

## **President's Corner: Know All About Your Computer**

**By Eric Moore**

**July 9, 2016**

### **Introduction**

Knowing where to find information about your computer's operating system, software, and hardware is something that all computer users should know. Whether you are checking the compatibility of a particular program with your operating system, the driver version of a piece of hardware, or the version of a program as it pertains to a technical problem, a few mouse clicks may be all you need to find the information you need. In this column I will cover three main areas of interest for Windows users: software, operating system, and hardware.

### **Your Software**

Finding the version of a piece of software is usually as simple as opening the program, clicking the "Help" link on the toolbar or ribbon, and then clicking the option titled "About ...", where the ellipsis is the placeholder for the name of the program you are using. You will usually find detailed information including the major and minor version numbers, whether it is a 32- or 64-bit program, who made it, and sometimes other information and helpful links. In the case of Windows Media Player, clicking on Help and then "About Windows Media Player" will open a dialog displaying the version of the program, the name of the company that made it, and a link for technical support information. In the case of Mozilla Firefox, clicking on Help and then "About Firefox" will open a dialog displaying the version of the program, a link to Mozilla's website, and a link to install any pending update.

Another place where you can find information about a program is in the Control Panel applet for adding and removing programs. Depending on the version of Windows you are using, you will open "Add/Remove Programs," "Programs and Features," or "Apps and Features." Once you have the applet opened, you will probably find the program listed along with the version, the date it was installed, and the amount of disk space it uses.

Some programs such as Flash Player also have special applets within the Control Panel. If Flash Player is installed, an applet named "Flash Player (32-bit)" will be listed in the Control Panel. When you open the applet, it displays a dialog with several tabs. Under the Updates tab you will find information about the currently installed version of Flash Player and a button to check for any updates.

### **Your Operating System**

For a quick check of the version of Windows that you are using, press WIN+R (Windows logo key and "R") to open a dialog to run a command. Enter "winver" (without the quotation marks) and then click OK. A window will appear with the version and build of Windows that is installed on your computer.

For more detailed system information, right-click My Computer and click Properties. This will open a window with detailed information about your computer – the version of Windows and whether it is 32-bit or 64-bit, the processor (CPU) model, the amount of RAM that is installed, the computer name, and other information.

### **Your Hardware**

When you need more information about your hardware than just the processor model and amount of RAM, you will want to use Device Manager. Right-click My Computer and then click Manage (you will be prompted for the administrator's password, unless you are logged in as an administrator). Then

click on Device Manager in the tree listing in the left pane. This will open a tree listing of all types of hardware devices in the right pane. The devices will be grouped by device type. For instance, your graphics card will be listed under "Display adapters." Your hard drive will be listed under "Disk drives." Your network card will be listed under "Network adapters." When you click the "+" to open one of the device types and then double-click a particular device, a window will appear with details about the device. A helpful piece of information may be the driver version (say if you need to confirm that the hardware driver is compatible with a certain program). Click the Driver tab to see the details about the version, date, and provider of the driver.

For comprehensive information about your computer's hardware, the System Information utility can be of help. Depending on your version of Windows, either click the Windows Start menu, click on Accessories, and then "System Tools," or else type "system" in the search box. Once you find the program named "System Information," click to open it. System Information opens to a summary list of your system, including the Windows version, computer name, motherboard model, processor model, etc. Under components you will find individual devices listed such as your CD/DVD drive, sound card, video card, and disk drive. The information will include the make and model of each device, helpful information to get without ever opening your computer to look inside. You may save information to a text file by clicking to select the particular section you wish to save and then going to the menu bar to click File and then Export.

### **Conclusion**

I encourage you to "poke" around your computer to become familiar with these tips for learning more about what is installed in your computer. You may find that various computer problems are not so difficult to resolve when you can narrow your web search based upon the model or version of a program or hardware device in your computer. Such information may also be useful when deciding when it is time to update/replace something, whether a program, hardware device, or the computer as a whole.