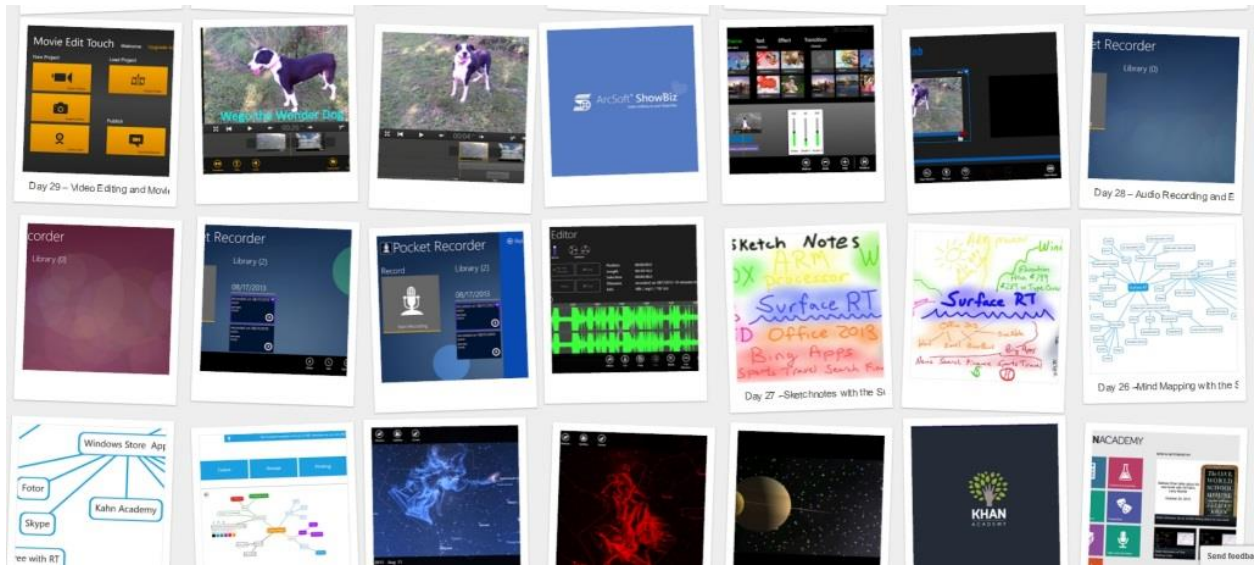


ITC Chronicles - Summer 2013

Lessons Learned: 30 Days with a Surface RT Windows 8 Tablet



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The following is a compilation of blog posts from the ITC Chronicles blog over a 30 day period of time. I recently explored the capabilities of the Microsoft Surface Pro Windows 8 Tablet from a teaching and learning perspective. The Surface Pro is a new class of device that is a hybrid between the traditional desktop computer and a tablet device. This combination takes advantage of the power of a PC along with the flexibility of the new touch-first interface of Windows 8 to provide unprecedented flexibility for the creative process of teaching and learning. Whether you are a teacher or a student, the Surface Pro offers much for day-to-day educational activities in a lightweight and mobile slate form factor.

This free ebook contains links to blog posts and other web resources. If you are connected to the Internet you will be able to access this additional content as I have tried to keep the links active.

There have been many software and firmware updates to the Surface RT and each has helped with the performance and stability of this new device. If you have a Surface RT please update to the latest software and firmware, your experience will be dramatically improved.

Later this fall Windows 8.1 will be released and will give the Surface RT additional capabilities. Things are moving fast in the tablet space and this new and innovative device is not standing still. The more I use the Surface RT the more useful I find it for everyday classroom use. The following is a snapshot frozen in time of my experiences with using the Surface RT, enjoy!

Tom Grissom, Ph.D.

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Surface RT for Teachers - Glass Half-empty or Half-full?

July 20, 2013

"Our environment, the world in which we live and work, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations." - Earl Nightingale

I bought a Surface RT this weekend.

After going back and forth whether I should buy one to learn more about the device I finally decided to, even with all the recent negative publicity.

Have you ever noticed the echo chamber that occasionally pops-up on social media sites and the mass media in general? It happened again this month, first it was #sharknado on my Twitter PLN and then the barrage of negative articles about the Surface RT after Microsoft announced its earnings and a [\\$900 million dollar write-down on the Surface RT tablet](#).



Here is a small sampling of the crescendo from techno-blogsphere this week:

Why Microsoft's Surface RT Failed

<http://mashable.com/2013/07/19/surface-rt-failure/>

Microsoft's Surface RT Didn't Have To Be A \$900 Million Disaster

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/19/microsoft-surface-rt-900-million_n_3624014.html

Zune 2.0: is Microsoft making the same mistakes with Surface RT?

<http://www.theverge.com/2013/7/19/4537944/surface-rt-mistakes-look-like-zune-2>

If the iPad was late, ran Windows 8, it would fail too

http://news.cnet.com/8301-10805_3-57594689-75/if-the-ipad-was-late-ran-windows-8-it-would-fail-too/

Surface RT at \$350: Time to Buy?

<http://winsupersite.com/windows-rt/surface-rt-350-time-buy>

So why did I buy a Surface RT with all the doomsday predictions?

- 1) Curiosity – many have asked me about the Surface RT but I had not used one for any length of time. What little time I did spend with one I saw potential as a teaching and learning device. Having used the Surface Pro for the past six months it is time to try out its little brother.
- 2) I was shopping for a larger tablet than the Nexus 7 that my wife primarily uses as an ebook reader. She is wanting a larger tablet to browse webpages, check email, and keep up with the family on Facebook in the evenings. Our older laptop that she currently uses is tethered to the table by the electrical adapter as the battery has completely failed, time for another device.
- 3) The price reduction to \$349 makes the Surface RT an acceptable risk for me and a prime candidate for a BYOD device. I need to learn more about this device first-hand and not from Monday morning quarterbacks. Most tech articles are superficial and the only way to know for sure is through your own experience. Also, keeping a couple of Benjamin's in your pocket is a good thing.
- 4) I have written extensively about the [Clover Trail Windows 8 Tablet \(Samsung Ativ 500T\) and the Surface Pro](#). Blogging my experiences about the Surface RT will complete the trilogy of current Windows 8 devices by processor type. The Surface RT uses an ARM processor that is not compatible with x86 programs so I go into this endeavor with that knowledge.
- 5) At #iste13 in San Antonio, the worlds largest edtech conference [approximately 10,000 educators were given Surface RTs as a gift from Microsoft](#) This is a great opportunity for teachers to explore the possible uses for education. Since the conference I have not seen many conversations about how to use the Surface RT for teaching and learning purposes. I have however witnessed many negative comments and complete dismissal of the device from some. I hope to be able to help with some insights for using the Surface RT in the

classroom so it does not become a paperweight from all the current negativity surrounding it, that indeed would be a shame.

Lee Kolbert also noticed the negativity surrounding the Surface RT at #iste13 and has a blog posting that is worth a read:

Rants, Ramblings, and a Challenge from #ISTE13

<http://www.leekolbert.com/2013/06/rants-ramblings-and-challenge-from.html>

So, is the Surface RT a half-empty or a half-full technology for you? I suspect that depends upon you and your mindset.

I will be finding out more for myself over the coming days, but be warned, I have always been a half-full type of guy.

I am sure I will find many limitations but I am also confident I will find amazing potential for use in the classroom. If you have not used that Surface RT you received at #iste13 since getting back from the conference it is time to pick it up and knock off the dust. Summertime is a perfect time for learning new things.

Stay tuned for more as I blog my Surface RT experience here in the coming days.

I am using the Surface RT right now to write this blog post, using the included Word 2013 program and then pasting into Blogger.

If you have a Surface RT, or received one at #iste13, or like me, bought one on your own at the new sale price, let's learn together.

Keep on Learning,
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Day 1 - The Beginning, Surface RT for Teachers

July 21, 2013

Curiosity finally got the best of me and I have purchased the Microsoft Surface RT this weekend to learn more about this new category of device for teaching and learning purposes. I have had many questions about this device from others and it is time to learn more firsthand. If you were lucky enough to attend the International Society for Technology in Education Conference in San Antonio, Texas this year you may have been one of the lucky ones to receive a free Surface RT, compliments of Microsoft. [Microsoft gave away 10,000 Surface RTs to educators](#) at this year's #iste13 conference.



The Surface RT has received a lot of negative publicity recently and yesterday I explained the reasons why I decided to purchase one anyway. I do believe this type of device has much to offer teachers and students and at an affordable cost. I do not however know the extent of its capabilities or its limitations so this blog series hopes to remedy that over the coming days.

I begin this Surface RT blog series with a set of low expectations due to all the recent negative press. I am not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing. I am not new to Windows 8 and I have reviewed two other Windows 8 tablets over the past 8 months. If you want to read about my experiences with the Samsung Ativ 500T Clover Trail Tablet or the Surface Pro please feel free to download two free eBooks here:

<http://eiuitc.blogspot.com/2013/05/free-ebooks-windows-8-tablets-for.html?view=magazine>

I say I come into this with low expectations because I have read many reviews that have been less than favorable. Here are two recent examples:

New Windows 8 system? Hope you're not in a hurry to use it - by James Kendrick
<http://www.zdnet.com/new-windows-8-system-hope-youre-not-in-a-hurry-to-use-it-7000018240/>

Surface RT at \$350: Time to Buy? - by Paul Thurrott
<http://winsupersite.com/windows-rt/surface-rt-350-time-buy?page=2>

Neither article paints a pretty picture of the Surface RT, but from what little experience I previously had with the RT something did not ring true with me based upon my past experience with other Windows 8 tablets. So here we are, let's learn more.

OOBE – Out of Box Experience

The Surface RT packaging is attractive and the device itself has a quality build feeling to it. First impression is that it is much thinner and lighter than my Surface Pro and the magnesium case feels solid in the hand.

The first thing I did after buying the Surface RT was to take it out of the box and plug it in to the electrical adapter and charged it fully. As tempting as it was I did not turn the RT on until it was fully charged.

Magnetic Power Adapter

I do want to note that the magnetic charging adapter can be a bit difficult to properly seat in the Surface RT, it takes a little practice. The Surface RT is slanted on the sides and you need to make sure that the magnetic power cable "snaps" in so that it is charging. There is a little white light on the end of the magnetic adapter, be sure to always make sure that light is on, otherwise the Surface RT is not charging properly.

In the article noted above, James Kendrick mentioned that one of the issues he had was the battery was not fully charged on the Thinkpad Tablet 2 he was reviewing so I wanted to take away that variable in setting up my new Surface RT. Most concerning to me was the following statement by Kendrick about his Windows 8 tablet setup experience:

“All in all it took a little over five hours from hitting the power button the first time until I had a totally updated system ready for action. My new toy was useless to me until this updating was performed, and it happened so slowly it was like watching paint dry.”

Armed with this information, and the RT article by Paul Thurrott my expectations were rather low going into this.

I have documented my experiences here so others may benefit in the future. My setup experience with the Surface RT was quite different than that of the Thinkpad Tablet 2 Kendrick wrote about.

Here we go!

To document the setup experience of the Surface RT I had two tablets setup side by side. One was the Surface RT, the other was my Samsung Ativ 500T tablet that I used OneNote to keep track of the time involved in each step of the RT setup.

To begin, I already had a Microsoft Account and have been using it with a couple of other tablets. If you do not have a Microsoft Account I would recommend getting one and using it BEFORE you even begin to setup the Surface RT. This is not completely necessary as you can setup the Surface RT the first time you use it with a “Local Account” but the Surface RT is meant to operate in the cloud and you will need a Microsoft Account to benefit from all the services in the cloud.

If you are using cloud service accounts like a Microsoft, Apple, or Google at school be sure to follow your organizations policies about using external accounts.

So, having said that here is the timeline:

4:57pm I turned on the fully charged Surface RT for the first time, after about 30 seconds the installation screen wizard started, here are the first setup steps:

- 1) It asked me what Language I wanted to use (English please) Next
- 2) I had to Agree to the Licensing Terms – Next
- 3) Personalize – the setup asked me what name I wanted to call my PC – I typed in Nemo – Next
- 4) Wireless setup was next with an option to Skip, I wanted to setup using my home wireless so I selected my access point and typed in the secret password – Next
- 5) I next selected use Express Settings and the Surface RT completed its setup. Time was now 5:02pm

5:02pm I signed into the Surface RT with my Microsoft Account. I got the nearly useless Windows 8 tutorial that shows you how to swipe from any edge of the screen with your finger. This tutorial always plays the first time you sign-in with your account to a new Windows 8 device.

5:03pm I am signed into my new Surface RT with my Microsoft Account and see the colorful Windows 8 live tiles.

5:04pm At the same time I signed into the Surface RT I received a text message on my Phone telling me that Nemo was added to my Microsoft account and asked me to confirm that this was indeed my device. The text provided a link to a website that I went to and signed in with my Microsoft Account to “trust this device”. This helps prevent unauthorized devices being attached to your account.

5:06pm Magic Happens! The Surface RT was installing apps and I prepared myself for a long wait. But, to my surprise about a minute later all apps were installed. At 5:06pm the standard Windows 8 apps were installed and ready to go, my pictures were available to me, and when I went to the Desktop my custom wallpaper was already set to what I use on my other tablet, all automagically!

Over the next 10 to 12 minutes my account information was synced up to the new Surface RT. This syncing brought over my Favorites for Internet Explorer and synced my OneNote files. Since I have 8 different OneNote notebooks it asked if I wanted to sync them all but I said to only sync one as I was excited to get started. Guess which notebook I selected to sync? That’s right, the one I was using on the Samsung Ativ to keep track of my Surface RT install timeline.

I was now able to open my notes that I was using on the Samsung Ativ on my new Surface RT in OneNote, pretty cool.

5:18pm ALL DONE! In 20 short minutes I have a fully functioning Windows 8 Surface RT Tablet that includes access to all my files via SkyDrive, has everything customized to my preferences, and is 100 percent functional, 20 minutes!!! A far cry from the five hour ordeal I read about previously.

So cutting to the chase, do not fear the horror stories about how awful Windows 8 tablets are to setup. The Surface RT setup is one of the best OOBE (Out of the Box) experiences I have ever had for any device. There is something magical watching the Windows 8 Live Tiles on the Start Screen light up with your own content.

There is however much more to the setup story so stay tuned for Day 2.

Keep on Learning,

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Day 2 - The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

July 22, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers - Teaching and Learning with a Surface RT Windows 8 Tablet

I still have a little bit more to tell you about my first day experience with the Surface RT before I share my Day 2 experience.

First, The Good

After I logged in for the first time with my Microsoft Account and everything synced up with SkyDrive I was impressed. From zero access on a brand new Surface RT to my entire Microsoft account collection being available to me in 20 minutes is impressive.

One of the reasons I purchased the RT was so my wife could also use it in the evenings for recreational purposes. So next up was her turn to login using her Microsoft Account. Here is her timeline from Day 1:

5:25pm My wife logged-in to the Surface RT with her Microsoft Account for the first time. Yes, the Surface RT supports multiuser accounts, another selling point of the RT. I will be adding a post about multiuser accounts in the future.

She also got the useless tutorial about swiping with your finger to access the Charms bar and like most people she tried swiping her finger in from the right side but this does nothing, it is only a video to make new users aware of swipe gestures on Windows 8.

5:26pm In less than a minute the Windows 8 Start Screen appears and her files from Skydrive begin to sync on our Surface RT named Nemo. I called it Nemo because this blog series will be going beneath the Surface to learn more, get it? ;)

5:27pm All of her info from Skydrive is synced and ready to be accessed. All of her Pictures and Settings were now synced on Nemo. This took less than two minutes and that included the video tutorial. We discussed what she wanted to first do with the Surface RT and she wanted to access her Kindle ebooks. Time to go to the Store for the first time.

5:32pm We went to the Microsoft Store and did a Search for the free Kindle app, found it and selected it to install.

5:35pm The Kindle app took approximately 3 minutes to finish the install. The RT will multitask so you can do other things while the app downloads and installs.

5:36pm My wife logs-in to the Kindle app with her Amazon account and her ebook collection starts to sync to the Surface RT under her user profile.

5:38pm My wife opens the ebook that she was reading previously on the Nexus 7 and is amazed that it opened on the Surface RT where she last left off reading, thanks to Kindle Whispersync. The entire library of ebooks we purchased is now available to her in the Kindle app on the Surface RT.

5:40pm I checked the Microsoft Store and it said we had 13 Store updates available. I checked Windows Update and it said we had 30 updates to install.

5:45pm My wife logged out of her account and I logged back into the Surface RT with my Microsoft Account. I also wanted to access the Kindle app so I went and searched the Microsoft Store, found it, and installed it. The Kindle app only took 30 seconds for me to install in my account probably because my wife had already downloaded it for her account.

5:47pm I wanted to get the free Office 2013 Home and Student Edition working so I went to Word 2013 and a wizard was started and walked me through a video tutorial of the new Office Suite and began downloading the program to the Surface RT.

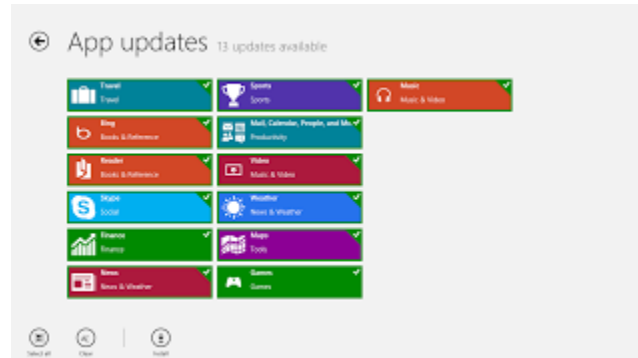
5:52pm Office installed and I was using Word 2013 for the first time on the new Surface RT.

5:58pm Logged out of my account for supertime.

The Bad – Updates

Windows 8 currently has two different update mechanisms. First is the regular Windows Updates for the operating system just like Windows 7. The second type of update is for the apps you get from the Microsoft Store. You have to check both places to be completely updated. I have heard that this may change in the new Windows 8.1 update expected to be out in a couple of months and will be unified into one updating process, let's hope so.

6:34pm logged back into the Surface RT with my Microsoft Account and went to the Windows Store to begin the update ritual. The Store still said I had 13 Store updates so I selected all of them and began the update. Below is a screenshot of the Store updates:



6:44pm to my surprise all the Store updates finished in about 10 minutes.

6:45pm Feeling confident I went to the Windows Updates and saw that there were 32 updates and a Firmware update. I plugged the Surface RT into the electrical adapter and began the updates. You always want to have your device plugged in when doing updates because running out of power in the middle of an update cycle can corrupt the installation.

6:58pm All 32 updates were downloaded and the installation portion began.

7:15pm The installation of the 32 updates and Firmware completed and required a Restart of the system. Total install time for Windows Updates – 30 minutes.

7:16pm Restarted the system and 30 seconds later my Lock Screen was ready for login. I logged in and checked for more Windows Updates and it said I had one important update and that it would be installed during next maintenance cycle.

The Ugly – More Long Updates and the slow ARM processor

On Day 2 I used the Surface RT for browsing mostly and just playing around with some of Windows 8 new features. In the afternoon I signed out of my account and ran some errands. When I go back I noticed that the Surface RT had begun to install another round of updates.

I guess it downloaded the updates in the background overnight. I am not sure what triggered the update process to begin but it did, I am guessing that me signing out did it, but this time the updates took A LOT longer:

Day 2 Update Timeline

5:00pm 30 updates began to download and install on the Surface RT

8:30pm The download and installation of all 30 Updates completed and required a couple of restarts along the way.

Total time for this round of updates was about 3.5 hours. Now that is a long time and this is also what James Kendrick experienced in his review of the Lenovo Thinkpad Tablet 2.

Spreading out all of these updates across two days lessened the pain but still 4 to 5 hours of updates on a brand new system is not a pleasant experience. There needs to be a better and faster way.

If you happened to be at #iste13 on a spotty wi-fi connection I could see where this would be unbearable. One solution would be to turn-off all Windows Updates on a new system until you are at a location with high-speed wireless access AND have the time to wait 4 to 5 hours for all the updates to complete. It is not recommended to turn-off Windows Updates for security reasons so be sure to turn them back on as soon as possible if you do.

I can see where this is frustrating to new users with such a long update time. I know there are a lot of variables that affect the time to install updates from wireless speed, how much RAM your system has, speed of the processor, etc.... but Microsoft needs to find a better way to communicate the time any give update cycle may take on a particular device. A heads up that this will take 3 hours would be appreciated.

This is also why Microsoft sets the update process to occur typically at 3am in the morning. All of this can happen in the background overnight while everyone is sleeping and this is what most people do. The good news is that once you endure the first long series of updates the Surface RT any future updates should have minimal impact upon its use if they are installed at 3am in the morning as Microsoft suggests. Out of sight, out of mind.

I account much of this slow update time to the ARM processor in the Surface RT, here is hoping that the next version of the Surface RT will have a much more powerful processor to improve overall performance, including updates.

It also confirms my view that the Surface RT is a companion device and processor heavy activities will be limited by the slow ARM processor.

It is not all bad as overall I have a more favorable impression of the Surface RT after using it for a couple of days. Barring the update situation, I look forward to using it more and sharing some of the positives in upcoming posts, but Microsoft you still have work to do here.

Keep on Learning,

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Day 3 – The Dual Personality of Windows 8 on the Surface RT

July 23, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers - Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Windows 8 is a transitional operating system that hangs on to some of the old ways of doing things, like the Desktop, and at the same time innovates with the new touch-friendly and colorful Live Tiles on the Start Screen.

Another innovation of the Surface RT is that cloud computing services like SkyDrive are seamlessly integrated into the OS when you use your Microsoft Account. Think of SkyDrive as a hard drive in the cloud, you automatically get 7GB of free storage space when you sign-up for a Microsoft Account. Of course, you can buy more storage space if needed.

If you are using a Microsoft Account be sure to follow your organizations policies about using external accounts. I also recommend that you keep a separate Microsoft Account for school use to separate your personal information from schoolwork.

Before I go any further in exploring the thousands of apps available for teaching and learning on the Surface RT I would like to take a moment to share my understanding of the new Windows 8 operating system and address some of the criticisms I have heard from others.

First, Windows 8 is a new and innovative operating system. By definition that means that there will be new things to learn.

This dualism of mixing the old with the new creates a “dual-personality” that some say is “jarring” as you switch between the Desktop and the Start Screen.

I have never considered the switching between the Desktop and the Start Screen as jarring and I think this dualism is actually a positive. It preserves a form of backward compatibility to the old way of doing things like having familiar applications like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote available from the Desktop on the Surface RT.

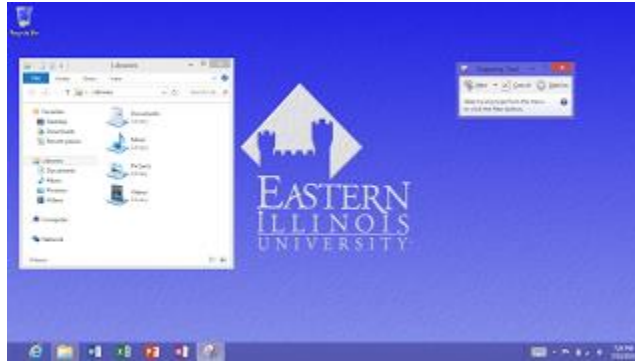
The same jarring argument can be made of the iPad as you switch between any app and the Home screen. Switching from an app to the grid of icons on the iPad’s Home screen is just as jarring but I hear few complain about it.

Desktop – File Explorer and Snipping Tool

On the Surface RT there are two other very big positives of the Desktop besides the MS Office programs.

First is the File Explorer, being able to find and organize your files via the File Explorer is a must for busy teachers. If you use Windows you will see the familiar Documents, Pictures, Music, and Video folders.

Second is the Snipping Tool. If you do not know about the Snipping Tool you need to learn how to use it. I use it so much that I Pin it to the Taskbar of the Desktop on the Surface RT, it is a must-know tool for teachers. The Snipping Tool allows you to copy freeform or rectangular areas of the screen to take a screen grab of just area of the screen you want. This is great for making tutorials.



Where is the Start Button?

The other common complaint you hear about Windows 8 is that there is NO Start button! Much ink has been spilled by reviewers and many have been very vocal about the missing Start button in Windows 8. This of course can easily be worked around.

If you have a tablet like the Surface RT you can press the Windows Flag on the tablet itself to take you to the Start Screen no matter what app you are in. Press it again and it takes you back to the last thing you were working on. The Windows Flag button on Win 8 tablets is similar to pressing the Home button on the iPad. When you press the Windows Flag you also get haptic feedback (vibration) letting you know you pressed it. If you have the keyboard attached you can also press the Windows Key.

Microsoft is Listening - 8.1

If you are one that considers the removal of the Start button as a deal killer and/or think the switch between the Desktop and the Start Screen is too jarring I have good news. Windows 8.1 is currently in beta testing and I have a testing this new version. In Windows 8.1 the Start button is back!!! And, Microsoft is changing the way the switch between the Desktop and Start Screen work. In Windows 8.1 you can use the same theme of wallpaper on the Desktop

and the Start Screen making the switch between the two visually smoother (less jarring).

I am testing Windows 8.1 on a couple of systems and at some point I will probably upgrade my Surface RT to the 8.1 beta version. But, for now, I want to stay on Version 8.0 so I experience the Surface RT the same way teachers that received one at #iste13

Until next time...

Keep on Learning,

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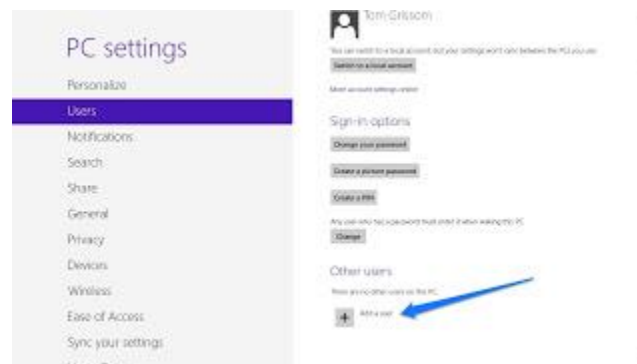
Day 4 – Multiuser accounts on the Surface RT, a big deal for schools and families

July 24, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers -

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Another feature of Windows 8 is something called multiuser accounts. Having the capability to logon as a different user on the Surface RT is something that is missing on other tablets. Multiuser accounts come in very handy in a school environment and also for the family.



Technology budgets are not unlimited

Gadget makers are in the business of selling as many devices as possible to as many people as possible. That is their business model. So if you are a gadget maker it stands to reason that you would encourage schools to adopt 1:1 programs so that each student has their own individual device. This is great for the gadget makers but sometimes having a device for each student is beyond the fiscal means of many school systems and families.

One device for each member of the family can be a budget buster. One alternative is to have one device setup with different user accounts, thus the name multiuser accounts. This is what I have done with the Surface RT. I have an account and my wife has an account and we share the device, essentially cutting the cost of our gadget budget in half.

One device now serves two different people. I can have my Start Screen setup the way I want and she can customize her Start Screen to her preferences. Sure, it is sometimes inconvenient to share a device but saving \$500 is enough of a reason for many to share. Sharing is caring.

Imagine if you are a family with 3 or 4 school aged children, is spending \$500 for each child to have their own tablet reasonable? That would be \$2000 spent on gadgets that will need to be replaced every three years. Some schools are even starting 1:1 programs at the Kindergarten level. Given a turnover rate of a new device every three years for four school aged children would require four different sets of devices at a total costs of \$8000 by the time all four children graduate from high school. For the average family this is difficult to do financially and does not even account for the costs of apps, ebooks, music, movies, and other online subscriptions/purchases. The costs add up in a hurry.

Online Stores

Speaking of costs adding up, these devices now come with something called "stores". Apple has the App Store, Google has the Play Store, and Microsoft has the Windows Store. Stores exist to sell you things. I have not heard many educators address this issue but having online stores on devices in classrooms and at home with targeted advertising, branding, and marketing to children is a topic of concern.



Many tablets are now given to children either as a learning tool or more often an entertainment device. Some stores make it very difficult to setup an online account without giving up credit card information. Once a credit card number is associated with an online store account the credit card holder is responsible for payment, be careful.

This new model of online store purchase and delivery is very challenging in a school environment and also for many businesses. Making an online purchase is now just a simple click or touch away. Managing hundreds or thousands of devices in this new environment is challenging and I know many schools and businesses are struggling with the implementing and managing large numbers of devices and trying to figure out how to deal with online stores.

Many children have no concept of money and when it comes to playing games on a tablet there are now new ways for stores to make money called "in-app" purchases. There have recently been a couple of cases in the news where a parent is shocked to find a \$6000 credit card bill because their child bought items from the Apple app store from a free app that included in-app purchases. Here are a couple of recent examples:

Apple refunds dad \$6,000 iPad bill racked up by 8-year-old

[http://news.cnet.com/8301-17852_3-57594710-71/apple-refunds-dad-\\$6000-ipad-bill-racked-up-by-8-year-old/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-17852_3-57594710-71/apple-refunds-dad-$6000-ipad-bill-racked-up-by-8-year-old/)

In-app purchasing and \$3,000 iTunes bill stun mom

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2013/07/22/nl-in-app-purchases-warning-723.html>

Both examples above are from Apple but this can just as easily happen on the Google and Microsoft Stores. There are ways to manage an account to help prevent this but having a separate account not associated with a credit card is another way to protect yourself from unauthorized purchases from a child using a tablet.

Screencasting and the Flipped Classroom

For teachers there is another HUGE benefit when it comes to multiuser accounts on the Surface. Windows 8 Live Tiles on the Start Screen are wonderful in keeping you informed with notifications of the latest happenings. But, if you are using a tablet in the classroom to project up on the big screen you probably do not want all of your email and other notifications broadcasted for the entire class to see.

The same is true with screencasting. With the popularity of the flipped classroom model of instruction you do not want your personal information captured when you record a screencast that will be posted to YouTube for the world to see. With the Surface Pro and Surface RT the simple solution is to make a separate account that you can keep pristine for screen recording and/or projection purposes.

I have used this multiuser trick often to keep a nice and neat Desktop and Start Screen, everyone thinks I am so organized, you should see my other account ;)

Now my screencasting secret is out.

Until next time...

Keep on Learning,

Tom Grissom, P.hD.

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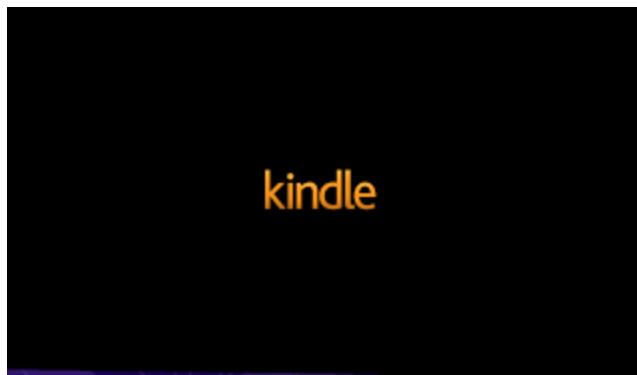
Day 5 – The Appification of the Surface RT Begins

July 25, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers -

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Today I begin to explore some of the apps available on the Surface RT. If you follow the marketing hype surrounded around tablets you have probably heard that the phrase “there is an app for that”.



One of the big surprises I found when I reviewed the Surface Pro was how few apps I used. This was in large part due to the Surface Pro being a x86 compatible PC and therefore I had familiar applications to choose from. Over the years I have a staple of about a dozen applications I regularly use. These select programs have been able to do everything I need to produce teaching and learning content.

With the Surface RT (the little brother to the Surface Pro) I do not have the option to run x86 programs. The Surface RT runs on the ARM architecture and is incompatible with other x86 programs. I already find this limiting as I do not

have the safety blanket of x86 applications available to me. I will be finding out over the coming days if I can find acceptable substitutes to some of the applications I regularly use on a PC.

I am not sure that the appification of education is a good thing because many apps are very focused on a single purpose and many seem watered-down. This can be a good thing if you regularly do that one specific thing with the app, but much of what we do in education is inter-related. I worry that breaking things down into small apps of single purpose that we might lose the big picture.

The other disadvantage of apps is that they are constantly in need of updating. Installing an app for this and for that can quickly lead to a proliferation of apps. If you are managing apps on a large number of devices the management issues can quickly become burdensome.

I am learning a lot about my workflow since I purchased the Surface RT. Starting out with a fresh system is a great opportunity to find the apps I really need. I am starting with a clean "slate" (pardon the pun) and I can quickly find the limitations of a new blank system.

The first app I installed on the Surface RT was the Kindle app and I followed that up with the Audible app from Amazon. I mentioned in an earlier post that my wife reads a lot of ebooks on our Nexus 7 Android tablet. This works great for her but she also wanted to have access to her Kindle books on the Surface RT. It took about five minutes to download and install the Kindle app and then sign-in to our Amazon account. In five short minutes we went from no access to complete access to our entire ebook Kindle Library, magic!

I also installed the Audible app even though we do not have an Audible subscription. We do have a couple of Audible books in our library so I installed the Audible app so we could listen to them. I have noticed the option for many books on Amazon that if you buy the Kindle format you also get the option to buy the audio Audible version at a reduced cost.



We decided to use Amazon long ago because we did not want to get locked into an ecosystem like iBooks that limited device choice. You can only read the iBooks format on an iOS device. Amazon gives us the ability to read our Kindle ebooks on Android, Apple, and/or Windows devices.

Yes, it is true that Amazon uses the KF8 proprietary format but at least you can use it on the device of your choice.

So the application of the Surface RT begins, stay tuned in the coming days as I share what other apps I discover for teaching and learning purposes.

Until next time...

Keep on Learning,

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Day 6 - Taking a Screenshot on the Surface RT and editing Photos

July 26, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers -
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

I stated yesterday that you learn a lot about your computing habits when you get a new device. When you need to get your work done you need access to the tools to get the job done. The first day I used the Surface RT I needed to edit a photo. Since the Surface RT does not run x86 programs I was in need of finding an app from the Windows Store to fill in the void. So today I continue my application of the Surface RT by selecting another app to get my work done.



But first, a little more about my two app picks from yesterday, both were consumption apps, Kindle and Audible, from Amazon. I think you could make the case that the Surface RT is worth its current \$349 price tag just from these two apps alone. I now literally have my entire ebook collection purchased from Amazon available to me on the Surface RT! When the Kindle was first introduced in 2007 the vision was "any book, anywhere, in less than a minute". Today Amazon has pretty much delivered that vision. Wow, just Wow!

This is great for individuals but for schools there are challenges for ebook distribution to students with many unanswered questions. How do schools buy ebooks, distribute them, who owns them, can they be re-used year to year, will the ebooks work on a variety of devices, can you add annotations in the margins, etc... This is another reminder that we really need to do our homework if we intend to replace textbooks with ebooks. It is doable but there are many logistical questions that need to be answered before rolling out a massive 1:1 program.

For an educator, having access to such an ebook delivery service is truly amazing. I have not had the Surface RT for even a week but I see much potential. I have experienced a negative update experience and am now aware of this weakness, but so far it is certainly not a deal breaker for me.

My overall positive experience to date makes me wonder about some of the pejorative comments from others that have said no one would want a Surface RT even if given away like at #iste13. Have we become so spoiled and branded by the consumption engineers (marketing) that we cannot see the potential of the Surface RT? The RT is far from perfect, but in the hands of a teacher I see so much potential.

I think some of my optimism for the Surface RT stems from my experience with computers in general over the past two plus decades. We really have come a long way and each generation gets better.

Today's App Pick

Now back to my app pick for today. When I began this blog series one of the first things I needed to do was take a screenshot of the Surface RT and paste it into this blog. How do you do that on the RT?

Taking a Screenshot on the Surface RT

To take a screenshot on the Surface RT all you need to do is press the Windows button and the Volume Down rocker at the same time. When you press the Windows button you will feel a slight vibration letting you know you pressed it. When both the Windows button and Volume Down rocker are pressed at the same time you will see the screen dim and your screenshot will be saved to your Pictures folder in a subfolder called Screenshots. The default file type is in the PNG format.

To get to the Pictures\Screenshots folder go to the Surface RT Desktop and click on the folder icon located on the left-side of the taskbar at the bottom of the screen, this is the File Explorer (just like Windows 7).

Fotor – Photo Editing App for the Surface RT

Of course one of the first things I wanted to do with my screenshots was to edit them for this blog. I downloaded the free Fotor app from the Windows Store and in less than two minutes was editing my first screenshot picture on the Surface RT



Fotor is very easy to use and is touch-friendly. You can Crop images, add Text, and apply a wide range of special effects to images and photos. If you so choose you can make some "Instagram-like" images very quickly by clicking on the filters. There are also adjustable slides to move back and forth to vary the effects.

There is also a secondary feature of Fotor that is very nice and allows you to make your own photo collages very easily. You can select multiple photographs and you have a variety of collage templates. Once finished arranging your photos in the collage the way you like you can Save it to a JPG file.

Until next time...

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Day 7 – Using Skitch Touch on the Surface RT

July 27, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers –
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Continuing my journey of exploring apps to be used in the classroom with the Surface RT I have discovered Skitch Touch for annotating images, screenshots, and photos.



Skitch Touch is a very simple program but for teachers it serves the key purpose of drawing the attention of the student to an area on the screen. It is very easy to use and only took 30 seconds to download and install from the Windows Store. It is produced by Evernote and once the install is complete you get a small ad that says "Skitch is better with Evernote" Evernote is a very popular online note-taking program.

I have used Evernote in the past but I have become a 100% convert to OneNote since I began using Windows 8 tablets. A big reason for my conversion is the excellent digital Pen I use every day with the Surface Pro. Using OneNote also allows the elimination of yet another userid and password to keep track of, Evernote requires a separate account sign-in.

Since OneNote uses my Microsoft Account on the Surface RT I already have access to all my OneNote notebooks. Because my notebooks are associated with my Microsoft Account all of my notebooks that are saved to SkyDrive are

available to me on the Surface RT. That means that no matter what device I use I have access to all my SkyDrive files if I use the same MS account. This is a big plus for the Surface RT as my companion device. I will have much more to say about OneNote in a future post.

Back to Skitch Touch, you can annotate photos that you take with the camera on the Surface RT. Or, you can open any image for editing, like a map or screenshot that you have stored in your Pictures folder. Since the RT has file management built-in you can navigate the file structure on the RT to get to the images of your choice and edit with Skitch Touch.

Since the Surface RT also has a camera you can take a picture and then immediately annotate it with Skitch Touch. Imagine you are a Biology Teacher on a field trip and you take several pictures with the Surface RT. When you get back to the classroom you can open Skitch Touch, access your camera roll, and immediately begin drawing arrows to features you want students to know about. You can very easily add text and pointer arrows to get your lesson across. Below is an example of a Catalpa Tree with seed pods annotated with Skitch Touch.



The above example was taken with the Surface RT camera and annotated with Skitch Touch, very easy to do. The Surface RT camera in my experience is certainly not the best camera I have ever used coming in at 2.0 megapixels, but it is fine for many everyday classroom tasks. If you find the Surface RT camera a bit lacking you can always use a separate high-quality digital camera and import the photos into the Surface RT to use with Skitch Touch.

The Surface RT comes with a USB 2.0 port!

If you have a USB to SD card adapter you can easily access your digital camera photos from the RT's USB port. No need to upload/download them to and from Dropbox and no need to plug the Surface RT to a different computer to copy photos on and off the device.

Skitch Touch is a simple but powerful app for enhancing visual aids. It is great for adding attention getting annotations to images, screenshots, and photos. These enhanced images can then be used to make great tutorials on any subject imaginable. If you have a Surface RT give Skitch Touch a try.

Until next time...

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Day 8 – Camera Options on the Surface RT

July 28, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers –
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

The past couple of days I have mentioned two image/photo editing apps, Fotor and Skitch Touch that are two great apps for teachers using the Surface RT. Teachers make a lot of visual content for their lessons and having options is always a good thing when it comes to creating content.

I mentioned that the Surface RT comes with two cameras, a back facing camera for taking pictures and videos, and a front facing camera that I use mainly for Skype. Another great feature of the Surface RT is its built-in kickstand that has just the right angle for making Skype calls.

Both cameras in the RT are 720p Lifecams and therefore are a little lower resolution than the 1080p cameras now on the market. Both of these cameras take an acceptable level of quality for classroom use but they are not high-resolution cameras by today's standards.

Many reviews will stop there and just give you the specifications but I know from experience that there is a big difference between writing about something and actually going out and using the product in the field. I think this may be one reason the tech press has dismissed the Surface RT, they have not used it for any length of time.

Continuing my experiment from yesterday I setup a scenario where a Biology Teacher went on a field trip and took along the Surface RT to document the trip with some pictures. Today, I did the same and took a little field trip of my own out into the woods with the Surface RT. Below is a screenshot of a flower I took with the RT.



In addition, I brought along my Canon S100 point and shoot camera that has a zoom lens and better optics. Below is a picture of the same flower with a tighter shot.



Can you tell the difference between the two? Besides the different framing can you tell that the resolution is much higher in the bottom picture? Select each picture and do a pinch and zoom. You will find there are more pixels in the bottom picture and therefore it is a little sharper, especially when you zoom in.

Here is another example, the picture below is at the edge of my cornfield and was taken using the back camera of the Surface RT.



Here is a similar shot taken with the Canon S100.



So, I have proven that a dedicated point and shoot camera that costs approximately \$350 is better than the Surface RT camera that currently has an education price of \$199. Not too surprising, but there is another trick that the RT has up its sleeve. I can easily take the pictures off of the Canon S100 and copy to the Pictures folder on the RT.

I used a microUSB cable and plugged one end into the Surface RT and the other end into the Canon S100, turned on the camera, went to the Desktop File Manager. The RT automatically recognized the camera and I was able to navigate to the SD card and copy files off the camera to the RT, easy peasy.

Once the pictures are on the Surface RT I can use Fotor and/or Skitch Touch to edit the photos to my hearts content. I could also have just as easily popped out the SD card on the S100 camera and put it in a SD card to USB adapter and copied the files directly off the SD card using the Surface RTs USB port. A very,

very, handy feature to have on a tablet to share content from one source to another.

Below is a photo I took today using the S100 and copied to the RT. I used the Fotor app to add a couple of different effects just to show more two more examples of what the Surface RT can do.



Until next time...

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[Day 9 – The Mighty USB Port on the Surface RT](#)

July 29, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers –

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

In yesterday's blog post you caught a glimpse of one of the best features the Surface RT offers, the mighty USB port. The Surface RT comes with a built-in USB 2.0 port located on the right-hand side of the tablet when held in the landscape position. This is a full-sized port so no extra adapters are needed, a nice bonus. Below is a picture of an inexpensive USB to SD Card reader that I often use to copy pictures from my point and shoot camera, very handy.



By the way, I use the Surface RT in the landscape position 99% of the time and I lock it into this position so the screen does not auto-rotate. This allows me to use my thumbs to swipe in from the right-side to access the Charms bar in Windows 8 very easily. It is so easy in fact that I rarely use the physical Windows button on the tablet itself. It is faster to swipe in from the right-hand side of the tablet with my thumb and select the Windows Flag icon from the Charms bar to go to the Start Screen.

Have I mentioned the Surface RT can multitask?

I often use my left thumb to swipe in from the left when I have multiple apps open. By swiping in my left thumb, over and over again, I can very quickly cycle through all my open apps. This is kind of like using Alt-Tab on the keyboard but it is much faster.

Meanwhile back to the USB port, I was not sure how much I would use the USB port on the RT because it has the ARM processor that is not compatible with x86 programs. I have been pleasantly surprised by how many devices the Arm-based Surface RT can access out of the box.

Yesterday, I plugged in my Canon S100 camera into the USB port and the RT recognized it immediately and I was able to go to the Desktop File Manager and access my files directly from the Camera. Below is a picture of the camera connected to the USB port on the Surface RT.



I also have a USB to SD card reader that allows me to read SD cards from cameras directly into the Surface RT, here is another view with it plugged in to the RT.



I can also use the Arc Mouse wireless transceiver to connect the Arc Mouse wirelessly to the Surface RT. This is very nice when using Microsoft Word when you need a bit more fine motor control.



Or, if you think the Surface RT keyboard is too small, or if you do not like an onscreen keyboard, just plug-in a full sized USB Keyboard to the USB port and use it.



If you find the wired keyboard a little too limiting then you can plug-in a wireless keyboard like the Logitech K400 and use it to walk around the room while you have the Surface RT plugged into a projector or HDTV via the RT's micro-HDMI port!



How's that for versatility?

Of course, USB drives are meant for saving and storing files. I often copy very large MP4 files that I create on another machine to a USB thumb drive for sharing on other computers. The good news is that I can plug in the USB thumb drive and watch a MP4 video files directly off the thumb drive on the Surface RT. No need to upload and then download the content to SkyDrive, DropBox, Box, or some other cloud service.

Watching videos off of the USB drive is also much, much faster and keeps A LOT of unnecessary traffic off of the network. You also do not need to worry about the video stuttering as it "buffers" over a slow and congested network connection.

You might not think that this is a big deal but think about how much traffic is created by having students watch flipped learning videos. If you assign videos for homework some students will not have access to broadband Internet at home, but a simple inexpensive USB drive can contain Gigabytes of learning material.

It is also very common for our college students to have a data plan that is capped at 5GB per month so watching videos over a capped data plan can get very expensive quickly if a student goes over their data plan cap. In reality 5GB is not very much video content at all.

So, something as simple as a USB port can dramatically impact the way you use a device in the classroom and at home.

Until next time...

Keep on Learning,

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[Day 10 – Bing Apps Keep You Up-To-Date](#)

July 30, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers – Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Today I want to mention a set of apps I regularly use that come preloaded on the Surface RT that I call my Bing Apps. Since this is a Microsoft tablet it is not too surprising that the default search engine is Bing and not Google, although you can still use Google.

If you have not used Bing in a while I think you will be surprised by how graphically pleasing the Bing search page has become. Every day the Bing search engine features a colorful photo from somewhere on Planet Earth. Below is an example from a couple of days ago.



This is a different than the minimalist approach that Google takes with the Google doodle on a stark white background. Some people still “Google it” but if you are using a Windows 8 tablet like the Surface RT you might want to “Bing it”, just go to <http://bing.com> to see the latest picture of the day.



Bing Apps

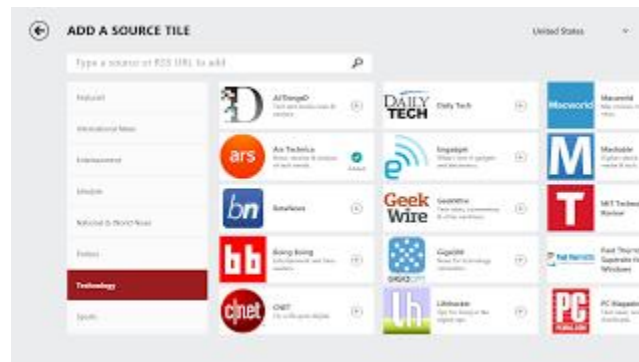
There is much more to the Bing family than the Bing search engine on the Surface RT. The other Bing apps I regularly use are the News app, Sports app, Weather app, Finance app, and Travel app. I have arranged them on my Start Screen with the category name Bing Apps to keep them organized and easy to access.



You can easily rearrange the Live Tiles on the Start Screen and I always place my Desktop Live Tile in the lower left-side of the Start Screen on all my Windows 8 devices so it is easy to get to. I group my other Live Tiles by categories that make sense to me. For example, I have a group called Office 2013 that keeps my Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote apps together.

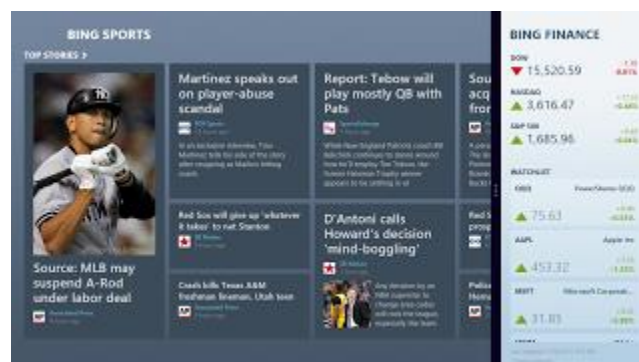
I think of these Bing apps as my own personal newspaper. You can add feeds to some of the apps and customize the sources that pull in information of interest to you. I do this mostly with the News app where I can add my own Technology

Section from the sources I choose. In a way, this is kind of like the now defunct Google Reader.



Another benefit of the Bing apps is that some of the apps offer notifications. I sometimes get a notification popup when breaking news hits. The biggest thing to get accustomed to with these apps is that you scroll to the right to access more information. We have become so accustomed to scrolling up and down that it takes a bit of time to get used to scrolling horizontally. This actually works quite well, especially on a touchscreen like the Surface RT.

Another benefit of using the Bing apps together is that you can take advantage of “snap view” where you can park one app on one side of the screen and have another app open at the same time in the main window. Below is an example where I have the Finance app open and snapped to the right-side of the screen and in the main portion of the screen I have the Sports app open.



So, I can be reading the latest sports news in the main window and at the same time have all the market stats updated in real-time in snap view, pretty cool!

You could also have your email snapped to one side of the screen while you are doing something else with the main screen.

Multitasking at its best.

Until next time...

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Day 11 – The Enigma that is the Surface RT

July 31, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers –
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

The Surface RT is an enigma. I can understand those that review the Surface RT not instantly understanding this device. Most reviewers are on a deadline and usually offer the cursory specifications and offer a couple of “needs improvement” comments to justify their critique after a couple of hours of use.

What is particularly confusing about the Surface RT is that it has a dual personality of the modern Windows 8 apps along with the traditional Desktop. Once you come to grips with this reality (it is really not that hard of a concept to grasp) you see the benefits of mixing the old with the new. But, the Surface RT adds another “exception” in that the RT is based on the ARM processor that is not compatible with x86 applications. To further complicate matters Microsoft has ported their best selling x86 application, Office 2013, to the ARM processor so it CAN run on the Surface RT. Got it? For the average user that is a lot to sort out.

The Surface RT has taken a beating in the press lately and many have dismissed this device completely. This really is a shame as my brief amount of time with this tablet has completely altered my original mindset since I began this blog series.

Day 2 was really rough for me with all of the updates that needed to be installed but since that time I have only had a couple of updates to deal with and both were painless. After Day 2 my expectations were pretty low, but since that time the RT has redeemed itself for the most part and I have only depleted the battery once over the past 11 days.

Since I started doing these 30 Days with.... blog series I have come to the conclusion that many of these superficial product reviews in the press are not that helpful, especially for teachers in a classroom setting. They all start to look alike and offer little in the way of practical hands-on advice. For the Surface RT this recently has become one giant echo chamber of doom and gloom in the press room, but what if they are wrong?

This is why I am blogging my experiences here in a real-life and practical manner for teachers and students to see an educators perspective. There are definitely bright spots in the Surface RT story that need to be told. One of the bright spots is Office 2013.



The dual personality of the Surface RT is a good thing overall. Having the ability to run the "Big Four" Office 2013 applications gives a teacher or student access to professional level tools at an incredible price point (currently the Surface RT is discounted to \$199 education price, \$289 with type cover, and that includes Office 2013).

The big four applications in Office 2013 are Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and

OneNote. This covers most of the tasks we ask teachers and students to do daily in the classroom. The Surface RT has an excellent browser that supports pinch and zoom and the Desktop has access to the File Explorer to manage all your files. Add in the ability to save documents to SkyDrive for anywhere access and you have a very compelling device for educators at a very affordable price.

I will be going into a little more depth in upcoming posts about the Office 2013 suite of applications but having them available on the ARM-based Surface RT is a nice luxury to have out of the box.

Until next time...

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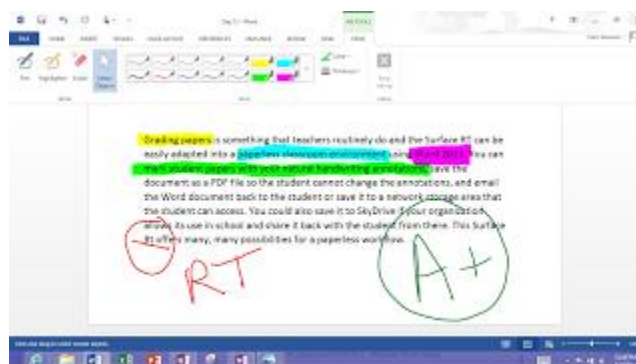
[Day 12 - Microsoft Word on the Surface RT for Teachers – This Changes Everything](#)

August 1, 2013

Surface RT for Teachers - Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Yesterday I explained some of the features of the Surface RT that makes it different from every other tablet currently on the market. The Surface RT is a new and innovative hybrid product that the mass market has yet to fully understand. It has a mixture of PC features like a USB port, microHDMI, and SD Card reader that gives complete flexibility for moving and sharing content.

The Surface RT also offers inking capabilities that teachers will want to explore for annotating a students digital work and also offers the real possibility of going paperless in the classroom. You can easily annotate documents using the inking tools built into Word 2013. Below is a screenshot of a Word 2013 document that I marked up to demonstrate the capability of grading student papers using the inking capability within Word 2013 on the Surface RT.



As stated yesterday, the RT can run Microsoft Office 2013 but no other x86 programs. The ARM based processor gets all day battery life but is underpowered for some uses. It is literally a hybrid device trying to maintain the benefits of the PC but at the same time moving the ball forward toward a productivity tablet.

In my opinion, the Surface RT is more of a tablet with some laptop capabilities. The Surface Pro, the big brother to the Surface RT, is compatible with x86 programs and is more like a laptop with tablet capabilities. The two different types of Surface devices offer you a choice depending upon your usage needs. If you want to see my earlier [review of the Surface Pro click here](#).

For teachers, Microsoft Word 2013 is a gem. Much of what teachers and students do is writing in some form or fashion and the new Word 2013 is the premiere word processor that is available for free with the Surface RT. One of the complaints from iPad users is that many wish the Microsoft Office Suite of programs were available on it. To date, this has not happened although there are occasional rumors that this might happen in the future. This currently gives the Surface RT the advantage over the iPad when it comes to getting productive work completed on a tablet using standard office applications.

The new Word 2013 features the familiar "Ribbon Interface" that first became available in 2007. Word 2013 is still a Desktop application on the RT but the icons on the ribbon have been spaced apart to make it a bit easier to use on a touchscreen.

I will spare you the details of all the capabilities of Word 2013 as it is a comprehensive list. Most users only touch the surface (pardon the pun) of Word's capabilities. Since Office 2013 is a port over to the new ARM-based processor on the Surface RT there are a few capabilities that the ARM-based version of Office 2013 cannot do. This is more noticeable with Excel 2013, that does not support macros, and in OneNote 2013, that does not support audio and video recording on the Surface RT.

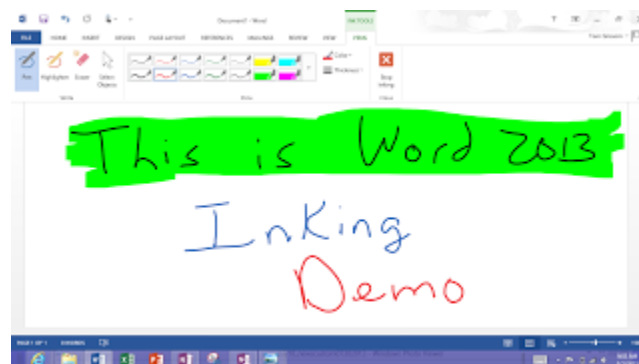
Worth the Price of Admission - Inking

One of the shining capabilities that Microsoft Word 2013 offers teachers is probably one of its least used. Word 2013 supports inking!!! Actually, all of the big four Office applications since 2003 support inking and this goes back to the Tablet PC days where Microsoft has been innovating for over a decade. This inking technology is a must know feature for teachers and students that use the Surface RT.

For teachers inking is a big deal on a touchscreen tablet like the Surface RT. For students, having the ability to take notes in a freehand format is also a great feature. To get to the inking capabilities in Word 2013 go to the REVIEW tab on the ribbon and select START INKING located in the upper right-hand area of the ribbon. Once you select START INKING you will see a new Tab on the ribbon called INK TOOLS –PEN. From here you can select the color of ink you want, select the highlighter tools, and other inking selections including Eraser and Select Objects.



You can use your finger to ink but I prefer the rubber tipped stylus that are made to use with capacitive touchscreens. You can essentially turn Microsoft Word 2013 (or OneNote 2013) into a Whiteboard. If you connect the Surface RT to a projector or HDTV via its microHDMI port you have a touch-enabled display for your entire class to view.



The Surface RT uses a capacitive touch screen similar to the iPad and only supports finger input or a stylus with the little rubber tips. Your finger and the rubber tipped stylus do not allow for a great deal of accuracy when inking on the Surface RT but it is certainly doable. It is kind of like finger painting or writing with a stick in the mud, the inking experience on the RT does not support a lot of control for fine-motor work.

Keep in mind that I have become spoiled by the fantastic inking experience on the Surface Pro that utilizes an active digitizer screen with digital Pen input. This is a much more natural experience similar to a ball-point pen when writing on paper. It is also much more accurate as the Surface Pro supports "palm-blocking" technology that allows you to rest your palm on the touchscreen when writing with the digital Pen. If you do a lot of inking, the Surface Pro is well

worth the extra money as it provides a faster, smoother, and more accurate inking experience that is a pleasure to use. It is so good that many artists are beginning to use the Surface Pro for their artwork.

Back to the Surface RT, given that qualification that the Surface Pro offers a superior inking experience, you can still do a lot with the Surface RT.

Grading papers is something that teachers routinely do and the Surface RT can be easily adapted into a paperless classroom environment. Using Word 2013 you can mark student papers with your natural handwriting annotations, save the document as a PDF file so the student cannot change the annotations, and email the Word document back to the student or save it to a network storage area that the student can access. You could also save it to SkyDrive if your organization allows its use in school and share it back with the student from there. This Surface RT offers many, many possibilities for a paperless workflow.

Two other features I want to mention about Word 2013 before I finish today's post are the pinch and zoom capability within Word and the ability to open PDF files and edit them with Word 2013.

Having the ability to open and edit a PDF file is something many teachers need to do from time-to-time and Word 2013 now has this built into the program. Once you have the document open and have enabled editing you can of course annotate it with the inking tools available in Word 2013.

I am really enjoying the inking capability of Word 2013. I even copy some of my Google Docs into Word so I can have easy access to the inking tools. This ability is very handy and practical for teachers!

Until next time...

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Tom Grissom, PhD

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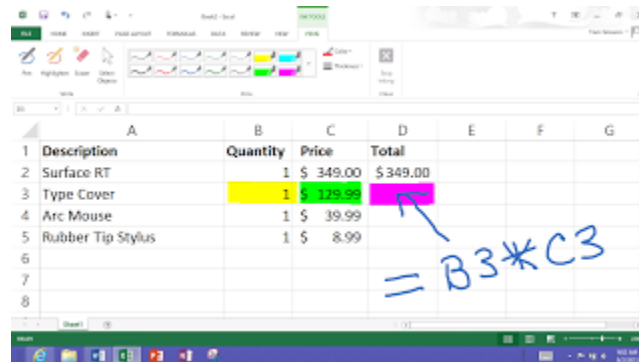
Day 13 - Microsoft Excel 2013 on the Surface RT for Teachers

August 2, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet program that is a very valuable addition for teachers working with numbers in the classroom. Whether you are just keeping track of student grades in a simple spreadsheet or collecting data for a Science experiment Excel is the best program for crunching numbers on the Surface RT.



The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

1	Description	Quantity	Price	Total
2	Surface RT	1	\$ 349.00	\$ 349.00
3	Type Cover	1	\$ 325.99	
4	Arc Mouse	1	\$ 39.99	
5	Rubber Tip Stylus	1	\$ 8.99	

A handwritten blue note with an arrow pointing to the 'Total' cell for 'Type Cover' reads: $= B3 * C3$.

I have taught Excel to teachers in the past and one of the nice features of using the Surface RT is the support of inking. Drawing the attention of the students eye to an area of the screen that you want the student to understand is very important when teaching someone something new. Yesterday, I shared that Word 2013 supports inking and how valuable it can be to annotate student work. The same is true for inking and Excel 2013. Being able to make handwritten notes next to formulas on an Excel spreadsheet makes the instruction much clearer than giving just oral instructions.

You get to inking in Excel 2013 similar to Word 2013. Go to the REVIEW Tab on the ribbon and select START INKING.



There are a couple of oddities that I have found in switching back and forth between inking and mouse mode when using Excel 2013. I sometimes have to double-click to select a specific cell when normally a single-click would do. I also have to sometimes press the ESC (Escape) Key to deselect something. It seems that Excel 2013 is not as fully baked as other programs so I expect Microsoft to continue to improve the ARM-based version to catch it up to the fully capable x86 version.

Unlike Word, Excel 2013 does not support pinch and zoom on the Surface RT. There is however a slider bar in the lower right-hand corner that allows you to slide for different zoom levels. Microsoft Word 2013 also has this zoom slider but I much prefer the pinch and zoom capability.

Of all the Office 2013 apps Excel seems to be the least touch friendly. I have had occasions where Excel will stutter and it sometimes does not seem to be as responsive to touch as the other Office 2013 applications. When using my fat fingers to move from cell to cell I really need to zoom in to get better accuracy.

Excel 2013 is the one app that causes me to reach for my Arc Mouse so I can use it as a traditional Desktop application. The Arc Mouse uses a wireless

transceiver that I plug into the Surface RTs USB Port. The Arc Mouse gives me pinpoint accuracy when using Excel 2013 and makes for a much more pleasurable experience. I recommend finding a mouse if you will be using Excel very much on the Surface RT.



There are also a couple of other limitations with Excel 2013, most notably the lack of support for macros. The Surface RT version of Office 2013 is a port over to the ARM-based Surface RT system. This porting is not complete as some features like macros have not yet been enabled on the RT version. If you are only doing simple calculations this won't be a big deal to you, but if you are an accountant you may find the RT version frustrating to use. If you do need the full power of the business class Excel 2013 program the Surface Pro would be a much better choice as it supports all of Excel's functions including macro capability.

I have also ran into a few template issues that I tried to use with Excel 2013 on the Surface RT. Some templates I have used on the RT had problems with ActiveX components. Microsoft still has some work to do here to make Excel on ARM-based devices work as well as it does on x86 systems.

Overall the ability to run Excel 2013 on a tablet like the Surface RT is a positive. There are still some rough edges on the RT version but for basic spreadsheet work this capability is a great addition to the Surface RT.

Until next time...

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Tom Grissom, PhD

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Day 14 – PowerPoint 2013 on the Surface RT

August 3, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8

Tablet

Are you a fan of PowerPoint? Does the phrase “Death by PowerPoint” send a chill down your spine? Whether you are a fan of PowerPoint or not, I am sure we have all had less than stellar experiences sitting through a PowerPoint presentation, but it does not have to be this way.

For all the critics of PowerPoint out there I suggest we first take a look at the instructional approach taken when creating PowerPoints before passing judgment on the tool.

Like a golfer that blames a club for a terrible tee shot, so it is with PowerPoint for some. Do you blame that boring PowerPoint for not getting students engaged in the lesson or could it be your instructional approach?



PowerPoint is just a tool and the presentation you produce will become what you make of it, for better or worse.

Students need to be able to organize and present content and PowerPoint is a great choice for presentations. Too often students focus on the animations and transitions available in the tool rather than the content that needs sorting through. Discovering what is needed and what can be left out is challenging for most students. I have seen many PowerPoint slide decks with 50 or more slides that need to be covered during a 20 minute presentation.

PowerPoint 2013 on the Surface RT has the familiar bullet point slide show templates that we have all become so accustomed to over the years. Some will still copy and paste large blocks of text into PowerPoint slides and read them word.... for.... word to an audience. Some will go overboard with the animations and transitions, others will go for artsy pictures and avoid text all together. There is no one best way to use PowerPoint and that is what makes it fun.

The trick of an effective PowerPoint presentation is to find a balance and like most things in life moderation is the key. You will need to use your judgment to find a balance with the content, presentation options, and instructional strategies you wish to be cover during the time allotted for a presentation.

PowerPoint has supported inking for years and being able to annotate over a slide while explaining things is very valuable for learning new things. I am guessing that 50% of teachers do not even know that there are inking capabilities already in PowerPoint and that you do NOT need a touchscreen to use them.

Since the PowerPoint 2003 version (maybe even longer) you have been able to hover your mouse in the lower left-hand corner of a PowerPoint slide (when in Slide Show view) and access the Pen tool for annotating over a slide. It's always been there, the ghosted icons will appear in the lower left corner when you move the pointer over them.



What makes this annotation ability really great on the Surface RT is that the RT does have a touchscreen and you can use your finger to select the Pen tool or laser pointer to direct a student's attention to a point you are teaching. I can draw better with my finger than with the mouse.

Another really cool feature of PowerPoint 2013 on the Surface RT is the absolutely fantastic "Presenter Mode" that allows the teacher to have their slides with notes and a preview of the upcoming slide on the RT screen but when the RT is connected to a projector or HDTV the students only see the current slide.



The Presenter View also gives easier access to the Pen Tool, Laser Pointer, and forward and back arrows to advance to the next or previous slide. It even has a timer to keep track where you are at in your presentation to compare to the available time you have left.



I have found a couple of missing features on the RT version of PowerPoint 2013, most notably is the lack of the ability to record your PowerPoint presentation on the Surface RT. If you want audio/video recording capability you will have to use a device with the x86 version of PowerPoint 2013 like the Surface Pro.

The last benefit of PowerPoint 2013 that I want to mention is that it is loaded locally on the Surface RT for free. What this means for teachers and students is that you can create presentations anywhere, anytime, even if no Internet connection is available.

Using cloud services is great when everything works but too often in a school setting there may be areas of the school where wireless is unavailable or

unreliable. It is good to have the option to work locally on the Surface RT until you can get to an Internet connection.

Until next time...

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Tom Grissom, PhD

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[Day 15 – Thoughts Halfway through 30 Days with the Surface RT – Is it Worth It?](#)

August 4, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Well, I am halfway through this 30 Days with a Surface RT blog series and this is a good time to reflect on my experiences to date with the Surface RT. First of all, I went into this thinking I had a good handle on what the Surface RT could do. For the most part my expectations have been confirmed but there have been some surprises as well. I went into this with low expectations from press reports but have found my experience contrary to much of what I have previously read. With many 1:1 initiatives being considered across the nation more real-world information is needed about device capabilities before purchasing decisions are made.



Surface

Microsoft Surface
for education
limited time offer

Surface RT (32GB) - \$199 USD (Estimated Retail Price is \$499)
Surface RT (32GB) with Touch Keyboard Cover - \$249 USD (Estimated Retail Price is \$599)
Surface RT (32GB) with Type Keyboard Cover - \$289 USD (Estimated Retail Price is \$629)

Microsoft is pleased to offer special pricing on Surface RT directly to schools and universities for a limited time between June 27, 2013 and August 31, 2013.

<http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/Pages/index.aspx>

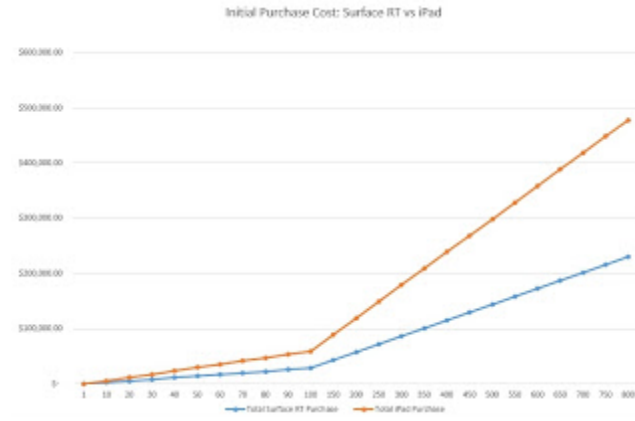
Microsoft is currently offering the Surface RT at steep discounts for a limited time to schools and universities with an education price of \$199 for the Surface RT alone, or \$289 for the Surface RT and Type Cover Keyboard (I much prefer the type cover over the touch cover).

The Surface RT has taken a beating in the tech press and Microsoft has written-off \$900 million dollars of Surface inventory due to over production. I have entered into this blog series at the low-point of Surface RT popularity.

One of the reasons I wanted to know for myself if the Surface RT is of any value for teaching and learning is due to the fact that Microsoft gave away 10,000 Surface RTs to teachers attending the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Conference in San Antonio, Texas earlier this year. Imagine the possibilities these educators have to improve the classroom experience for their students.

Educators that received a Surface RT at #iste13 have a wonderful opportunity to experience for themselves how they can use the Surface RT in the classroom. Of course, some will say that the RT is a paperweight and will just collect dust in the corner. That would truly be a shame as I have experienced for myself these past two weeks a wonderful teaching and learning tool for teachers and students. My first post in this series was called "Glass Half-empty or Half-full" at Day 15 it is definitely half-full for me however there are things that need improvement going forward. I also can say the same thing about the iPad as there is also room for improvement with it as well.

One thing that I am learning about the Surface RT is that it is not in the same category as the iPad and therefore should not be compared to it, but none the less most do. Since others are making this comparison I thought I would take a look at the current discounted pricing of the Surface RT compared to a discounted iPad and see what impact it might have on a purchasing decision given tight school or university budgets. Below is a graph of the total cost of purchasing between the iPad and Surface RT.



I used Microsoft Excel on the Surface RT to calculate the price difference between purchasing multiple Surface RTs and iPads in the quantities of 1, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500, 550, 600, 650, 700, 750, 800, 850, 900, 950, and 1000. Below is a screenshot from the Surface with the numbers.



I used a price of \$289 for the 32GB Surface RT with Type Cover and \$598 for the iPad with a cover and keyboard. The current price for a 32GB iPad is \$599 without a cover or keyboard so I discounted it \$100. This also does not include additional warranties or AppleCare. It also does not include wireless access costs or deployment servers that can easily double or triple the cost of the initial devices.

Many think that a few dollars difference in price per unit does not make that much of a difference in total costs but as you can see in the graph it makes

a huge difference. Especially with larger quantities where the cost difference really begins to separate on the graph.

Depending upon your viewpoint this separation in price difference may be necessary to get the device for the job, or could be viewed as over-paying if the alternative meets or exceeds the requirements for the job.

So if you are buying 1000 devices for a 1:1 program the current price savings is \$309,000 if you went the Surface RT vs. the iPad route. If you were a very large district and bought 10,000 devices that difference jumps to \$3,090,000 – 3 Million dollars is a lot of money and a potential savings worthy of further investigation.

Looked at in a different way, you could buy devices for twice as many students for the same amount of money.

In these tight budget times there is enough of a cost difference to catch the attention of those who will be funding 1:1 initiatives, whether that be parents or taxpayers.

In the end the Surface RT should be judged on its capabilities and merits. Each institution will need to do their own homework and find the device that meets their needs based upon initial cost, functionality, deployment, and maintenance over a 3 or 4 year life-cycle. In year 4, most likely, you get to start the whole process over again, a lot can change in 4 years.

So, at the halfway point I have learned much but have much more to explore with the Surface RT. At this point I have more questions than answers, and that is a good thing.

Until next time...

Keep on Learning,

Tom Grissom, PhD

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[Day 16 – The Best Application You Probably Have Never Used for Teaching and Learning - OneNote](#)

August 5, 2013

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Yesterday, I asked the question if the Surface RT was worth it? For me, the answer is definitely yes for a number of different reasons. The Surface RT makes a great companion device and is excellent for what it is designed to do.

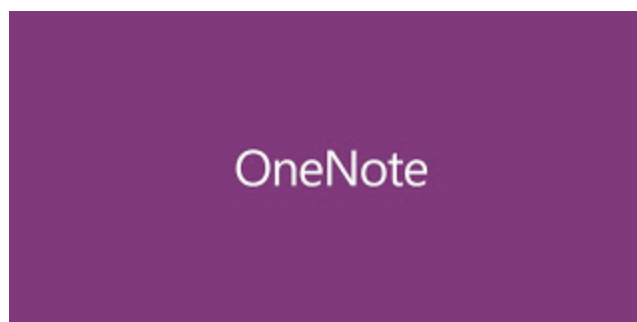
The other big plus for the RT is the current education price of \$199 that makes this device appealing to those interested in learning more about what this new class of device offers schools. I think many will be surprised if they just give the Surface RT a chance to prove itself.

The biggest strike against it however, is the ARM processor that is at times a little under powered for certain tasks. The flipside to this lower power processor is that the battery-life is extended for all day use.

The Surface RT comes with the Office 2013 applications of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote included. The free Office 2013 applications are a second reason the Surface RT is worth considering for schools. These are the

“Big Four” applications that teachers and students routinely need to get work done.

Wait, what was that last application you mentioned, OneNote? What is OneNote?



For teachers and students OneNote is one of the best kept secrets of the entire Microsoft Office 2013 Suite. OneNote is an absolutely fantastic program for keeping notes (something that teachers and students do often) but it can be so much more. OneNote is a natural fit for keeping ePortfolios that can be shared with others easily using SkyDrive.

OneNote: one place for all of your notes



The premise of OneNote is a digital 3-Ring Binder that you store and access information from any device that has the OneNote app installed. If you have an Internet connection you do not even need the installed app, just use the free Office Web App version using only a browser to access notes stored to your SkyDrive using your Microsoft account.

2. Get organized

You start with "My Notebook" - everything lives in here



Add sections for activities like:

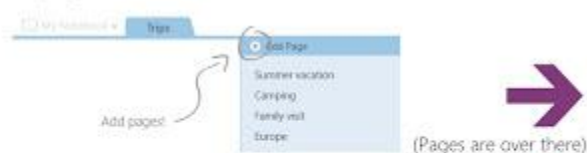


Add pages inside of each section:



OneNote is organized into Notebooks that have Sections, and within Sections you can have Pages, just like the analog equivalent. The power of OneNote comes with its Search capability including the ability to search handwritten notes. It even has Optical Character Recognition (OCR) built-in that will search text within images. You can store your Notebooks locally or to the cloud using SkyDrive so your Notebooks can be available to you on any device with Internet access, including your mobile phone!

Add pages inside of each section:



3. For more tips, check out 30 second videos



You may think this all seems a little familiar and you would be right if you have ever used Evernote. The Evernote app offers similar functionality and shares some of the same features available in OneNote. The main difference between the two is that OneNote is a little more structured than Evernote using the digital 3-Ring Binder concept. OneNote also pre-dates Evernote by five years as OneNote was introduced with Microsoft Office back in 2003, Evernote did not exist until 2008.

I have used both Evernote and OneNote in the past so I am familiar with both. Since I moved to using Windows 8 with the Surface Pro and the Surface RT tablets I have switched exclusively to using OneNote for all my digital note-taking needs. I am finding advantages to staying within the Microsoft ecosystem as it simplifies account access and offers me easy access to my data across multiple devices.

Why OneNote?

First, the digital Pen input on the Surface Pro is the best inking experience I have ever used on any device, bar none, it really is like writing on paper. The Surface RT also supports inking but the capacitive touchscreen is not nearly as good as the active digitizer on the Pro model. You can ink with the Surface RT it is just not as pleasant of a writing experience for me after being spoiled by the Surface Pro's digital Pen. The other great feature on the Surface Pro is Palm-blocking technology that allows me to rest my palm on the Surface Pro's glass and write in a more natural way, just like using paper.

Second, SkyDrive. I store some of my Notebooks to SkyDrive so I can access them anytime when an Internet connection is available. If I so choose I can also

save my Notebooks locally or on a company networked shared drive. SkyDrive has the added benefit that my notes are available to me immediately when I sign into the Surface Pro, Surface RT, or other Windows 8 device using my Microsoft account.

If you use an iPad you first sign-in with your AppleID, then into your Google account if you are using Google Drive, then finally into Evernote if you are using Evernote for your note-taking. Three different accounts just to begin your workday, this all gets a bit messy quickly. The Surface RT together with Office 2013 applications and SkyDrive streamline this workflow all under one Microsoft account.

Third, OneNote is now available as an app for Android, iOS, and other Windows 8 devices. The OneNote app, called OneNote MX, is a bit watered-down (like most apps) and the features vary from operation system to operating system but the different apps do allow you to access your OneNote Notebooks on different types of devices. This is a big plus for me as I like having a choice of devices as I may change my mind in the future. For me, I have currently switched to primarily using Windows 8 devices as I can access the full-features of the OneNote application on both the Surface RT and Surface Pro tablets.

Fourth, you can share your Notebooks with students. This one takes a little bit of planning on your part but I know teachers that share their daily class notes with their students by giving them read-only access to their Lesson Notebooks.

Below is a video (this is from 2011 but well worth watching) of a Physics Teacher that uses OneNote to share class notes and homework problems with his students. He uses the digital Pen to solve problems in class and makes them available to his students by sharing his class notebook to SkyDrive and making it available to his students. Back then he was using a Gateway Tablet PC but just

imagine what you can do now with the Surface RT. Using OneNote in this way essentially becomes a photographic memory to access everything the teacher does on the Whiteboard. All of this can be immediately available to all students as soon as the lesson is over, pretty cool!

There are many other features to tell you about OneNote and it will take a couple of additional blog posts to do so, but if you are a teacher or student you owe it to yourself to learn more about this amazing program.

OneNote Rocks!

Until next time...
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Tom Grissom, PhD

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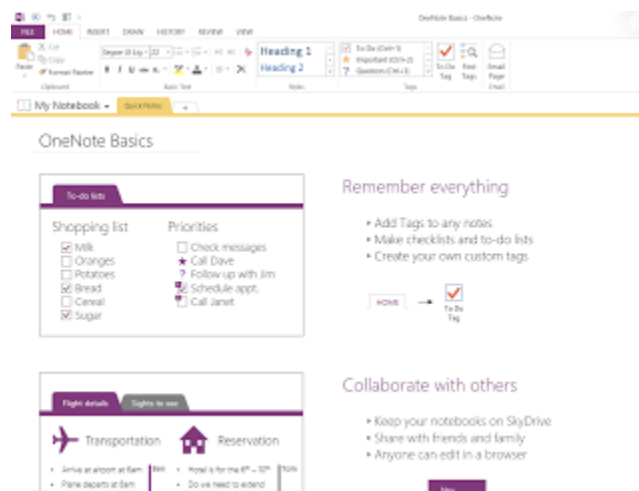
Day 17 – OneNote: Put it on your To-Do List

August 6, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

OneNote and the Surface RT are a great combination for teaching and learning. OneNote, as the name implies, is one place to keep all of your digital notes together in what are called Notebooks. Like the physical 3-Ring Binder you can organize digital Notebooks by topic. Within each digital Notebook you can make Sections, and within Sections you can add Pages, as many as you would like.



If you store your OneNote Notebooks on SkyDrive you can access them anywhere an Internet Connection is available using your Microsoft account.

You should give some thought to organizing your OneNote notebooks on the front-end as this will pay off big dividends later. Just like File Management having some structure to your notebooks will help you better organize, store,

and retrieve your digital notes. OneNote has excellent searching capability but I have learned over the years that organizing things on the front-end saves much time in the long run.

Your first decision is whether you want to make your OneNote Notebook Public or Private. About 90 percent of my OneNote notebooks are private. You may want to make a Notebook public for an ePortfolio project or share with a few select students for a class notes notebook.

Organizing Notebooks, Sections, and Pages

I tend to organize things by academic year so here is an example OneNote notebook structure.

Notebook Name: [EIU Grissom 2013](#)

Section Name:

[EIU Tech Committee 13-14](#)

Page Name: [June 2013 Meeting](#)

[July 2013 Meeting](#)

[August 2013 Meeting](#)

Section Name: [Toms To-Do Lists 2013](#)

Page Name: [June 2013](#)

[July 2013](#)

[August 2013](#)

Here is another example that a teacher or student might use for a Biology Class

Notebook Name: [Biology 101 \(Fall 2013\)](#)

Section Name: [Chapter 1](#)

Page Name: [Day 1 - 07012013](#)

Day 2 - 07022013

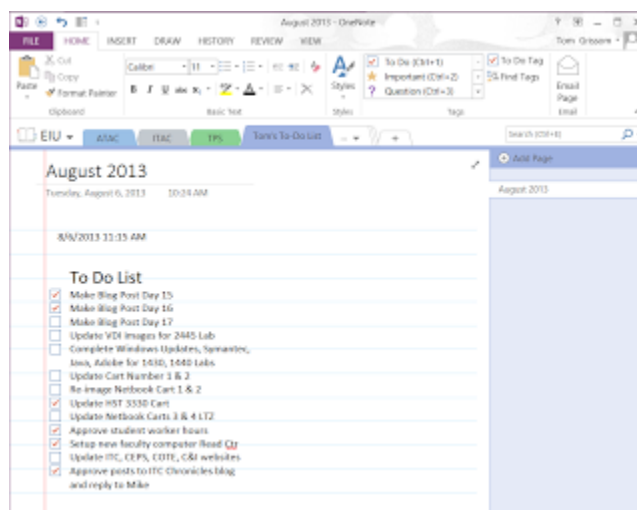
Day 3 - 07032013

This structure works very well for me and keeps my notebooks organized by academic year or by semester. Next year I can replicate the structure and start anew. I often like to put in a date code like 07012013 for July 1, 2013 as I can search by the code if I want to know what I did in last Tuesdays class. That is just me, you can develop your own system that makes sense to you.

The other big payoff with organizing your notebooks upfront is that this will greatly help you later when you start searching for information contained in your notes. You can filter searches by notebooks, sections, and pages. Once you start accumulating notes they quickly grow and narrowing your search criteria by notebook, section, or page is a good way to find things faster.

Let's take a closer look at my To-Do List:

There are so many great things about OneNote for teachers and students that it is hard to know where to begin. Many teachers keep to-do lists and this is as good of place as any to start. To-Do Lists are immediately useful and will allow you to get a feel for how OneNote works.



I organize my To-Do Lists by month, but do whatever works for you. Maybe you have a project you are working on. You can make a section just for that project, for example – My Special Project 2013. You can then add Pages underneath the My Special Projects Section related to it. Often times I will only have one page under a section, especially for to-do lists as I do not want to scatter the information everywhere.

If it is a really big special project you might want to consider making it its own Notebook.

If you are new to OneNote 2013 I highly recommend you go through this introductory tutorial by clicking on the following link:

Create your first OneNote 2013 notebook

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/support/create-your-first-onenote-2013-notebook-RZ102925079.aspx>



This tutorial is a PowerPoint .pptx file that contains short videos about how to use OneNote.

The other tutorial I would suggest is "Make the switch to OneNote 2013". Both tutorials are well done and each topic within the PowerPoint is only two to three minutes in length.

Make the switch to OneNote 2013

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/onenote-help/make-the-switch-to-onenote-2013-RZ102924426.aspx>

If you would like you can download the PowerPoint files locally to the Surface RT and watch the videos locally, even if you do not have an Internet connection.

Microsoft has developed additional training materials for other Office 2013 applications and I highly recommend you take a few minutes and go through the tutorials. If you are interested in learning more about using Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote on the Surface RT click on the link below for other tutorials.

Additional Office 2013 training

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/support/training-FX101782702.aspx>

The screenshot shows the Office training website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, MY OFFICE, PRODUCTS, SUPPORT, IMAGES, TEMPATES, and STORE. Below the navigation bar, the main heading is "Office training" with a sub-heading "Discover the new". There are three featured training modules: "First words in Word 2013", "First workbook in Excel 2013", and "Calendar basics in Outlook 2013". Below these, there is a section titled "Training for the 2013 applications" which lists various Office 2013 applications with their respective icons: Excel, Access, Publisher, Outlook, Lync, SharePoint, PowerPoint, OneNote, Visio, Word, Project, and Office 365 for business. To the right of this list is a box for "Free 15-minute seminars" with a "View all" button. At the bottom, there are three columns of links for "Office 2010 training", "Office 2007 training", and "Office for Mac 2011 training".

So, with that, you should be well on your way to discovering what OneNote 2013 and the other Office applications can do for you when using the Surface RT.

Until next time...
Keep on Learning,

Tom Grissom, PhD

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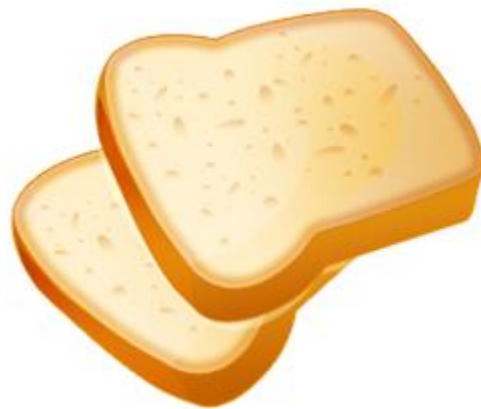
<http://techtalk4teachers.blogspot.com/>

Day 18 – Screen Clippings with OneNote, best thing since sliced bread

August 7, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers
Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8
Tablet

My perceptions of the Surface RT are changing the more I use it and the same is true of OneNote, in a good way. The Surface RT is working out to be a great companion device for me. Like the iPad, the RT has long battery life but lacks some of the real horsepower I occasionally need to get all my work done. For the heavy-lifting I still need to turn to my Desktop computer or the Surface Pro.

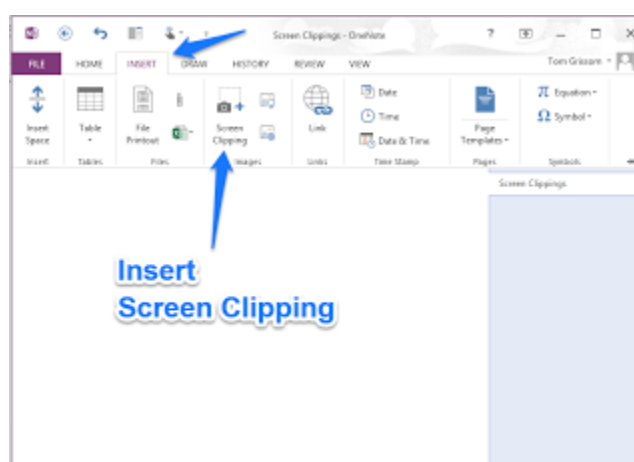


It is now rare that I do not have the Surface RT close by. I usually have the Desktop IE browser open at all times and right along with it, OneNote.

Screen Clippings in OneNote

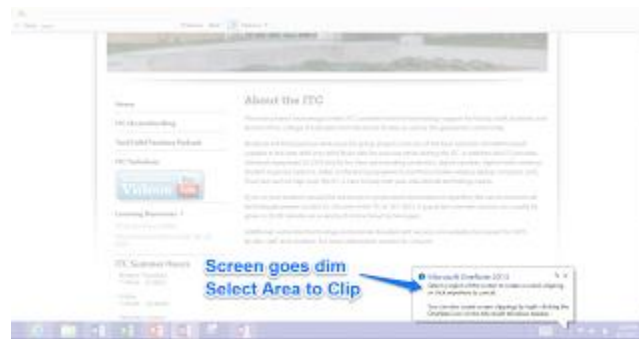
One of the workflows I routinely use is for taking Screen Clippings with OneNote. A Screen Clipping is like a photo snapshot of an area on the screen. To do this I navigate to a website that has something of interest I want to save to OneNote. I open the IE browser to the webpage of interest in full-screen mode on the Surface RTs Desktop, then I also bring up OneNote in full-screen mode on the Desktop. Think of this as OneNote being layered on top of the webpage on the Desktop of the RT.

Now, OneNote is on top and all I see, I change to the Notebook, Section, and Page where I want to save a note about the website of interest that is now behind OneNote. I place the cursor on the Page in OneNote where I want my note to be inserted and then go to the INSERT tab on the Ribbon Interface in OneNote.

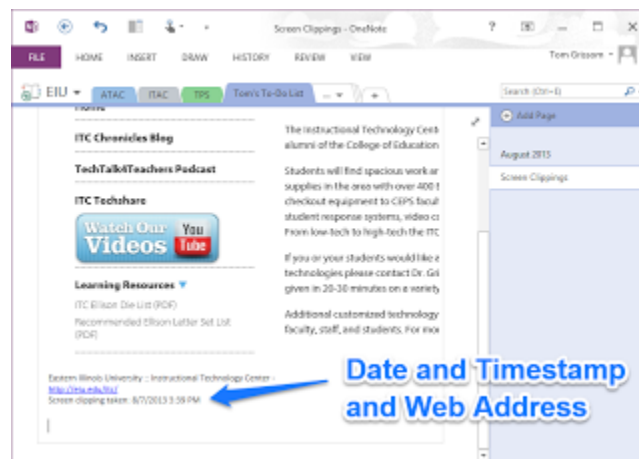


From the INSERT tab you will see an icon for Screen Clipping. When you select the Screen Clipping icon OneNote minimizes, and whatever you had open in the background (in this case our full-screen Internet browser) fades-out. Your screen will now be dim and you will see a small cross-hair pointer that you can draw a rectangle around the area of the webpage that you want to make a Screen Clipping of. As soon as you draw the area of the screen to select it

OneNote will automatically Paste it into your OneNote Notebook, pretty cool!



You can select a small area of the screen or the entire screen. I often only select a small portion of the screen that I am interested in. No need to capture a full webpage that is 80 percent advertisements, concentrate on the content you want to make note of.



Best of all, along with the Screen Clipping you just made, you also get a time and date stamp along with the URL of the webpage where you took the Screen Clipping from! Talk about useful!!!

How many times have you found something of interest on a website but cannot remember where it was? With OneNote and the Surface RT you no longer have that excuse as it is so easy to make Screen Clippings. Better yet, these screen clippings are searchable and you can add your own notes off to the side of the

clippings about why you thought the webpage was worthy of saving in the first place.

With OneNote you can make different Sections or Pages to categorize your Screen Clippings. The choice is really up to you, the key is to make OneNote work for you.

For now, the Windows Key + S is the keyboard shortcut for making a screen clipping for OneNote. I have heard rumors that this may change in the next version of Windows (8.1) that is due out in about a month.

I keep the Send to OneNote app in my Taskbar of the RT Desktop, I use this like a shortcut to quickly take a Screen Clipping of anything I have displayed on the Desktop. This only works on the RT in Desktop mode, if I am using a modern app or the Start Screen and I need to take a Screen Clipping I currently use the Windows Key + S keyboard shortcut.

You do not need to confine yourself to making Screen Clippings of webpages, this also works for anything else on the screen. You could make a Screen Clipping of Word, Excel, PowerPoint files. This is a great way to illustrate things in the classroom and you can use OneNote like a telestrator using the DRAW tools built into OneNote. Watch a YouTube video, pause the screen, take a Screen Clipping and annotate away. Any coaches out there?



If you are a teacher, student, or coach, you really do need to give OneNote a try, it comes free with the Surface RT.

OneNote Rocks!

Until next time...
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Tom Grissom, PhD

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[Day 19 – Skyping with the Surface RT \(Video Chats\)](#)

August 8, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

The Surface RT is turning out to be quite a diverse teaching machine for the classroom. Today I would like to introduce you to the Skype video conferencing app. Skype allows you to easily video chat with your friends using the Internet. It could not be easier to video chat with a friend using the Surface RT.

The built-in kickstand on the Surface RT comes in extremely handy for Skyping as you just set the Surface RT with the kickstand open on a table, login with your Microsoft Account, and open up the Skype app from the Start Screen. Your friend will also need a Microsoft (Skype) account. Once you know their Skype name, search for it, select it, and press the Call button, that's it!

By default, the Skype app begins with audio only for the call and you will need to press the Video Camera icon to give permission for Skype to turn on the webcam.

The front-facing camera on the Surface RT is angled for the best video conferencing viewing experience when you using the kickstand. The Surface RT also has a built-in microphone that sounds good so you will not need to mess around with an external camera or mic.

Since I am a little camera shy I would like to introduce you to Mr. B and Mr. T who will be making the Skype call today.



Like many things with the Surface RT, the Skype app is free and can be downloaded from the Windows Store if it did not come preloaded on the Windows 8 Start Screen.

The new version of Skype is greatly simplified over previous versions I have used on Windows 7 as it has been redesigned for Windows 8. Skype has been around for a long time and many just know video conferencing as Skyping. This is a bit like calling tissues Kleenex as there are other video chatting services, but the Skype branding is strong.



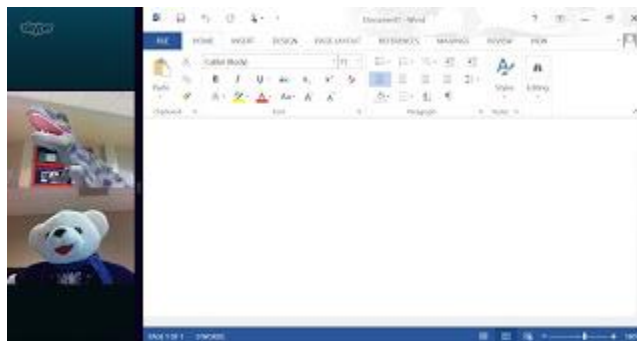
One of the benefits of a Microsoft Account is that it conglomerates all Microsoft services under one account and this makes things much easier to manage by avoiding multiple userids and passwords. I had to merge my very old Skype Account with my Microsoft account last year when Microsoft was merging multiple accounts but now I just need to login once and Skype is available to me.

Snap View with Multitasking on the Surface RT

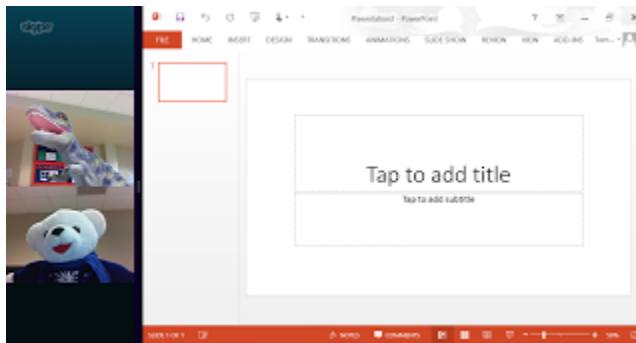
Another huge benefit of the Surface RT over other tablets on the market is its ability to multitask. I often have multiple apps open at the same time and it is very easy to cycle through them by swiping in with my left thumb over and over to go from app to app. If I need a more static view of two apps side-by-side I use the "Snap" feature of Windows 8.

I use the snap feature a lot on the Surface RT. You can snap apps with an 80/20 split or 50/50 split. Windows 8.1 will offer additional choices when it becomes available next month.

Below are two screenshots of how you might use a video chat with snap view. The first example has the Skype call snapped to the left and on the right-hand side I have Word open to take notes about the conference call.



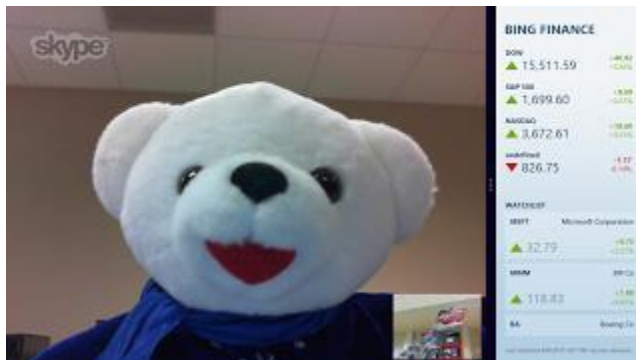
The next example I have the Skype call snapped to the left and PowerPoint open on the right. You could be viewing a PowerPoint together with your video conferencing friend if you email them the PowerPoint ahead of time. If you number your slides this is a great way to share and discuss the presentation if your partner cannot get together face-to-face. Of course, your partner would need a device (like the Surface RT or Surface Pro) that multitasks and offers snap-view to see both the video chat and the PowerPoint at the same time ;)



There are many apps that will work with snap-view. If you are a sports fan you can keep the game scores open on the side as you are doing other work.



Or, if you are wanting to keep track of the business world open the Bing Finance app on the side for daily info on the markets.



In the above examples I have the Skype app open in the main snap view window but you could have any combination of Windows 8 apps you want. You could have your IE browser open and the music app snapped to the side.

Another useful combination is to snap a YouTube Tutorial to one side and have the app you are learning about in the main window. The possibilities are endless.

Surface RT Rocks!

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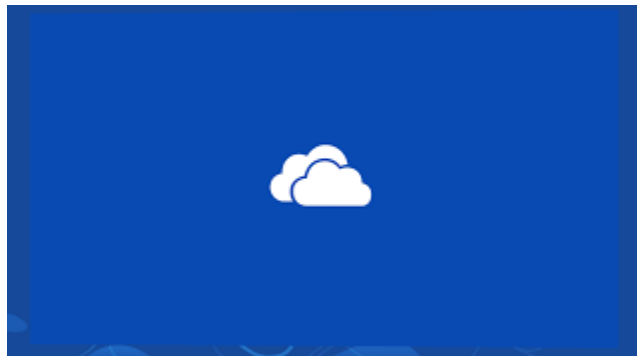
[Day 20 – The Magic of SkyDrive and the Surface RT](#)

August 9, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Throughout this series I have occasionally mentioned SkyDrive. SkyDrive is the Microsoft cloud storage solution for end-users.

At present, you automatically get 7 GB of storage space when you sign-up for a free Microsoft Account. Of course you can purchase additional storage if necessary but for most users 7GB should be sufficient in getting started with SkyDrive.



I have been using SkyDrive for over five years now and this service has evolved considerably over the years. You may be familiar with similar services like Dropbox, Google Drive, or iCloud that offer cloud storage. There are others as well but Microsoft SkyDrive was an early pioneer.

Microsoft has recently been involved in a lawsuit with BSkyB over the “Sky” name and has agreed to a settlement to change the name of SkyDrive to something else. BSkyB has granted a reasonable period for Microsoft to make

this name change. For now, I will continue to call it SkyDrive until a new name is announced.

SkyDrive is the Hub of Your Microsoft Account

Today, SkyDrive is becoming the hub for your Microsoft Account. There are many advantages to having files and settings stored in the cloud. Since I use the Surface RT as a companion device I often work on my main Desktop computer during the day and the RT at night. If I save selected files to SkyDrive they will be accessible on other devices I use when I login with the same Microsoft Account on a different device.



For example, if I save a file to SkyDrive at work it will be available to me at home when I login with the same Microsoft account on the Surface RT. I can work on the file at home and save it back to SkyDrive, the next morning I go to work, login, and the updated file is there waiting for me.

Cloud storage is relatively new and some organizations have policies about storing information outside a company firewall. I do not recommend storing confidential data to the cloud unless security protocols have been established but for my lesson plans and generic work it is fine for me. Be sure to follow your organizations computing policies.

Magical Account Syncing To Trusted Devices

The other huge benefit to having a Microsoft Account is that you can setup devices as “trusted devices” so that information can be synced across these trusted devices. When you update information on one trusted device, say a new photo, it is automatically synced and available to other devices via SkyDrive.



When I first received the Surface RT, brand new out of the box, I turned it on and after going through the initial setup and “trusting” the device ALL of my Microsoft Account information synced to the new RT.

This is magical!



All of my preferences, favorite websites, pictures, desktop wallpaper, pinned items on the task bar, and documents stored to SkyDrive were all immediately available to me. My new Surface RT became like my other device that I spent hours customizing just for me. ALL of this in about 20 minutes from logging in to a brand new device the first time!

After syncing, my “Live Tiles” on the Windows 8 Start Screen came to life with MY information.

The Photos Live Tile displayed my pictures, the SkyDrive Live Tile displayed the last documents I was working on, and the Weather Live Tile remembered my location. The customization offered by account syncing saves much time and takes some of the pain away when setting up a new Windows device.

The other benefit of SkyDrive is that you can access your files from anywhere there is an Internet connection. You do not even have to have an Office application installed on the computer you are using. This is another Microsoft “secret” that few know about.

You may have heard of Google Docs and how you only need a browser and Google account to access your files on Google Drive. Sound familiar?

Google is not the only one with free office-like apps, Microsoft has been busy creating “Office Web Apps” that only require a Microsoft Account and browser to use.

Office Web Apps include Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote. These web apps are a bit watered-down from their full-fledged big brother applications but when used with SkyDrive they become very handy to have access to anywhere an Internet connection is available.

Sharing

SkyDrive also allows you to easily share photos and documents with other individuals via a link or you can make a file public for sharing with others. You can give others read-only access to a particular file, or editing capability if trusted.

Windows Store Apps

Not all of my Windows Store apps were installed by default on my new RT. I had to go out and manually install some of the apps I wanted on the new RT from the Windows Store. All of my data was available but I did have to install certain apps.

I have heard rumors that the new Windows 8.1 update will give you the choice to “sync all of your apps” across multiple devices. What that would mean is if I installed the Kindle app on my Desktop and had “sync my apps” turned on for the RT, the Kindle app would automatically install on my Surface RT.

Magical!

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[Day 21 – Xbox Music on the Surface RT](#)

August 10, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

I spent most of the day today helping out a local K12 school setup new computers to help get ready for back to school. This post will be short but I wanted to cover another feature of the Surface RT tablet for teachers, music. Music can help lighten the load during this very busy time.



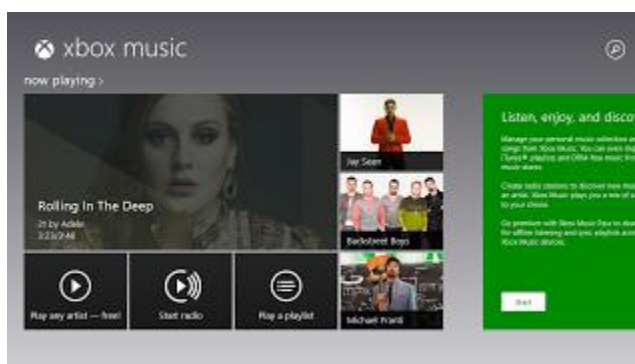
This time of year is absolutely crazy for technology staff as we get ready for the tidal wave of faculty, staff, and students that will soon hit the school doors all at once.

Technology folks work extremely hard and the summertime is no different. Many think the pace is slowed but actually there really is no such thing as a “slow time” anymore in the tech world. Floors are waxed so equipment has to be taken out of rooms and re-installed once the summer cleaning is finished. New systems are installed, software is upgraded, wireless access is being expanded, new users have to be entered, and registration systems updated. So was the case today.

To keep me company I had my Surface RT with me and I decided to listen to the Xbox Music app that comes free on the Surface RT. The Xbox Music app is a first class music service. One of the things I really like is that it lets you create playlists and radio stations of your favorite artists.

Here is a short example of how I used the Xbox Music app today.

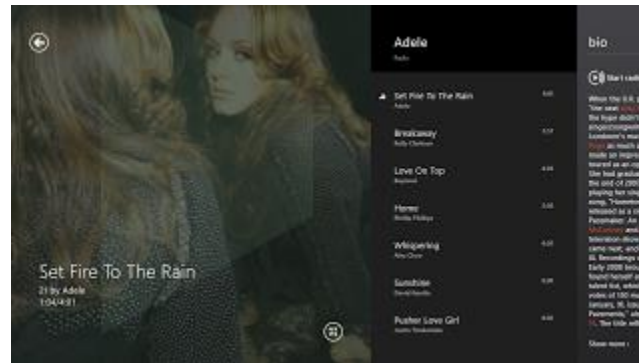
I opened Xbox Music and did a search for the artist I wanted to hear. Once I selected my artist, let's use Adele in the example, I created a Radio station for Adele and artists similar to Adele.



Another great thing about your own Radio station is that you can Fast Forward through a song or skip a song if you do not like it. Like other radio stations, there may sometimes be inappropriate language in some songs so keep that in mind.

What I really like about the Xbox Music service is that you will see a slideshow of pictures of the artist scrolling by in the "now playing" window.

You also get an album art experience in that you see a Biography of the artist currently playing and suggestions for other artist that are in a similar style. This is a fantastic way to expand your musical repertoire and I have discovered many artists I never knew about before using this service.



Xbox Music is free on the Surface RT but you will occasionally hear advertisements. If you do not like the advertisements you can pay \$9.99 for a music pass that will get rid of the ads and also allow you to download music locally on the Surface RT so you can listen without a WiFi connection.

Another cool feature I really like when I am at home is using the Smart Glass app to "Play To" my Xbox that is connected to my HDTV to watch and listen the slideshow on the big screen.

Xbox Music kept me company today as I installed dozens and dozens of computers and it helped make the day go a little quicker.

Xbox Music Rocks!

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Tom Grissom, PhD

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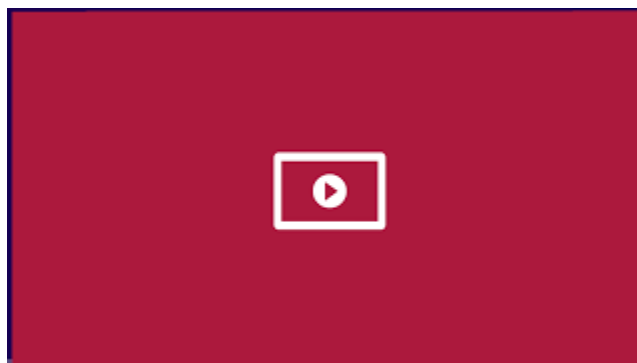
Day 22 – Video on the Surface RT

August 11, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Today was another day spent at the local K12 school helping out with getting ready for the first day of class. By the end of the day we were able to completely image all of the computers in the Elementary building. Now for all the tweaks and customizations and on to the middle school and high school. It is going to be a busy week.

Keeping me company again today was my Surface RT. Today I setup my Surface RT in the Computer Lab(s) I was working on and was able to connect the RT to the projector and sound system in the lab. I could play back videos that I preloaded on the Surface RT.



Besides the computer labs, we were also in areas of the school that had no WiFi so I also brought along a USB flash drive full of MP4 and WMV video files to access where no WiFi

The Surface RT features a USB port that comes in very handy in these situations. It also has a microSD card that I can load up to 64GB of files to access locally, nice!

Expandable storage on the Surface RT is a HUGE advantage over other tablets on the market.

I really expected the Surface RT to struggle with playing back video with all the press coverage about the slow ARM processor that is almost always mentioned in the same breath of any review of the RT. But, the RT performed very, very, well at video playback.

The screen would go black as it went to sleep but the sound kept going, the power setting can be changed so the screen does not go to sleep so fast but it does this to conserve power. I did bring my power adapter to plug-in and I did change the power settings so I could see the videos playing back in the labs.

This time of year you will find many tech people across the nation giving their own time on the weekends and evenings getting systems ready for that first day of school. I suspect many readers of this blog have been doing the same.

The Surface RT also comes with the Xbox Video service but to be honest I have not used it much as most of the videos there require a purchase. I do need to give this a try but have not found the time, nor need to do so.

You might be asking then, what videos am I watching on the RT? Stay tuned for the answer to that question tomorrow.

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Day 23 – Podcasts on the Surface RT

August 12, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8
Tablet

I continue to find value in the Surface RT tablet for teaching and learning purposes. Yesterday I lauded the USB port and microSD card slot that allows for expandable storage on the Surface RT.

What this means to me in practical terms is that I can load up a USB flash drive full of educational WMV's, MP3's, and MP4's and have hours/days of listening and viewing on the Surface RT. Where do I get these free educational recordings in audio and video formats? Podcasts.



I have one central Desktop computer with a large hard drive that I use as my main media storage computer. I occasionally copy files to other devices, like the Surface RT, that I want to listen or view the content on while on the road. This allows me to manage my media collection without having to re-download media files from device to device wirelessly.

A 32GB Flash Drive can be purchased for under \$20 now and if you are in a school setting using a USB Flash drive is often times more convenient to access

multimedia content than downloading selected files to every single tablet over wireless. This also saves tremendous bandwidth costs and provides easy local access to bypass areas that do not have WiFi access. Even if you do have wireless available there are times when a network will become congested and videos will often start buffering and become unwatchable. This is particularly true if you send 30 students to the same video at the same time on the network. Having videos play locally on the local device avoids this problem.

In a perfect world we would have enough bandwidth to do what we wanted to, but for many schools this is just not the case. The Surface RT has been great at playing back HD quality videos off of the USB port.

If a 32GB Flash Drive is not enough storage for you how about a 1 Terabyte USB drive? Yes, the Surface RT will access a 1 TB USB drive that can store hundreds of HD quality MP4 files. This is another advantage of having the Desktop mode on the RT as you can use the traditional file manager to access audio and video files.

You can even connect the Surface RT to a projector or big screen HDTV if you like and if you use the 1 TB USB drive full of educational media you will have months of listening and/or viewing content available for your classroom.

Podcast Catcher Apps

There are two podcast catcher apps that I routinely use on the Surface RT. Podcasts! and Slap Dash Podcast, both are available for free in the Windows Store.



These apps are similar but they have different styles and different catalogs.

When I am looking for something I will do a search in both catalogs to see if there is anything new I am interested in. Apple has not yet made an iTunes client available on Windows 8 but I find these two podcast apps more than adequate and a good replacement for iTunes. Plus, you already have Xbox Music for all your music needs.



The other nice thing about the Podcasts! and Slap Dash Podcast apps are that they give me the freedom to "live stream" audio and video podcasts to the Surface RT. When I stream I do not have to worry about downloading them and taking up storage space on the RT. The choice is yours, whether you want to subscribe and download or just stream audio/video when you have a wireless connection.

Be aware that streaming can use massive amounts of bandwidth so be mindful if you are using a metered Internet connection with data caps. This is another

reason I use one central computer as it is hard-wired to a LAN connection and it is much faster downloading large video files.

Podcasts! and Slap Dash Podcast on the Surface RT gives me access to a catalog of thousands of free podcasts. Please give one or both a try on the Surface RT and see what you think.

Might I suggest our TechTalk4Teachers podcast :)



Here is the TechTalk4Teachers RSS Feed, if you cannot find TechTalk4Teachers in the catalog you can manually add it in either podcast catcher by typing in our RSS feed:

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[Day 24 – Kahn Academy and Flipped Learning with the Surface RT](#)

August 13, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Today I would like to continue with a video related post of using the Surface RT in a flipped classroom learning environment. The way that the Surface RT plays back video has been a surprise to me. With all the reports of the slow RT ARM processor I was expecting a sluggish viewing experience, this has not been the case at all. The Surface RT has been a champ at video playback.

Yesterday I laid out the possibilities of using expandable storage with the Surface RT and how I have been watching full HD MP4 files without issue. This experience has made me think that the Surface RT might make a great device for those classrooms interested in flipped learning.



Flipped learning has gained notoriety over the past five years as a different pedagogical method for engaging students in the classroom. In its most basic form teachers assign students to watch videos as homework. When students come to class the next day the teacher will have the students work on

homework in class, thus the name the flipped classroom. If a student has a question they can watch the instructional video again or ask the teacher. Better yet, have students help each other and dive deeper into the homework problems together. Research has shown significant gains in student understanding when peer instruction is used.

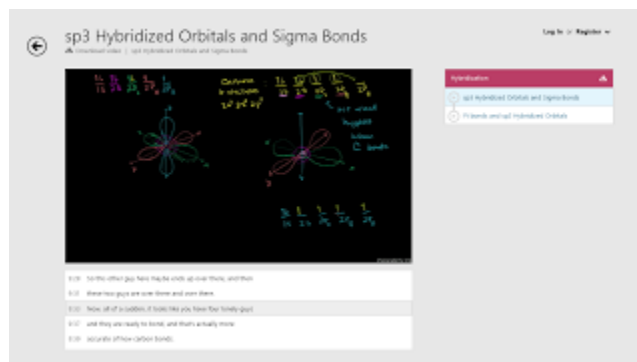
Of course, you can make your own video screencasts and the Surface RT can help with that too, but when will you find the time?

You may be surprised to find there are already thousands of educational videos already available on the Internet. The best known site for K12 instructional videos is the Khan Academy, and as they say, there is an app for that for the Surface RT.



Sal Kahn, the originator of the Kahn Academy has become the best known advocate for flipped learning in the classroom. He has created the non-profit Khan Academy website that has thousands of videos on just about any subject imaginable for K12. These videos are typically less than 10 minutes each and build upon each other.

There are videos for Basic Math, Algebra, Geometry, Calculus, General Science, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Finance, English, Social Studies..... you get the idea.



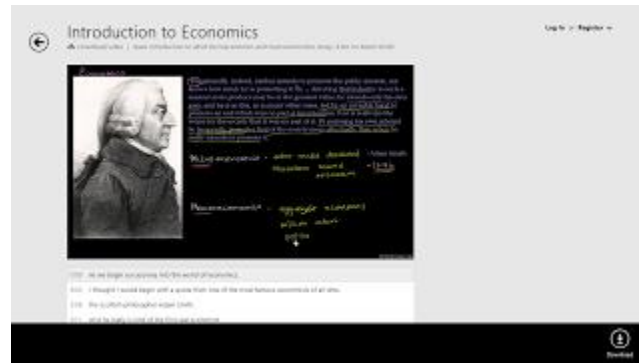
This is where the Surface RT comes in. I installed the Khan Academy app from the Windows store and the best thing about this app is that it lets me download videos that I am interested in directly to the Surface RT.

In this area of the State of Illinois our Internet access is limited. This is especially true for our K12 students as many parents do not have access to broadband Internet. You really need to have reliable Internet connection to watch videos online and this has been a deterrent to flipped learning. But, if you download them locally to the Surface RT you can watch them anywhere WITHOUT an Internet connection!!!

This has been a big stumbling block for teachers in this area wanting to implement the flipped classroom approach to teaching. The Surface RT is capable of solving this problem. If you have a central computer to download the videos you now have a reasonable way to share legal content with other students thanks to the Surface RT's USB port.

With the Khan Academy app on the Surface RT students literally have access to an entire K12 curriculum in bite-sized video chunks. If you are lucky enough to have broadband Internet access you can just watch the videos when you are online, no need to download.

Another great feature of this app on the RT is that the videos are Closed Captioned and you can read the captions along as he speaks!



The Khan Academy has also added learning analytics that make it possible to track student progress if students login with a user account. If you download videos locally the Khan Academy will not be able to track video viewing, but at least students have the content available at home.

I have provided a link below to an overview of Sal Khan explaining how he created the Khan Academy and how it can help students. It is an interesting story on how he used a Tablet PC and screencasting software to tutor his cousins who were living on the other side of the country. That was the birth of the Khan Academy.

There is much more to flipped learning and you do not even have to include videos to flip your classroom but that is another discussion. Many start with the video approach because of the success others have seen with the Khan Academy.

So, once again the Surface RT has me thinking about what students can do with this device, the list is growing.

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Day 25 – The Serendipity of the Stars and Surface RT

August 14, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

A couple of nights ago I was out gazing at the stars trying to catch a glimpse of the annual Perseid Meteor shower that puts on a celestial show this time of year.

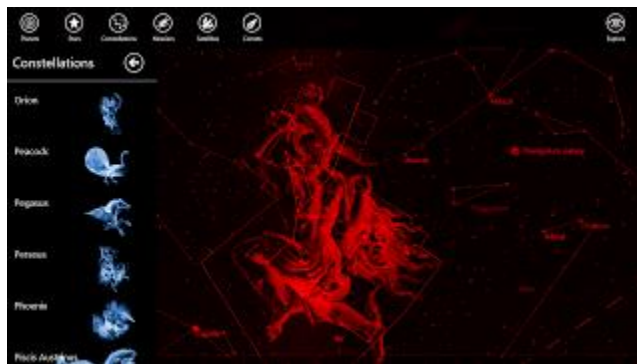
I have long been a star-watcher and the Perseid event got me to thinking about if there were any apps on the Surface RT I could use to help me navigate around the night sky. Turns out there is!



I downloaded the free Star Chart app on the Surface RT from the Windows Store. Most apps I install take only 30 to 60 seconds on the RT but this one was different and took about 20 minutes to install. Turns out the Universe is a big place and the database requires approximately 500MB of space (pardon the pun).

The Perseid Meteor viewing was a bust for me as the clouds rolled in during the peak viewing hours between Midnight and 3am but I had the Star Chart app to keep me company.

One of the best features of this app is a night-time mode that turns the Surface RT screen all red. This keeps your pupils from dilating from a bright screen and lets you keep as dark of viewing experience as possible to see the stars clearly.



With Star Chart you basically have an entire Astronomy course with just this one app!

There is also an explore view that lets you navigate around the Universe with pre-made tours of the Solar System. Pinch and zoom works well and the graphics are astonishing. There is even a simulated Celestial Sphere you can put into motion to see how the stars rise and set on the horizon.

Star Chart has categories for Planets, Stars, Constellations, Messiers, Satellites, and Comets, but the Satellites and Comets cost extra as an upgrade.



This is a pretty amazing app and should be enough to keep any Astronomy fan busy for quite some time.

Until next time...
Keep on Learning,

Tom Grissom, PhD

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Day 26 –Mind Mapping with the Surface RT

August 15, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8
Tablet

In my adventures with the Surface RT I have been trying to find apps that will be useful for teachers. If you were lucky enough to get one of the free Surface RTs from Microsoft at the #iste13 conference I think you will find much value with the Surface RT in the classroom. The other day I found a great mind map tool called M8! and works great with the Surface RT.

Mind mapping and flowcharting are common activities that teachers and students routinely do. While I am a fan of freehand note taking and sketching some prefer to have a more ordered and readable format, M8! fills that need.

M8! is available for free in the Windows Store and also has a more full-featured paid version. M8! is an app that will help you with easily creating mind maps.

Mind Maps

With mind mapping you start with a central idea and branch out from there. This helps you visualize your ideas and thoughts in a fast and efficient way.

I very quickly put together a mind map using M8! about some of the key features of the Surface RT. This mind map barely scratches the surface (sorry, another pun).

you press the Windows Flag button to let you know you pressed it. This is haptic feedback since it is not a physical button. When both the Win Flag and Volume Down rocker are pressed at the same time you should see the screen go dim as it takes the screenshot.

Note: If you accidentally press the Windows Flag and the Volume Up rocker at the same time you will turn on Narrator and you will hear a voice. To turn Narrator off just press the Windows Flag and Volume Up button again.

Screenshots are saved to the Pictures Folder in the Screenshots sub-folder on the Surface RT.

Since a PNG file is a standard graphic format you can edit it with other image editing apps like Fotor or Skitch Touch on the Surface RT.

M8! is available for free in the Windows Store and also has a more full-featured paid version. M8! is an app that will help you with easily creating mind maps.



So, there you have it another extremely useful app for teachers and students using the Surface RT.

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Day 27 –Sketchnotes with the Surface RT

August 16, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers

Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

I discussed a computer-based app yesterday for mind mapping on the Surface RT. Today, I would like to discuss a more organic approach that is also loosely based on the mind mapping idea using something called sketchnotes.

Learning is Messy

Perhaps it is just me but when I am learning something new learning feels messy. I feel awkward like a baby trying to learn how to take those first steps. It would be really nice to create a perfect mind map the first time I learn something new but learning does not work that way. We have gaps in our knowledge that need to be filled and a mind map is a great way to expose some of those gaps.

I am the type that likes to doodle as I think about and learn new things. When we learn something new by definition we do not have control of all the knowledge and facts needed for mastery. Sketching helps me connect the knowledge I already have with new material. There is something about the hand and eye working together that provides the conditions necessary for learning AND remembering new things. Making associations from the known to the unknown is how we learn.

Tony Buzan is one of the leaders in the field of mind mapping and has conducted years of research into its effectiveness. He has written many books on the subject and has a system based upon his research. Buzan is one of the

experts in the field but many others have used the mind mapping concept going back hundreds of years. I have provided a more general link below to a Wikipedia article about mind maps if you want a quick overview.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map

There are many different ways to use the basic premise of creating mind maps. You generally start with an idea or concept in the middle of the page and branch out from there.

Sketchnoting is a little different take on mind mapping and is not as structured.

A new trend in attending some conferences is to invite an artist to create something known as sketchnotes. As the name implies this is just a sketch about a particular topic that transforms the spoken word into a sketch that is usually done on a large sheet of paper taped to a wall. Here is another link to the Sketchnote Army that provides hundreds of examples.

<http://sketchnotearmy.com/>

There is no one right way to create a sketchnote, do what works for you. Some use colors others use monochrome. Some use more sketches, others use more words. The important thing is for these notes to help you learn and remember whatever content you are trying to master.

Now, how can we use the Surface RT to help us create freeform mind maps and sketch notes? There are actually many ways but I will mention a couple to get started.

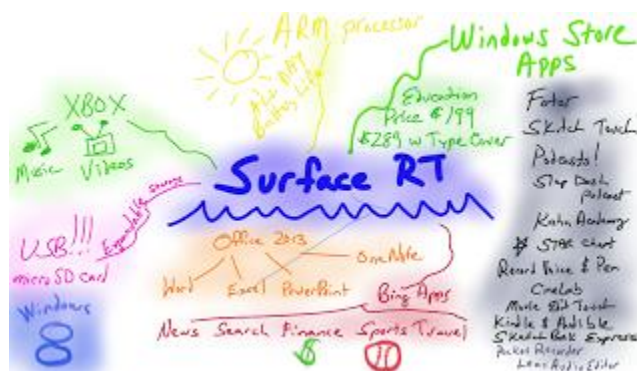
The first app that works very well on the Surface RT is Sketch Book Express. I purchased a capacitive stylus to help me sketch more precisely than just using my finger and this works OK on the Surface RT. I say "just OK" because my experience on the Surface Pro with active digitizer Pen is much, much better. Since the Surface RT uses a capacitive touch screen it is similar to the iPad and is not meant for precise work. It feels like finger painting so you do not have a lot of control.

Yesterday, I used M8! app to create a detailed mind map about the Surface RT, below is my sketchnote example with a similar Surface RT theme. I did not sketch many symbols but wanted to represent the big features of the Surface RT.



Both the Surface RT and the iPad feel limited with precision compared to the superior drawing and writing experience on the Surface Pro. Having said that, it is quite workable if you do not need precise control and will do fine for most classroom work.

Below is another sketchnote example I created on my Surface Pro, notice there is a lot more detail and I did sketch some symbols to help me associate the material because the digital Pen is easier to use.



Yesterdays M8! example was computer-based and all neat and tidy but my sketchnote today is free-form and messy. One is not better than the other, just

different. The M8! app and the sketchnotes I created above represent the same information but in two completely different visual presentation styles. Some may find my sketches hideous and prefer the neat M8! computer-based app and that is fine, but for me I find value in associating my handwritten notes in a colorful sketchnote form. The good news is that the Surface RT is a flexible tool and you get to decide how to use it best for your needs.

OneNote for Sketchnotes

You can also use OneNote to make your mind maps and sketches. This is one reason I am such a fan of OneNote for teaching and learning. You can type your notes or you can use handwriting (or both). You can draw symbols and sketches at any time in OneNote. Best of all since you are doing this work in a OneNote notebook you can share it immediately with your students if you would like.

Instant access to a teachers notes sounds like something of value to a student learning new things.

Or..... if you want to do it old school you can just use regular paper and colored pencils and sketch things out the old fashioned way with no need to be limited by the digital touch screen. When you are finished with the paper sketch you can use the camera on the Surface RT to take a snapshot of your paper notes and insert the picture into OneNote..... and since OneNote has Optical Character Recognition it can search for words within the sketch.

Taking the cognitive burden of notetaking away from students learning complex subjects frees the learners mind to concentrate on the new.

Maybe the students would not need to frantically worry about copying down everything you say to their own notes... maybe they could be freed to concentrate more on the material being presented rather than expending their energy on notetaking... maybe later they could regenerate your notes after class

when they are studying into a mind map or sketchnote form, hmmm, multi-pass learning :)

Think outside the box, there are a million ways to teach something new. The Surface RT has a lot of out of the box thinking going into its creation. This out of the box thinking is why I think some people do not get the Surface RT and deride it in the press. If you take the time to learn some new things about the Surface RT you will be rewarded with a very capable and affordable device for teaching and learning.

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[Day 28 – Audio Recording and Editing with the Surface RT](#)

August 17, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

It is a Saturday and today I am writing this at home on my Dell XPS laptop that is running Windows 8. I just signed into this laptop with my Microsoft Account after about a week of non-use and I just opened up Word 2013. It was great being greeted by my blog post from Day 27 (yesterday) in the recent documents section of Word.

Since I save the blog postings I am working on for this series to SkyDrive it is convenient to have them immediately available to me from any trusted device I use with my Microsoft Account. This syncing of content just happens without me even thinking about it. I did not have to sign-in to SkyDrive, go to the file manager and find my file in SkyDrive. My most recent Word documents from SkyDrive were just there waiting for me in Word 2013, nice!

Like many teachers I use Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote regularly and often create multimedia content. Today I would like to explore the audio creation side of the Surface RT and have a couple of audio app picks.

Pocket Recorder

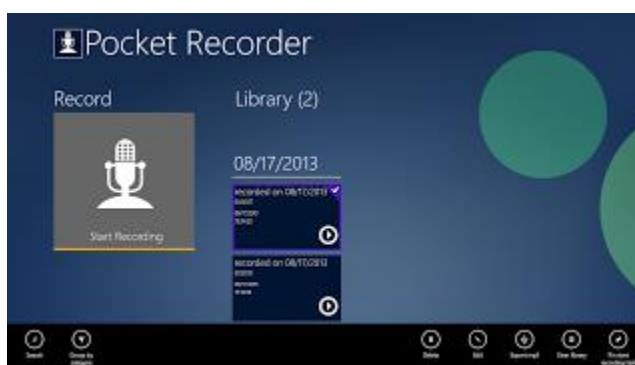
The first audio pick for the Surface RT is Pocket Recorder. Pocket Recorder is an extremely simple to use audio recording app. When you open the app you will see a big icon with a microphone that is labeled "Start Recording". Just click this icon and you immediately begin to record.



There is a timer that begins to keep track of the recording time and you simply press the stop icon to stop the recording.



When you are finished recording you can swipe up from the bottom of the screen (or press Windows Key and Z) to bring up the app bar for additional choices. From the app bar you can Search, Group by Category, Delete, Edit, Export to MP3, Clear Library, and Pin Start Recording Task.



If you Pin the Start Recording Task a Tile will be placed on the Start Screen that is for instant one-button recording, just press this tile and you immediately begin to record audio. It doesn't get much simpler than that.

Pocket Recorder also has the ability to Share a recording using the Charms bar to SkyDrive. If you want to have access to your recordings from any device you use with your Microsoft Account this is an easy way to access your recordings across multiple devices.



I also use the Pocket Recorder app on my Windows Phone and it has similar functionality. Having a phone app is often times more convenient because I almost always have my phone clipped-on to my belt. When I want to make an audio note on the spur of the moment I just use my Windows Phone and Pocket Recorder. These short audio notes are great for reminding me about things I want/need to do.

Files are saved with a date and timestamp. I am not sure what the recording limit is as I have been using this app for quick recordings under ten minutes. Going much more than this is probably pushing the Surface RT, especially when it comes to the audio editing process of larger files.

Lexis Audio Editor

Speaking of audio editors I have been using the trial version of the Lexis Audio Editor for some small editing jobs on the Surface RT. This is a very nice editor for single track audio edits. There is also a paid version in the Windows Store

but I am not sure what additional functionality is provided, if any beyond removing ads.

I really do like the Lexis Audio Editor as it is pretty intuitive to use. Below is a screen shot with the app bar showing the different capabilities for editing.



I still have not found a suitable replacement for Audacity for my audio editing needs. Audacity is a fantastic multi-track editor and I need multi-track editing capabilities for producing my TechTalk4Teachers podcast.

Since the Surface RT has a USB port it is easy enough to copy my recordings from the Surface RT to a USB drive and edit the audio files on a x86 computer that will run Audacity. Or, I could also save my audio files from the Surface RT to SkyDrive and access them on any x86 computer running Windows 8 that supports Audacity.

These are workarounds but I am still looking for a good multi-track audio editor that works on the Surface RT similar to Audacity. If you know of a good one that is in the Windows Store please let me know.

When I have an audio recording I want to keep after editing with Lexis Audio Editor I select Export to MP3 to save the recording out to a folder of my choice and with a filename that makes sense to me. Having a file management system helps me keep track of all the projects I have going on.

I have been using the Surface RT more and more and while I would not say that the Surface RT is a full replacement for my laptop, it is getting close. The Surface RT is handling about 80% of my needs but there are occasions that require a different device for the job.

It will be no shocker that I need a more powerful computer to handle heavier video and audio editing duties but the Surface RT can handle many of the smaller audio and video editing jobs.

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[Day 29 – Video Editing and Movie Making with the Surface RT](#)

August 18, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

I have been experimenting with creating short videos on the Surface RT for the past couple of days. Going into this blog series I did not think the Surface RT would be useful at all for video editing projects for the classroom. I have been pleasantly surprised to find a few video editors that do make the grade for classroom use. Let's explore.

Movie Edit Touch App

The first app I tried out was Movie Edit Touch and I think this app may ultimately be my app of choice for short classroom video projects. Movie Edit Touch by Magix offers a free trial in the Windows Store but if you want to do anything productive you will need to purchase this app (\$5.99 in the Windows Store). If you are wanting to edit videos on the RT downloading the trial version is worth it so you can see if it meets your needs before purchasing.



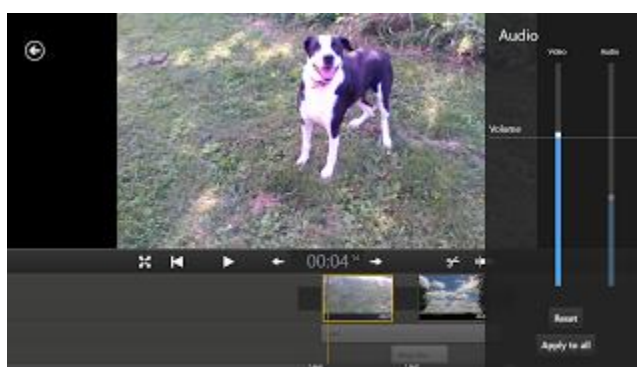
The trial version is crippled in that it will only export out 10 seconds of video. If you are into Vine-style videos that are all the rage right now this trial version may work for you but you will need to purchase the app to have practical export capabilities.

I have not purchased this app yet (or any other app) in this blog series but I most likely will purchase Movie Edit Touch so I can explore its true potential. Movie Edit Touch is very easy to use for basic video editing. It uses the touch interface of the Surface RT effectively and is very easy to use. If you or your students are familiar with the basics of video editing you should have no problem using this app, even if you have no experience with video editing it is easy to learn the basics.

The major difference with the Movie Edit Touch app compared to other video editors is that you slide your video timeline underneath a stationary scrubber marker located in the center of the timeline. In many video apps the video timeline stays stationary and you move the scrubber to position it where you want to make edits. This is a small adjustment and you will quickly get the idea when you first start to use Movie Edit Touch. The touch motion is very fast and is quite easy to position the video to the frames where you want to edit.



Movie Edit Touch also supports adding transitions, titles, and audio (it has a separate music track). You can adjust the volume separately for the video track and audio track which is really nice when you want to add background music to your videos but need to have music softly playing in the background so it does not overpower the sound on the video track. You can also easily add other video clips, photos, music, and even take a live camera shot (still picture or video) within the app. Talk about a live video editing experience, my mind is racing with all kinds of classroom possibilities!



With the Movie Edit Touch app and the Surface RT with its two built-in cameras you have everything you need to create basic classroom videos. You can use the kickstand on the Surface RT, set it on the table, open the Camera app and select the front facing camera and record a quick video chat for your students.

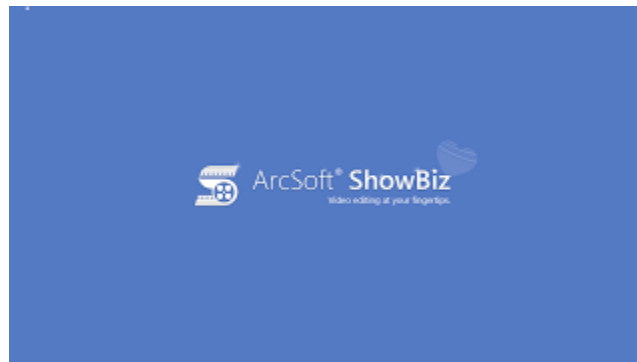
Another example, say you are going on a field trip, you can use the Camera app and back-facing camera on the RT to take still snapshots and/or videos of things of interest. When you get back you can import the photos into Movie

Edit Touch, add some background music, and you have created a video montage of the fieldtrip!

Once you export the video you can save it to a flash drive and share it easily with others or upload to SkyDrive. Just imagine the possibilities... all with a sub \$200 tablet, Wow! (The current education price of \$199 for schools/universities is a limited time offer).

ShowBiz Video Editing App

The other video editing app I discovered that shows promise is ShowBiz by ArcSoft. This too is a very easy to use video editor that provides basic editing capability. It also uses a stationary scrubber and you move the video underneath the scrubber marker to the place you want to add or make edits in your timeline.



ShowBiz also has a paid version (\$9.99 in the Windows Store) for more functionality. The trial version of ShowBiz is a little more useful than Movie Edit Touch as you can at least export out low resolution (VGA – 640x360) quality videos. This lets you get practice with the app to see if you would like it and if you do purchase it you will be able to export to a higher quality video format.

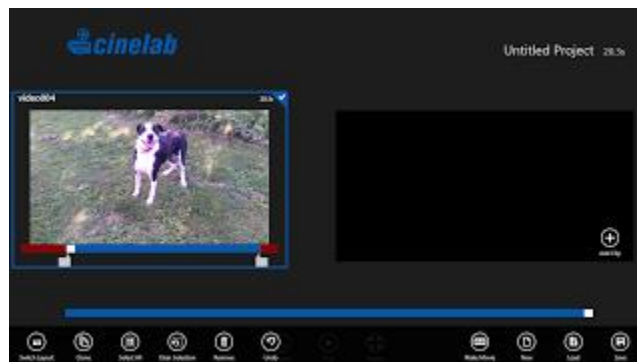
Another benefit of using ShowBiz is that it also allows you to record audio to add narration either to still photos or videos in addition to adding a music track. This gives you a video track, music track, and narration track. To add a narration position the video underneath the scrubber marker where you want to begin

the narration, then press + Add and select "Record Audio". You will see a microphone icon under the preview window. Just click on "Start" to begin recording your narration and press "Stop" when finished. You will see an audio track under the video segment on the timeline. I can think of many useful student projects for this feature as students narrate slideshows or videos that they have taken, pretty cool!



Cinelab

The last app I will mention is cinelab and it is a very, very, simple video editor app that basically lets you easily trim videos and combine them into one video track, that's it. No titles, no transitions, no soundtracks. If you do go into settings of the paid version it does have the ability to rotate your video (\$1.49 in the Windows Store) but this comes in handy if someone mistakenly recorded a video in portrait mode (like many do with cell phones).



Cinelab will be good for very fast trimming or when you have a series of videos you want to string together quickly. If you like this quick interface you could use it to put together clips then you could export out the compiled version and use it with Movie Edit Touch or ShowBiz to add transitions and titles. There are many ways to put together a movie project and the Surface RT has surprised me with the video editing possibilities.

So there you have it, three video editing apps that turn the Surface RT into a capable video editing machine.

Surface RT Rocks!

Until next time...
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Tom Grissom, PhD

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[Day 30 – Creating Screencasts and Flipping the Classroom with the Surface RT](#)

August 19, 2013

30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers Teaching and Learning with a Windows 8 Tablet

Well, we made it!
Day 30.

Thank you for being a reader of the [30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers](#) blog series. I hope to have helped in some small way to answer a few of the questions I have been getting about using the Surface RT in the classroom. This innovative device has been misunderstood by many and my posts over the past 30 days have given me a new insight and appreciation for this new class of device.

I have embedded a YouTube video I created on the Surface RT at the end of this blog post showing my final app pick in action.



Going into this blog series I really did not expect the Surface RT to even be a contender with producing multimedia content, but I have been proven wrong over the past week. The Surface RT is a great creation device with the ability to

easily create and share content via the built-in USB port or other cloud services like SkyDrive.

As a follow-up to yesterday I put my ideas to the test and produced a short little video using the Surface RT back-facing video camera and the Movie Edit Touch app. I have posted an example video to YouTube so you can see how you might use the Surface RT to document a field trip. This took me about five minutes to shoot and edit and another 20 minutes to render to a 1080P video. I could have cut the render time significantly if I encoded it to 720P but was curious if the Surface RT could handle the 1080P processing, it did. Below is a YouTube video of my first multimedia project I created on the Surface RT.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llChUw6Dwzg&feature=c4-overview&list=UUAkVWHTOjqjhlEn742w2Aw>

So, it is indeed impressive that we now have the Surface RT device that currently is at an educational price of \$199 that can produce video content from the field and have it available on YouTube in well under an hour. Amazing times we live in, what will you teach the world today with your Surface RT?

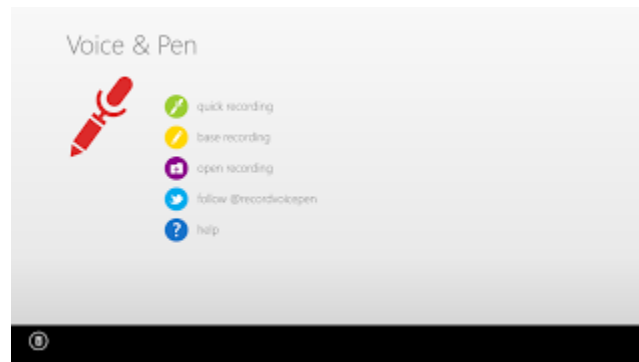
At less than half the cost of other tablets on the market the Surface RT has a lot to offer educators. In addition to many valuable apps in the Windows Store it can run the Office 2013 applications of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Excel and OneNote. It also has expandable storage to easily move content on and off the device, perfect for easy classroom sharing. The Surface RT offers tremendous value and is a worthy choice for teaching and learning purposes.

After being impressed by the video editing capabilities of the Surface RT I thought I would finish this series with one of the hottest trends in education circles today that also requires the production of videos, the flipped classroom.

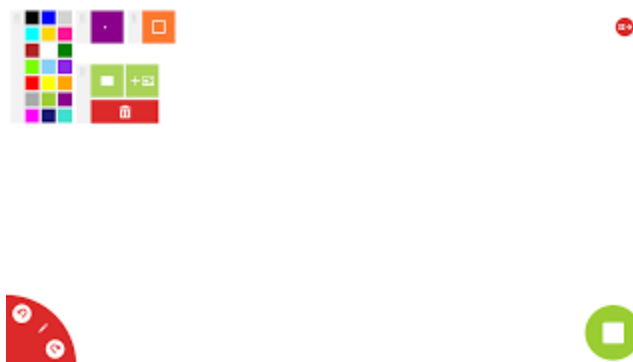
Screencasting on the Surface RT - Record Voice & Pen

One of the remaining challenges for the Surface RT is if it can easily produce screencasts for flipping the classroom. The answer is.... yes it can.

A screencast is simply a recording of everything you write on a touchscreen along with your voice. Think of it as recording everything you do on a whiteboard except you are now using the touchscreen of the Surface RT.



The best app I have found, to date, for screencasting on the Surface RT is Record Voice & Pen. This app also works on other Windows 8 tablets and comes in both a free and paid version. When you first open Record Voice & Pen you will be presented with a whiteboard screen with a few annotation tools available for you to use in your recording.



There is a Pen tool and a palette of color choices if you want to change the color of the Pen as you record your lesson. You can change the color and thickness of the Pen tool at any time in the recording. You can also hide the

tool choices if you need to draw in an area of the screen that they cover up. The recording process only records your pen annotations so do not worry about the overlay on the screen, it is just there so you can change Pen colors or if you want to add an image to annotate on top of. Changing colors during the lesson can draw the students attention to an area of the screen that is pertinent to the lesson.

The free version will place the word PREVIEW across your screencast recording if you use images. If you purchase the app this PREVIEW watermark will not show on your recordings.

I like Record Voice & Pen so much that it was one of the first apps I purchased from the store. I also went ahead and purchased the Movie Edit Touch and ShowBiz apps after yesterdays blog post. After 30 Days with the Surface RT I have only purchased 3 apps.

Record Voice & Pen also offers the ability to record multiple screens in one recording setting. If you purchase the Record Voice & Pen for \$3.49 in the Windows Store you can also add JPG or PNG images to your screencast and annotate on top of the images. This is great if you already have a prepared PowerPoint made as you can just save your PowerPoint slides as image files and add them to Record Voice & Pen BEFORE you start your recording. By prepping the slide images in advance you can easily move from one slide to another when you make the recording to keep the flow going.

I created a very fast-paced screencast of Record Voice & Pen and uploaded it to the EIU ITC YouTube Channel available here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVV3P8WxQlo&feature=c4-overview&list=UUAkVWHTOjqjhlEn742w2Aw>

Believe it or not, I have more to say about the Surface RT but it will need to wait a couple of days as today is the first day back-to-school. If you asked me 30 days ago if I would have needed more than 30 days to answer my questions about the Surface RT I would not have believed it.

The Surface RT still has a few secrets left to discover for teaching and learning.

So there you have it, the finale of the 30 Days with a Surface RT for Teachers is the Record Voice & Pen app for all of your screencasting needs.

Surface RT Rocks!

Until next time...
Keep on Learning,

Tom Grissom, PhD

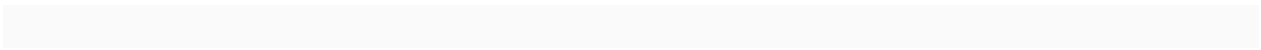
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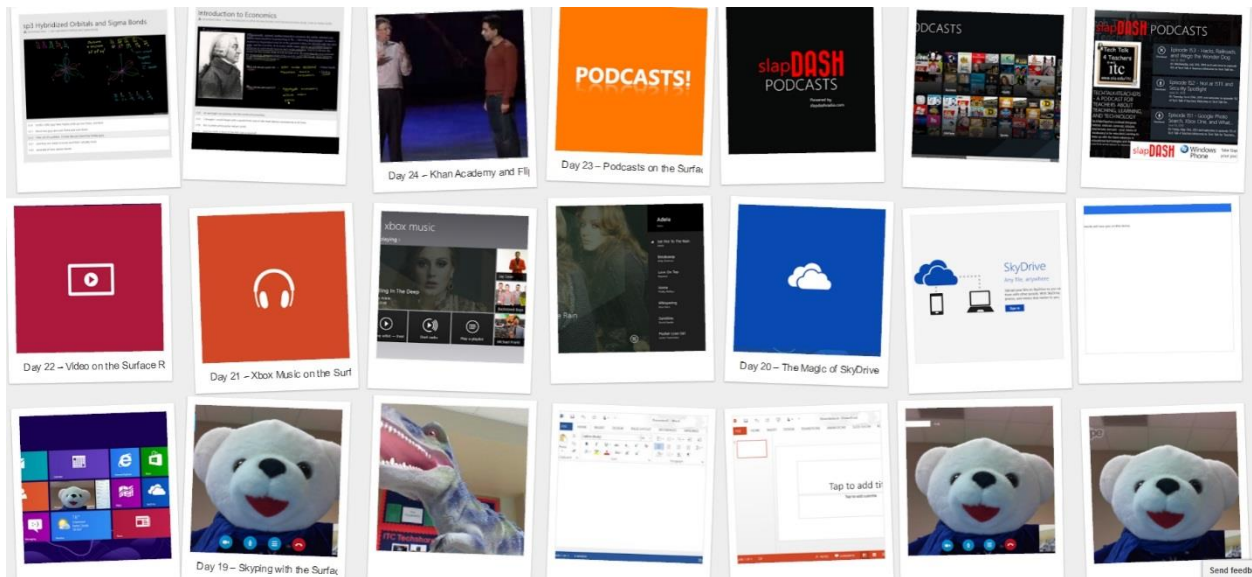
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Lessons Learned: 30 Days with a Surface RT Windows 8 Tablet



Tom Grissom, Ph.D.
Summer 2013