Radio Days – 2012-02-25

Tip of the Week – Websites & Web Browsers

Last week I updated my website to include the first testimonial that a client had sent me. I then looked at the site in all my browsers. Everything looked fine until I saw it in Internet Explorer (IE): in that browser it looked awful. At that moment I decided to make a rant against using IE. Then, that morning, I woke to the realisation that I had made some significant changes to my website but had not yet validated it against the World Wide Web Consortium's programs which let you know if your website is syntactically correct. There are two parts to a website: the content (HTML) and the layout (CSS).

My CSS was fine: it validated correctly first time. Because this was that part which had given me most problems I was sure that all was well with the rest of the website. I was wrong! My HTML had a number of flaws. I fixed them one by one until the validation program gave the all clear. At this stage I checked my site in IE and, despite my ranting of the day before, it displayed perfectly.

If you have a website I urge you to validate your CSS and HTML using the W3C's tools so that you know that your website will display correctly. Again, just to be sure to be sure, I urge you to check you website in all the main browsers. You may need to download all except IE: this may need to be updated to version 9 (for Vista and 7) and to version 8 (for XP).

If it had not been for the problem with the way that IE displayed my website I would have increased my dislike for this program immensely. Thank you IE!

Hard Discs & Partitions

Most people do not make any changes to the way their computer's hard discs are organised. This means that they may well be missing out on the benefits that are available if they take a little time to change the setup of their computer to increase its usefulness.

There are many things about computers which confuse people. There are many ways to learn about computers, but it helps to have a mind which understands (at least in part) just how computers work. For most people this part is the most difficult part because their mind does not work in the correct way to understand a computer's mind. Some, of course, would state very strongly that computers do not have minds. This matter is open for debate.

Many computers arrive with a single hard disc which has only one partition. Some computers arrive with a single hard disc which has two partitions. A very small number of computers may arrive with a different configuration, but those computers are not part of this discussion.

What is a Partition?

A partition on a hard disc is like a partition in an office. Most buildings designed for offices have an open floor plan which is useless for everyday work so the owners of the business will install partitions to make the office space more functional. This is called *partitioning*. In an office this makes it easier to place workers doing similar jobs in the same partition.
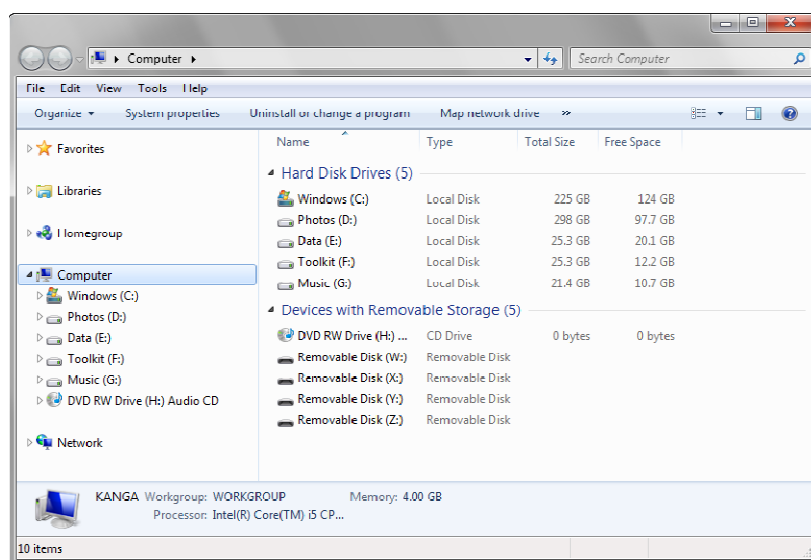
In a similar vein, you can partition your hard disc so that it has like files grouped together. Doing this makes certain tasks easier. My computer has a number of partitions:

- **System**: this is where I have installed Windows and my programs. It is an essential partition and every Windows computer needs this partition. For many people this is the only partition they need, but some computers come with an extra data partition which is only wasted space.
- **Data**: this is where I store all the documents that I create. These documents include my Saturday cheat-sheets and my website to which I upload them. Having all my documents in one place makes backing them up so easy that it is not a chore so I do it whenever I have created or changed a document.

- **Music**: this partition obviously contains all my music. Again, having this partition makes it easy to backup my music.
- **Photos**: this partition is quite active because I am taking a lot of photos all the time. Again, this partition is easy to backup every time that I have downloaded or changed a photo.
- **Toolkit**: this partition contains all the programs which I carry on my USB toolkit. It is easy to copy this partition both to my USB toolkit stick and to my backup disc.

As you can see, I use partitions well to make my life easier.

Why Partition?

If you are an average computer user you will just want things to work. This is like driving a car without needing to know how the engine and gearbox work, and this is how most of us drive. The manufacturer has decided what you need and you have chosen a vehicle which suits your purposes.

For computers, often the choices made by the manufacturer are hidden from normal people. This is where it becomes difficult for the average user to know what is happening. If you go to *My Computer* you can see a screen similar to this. You may have to change the *View* to *Detail* (either from the View menu or from the View button: third from the right).

This screen shows you how many partitions are on your computer. The image above shows the partitions in my computer: yours will probably have one or two *Hard Disc Drives*. If you have two, and one has all its space free, then you may want to merge your *Windows* and *Data* partitions.

Conversely, you may have only one partition and you may want to create one or more partitions to store a particular type of data. You may need advice on this matter, and you may not want to change a working system. The choice is yours.

Before You Start

The following steps are quite easy to perform, if you know what you are doing. They are also quite easy to mess up if you make the wrong choice. There is the potential for creating a boat anchor from your computer if you do the wrong thing. I remember how the son of a client intended to install Linux on his father's work computer but did not follow instructions. The computer only ran Linux: the Windows partition had been killed.

When he re-installed Windows, his father's data had vanished. His father was not impressed!

To prevent this happening to you I strongly recommend that you make at least two good backups of your complete computer, including an image of your Windows partition. My favourite backup program is *SyncBack* and my favourite imaging program is *DriveImage XML*. The websites for these two free programs are given below.

Again, if you are not sure how to use them you need to get competent help. The term *competent help* does not usually include your neighbour's primary-school child: they tend to have more confidence than competence!

How to Change Partitions?

Changing your partitions is now very easy with a free program called gPartEd. This program can be downloaded from the website given on the last page of this document. Once you have downloaded gPartEd (an .iso file) you will need to burn a CD so that you can run the program. Ma favourite burning program is Ashampoo. Both free and full versions are available from the Ashampoo website: please ensure that you download the correct one for your needs.

When you go to burn the downloaded gPartEd program make sure that you select the option to burn a disc image. If you just write the .iso file to a CD it will not work: burning the image is essential for your CD to work.

Not that you have a working CD you will need to start your computer with the CD in the disc drive. This will start your computer in an unfamiliar way. As your computer starts you will be asked to make four choices: just press *Enter* each time. After a while your screen will stop changing and you will be presented with the program to change the way your disc partitions are arranged. This is where you need to have some skill or luck, because you can easily fry your computer.

I have changed partitions on many clients' computers. The usual reason for this is that their computer arrived with two partitions and they were running out of room on their main partition. Merging these two partitions doubled the effective size of their computer's hard disc and meant that there was more than enough space to continue working. This saved them the trouble of buying a new computer, so was a wise investment of time and money!

Further Information

CSS validation	http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator
HTML validation	http://validator.w3.org
Chrome	www.google.com/chrome
Firefox	www.mozilla.org
Opera	www.opera.com
Safari	www.apple.com/safari
SyncBack	www.2brightsparks.com
DriveImage XML	www.runtime.org/driveimage-xml.htm
GPartEd	http://gparted.sourceforge.net
Ashampoo Burning Free	www.ashampoo.com/en/aud/fdl