

East SIG Report – February 2019

Paul Woolard welcomed members back after the Christmas break for the first meeting of East SIG for 2019. The February meeting then commenced with **George Skarbek** conducting Q&A.

Q: All the icons on my Windows 10 desktop have disappeared. I found they still existed in a folder called Desktop so how can I get them back?

A: It would appear that you have clicked on a second desktop. Select Desktop 1 in “Task View” and all your icons should return.

Q: A friend uses “Messenger” when communicating back to Australia while overseas. Is this safe and how do you use it?

A: Messenger was a MicroSoft product but is now part of Facebook. I have no need for Messenger so I don’t use it. I use Skype which offers both a free and a paid version. In some cases your telco may be more economical than the paid version of Skype, so it’s worth checking if planning to use the paid version.

John Hall: To use Messenger go into Facebook and hover your mouse over the Messenger icon. I suggest you search “How to use Messenger” in YouTube to learn about the features you may need to use. Messenger is free anywhere you can get wireless.

Q: I have lost access to sound on my computer and am now using a USB soundcard for sound. I notice that the cost of these USB soundcard can vary from \$4 to \$400. Apart from price what is the difference between these?

A: I have tested both cheap and up market USB soundcards. To my ears the differences are hard to differentiate between a medium priced and high end soundcard with average speakers. A friend purchased a \$12 soundcard and is very happy with it. I would recommend not spending big on a USB soundcard as the cheap ones can be very good.

Q: I worry about my privacy and the safety of my passwords when using Messenger on my mobile phone.

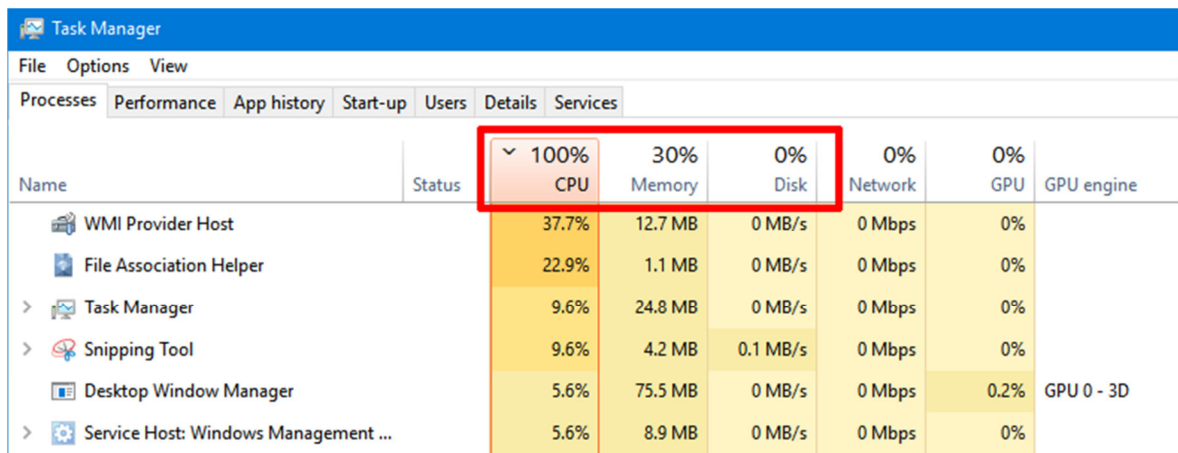
A: To improve safety I recommend you use different passwords. As for your privacy, it’s gone.

Audience Member: I only use Messenger on my mobile phone for non-important chat. I use Messenger on my PC for more important calls as it can’t “follow you around”.

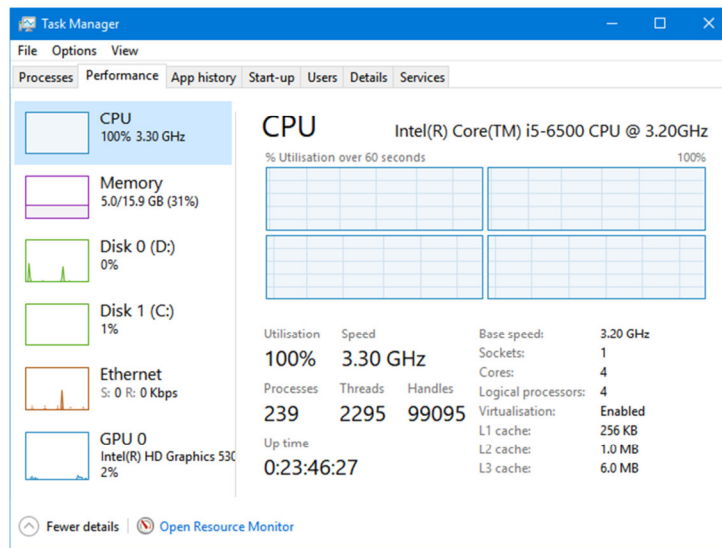
Following Q&A **George Skarbek** posed the question “My computer is running slowly, what can I do about it?” There are 3 main causes that can make your computer slow down.

- Running CPU intensive programs.
- Running out of system memory caused by having too many programs open at once.
- The hard disk running at 100%, most commonly caused by an antivirus program misbehaving.

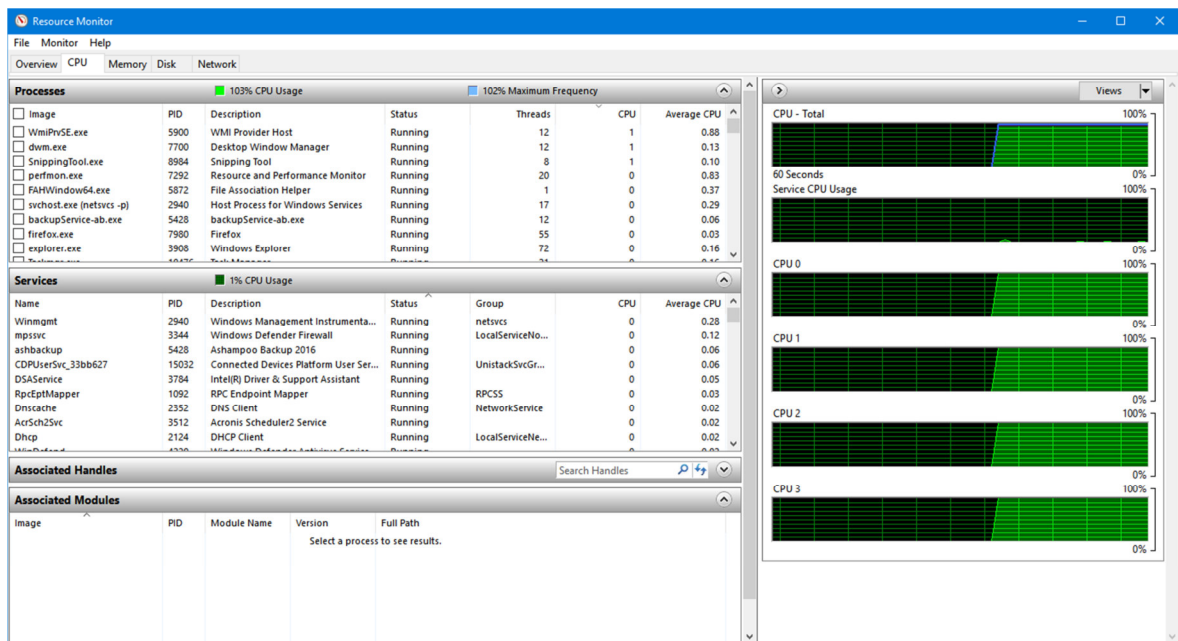
To determine which of the above may be causing your computer to slow down you need to open “Task Manager”. There are various ways to open “Task manager”, but right clicking the Windows Start button and select Task manager from the list is as easy as any. The 3 areas to look at in “Task Manager” are CPU, Memory and Disk. See graphic below.



The next step is to click on the Performance tab to gain more detailed information on these 3 critical areas, CPU, Memory & Disk. Under the Performance tab is where the problem can usually be found.



In the graphic above the CPU is running at 100% usage. As the CPU is obviously causing the computer to slow down, the next step is to go to Resource Manager, found by clicking the link on the bottom left of the above window then look at the CPU.



In the “Resource Manager” window above, select the CPU tab to find the process causing the slowdown. In the screenshot above WmiPrvSE.exe is causing high CPU usage. A Google search reveals many others are experiencing the same symptoms. Now that the culprit process has been discovered, further Google searches are needed to solve the issue. If the file is non-essential, right click on it and select “End Process”. The same approach applies if problems are found under the Memory or Disk tabs. In many cases a slowdown is caused by an antivirus program which has gone rogue and is scanning the whole drive, thus preventing other processes from starting.

(WMI Provider Host (WmiPrvSE.exe) stands for Windows Management Instrumentation Provider Service. It’s an important service that applications cannot run without. If this process stops, many of the features in your PC will become useless. On top of all, you might not even receive error notifications.)

In addition to using Task Manager to fix problems, the following tips will also help speed up your computer. A program such as “DU Meter” or one of Dave’s favourites “Coolbeans”, can monitor if a large amount of data is being sent to outside sources via the internet. If this occurs the offending program needs to be identified and if necessary stopped. Such behaviour will also cause your computer to slowdown.

George also recommends and uses cCleaner on a regular basis to refresh Windows. He then uses Windows 10 tools under Settings → Storage → Free up Space Now, to remove from your hard drive unnecessary files, including temp files. George has found Windows will often find items cCleaner missed.

After a break, **Stuart Bedford** spoke on “Artificial Intelligence, Robots and the Future of Computers”. Stuart believes our generation (baby boomers and older) have an advantage over younger generations in that we know what was. Things such as phone books, pay phones, street directories, logarithmic tables, writing letters, using a dictionary, reel to reel tape, vinyl records, cassette tapes, Betamax, speaking on the phone to a human when requesting service, etc. have all but disappeared. In today’s world you can phone anywhere in the world, navigate anywhere with Google maps and find almost any information you want using the phone you carry with you. The

younger generation is totally dependent on having this sort of information at their fingertips, whereas the older generation could get by without it when things break down.

As time moves on we won't need to write, spell, read a map or learn anything. "Okay Google" will be the easy way to go, as we won't need to remember anything. However if we don't use our brain it will slow down and stop working.

In the middle ages the "Scribes" were the go to people for information. Stuart believes we are now about to turn full circle due to smart phones and Google.

Today's computers are dumb, as they only do what's instructed of them. Robots still need human intervention, even at a reduced level. However with artificial intelligence, the development of algorithms and machine learning developing so fast, we are now at the beginning of what is being called the 4th Industrial revolution.

Stuart then played 2 videos showing how robots have revolutionised product shipment in an Amazon warehouse and manufacturing in the car industry. A third video featured a new AI assistant called Google Duplex making phone calls to two businesses, one a hairdresser and a restaurant to make an appointment and book a reservation, show where we are headed. These videos show how computers and robots can aid humans and eliminate jobs.

Stuart believes any industries where jobs follow a set of rules are potential for AI. Manual or repetitive jobs will be the first under threat. Eventually computers will be able to review all options and select the best solution to a problem. Results will be very fast and have the knowledge of the world to base decisions on. Stuart provides an example of this where the Da Vinci machine performs a prostate operation unaided by a surgeon.

Stuart next showed a number of examples where computer generation has been used in movies to both create actors that have been dead for over 20 years or change the facial features of one actor to look like another.

To conclude Stuart showed another video where a software program called Lyrebird can voice clone a person's voice from a small sample of their voice. Donald Trump and Barak Obama were two examples given and appeared very realistic.

Stuart's presentation has shown how things are now, where they are heading and what the future may look like.

Neil Muller