

TECH TALK

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A Good Snapshot Stops A Moment from Running Away

In this issue of Tech Talk I thought I would talk a little about something that is near and dear to me. I have been enjoying taking pictures of family, events and the world around me since I got started with photography in the early 70's. Today with the ease of use of most digital cameras and the limited expense of taking hundreds or even thousands of pictures we need an easy and safe method to store all of those wonderful memories you have captured.

The following products can be fun to setup and work with and provide some added protection to your digital photographs. I am going to focus primarily on photography storage services but there are many other ways that you can safely store and protect your pictures both at home or off site in the internet cloud.

There are a lot of services on the internet that give you the ability share your photographs and videos, some are free and some are not. Microsoft has Microsoft Live Spaces where you can upload up to 500 photos per month, create albums to organize your images, download a photo or the entire album (this is the true sharing part), and order prints. As with most of the free sites, the images are stored in a compressed format so you will lose some resolution but they are not bad. I like this product because it integrates very well with some of Microsoft's other Live Spaces products and allows easy sharing of your pictures in Web Sites and Blog Sites that you might create.



Flickr probably has the best known photo sharing site and has the largest following. It is owned now by Yahoo and provides a large number of add-on services. To find out more about Flickr, take the Flickr tour at: <http://www.flickr.com/tour/>. Flickr's albums are called collections and you can organize your pictures and control access to them as well. They also have a service that allows you to print your

photos on objects, in picture books, calendars and more. There are a lot of sites that have hooks to allow the images to easily be used on them. The Internet is becoming more and more of a social meeting place and Flickr's features lean more in this direction than some of the other sites.



Google has a photo site as well called Picasa that installs on your computer and then integrates with the online site. Their approach is a little different than Flickr and Microsoft Live Spaces. Picasa's site tour can be found here: <http://picasa.google.com/features/features-edit.html>. Their approach is to provide you with an application on your computer to help you manage your pictures and then push them to their online site. After you install the program it will index all of your pictures on the computer in an easy to use and view format. You can create a slideshow, print your pictures, and share your pictures with others by mailing or publishing them to your Picasa website. This program has many simple photo editing features to crop, straighten, correct red-eye and other image enhancements. Be careful that you work on copies of your images because it changes them immediately. It has drag and drop capabilities easily manage your pictures both on your computer and your website. You can create gift CD's and movies of your pictures as well. A very nice photo application with one drawback, you are limited to 1GB of storage on the Picasa Website. You can purchase more very reasonably. This storage is shared between several different

Google Applications including plain file storage, photos and your email. Upgrades are for 10, 40, 150 and 400GB and are priced per year. https://www.google.com/accounts/PurchaseStorage?hl=en_US,

My personal favorite is a site that you pay for. Now you might ask why you would want to pay for site when there are so many choices that are free. It is really quite simple. The site I am talking about is called SmugMug and it is located at <http://smugmug.com>. The one benefit that you get with this site is that it stores your pictures in their original format (full resolution) with all of their metadata (information that is stored in the picture detailing the camera settings and other data). There are no commercials being played on the site because you are paying for the site. The cost is just \$49.95 per year and it gives you all of the capabilities of the other sites with the added benefit of being an off-site storage facility for your digital photographs. Nothing can be more devastating than losing all of your pictures when the drive they are stored on fails and you don't have a backup. By storing them on this site you will be able to put together a well documented portfolio but also have your pictures backed up on a secure server, off site, on one of the largest storage networks in the world, Amazon's S3 storage system. I also like the strong and easy to use interface for documenting and categorizing your pictures. It makes it very easy for me to find stock pictures to work with or display on a moment's notice. Of course many of these features can be found in both Flickr and Picasa but interface (the



look and feel) feels right to me and I am very comfortable using it. An added benefit of this site is their webcart. If you think others may want to purchase your photos, you can upgrade to the pro version and use their webcart feature to promote and sell your pictures on the web to your adoring

public. Maybe someday I can become another Ansel Adams. You may view my gallery at <http://bappleby.smugmug.com>.



How do you decide which site is best for you? Well one thing to consider is what other applications you are using from any of these companies. As the Web 2.0 applications keep getting better you will probably settle on one company's products to work with. I am currently using Microsoft's Live Spaces for my web blogs (both personal and professional) and Microsoft's OfficeLive for some of our company's support web pages. (See an example at <http://localsupport1.com> to see what this looks like.) Many of these products are free (I did upgrade our OfficeLive site to the next level to gain more bandwidth and storage space.) A free program from Microsoft called LiveWriter makes it very handy to make quick formatted blog entries to help you publish your information pages quickly and easily.

If you have any questions or comments on the information I have provided, please feel free to contact me at bobstechtalk@comcast.net. I would love to hear from you and if you have any content suggestions or questions on any computer-related subject.

Bob has been working in the computer field since 1975 and started Computer Connections with his partner Jude Daigle in 1981 at the beginning of the personal computer revolution. Bob grew up in Ligonier and graduated from Ligonier H.S. in 1972. George Washington University is his college alma mater and he is currently living in the Greensburg area. You can see more tech tips and product reviews in Bob's Blog pages at <http://www.bobstechtalk.com>.

(Title Quoted from Eudora Welty)