

## Maintenance Programs

by Dick Evans

There are a number of programs that have been suggested over the last year or so here at the computer club. They all have free versions and those are the ones suggested to use. Here is a list:

CCleaner

Malwarebytes

Superantispyware

Glary Utilities

ADWcleaner

They each catch things the others do not, so it is a good idea to run them all. I suggest once a week for it is better to keep your computer running well rather than waiting until it is barely functioning.

It is like that little noise you hear in your car once and a while. When you turn on the radio you no longer hear it, so it must not be anything important. Then one day the car breaks down and it cost a small fortune to get it repaired. If you only had checked it out when that little noise started.

Another maintenance program we tend to not think about because it is running all the time is our antivirus program. If you are running Windows Vista or 7 the free Microsoft Security Essentials works well, Windows 8 has Defender built in. Windows XP is different. Most antivirus companies are not supporting it; not updating databases for it. I use Avast on XP computers.

Norton, McAfee, and AVG are all great but they do use a lot of resources in your computer and therefore slow it down. Most new computers come with 30-60 day trials and get you to purchase the full version at the end of the trial or lose your protection. I just uninstall their program and activate Defender on Windows 8 or MSE on Windows 7.

Ok, maintenance is important. However there is one step that is even more important. Someday your computer will fail and you will stand to lose all the information stored on your hard disk drive. And you will lose all the programs you have added along with the codes to install them. The solution? backup, backup, backup.

I suggest using an image backup program. There are a number out there including one that comes with Windows 7 and newer. I have been using Macrium Reflex and EaseUS TODO backup. They each do a great job creating an image of the hard drive, a boot disk to recover from a complete loss of the hard drive, and an easy to use ability to drill down into the image file stored on an external drive to restore individual files or folders at anytime.

If your hard drive fails, you can purchase a new one and install it in the computer. Then you boot from the recovery CD you made, plug in your external drive containing the image file, and within a short time you will have your computer back looking just like it did the day you made the image file. No programs to reinstall, no software keys to search for.

Although it does not take long for most computers to make an image, you probably don't want to do that every day. I suggest once a week or once a month depending on how much you do on your computer. Whatever you have added to your computer in the way of new documents, new pictures, new software, new movies, or new music is not on that last image. You will have to reload those new entries if possible.

To solve that problem, I use an online backup service called Mozy. The first 2.25gb of storage are free, but after that the yearly charge is very reasonable--something like \$60. I set it to backup all except my pictures, movies and music. So all I need fits within the free allocation. Once you have done this Mozy runs during the day to backup your files. If a file has been added or modified the new version is sent to Mozy. Restoring a file or group of files or folders is as easy as opening your Mozy account on their website and downloading them to your computer.

What about my pictures? I suggest having a Google account and using their free image cloud service. Each user is assigned an unlimited amount of storage and software to sync pictures from their computer and cell phones and tablets right to the cloud.

Back to those maintenance programs. Even though they are not running all the time to keep malware out of your computer, they are running in the background to do other tasks such as checking for updates to their database and program releases.

Since we only run these once a week we do not have to keep them on our computer running all the time. With a fairly new and fast computer this probably does not matter and will not affect the speed. But older slower machines or ones with less memory or slow processors may run quicker with these programs gone.

Most of the time when I start one of the maintenance programs the first thing that happens is that it goes to it's website and downloads a more updated version with the latest database. So if it is going to pull down a new version anyway why keep the old one running all the time.

So my suggestion is this, when you have finished running all six programs to clean out your computer uninstall them all. Also locate the adwcleaner folder on your C: drive and delete it. I have done this on a slow machine and found a difference in speed.

All but CCleaner and ADWcleaner are found on Ninite so the install is pretty simple when it is time to run them again. If you keep the Ninite file in your download folder all you have to do is double click it to install the same set of programs. You only have to go back to the Ninite website if there are additional programs you want to download.

Although I really like to use Google Chrome it does open a number of background processes that constantly run in the background. Firefox does not do this. Uninstalling chrome does free up background tasks and speed processing as well.

In summary, run the maintenance programs often and do an image backup at least once a month. Keep your antivirus program updated as well. I will be writing papers on installing and running each of the maintenance programs in the near future.