BITS AND BYTES

JANUARY 2017

http://mcc.apcug.org/

Midland Michigan

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

Wednesday, January 25, 2017
NEW START TIME: 6:30 P.M.

It's Innovation Time
Best of Innovation Honorees for CES 2017

By Lou Torraca, President, MOAA-The TUG, Hawaii -- Around Hawaii, Oceanic Time Warner Cable
http://www.aroundhawaii.com/lifestyle/innovation-time-vegas/ -- www.the-tug.org

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) producer of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the world's gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies, announced the Best of Innovation Honorees for CES 2017. The annual CES Innovation Awards honors outstanding product design and engineering across 28 product categories. The show, in January, annually attracts around 150,000 folks to Las Vegas, who represent consumers, company CEOs, venture capital money folks as well as a huge contingent of media who document it all. With 28 categories, you can imagine how much time it takes to see it all. Since each category picks a winner, I have picked six I think will interest you. Next time, I'll cover another six in different categories. To give you an idea of how these winners are chosen, here are the criteria the judges use:

- Engineering qualities
- Aesthetic and design qualities
- The product's intended use/function and user value. For Tech for a Better World entries, this also includes how it can make a positive impact to the quality of life for its users, or those affected by its use.
- Why the product deserves the Innovation Award, including specifics regarding its unique/novel features and features that consumers would find attractive
- How the design and innovation of this product directly compare to other products in the marketplace

And here are the winners in six of the categories

uBolt, an innovative and unique multi-factor authentication personal identity wearable device combining biometric fingerprint and voice recordings and a secure element to ensure "you are who your say you are" to establish trust and verifiable confidence in a user identity.

COMPUTER PERIPHERALS

Predator Z301CT monitor

Acer

The Acer Predator Z301CT is the world's first 21:9 curved monitor with eye-tracking functionality.

HOME APPLIANCES

Sleep Number

Sleep Number's 360 smart bed will forever transform the way people sleep. The new integrated design includes a proprietary algorithm (powered by SleepIQ technology) and machine learning to intuitively sense and automatically adjust all night for an effortless and optimized sleep experience.

Integrated Connectivity Cluster

Bosch

The ICC is the all-in-one information and communication system for motorcycles – and riders. It is the first of its kind integrating head-unit functionality into a cluster. The HMI clearly displays nothing more (and nothing less) than the information essential to riders looking to take their experience to the next level.

TECH FOR A BETTER WORLD

Tobii Dynavox PCEye Mini with IS4 Eye Tracker

Tobii Dynavox

The Tobii Dynavox PCEye Mini featuring IS4 eye tracker is the world's smallest and most robust eye tracker. Optimized for individuals that do not have use of their hands due to various disabilities, the device enables users to control a computer, laptop or tablet using only their eyes.

SMART HOME

Smart Remote by Sevenhugs

Smart Remote is the world's first contextual control system for connected homes. It lets you control everything at home with just one touch. When you point Smart Remote at a device, the screen automatically adapts and you just need one touch to control it. A seamless and intuitive control system.

That's it for January, hope your New Year will be a wonderful one for you and yours. Aloha,

Pooky & Lou

LibreOffice

By Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ
August 2016 issue, BUG Bytes -- www.bcug.com -- n2nd (at) att.net

LibreOffice originated in Germany in 1993 as Star Office, which became OpenOffice, first under Sun Microsystems and later under Oracle. In 2010 a group of developers, unhappy with Oracle's management of the project, formed the Document Foundation, and used the OpenOffice code as a basis for LibreOffice. Oracle later donated OpenOffice to the Apache Software Foundation, where its development appears to be lagging behind the vigorous pace of LibreOffice. Although LibreOffice and MS Office do similar tasks, their operating details differ considerably. If you have used MS Office for a long time, then your first experience with LibreOffice will probably leave you frustrated with illogical menus and unpredictable operation. I've used LibreOffice for years (and OpenOffice before that) and those are exactly my feelings when I try to use MS Office. If you're thinking of installing LibreOffice and trying it for a few minutes, don't bother; you won't like it, because it's not an MS Office clone. If you are using MS Office casually at home, you have little reason to change, as LibreOffice offers no new capabilities. However, you may wish to consider changing if your environment changes, for example if you purchase a new computer or change operating systems. Now it makes sense to ask yourself whether to purchase a new version of MS Office or to make the effort to relearn your habits. If you really need something "Just like MS Office," then you should pay the money. A good comparison of these two suites appears at http://wiki.documentfoundation.org/Feature_Comparison:_LibreOffice_-_Microsoft_Office, but note that this is the Website of the Document Foundation, the publisher of LibreOffice. The two suites have different capabilities and features; if you do specialized work, check the Website referenced above for the features that are important to you.

The software is available at http://www.libreoffice.org/download/libreoffice-fresh/. You won't find a book on LibreOffice in your local bookstore, but you can download a good 388-page manual from http://www.libreoffice.org/get-help/documentation/. If after reading this you need more detailed information, the same site has manuals for the individual LibreOffice applications, but they are for earlier versions. There is also a 512-page tutorial on document styling at http://designingwithlibreoffice.com/, which you'll find interesting after you've mastered the basics. Some books are available from on-line vendors, but be careful, many are for older versions, and others are printed copies of what you can

download for free. LibreOffice is evolving quickly; as a result, even the latest manuals are somewhat out of date with respect to minor details. Like all full-featured office suites, the LibreOffice applications are complex, and trying to learn to use them by trial-and-error will be tedious and frustrating, making a good tutorial essential.

Although you can start the individual LibreOffice applications directly, you can also open a general application (Screen 1), from which all the individual applications as well as the recently-opens files are available.
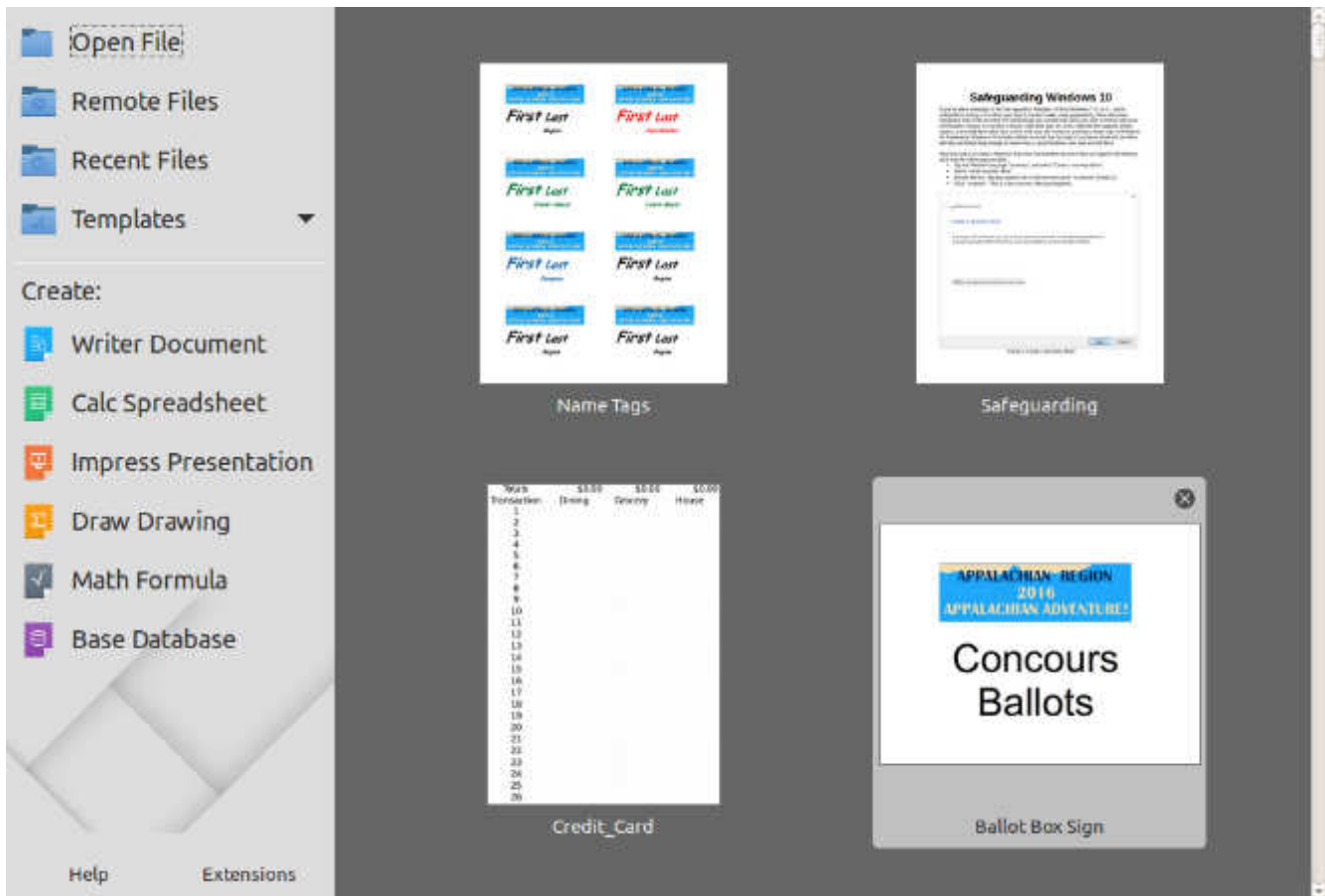

Screen 1. LibreOffice Startup.

Write is the LibreOffice word-processor, and is the only type of office application that many home users run (Screen 2). The two toolbars at the top are configurable, so you can populate them with the functions you use most often. The top one is the Standard Toolbar and is nearly the same for all LibreOffice applications. Below that is the Formatting Toolbar, which adapts to the current application. The right sidebar also changes according to what you are doing. In the screen-shot below, the cursor is on text and as a result the sidebar shows text styles. However, all the functions in the sidebar are also available on the menu bar and the toolbars, although accessing them may require several mouse clicks. My work requires little formatting, and as a result I usually keep the sidebar closed to allow more space for the document. Writer, like all the LibreOffice tools can be customized by adding, moving, and customizing toolbars, but this can become a tar pit. Be sure you are familiar with basic operation and carefully read a good tutorial before you venture too far into customizing.
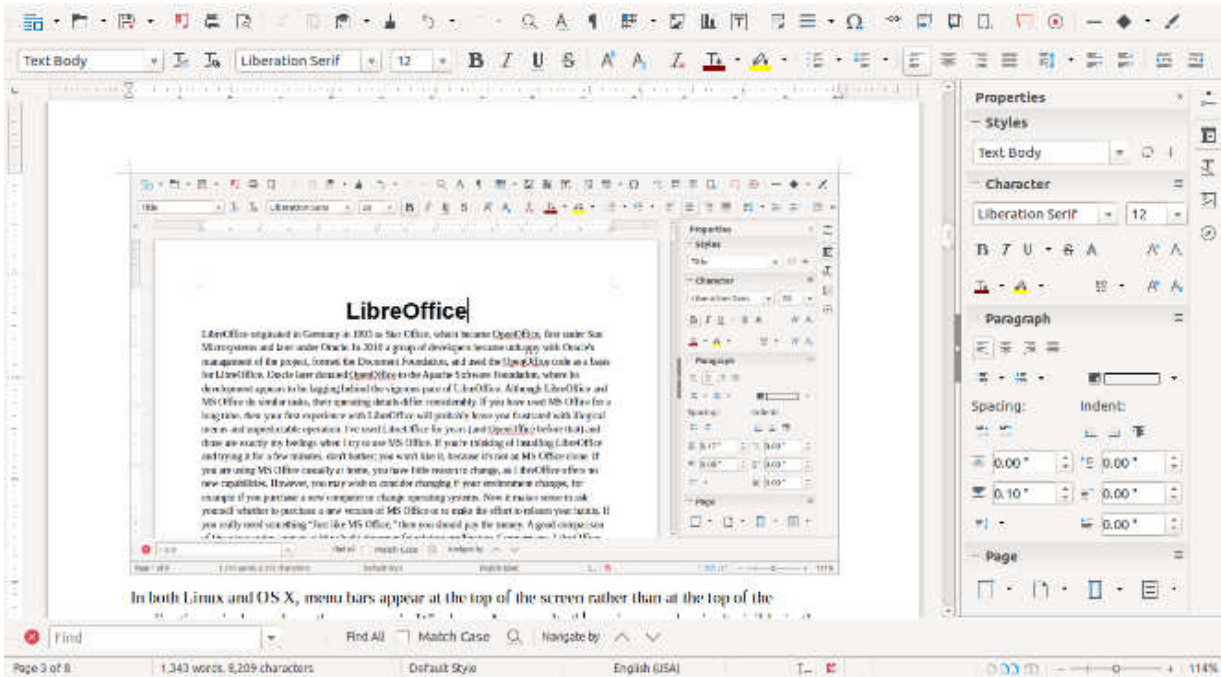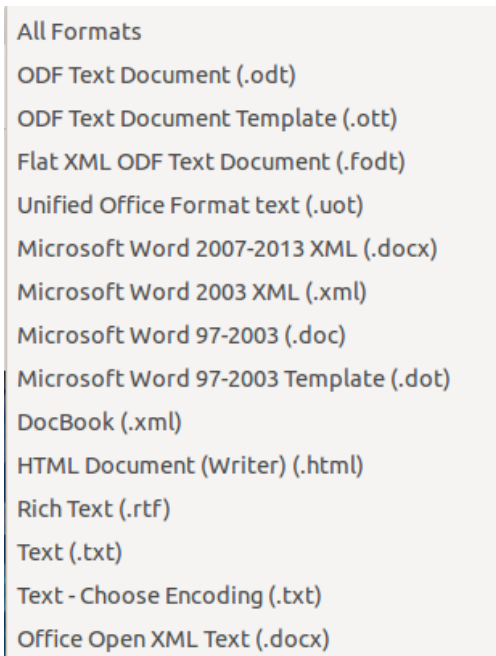
Screen 2. LibreOffice Write.

In both Linux and OS X, menu bars appear at the top of the screen rather than at the top of the application window where they appear in Windows. As a result, the main menu bar isn't visible in the above screen-shot. It appears below (Screen 3).
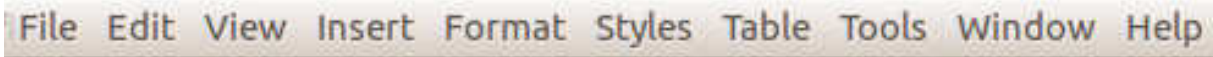
Screen 3. Write Menu Bar.

Like all LibreOffice applications, Writer can save files in several formats, as shown in the drop-down menu that appears when you select "Save as" (Screen 4).

All Formats

ODF Text Document (.odt)

ODF Text Document Template (.ott)

Flat XML ODF Text Document (.fodt)

Unified Office Format text (.uot)

Microsoft Word 2007-2013 XML (.docx)

Microsoft Word 2003 XML (.xml)

Microsoft Word 97-2003 (.doc)

Microsoft Word 97-2003 Template (.dot)

DocBook (.xml)

HTML Document (Writer) (.html)

Rich Text (.rtf)

Text (.txt)

Text - Choose Encoding (.txt)

Office Open XML Text (.docx)

Screen 4. Save File Drop Down Menu.

I have not run into problems converting Writer documents to Microsoft doc and docx formats. I understand that converting the other way can be problematic, as Microsoft sometimes employs undocumented features, and this is true for all LibreOffice applications. The suite is evolving rapidly, and every version produces files that are more compatible with Microsoft's, although the latter are moving targets.

Calc is LibreOffice's spreadsheet application. Screen 5 shows one I put together to reconcile my credit card bills. Its menu and toolbars are quite similar to Writer's, although the individual functions differ of course. Here I show the sidebar closed, since i don't need it for this simple application. If you are familiar with Excel, you should quickly adapt to Calc, although if you will probably have to make some changes to the macros to move existing sheets to this new environment.
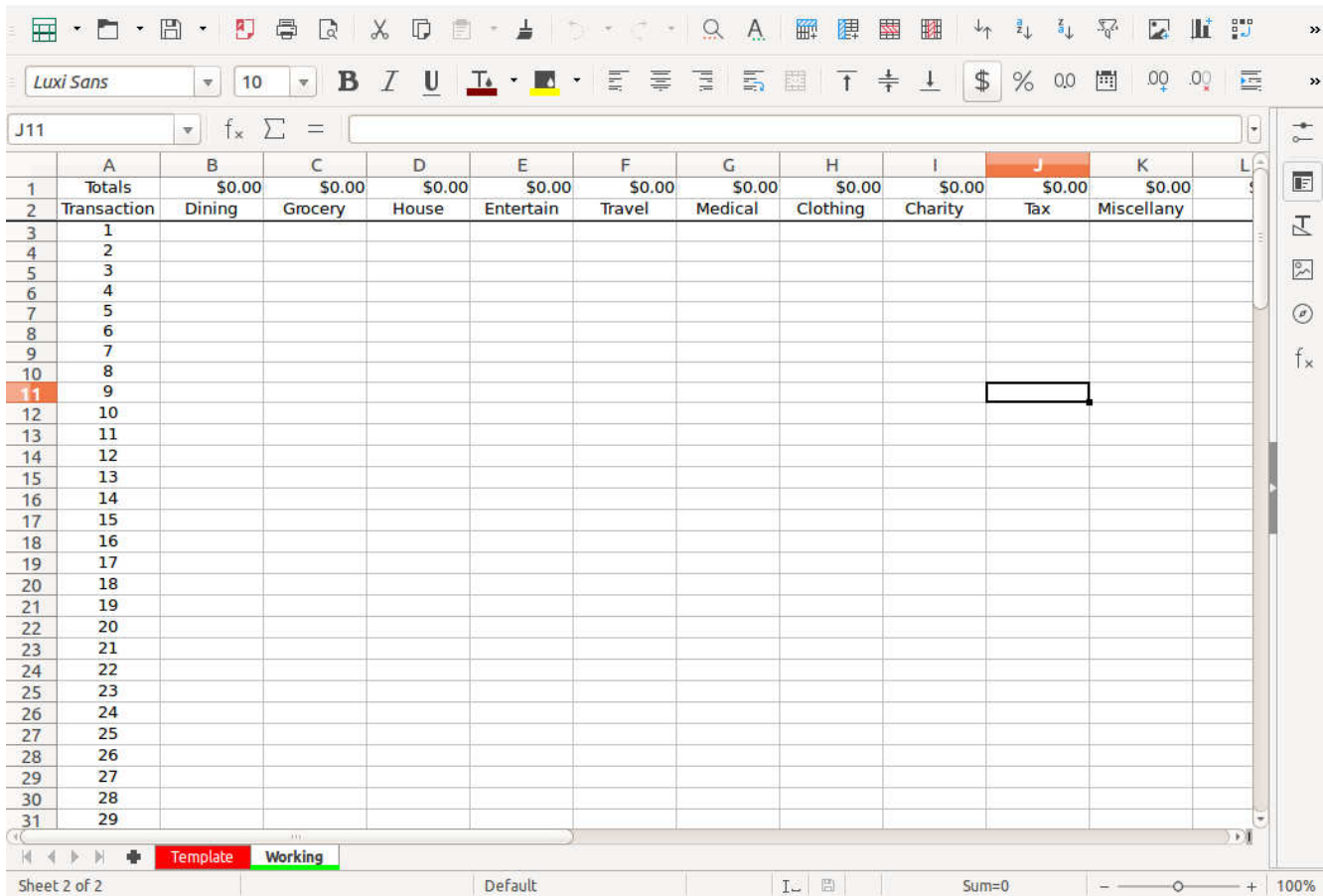

Screen 5. LibreOffice Calc.

It's presentation application is *Impress*. The screen-shot shows a PowerPoint file open in Impress. When I tried this some years ago, with OpenOffice (a predecessor of LibreOffice), there was considerable mangling of the slides. I've seen no evidence of this in the current LibreOffice. Nevertheless, be careful if you have an important presentation, and use the same program, and if possible the same operating system, to display it that you used to develop it. Screen 6 shows the program open in the notes view, so I can edit my lecture notes; the slide appears at the top of the screen and slide thumbnails in the left sidebar. Too many speakers either just read the slides to their audience or try to make up comments on the spot. Don't make this mistake; in preparing a talk, you should spend as much time preparing your remarks as your slides. You should also assume your audience can read; there is no reason to repeat the contents of the slides.
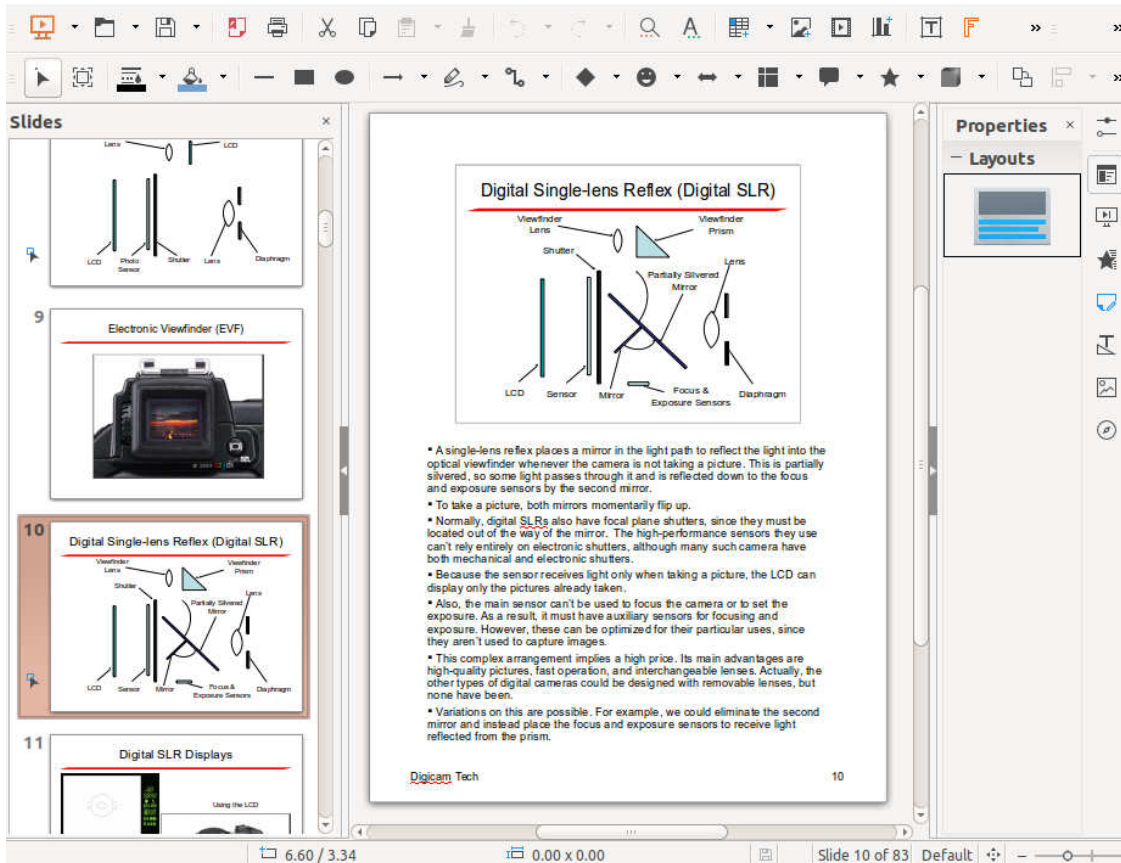
Screen 6. LibreOffice Impress.

Draw (Screen 7) is a simple drafting application, useful for creating figures for Writer and Impress. While both these applications have drafting functions, I find it easier to create figures with a dedicated program and then paste the results where I need them.
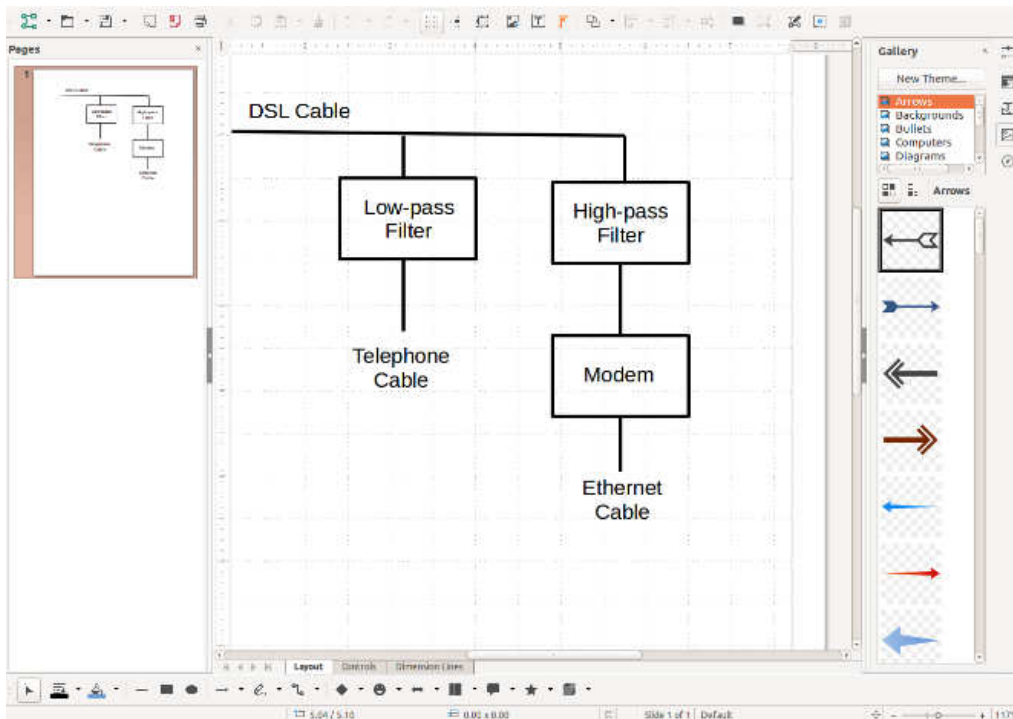
Screen 7. LibreOffice Draw.

Base (Screen 8) is the LibreOffice database application. The screen-shot shows a simple database for organizing photographs being developed using the wizard. I think too many people would use a spreadsheet for this, just because they are comfortable with it, when a database would be more appropriate. Another significant factor in the low usage of databases is that Access (the MS Office database application) is available only in the professional version and not at all for OS X. As a result, few home users have seen it.
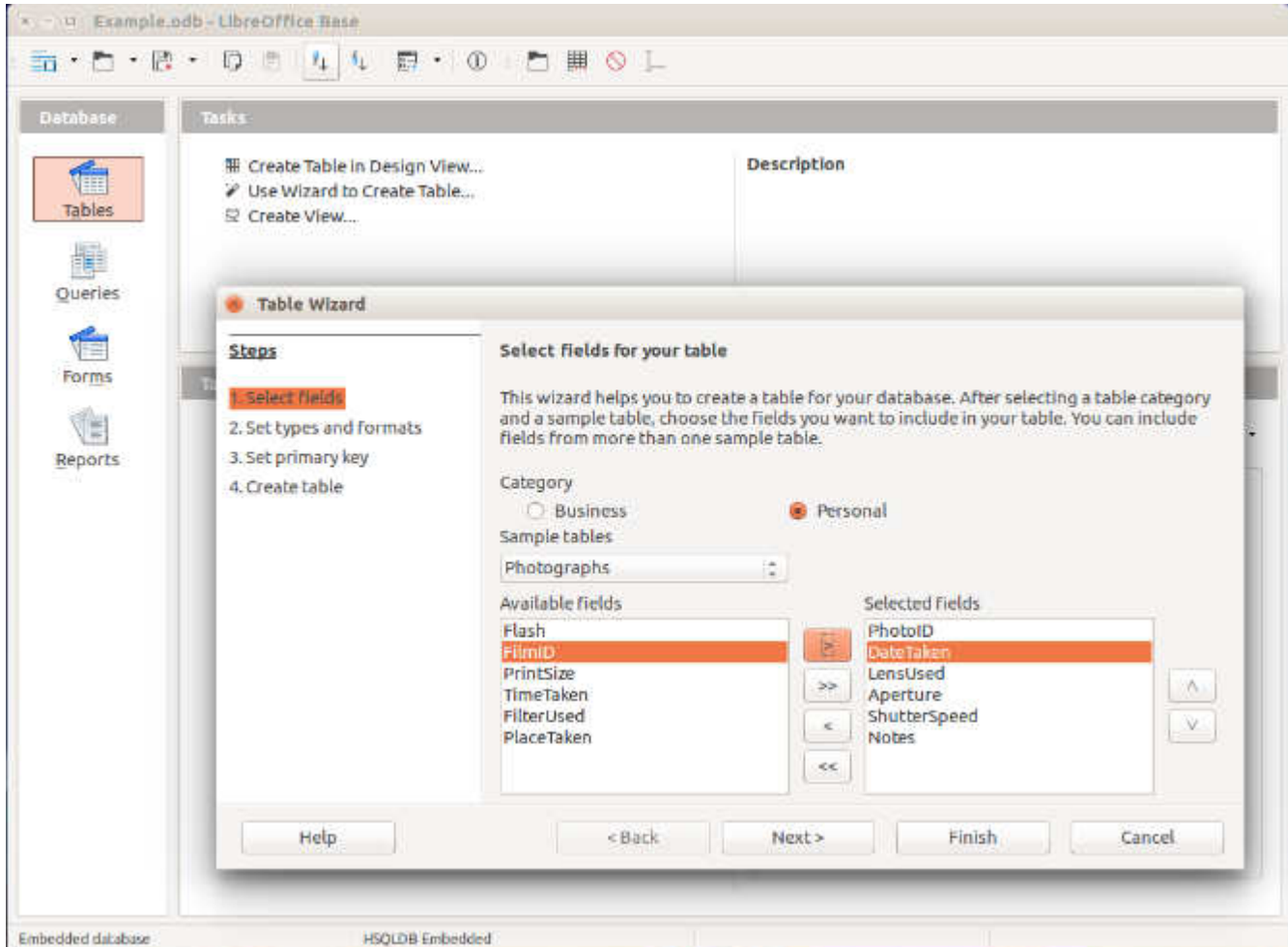
Screen 8. LibreOffice Base.

This has been a very brief introduction to LibreOffice. If you collaborate with others on complex office documents and they use MS Office, you may have an easier time if you use the same suite. I say "may" because the Mac and Windows versions of MS Office differ, and I've also had problems with incompatibilities among different versions of Windows Office. The only way to ensure compatibility is for all members of the team to use the same version of MS Office on the same operating system. By comparison, the code base of LibreOffice is the same for Windows, OS X, and Linux (for which MS Office is not available); if the members of your team use different operating systems, you will have fewer incompatibility problems than with MS Office. For most people, compatibility is not an issue, provided the LibreOffice users convert their files to Microsoft format.

That LibreOffice is open source brings some advantages. It costs nothing, so you can use it on as many computers as you like, and you can even install it on a memory stick for use on any PC, which allows you to use the same office suite wherever you go.

New Programs and Devices

By Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ
November 2016 issue, BUG Bytes -- www.bcug.com -- n2nd (at) att.net

Computer programs can be complex and learning to use a new one can be difficult and frustrating.

Further, many hardware devices contain processors, making it easy for designers to add features that can make them equally complex. My primary operating system is Linux, and I like to explore new applications. These are usually free, and there are often several for every task, usually with drastically different approaches. I also love such gadgets as digital cameras and pocket GPS navigators. As a result, I am continually trying to master new programs and devices and have worked out some methods of doing this.

There are many barriers that make the task difficult.
- Every designer has a different idea of how a program or device should work, and trying to use a new one the same way you used an old one can be counter-productive. Sometimes, the most difficult part is unlearning what you think you know, especially for experienced users who may feel they should be able to figure out new software and hardware by instinct.
- Different products can use different vocabularies – for example "uploading" sometime means importing information into an application and sometimes exporting it.
- Except for a handful of very popular applications, good tutorial books don't exist. This is especially so for Linux, OS X, and many cameras.
- The number of brick-and-mortar bookstores is decreasing, and those remaining are continually decreasing the shelf space for technical books. Software is frequently updated, meaning that books quickly become outdated and public libraries can't keep up. As a result, it is difficult to find useful information by browsing books.
- Information on the Internet is fragmented, poorly organized, and often wrong.
- Tech writers seem to fixate on tasks that don't interest me – they go into elaborate detail on things I never do and skip over those I perform almost every day.
- User interfaces are frequently not well designed, and not all products have useful help features. Purchased software and hardware usually includes only a small printed pamphlet, containing mostly legal disclaimers in several languages and labeled, "Getting Started Guide," or something similar. Many people assume this is the manual and never look at the real manual, which resides on an included CD-ROM or the vendor's Website.

I have found several ineffective techniques.
- Calling a friend – while this is occasionally appropriate, you will soon run out of friends if you overuse it, and some friends have more confidence than expertise.
- Taking random screen shots – unless you organize these and add comments as soon as you take them, you just end up with directories full of useless graphics.
- Handwritten notes – unless you organize these you end up with stacks or useless paper.
- Working by analogy from similar products – every program is different, and few are clones. New ones appear because their developers felt previous ones had fundamental shortcomings; few are just old ones with bug fixes.
- Using a new program to work with valuable data – making a mistake here could mean you lose the data.

Before you install the software or turn on the device, gather the available information about it that appears useful, including: the full manual (if only an on-line version is available, get its URL) not just the getting started guide, reviews (which frequently provide helpful overviews), and Internet articles (or their URLs). If this is software, make a complete backup of your computer. This is important if you downloaded the software, especially for Windows users. Linux users can install new software on a virtual machine, which isolates any problems. Read the reviews and articles you gathered and at least the introduction and installation sections of the manual. Create a sandbox in which to experiment. This can be as simple as a directory with a few files you will manipulate with the new software or as complex as a virtual machine. Set up means of recording notes. I use CherryTree, http://www.giuspen.com/cherrytree/, which is free, but

available only for Linux and Windows; Mac users can find equivalents at
http://alternativeto.net/software/cherrytree/?platform=mac.

Screen 1 shows my complete CherryTree notes on QMapShack after an hour or so of use. (This is a mapping program that works with a GPS.) As you can see, these fit on a single page, and at this point I had a lot yet to do.
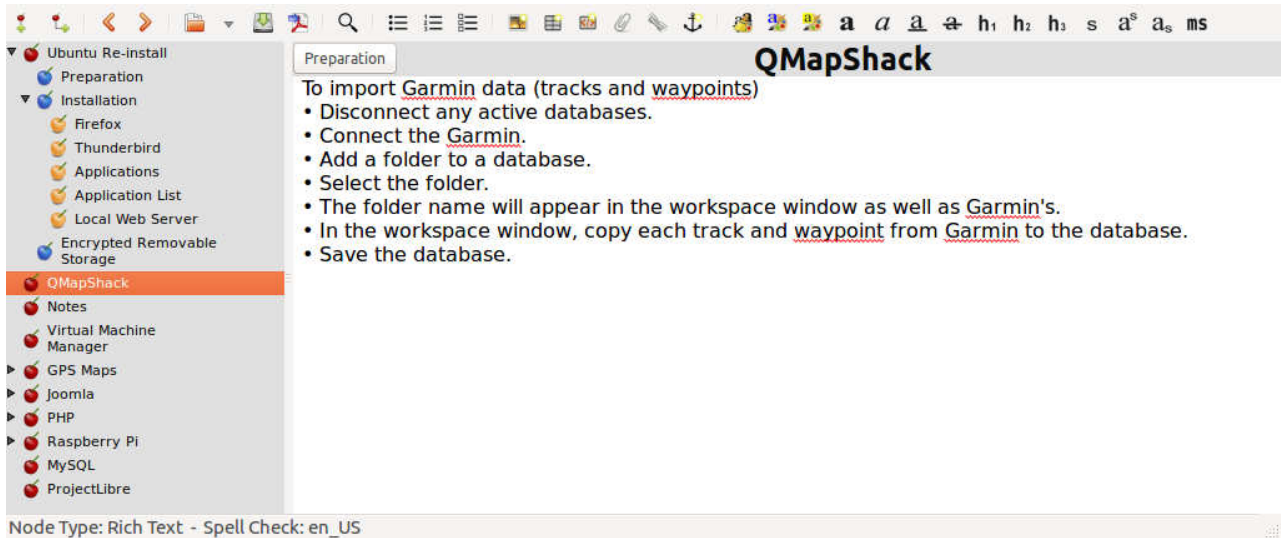
Screen 1. Initial CherryTree Notes on QmapShack.

By contrast, Screen 2 shows a portion of my notes on installing Ubuntu Linux, which have been refined for several years. Note from the outline view in the left panel that these now extend over several pages. I modify these notes again with every new installation.
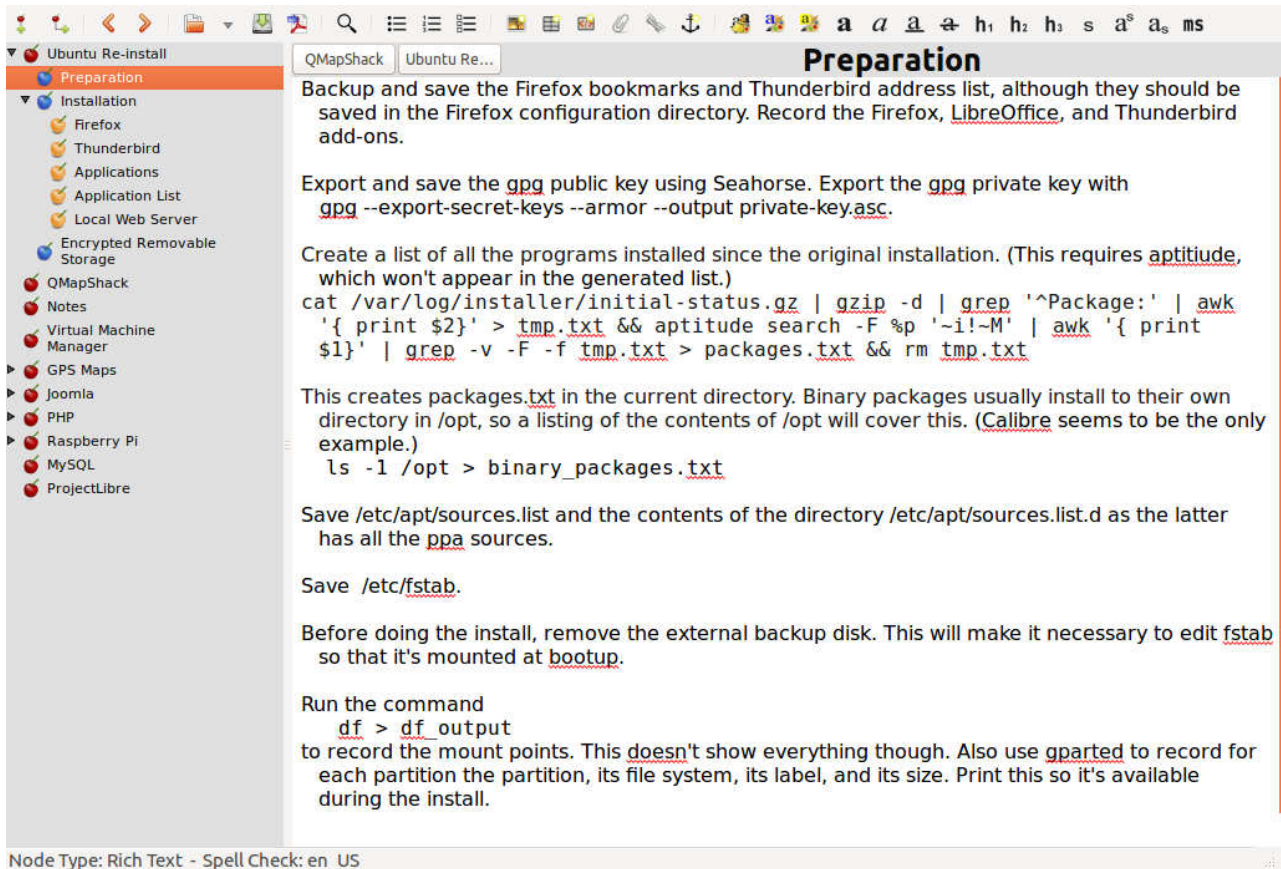
Screen 2. CherryTree Notes on Ubuntu Linux.

Now you're ready to begin. Open the manual, or equivalently open its file or URL on your desktop, and open your notes program. As a result, you may have three open windows on your desktop, the manual, the notes program, and the new software. You may have less if you have a full printed manual or if you are working with new hardware. Follow the instructions to install the program or set up the hardware, making notes as needed. (Do this as soon as you perform the action. Don't wait until the end of the session.) Work your way through the manual, making notes about what you do, especially if something surprises you or works differently than you expect. On the first pass, cover only the basics and skip over those features that don't interest you. At this point you're looking for only the features that you are likely to use initially. Take screen shots as appropriate and include them in the notes (although I seldom find this necessary). Note especially any configuration changes and the locations of the files used. Repeat this until you don't have to refer to the manual, but only your notes.

By now, you should have captured the features that are important to you. I often find that my notes fall into two areas, configuration and work-flow (the process you follow as you use the program or device). A complex program may require several of these. They need not be polished, after all no one but you will ever see them, but they should be complete enough to guide you days or weeks in the future.

Every time you use the software or device, open the notes, as you will want to revise and augment them as you correct early misinterpretations and learn more. This is especially important for things you use infrequently.

Your notes should contain everything you need; that is, you shouldn't have to rely on any other material to use the program or device they cover. This should include:
• the URLs of any on-line material, such as manuals, reviews, tutorials, and newsletters,
• the supplier's Website URL,
• configuration data at install time,
• work-flows,
• contents of configuration and profile files, and
• annotated screen-shots.

Place a copy of these notes on all the PCs with which you will use the program or device. For example, if you take a laptop on vacation, it should have the notes for your camera. Consider making such notes for your operating system, your complex applications, and your hardware, including peripherals. Without them, such jobs as reinstalling an operating system will take far too long and may require several attempts. You will find that they make using and maintaining complex products much easier and maintaining them far less frustrating, especially for those you don't use every day.

What's New?
Reviews by George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ
August 2016 -- www.aztcs.org -- georgehardingsbd (at) earthlink.net

Etòn …

I received three products from Etòn for review. Eton, incorporated in 1986, is a Canadian company providing products in partnership with the Red Cross.

Blackout Buddy is a small unit about the size of a cell phone and provides you with a night light, blackout alert and an emergency flashlight. It has prongs for a wall socket, which turns it into a nightlight. If power goes out, the flashlight automatically turns on and gives you a bright beam from its three LED bulbs. If you remove it from the wall socket and fold the prongs in, it is now a flashlight. This is a handy product for your home and is very reasonable priced at $15.

FR1 is a combination radio and cell phone charger. It has an internal battery that can be charged with the included cable or by using the embedded crank. Four minutes of cranking gets you 10-15 minutes of radio time. There are three radio bands, AM, FM and Weather. Controls on the face of the FR1 allow you to change band, change radio station and change volume. There is a collapsible antenna on the side of the FR1. Another button on the face activates the cell phone charging port. When in Weather band mode, you can set a monitor to turn the FR1 on whenever the station issues an alert for hazardous weather. You can also set an alarm to sound at a particular time. This product is versatile and would be an essential item to have on backpacking and camping trips, or even on a driving trip. It's modestly priced at $45.

Satellit is a multi-purpose radio receiver with many features. It receives AM, FM, LW, shortwave and aircraft bands. It includes a clock and alarms can be set and there is a sleep timer, as well. There is capacity for up to 700 memory channels. It is powered by either a wall plug or by 4 AA batteries. If the batteries are NiMh rechargeable, running the radio on wall power will charge the batteries. A collapsible antenna is stored on the back of the box. The box includes a very nice carrying bag. Both audio in and out are supported. The unit includes a very thorough User Manual with sections in English, French and Spanish. With the many features and options available with this product, the complete manual is a necessity. Priced at $230 through the company, although Amazon advertises the product at $159 at this writing.

Etón Corp.   www.etoncorp.com

I-Sleep …

If you have trouble getting to sleep, this product may be for you. It is scientifically designed to use your brain's impulses to enhance the likelihood of sleep.

The kit comes with several parts. The first is a controller which outputs a signal to your circulatory system and ultimately your brain. It includes a control for you to increase or decrease intensity of the signal. It has an internal battery and a charging cable is included to enable this. The controller has a monitor screen which shows information.

The kit also includes a set of what might be earbuds if the ends were to go into your ears. In this case, though, the ends clip onto your ear lobes. There are cloth pads that fit onto the clips, that must be moistened for connectivity. The manual suggests eye drops as a moistening agent.

When you are ready to go to sleep, you attach an ear clip and turn on the controller. Twenty minutes' time is shown on the monitor and countdown starts. After twenty minutes, the controller automatically turns off.

While on, you may adjust the intensity of the signal put out by the controller. You increase or decrease as needed.

The Company description of operation is: "The product uses advanced bioelectricity to balance brainwave technology to increase the activity of Alpha wave, reduce the activity of Delta waves, in order to improve sleep quality. About 20 minutes after using it, you will fall into a deep sleep."

This innovative product is not yet available to the public. I received it for review as an Xberts Pioneer.

I-Sleep by Xberts   No web access at this time   Price: $169


Nite-Ize …

This is one of the most innovative companies I've come across. They develop useful tools for you and me that are easy to use and reasonably priced. Here are a few that the Company provided me for review.

- Steelie Pedestal for Tablets. This device is pretty simple, but fills the need for a support when you use a tablet on a flat surface There is an adhesive-backed magnetic disc, the Steelie stalk and mount for a desk or other flat surface. You attach the magnetic disc to the back of your iPad or other tablet and place the mount on a flat surface. The Steelie stalk head fits into the magnetic disc and the end goes on the mount. The tablet can be rotated and tilted as needed. Price $50

- Steelie Vent Mount Kit. This is similar to the Pedestal product, but has a mount that clips easily to most vehicle vents. It keeps any cell phone securely attached, yet is easy to manipulate. Don't drive and manipulate! Price $40

- Financial Tool. Holds currency, driver's license and credit cards securely and serves as a multi-tool as well. Tools are: screwdriver, tape cutter, ruler, windshield scraper, wrench and bottle opener. All this in a stainless-steel frame! Price $10
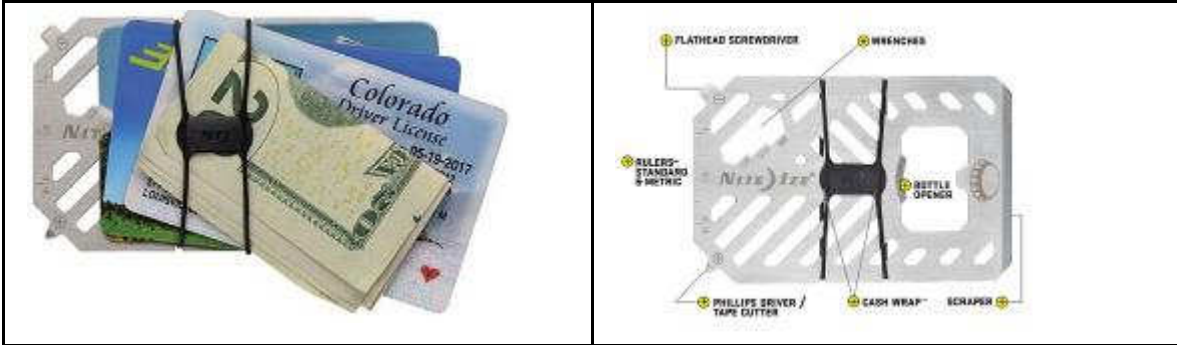
- Mini flashlight. Has functions for flashlight, lantern and safety light. The flashlight has two levels of brightness, high and low. The lantern also has two modes, high and low. The safety light has three modes, glow, flash and SOS. All this in a machined aluminum body and takes only one AA battery. Price $12

- BetterBand. Stretch bands that can hold things together, link cords, bags of chips, etc, or use as a tie-down to something else. Price $4 There are many other versions of these bands in different lengths. Handy for keeping thing together.

- PowerKey. A small container for a cable with an iPhone 5/6 attachment and USB plug. Price $18

- GearTie. A flexible rubberized wire, useful for keeping items together. Comes in various lengths. Price $4.50 for 6-inch pair.

There are many more useful products in the Nite-ize catalog. See http://www.niteize.com

Educational, Fun, and Interesting Websites (submitted by Howard Lewis)

http://tinyurl.com/l75ghg
If you have specific searching needs on the Internet, it may be to your advantage to use something besides the few general ones (Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.). There are over 100 search engines that address specific needs (topical, regional, etc.).

https://www.nomoreransom.org/
If you are ever hit by ransomware, this site may be able to help you recover your computer without having to pay the ransom. The "No More Ransom" website was formed in July 2016 as an initiative by the National High Tech Crime Unit of the Netherlands' police, Europol's European Cybercrime Centre and two cyber security companies – Kaspersky Lab and Intel Security – with the goal to help victims of ransomware retrieve their encrypted data without having to pay the criminals.

http://tinyurl.com/j6okwwz
We have all encountered the Periodic Table of Elements. Someone (with to much time on their hands) has generated one call the Periodic Table of Meats! My favorite element is #4 Bb (baby back ribs).

http://tinyurl.com/hwoubbw
Did you know that January is National Oatmeal Month? This site can tell you what holiday is celebrated(?) for a particular day/week/month.

http://tinyurl.com/znjwvqu
This is the current complete list of Windows keyboard shortcuts.