

Useful Bits & Pieces

by Lorrin R. Garson

Columnist, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society

Free Antivirus Software for Apple Computers

Whether to use antivirus software on Apple computers has been a controversial issue for years. Major providers such as Symantec, Kaspersky, Panda and Trend-Micro offer products for a fee. In the table below is a list of some free offerings for Macs. See <http://goo.gl/VA1iHz> for a comprehensive list of antivirus software for PCs, Macs, Linux, Unix, smartphones, etc. Also search the term “antivirus” in Apple’s App Store for numerous antimalware apps (free and for fee).

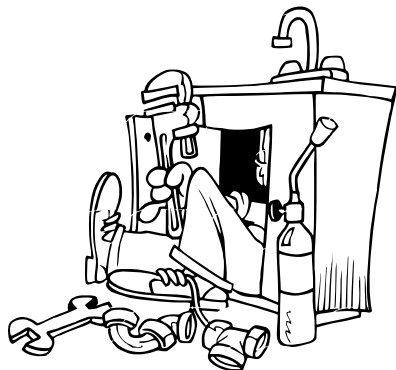
Program	Access
Avast!	http://goo.gl/ruj16U
Avira	http://goo.gl/K7apuo
ClamXav	http://www.clamxav.com/
Comodo	http://goo.gl/Mm1QKm
Sophos	http://goo.gl/aO7ncD

Entertaining Web Sites

On occasion it can be fun to explore off-beat Web sites. Here are a few sites for your entertainment pleasure:

- See <http://www.dumblaws.com/>. Did you know that in Virginia “No animal may be hunted on Sunday with the exception of raccoons, which may be hunted until 2:00 AM?” Well, now you know.
- See <http://www.funnytypos.com/>. An amusing collection of typos like “world famuos”, “no smorking” and “free chicken stips with purchas”.
- See <http://whitewhine.com/>. Want to learn what people are complaining about? For example, “I hate it when I have money to spend and can’t find anything I want.” Poor baby!
- See <http://www.craigslist.org/about/best/all> for offers voted best by Craigslist readers. For example: “I have 2 dozen goats I need to get rid of. I had no idea raising goats would be this hard. These little ***** keep eating all my wife's flowers and climbing on our **** cars. Nobody told me they were such good climbers. The first person to get these **** goats out of here can have them.” Jerk goat anyone?

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Keeping an Eye on the Baddies

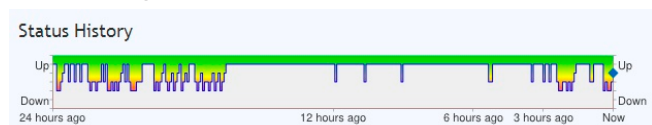
Want to know what cyber charlatans are up to? Periodically look at <http://krebsonsecurity.com/>. Brian Krebs is a well-respected reporter who was the first to expose the notorious Target data theft on December 18, 2013. He is a former Washington Post reporter who now makes a living as a security blogger. You can subscribe to his blog “Krebs on Security” at Amazon.com for \$0.99/month.

DownRightNow

Is Google Mail (Gmail) down? What about Facebook, Yahoo! Mail, YouTube, PayPal, Netflix, etc. You can check DownRightNow at <http://downrightnow.com/> to see about these services and others. See below for a “snip” that shows an example.

Service	Status	Last Disruption
Google Mail (Gmail)	Possible Service Trouble	6 minutes ago
Twitter	Possible Service Trouble	23 hours ago
Facebook	Up	15 hours ago

For example, see the “snip” below for details about Google Mail.



External Storage for iPad

You know it had to happen. LaCie (a division of Seagate), which is familiar to Apple devotees, is offering a wireless 1 TB disk drive that creates a WiFi network of its own. It’s called “The Fuel” and can run 10 hours on a battery charge. It can also be used with iPhones and Mac computers. Price \$199.99. See <http://goo.gl/H6xvZ9>.

Opting Out of SkyDrive

In Windows 8.1, some may wish to opt out storing their files on Microsoft’s SkyDrive, which is the default storage site. To accomplish this, run `gpedit.msc` by typing `gpedit.msc` in the search bar on the Start screen or by starting the Run command (Win+R) and keying

`gpedit.msc`, then go to “Local Computer Policy” > “Computer Configuration” > “Administrative Templates” > “Windows Components” > “SkyDrive”. At this point, options to save documents and settings to the local PC instead of SkyDrive will be displayed. Another option is “Prevent the usage of SkyDrive for file storage”, which stops all applications from using SkyDrive. Double-click on this option and select “Enabled” when the box pops up. You’re enabling the policy that disables SkyDrive. Not intuitive. It is likely Microsoft will continue to push the use of SkyDrive.

Tor—Anonymity Online

Tor is free, open-source software that protects users by routing Internet communications through a distributed network of relays that prevents someone from tracking Internet connections, monitoring sites visited and identifying the location of users. Such anonymity is often sought by government agencies, corporations, individuals and, of course, criminals. See Bloomberg Businessweek, January 27—February 2, 2014, pp. 40-47 for an article entitled “Spy Vs. Spy” [Ed. An online version of the article is at <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-23/tor-anonymity-software-vs-dot-the-national-security-agency>]. Also see <https://www.torproject.org/>. This technology is quite interesting as well as controversial (recommended by Edward Snowden).

NortonLive Ultimate Help Desk

Did you know Symantec was in the support business beyond antimalware software? This service has been around since 2011. For \$5.99/month you have 24/7 help available for one PC. For this “Deluxe Plan” you get one computer tune-up per year and Symantec will “ensure [your] software is up to date and optimized”. That’s it! But for \$9.99/month, the “Premier Plan”, you get four tune-ups per year, home network support, set-up and troubleshooting for printers, digital cameras, smart phones, tablets, and “basic

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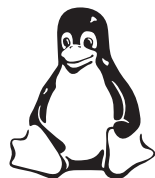
troubleshooting for common apps and software”. For \$19.99 per month, the “Ultimate Plan”, you can have coverage for up to 3 PCs, unlimited virus removal and unlimited tune-ups. Have a Mac? Only the “Ultimate Plan” is available to you, even if you have only one Mac. This service is aimed toward small businesses where IT support is non-existent... those folks who need help with the cup holder in their laptop. This very pricy service can be a godsend to an individual with very little computer savvy. However by actively participating in a user group or reading appropriate books and magazines, neophytes can fairly quickly attain sufficient skills to do much of this work themselves. For more information from Norton see <http://goo.gl/7DxJK6>.



Linux and Open Source News

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Linux for Windows XP Users

With Microsoft ending updates for the Windows XP operating system in April, there have been many articles discussing options. Not surprisingly, Microsoft recommends “upgrading” to Windows 8, which for most users means buying a new PC with more memory, faster processor, and a touchscreen interface. While Windows XP users can continue to run that operating system, vendors of antivirus and antimalware products will likely drop XP support before long, at which point any XP computers left on a network will be significantly more vulnerable to attack.

Some writers are promoting Linux as an alternative. However, their articles may set unrealistic expectations for those new to Linux. There are some things to keep in mind.

Don’t expect to run Windows applications directly. While many native Windows

applications can be coaxed to run within Linux using the optional Wine “compatibility layer” add-on software (a database of tested applications is at <http://appdb.winehq.org/>), the preferred approach is to use Linux native applications that perform the same function. The Free Software Foundation has a sample list of functionally equivalent free, open source applications at <https://www.fsf.org/working-together/moving/windows/>. Some, like Mozilla Foundation’s Firefox web browser and Thunderbird e-mail client, are nearly identical to their Windows’ counterparts. In most cases, the Linux equivalents can import files from Windows applications, but you may need to export files from the Windows application into a format compatible with the Linux application (for example, a proprietary database format into a comma-separated values file) before you remove Windows.

There isn’t a single “Linux” operating system.

Linux is actually the kernel used by operating systems (including Google Android) to provide the interface that allows software applications to communicate with the hardware. When the Linux kernel is integrated with operating system utilities from the Free Software Foundation’s GNU Project, it is a GNU/Linux operating system. Software publishers customize the GNU/Linux operating system and bundled applications to create GNU/Linux distributions, which may be free to download and use or require commercial support services. As of March 2014, there are 266 GNU/Linux distributions listed as active on <http://distrowatch.com>. Freely available distributions can be downloaded from host web sites as CD or DVD image files – you will need software under Windows to burn the image to media, though services (such as <https://www.osdisc.com/index.html>) will ship media at a nominal cost.

The best GNU/Linux distribution for former Windows XP users is ... highly subjective.

However, I provide some recommendations presuming “best” means an interface that is

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similar to Windows XP and is most likely to work with older hardware (note that Linux does not support some hardware designed specifically for Windows). Unlike Windows, there are many different graphic desktop environments available for GNU/Linux that provide different user interfaces (i.e., menus, icons, taskbars and docks). Each distribution provides its own user guide with installation instructions and how to use key features.

Puppy Linux (<http://www.puppylinux.com/>) has a menu interface like Windows 9x, and low resource requirements suitable for older PCs (64 MB RAM minimum, 256MB RAM or more recommended, 333MHz or faster processor). Puppy Linux can load off of a CD or USB (only requires 85MB) and runs entirely from RAM in most cases, so it is very fast.

Zorin OS (<http://zorin-os.com/>) is a derivative of Ubuntu GNU/Linux. Ubuntu and its derivatives “just work” with most system hardware. Zorin OS has a “Look Changer” feature to make the user interface look like Microsoft Windows 7, XP, Vista, Apple OS X, Ubuntu Unity or GNOME 2. Zorin minimum requirements are a 1 GHz x86 processor and 512 MB RAM. Zorin OS has both free and Premium versions. Zorin OS can run directly from installation media for evaluation without installing to a hard drive.

Linux Mint (<http://linuxmint.com/>) is another Ubuntu derivative and currently one of the most popular GNU/Linux distributions. The Xfce edition and the MATE edition have a desktop interface similar to Windows XP. Linux Mint MATE requires a x86 processor and 512 MB RAM (1 GB recommended); Linux Mint Xfce requires 384 MB RAM (1 GB recommended). Linux Mint can also be run from installation media for evaluation.

Another open source project worth noting is ReactOS (<http://www.reactos.org/>), which aims to provide an operating system that is binary compatible with Windows. “Written completely from scratch, ReactOS is not a Linux based

system, and shares none of the UNIX architecture.” However, the current release is still listed as “in alpha stage” and “recommended only for evaluation and testing purposes.”

Featured Open Source Software of the Month: May 2014

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the PATACS Fairfax meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

Lynis – v1.4.7. <http://cisofy.com/lynis/>. Free GNU General Public License shell script by Michael Boelen. Lynis is a security tool to audit and harden Unix and Linux based systems. It scans the system by performing many security control checks, looks for installed software and determines compliance to common security standards. Also it detects security issues and errors in configuration files. At the end of the scan it will provide the warnings and suggestions to help you improving the security defense of your system(s).

Minetest Classic – v1403.00. <http://minetest-classic.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable client for Microsoft Windows by Lisa ‘darkrose’ Milne and community, and executable packages for Fedora, Chakra, and Arch Linux. Minetest-Classical aims to be a fast, polished 3D sandbox voxel world game, and features hundreds of blocks, official and player-run servers, a growing community, rapid development, and a growing number of packages for various GNU/Linux distributions and other operating systems. The recommended minimum system requirements are dual-core CPU, OpenGL video driver, and ADSL network for online play.

Opendedup – v2.0.0 RC1. <http://opendedup.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and 64-bit executable packages for Ubuntu/Debian, Red Hat Enterprise Linux/CentOS by Sam Silverberg. The user space

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Build and explore an online world in Minetest-Classic

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deduplication file system (SDFS) leverages data deduplication for primary storage. It acts as a normal file system that can be used for typical I/O operations similar to EXT3, NTFS, etc. The difference is SDFS hashes blocks of data as they are written to the file system and only writes those that are unique to disk. Blocks that are not unique just reference the data that is already on disk. Deduplication can reduce disk usage by 90-95% depending upon the application. Recommended applications include backups, virtual machine disk images, and network drives for unstructured data like documents and e-mail.

X11-Basic – v1.22. <http://x11-basic.sourceforge.net/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Microsoft Windows, Apple OS X, Google Android, Ubuntu and Debian Linux by Markus Hoffmann. X11-Basic is a dialect of the BASIC programming language with graphics capability that integrates features like shell scripting, CGI-Programming and full graphical visualization into the easy to learn BASIC language on modern computers. The syntax is most similar to the old GFA-Basic ATARI-ST implementation. The actual implementation runs on UNIX workstations (DEC-alpha, HP-UX, FreeBSD, Apple OS X, ...), CygWin and Linux PCs (SuSE, RedHat, Mandrake,

Debian, Ubuntu, ...) with the X Window System. The MS-Windows version runs with the Simple Direct Layer library. Also an ARM-Linux version with framebuffer support is available, which runs on devices with Android operating system (see X11-Basic in the Android Market) and palmtops like the TomTom Car Navigation systems. You can use the X11-Basic interpreter as a shell and for execution of CGI-Scripts. A BASIC compiler is included so that you can make stand-alone binaries out of your programs, which run up to 14 times faster than the interpreted programs. You can do any data manipulation and you may use external functions and libraries.

Kernel Source – v3.14. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.



Waze Travel and Routing Information on Your Smart Device

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<https://www.waze.com>

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.waze>

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/waze-social-gps-traffic/id323229106?mt=8>

<http://www.windowsphone.com/s?appid=f07f83eb-a8a4-49fd-8946-c67a9349e062>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waze>

<http://www.haaretz.com/business/.premium-1.529478>

Over the past several weeks, I have taken several out-of-town road trips. On these trips I used a novel free smart phone app for routing and traffic information called Waze (waze.com). There are an abundance of apps that function with the integral GPS built into almost all smart devices, including smart phones and tablets. Available for most smart devices with an appropriate wireless internet connection (cellular or Wi-Fi) running Android, iOS (Apple devices), Windows Mobile, Symbian, and Blackberry powered devices, Waze provides much more current routing and road related information than most other competitive apps.

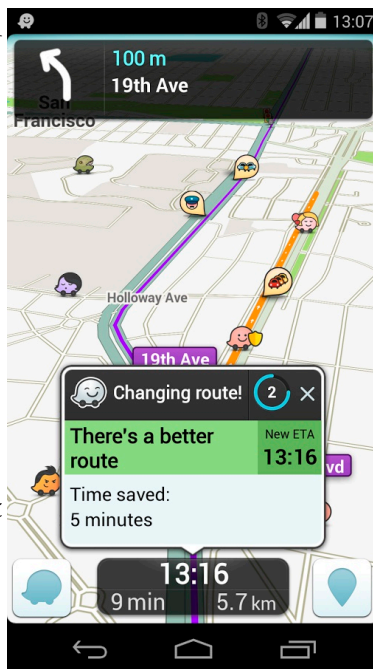
For those who may drive outside the U.S., Waze is multinational in scope, and offers real-time traffic information on an international scale. According to Wikipedia, "As of 2013 Waze has a complete base map for the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy,

Netherlands, Belgium, Israel (claimed to be the best map for that country), South Africa, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and Panama, but the company has plans to complete maps for other countries in Europe and elsewhere."

With the motto, "Waze. Outsmarting Traffic, Together", Waze describes itself as, "Get the best route, every day, with real-time help from other drivers. Waze is the world's largest community-based traffic and navigation app. Join other drivers in your area who share real-time traffic and road info, saving everyone time and gas money on their daily commute." With millions of users (Yahoo! reported over 50 million users in mid-2013), Waze utilizes real-time information from users who have opened the Waze app on their smart devices. Waze anonymously, continuously, and transparently reports location, speed, and other information to a centralized server, which in turn almost instantly compiles and displays this shared information on other Waze equipped smart devices in the same user selected area. For privacy and security reasons, by default, the Waze configuration utilizes a user chosen screen name and avatar on the remote screens, and does not publically display any other personally identifiable user information.

While several other route mapping apps simply display traffic conditions as a colored line on a map, typically green indicating that traffic is moving fast, yellow indicates slowed traffic, and red indicating major traffic slowdowns or stoppage, Waze utilizes a different approach. Since the Waze app on the users' devices are continuously reporting speed and location, based on GPS information, accurate traffic information is displayed along with a wide assortment of other helpful and useful information. According to the Waze website, this difference between Waze and the other GPS based routing apps is, "Get alerted before you approach police, accidents, road hazards or traffic jams, all shared by other drivers in real-time. It's like a personal heads-up from a few million of your friends on the road."

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For safety reasons, if Waze is used by the driver of a vehicle, the text input function is disabled once a destination is entered or selected off of a saved list. The driver can still be informed of upcoming traffic, hazards, and other reports, as well as audio turn-by-turn directions, without having to physically handle the device. There is an option button displayed where a passenger can enable the text based data entry process while the vehicle is in motion. In addition to the passive information on speed and other road information provided by the app itself, a passenger can actively contribute to the community of Waze users by using a simple icon based method of sharing road reports. These passenger entered road reports take the current location, as automatically provided by the GPS, along with manually entered information on accidents, traffic congestion and delays, disabled vehicles, speed traps, and other road hazards, which immediately show up on all other Waze connected devices in the area. In addition to road related information, users can also enter gas station prices observed on their route, which will be displayed to others driving through the same area. Waze says on its website, "By working together to report prices at the pump, Waze drivers can always save some gas money."

Too many of us have had to deal with outdated maps on our GPS or smart devices. While some newer free-standing GPS devices offer free quarterly updating of maps, many still charge substantial fees to purchase map updates. When using an Internet-based mapping service, it is often difficult (or impossible) for the user to either determine the age of the map displayed, or to enter map corrections, both of which may undermine the confidence of the user in the accuracy of the maps displayed. What is unusual about the maps displayed on Waze is that they are community edited; Waze has an active community of map editors who work continuously to improve and update the maps displayed by the Waze app. Map corrections and updates are constantly incorporated in the Waze

display, down to the neighborhood level. These same community map editors also continuously improve the routing utility incorporated into the Waze app. Waze has made it as easy for any of the millions of users to submit suspected map errors or better routing information to the editors as it is to enter a road hazard; a single click on the appropriate icon, along with an appropriate comment, immediately sends the information to the map editors. For example, earlier today, while returning from Houston (my wife was driving), I submitted two suggested changes: the first was a suggested routing correction to my home address, submitting a shorter and faster route; the second was the location of a newly opened gas station.

While the information from users is anonymously displayed on the Waze display, using a moniker rather than a real name, users can also optionally select to send Waze information to selected individuals, or to post it on social networks, such as Facebook. On a recent out of town trip to visit a daughter and her family, I chose to provide her with a real-time web link that would display my current location and "ETA" (Estimated Time of Arrival). Since my wife was at the wheel at the time, it was safe for me to do the appropriate messaging. Clicking on the icon on the bottom-left corner of my screen, I selected the "notify" function, which presented me with a comprehensive list of messaging utilities; text messaging, email, Facebook, and several other modes were displayed. I selected to send my daughter a private text message which included a Waze generated unique URL, which when opened in her browser, displayed my real-time location and ETA, which was continuously updated in her browser. This same function can also serve to notify someone who is going to be met or picked up by the Waze user of the expected time of arrival.

The posting of travel information to Facebook can be useful if a group is trying to arrange a get-together of some type, and all of the participants can be kept apprised of the others' locations and

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arrival times. While Waze supports posting of current location information to social networking services, such as Facebook, for security reasons, I cannot recommend this practice. Even if the social media post is only directed to friends, not all friends may be honest and trustworthy. Posting that a user is a distance away from home, and will not be returning for a lengthy period of time, opens that user's home to possible break-in and burglary, as the perpetrators will know that no one is home and no one is likely to be home for a foreseeable time.

The Waze app has a most interesting history; originally invented in Israel in 2008 by a small group of developers as, "a GPS-based geographical navigation application program for smart phones with GPS support and display screens which provides turn-by-turn information and user-submitted travel times and route details, downloading location-dependent information over the mobile telephone network." Waze was recognized by the 2013 Mobile World Congress as the "Best Overall Mobile App", beating out several better known apps such as Dropbox. The original company, Waze Mobile, was acquired by Google in mid-2013 for the princely sum of \$1.3 billion, after being approached by other prominent internet giants, including Facebook. According to contemporary news accounts, "As part of the deal signed, each of Waze's 100 employees will receive an average of about \$1.2 million, which represents the largest payout to employees in the history of Israeli high tech." (source: haaretz.com, June 13, 2013).

While the Waze app is totally free to download and use, its business model is funded in a variety of ways. Waze offers advertisers an opportunity to place a very small, unobtrusive icon on a given location, which may encourage Waze users to patronize that location. Waze also sells its aggregate traffic conditions and reports to media outlets, mostly TV stations, for their use in broadcasting current local traffic information. Utilized by several New York and New Jersey TV

stations, the Waze feed is also employed (as of June 2013) by over 25 other U.S. TV stations, as well as foreign TV stations, including one in Rio de Janeiro.

Provided that a driver is not distracted by its use, the free Waze app is an outstanding resource. Waze also asks that the app be used to monitor daily commutes, in addition to longer trips, so that others may get the enhanced benefit of a greater knowledge base of road information. Over the past several weeks, I have used Waze on my smart phone rather than Google Maps and the other road routing apps that I have installed. Waze uses the device's GPS to determine the current location, and then offers a simple search function to ascertain the destination. In using Waze I have entered, street addresses, the names of restaurants, and hotel names, with the integral search function rapidly calculating a route to the chosen destination. While on the road I used Waze to find the best gas prices, avoid major traffic congestion, and other road hazards.

Since Waze is free, and will run on almost any appropriately equipped smart device, regardless of operating system, I can wholeheartedly recommend it to travelers for both local and long distance driving.



What You Need to Know about QR Codes

by Sandy Berger

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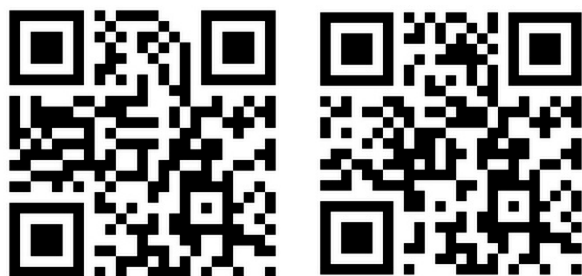
If you've seen QR or Quick Response Codes, but don't know what they mean, this article will explain it all for you. QR codes are becoming more and more prevalent and offer additional information on many of the things you read and see. QR codes can be found in many current magazines and newspapers.

QR codes: They are small squares filled with black square dots arranged in a grid pattern on a white

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background. If you look carefully at a QR code, you will see that each one is unique in the placement of the small black and white squares. While this doesn't mean anything to the eye of the beholder, the placement of the dots defines the additional data that is embedded in the code. The QR code on the left will lead you to The website of The Pilot, a newspaper I write for. The one on the right will lead you to the home page on my Compu-KISS website.



Although most QR codes are black and white, they can also contain stars, squares, and other color and/or black and white images.

QR codes are now linking paper content like newspapers and magazines to digital content. To understand QR codes, you can think of them as paper-based hyperlinks that work like bar codes. To access the digital content, you need a QR reader which you can easily download to your smart phone or tablet. Most of these are free. They use the camera in your phone to read the QR code and take you to the digital content.

You can find a QR code on a newspaper or magazine article, a business card, or a menu. Actually QR codes can be printed on just about anything. I've even seen them printed on T-shirts. Of course, they can also be used digitally. For example a QR code could be displayed on a web page to transfer information directly to a cell phone. A QR code can even be added to a Tweet.

To access the information in a QR code, after you download a free QR reader, you simply start the app and hold your mobile phone or tablet about 4" to 6" with the camera squarely above the QR

code. When you get it positioned properly, your phone will take the picture and display the additional information on your device. You don't have to press any buttons or the screen, everything is done automatically.

QR codes can give you many different types of additional information. If you see one on an advertisement, it will probably lead you to more information about the product. A QR code on a business card can lead you to more information about that person or company. QR codes can lead you to things like coupons, movie trailers, phone numbers, or directions. I find them invaluable when on a recipe because they allow me to view the recipe on a tablet and use it immediately in the kitchen.

Several companies have developed further enhancements for QR codes allowing them to be hidden in a picture. They embed imperceptible digital information in pictures or behind text, creating an invisible hyperlink to online content. They can even embed a QR code in an audio file.

Digimarc is a company in the forefront of the QR world. I use the free Digimarc app because it works with their own "hidden" codes as well as regular QR codes and barcodes. It is available for both Android and Apple.

When a QR code is hidden, there will usually be a note to that effect or a small logo on or near the picture to indicate that it is, in fact, a QR code. Even though you don't see the code, you can hold your phone or tablet over the picture to activate the code.

QR codes are very popular in Japan and are becoming more and more popular here as people find new uses for them. I imagine that sometime soon, all smart phones and tablets will come with a QR code reader so you won't have to download one.

If you are interested in creating a QR code for your T-shirt, business card, or website, the easiest way to do it is to use a third-party QR code generator. I created the two QR codes

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shown in this article using a website called Kaywa at <http://qrcode.kaywa.com>. Of course, Kaywa has professional options that you have to pay for, but creating a few simple QR codes is completely free.



Chromecast—Watch On-line Entertainment on your Big Screen TV

by Phil Sorrentino

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December 2013 issue, PC Monitor

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Chromecast is a new device from Google, aimed at getting your on-line entertainment on to your living room TV (or any TV with an HDMI input). For video streaming, Chromecast may be similar to AppleTV and Roku devices, though I haven't used either of these. Chromecast is an exciting device for both consumers and developers alike, because it offers a new, inexpensive (\$35) and simple way to stream entertainment from a Website or a computer to your living room big screen HDTV. (By the way, a less elegant way to accomplish this is to connect your TV directly to your computer, via HDMI, and then go directly to the websites with the computer. This is not usually convenient because of the locations of the computer and TV and the cables and wires needed to set this up.) Chromecast is small and it plugs directly into the back of your TV, keeping it completely out of sight.

Wikipedia adds: "Chromecast is a digital media streaming adapter developed by Google. The device, a 2.83 inch dongle, plays audio/video content on a high-definition television by streaming it via Wi-Fi from the Internet or local network. Users select the media to play on their television from the Google Chrome web browser on a personal computer or from a supported App on their mobile device."

Chromecast's basic features are as follows:

- 1080p output video resolution
- Wi-Fi 802.11b/g/n
- USB powered
- Compatible with Android and iOS devices

The minimum system requirements needed to take advantage of Chromecast are as follows:

- HDTV with HDMI input
- Wi-Fi 802.11b/g/n network
- For use with a Tablet or Smartphone:
 - Android OS 2.3 and higher
 - Apple OS iOS 6 and higher
- For use with a computer:
 - Windows 7 and higher
 - Mac OS 10.7 and higher

Chromecast works with devices you already own, including Android and Apple tablets and smartphones. It also works with the Chrome Browser for Windows and Mac. A Browser, with the Chromecast extension, allows you to send the contents of a "Browser Tab" to your HDTV allowing you to experience photos, videos, and music on your HDTV. It turns any TV with an HDMI input into a smart TV, albeit only as smart as the Chromecast device.

Chromecast allows you to view on-line entertainment on your living room HDTV; however, currently it seems to be limited to Netflix, Hulu plus (not Hulu), YouTube, Google Play TV & Movies, and Google Music. Indications are that many others such as Pandora, HBO Go, Vimeo, and Redbox, are in the pipeline. You will need an account with any of the pay services, such as Netflix or Hulu plus (YouTube is free, so far).


Chromecast is packaged in a very neat, compact box. Included in the box are the Chromecast device (it looks like a flash memory device with an HDMI connector), an HDMI extension cable

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(for hard to reach HDMI connections), a micro-USB to USB cable (to supply power to the device), a power supply adapter (if a convenient USB port is not available), and a tiny 14 page product information pamphlet. The “Getting Started” directions are printed on the inside of a swing-out cover and are clear and simple. Chromecast plugs into your TV’s HDMI port, while the power is supplied by connecting the devices micro-USB port to a USB port, on the TV (if available), or to the external power supply that plugs into ac power (recommended). Because Chromecast accomplishes its magic using your Local Area Network, aka Wi-Fi, you will need to enter the password to your Wi-Fi network during the setup process. The Setup, in a nutshell, is simply, Plug the device into your TV, Connect it to your Wi-Fi, and let it do its thing. The setup is really easy to do and it took only a few minutes, although the TV screen did go dark for a few tense moments while the Chromecast was rebooting leaving an uneasy feeling until the “ready to cast” screen appeared. Once Chromecast was “ready to cast”, streaming from an Android tablet or the Chrome browser was easily accomplished.

(Note: It is a good idea to follow Google’s directions to download the Setup App on to your mobile device first. With this done, setup was very easy.)

Google uses the term “cast” to indicate streaming. The “cast” icon appears in the tablet App or in the Chrome browser in order to enable “cast”ing to the Chromecast device. The “cast” icon is a rectangle with a symbol in the lower left corner that looks like a Wi-Fi symbol. 

Using a tablet, the Chromecast App is used in conjunction with YouTube (or other Chromecast enabled App, such as Netflix). After you start YouTube (or Netflix) on the tablet, touch the “cast” icon towards the top of the screen. A window will open to allow selection of the tablet display or the Chromecast device (that has been discovered). Select the Chromecast device and the YouTube video will be shown on the HDTV

hosting the Chromecast device. The tablet acts as a controller to direct the video/audio from the source to the Chromecast device for use on the TV. Could it be any easier? (Return to this window to return YouTube back to the tablet display.)

Google has set up a website at <https://support.google.com/chromecast/> for product information and it includes some very good directions for using Chromecast. This site is a very good Help resource for getting started with, using, or just learning about Comcast’s capabilities.

Google has indicated that YouTube, Netflix, and Hulu Plus are just the beginning. Many others have voiced their support, and many independent developers have started to develop Apps for this new device. It’s only a matter of time before Chromecast has many new uses.



How to Write, Publish and Promote Your Book for Free Using Technology

by Bohdan O. Szuprowicz

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July 2013 issue, PC Monitor

www.spcug.org

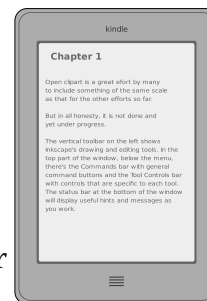
editor (at) spcug.org

Millions of people all over the world want to write and publish a memoir, a novel, or share their grandmother’s favorite recipes.

They spend months and years chasing agents and publishers only to face endless rejections.

But times have changed. The latest technologies make it possible for anyone who can get on the Internet to become an author, publisher, and promoter of anything he wants to write, whenever he wants to do it, and all without spending any money in doing so.

All you have to do is write your stuff, edit it, and follow instructions of various services to format your text, design a cover, price the book, select a



(Continued on page 12)

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publicity program, and boast about your achievement to book review editors, on Facebook, Twitter or your own E-mailing lists.

Yes, all those functions are being offered to would-be authors at a price by masses of editors, agents, consultants and promoters. They took the trouble of reading the instructions and now they try to cash in on it. You do not need them if you follow the instructions yourself.

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You also set the price that you may vary at will as time progresses. Amazon sells your book and you get a royalty of 35% to 70% depending on arrangements.

There are close to 2 million titles on Amazon so it's important that your book has a cover that is distinctive and attractive to readers. You can design your own cover using Picasa collage functions, which is also free. It offers hundreds of fonts and colors and you can include any photographs or images you like. The important thing to remember is the fact that on the screen of a tablet or an E-reader these covers are thumbnail-size. As a result you should make sure that the size of title lettering and colors are contrasting and show up clearly in black & white on many E-reader devices.

Once your book is on Kindle you want to let the world know that it has been published and where to find it. If you stick to digital publishing there is no problem of distribution or costs of sending the book by mail. It is delivered via the Internet

to the buyer who can read it on about a dozen devices such as E-readers, iPads, PC's, iPhones, and various smart phones.

There are several publicity websites that can be used to announce the publication of your book. Most offer a basic free service as well as paid versions depending on distribution requirements. Once you follow instructions of a press release site you can also include the image of your book cover and send the whole package to book review editors, TV or radio talk show producers, and your personal E-mail lists completely free of charge.

Better still, the URLs of such press releases can be copied and simply pasted into other messages you are sending out. PRLOG is such a service used by the author and examples can found at <http://www.prlog.org>.

Twitter and Facebook are the two most popular social media services that you can use freely to promote your book. Although Twitter allows only 140 characters per tweet, you can easily include the URL of your press release and also another link to an image, which may be a Picasa collage of your book cover, prices and reviews, as well as author biography and a photograph of yourself with your pet alligator. You can also use the Twitter search window to send such promo packages to selected recipients like your preferred talk show hosts, and book review editors, many of whom maintain distinct Twitter accounts.

Similarly, Facebook can be used to introduce your memoirs or novel with all the publicity materials to your friends and family. Other social media like LinkedIn, Pinterest and such, can also be used in providing free publicity for your book depending on type of audience you are seeking.

In short, the technology is here to be used and most of it is free. What it means is that anyone can become a published author literally overnight



Filter Out Junk Email with Outlook 2010

by Lynn Page

Editor, Crystal River Users Group, Florida

November 2013 Issue, CRUG Newsletter

www.crug.com

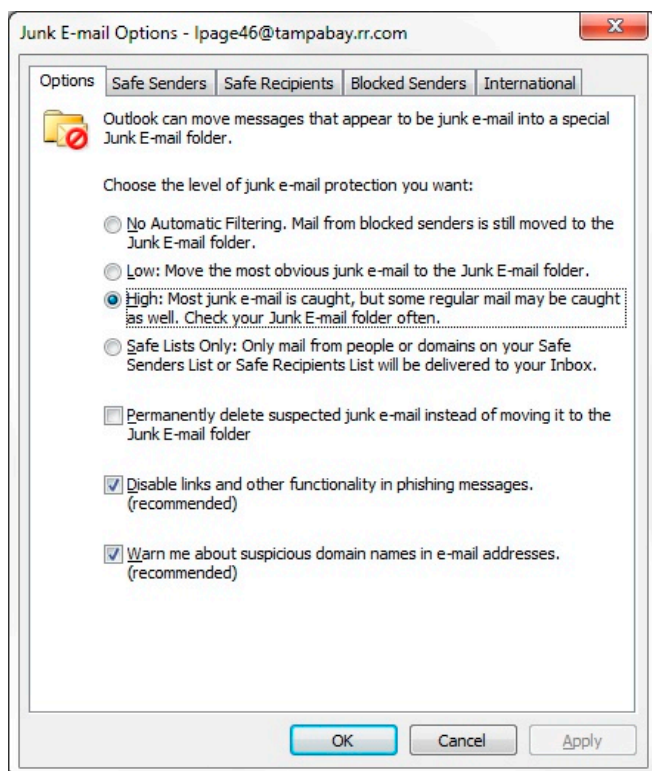
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I have used Outlook for my email since my first version of Office (97). I keep my junk email protection level at high and have Outlook disable links in messages considered to be phishing and warn me about suspicious domain names.

Outlook's junk email filter is designed to keep spam and junk from getting to the inbox. It is on by default and will place the junk in its own folder. One of the default options is to have Outlook automatically delete suspected junk but it only takes a second to open the junk folder and glance to be sure something wanted didn't end up there. I changed the filtering protection from the default level to high.

Junk Email Options

To control Junk Email options while in Mail on Home tab in the Delete group click the down



arrow by Junk. On the dialog box Options tab select the level of protection desired. Selecting No Automatic Filtering turns the junk email filter off but you can still block senders and that email goes into the Junk folder.

The Safe Senders tab lists email addresses that you trust and have noted so. Email addresses and/or domain names in this list are never considered junk, regardless of message content.

The Safe Recipients tab lets you add specify an email address you use for a mailing or distribution list. All email sent to that address is never considered junk. I use this for my Corel PaintShop Pro Groups.

All email from addresses or domain names on the Blocked Senders list are automatically considered junk.

Add Senders to Safe Senders List

I mentioned that I keep the filter set to high so occasionally Outlook flags message I want as junk. That is not a problem. For an occasional email I simply drag it from the Junk to the Inbox. If the email is from someone I expect to continue to receive email from I add the address to the Safe Senders List. Simply select the email in the Junk folder and in the Junk drop down menu (Home tab Delete group) select Not Junk and respond as required.

Block a Sender

Conversely a few times email slips through from someone I do not know and I don't want to continue receiving messages from them. In this case select the message in the Junk drop down menu select Block Sender.



Fairfax Meeting: May 17

Fairfax County 9-1-1 Call Center

Presented by Sherrie White

This one hour presentation will enlighten the citizens of Fairfax County on how their 9-1-1 system works from the inside out. You will learn some history on how 9-1-1 began and hear how a citizen is a vital link to the Public Safety family. You will see a pictorial view of the McConnell Public Safety Transportation Operations Center where the Fairfax County Department of Public Safety Communications (Fairfax County 9-1-1) operates out of. Explanation will be provided as to our operating system and what it takes to do the job. You will be given an honest straight forward view from a person within the center, Communications Operations Supervisor Sherrie White.

Sherrie has been with the Fairfax County Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) for 15 years. She started as a Call Taker then increased her skills by becoming a Police and Fire Dispatcher. Sherrie has continued her growth within DPSC and has been a Supervisor for the past 7 years. Currently, Sherrie has two roles within DPSC. She is one of the Supervisors on the B Days Operations Squad and assists the Training and Career Development Section.



Help Wanted: Meeting Speakers

Finding presenters for our meeting programs is difficult – your help in the effort to enhance the value we all receive from PATACS membership would be greatly appreciated!

Please consider speaking to your friends at an Arlington or Fairfax meeting. We'd love to feature your take on a smart phone or tablet app. A presentation on these or other topics of interest to you, would undoubtedly be welcomed by your PATACS colleagues. We have space in our schedule for 15, 30, 60 and 75 minute discussions - what are you waiting for?

We also have ready-made paragraphs you could use in email communications to help us find speakers. Contact: [director2\(at\)patacs.org](mailto:director2@patacs.org)

Micro Center® In Store Clinics

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Micro Center stores host free events called "In Store Clinics." The clinics cover a wide range of topics. All Micro Center store locations follow the same schedule of topics.

A link for store locations is at the top center of the home page, www.microcenter.com. For those in the Washington, D.C. area, the only store in Virginia is in the Pan Am Plaza at 3089 Nutley Street, Fairfax, VA 22031, phone (703) 204-8400, and the only store in Maryland is in the Federal Plaza at 1776 E. Jefferson #203, Rockville, MD 20852, phone (301) 692-2130.

Micro Center Clinics are held on most weekends, except during holidays. The same topic is usually presented on both Saturday and Sunday. Topics may change and clinics may be cancelled without notice. Please verify the schedule with the store before leaving and register online for e-mail updates (http://www.microcenter.com/instore_clinic/sign_up.html).

Signing up in advance reserves a seat, recommended as space is limited. This can only be done at a store, either at the Tech Support or Customer Support area.

April – May 2014 Schedule

Start Time is 2pm local unless otherwise stated.

Apr 19: Mac OS X Networking

Apr 26 & 27: Smartphones, Tablets & eReaders

May 3 & 4: Digital Cameras

May 10 & 11: Windows® 8 Basics



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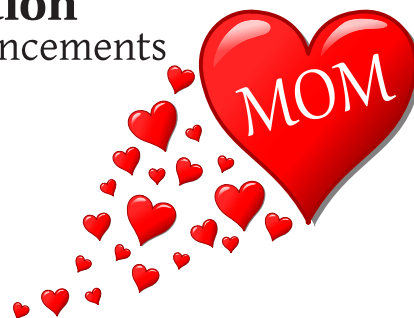
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Arlington Meetings

Carlin Hall Community Center
5711 S. 4th Street, Arlington, VA 22204
<http://www.patacs.org/arlingtonmeetings.html>

General Meeting

1st Wednesday (5/7), 7 p.m. ET

Technology & PC Help Desk

4th Wednesday (5/28), 7 p.m. ET

Board of Directors

3rd Monday (5/19), 7 p.m. ET

Fairfax Meetings

(with OLLI PC User Group)

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)
4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax VA 22032
<http://www.patacs.org/fairfaxmeetings.html>

General Meeting

3rd Saturday (5/17), 12:30 p.m. ET

Online-Only Webinar

2nd Wednesday (5/14), 7-9 p.m. ET
<http://www.patacs.org/webinarpat.html>