Midland Computer Club
Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

FEBRUARY 2019

https://mcc.apcug.org/

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GENERAL CLUB MEETING
Midland Public Schools Administration Building
600 E Carpenter Street - Room D

**Wednesday, February 20, 2019 (3rd Wednesday)
6:00 P.M.**

Using the Virtual Desktop (Task View)

By Rosita Herrick, Forum Leader, Sarasota Technology Users Group, Florida
February 2018 issue, STUGMonitor - www.thestug.org -- rherrick (at) aol.com

I believe that the Task View option is an ignored productivity feature. Staying productive is often as much about staying organized as anything else, especially while multitasking. And when it comes to productivity on PCs, many people may opt for a desktop setup with multiple monitors. But that's not an option for everyone – particularly if you do most of your work on the go with a laptop.

Thankfully, Windows 10 includes a handy feature that can mimic the experience of spreading your work around multiple monitors without the extra hardware: virtual desktops, or as the shortcut on the task bar displays, Task View. Virtual desktops essentially let you multiply the number of distinct desktops you have at your fingertips on one PC. This can come in handy if you just want to keep work tasks separated from your personal windows. But if separating tasks is your goal, the Task View lets you keep things separate and organized while still having access to everything at a click

How to Use Windows Virtual Desktops

Accessing your virtual desktops is fairly easy, but it's not immediately obvious unless you're looking for it. The most obvious way to get started is through the Task View icon located on your taskbar. You'll find it located to the right of the Cortana search bar; it looks like a rectangle flanked by two other, partial rectangles. Click the Task View icon and you'll be greeted with a screen that shows all your currently open apps. This is essentially a birds-eye view of your first, primary desktop, which can be quite an asset

On the bottom right-hand corner of the Task View screen, you'll find a "+" icon that says "New Desktop" underneath.
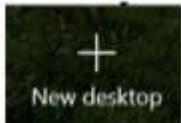
Simply click the button and Windows 10 will surface a bar at the bottom of your screen showing your original, primary desktop and the newly created one.
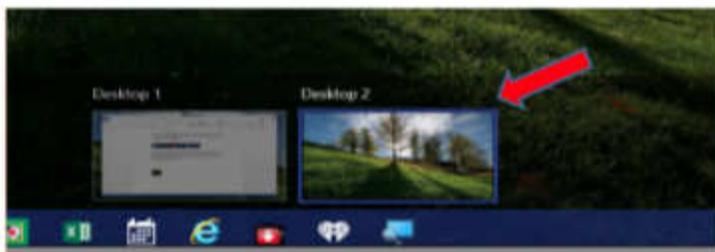
You can keep tapping or clicking the "New Desktop" button to add as many as you want (based on the capabilities of your PC).

Switching between desktops is as easy as selecting one from the Task view.

View screen. You can also drag and drop specific programs from Task View on one desktop to the others listed on the screen. And when you're done with a desktop, you can close out of it by hovering over it with

your mouse and clicking the "X" button within Task View. The benefit of using Task View is that if you close one screen by mistake, the active programs gets transferred to the preceding screen.

Getting around quickly with keyboard shortcuts
Of course, while the steps described above are fine for getting started, you'll want to move around more quickly as you get used to things. Fortunately, there are some keyboard shortcuts associated with virtual desktops that can speed things up.

To access Task View:	**Windows key + Tab**
Create a new desktop:	**Windows key + Ctrl + D**
Deleting a desktop:	**Windows key + Ctrl + F4 shortcut.**
Accessing previous screen:	**Windows key + Ctrl + Left Arrow**
Accessing next screen:	**Window key + Right Arrow**

Getting used to the keyboard shortcuts can take some time. However, once you do, you'll find yourself zipping through things at the speed of light.

Task View restricts the user to viewing one desktop at a time. However, the upshot is that it makes it that much easier to quickly switch between tasks without closing one task by mistake.

Add Bookmarks to Your Word Documents
By Nancy DeMarte, 2nd Vice President, Sarasota Technology Users Group, FL
July 2018 issue, STUG Monitor -- www.thestug.org / ndemarte (at) verizon.net

If you have composed a multi-page Word document, especially if it has a table of contents, you can make it easy to go to specific locations within the document by adding bookmarks. A bookmark is used to jump to a place in a document. It is a cousin to a hyperlink, which is most often used to go to a specific place on the Internet.

Let's say you have written a tutorial that has a Table of Contents. By adding a bookmark to each section in the tutorial, the reader can go to any section by clicking its title in the Table of Contents. Anything in a document can be bookmarked: text, a picture, or section, for example. Here are steps for creating a bookmark for section 4 of the tutorial below:

TABLE OF CONTENTS
This tutorial includes a few methods for backing up your PC files:
1. Backing up to a flash drive (page 2-3)
2. Backing up to a CD or DVD (page 4-8)
3. Backing up using Windows 7 Backup and Restore (page 9-10)
4. Backing up using Windows 10 File History (page 11)
5. Creating a System Image & System Repair Disk (page 12)
6. Backing up to OneDrive (page 13)

1. Go to and select the title of the chapter where it is located in the document.

4. Backing up using Windows 10 File History

2. On the Insert tab in the Links group, click Bookmark.
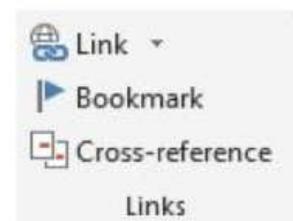
3. Under Bookmark name, type a word or short phrase and click Add. (Bookmark names must begin with letter and must not contain any spaces. They can also include numbers or underscores, as shown.)
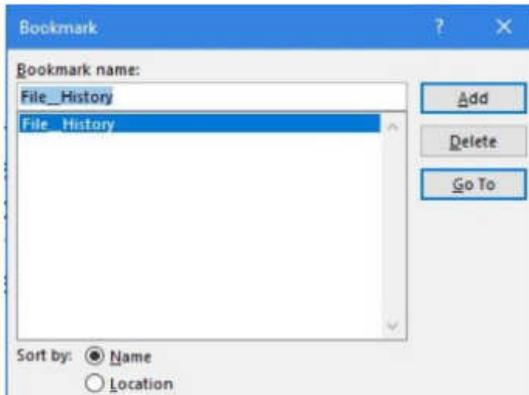
4. Test your bookmark by typing Ctrl+G to open the Go To tab in the Find and Replace tool. In this example, we only have one bookmark (File_History). If you have created several bookmarks, choose the one you want. Then click Go To. You will immediately jump to the title of that section.
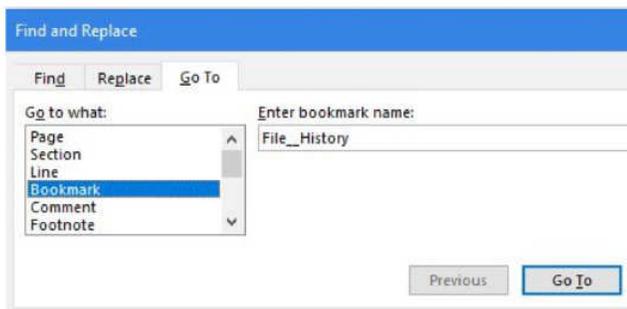
How to add hyperlinks to get to your bookmarks, rather than use the Find and Replace tool. Below are the steps you will need to create hyperlinks to the bookmarks in your document.

1. Right click the word or image you want to become the link and then left click 'Link'
2. In the 'Link to' box, click 'Place in this Document' (left pane)
3. In the list, select the bookmark you want to link to, and click OK. Now you can use the keyboard combination, Ctrl+click, with each hyperlink to go directly to its bookmark in the document.

What is Office 365? Is it for you?

By Nancy DeMarte, 1st Vice President, Sarasota Technology User Group, Florida
February 2018 issue, STUGMonitor -- www.thestug.org -- ndemarte (at) verizon.net

I get a lot of questions about Microsoft Office 365. Because it's a unique concept in software acquisition, some users don't understand what it is or how it works. In brief, Office 365 is a Microsoft Office suite to which people subscribe rather than purchase from a store. This option first appeared on the market in 2011.

There are several versions of Office 365 designed for different audiences. Two of them are best suited for home users. Office 365 Personal includes a single installation for one user. Office 365 Home includes five installs to a computer, tablet, and smartphone. If a family has parents and three children, for example, each person can install Office 365 to his computer, tablet, and smartphone.

You can still purchase the traditional boxed version of Office in the store or download it from the Microsoft site. You will get the most recent Office edition, which is currently Office 2016. It includes four Office applications -- Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote -- to install on one PC or Mac. New boxed versions come out about every three years.

What are the differences between these two approaches? The Office 365 editions contain more applications than the boxed one. Office 365 Home or Personal includes seven apps. These are listed below with their functions compared with the boxed edition:

Office 365 Apps	Boxed Office 2016 Apps	Function
Word	Word	documents
Excel	Excel	data management
PowerPoint	PowerPoint	presentation
OneNote	OneNote	note-taking and organization
Outlook		e-mail
Publisher		newsletters
Access		database

Office 365 also offers extra benefits. Perhaps most interesting is the automatic upgrading of apps almost every month. It doesn't take long before the apps in Office 365 contain newer features than the boxed version, which does get all security updates and bug fixes.

Other perks that accompany Office 365 include 1 terabyte (1000 gigabytes) of online storage in the Microsoft cloud, called OneDrive, for each installation. That means each of the five users with Office 365 Home has 1 TB of storage. Office 365 Home and Personal users also receive free phone support from Microsoft, an hour of free local and international calls on Skype per month, and the ability to collaborate in real time on projects with other people.

How do you get Office 365?

A major misconception about Office 365 is that it is just an online service, as some digital subscriptions are. In fact, every Office 365 owner has a Microsoft account page from which he or she can install or reinstall the full suite to as many computers, tablets, and phones as his edition includes. The Office 365 suite is fully installed on the devices and can be used without an Internet connection. The Internet, however, does play valuable functions, such as updating, re-installing, collaborating, and using some of the new features. Therefore, having Internet access is key to taking advantage of the full potential of the suite.

What does Office 365 cost?

Office 365 Home (five installations) costs $99.99 per year or $9.99 per month. Office 365 Personal (one installation) costs $69.99 per year or $6.99 per month. Office 2016 (boxed) costs $149.00 and goes on sale at times.

Those are the facts. The decision is up to you whether you think Office 365 would benefit you. It depends on what you do with your computer. Here are some scenarios to help you decide whether Office 365 is for you.

The Scenarios:

1. You have a desktop or laptop computer, but since you got a tablet or smartphone and use it for email and Internet searching, you don't use your computer as much as you used to. Occasionally, you need to create and print documents. You may have never owned Microsoft Office.

Possible Solution: Use Microsoft WordPad, a free Windows app that is installed with Windows, for your documents. It has fewer features than Word but enough to create documents and format them. Search for it using the Cortana search box since it may not be found on the app list. Another option is one is to use a free Office Suite – Open Office or Google Sheets.

2. You have a single computer and own the box version of Microsoft Office. You use your computer often to create documents like minutes of a club for which you are secretary. You keep an address list and budget on an Excel worksheet. Last year you put together a slide show using PowerPoint for a family reunion. You have quite a few Word documents and Excel sheets stored on your computer.

Possible Solution: You may be a candidate for Office 365 Personal. You use enough of the Office apps to benefit from the upgrading, and you may benefit from the extra perks that come with 365, especially the free online storage and free phone support.

3. You are a loyal Microsoft Office owner. You enjoy your tablet for entertainment and your computer for projects. You are the curious type who likes to learn new things. You enjoy putting together professional-looking documents and presentations. You travel a lot and often need to plan complicated travel arrangements. Your household owns four computers.

Possible Solution: You are the kind of person that probably would be glad that you subscribed to Office 365 Home. You will enjoy exploring the automatic upgrades. You can save money by being able to install the 365 Home suite on your four computers, as well as your phones and tablets. You can offer the fifth installation to a friend or relative at no charge.

Disclaimer: This is not intended to be an advertisement for Microsoft Office 365. We all have to decide what is best for us. I hope it helps clear up any confusion you might have about this product.

Dan's Desk
Life without the Internet
By Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG, FL
June 2018 issue, The Space Coast PC Journal -- www.scpcug.org -- datadan (at) msn.com

Have you wondered what life would be like without the Internet at our fingertips anymore? Having experienced this very situation recently, due to an extensive outage at our office complex, I can tell you it would take some adjustment. If you ever watch shows like 'The Walking Dead,' then you get an idea of what a disconnected society would be like, but hopefully minus the zombies!

Now, I will be the first to admit that I may be out of the ordinary with my dependency upon the Internet, due to the main nature of my business; repairing and upgrading computers. But I would bet that most of my time on the Internet is like yours; surfing the web, communicating with friends and family via Skype etc., doing email, streaming movies and performing financial transactions. I do the extra tasks of downloading programs/updates, performing product activations, locating drivers and Windows fixes more than the normal person, along with the research required to solve various error messages and program version incompatibilities. So, when my Internet is unavailable, I'm really limited in the functions that can be performed.

Let's look at those functions that we take for granted while using the Internet and what alternatives we have:

Surfing the web – this is the main information source for most people today, I would guess. So back to TV, radio, the library and reading daily newspapers. The previous generation of Wikipedia – Encyclopedia Britannica is back! I can get my first and worst job back - selling them door to door. Remember the Microsoft (Encarta?) annual encyclopedia on CDs?

Communicating – Cell phones will get really streamlined without all the Internet and related display functions and just back to basic phone call capabilities.

Email – back to the delay of mailing and receiving letters. Typewriters and carbon paper will come back from the dead to provide the capabilities of writing legibly and multiple copies (that is what CC means after all – carbon copy for additional parties). Actually, I can still use the PC and a printer for the main reason PCs were first justified in businesses – word processing.

Streaming movies – check your local theatre for playing times – you can no longer watch your show on demand. Or you can use that DVD/ Blu-ray player for more than streaming – back to discs. Maybe I can restart the movie rental business that I was in back in 1979!

Financial transactions – remember standing in long lines at the bank? Having to access your money only at the branch where your account is based? How about ticker tape machines for those who are addicted to following the stock market?

Well my Internet is back now, so back to work I must go.

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Interesting Internet Finds - August 2018

Steve Costello -- scostello (at) sefcug.com

While going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during August 2018.

What to Do If Your Kindle Is Lost or Stolen

https://www.howtogeek.com/357546/what-to-do-if-your-kindle-is-lost-or-stolen/

I have had my Kindle Touch since it was first available. I have never lost it nor had it stolen. So, this is not something I have thought of. Now that I have read this post, I am aware of what I should do if loss or theft happens, to make sure my Amazon account is secure. If you use a Kindle, of whatever model, you should be aware of these things too.

Lesson learned? Most used memory cards contain data when sold

https://www.ghacks.net/2018/07/09/lesson-learned-most-used-memory-cards-contain-data-when-sold/

After reading this post, I will make sure to wipe any kind of memory device before selling or giving it away. Read this post and I am sure you will also make sure to wipe them too.

Captchas: Why We Need Them, How They're Evolving, and How You Can Solve Them More Easily

https://www.maketecheasier.com/captchas-why-we-need-them/

If you have been on the internet, you have definitely run into captchas somewhere along the line. Check out this post to learn the most recent information about them.

The Fake ISP Phone Call Scam: How It Works and What to Do About It

https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/fake-isp-phone-scam/

My wife answered a call the other day from our ISP saying my router was out of date and needed to be replaced, just give them the credit card info and they would send a new one right out. This happened before I saw this post, but I knew it had to be a scam and told her to hang up. This tells me this scam is starting in my area and there will probably be more calls.

Is Your PC Running Unsupported Hardware?

https://askbobrankin.com/is_your_pc_running_unsupported_hardware.html

Bob explains how if you are using Windows 7 or Windows 8.1 you might not be getting security updates from Microsoft, and how to fix the problem.

How cord-cutters can deal with data caps

https://www.techhive.com/article/3292916/streaming-media/how-to-deal-with-data-caps.html

Cord cutting is a very popular topic these days. Data caps can be a big problem for cord cutters. Check out this post for ways to deal with data caps, especially if your provider has data caps.

Can My ISP See What I'm Doing If I Use a Virtual Machine (VM)?

https://askleo.com/can-my-isp-see-what-im-doing-if-i-use-a-virtual-machine-vm/

Leo explains that your ISP can see the same things in a virtual machine as in a physical machine, so a VM offers no additional privacy. Leo does talk about some things you can do to give more privacy, whether it is a physical or virtual machine.

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How to remove GPS and other Data from Photos on Your iPhone or iPad
By Bill Crowe, Instructor, Sarasota Technology User Group, FL
July 2018 issue, STUGMonitor -- www.thestug.org -- wtcrowe (at) verizon.net

The general term for data saved with your picture is Exchangeable Image Format, also known as EXIF. It is a set of data that's attached to every image you take. Most cameras and smartphones these days add basic parameters such as the mode in which the photo was taken, the shutter speed, ISO, aperture data, and even the location of the photograph. This presents a peculiar problem — when you click a picture of a beautiful bird perched on the windowsill in your house, your camera automatically adds the location of the picture, which could reveal your home address when you share it with others online. Most social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter remove all this data from photos when you upload them. However, when your photo is shared via email, messages or cloud storage services such as Google Drive or Dropbox, this data is still present on pictures. To protect your privacy, it's best to remove some or all of the EXIF data from images. Here's how you can do it.

**Remove GPS data your iOS Device using:**
"Photo Investigator"

You can remove GPS info from photos on your iOS device, but you'll need a third-party app to do so. There are a couple of options available, but here's how to do it with the free app Photo Investigator.($2.99 for the Pro version)

1. Install the "Photo Investigator" App

2. Open the application, tap the photo icon, and allow the application access to your pictures

3. Select a photo album and then the photo you would like to view the metadata .

4. To see what the data looks like you can tap the various fields in the lower left box and see the data in the lower right box. I have done it here for the GPS data.

5. Tap Metadata box. You can remove all the meta data from here or edit individual items of the meta data by paying the $2.99 for the pro edition.
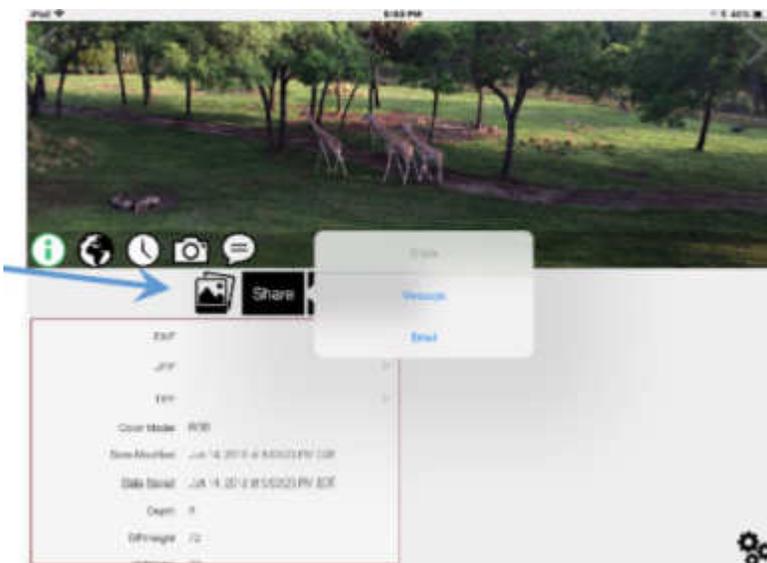
6. You will then be asked if you want to keep both the original and the modified picture or remove the original picture.

7. Now you can share the modified picture with others via email or message. By taping the share box.

8 . To process another photo, click the photos icon.

BONUS: Keeping GPS metadata off your phone in the first place

If you want to be 100% sure that this data is removed by making sure that photos taken on your iPhone don't have GPS info captured in the first place, you can do so by going to:

Settings / Privacy / Location Services / Camera / Never.

Keep in mind that doing this will eliminate the ability to make albums based on location. Also, this setting only applies to the default Camera app; if you use a third-party camera app, it will still be allowed to tag your location in your photos unless you alter that setting as well.

Source and Compliments of igeeksblog.com

Security Tips for June
By David Shulman, WPCUG Weekly Update Editor, Westchester PCUG
June 2018 issue, WestchesterPCNews -- www.wpcug.org pcug.d_shulman (at) yahoo.com

The June (2018) issue of Consumer Reports has a cover story entitled "Protect Yourself from Scams" and a subhead containing the words "smishing, spoofing, and shimmers." Intriguing? Get a copy. As a bonus there is an article on the protection of your financial data after the Equifax incident. Did you know that 52 percent of surveyed Americans have done nothing in response to that incredible mess?

Traveling and staying in a hotel with an electronic door lock? A team from F-Secure has created a hack (after one of them had his laptop stolen from his room years ago) that takes about a minute and creates a master key for all the rooms in a hotel. This hack still is effective in some hotels. Read up!!
https://www.wired.com/story/one-minute-attack-lethackers-spoof-hotel-master-keys/

Oath is the new entity in charge of what formerly was Yahoo, AOL, and Verizon email services. Oath has a new privacy policy. That's what you have NEVER read, skipped to the end of, and signed. Kim Komando has gone crazy over the details and perhaps so should you! Oath apparently claims rights to pictures and to analyze financial data in your mail. See https://www.komando.com/happeningnow/455054/yahoo-aol-and-oaths-new-massiveemail-privacy-policy-changes-you-need-to-knowabout

Delta Airlines and Sears were hacked last fall. If you shopped there or booked a flight, the software company [24]7 revealed complete profiles of well over 100,000 customers. It took months for them to reveal this theft. The worst example of delay this month has come from Panera Bread. Apparently, they were notified last August of a breach, but it took until mid-April 2018 for them to act. The data stolen affected over 30 million customers and contained names, addresses (email and physical), birthdays, and the last four digits of credit cards leaked onto the internet.

What to do?
    Stay on top of your credit card purchases. Set alerts to your cellphone. Check the statements regularly.

    Be alert about mailed offers of credit and calls from credit card or banking folk. They may be scams using your stolen data to gain your trust. Consider a credit freeze on all the credit services. You can lift it when you need to.

    Make sure your mail (your USPS "snail" mail) is secure. If your mailbox can be accessed by anyone walking down the street, consider steps to lock it up or use a secure mailing address such as a post office box. Thieves use your ID to apply for credit cards and then steal them from your mailbox, activate them, and have a shopping spree. While it is true that you are not responsible, the hassle of proving it was not you and cleaning this up is incredible.

Consider this: Increasingly, vendors are forcing you to stipulate that any disputes between you and them be resolved by an arbitrator of their choice as your only recourse. Historically, this method has not worked in the favor of the customer. Legislation has been introduced to nullify this condition. When your security is compromised, and you not only have to fight the people using it but the company that compromised it, that's an unfair burden.

My July 2018 Linux Only Vacation
By Steve Costello
Retired, grandfather, blogger, creative writing prompt blog participant, and loves to read.
Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog : http://ctublog.sefcug.com/
Creative Writing and Book Review Blog: http://sefccw.wordpress.com/ - scostello (at) sefcug.com

A Little Background
Now that the Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc. is shutting down and I no longer needed Microsoft Publisher to get out the Boca Bits newsletter, I only took a Linux Mint 18.3 Cinnamon laptop on my July 2018 vacation.

The software I installed to use:

LibreOffice 5.1.6.2 instead of Microsoft Office 2010

Firefox Quantum 61.0.1 (64 bit) for my web browser

NixNote 2.0 to access Evernote files on the Linux laptop

TeamViewer 13 if I needed to access my home computer remotely

NoteTab Light through Wine

With this setup I got out my Interesting Internet Finds - WE July 20, 2018, and Interesting Internet Finds - WE July 27, 2018 for my Computers, Technology, and User Groups blog, as well as most of the Interesting Internet Finds August 2018 for APCUG PUSH articles.

Equipment
The laptop is a Dell Inspiron with 4GB of memory and a 475GB hard drive, which used to run Windows XP given to me by my daughter-in-law when she upgraded to a Windows 10 laptop. I had tried to use as an XP machine, but there were so many problems I ended up loading Linux Mint 18.3 Cinnamon to play with.

My Experience
Other than having minimal internet access for a few days, I was able to make my interesting finds, keep up on Goodreads with my books read, and get my blog posts posted. The access was not through any fault of the hardware or software. Rather a lack of internet access where I was staying.

Software
LibreOffice and Firefox
LibreOffice and Firefox worked just like they do on my Windows machine.

NixNote and Evernote
I had to use Evernote online, as NixNote didn't sync my notes, guess I will have to find something else for Linux.

TeamViewer
I didn't need to use TeamViewer to get access to my home Windows 7 computer. I was able to do it all on the Mint laptop, which was a good thing because I never had a good enough signal to use TeamViewer.

NoteTab Light
NoteTab Light did work and I was able to use the HTML-CSS quick tags to format the text to past into the WordPress posts. But it worked a little differently than on my Windows machine.

Conclusion
This week-long experience tells me that I can do most everything without Microsoft (neither the operating system nor applications) being necessary.

There was a bit of a learning curve, but things are much speedier than with Microsoft. I don't think I will get another Microsoft computer when my current one dies. And, this experiment also reinforced my thoughts on my next laptop purchase being a Chromebook. I just don't need the expense, nor security problems of a Microsoft computer.

I am not one to completely knock Microsoft, but for me, Linux and Chromebooks are the way to go.

If you are frustrated with Microsoft, give Linux a try. Most distributions of Linux, like Mint and Ubuntu, are available to run live from CD or USB without affecting your Windows OS, or install in a virtual machine, I just happened to have an old laptop to install Mint on.

Night Light: A Little-Used Feature of Windows 10
By Martin Arbagi, Editor, The DataBus, Dayton Microcomputer Association, OH
www.dma1.org -- Martin.Arbagi (at) Gmail.com

An increasing amount of scientific evidence now indicates that bluish-white light—the kind that typically occurs at noon of a clear day—tends to stimulate the brain centers that keep us awake. On the other hand, light from the red-orange bands of the spectrum—the type that usually occurs at dawn or evening—either makes us sleepy or at least does not actively excite the "waking centers" of our brains.

Unfortunately, bluish-white light is precisely what the screens of most computer monitors and other digital devices usually emit. Thus, for example, reading yourself to sleep with an e-book can actually keep you awake, as can taking that spread sheet home from the office so you can work on it after dinner.

Microsoft's latest operating system, Windows 10, has a feature that can mitigate this problem. It's called "Night Light," and is frequently ignored when setting up or customizing a PC. I myself initially thought it was designed to have monitors glow softly at night, thereby making the computer easier to find in a darkened room. I finally blundered into the correct use of Night Light almost by accident. Night Light is easily set up. Merely go to your Desktop and right-click your mouse. (Left-click if you use a left-handed mouse, as I do.)

The familiar screen shown in Figure 1 shows up. Now click on "Display Settings."
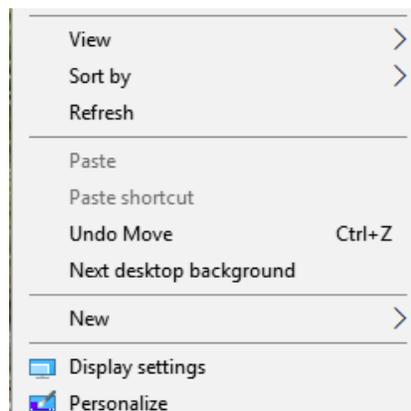
Figure 1

The screen shown in Figure 2 now appears. Finally, move the slide switch labeled "Night Light" (circled in red) to the ᴏɴ position.
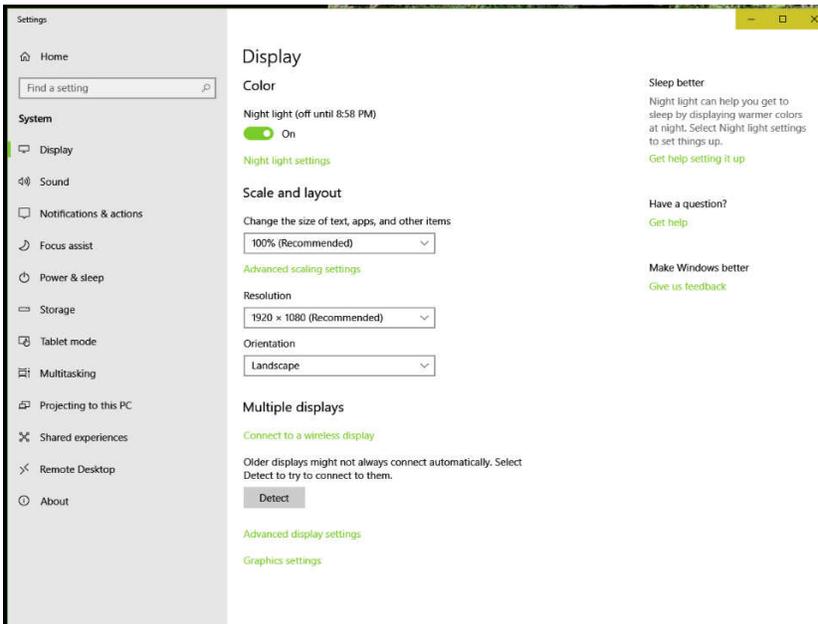

Figure 2

Two comments before finishing:

(1) *Night Light knows when to turn on.* If you look closely at Figure 2, you'll see that the day I wrote this article, my PC switched to Night Light at sunset: 8:58 ᴘ.ᴍ. Obviously, I was writing during the summer! Windows 10 knows your approximate location by, among other things, your IP address, and will adjust for time zone, latitude, longitude, and Daylight Savings Time.

(2) *Turn Night Light ᴏғғ if you are working on something that requires true color rendition.* For example, if that project you brought home from the office is not a spread sheet, but rather an advertising campaign with lots of graphics, you don't want the color distortion that Night Light will inevitably generate.

Tom's Tech-Notes
Review: The Amazon Fire Stick, a Plug-in Streaming Device for Internet TV Services
Tom Burt, Vice President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club, NV
September 2018 issue, The Gigabyte Gazette -- www.scscc.club/ -- tomburt89134 (at) cox.net

Overview
During the mid-July "Amazon Prime Day" sales, Mrs. Burt and I ordered an Amazon Fire Stick device. It was on sale for half price - $19.99. At that price, we figured what have we got to lose? The Fire Stick device plugs into an HDMI port on your HDTV and then, after some simple setup steps, connects to the Internet via your Wi-Fi router. It turns your HDTV into a "smart" TV. It comes with all the usual apps for streaming TV services like Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, Pandora and, of course, Prime Video.

The Fire Stick regularly sells for $39.99 at Amazon.com. You can find details and specs at:
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00ZV9RDKK/ref_=fs_ods_fs_smp_tk.

Included with the Fire Stick is a compact, easy-to use remote that includes a microphone that allows you to talk to Amazon's Alexa to control the Fire Stick with your voice.

This article will discuss our experience after about a month of use.

Setting Up the Fire Stick

The package contains the Fire Stick itself, the remote, an HDMI extender cable, two AAA batteries and a power / adapter cord. The power cord has a micro USB jack on one end that plugs into the Fire Stick and a regular USB connector on the other end. The regular USB connector plugs into a USB socket on the small power adapter.

I plugged the Fire Stick into my HDTV's HDMI 2 port, using the HDMI extender cable for better clearance. (My DirecTV receiver is connected to the TV's HDMI 1 port.) I first tried plugging the USB connector of the power cable into my Samsung HDTV's USB jack, but found that the USB jack wasn't putting out enough power. So, I used the power adapter and plugged it into a surge protector next to the HDTV.

Plugs into TV HDMI port (HDMI extender recommended for best Wi-Fi reception)
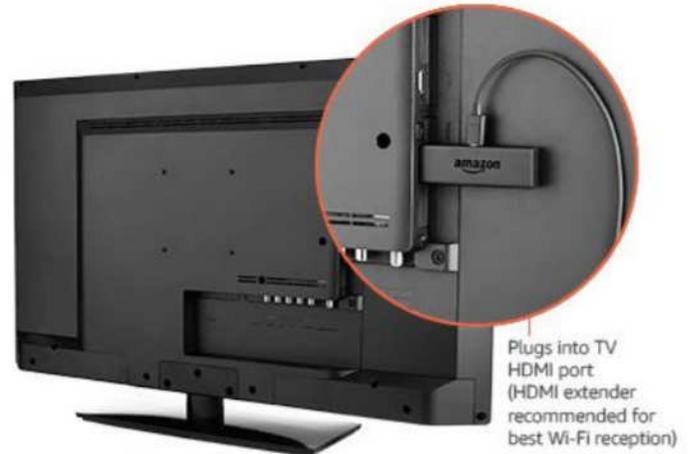
I used my Samsung HDTV's remote to select HDMI 2 as the Input Source. That gave control of the screen to the Fire Stick.

Next, I put the two AAA batteries into the Fire Stick's remote and then let the remote find the Firestick. From there, I followed the on-screen prompts to connect the Fire Stick to my Wi-Fi router.

To use the Prime Video service, you must be an Amazon Prime subscriber and you must log in with those account credentials. For other paid services like Netflix, you need an active account and, the first time, will need to enter your account credentials for the service.

Using the Fire Stick
Our Samsung HDTV already had "smart features", but the performance of the apps was spotty with very slow connections and frequent dropouts and pixilation. I think the TV's internal Wi-Fi components were not powerful enough to do a good job.

By contrast, the Fire Stick has been amazing – quick connections with rock solid and very clear pictures and clean, clear sound. It's Wi-Fi is 802.11ac, which my Netgear home router supports. I've had no trouble with dropped signals and we don't see any buffering.

The Fire Stick remote is easy to use with a ring in place of the four arrow keys. It's light and small enough to fit any hand comfortably. The Fire Stick is very responsive to clicks on the remote.

I've tried the remote's Alexa voice control, which is very nice for searching and works well. However, most of the time we use the navigation ring to click around. The on-screen graphics are eye-friendly, and the navigation is easy to figure out. When I want to browse to see what's available on a service like Prime Video or Netflix, I still favor using my desktop PC because the mouse and keyboard are more efficient for navigating. When I find something of interest, I add it to my watch list for that service and then it's easy to get to on the Fire Stick.

Fire Stick Apps
Unlike my Samsung TV's "smart" apps which are a limited set and don't get updated, the Fire Stick is designed to let the user decide which Apps are installed. There are hundreds to choose from, aside from those that come pre-installed on the Fire Stick. There are also many games that you can download and

install. The Fire Stick has 8 GB of storage, so it's possible to have many Apps installed. The Fire Stick has a built-in web browser, but you can also install the Firefox browser. With a web browser, you can go to any website that has streaming content and watch it, even if there's no specific App for it. Here's a link to an article from FireStickTricks.com listing 20 recommended paid and free Apps:
https://www.firesticktricks.com/amazon-fire-stick-apps.html

Prime Video
At present, since we've subscribed to the Amazon Prime service; we're also able to get the Amazon Prime Video service at no extra charge. Prime Video features many movies and TV series, but also has some great original content. Over the summer we've been re-watching all 9 seasons of the Hugh Laurie "House, MD" series and the Prime original "Bosch" series featuring Titus Welliver. The offerings get updated frequently. The streaming video quality is great, and the content is all "on demand." And, if you doze off while watching an episode, you can go back and watch it again.

Conclusions
We're quite happy with the Fire Stick. I'd definitely recommend it if you don't already own an Apple TV or Roku device, which offer similar functionality. The Fire Stick is far better than the built-in "smart" features of my Samsung HDTV. As a vehicle for "cord cutting" the Fire Stick is interesting because it can access so many sources for content. Among its available Apps is one for "DirecTV Now," which is a streaming version of DirecTV that currently costs quite a bit less than the satellite version. There's also an App for Sling TV, which is another streaming service that offers a lot of "cable" channels at very low rates.

President's Corner
Happy New Tech Year
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Another New Year is upon us. As we start 2019, I wonder what new technology we will see this year, and how it will affect our lives. It seems we can't swing a corded mouse (better for our times than a dead cat) without hitting some piece of technology in our lives. So many things we take for granted today were not around 20 years ago, or even 10. Smart phones, smart homes, smart cars, smart TVs - everything is becoming smart through technology. How did we ever survive with only dumb stuff around us?

We have just concluded another busy holiday shopping season. Remember when that meant spending the month of December in the shopping malls, standing in long lines? Now with online shopping (especially Amazon.com) and all the tech that enables it, we can do all our shopping from home. With our smart phones, we can even shop while on the go. This trend has resulted in big changes in our behaviors, as well as in our local and global economics. Brick and mortar chains that were once the powerhouses of commerce, like Sears, are shrinking or going out of business. Almost all businesses fear Amazon, as it has transformed the shopping experience in many categories. How will Amazon next change our lives?

The concept of two-day delivery of products used to be exceptional and/or expensive, but now it is commonplace (and the default for all those Amazon Prime subscribers). Will 2019 finally be the year that Amazon makes good on their plans to deliver products the same day using drones? Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos claimed in December 2013 on "60 Minutes" that drones would be delivering packages within five years. Where are our drone deliveries?

There are plenty of drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) out there now, of all kinds. They protect our borders, launch strikes against our enemies, photograph and film our events and monitor our real estate, crops, forests and construction. They can also provide entertainment, through personal use and drone racing. Unfortunately, misuse of the technology has also occurred, requiring new regulations for their use. From interfering with fire-fighting efforts in California wildfires to the recent shutdown of the Gatwick Airport in England due to drone overflights, we have seen how these useful devices could be misused by vandals, criminals and terrorists. Some aviation experts believe it is just a matter of time before a drone causes a commercial plane crash.

Another technology that didn't exist ten years ago is personal DNA analysis. Companies like AncestryDNA, 23andMe and MyHeritage claim to provide ancestry information and ethnicity breakdowns. Some claim to provide genetic health information and predisposition to inherited conditions. Some can match you to others that may be relatives. These are home kits that allow you to provide a sample that is analyzed and potentially matched to the samples of others. Many of these kits were discounted for the holidays and advertised as great gifts.

These tests may be entertaining and can provide useful, though perhaps vague, information on your ancestry and genetic health. There are some concerns about privacy and accuracy, however, and you may learn things you might have wished you didn't know. One company's test reportedly failed to identify that a submitted sample was actually from a Labrador retriever. Some have learned from these tests that their parentage is not as they were led to believe, or that they had half siblings unknown to their families. Submitting your sample puts your DNA information in the test company's genetic database, which could be used for things you didn't intend. One example is in identification of suspects in law enforcement investigations. These genetic testing companies could also share or sell genetic information to insurance or pharmaceutical companies.

Loss of privacy seems to be a common risk with a lot of the new technology we have adopted in the last decade or two. In the best case, our personal information, preferences and habits (such as for travel and consuming) have become a commodity that companies we deal with can use, buy and sell, with advertisers looking to improve their sales to us, the consumers. In the worst case, criminals are trying to gain, through tricks or theft, our personal information, especially that dealing with our identity and account passwords, in order to steal from us, or sell to others that will. Somewhere in the middle is the threat posed to the individual by a police state that has accumulated detailed information on its citizens, with the goal of tracking and controlling them.

In addition to the information that we provide online with our computers, or in using our smart phones, we now have to worry about the data collected by our connected cars. Automakers are collecting ever more information about how our cars are running and how we use them, and that information is often accessed wirelessly. While older cars are still safe from this, about 3 in 4 of the cars sold by 2020 will be online. This information may be able to help track your car servicing more easily, update safety systems and provide emergency services, but it also could be sold to insurance companies eager to study your driving habits or provided to law enforcement to determine where you have been or when you have been speeding.

Self-driving cars have seemed to be on the verge of introduction to the consumer for a few years now; perhaps 2019 will finally see a service generally available. Many companies have been testing autonomous vehicles for years, mostly with human back-up drivers. Autonomous trucks, taxis and cars could be revolutionary forces in our society, economy and labor market. These technologies could reduce transportation costs greatly and help provide greater freedom for the disabled, and likely would reduce vehicle accident rates.

Technology appears to be finally allowing humans to once again make real progress towards space travel. Christmas Eve 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the first flight to the moon, where Apollo 8 orbited the moon and took the first photo of Earth as a distant object. Following the final Apollo moon landing, however, human space flight never left low Earth orbit. Now that many commercial companies are competing with NASA to fly cargo and ultimately people to the International Space Station and beyond, progress in space is accelerating. Several companies, including Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin, have successfully demonstrated the recovery (landing) of a rocket first stage, allowing reuse and a lower cost for future launches. Musk has a plan for SpaceX to be able to launch people to Mars within six years. I feel for those that watched the moon landings as fifty-year-olds and then died disappointed that humans never again did anything so dramatic. With luck my 82-year-old parents will see people on Mars.

National Geographic has created a TV series called 'Mars', which is very inspiring, yet brings some concerns with the human colonization of that planet. It portrays some of the issues we could face in the development of space technology by private companies, rather that government entities, a road we

appear to be going down now. It shows the parallels this could have with the commercial development of resources here on Earth in the arctic. It is a series well worth watching.

As hopeful as I am that all the new tech we get in the New Year will on balance be a benefit to humankind, I sometimes wonder more about the humans. Many notable people, including Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk and Bill Gates have concerns about artificial intelligence, or AI. AI is on its way, so I wonder if one day we will have to battle with it for our survival, as in 'The Terminator' movies, or will we humans gladly relinquish our control over technology, should that time come. A study by McCann Worldgroup of young people in seven countries conducted in 2011 indicated that 53% of 16 to 22-year olds would prefer to give up their sense of smell than their technology. Will our future turn out rosy, or just stink?