$20.00	Information

Let me explain some of this. First, you can see that my favorite donation amount is \$20. When I started doing these donations years ago, it was \$10, but inflation has set in, so several years ago I went up to \$20.

It appears that several organizations got to me twice in 2024, because I was too dumb/lazy to check for prior donations. That's not entirely true. I subscribe to Consumer Reports anyway, but I use them a lot, and they save me substantial money, so besides the annual subscription fee (rest assured; they remind me about that) I also participate in their annual automobile raffle, and sometimes buy extra tickets. (No, I have never won.) It's the same sort of thing with Older Geeks. I picked their brains with a lot of questions this past fall, so I knowingly donated twice.

The only one that really got me more than once is Mozilla, the developers of Thunderbird email client software. I have been using Thunderbird for years, and really like it. I do want to donate to them every year, but not multiple times. They ask for a donation every time they release a major update to the software. I didn't bother to check a month ago, so they got two donations in 2024. That's OK; I feel like I'm still getting my money's worth. Besides, making that mistake is what motivated me to keep better track of freeware donations, and to write this article.

You may wonder why I donate to Wikipedia. It has to do with the Freeman Army Airfield Museum, where I am the volunteer curator. 'Curator' means being in charge of displays. I create all the signs that explain the exhibits to our visitors. In order to do that, I have to research to make sure my facts are complete and correct. Wikipedia is my go-to source.

I'll close with what I think is an interesting donation story. During my several communications with Randy at Older Geeks back in the fall, he suggested that I switch from CCleaner, which had become a pain in the patootski of late, to HDCleaner, a freeware program. I did that, and I like HDCleaner, so I wanted to donate. I went to their website and looked for a DONATE button. Nothing there. I looked in the program itself. Nothing there either. Then I sent Randy a message, and asked him what was with Kurt Zimmermann Software, the developers of HDCleaner. Don't they like money? Randy searched to see if I had somehow missed the donation portal. He couldn't find anything either, and suggested that I send a message to Kurt Zimmerman Software through the Contact Us link on their website. I did that, asking if they would like to receive a donation. About 5 days later I got a reply, telling me they don't have a PayPal account (no explanation), and providing their mailing address in Germany. I made out a check to Kurt Zimmerman for \$20, and snail-mailed it to Germany for \$1.65 in postage. It's too soon to know if they cashed the check.

Larry Bothe is an associate member of CAEUG. He served as president for a time back in the 90's when he lived in the Chicago area. Larry presently resides in southern Indiana where he is retired from the plastics industry, does a little flight instruction, and is the volunteer curator of the Freeman Army Airfield Museum. He can be contacted at LBothe@comcast.net.

Clean Your Dirty Laptop
David Kretchmar, Hardware Technician
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
<https://www.scscc.club> **tomburt89134 (at) cox.net**

After being used regularly for months or years, our laptops accumulate dust, grime, skin oils, sneezes, and who knows what else. Your laptop is most likely due for a cleaning, and I'm going to pass along some suggestions for how to do it effectively without harming this delicate piece of equipment.

You know your laptop is filthy. You can see the dirt and grime on your screen and keyboard. You might also be able to see grime accumulated on your trackpad. So, it's time for a cleaning.

A shining, newly cleaned laptop should be a joy to use; the keys are clean, and the screen is free of smudges and splatters. These cleaning suggestions might also be helpful if you buy a used laptop since the previous owner doesn't always leave it in pristine condition.

Your Supplies

You don't need much to clean a computer: rubbing alcohol, a mild dish detergent, soft lint-free cloths (microfiber cloths are ideal), Q-tips, and canned air. Ninety percent or higher isopropyl alcohol is what you want since it won't damage the internal components. And if you have some particularly embedded dirt, a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser (or other melamine sponge) can also work wonders. However, it should be an absolute last resort since it's abrasive and can leave permanent scratches.

Don't waste your money on specialty cleaners you see at Amazon or big box electronics stores like Best Buy. They work just fine but no better than what you already have at home.

Start With the Inside

Starting with that dirt on the keyboard and screen might be tempting, but you should start with the internals. Canned air will blow dust and dirt everywhere, so if you start cleaning the screen, you'll have to clean it again after you've used canned air. Start by blowing out the dust, then move on to the outside.

You shouldn't have to open your laptop to clean the inside. Turn off the laptop, unplug the power cable, and remove the battery if it pops out (removable batteries are becoming a thing of the past). Give it a quick burst away from the laptop to eliminate condensation, and then start blowing air into any cracks and crevices: the keyboard, the vents, and even the USB and other ports. Blow in short bursts since longer sprays can cause moisture to accumulate inside your computer. You can also damage the fans by making them spin too fast.

You probably won't see a significant change after doing this. The goal is to prevent dust buildup over time, which can cause your laptop to overheat and possibly spontaneously shut down. If you can see dust bunnies in the vents, you've let it go

too long without a cleaning. If you see dust stuck behind the vent that you can't dislodge by blasting it with compressed air, consult your user manual to open the case. Be sure you remember which screws went where for the reassembly. Snap a picture or two of your laptop for reference before opening the case, and be super-organized with the screws as you remove them.

Smokers and pet owners should take special care to clean the inside often since you'll likely experience a much quicker buildup of dust, smoke, hair, and other dirt. Computers exposed to smokers can have their useful life cut by as much as half.

Wipe Down the Outside

Remember, when cleaning a laptop (or desktop) computer, apply the cleaning product to the tool you're using to clean, NEVER directly onto the computer. So, grab your microfiber cloth, pour a little alcohol onto it, wring it out so it isn't dripping wet, and wipe down the surface. Cotton swabs and alcohol are helpful for the keyboard keys and the small spaces between them. (If there are marks that won't come off, you can try rubbing them with a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser or other cleaner very lightly, but again, they're mildly abrasive, which can alter the surface's finish.)

It may take a few passes to get all that grime off, but you should notice a dramatic difference once you do. If your laptop is particularly old, you may not be able to get rid of the shine on the keys; some of us may have worn down the top layer of plastic and even the letters on the keys. There's not much you can do about that.

You should be able to wipe fingerprints off your screen with a dry microfiber or soft terry cloth. If you need more cleaning power, a slightly damp cloth that has been thoroughly wrung out first can help. Some manufacturers, including Dell and Lenovo, even say you can use a 50:50 mixture of isopropyl alcohol and water to remove tough dirt. Avoid household cleaners with harsher chemicals like ammonia or Windex on the screen.

Get Rid of Bad Smells

Let's say you have a particularly terrible case of a gross laptop, and even after the above steps, your laptop still carries the essence of whatever it has been exposed to. I've seen many laptops that smelled like smoke, and getting rid of that is challenging or impossible. Cleaning the surface can help, but many of those smells may also be inside the computer. For that, you can turn to a natural deodorizer: charcoal. Don't go digging through your grill for briquettes! Cooking charcoal is different from activated charcoal. Activated charcoal is made with much more (micro) surface area to be more absorbent. Another common household item is kitty litter. It's a great odor eliminator because most kitty litter formulas have activated charcoal to neutralize litter box smells.

Seal the laptop in a bag or closable bin with a cup or so of the activated charcoal or litter and leave it for at least 24 to 48 hours. If you don't have a cat, people also had good luck with diaper pail deodorizers, which are neat little packets of charcoal you can throw away when you're done. The longer you leave the computer in the bin, the better.