

THE COMPUTER CORNER

## No. 138. Find My Credit Card, Device Drivers, and Driver Magician

- by Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR  
715 N. Dries Street  
Saukville, WI 53080-1664  
(262) 268-1949  
skaplan@mcw.edu

I monitor <http://www.majorgeeks.com> almost daily, and every now and then real winners come along. Here are two that are now on all my computers.

**Find My Credit Card** is a small (about 1 Mb on your hard drive when installed), free program provided by Smart PC Solutions, Inc., of New York. You can download the program at <http://www.smartpctools.com>, or at majorgeeks. The program scans your computer for three categories of information: business, personal and Internet. You can then click "Wipe", and it is gone from the computer. The scan process is really fast – only a few seconds at most.

Now you might say (as I did) that you don't really keep any sensitive data on your machine. However, don't forget that, for example, whenever typing your credit card number for an on-line purchase, that number is stored somewhere on your machine. The same is true every time you enter your bank account number when banking on the web, or passwords for one or another site. I personally am very careful to clean up cookies, and the like, and thought my machine was reasonably clean and secure. Then I ran Find My Credit Card and darned if it didn't find two copies of my social security number!!! That is really interesting because I do not remember ever typing my SSAN while on the web, or even in a document, but I must have at some point because there it was in front of me, twice. I pressed that Wipe button quite quickly! Subsequent scans have shown the information is gone.

Smart PC Solutions does not tell you how they scan, or specifics of where they found the information, which might be useful. However, they do find it and let you erase it, which is the crux of the issue. Now, even if an intruder enters your machine via the web or in person, sensitive information is not likely to be stolen. This freebie is definitely a must have and it is painless to run.

Before I tell you about the next program, let me discuss **device drivers** (the word *device* is commonly dropped and just *driver* is used). A driver is a program (a series of specialized commands or instructions) that controls a hardware device, such as a printer, disk drive, keyboard, hard drive and so on. Every single hardware device inside or connected to your computer must have a driver (even the power supply, in all but older machines). When you send a document to your printer from your operating system (OS, Windows itself), the OS does not know how to instruct the printer. But the printer driver does. In essence, the driver accepts general commands from the OS and translates them into specific commands that it sends to the device. Only the driver knows the specific commands that need to be sent.

Some drivers come bundled with Windows, and are installed when the OS is installed. Others are not installed, but may be kept on your hard drive in compressed form, in case the OS needs one. Still others are not on your hard drive at all, but are present on the OS installation disk (and Windows will ask you to put in that disk if it needs a driver located there). Still others are on the installation disk that you get with your new printer, or scanner, or whatever.

Now let's move on to another really useful free program that deals with drivers, **Driver Magician Lite**. Offered by GoldSolution Software, Inc., this program scans your system and presents a list of all of your current drivers. Those in the list it shows you in black are installed with your operating system (OS), so you don't need to back them up if you have the OS disk. Those shown in red are NOT installed with whatever version of Windows you have, so you do need to back them up. Simply select those in red and

choose a spot to save them. Copies will be stored there, in separate subfolders. Best is to next burn a CD with the backups. Then, if you ever need to reinstall the OS or change the hard drive, you don't need to hunt for each and every driver on the web since you already have them in a single, accessible spot.

Driver Magician Lite is free, and downloadable from <http://www.majorgeeks.com>. If you want to purchase the full version (\$29.95), it contains a built in database of the latest drivers, with the ability to go out to the Internet to get all the new updates of the drivers themselves. The full version also has a hardware identification database to help you identify unknown devices on your machine.

It is really great to find useful programs like this one. The free version is extremely useful by itself, and it looks like the full version may well be worth the purchase. Nice work, GoldSolution Software!

Happy Computing!