

NEWSLETTER

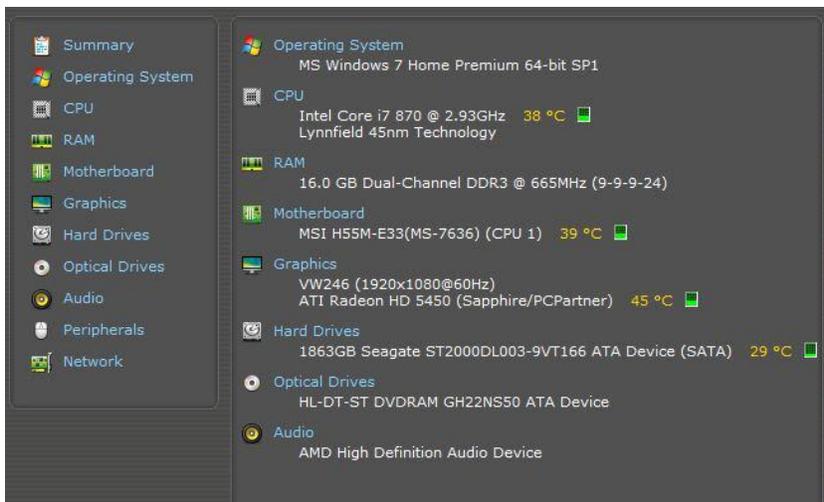
December 2012



As we approach the festive season I have expanded the content to cover lots of interesting but probably useless information! I hope you enjoy it and have a great time during the holidays.

SPECCY

Do you know what is inside your computer? This free program catalogs all the components in your system and gives you a full description of everything from the



operating system to peripherals. (See picture). As a bonus it also measures the temperatures of critical parts and advises on the SMART (Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology) a diagnostic method for analyzing the condition of your hard drive. This little program gets 5 stars from CNet

and is worth installing on your machine. It can be downloaded [here](#).

BUYING REFURBISHED?

Buying an item from a manufacturer that has been refurbished is usually a way to save big bucks and get the item you want. A recent study by Cnet found there are great deals on refurbished laptops, tablets, Blu-ray players, and the like. However they also found there are a couple of items you should probably steer clear of buying in the refurbished aisle.

HARD DRIVES

The argument for buying anything refurbished goes like this: if it was returned because it had a problem, that problem has already been fixed -- meaning you're potentially better off with a refurbished unit than you are with a new one. I don't think that applies to hard drives. Whether it was returned owing to a defect or simply because a person didn't like it, the fact is that it's been used. There is no "refurbishment" process I'm aware of that can restore a hard drive to factory-new condition. And with drive prices so low already, is it really worth gambling your data on a unit that's already seen some action?

PRINTERS

This is more of a guideline than a rule, as a refurbished printer might prove to be a decent deal.

The chief concern is that if ink or toner has already cycled through the printer's innards, then what you're really getting is a used printer, not one that's been restored to factory-new condition. And as we all know, ink and toner have a way of gumming up the works, especially if the printer sits idle for a long period. That said, if you can confirm from the seller's description that the printer has indeed been recertified by the manufacturer, and that it comes with brand-new ink/toner, it might be worth buying -- especially if the savings are significant.

TELEVISIONS

For whatever reason, refurbished TVs don't seem to get the same loving treatment afforded laptops, tablets, and the like. Maybe it's because they're so large and heavy, and because their packaging is so fragile to begin with. Whatever the case, I would steer clear of them, usually there's too much money involved to risk potential further problems.

There's also the matter of warranty. A typical refurbished unit is covered for 90 days, and TVs these days are too unreliable for that short a protection plan.

RIOT

No I'm not thinking about becoming an "Occupy" member this concerns a neat free program called the "Radical Image Optimization Tool" or RIOT for short! RIOT is useful when you have the need to compress or resize an image but feel reluctant to fire up Photoshop Elements and take the time to play with the image. RIOT is a no-frills way to

get images ready to be shared via e-mail, social networks, instant message, or anywhere else smaller files are needed.

The interface consists of two preview panes display the original image and the edited one. Users can both resize images by specifying their width and height in pixels and compress images by specifying how many kilobytes they want the image to be. Brightness, contrast, and gamma can be adjusted, and users can specify whether they want various types of metadata to be included in the new image. Images can be saved in JPEG, GIF, or PNG formats and the program supports batch processing. A nice little addition to your portfolio. The program can be downloaded as a zip file from CNet [here](#).

MISSING MANUALS

We are all familiar with the bestselling O'Reilly series of missing manuals books but how many manuals are you missing for all the stuff in your house? Do you have need to get parts or instructions for computer gear, household appliances etc. and you can't find the manual or there never was one to begin with?

There is a useful website Manuals Library or "*ManualsLib*" for short that has a database that has nearly 100,000 PDF files and becoming bigger every day. Just enter the keywords in the search field such as manufacturer and model number. Search results include manual name, description, size and number of pages. You can either read manual online or download it to your computer. Moreover, documents can be shared on social networks. Check out the link [here](#).

DISLIKED FONTS

Recently a poll was taken to find out what fonts people disliked on web sites and technical publications. The four most selected by a wide margin were:

Comic Sans - This font is so disliked, that since 2002, it has had its own hate website. It is a childish font that will probably never go away. Most annoyingly about it is that every once in a while it is perfect for something that you are working on and you get upset knowing that you are only perpetuating the problem!

Times New Roman - I was actually surprised to see how many people disliked this font, but I think I understand why. Studies have shown that serif fonts are very difficult for people to read on a computer. So I think a caveat needs to be placed on this one that while it is much disliked online, it is liked and sometimes even preferred in print materials.

Monotype Corsiva - This font is like the child of Old English and some weird pirate font. It had been around since the beginning of Windows, but it looks so cheesy. Have you noticed how many times it is used by

religious and historical organizations? They want Old English, but they know that most of their readers will struggle to read it, so they switch to Monotype Corsiva. And don't even get me started about how awful it is in all caps.

Papyrus - When this font first came out, I liked it. It was easy-to-read with a touch of the Holy Land making it perfect for holiday cards, weddings etc. However after a while it gets tiresome and boring. It should definitely be used judiciously.

The next question is what is popular? Solopress, a large commercial print shop lists the following as the most requested fonts.

Helvetica is one of the most widely used sans-serif typefaces available today. American Airlines, Apple, Microsoft and NASA are big fans of Helvetica. Although we're not too sure if all Americans love the font, because the U.S. Government also uses it for their income tax forms.

Garamond is an understandably popular choice for designers, Garamond is widely considered to be one of the most readable serif typefaces for print use. Popular applications include the Harry Potter and Dr. Seuss books, the original Nintendo Entertainment System and Apple Macintosh personal computer,

Calibri is becoming the font of choice by many people as it is very easy to read, compact and very readable on computer screens making it very popular in web design.

Arial and its variations, (narrow, rounded, Unicode etc.) are very popular for all general printing and is probably the most readily available font today.

Futura is the favorite font for customers at Solopress. This modern looking typeface actually dates back to the roaring 1920s but is still very popular today.

So now that you are aware of the likes and dislikes of many people what is your favorite font (or what do you dislike), send me some examples and I'll put them in the next newsletter. Note: All these fonts (including the default font for the newsletter, Arial,) are sized 12 point.

PICMONKEY

I know this newsletter is supposed to be about Photoshop Elements but I can't resist plying with other photo editing programs especially free ones! I don't know how many of you have used "Piknik" a very good free program but which was bought by Google and is now available exclusively for Google sites and people who have Google accounts. However a group of the original Piknik developers have developed a new on line editing

program called Picmonkey. You upload your images to the site, interfere with them (there are several options) and then download them back to your computer. The program is quick and easy to use and there are a lot of quirky comments to keep you amused! Go to the website [here](#).

ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 11

Adobe released the latest version of the popular software and I have to say I was pleasantly surprised when I installed it and took my first look. Finally the dark color scheme has given way to a light grey one and it is much easier on the eyes!

As you know I showed the main changes at the October meeting and I think there are quite a few new features which would justify spending the money on upgrading especially if you have a pre version 9 version. I have seen it on sale at Costco and some local retailers for as low as \$50 so check around for pricing.

Well that is all for this newsletter, remember I am always looking for contributions for this so send anything you think would be interesting.

In the meantime I would like to wish all of you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year. I will finish with the image from before, available as an “action” for Elements 11.

