



Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

APRIL 2020

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APRIL MEETING CANCELLED

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Making Your Tech “Fit” – Cords, Voice, Sound, and other hazards

Author: Debra Carlson, Technical Advisor, CVC Computer Club, CO
Q4 2019 issue, Tech-Notes — [cvc.computer.club \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:cvc.computer.club@gmail.com)

Cords – Whether tripping or kicking (and disconnecting) them ...



or getting the contents of your desktop lost in the shuffle ...
cord / cable management is both a convenience and a safety issue.



Some basic principles:

- Label each Cord you plug into your outlets / surge devices.



Hint: When you get a new device, unplug the power cord from the device and attach the outlet end of the new device to this with a twist tie (or tape). Pull the old cord from the outlet end and it will fish your new cable to the surge strip or outlet. This doesn't work in a “mess of wires” but is good for many setups.



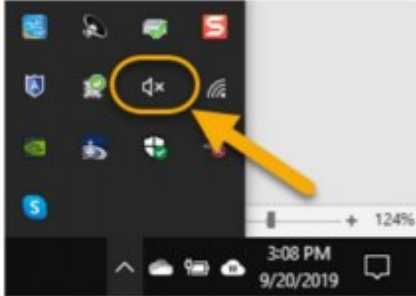
If you have many peripherals intermittently connected to your machine (a couple of cameras, a scanner, an external drive), consider a cable management “toy” for that as well.

Voice – You may have a microphone built into your webcam (or the webcam in your laptop), part of a headset, or a separate microphone. Settings are most often tested in an app that uses the microphone (e.g. Skype). External units may connect to your machine by audio jack, USB cable or Bluetooth (wireless). Two things are important:

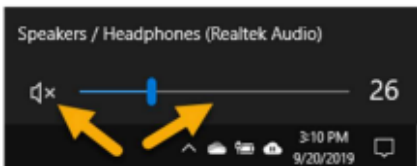
1. Train transcription software completely if you use it. It will help minimize errors in the text.

2. If you are using this for dictation, assume there are going to be errors! Check for them ... this will help avoid embarrassment over the messages you may send.

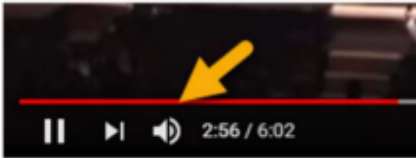
Sound – The biggest issues with speakers – USB, audio jack, Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi is accidental muting. This may happen on the speaker – especially if the on/off switch is a button rather than a knob control OR ...



Your sound is muted (see the X next to, or on top of the megaphone)



If not muted, the volume may be too low.

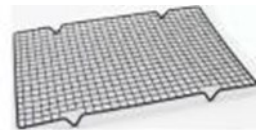


Your YouTube or other video may need either unmuting or volume adjustment (YouTube shown).

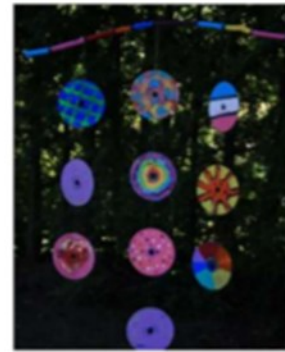
You may need to adjust the speaker volume AND the volume of the audio/video – setting both of them to maximum can interfere with sound clarity.

Other hazards –

- UPS units and surge/power strips can be great, but many have on/off switches. Be sure your unit is not in a position where it can be easily kicked (or hit) – and shut off.
- All computing devices can overheat. Have circulation space -- at least a couple inches each side on a tower, and if you have a laptop that lies flush on a desk, consider a cooling pad or other prop (I like bread cooling racks – right height and size).



Old program CDs make good drink coasters, wind chimes, or decorative hangings / picture frames. A couple ideas to make your desk area manageable and clear some clutter.



Meeting Review

Big changes coming to media, entertainment, newspapers

Authors: Michael Shalkey, Computer Tutor and Troubleshooter and John Weigle, Editor, Channel Islands PCUG, CA

September 2019 issue, The TOE

www.cipcug.org

[jweigle \(at\) vcnet.com](mailto:jweigle@vcnet.com)

Things are changing quickly in the world of media, entertainment, and newspapers, Michael Shalkey said at our last meeting.

Lawyers, big corporations, money and the Internet are behind the changes, he said.

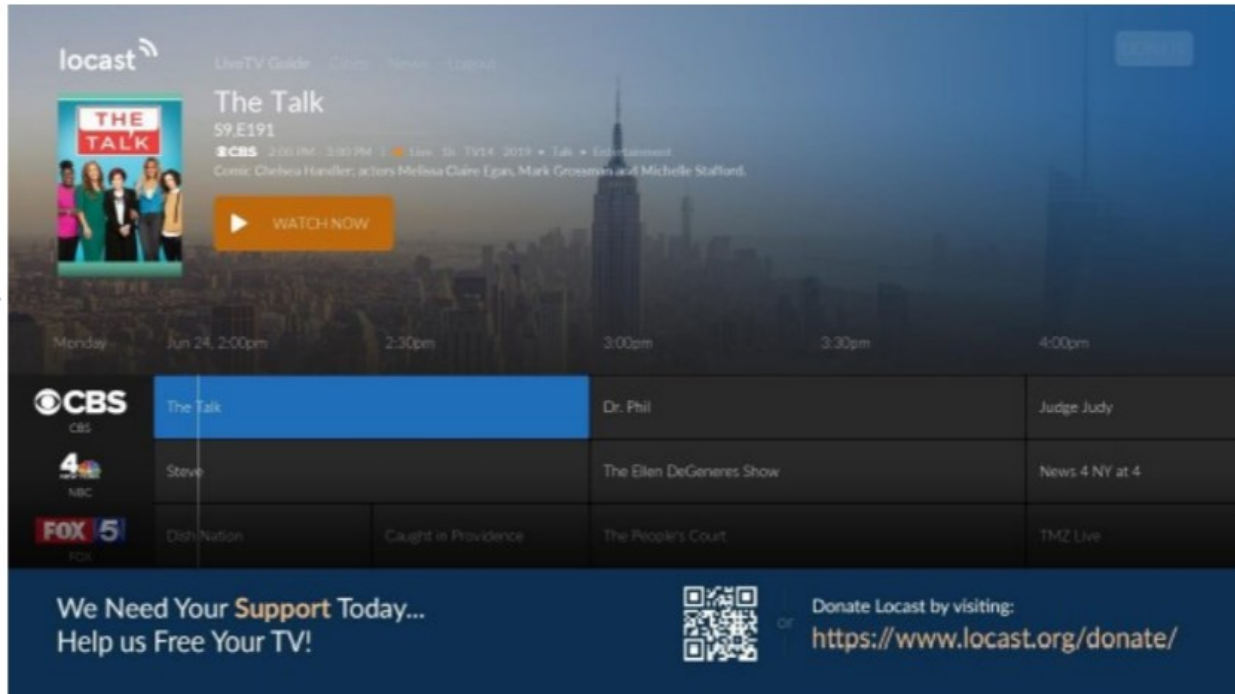
TV networks used to broadcast over the air using signals of a certain frequency. The broadcasters had to pay a fee for the frequencies, and they charged businesses for advertisements. Anyone could put up an antenna and get the broadcasts as free TV.

When cell phones came in, fewer people were getting over-the-air signals. The government took some of the frequencies back and is selling them to cell phone carriers. On June 12, 2009, they went from analog to digital, a different type of wave form.

You may not have noticed then because most of us are getting our TV from cable or satellite providers. Those providers pay TV channels to be included in their package. You have seen disputes for years about these fees.

Recently CBS and Direct TV fought over the amount that CBS would be paid to be on the Direct TV service. For a few weeks you couldn't watch CBS, but they resolved it (for now) and you can now watch CBS like normal, but I think the death of TV as we know it is coming soon. CBS did this because, although it came out with CBS All Access in 2014 it is now ready to really push it with exclusive streaming-only content.

That time when you couldn't watch CBS was the genesis for this presentation. Here is how to watch CBS on your TV using an app for your streaming box.



All of us hate the amount of money we spend each month for TV. Many have added boxes to watch content from the internet. Some have already become cord-cutters and get their TV only that way.

Definition first. Sometimes the word streaming means following the TV schedule, just over the internet, sometimes it is used for on demand, which means I want to watch something, and I want it now.

Live TV is now viewable using the LoCast app. It is very, very interesting. It's a non-profit that can legally pick up signals for free. It can put its own ads over the other ads. Because it's a local service, the programs available differ from area to area.

Some of you may remember a similar service a few years ago called Aereo that had antennas in New York that received over-the-air signals and allowed subscribers to view those signals. Lawsuits went all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled against them partly because they were reselling the content without permission of the copyright owners. The hope for LoCast is that as a nonprofit, it is not selling anything. There will be lawsuits, but one of the supporters of LoCast is ATT, which has donated generously to LoCast.

You can get LoCast with most of the boxes like Roku, FireTV and similar boxes — and even a smart TV. The on-demand services like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, and HBO Go are also available on those boxes but they charge a monthly fee. These are becoming so popular that if you have never tried them, you probably will soon.

If you want to start a conversation waiting in line at a store or bank, say, "I just got Netflix. What should I watch? You can shut up for 10 minutes."

Toby Scott said to expect a fight over something that's recommended.

Many shows are exclusive, meaning they're available only on one of the services.



One of the people in the audience wants to watch TV at a louder volume than others in the room. He wants to have earphones. He can pair a device with his Bluetooth headphones to the Amazon Fire Cube through settings or through the newer Roku boxes that have a headphone jack in the remote control. (See photo above)

Shalkey was showing two devices: Amazon Fire Cube and Roku version 3. The headphone jack in the Roku remote shuts the volume off on the TV and puts it in the headphones or earbuds you have plugged in.

The August 2018 TOE has the program on the Amazon Fire Cube including the voice activation and channel changing.



One Fire TV Cube feature — as you can see — is the slideshow feature (above). As you know, I like wine. My wife and I went to a wine event in Paso Robles. We can take as many pictures as we want on our phones and upload them to Amazon Photo. It's free. I then put those photos in their own folder. Now I can set the FireTV Cube to show the pictures in that folder and talk about them when friends come over.

For streaming services, the big three are Hulu, Netflix and Roku. The up-and-comers are HBO-Go, YouTubeTV, CBS All Access, and the new Disney Plus (launching in November).

With Netflix, Hulu and Amazon you can have profiles so you will be offered films that match your previous choices, he said. Some of the shows on these channels could not be sold to the big networks, he added.

A lot of the old favorite shows are being pulled back by the networks that broadcast them originally.

Q. Do you see the future as cord cutting?

Michael Shalkey: Yes. I think in the future no one will have home phones, newspapers and cable TV. The satellite and cable people are doing this to themselves. For people who are cutting the cord because of the cost it's going to be hard to decide what they want to keep and to be sure that cutting the other things are not more expensive than the bundle.

Q: If you get rid of the phone and TV what are you going to pay for internet?

Michael Shalkey: It depends on where you are and what you need. Depending on where you live, you might not save much by cutting everything. When you are calculating, please do the math right. If you are already an Amazon Prime member, there is no cost for Amazon Prime Video. If you currently have

Internet in your house (and who doesn't)? you can't really count that as an added cost in the cord-cutting scenario unless you are seriously thinking about getting rid of the internet at home.

Q: I have a home with two TVs for two families and Wi-Fi for cell phones. What speed do I need to run effectively?

Michael Shalkey: It depends. I would not think of moving into a new home now and having less than 15 megabits per second. It really depends on your users. Music is already streaming. How many of you have bought a music CD in the last year? How many of you have an AM radio (few said yes). Big producers have changed the music world. The TV world is not far behind and many changes have been made in music.

Q: I was watching a Prime movie, and there were commercials, which I haven't noticed before.

Michael Shalkey: It's their platform. I haven't seen them, but they can advertise their own shows particularly before the movie (kind of like a movie trailer in a theater).

Q: Can we have more than one of such devices and listen to different things in different rooms?

Michael Shalkey: Yes. I can watch a movie on Netflix in the bedroom while my wife watches something else in the living room on her box. I don't think smart TVs are that smart. The manufacturers don't update the apps.

Q: How many options do you have and what do you pay for them?

Michael Shalkey: You pay for the Roku box but you don't pay to use it. I pay for Netflix, and I pay for Hulu and I'm a prime member of Amazon, but I don't count it as a monthly expense because I buy so much. I'd be saving a lot of money if I could get my wife to drop Direct TV, but she does like her Hallmark Channel.

Q: What about live sports and news reports?

Michael Shalkey: It depends on what you want and what the channel you want is doing. LoCast is live TV, but that is only the traditional over-the-air networks. It does not include ESPN, CNN or MSNBC.

Q: Do you find much overlap in the channels you get?

Michael Shalkey: Yes and no. Yes, different boxes get the same "channels" like Netflix, but I don't pay more per month for each device, so that's no problem. I don't see much overlap.

Comment: The Amazon Echo can also play radio stations, and if you have more than one they can be used as an intercom.

Michael Shalkey: You can also use them to make phone calls.



New to the Library

Google Apps Made Easy – Learn to Work in the Cloud

Author: Terry Flanagan, Club Librarian, GVR Computer Club, AZ

October 2019 issue, Greenbytes — www.ccgvas.org — Newsletter (at) ccgvas.org



Just added to the club library is *GOOGLE APPS MADE EASY – Learn To Work In The Cloud*. Google Apps is Google's response to Microsoft Office and LibreOffice. The table below lists the various functions and the names used.

| FUNCTION | GOOGLE APPS | M/S OFFICE | LibreOffice |
|------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Word Processing | Docs | Word | Writer |
| Spreadsheet | Sheets | Excel | Calc |
| Presentation | Slides | PowerPoint | Impress |
| Database | N.A. | Access | Base |
| Forms | Forms | N.A. | N.A. |
| Note Taking | Keep | OneNote | N.A. |
| Photo Organizing | Photos | N.A. | N.A. |
| Vector Graphics | N.A. | N.A. | Draw |
| Email | Gmail | Outlook | Thunderbird |
| COST | Free | \$100/yr. | Free |

What makes Google Apps different? First and foremost Google Apps are web based. You do not download and install a program on your computer. You use your web browser, preferably Google Chrome, to go to www.google.com and log into your account and there they are. You do not have to be concerned with updates, maintenance, and backup issues. They are also platform or operating system independent. It does not matter if you are using a M/S Windows, Apple MAC or Linux computer, an Android smart phone, iPhone or iPad. The applications and your files are there in the cloud for you to access from wherever you are.

There are several advantage and disadvantages to working in the cloud. Being on the cloud makes it easier to share your files with others, which makes collaboration easier. There is no need to send email attachments back and forth or copy files onto flash drives. Also, all of your data will be consistent between your devices. If you make changes in Google Docs on your PC and later open the file on your iPad the changes are there. Even if you save the file locally to your computer it will be synchronized to the cloud version. The disadvantages are that you must have an internet connection since most of the things you will do with these apps are cloud-based and done online. The applications do not have as many features as the other office suites and some may have security concerns about their data being on the cloud.

From the chart above, you will note that each office suite has applications that the other does not. Google Apps does not have a database module, but this is not a frequently used application by home users. Many common database functions can be handled by a spreadsheet. M/S Office and LibreOffice do not have a photo editing module, but there are a number of good stand-alone programs to perform those tasks.

Google Forms stands out as a unique application. Forms does what the name implies. You can easily create forms to gather information or take surveys. The data is automatically transferred to a spreadsheet and reports created to summarize the results and display them in easy to understand charts.

One final point to mention – notice the bottom line in the chart above. Google Apps are free along with 15 gigabytes of cloud file storage. More space is available for a fee.

Thoughts from a Clicker - September 2019

Author: Tiny Ruisch, Member, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA

September 2019 issue, CCCC Computer News - www.clickers.org - tsa70785 (at) gmail.com

This month I'd like to tell you about one of my favorite utility programs. I have it installed on all my computers and have been using it for more than ten years. I first reviewed this program in July 2009. The program has gotten even better since then. Like many other free programs, the programmer has a donate button on his website. I like the program so much that I hit the PayPal button a long time ago. Maybe it is about time I gave him a few more dollars.

FileMenu Tools lets you customize the right click menu of Windows Explorer. It also works with all the alternate explorer programs that I've tried. The program adds utilities to perform operations on files and folders and adds customized commands that let you run external applications, copy or move to a specific folder or delete specific file types.

With the built-in commands you can:

- Run With Parameters – Runs a program with parameters you input in a dialog box.
- Command Line From Here – Opens a command line window.
- Copy/Move – No need to cut and paste. You can also use filters in file selection.
- Duplicate Files – Makes a copy in the same folder.
- Pack to Folder - Moves all the selected elements to new sub-folder in the current folder.
- Copy Path/Name/Content - Copies the selected item(s) to the clipboard.
- Attributes – You can view and change them without having to open a properties dialog box.
- Find and Replace – Lets you find or replace a text for all the files in a selected folder.
- Advanced Rename – With lots of options.
- Change Icon – Changes the icon for the selected folder.
- Change Attributes – Quickly and easily change folder options.
- Advanced Delete – Lets you delete specific file types in a folder.
- Synchronize Two Folders – Lets you synchronize two folders quickly and easily.
- Shred Files – Overwrites several times so it is impossible to recover the file in the future.
- Send to Mail Recipient – Lets you send an e-mail with selected elements as attachments.

These are less than half of the FileMenu commands you can select from. In the configuration menu, a simple check will turn off the commands you don't want. If you can't find the FileMenu function you need, then just add a customized command to run external applications, copy/move to a specific folder or delete specific file types.

FileMenu Tools lets you configure the "Send to" sub-menu. You can add new items, change the properties of the existing items or delete them. You also can disable existing "Send to" items in order to hide them from the menu.

FileMenu Tools will also let you enable/disable the commands which are added to the context menu of the Windows Explorer by other programs. This is the only function that is not one hundred percent reliable.

When it works, it works well, but it doesn't catch all the programs that add a right click. FileMenu Tools is a 12.90 MB download and runs on all Windows platforms. Open Candy is used during the installation process but can be refused with a check mark. Did I mention the price? This program is freeware and costs nothing.

Download FileMenu Tools and give the program a test. I'm pretty sure that you'll like it. While you're on the Lopesoft website, you can also download and test LopeEdit Lite, an excellent alternative to Windows Notepad.

Keep on clicking and thanks for reading.

Windows 10 Taskbar Options

Author: Jim Sanders, Director / Webmaster, North Orange County Computer Club, CA
September 2019 issue, Orange Bytes - www.noccc.org / [jsanders \(at\) ligasmicro.com](mailto:jsanders@ligasmicro.com)

The taskbar is a very important part of the Windows 10 operating system. Arguably, it's primary purpose is to make computing life for you, the user, easier. Like a lot of things in Windows 10, most of the features in the taskbar can be implemented or modified in more than one way. Some, directly on the taskbar itself. For instance, the order in which shortcut icons appear on the left end of the taskbar can be rearranged by simply moving the cursor to that icon, left click and hold with the mouse, then drag the icon left or right to the position that you want it to be in.

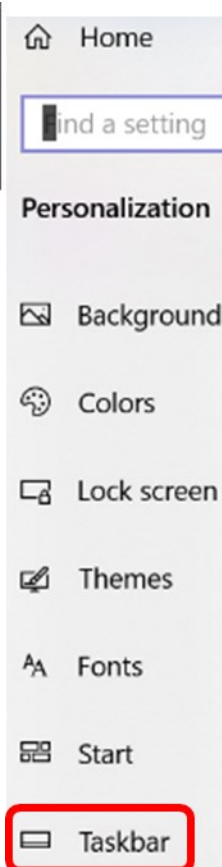
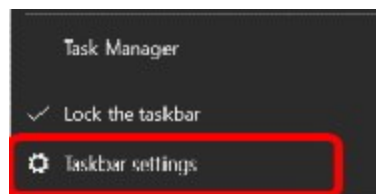
The taskbar is a great location for any shortcuts that you use often. One way to get that shortcut onto the taskbar is to right-click on any shortcut icon on the desktop and choose "pin to taskbar" from the list of options in the window that pops up. Or, click on start, pick the program that you want from the list that you can scroll through, right-click on that program, in the window that pops up, left click on "more" and on the sub-window that pops up, click on Pin to taskbar. If a program shortcut icon has already been pinned to the taskbar, you can "unpin it" in the same procedures.

One feature that some people love and others hate, is auto hide the taskbar. When the taskbar is at the default bottom of the screen location, and auto hide is turned off, the taskbar is always visible and covers up at least one line of information at the bottom of the screen. When auto hide is turned on, the taskbar is hidden until you move the mouse cursor to the bottom edge of the screen. At that point the taskbar rises to visibility. I happen to prefer that setting.

One taskbar function that few people seem to be aware of, assuming "Lock the Taskbar" is not checked, is that by simply moving the mouse cursor to the top edge of the taskbar a double headed arrow appears. With the double headed arrow visible, a left click and hold will allow you to move your arrow up and

increase the number of lines that the taskbar covers, to half the screen if you want, or vice versa. Increasing the height of the taskbar allows you to have more of the larger icons that are easier to read.

The taskbar incorporates a large number of functions that could make your computing life easier if you studied up a bit on all the things that it can do. When you right-click on the taskbar, the first item on the window that pops up, at the bottom, is taskbar settings. It is recommended that you click on that and read all of the possible variations that the settings screen allows you to make. In particular, the section on system icons.



Taskbar

Lock the taskbar
☒ On

Automatically hide the taskbar in desktop mode
☐ Off

Automatically hide the taskbar in tablet mode
☐ Off

Use small taskbar buttons
☐ Off

Use Peek to preview the desktop when you move your mouse to the Show desktop button at the end of the taskbar
☒ On

Notification area

Select which icons appear on the taskbar

Turn system icons on or off

Freshly Squeezed Review — **Light Cubed**

Author: Frank Petrie — October 2019 — <https://lympnow.com>

Several months ago I reviewed the benefits of Bias Lighting, not just for setting ambience but regarding taxing your retinas. Lately, I have found myself being a creator of video not just a consumer. Appearing on the occasional podcast (what were they thinking?) and creating a short project for a film festival. Plus time-to-time I video chat with my daughter on the other side of the continent and friends around the globe. (This is all that my Film degree has gotten me.)

For drone-fanatics you are probably already familiar with [Lume Cube] as not only do they manufacture lighting for taking shots in a multitude of situations, they have recently released anti-collision lighting to apply to your drone when night shooting. But I was in the market for an inexpensive, versatile light to mount on my iMac for video conferencing and aforementioned activities. That's when I stumbled into the world of Lume Cube.

I already knew of lighting setups for TV and film work, and their myriad of benefits such as drastically reducing heat generated by the lighting (when recording an interview in a small room, a Tungsten light could turn said room into an oven extremely fast).

Lume Cube has many solutions for a vast number of situations from regular video conferencing, chatting on your mobile devices, to lighting for your drone shots and now The Strobe - Anti-collision Lighting For Drones. Plus there is an incredible amount of accessories for the amateur to the professional (honestly, a snoot for use with a light on your iPhone).

I purchased the [Lume Cube Air VC Lighting Kit for Video Conferencing] (for brevity, I'm going to refer to the Lume Cube Air VC as LCAVC) which I use for daily activities as well as for my short film projects. I'll base my review on that unit. (As Lume Cube has an astonishing selection of devices and assortment of accessories, I enthusiastically suggest that you visit their site.)

##The Good

Let's begin with the packaging which has more of a 'Whoa' factor than anything Apple has produced. A simple white box but it opens and closes in a unique fashion. Instead of sliding cardboard 'ears' into and out of slots, the box unfolds. How? The right side has a small piece of cloth which you pull on to release magnets imbedded in the cardboard and some metal in the body of the box. This keeps the box securely closed. It's ingenious. I've never seen anything like it.

Once opened, you'll find your LCAVC, a powerful suction cup mount, two diffusion bulbs, and a micro USB charging cable.

You use the suction cup to mount your LCAVC to any flat surface. For conferencing that most likely would be your iMac, MacBook, iPad, even your iPhone.

The brightness is incredible. You can adjust it by pairing it with their free iOS app, Lume-X, which will ask for access to both your camera and microphone. You also use it to register your light's serial number. This is handy in the event you should switch whatever your cube is mounted to so you can use the app without constantly refilling your information.

The interface is very intuitive, allowing you to turn the cube or multiple cubes on and off, adjust the brightness, the duration of the flash for photography, giving you the amount of battery life left, and more. A very useful feature is you can switch to your selfie camera, allowing you to adjust the aim and brightness to your liking.

##The Bad

I wish they had made the button on the cube itself more prominent (fortunately, you can turn the cube on/off with the app once you have turned it on via the cube). I don't have the greatest tactile sense, so

locating and operating it without being able to see it (mine is mounted on my iMac) is difficult. The button also seemed somewhat wobbly.

The biggest problem that I found was mounting the cube to my iMac. Mounting it to a perfectly flat surface such as my iPhone or iPad was a breeze as their backs are perfectly flat. But in the case of the iMac's latest form factor, there's an ever so slight curve. It took me repeated attempts and some seaman's lingo to get it to adhere to the back of the iMac. Regrettably, I ended up placing it where it would grip and not where I wanted it.

Another is their "gotcha" sales tactic when buying accessories. As an example, I wanted to buy barn doors for my cube. I paid and received them within several days. I unpacked them, went to mount them to my cube only to find that I couldn't without a special mounting bracket. I returned to their site to find that the mounting bracket was sold separately! The barn doors were only USD \$15. Coincidentally, so was the "AIR MODIFICATION FRAME" that I now had to purchase. Why wouldn't you sell the two as a bundle as neither is functional without the other piece? You could nickel and dime yourself to death. (They do have kits but you wind up buying extra things that you may have no intent of ever using.)

Nowhere on the site did it mention that I needed the aforementioned bracket. I later found that they have entirely separate ecosystems for the LCAAV as opposed to their other similarly looking cube. It would have been nice if they had placed the two ecosystems on separate pages. (Be fair, there is a button on the home page, "SHOP THE KIT." But if you aren't sure what you need to fulfill your requirements, it's a crapshoot.)

##Conclusion

I don't regret my purchase. The output of light is impressive. Regrettably, trying to mount to it the iMac wasn't a pleasant experience. (Is there a trick that I don't know? All the users in the promo shots seemed so happy!) If need be, I can gerry-rig it somehow if need be.

Lume Cube has a vast assortment of products to choose from. While I don't condone their business model, I definitely feel you should consider giving them a look and see if they have something that will fit your lighting needs. But pay close attention to the details.

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President's Corner—Forty Years

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer User Group, CA
June 2019 issue, Drive Light — www.uchug.org — [president \(at\) uchug.org](mailto:president@uchug.org)

There have been a lot of changes in the technology that affects our everyday lives over the last 40 years. Personal computers, cell phones, the internet and web sites are just a few of the things we probably use every day that were not around when our user group started. So many technologies have improved so much since then that our lives have been forever changed. Wireless communications, small and powerful batteries, robotics and automation and the ultra-miniaturization of electronics have altered our world economy and our personal behaviors. Our cars, homes, neighborhoods and workplaces have been transformed in many ways. How we get our entertainment, find jobs, search for a mate, order food, pay our bills and communicate with our friends and family have been changed in ways we usually don't think about much.

A couple of recent events in my life have pointed out some of the ways my life and lives of everyone I know have changed due to the advances in technology in the last 40 years. I recently had to change jobs, due to lay-offs at my longtime employer. In spite of the claimed improved economy and employment situation, I was very concerned about how long my job search might take, as I know there is age discrimination in the workplace (good luck proving it, though). I also had not had to look for a job in almost 20 years and found the employment search landscape had changed considerably. While resumes are still important, including key search terms in them is critical to getting noticed by employers. Most of the searching and applying is now done online, on company web sites and new job search sites like LinkedIn, Indeed and Glassdoor. Even applying for state unemployment benefits is best done online. California has its own job search web site, CalJOBS. Job seekers must post their resumes on the CalJOBS site as a condition of eligibility for unemployment compensation (though I believe it is possible to mail them a resume for posting). Fortunately, due to some old-fashioned networking with ex-coworkers now at other companies, I was able to find new employment relatively quickly.

My son got married a few days ago. While a lot of young people are not including marriage as part of their relationship plans, those that do are involving more technology. While my son's wedding invitation did involve a mailed card, most of the information and the RSVP capability were on the web site it referenced. The boutonniere I wore as father of the groom had real flowers but was held to my lapel by very small and powerful rare earth magnets, rather than a pin.

Those born in the last 40 years have grown up with all this new technology and have more easily adapted and accepted it. Some of us older folks have had a harder time. That is a major reason why user groups like ours are in decline. Young people see no need for organizations geared towards helping learn and use new tech, leaving a shrinking population of older users that still find them of value. The only exceptions seem to be groups aimed at robotics and 'maker' tech, which probably seem way beyond those just looking to solve their email and smart phone problems.

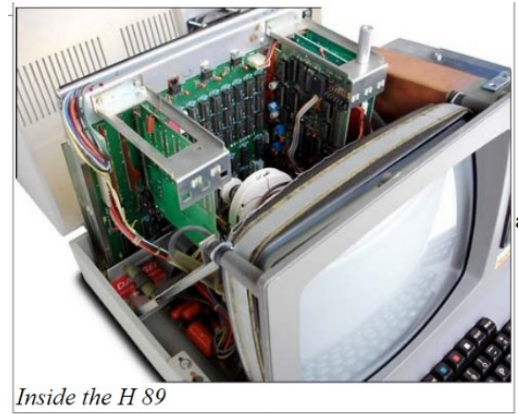
Our Past

In 1979, some San Diegans interested in new technology decided to form a group to help each other and collectively increase their knowledge in the new field of personal computing. In those days only the truly avid hobbyists pursued this interest. Institutional analog and digital computers had existed for some time, but it was the developments of the transistor, solid-state electronics and the integrated circuit that allowed the creation of computing devices that individuals could afford. These early digital computers were often initially available only in kit form, and this particular group favored kits made by the Heath Company, long a supplier of kits for amateur radios, test equipment, television and audio electronics.



HS computer, no monitor, note the keypad

The San Diego Heath User's Group (SDHUG), as they were originally named, was one computer. They met for a time in the Heathkit store in La Mesa. A computer enthusiast at the time found it difficult to learn about computers and solve their own problems without a user group to help them. Remember that the commercial Internet was still a decade away. There were dial-up BBSes (bulletin board systems), but those required working terminal hardware and software and a sophisticated user. In those days, your display was a few rows of lights or if lucky, a green CRT. Input was by rows of switches or perhaps a keyboard. Computer data storage drives were floppy and were both large in size (8 inch) and small in capacity (about a megabyte). Still, these computers were useful, and our group's membership grew.



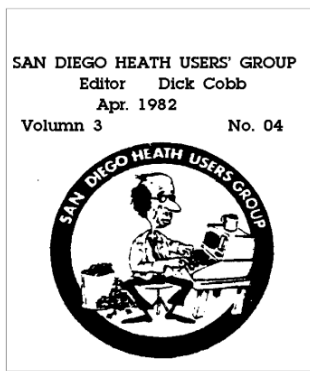
Inside the H 89



The All-In-One H 89

We have a pretty good collection of our group's newsletters archived on our website, going all the way back to the June 1980 issue, with a few missing here and there from the early years. I started going through our old newsletters last fall, with the intent of writing up what history I could from the information in those first issues. While we have two charter members presently on our membership list as active members (and also serving as board members), I was barely part of that first decade of operation. I did not join the group until March of 1989, and so wanted to research what went on in those early years before I found out about the group. I wrote three columns on my interpretation of our first decade of operation; these appeared in our August, September and October 2018 newsletter issues.

Unfortunately, I only got up to January 1983 in my historical review. I'd hoped to finish writing up at least that first decade before our 40th celebration, but with luck I'll find an opportunity to continue later this year.



Those early newsletters revealed that a lot has changed over the years but a lot has also stayed the same. Our initial membership count was 27, and our cost of membership was \$10. Jim Quinn was the founding President; he is currently serving as our Vice President. Though Jim left the group for a while during his working years, that he has come back once retirement provided him the time to join and serve on our board again is remarkable. Mike Trempe, our present Treasurer, is another Charter member of SDHUG still involved and serving after 40 years!

One of Jim's reports from an early issue said, "Having received no other nominations for club officers, the following is the ballot we will vote on at the September meeting." Sound familiar? In those early years they also had elections of officers with no contested positions. Even worse than today, the board members sometimes served double duty, as that slate included a President, Vice President/Treasurer, Secretary/Membership, Librarian, Editor and one Member at Large (six board members in total).

Like today's offerings on our website, the group also had software it provided as a service to its members. In 1981, it included games, personal accounting and income tax software and programming and printing utilities. All these benefits must have been enticing to the computer geeks of those days, as the September 1981 newsletter listed the addition of eight new members from the previous month (dues were \$12 per year at the time). In that first decade of SDHUG, membership swelled to a high of around 175, but declined to around 55 by the time I joined in 1989.



Timex Sinclair 1000 (ZX81)

In late 1988, a former co-worker of mine, Bob Woods (our current Webmaster), told me about a group he belonged to that might be able to help with my computer problems. I had been playing with my Timex Sinclair 1000 (ZX81) since the early 80's and had moved on to the Zenith Z-157, an IBM PC-XT clone. Since Zenith Electronics had acquired Heathkit in 1979 and formed Zenith Data Systems to cater to the computer market, SDHUG had also moved on to help users of ZDS computers and other IBM compatibles. I attended my first meeting in February of 1989 and joined the group the following month. By that time they were meeting at the Kearny Mesa Rec Center.



The Less-Filling Newsletter of the
SAN DIEGO HEATH USER'S GROUP
With the Same Outrageous Taste!

My involvement in the group started slowly and innocently at first. I wrote a review of a program from the group's library for their newsletter (August 1990 issue of the now Dup & Dump Lite), and then was asked to run for an Officer-at-Large position on the board in 1991. The board must have seen me coming, as they recruited me to take the minutes of the first board meeting I attended as an officer (see the Nov. 1991 issue). After taking board meeting minutes in the absence of our Secretary at the time, Clem Pepper, for another time (Sept. 1992 issue), I was "recruited" for the Secretary position in the fall of 1992. I would never again escape the board, serving two terms as Secretary, one as Vice President, and finally the top of the slate. So this fall, I will have served 28 consecutive years on the board and 24 consecutive years as President. My work with the group has been made far easier by the core group of key officers who have competently served just about as long.

S.D. UCHUG

Formerly Heath/Zenith SDHUG



A number of significant changes occurred in the group since I joined the board. In 1993, with the decline of both the Heath name and our membership numbers, our President at the time, Sandy Shapiro, led the board in discussions on changing our group's name to something more relevant to the computing landscape of the day.

Our December 1993 newsletter was to be the last with the SDHUG logo, as the membership voted at the December general meeting to change to the Under the Computer Hood Users Group, or UCHUG. Note that other names on the ballot were Under The Hood Users' Group (UTHUG) and Under the Hood Users' Group (UHUG). Our members made a good choice, keeping a piece of our heritage while expressing our focus on all technical (under the hood) aspects of computer hardware and software. By February 1994, we had also changed the masthead of our newsletter to the more relevant "Drive Lite" (it would later change to the current "Drive Light").

As S.D. UCHUG, we remained a user group affiliated with the San Diego Computer Society (SDCS). Our relationship with SDCS brought a number of benefits, including booth space at many computer fairs and expos sponsored by SDCS and ComputerEdge. Our expo booths at the San Diego Convention Center proved to be a great place to show off our group and recruit new members. We also were allowed to use the VGA projection pad belonging to the SDCS for our meeting presentations (remember overhead projectors?). Later we were told we could only use their pad while at the San Diego County Office of Education, where the SDCS met, so in September 1994 we moved our general meetings there. This was generally a good meeting location for us, especially when we got to meet in their plush Joe Rindone Technology Center.

In 2003 I attended my first Southwest Computer Conference. Since they were at the time being held in San Diego, we could usually get good representation there by members of our group. At our 2004 picnic we celebrated the group's silver anniversary. The 25th anniversary edition of the Drive Light that Art Gresham, our long-serving editor, put out that month contained lots of great historical information on our group for the occasion.

Our relationship with the SDCS turned sour later that year when, in decline, the SDCS was effectively taken over by members of SDMUG, the San Diego Macintosh User Group, which was another associated group. This was one of the most difficult times I have seen our group face, but by December of 2004 we were able to settle with the SDCS in a manner acceptable to all. Through the hard work of Peggy Elliott and Al Brengle, we were able to incorporate as a California Public Benefit Corporation and were granted 501(c)(3) Federal tax-exempt status and state tax exempt status in 2005 and were returned our assets held by SDCS. Now SDMUG is still out there (it appears by their Meetup page that they are now a SIG of CyberTECH, another non-profit tech group) and we are still going, but it appears that SDCS is no more.

With SDCS out of the picture we were initially able to continue meeting at the SDCOE facilities for free, but in December of 2008 we were informed that we would be charged (quite a bit!) going forward. Through the help of UCHUG members that also belonged to the Seniors Computer Group, we were able start meeting at the Wesley Palms retirement community in February 2009. We have enjoyed using their wonderful facilities ever since (though due to our reduced size, we were moved from Woodbury Hall to the smaller Activities Room a few years ago).

Our group's attendance at the Southwest Computer Conference was strong while it was held at the Town & Country Hotel and Convention Center in San Diego, with a dozen or so members able to go each year. Once the conference (then renamed the Southwest Technology and Computer Conference) moved to the Kellogg West Conference Center at Cal Poly Pomona in 2013, the number of UCHUG members that could make the journey dropped to a handful. Unfortunately, overall attendance was also down and 2015 was the last year the conference was held.

UCHUG has for many years (approximately 10) been a member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, or APCUG. It is an organization helping groups devoted to technology, providing resources and facilitating communications between groups. Our group has used many live (through video conferencing) and recorded presentations provided by the APCUG Speakers Bureau and their Virtual Technology Conferences (VTC). Through Judy Taylour, a Southwest organizer and APCUG Board of Advisors member, our group was invited to participate in SCRUGS (Southern California Regional User Group Summit), a quarterly meeting of SoCal user group leaders held in the Los Angeles area. I have been attending those meetings for about the last ten years, bringing useful information on presentation sources and dealing with organizational and membership issues back to our board.

In recent years the board has continued to look for ways to attract new members. One way we have tried to get our group's name out there is through our Meetup page, started a few years ago. Though we have several hundred Meetup "members," this has translated into only a handful of actual new members for the group. The costs for our Meetup membership have so far been covered by generous donations from our Vice President.

Through all the changes our group has gone through over 40 years, we have always provided informative monthly presentations (at least ten months per year), engaging social activities (December parties and June picnics) and mutual help and support through our "random access" problem solving sessions. With our membership in a slow decline, we continue to seek new ways to stay relevant. With our members interested in new technologies like smart phones, smart homes and tablet computers, we have added more presentations in those areas.

Our Future



Over the years, prudent management and fortunate meeting room arrangements have kept the group on a solid financial footing. Our main problem is the same as most groups in APCUG - a declining (and aging) membership. I would have liked to research our group's membership numbers over the years and be able to provide a graph, but never found the time. Most APCUG groups report problems recruiting members for officer positions, a common issue in volunteer-run organizations. Some groups wind up disbanding due to a lack of volunteers to fill board positions, as groups cannot be run by only a couple of volunteers filling multiple officer positions.

UCHUG has been very fortunate to have a very good group of dedicated and long-serving officers as its board of directors. Our core group of officers - president, secretary, treasurer, editor and librarian/webmaster - have all been serving in those positions for at least 20 years. We have always been able to keep at least nine officers (out of 11) on the board at any time, with all the key positions filled.

We have not been as lucky with total membership, as though we may pick up a new member or two per year, we lose more and have now declined to 21 paid members. With ten of them officers, our board now makes up almost half the group. While we have had some luck in the past attracting younger members, I'm pretty sure we currently don't have any members under fifty, and many are in their seventies and eighties. We generally do have a pretty good turnout at meetings, though, with 17 reported at our March meeting this year (this is great considering a few of our members live out of the area and don't ever attend).

Our board has had discussions on what to do when our membership numbers get too low, though we have not defined what too low is. We continue to look for ways to boost membership. More advertising might help, though finding the right method and medium is key. We send our presentation information to Wesley Palms to publicize, but we have never had much luck attracting their residents to our meetings. Still, we will keep trying to provide presentations and benefits of value. As long as we continue to have a strong board made up of hard working and congenial members, they will hopefully steer our group through many more anniversary celebrations.

Happy 40th anniversary to UCHUG!
