

Radio Days – 2010-05-15

Tip of the Week – Free Software

There are many free programs available on the internet. Some programs are excellent, but others are not worth the download time. The question is how to pick the good from the bad. Over the years I have come across many web sites which provide excellent advice for people who are looking for good free software. I don't always agree with the advice given in the two sites below but they are good places to start looking. There are too many programs listed in these sites to make any recommendations, but they will give you a good starting point.

Please note that some of these programs have both a free version and one or more paid-for versions. Ensure that, if you want the free version, you download that version. Sometimes the free version has all the features of the full version for a trial period, then the extras in the full version become unavailable until the program has been bought. Please check that you are getting what you want.

Cleaning Hard Discs

After you have used a computer for a while it knows quite a lot about you. It will have some of your emails, some of your browsing history, some of your documents, some of your photos. All this information may well be of use to the next user of your computer if you give it away. To maintain your privacy it is best to delete all this information. You do not need to go to the lengths taken by the American spy agencies which bash, burn then bury their old hard discs to ensure that state secrets do not fall into the hands of the enemy. The main problem is that state secrets fall into the hands of the enemy by other means, but old habits die hard.

Step 1 – Remove all old data

- In *My Documents* remove the contents of each of the folders under *My Documents*.
- For emails, delete all the emails in each folder then empty the Deleted Items folder.
- Now compact all your email folders using the menu (probably in the File menu).

Step 2 – Remove all traces of data

This step takes time. Deleting a file puts it in the Recycle Bin ready to be recovered. You probably do not want any of the files in the Recycle Bin so just empty it. Now comes the time to remove all traces of all the files that you have deleted. There are a number of free programs to remove all traces of all removed files: perhaps the best is Eraser. It takes time to work out how to use it but it will make your old computer much less of a risk.

Another option is a program like Hiren's Boot CD. I have not tried this disc but it appears to have everything needed to clean a complete hard disc: this means that there will be nothing left on your hard disc after running this CD. You will then be able to re-install Windows using your installation key and the next person who uses your computer will have a new version of Windows to play with.

Websites

Best Free Software	http://windowssecrets.com/
Gizmo's Freeware	www.techsupportalert.com
Freebyte	www.freebyte.com
Eraser	http://sourceforge.net/projects/eraser/
Hiren's Boot CD	www.hirensbootcd.net