East SIG Report – June 2019

The June meeting opened as usual with M.C. **Paul Woolard** welcoming members, followed by Q&A conducted by **George Skarbek**.

Q: I want to wipe my hard drive so data can't be recovered from it afterwards. To do this I selected an option in cCleaner to clean and wipe the drive. When the program commenced it indicated that the process would take 12 hours 40 minutes to complete. I left cCleaner running overnight and when I checked its progress the next morning it still had 11 hours to go. Is there a faster way to do this?

A: What you're doing will work but there is a slightly better way. Copy what you need from the drive and then format the drive. Don't do a quick format but a normal format. A quick format will only get rid of the directories and the file allocation table but the data can still be recovered from the drive. A full format will write on every sector whether it's used or not so may take more than an hour. That won't give you the security you need so copy a dozen or so BluRays disks, DVDs, videos etc to fill the drive then delete them. "At this stage the average hacker is out of the loop".

For a CIA style clean you can used the built in DOS command "Cipher". Cipher makes 3 passes over the drive, however if you've run format first, one pass will be enough as there is no real data on the drive. The DOS command is Cipher /w:E where E is the drive you're wiping. When run the first pass writes binary zeros over the whole drive, the second pass writes binary ones over the whole drive and the third pass writes random numbers over the whole drive. Cipher can also be used to encrypt files.

Q: I still use Internet Explorer but would like to move to Firefox as it's more secure. Can you suggest how I can copy my bookmarks and favourites over from Internet Explorer to Firefox?

A: The easiest solution is to Import these from within Firefox. Firefox will ask what browser and give you a selection of browsers to import from. Tick Internet Explorer and that's all you have to do. I suggest you save them as well.

The procedure is as follows:

- In Firefox, click on the **Library** icon in the toolbar and then click **Bookmarks**
- At the bottom of the list of bookmarks click on **Show All Bookmarks**
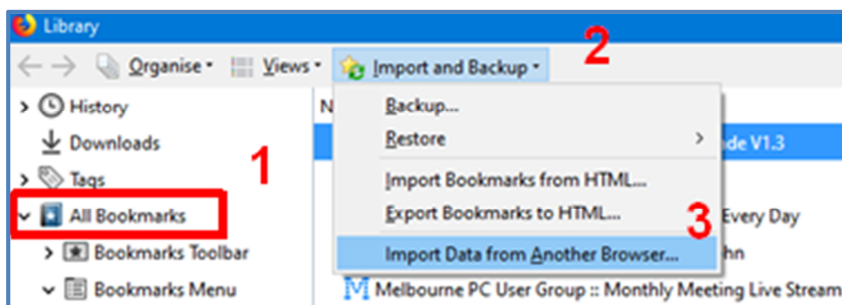
- The Library window opens (see graphic above) and on the left side select **All Bookmarks** (1)
- Next click on the **Import and Backup** toolbar button (2) and then click on **Import Data from Another Browser** (3)
- Select **Microsoft Internet Explorer** and click **Next**.
- Check the items you want to import from Internet Explorer to Firefox and click **Next**.

Q: In Windows 10 I've set the taskbar to disappear when not in use. When I wish to use the taskbar again I move the cursor back down to the bottom of the screen and the taskbar reappears. However when using Word 2010, if I move the cursor down to the bottom of the screen the taskbar will not reappear as it does for other programs.

A: I can't explain that behaviour as the taskbar should reappear. A work around would be to resize the Word window so that it's no longer full screen and then move its window up a small amount exposing the bottom of the screen. You should then be able to bring up the taskbar by moving the cursor down below the bottom of the resized Word window to the bottom of the screen.

Q: Has anyone taken up Brave as their browser? (N.M. Brave is a free open source web browser for Windows based on the Chromium web browser. A key feature of the browser is that it blocks ads and website trackers. Brave supports Chrome extensions and claims performance comparable to or faster than Google Chrome.)

A: [Dave Botherway] Sometimes I've found it a little slow on the internet

Q: I'm using Thunderbird for emails and when I send an email with a large attachment Thunderbird no longer saves the outgoing email. I have plenty of disk space so that should not be the cause of the problem. What alternative would you suggest for sending emails with large attachments?

A: I use Outlook and don't have any trouble saving outgoing emails with large attachments. George opened the question up to members of the audience, unfortunately other Thunderbird users have not encountered this issue.
Audience member: It might not be a problem with Thunderbird but the email itself.
George: That would be worth investigating.

Following Q & A **George Skarbek** presented tips on how to "Keep your Passwords Safe". The techniques shown were developed by George and others he's refined over the years.

First up George summarised the most common methods for saving passwords. These were using the Web Browsers autocomplete function, Password vaults (e.g. LastPass, KeePass, 1Password etc.) and DIY systems. The pros and cons of each were presented and discussed.

George then outlined the dos and don'ts needed for keeping passwords safe. Characters to use in passwords and the naming of the password file were recommended.

George followed this by suggesting a simple DIY password manager based on Microsoft Excel and suggested a preferred layout. He noted that Excel makes a very good password manager because it has very good encryption built in. George stressed that the Excel file must be encrypted to be secure.

For users looking for more extreme password protection the following methods were suggested.
- The first was to hide a letter or symbol within the password by using another letter or symbol in its place. For example, if a letter "b" appears in the password it will always be entered as another character say "W".

- A second extreme suggestion was the naming of the file and where to store it on your computer. Name the Excel file starting with an A, change the extension to dll and store the file in the Windows System32 folder. There are over 170 dll files starting with A in that folder so it's unlikely the file would easily be found.

George's final suggestion on the naming of passwords was to use an algorithmic password. This is one where you never have to look at your password file. George gave the following example:
- If your name is Fred then use an algorithm, starting as:
  { Fred$7 (Note the space after opening the curly bracket. A space is considered a character and one people rarely use so is a good choice in a password. It's also an easy character to use as it doesn't require the use of the keyboards Shift key)

- After your selected number, add two letters that relates to that password. Say the second and third letter and reverse these. If the password is for Westpac, then your password will be { Fred$7se

Finally George noted that it's all well and go to protect your password while living but plan for those who will need this information when you die.

George's full presentation can be found on the East SIG website.

After a break, **Trevor Hudson** introduced his series of videos on "How to securely prepare your computer for disposal". The video of the above name is the master for a suite of videos Trevor has prepare over the course of the last year. All 12 videos of the series are available on YouTube, with URLs for each listed in the description panel below the master video. All the videos are short in length at around 5 minutes.

After a brief introduction Trevor took advice from the audience and played 6 videos as requested by the East SIG audience. These were:

- How to Change Windows Login Password
- How to Delete all Browsing History in Mozilla Firefox
- How to Remove Saved Passwords
- How to Get Data off Corrupted HDD
- How to Factory Reset Vista PC
- How to Overwrite Deleted Data using DOS

Final tips from the audience were;
1. (George) When disposing of a computer to a friend, create a new account and then delete the old user.
2. (Richard) When deleting data from Firefox, make sure Sync is not on or you may lose all Firefox data on your other PC's.

Neil Muller