Google Docs and Cloud Backup

Instructor: Sean Luster

Overview

As Internet connections have accelerated and access has become more universal the popularity of cloud based solutions to software problems has increased. The advantages of having your software or files available anywhere, reduced risk of losing important information, and decreased cost of hardware can be hard to resist, in this class we'll discuss what products make the most sense to use in day to day life and how to best take advantage of them.

Cloud Storage

The first cloud app most people encounter is storage. In many ways we have been using this for decades without knowing it. Email accounts are essentially cloud storage tools, as can be a facebook account, or flickr, or any other service that allows you to transfer files to and from a named account. The big change in recent years is the huge decrease in cost, making cloud storage a practical option for both home and professional use.

Name	IDrive	CrashPlan	CertainSafe	Hightail	SugarSync	Google Drive	Microsoft OneDrive	Box (Personal)	Dropbox	Apple iCloud Drive
Lowest Price	$59.50 iDrive	$59.99 Code42	$9.00 CertainSafe	$191.88 HighTail	$37.49 50% off for PCMag users	Free Google	Free Microsoft	$5.00 Box	Free Dropbox	Free Apple
	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT	SEE IT
Editor Rating	●●●●○ EC	●●●●○ EC	●●●●○ EC	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●● EC	●●●●○ EC	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○
Area of Specialization	Backup	Backup	Security	E-Signatures and File Delivery	Simplicity, Ease of Use	Collaboration	Collaboration; Microsoft Office 365 Included With 1TB Purchase	Compatibility With Other Services; Business Use	Compatibility With Other Services	Apple Device Users
File Size Limit	None	None	2GB	250MB With Free Account; 10GB With Professional Account	None	5TB	10GB	250MB With Free Account; 2GB With Starter Account	10GB; Unlimited With Desktop Client	15GB
Free Storage	5GB	0	None	2GB	5GB 90-day free trial	15GB	15GB	10GB	2GB	5GB
File Versioning	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅
Windows App	✅	✅	❌	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅
iOS App	✅	✅	❌	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	❌
Android App	✅	✅	❌	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	❌

Cloud storage comparison

	OneDrive	Dropbox	Google Drive	Box	Amazon Cloud Drive
File size restrictions?	10GB	10GB with website, none with Dropbox apps	5TB	250MB for free plan, 5GB for paid personal plan	2GB*
Free storage?	5GB**	2GB	15GB	10GB	No***
Can I earn extra free storage?	No**	Yes	No	No	No
Paid plans	$2/month for 50GB**	$10/month for 1TB	$2/month 100GB, $10/month for 1TB	$10/month for 100GB	$12/year for unlimited photos, $60/year for unlimited files
OSes supported	Windows, Mac, Android, iOS, Windows Phone	Windows, Mac, Linux, Android, iOS, Windows Phone, BlackBerry, Kindle Fire	Windows, Mac, Android, iOS	Windows, Mac, Android, iOS, Windows Phone, BlackBerry	Windows, Mac, Android, iOS, Kindle Fire

http://www.cnet.com/how-to/onedrive-dropbox-google-drive-and-box-which-cloud-storage-service-is-right-for-you/

http://www.cloudwards.net/comparison/

Automating Backup

There are a number of companies that provide tools to automatically backup your files to the cloud (iDrive, CrashPlan, SOS Online Backup, & Backblaze are among the best reviewed.) This is performed by installing an application onto the local machine and walking through their settings to determine what files you want backed up and on what schedule. The software will then continue to run automatically as long as the computer is functional and connected to the Internet. When choosing a backup product some features to look for include:

- Storage limits
- Price per year
- Number of computers
- Web client
- File Sharing
- Explorer Integration

- Folder Syncing
- Version Saving & # of Versions saved
- Backup to Local Storage
- Mobile Access

<u>Transfer vs. Archival</u>

There are two different aspects to cloud storage – the desire to move files around from one location to another, and the desire to backup files for possible recovery purposes. On some levels these are the same function, storing files in a cloud location, but from a practical standpoint they are very different tasks. So far we've been primarily talking about tools to store your files long term, now I'd like to discuss using cloud storage as a more efficient and reliable version of a floppy disk or USB drive.

Dragging and dropping:

The most common cloud storage options (Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Apple iCloud) all offer web interfaces that allow you to drag and drop files in the same way you would when moving files around your computer's folders. A few things to be cautious about:

1. Beware of multiple versions of the same file. Once you have moved something to the cloud drive it was copied exactly as it was at the time that you moved it. If you make changes to the file it will not automatically update on the cloud location. Most storage services attempt to avoid overwrites by warning you if you attempt a second copy but it's easy to lose track of which version is most current if you aren't conscientious about naming.
2. Remember that when you copy from one drive to another it does not remove the original. This can cause clutter and/or confusion on either your cloud storage service or your home computer.

Creating a local drive:

Many cloud services also allow you to create a local folder that will automatically backup to the cloud storage location. This is available for both PC users and mobile devices. We will do a demonstration of this product in class.

*NOTE: When you drag and drop items from your computer folders to the cloud folder you create it **will** remove them from your PC. If desired, be sure to copy and paste rather than dragging and dropping.

Collaborative Tools

Sharing Files & Folders

When you have a file stored in a cloud drive you have the option of making that specific file available to others without making your entire drive available. Google Drive, Dropbox, and OneDrive are used for this extensively. To make a file or folder available right click on the item of choice and select Share:
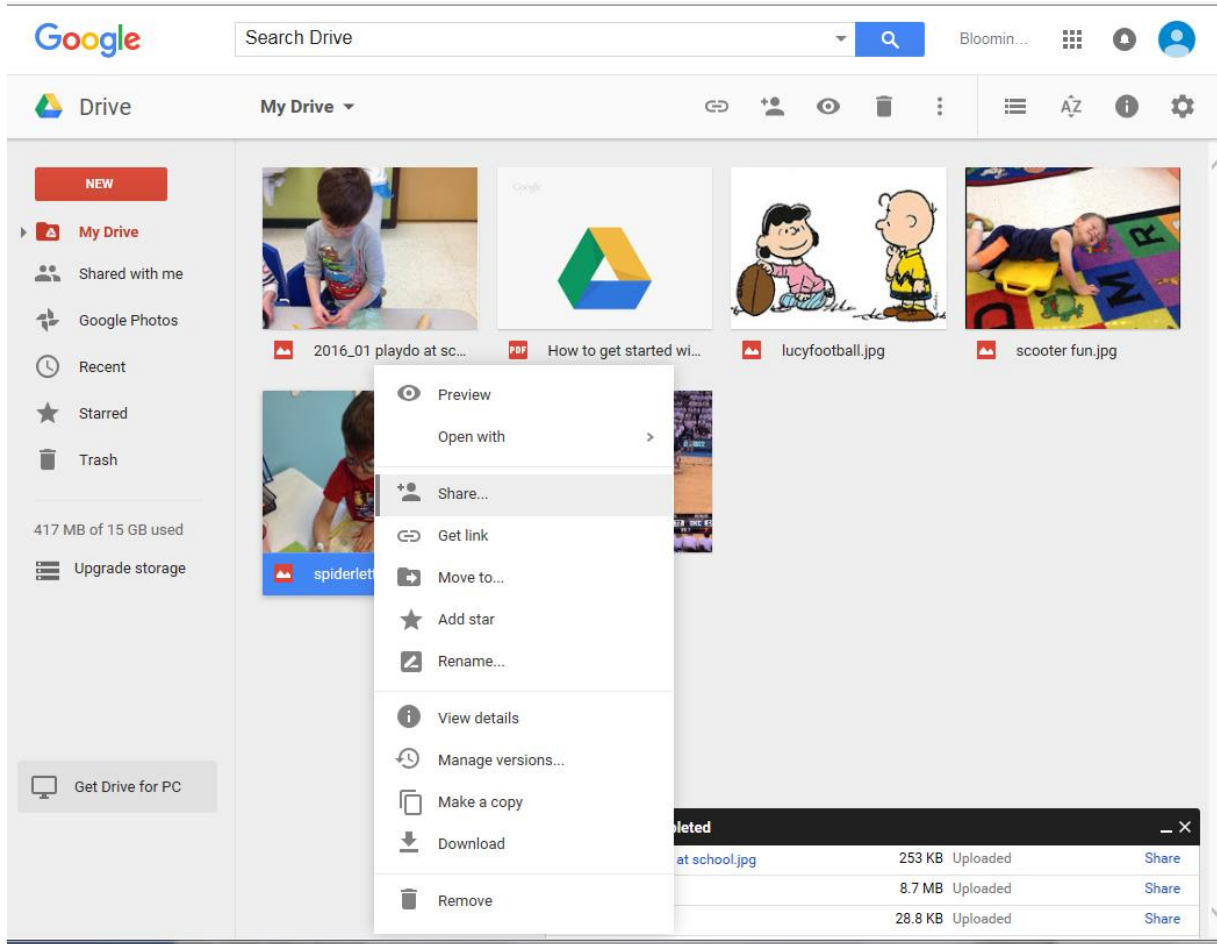

From the screen that appears
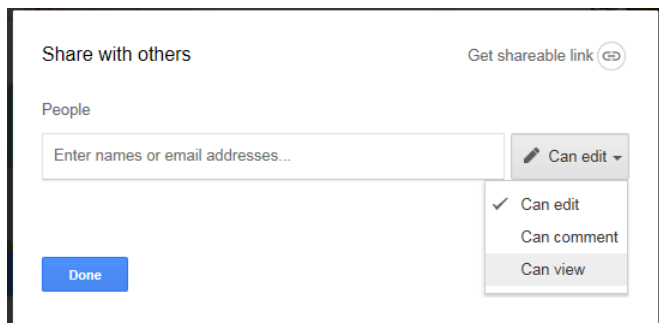
Adjust the options appropriately. Be sure to select what you want the recipient to be able to do (edit the file or just view it) and enter in either the contact name, full email address, or list name of who you want to receive this level of access. Advanced options allow you to control things like download options and whether or not the recipient can share the file with other people as well. You can also get a link to share directly if you want to make it available via a website or social media.

<u>Tools for Online Creation</u>

In addition to storing files in these locations, some allow you to create and work with your files directly on the web (as opposed to downloading them and copying them back.) Google and Microsoft in particular have made those options a primary focus. We will look briefly at using Google Docs and other tools in class.
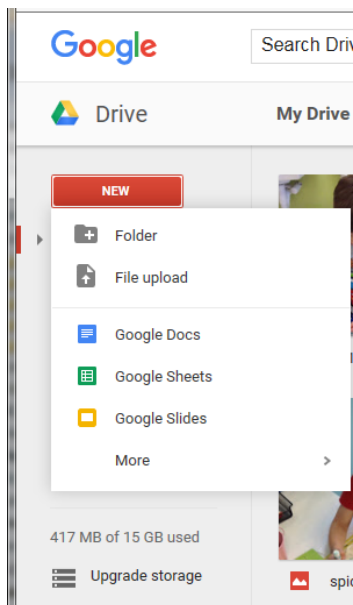
Software Options

More and more software companies are going over to a licensing system that focuses less on the computer their software is installed on and more on the active users with it. Adobe, Apple, and Microsoft have almost completely converted to this approach. Let's take a look at Microsoft Office 365 as an example of what it's like working with cloud based software.

Advantages

- Lower up front cost
- Access anywhere
- Consistently updated
- Seamless integration with cloud storage
- Automated backup of work (often)

Disadvantages

- Annual or monthly licensing costs
- Increased cost for multiple users
- Internet connection required, at least at first
- Time overhead for loading software over slow connections