

## PATACS/OPCUG

3rd Saturday, August 15 1:00-3:30 P. M.

### The Carrington Event

Presented by Brian Slawski

In the summer of 1859, an especially powerful storm on the surface of the sun unleashed effects experienced across the span of the earth. The Carrington Event, as it's now commonly known, not only transfixed public attention, but also elicited greater understanding of the relationship between the earth and the sun, and of the risks that solar storms can pose to electrical infrastructure. This eclectic talk discusses not just the Carrington Event itself, but also the physical phenomena involved, the historical and scientific context in which the event occurred, and the implications of the event for the present day.



Brian Slawski serves as Vice President and Programs Chair of the Burke Historical Society. In his day job, he's worked as a utility patent examiner at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office since 2007. Before joining the Patent Office, he worked in Charlottesville as an engineer for a start-up developing a new vapor deposition process. He holds a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Virginia.

Learn in 30



## “Routine Computer Maintenance”

By Lorrin Garson

Is routine maintenance necessary? How often should it be done? Should backup be part of regular maintenance? What about software updates? Do you need antimalware software, and does it need recurring attention? How full is your disk drive and does that matter? Is your computer running hot and so what? What about those dust bunnies, ventilation and cable discipline? Do you need to lubricate the bearings in your hard drive? Should you replace your old computer if it still works?



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## Uninterruptible Power Supplies and Ethernet surge protection

The built in surge protection might cut your internet service speed

By John Krout, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS)

Recently I replaced an old, dead Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) with a brand new Tripp-Lite UPS. I bought the Tripp-Lite model INTERNET900U, which provides twelve 3-prong AC sockets, all of which offer surge protection, and half of which are also served by the UPS internal battery during an AC power outage.

This UPS also offers surge protection for Ethernet. One risk associated with Ethernet is that a lightning strike on an Ethernet cable outside the home might come through the cable inside and damage attached equipment such as computers, routers, network switches, et cetera. The UPS has a simple pair of Ethernet sockets on the body, as shown in **Illustration 1**. The sockets are labeled In and Out. The distinction is that In socket is for incoming Ethernet from your Internet Service Provider (ISP), and the surge protection stops surges from that direction; all equipment connected to the Out socket is protected from surges.



*Illustration 1*

As it happens the UPS includes a guarantee that protected equipment attached to the Out socket, or to any AC socket of the UPS, will not be damaged by a surge. The guarantee has a \$100,000 limit, which is a lot more than the cost of replacement of my computer and other attached gear.

I think surge protection is rational and necessary, and not just for electrical power. In the 1980s, a club member of the Washington Area Computer User Group had analog cable TV service connected to a VCR, and the VCR connected to a large screen television. He also connected a computer to the TV, and was using the TV as a monitor for his computer. After a stormy summer night, he ruefully reported that a surge through the cable destroyed his VCR, TV and computer.

Recently, I upgraded my internet service. That involved an upgrade of the service provider's equipment on the outside of my house, and acquisition of a faster router. When those steps did not provide 100% of the expected speed increase, a couple of weeks of troubleshooting led to replacement of the 18 year old Ethernet cable connecting the outside equipment to the computer.

During that upgrade experience, I learned to use the speed measurement service Fast.com as an internet speed diagnostic tool. The web site provides an immediate evaluation of download speed, plus a link to More Info. That link causes the site to evaluate Upload speed as well. You can see the Fast.com home page in **Illustration 2**, after it evaluated download speed at my home. The circular icon is a link to repeat the test; the Additional Info button is a link to perform an Upload speed test.



*Illustration 2*

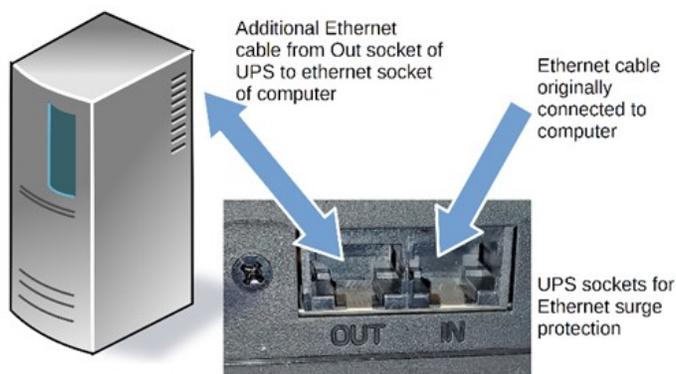
Because that experience gave me a moderate level of skepticism about upgrading Ethernet networks, I decided to check out the impact, if any, of the TrippLite Ethernet surge protection on internet speed.

First, before I included the UPS Ethernet surge protection in the Ethernet path, I ran a test to confirm the baseline “as-is” internet speed on my desktop computer, using Fast.com. It turned out as I had expected, slightly above 300 megabits per second (mbps) for downloads and uploads. All of the Ethernet cables in that baseline were

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CAT5, a measure of the speed for which each cable was designed.

Second, I added the UPS Ethernet surge protection to the Ethernet path. **Illustration 3** shows how that was done, using an additional CAT5 cable. I moved the Ethernet cable plug from my computer to the In socket on the UPS, and added a second Ethernet cable connected to the Out socket on the UPS and to the Ethernet socket on my computer.



*Illustration 3*

With the Ethernet surge protection included, I ran a second internet speed test to determine if the surge protection, or the newly added cable, had an effect on internet speed. Indeed, what I feared turned out to happen. Both speeds were reduced below 100 mbps. Download speed was reduced by almost 70%, and upload speed was reduced by about 75%.

The test does not definitely prove that the UPS Ethernet surge protection was the cause of the slowdowns. The cause could have been the additional Ethernet cable I used to connect from the Ethernet surge protection to my computer. Most of the short Ethernet cables I own were obtained in used condition from a former employer.

Third, to determine whether the additional Ethernet cable was the culprit, I disconnected the cables from the Ethernet surge protection and

connected the existing cables with a female-to-female Ethernet adapter. You can see that adapter in **Illustration 4**. I ran the speed test again. I got the same speed results that I had seen in the baseline test. To me, this suggested strongly that the UPS Ethernet surge protector was a bottleneck.



*Illustration 4*

I contacted Tripp-Lite customer support via phone. I explained the three speed test results. After 20 minutes on the phone, they opened a service ticket for me.

Roughly 40 minutes after that conversation ended, I got an email from customer support stating that the Ethernet surge protection in the INTERNET900U device was designed several years ago when residential internet service speeds of 100 mbps was almost unheard of. In short, the UPS Ethernet surge protection was performing as designed. Suspicion confirmed.

I do not think this speed reduction due to use of Ethernet surge protection is unique to Tripp-Lite UPS devices. I suspect most UPS makers face the same issue, since the typical approach is to design a specific model and sell that model for many years.

My guess is that the server-class UPS devices have gigabit Ethernet surge protection built in. The cost of those server-class UPS devices is more than the cost of my desktop computer. I did not want to spend that much. Alas, the online

Continued Page 4

descriptions do not explicitly make the speed limit of Ethernet surge protection clear. For that matter, the box containing the INTERNET900U, and the online description of that product, do not mention a speed limit.

One recommendation to all the UPS makers is to publicize the Ethernet surge protection speed limit for all UPS and surge protection products.

I did a bit of further research online and found that *stand-alone Ethernet surge protectors* exist, and the specs do indeed include the Ethernet surge protection speed limit. What's more, stand alone surge protectors supporting even gigabit speeds are priced at about 25% of the INTERNET900U UPS device.

Stand-alone Ethernet surge protectors do not require AC power to operate, but they do require grounding to drain off surge current to ground. You can see an example of an Ethernet surge protector with an attached ground lead wire in **Illustration 5**; like the adapter in **Illustration 4**, this surge protector has an Ethernet socket on both ends. The U clip on the end of the ground lead wire is clearly designed to clamp to the center screw on a grounded AC outlet cover. The ideal placement of the surge protector is as close as possible to the point where Ethernet enters your home, so that your router and all other devices connected to the Ethernet are protected from surges.



Illustration 5

An important difference between the stand alone Ethernet surge protectors and the UPS Ethernet surge protector is that the stand alone surge protectors have no protected equipment guarantee. To me, that is an acceptable trade off, since I need the protection but cannot tolerate the massive reduction in internet speeds imposed by the UPS surge protection for Ethernet.

One final note: Not all installed three-prong AC outlets are grounded. Those sockets are supposed to be grounded, according to local construction regulations, but I found some AC sockets in my home that were not; apparently some electricians are a bit sloppy about the details. AC socket diagnostic tools are available at reasonable prices such as the Gardner Bender tester, priced at less than \$8 at Home Depot as of June 2020. You can see that tool in **Illustration 6**. The tool tests for a number of wiring anomalies, and those anomalies are listed on the top of the tester device as you can see in the illustration. What I specifically found in the upstairs sockets of my home was that the electrician had not connected the ground wire to the two 3-prong AC sockets, which is known as an Open Ground issue. That means that the central screw of the face plate is not grounded.



Illustration 6

Continued Page 5

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout has been writing about personal computer topics since the early 1980s. He held various offices in the Washington Area Computer group. That group later merged with another to become the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS). He is a frequent contributor to PATACS Posts, the monthly newsletter of PATACS, and often presents demonstrations at meetings of that group.



### **Nimrod's Message**

**Editor: Cat Mews  
AKA John Driscoll's cat**

**He's the President of The Central New York  
Technology User Group**

**April 2020 issue, Salt Bytes**

Oh, now he tells me cats don't get COVID-19. Do you know how hard it is to get a mask that fits me? And this "paw" washing ... you know cats don't like water anyway. And, guess what, how do you think they take a cat's temperature? It was bad enough using John's thermometer.

Can't say too much more though, I do get fed regularly and the stores don't seem to have a "run" on "Sheba" kitty delight cat treats. Oh yea, kitties don't use litter box "paper" either.

I have to say one thing. Sometimes it's nice to just cuddle up and take advantage of the amount of heat our humans radiate. And, you know, things get cleaned up a lot more.

John's been down in the basement quite often doing loads of wash.

I even get to go out on the porch once in a while. Not too far from the sliding glass door though, remember to stay between the human and the door. Don't want to get locked out by accident. I hear it's pretty tough in the wild.

### **Top 8 World News Websites with Unbiased Stories**

Techboomers.com

Last Updated: January 17, 2018



If you like the news – listening to it, watching it, reading about it, sharing it online – it's important to have good sources to fall back on, and have a great go-to website that can help you find the best stories, from legitimate journalists, with no moral or political biases.

It's not only your social responsibility to share correct news information online, but it's important to most people to keep their reputation intact "when sharing," because there's nothing worse than being *that person* who shares a fake news story without thinking; your online connections will never trust you again!

It may seem easy to get the most accurate news information, but there are some people who have specific political or moral associations that motivate them to intentionally share fake news – and they don't always make it obvious why a story might be fake. If you need help figuring that out, check out our [ultimate guide to fake news](#) to get the whole scoop. But if you're here to find out where to go for unbiased news, check out 8 of the sites we've found below. And don't forget our tips for knowing if a news site is unbiased at the bottom!

#### **8 of the best unbiased news websites**

Each of the sites listed here (in no particular order) pride themselves on being an unbiased source of news, and have proven many times in the past to present objective points of view until hard facts can be presented as evidence. Though no news site is ever free from bias, since a team of journalists, editors, news producers, and dozens of people are involved on each piece of content, each of these sites have qualities that make them a great source of unbiased news.

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## 1. Wikinews

wikinews.org



Welcome to Wikinews  
The free news source you can write!

Wikipedia is always under scrutiny for not being a legitimate source of information because, essentially, anyone can contribute to its information source. This, however, is what gives it additional credibility when it comes to news. When your website is based entirely on collaboration, it's almost impossible to get incorrect information up there for a long period of time; anyone else who is interested in the same topics will find the incorrect information, and make it accurate. When it comes to news, collaborative sites (that have some form of verification) are a great source.

## 2. The Real News

TheRealNews.com



If you want an ideological news medium that aims to report unbiased news, it's hard to find one that states it so eloquently [in their mission](#): "The Real News Network (TRNN) is a non-profit, viewer-supported daily video-news and documentary service. We don't accept advertising, and we don't accept government or corporate funding. TRNN is sustained by viewer donations and earned revenue." This kind of business platform means they will miss out on a lot of revenue opportunity from advertisements and user social media sharing potential, but it also means their news is likely to be unbiased towards any one political affiliation.

## 3. Reuters

Reuters.com



Reuters, coming to you out of London, England, has always aimed to provide an unbiased perspective on the news. They are committed to providing a neutral perspective when it comes to values, and intentionally report less information if facts have not been determined. They are even known for not using the word "terrorist" when news of a bombing occurred, as there was not yet any evidence to support that, though all other news media outlets would report this assumption.

## 4. C-SPAN

C-SPAN.org



Focussing on events mainly to do with the United States government, C-SPAN, or the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, follows prominent events occurring in the U.S., and makes them available for viewing by the general public. C-SPAN is famous for its livestream where users can watch events live as they are happening, or access their archives to watch things that have happened in the past. This method of reporting news allows the users to watch events in entirety without comment or influence from the network, meaning they can draw their own conclusions about the meaning of the events.

## 5. The Associated Press

AP.org



The Associated Press, a multi-national non-profit news agency, was founded in 1846, and aims to stay true to its unincorporated nature, remaining free from bias. Frequently using the "[Inverted Pyramid](#)" method of journalism, the Associated Press reports on the general information related to a newsworthy event, and gives the pertinent details without bias; many other news stations often re-share or re-publish their stories, then adding more crucial details, often related to their own local area or political agenda. If you want the general facts without a lot of argumentative input, The Associated Press is the place to go.

## 6. The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)

WSJ.com

The Wall Street Journal has al-



ways been one of the world's top sources for news, since the days of printed newspapers – and there's a good reason. When a news medium can establish such a good reputation over years and years of presenting news, it's because they do it well. The WSJ has legitimate sources, and a large team of people who fact-check and verify the information they put out. They strive to present information without bias, and do so on a variety of news topics.

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## 7. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

**BBC.com/news**



Similar to the WSJ, the BBC has been around for years, and is widely considered to be a legitimate place to obtain unbiased news. The BBC concernings more on world events, and attempts to report breaking news on every subject, as quickly as is possible to do while still publishing accurate stories. Over time, however, the hard truth is the BBC reports on events from all over the globe, and prides themselves on objectivity.

## 8. AlterNet

**Alternet.org**



AlterNet has won numerous awards, and is known as one of the best sources of news information on the Internet. Their stories tend to focus on specific topics that are prevalent within society, and what they believe to be the most important topics to follow in society today. It has been criticized for having a politically left-leaning bias, however, some of their stated goals are to inspire social change and environmental awareness, which is a possible explanation for why their coverage tends to be on stories that fall within this category.

## 6 Ways To Know If Your News Is Unbiased

From [techboomers.com](http://techboomers.com)

### 1. The article is written properly.

This is an instant giveaway that the article you're reading is unbiased. Though it is true that a person with good spelling, grammar, and sentence structure can write a piece of fake news, there simply isn't as much care put into an untruthful article. A qualified journalist knows how to write properly, and they are also worried about their reputation, which means they take more time to review what they have written.

A person writing a fake news story wouldn't need to take as much time to verify what they have written, because it doesn't come from facts. Not to mention, they simply might not have gone through the same literary training as a journalist, so always be on the lookout for these kinds of mistakes in the writing. This is one of the most obvious ways you can tell that the author of a news article might not be entirely qualified.

### 2. There are more facts than arguments.

With a news story, you should be forming your own opinion based on the unbiased facts that

are presented to you, not reading someone else's interpretation of events that occurred. Much of the bias that is present within news articles comes from the author's opinion or intention, so if the majority of the article is argumentative without supporting evidence, or is full of opinion-based statements, chances are you're going to find a lot more bias in there than with an article that is a strictly factual reporting of events.

Pick out individual statements throughout the article, especially the first sentence of each paragraph, and evaluate how factual it is. Is the author telling you what happened and letting you decide what you think about it? Or are they telling you what you should think about something that happened? If your conclusion is that it's mainly the latter, then you're probably working with a biased news article.

### 3. The sources are legitimate – and exist!

No matter your own biases, opinions, or affiliations, you should never read an article claiming to be "news" if it doesn't cite or reference sources. Generalized claims or insinuations are not facts, and without sources that can back up a claim, a news article becomes biased because it

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relies almost entirely on the speculation of the author. These kinds of articles aren't trustworthy, so step 3 is looking for the sources and making sure they are present within the article.

After you've located them, try to evaluate their legitimacy. Where is the author claiming to have gotten their information from? Do they give you a hard citation, or is it a generalized claim? Sometimes journalists need to protect their sources, but if every article on the website claims a "trustworthy source" provided the information, especially when this person is seemingly close to the person the news story focusses on, this could be a ploy to gain the reader's trust. Always use your judgement, and think about how the site as a whole focusses on providing you with information about their sources – rather than just for the one article you're reading

A graphic in The Wall Street Journal on the morning of Oct. 19, 1987, compared current stock trends with those of the 1920s.

| Days With Greatest Percentage Loss:<br>DJ Industrials |            |         |            |        | Weeks With Greatest Percentage Loss:<br>DJ Industrials |            |        |            |        |
|---|------------|---------|------------|--------|--|------------|--------|------------|--------|
| RANK  | DATE       | CLOSE   | NET CHANGE | PCT    | RANK   | FRIDAY     | CLOSE  | NET CHANGE | PCT    |
| 1   | 12/21/1914 | 54.00   | -17.42     | -24.39 | 1  | 7/21/1933  | 88.71  | -16.33     | -18.55 |
| 2   | 10/28/1929 | 260.64  | -38.33     | -12.82 | 2  | 5/17/1940  | 124.20 | -20.57     | -14.21 |
| 3   | 10/29/1929 | 230.07  | -30.57     | -11.73 | 3  | 11/8/1929  | 236.53 | -36.98     | -13.52 |
| 4   | 11/6/1929  | 232.13  | -25.55     | -9.92  | 4  | 4/8/1932   | 62.90  | -9.28      | -12.86 |
| 5   | 12/18/1899 | 58.27   | -5.57      | -8.72  | 5  | 10/7/1932  | 62.67  | -5.89      | -12.42 |
| 31  | 5/28/1962  | 576.93  | -34.95     | -5.71  | 6  | 9/16/1932  | 67.10  | -9.09      | -11.93 |
| 75  | 9/11/1986  | 1792.89 | -86.61     | -4.61  | 7  | 10/2/1931  | 96.88  | -12.98     | -11.82 |
| 76  | 10/16/1987 | 2346.74 | -108.35    | -4.60  | 8  | 12/22/1899 | 58.69  | -7.52      | -11.36 |

#### 4. The article doesn't rely on social interaction.

A news story should be factual, and update you on the things that actually happened. It shouldn't be based on what other people using the site think is "newsworthy," nor should other people be able to contribute to the overall framework of the reporting. If you're using a social news website, you should exercise caution with what you read, and ask yourself if the story would be presented in the same had you read it on another website.

The allowance of social interaction with a news story, though often entertaining and occasionally useful, does create instant bias, and interferes with the account of the events. Avoid sites with voting components, user-generated content, and forum-based information; these kinds of sites are much more likely to have bias than a typical news site.

#### 5. A political or moral bias isn't stated (or hidden) in the website structure.

Don't just look at the individual article when hunting for a bias – be sure to check out the site as a whole. Looking at pages like the "About Us" or trying to find a mission statement is a great way to find obvious biases. Some websites won't be shy about admitting the fact that they support a particular political party, or have a purpose in providing you with the information they do on the site. Unfortunately, some websites won't be so obvious about presenting these biases to you, as their intention is to disguise them, making you believe that their version of "news" is simply the truth. Always look through some of the other articles that have been posted on the site, and look for common themes. Articles that are overly negative or always attacking particular well-known figures or institutions are often biased, as they only choose to report on topics that make certain groups look bad. Though their article may be generally truthful, by intentionally ignoring stories that make their own affiliations look bad, they are presenting you with news updates that are biased overall, which is of particular importance if you enjoy going to the same news site each day to get your information.

#### 6. You can find qualifications for the author.

It's always a good idea to look up the author and see what their qualifications are. Of course, it is unwise to judge an article based entirely on this, but if you look up the author and see that in their spare time they are the chair of an extremely right or left-wing organization, and have publicly posted about their dislike of a particular party or group of people, it might be a hint that their work could be biased.

Try looking up who they've worked for, and what other websites they may write for. In many cases, legitimate journalists can be found online through other social profiles such as [LinkedIn](#), or [Facebook](#) to see what other biases they may have.

That's it – you're officially a pro at recognizing biased news, and know exactly where to go to get a balanced viewpoint of the world's events. If you're interested in news updates, we have plenty more where that came from; browse our news and information articles to learn more. If you want to know how to make your searches for unbiased news better, check out our article on page 5.

## Amazon Prime Competitors

Last Updated: March 12, 2020  
From Techboomers.com



There are quite a few competitors out there looking to muscle in on the market for e-commerce benefits like

those provided by [Amazon Prime](#). Note that Prime also includes other features such as Prime Video and free Prime Music. Some are extensions of other online marketplaces (like Amazon Prime is itself), while others are stand-alone services. Here are 5 of the most popular ones.

### Google Express



(<https://shopping.google.com/>)

(Google Express has been replaced with Shopping.Google.com.)

Yes, even Internet giant Google is in on the online marketplace scene. Google Express allows you to get same-day delivery on groceries and other products from local big-box stores in your neighbourhood. If you sign up for their \$95 annual membership (\$4 cheaper than Amazon Prime), shipping is free on orders over \$15 (which would normally be about \$5 per order). And you get a free 3-month trial, too.

### ShopRunner



([www.shoprunner.com](http://www.shoprunner.com))

ShopRunner is one of the most famous Amazon Prime competitors. It is similar to Google Express, in that it offers free 2-day shipping on products that you order on websites for many popular stores. Members also receive free return shipping if they need to send something back, plus faster checkout times and exclusive deals at certain stores. Membership is \$79 per year paid either annually or in monthly installments. A 30-day free trial is also available.

### NewEgg Premier

[www.newegg.com/neweggpriemer](http://www.newegg.com/neweggpriemer)



NewEgg is an online marketplace that specializes in electronics, including computers and computer software (but it has other, less high-tech goods, too). Its paid subscription club, NewEgg Premier, costs \$50 per year, and has many similar features to Amazon Prime and ShopRunner. These include free 3-day shipping on qualifying items, free return shipping, exclusive deals, and the ability to share benefits with other NewEgg members. Like some other Amazon Prime alternatives, it comes with a 30-day free trial when you sign up for an annual membership.

### FreeShipping.org



([www.freeshipping.org](http://www.freeshipping.org))

While not really much of an online marketplace or shipping savings club, FreeShipping.org is one of the Internet's largest collection of promotional codes for free shipping. It contains free shipping codes for all sorts of products ordered on many websites for big-box stores that you likely shop at all the time anyway.

### Jet



([www.jet.com](http://www.jet.com))

Jet is an alternative to Amazon Prime that was actually founded by a former Amazon employee. Similar to Google Express, Jet allows you to order products from big-box stores, with free 2-day shipping on orders of \$35 or more. Plus, you get products at a lower cost, and free return shipping if you send something back you don't like within 30 days of ordering it. Like ShopRunner, you have to register in order to use the service, and it costs \$50 per year. However, you get a 3-month free trial after you make your first purchase.

**Dan's Desk****What is Streaming?**

By Dan Douglas, President,  
Space Coast PCUG, Florida March 2020 issue,  
Space Coast PC Journal  
www.scpcug.com      datadan (at) msn.com

On the surface, we have been 'streaming' since the days of radio. Basically, you have a receiving device, like a radio, and a 'broadcast', like a radio frequency that you use the device to select and play. The same concept applies to TVs as well. You select a particular channel on the TV to play a selected broadcast frequency received through an antenna.

Streaming in the current sense is very similar; we use an application (app) to select a particular stream of data through the internet. In effect, we use the app to communicate to a remote server to request that a particular file is sent to our device. The app and the device then decode that file in a way that is appropriate for the user.

On a smart TV/Roku/Apple TV/Fire TV stick/Chromecast/etc., an app like ESPN will allow you to select a particular show (like a channel or data stream) for playback on the TV. For a computer, it is the same; the app will select a particular data file to be displayed on the monitor and/or played through the audio system.

The advantages of subscribed or paid apps versus free ones are usually two factors: fewer or no commercials and access to more content. Many apps, such as Hulu have multiple tiers of use: Free, limited commercials, no commercials, live TV channels.

Some apps such as CBS All Access may offer shows such as Star Trek Discovery or Picard to only the subscribers of that channel.

**Common Streaming Devices**

Smart TVs – TVs connected to the internet that have apps available to playback content from free or subscribed providers.

ROKU, Apple TV, Fire TV Stick, Chromecast, etc. – a standalone box that connects to a display

of some sort, like a TV, that contains access to various apps that provide for streaming content from free or subscribed providers.

Web Browsers (Microsoft Edge/Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.) - the web browser is an app running on a PC Operating System (Windows, Mac OS, etc.) that allows you to select a server to connect to through the use of the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) commonly called the web address.

The address itself can be the actual stream that is then played through various web browser functions.

**Popular Apps**

Here is a list of some of the frequently installed and mentioned apps across all devices in no particular order. You can go to the website for each for details on content, pricing, etc.

**Movie Streaming**

Netflix, VUDU, Movies Anywhere, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Disney +, Apple TV +, Fandango Now, Tubi (free), Google Play Movies & TV, Roku Channel (free), Acorn TV, BritBox, YouTube (free), Crackle (free)

**Live TV Watching**

Hulu, AT&T TV, Sling TV, YouTube

**TV Channels on Demand**

CBS All Access, PBS (free), Showtime, NFL, ESPN, HBO Go, A&E, ABC, Fox, NBC, SYFY, USA, BBC America, AMC, Peacock

**Music**

Amazon Music, Stingray Qello Concerts, Sirius XM, Pandora

Plus thousands of others with more being created every day it seems. No matter what your tastes are, there is an app for it!

I hoped this served as a general introduction to streaming and now enjoy!



**Connecting to  
Friends and Family Members**  
By Dorothy Fitch, Green Bytes Editor,  
GVR Computer Club, AZ  
April-August 2020 issue, Green Bytes  
[www.cgvaz.org](http://www.cgvaz.org)  
[dmfitch \(at\) cox.net](mailto:dmfitch@cox.net)

There are many ways to communicate electronically with people these days, keeping a safe distance. This article explores ways to communicate with lots of people at the same time.

### By Email

You can create a group of contacts in your email program. Then you can create and send a message to that group and they will all get your message.

Use the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) line for the group so that all the email addresses aren't visible to everyone. This protects the privacy of the recipients.

### By Phone

Did you know that you can set up a conference call with all your friends and family for free?

[Freeconferencecall.com](http://Freeconferencecall.com) is a free service that allows an unlimited number of people to call a phone number, enter an access code, and talk with all the other people on the line. The phone number to call isn't local, so long-distance charges may apply. However, most people have unlimited long distance for calls within the US these days.

Freeconferencecall.com also offers free screen sharing and video conferences. [Compare their services to others on their website.](#)

### By Video

There are many options for face-to-face communication using video. Your computer or device would need to have a camera.

In addition to [freeconferencecall.com](http://freeconferencecall.com), noted above for audio meetings, there are also these other apps that are free (or very low-cost).

[Zoom](#) is a popular video conference application. The free version allows for unlimited 1 to 1 meetings, 40-minute sessions for 3 or more people, application sharing, and collaboration. They are offering added support and training during the pandemic.

[Skype](#) is a free video communication tool that you can use to connect to other people who have Skype accounts. Software downloads are available for Windows, Mac, and Linux desktops and Apple and Android mobile devices. Skype also offers free video conferences and conference calls that anyone can join even if they don't have a SkyAll participants must have an iPhone or an iPad.pe account; no special software is required. See [apple.com](http://apple.com) to get started. (Skype is a product of Microsoft.)

[Group FaceTime](#) allows you to communicate with up to 31 other people at the same time for iOS devices.

[Google Duo](#), for Mac and Android devices, allows you to connect to up to 12 people (now up from 8) on phones, tablets, and computers.

Here are a few articles comparing these tools and tips for using them.

### [Compare Zoom vs FaceTime](#)

### [Zoom vs. Skype vs. Discord vs. Facetime vs. Google Hangouts \(for Video Conferencing Calls\)](#)

### [Using Zoom? Here are 10 tips to get the most of it](#)

### [Google Duo's group video limit rises to 12 people just at the right time](#)

## How Not To Send Your Email to a Bunch of People (or Just Reply To Sender)

By Lou Cioccio, Board Member,  
Computer Users of Erie  
<https://www.cuerie.com/>  
lcioccio (at) mac.com

This happens to me and probably happens to everyone at one time or another whether we are professionals or just "regular" people. In business situations your email, when sending, will have the following:

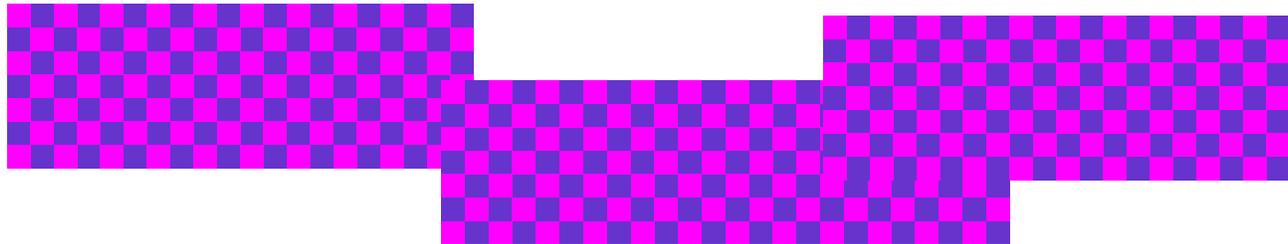
TO:           CC:           And maybe BCC:

The TO: is sent to the person you are sending to or replying TO: (this IS important for you need to be aware of Reply TO: or Reply TO ALL:). Sometimes someone makes a foolish mistake or brakes a mail etiquette rule, and you want to tell him/her but not embarrass the person so you need to Reply TO:, not Reply ALL:, otherwise you are correcting

the person among his/her peers. This is one thing I had taught my junior leaders in scouts and also how I handled it when I was an NCO in the Army. As long as it's not a life-threatening mistake, you do not have to make an example to their peers!

On to emails. If you have a very large list of addressees, it can be longer than your actual message. When you use Blind Carbon Copy, otherwise know as BCC, addressees will only see their own address.

So, when replying, STOP, make sure you are not replying to the whole enchilada, only to ONE person. So I hope I did not offend anyone but at least you know and are aware of the difference to Blind Carbon Copy when you do not want to share an address or have something private to say but are letting others know that you sent this email out.



## Ohsnap Review   By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society [www.aztcs.org](http://www.aztcs.org)   actuary110 (at) yahoo.com

This is a clever tool to make your phone easier to use. It attaches to the back of your cell phone and has two "fingers" that can pop up. You connect them to form a loop, which you put your finger through when using the phone. Doing so relieves you from having to hold the phone with your thumb and index finger.

The idea is that the Ohsnap protects you from dropping the phone or otherwise losing it when you are distracted. You'll find that it's very comfortable to use with only your middle or index finger to keep the phone attached to your hand. But that's not all! If you are watching a video or looking at pictures, let the phone lean sideways (or upright) to watch, without the need to hold the phone. Just set it down, leaning on the Ohsnap, vertically, or in landscape mode.

The Ohsnap has a magnetic back so it can stick to anything metallic. There are many surfaces that are useful in this way, while you watch videos or talk to a caller. It can also stick successfully to any magnetic mount on your car's dashboard, leaving you hands-free for driving. Ohsnap is quite thin and even when it is attached to your cell phone, your phone is still easy to slip into a pocket or purse. It won't catch on anything when you pull it out since it's edges are very smooth.

**Ohsnap**   <https://www.ohsnap.com>   **Price \$29**

## Desktop Linux Mint 19.3

By Tom Burt, Vice-President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club

[www.scsccl.com](http://www.scsccl.com)

tomburt89134 (at) cox.net

Even though I'm predominantly a Windows 10 user, every 18 months or so, I teach a seminar on "What's New with Linux." As you might guess, it doesn't usually draw much of a crowd. My favorite "distro" (version) is Linux Mint because it's free (open source), it comes with a very nice graphical desktop (actually, a choice of three), it includes lots of bundled applications, it's well-supported and it performs great on old, low-end hardware. Also, because it is internal design, Linux is innately very secure. With Windows 7 losing support from Microsoft as of January 14<sup>th</sup>, if you're now among the Windows 7 orphans, you might want to consider installing Linux Mint to replace or run alongside Windows 7 on your "well-seasoned" PC. Following is an overview of Linux Mint 19.3, the newest version released in December 2019.



### How to Get and Install Linux Mint 19.3

Browse to: <https://linuxmint.com/>. The home page has lots of links to information about Linux. Click one of the buttons to choose which desktop version (Cinnamon, Mate or Xfce) to download. A page of information, including download links, will appear. Click one of the "USA" download links to download a 64-bit "ISO" (DVD) image file to a folder on your PC's hard drive.

### LinuxMint.org Home Page with Cinnamon Desktop Version selected

Once the Linux Mint ISO download is complete, you can burn the ISO image to a DVD to make a

bootable setup DVD. Or, you can download and use a free program called **balena Etcher** (<https://www.balena.io/etcher/>) to convert the ISO image to a bootable USB flash drive.

To get a feel for Linux Mint, you can simply boot and run Linux Mint from the boot media without installing it. This is called a "live session". The live session desktop includes an "Install Linux" icon that will let you install Linux. In the installer, you can choose to replace the current operating system, or you can install Linux Mint alongside the current operating system. This will configure your PC to dual-boot Linux and Windows. The 64-bit Linux Mint configuration defaults are fine and the installer will automatically handle secure boot and UEFI issues.

For comprehensive Linux Mint installation instructions, see:

<https://linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/index.html>

Another alternative is to set up Linux Mint in a virtual machine. For this, I use **Oracle Virtual Box** (<https://virtualbox.org>). After the empty virtual machine has been set up, boot it from the Linux Mint ISO and install Linux Mint to the virtual machine's virtual hard drive. To learn more, see my **Virtual Machine seminar** at [https://www.scsccl.com/smnt/Virtual\\_Machine\\_Primer.pdf](https://www.scsccl.com/smnt/Virtual_Machine_Primer.pdf).

### Exploring Linux Mint Cinnamon

Linux Mint is a Windows 7 work-alike, so it's relatively easy for a Windows user to get going with it. The below screenshot of the desktop shows desktop icons, a Task Bar with a Start button, "quick launch" icons and a tray area, and a customizable desktop background.



Continued Page 14



You open the Start Menu by clicking the button in the lower-left corner. The Start Menu has a pane at the left for launching key applications and functions, a search window at the top, a column of application categories, and, for a selected category, a list of the applications in that category. A scroll bar appears at the right edge when needed

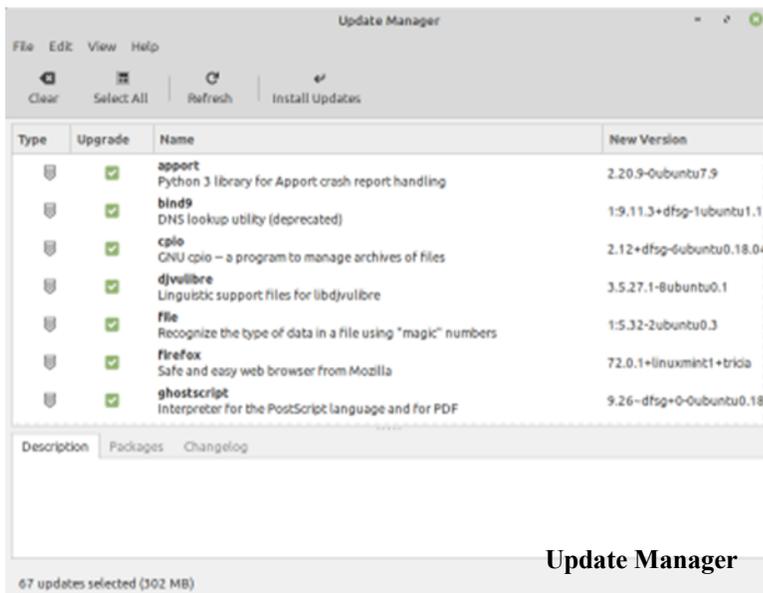


### Linux Mint Cinnamon Start Menu Screen Shots

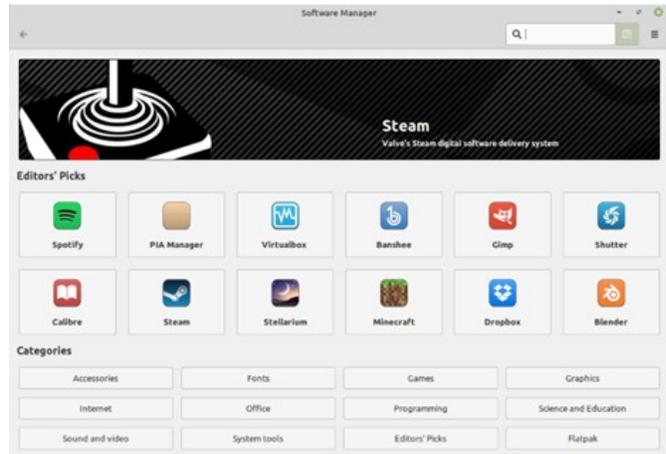
Among the bundled applications in Mint 19.3 is **Libre Office**, which includes a spreadsheet, word processor, presentation

graphics, drawing and flowcharting, and several others. Libre Office can open and save in MS Office file formats. The Firefox web browser and the Thunderbird email program are also bundled. Mint 19.3 features a new video player named Celluloid and a music player named Rhythmbox. Accessories include a calendar, calculator, file viewer, a password manager, and a note-taking tool.

The **Preferences** settings tool allows you to customize the look and feel of Linux Mint. This includes choosing your desktop background (pictures, solid colors, gradients).



The **Update Manager** (below left) handles checking for and installing updates to Linux Mint and its applications. The Update Manager alerts when new updates are available via its tray icon, but YOU decide when to actually download and install them. To launch it, click its icon on the tray. You can select any or all of the available updates. Generally, you will want to install all of them.



The **Software Manager** allows you to access Mint's online repository which claims over 60,000 free, open-source applications and install whichever ones you desire. Launch the Software Manager from Start Menu > Administration > Software Manager. When you click the link for an item, it opens a detail page to help you decide whether the program is what you're looking for.

**Final Thoughts** I set up **Linux Mint 19.3** in a Virtual Box virtual machine to get the screenshots for this article. I booted the virtual machine from the downloaded Mint 19.3 64-bit ISO image and then double-clicked the "Install" icon on the desktop. Other than that, I made a few clicks to select language, keyboard, and time zone and entered my account credentials. The entire setup was done in about 15 minutes. I chose a desktop background and was ready to go. My virtual machine boots to the Linux desktop in about 15 seconds. What could be easier?

That's about all I can cover in my allotted space. Check out my Linux seminar handout at:

[https://www.sccc.club/smnr/Desktop\\_Linux\\_Fresh\\_Look.pdf](https://www.sccc.club/smnr/Desktop_Linux_Fresh_Look.pdf)

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PATACS, Inc. 201 S. Kensington St. Arlington VA 22204-1141

Club Information call: 703-370-7649 Web Site: www.patacs.org

President, Registered Agent, Internet Services..Paul Howard, 703-860-9246, president(at)patacs.org
1st Vice President:.....Ron Schmidt, 301-577-7899, director11(at)patacs.org
2nd Vice President, Membership Chair:.....Mel Mikosinski, 703-978-9158, director4(at)patacs.org
Secretary.....Jim Rhodes, 703-931-7854, director7(at)patacs.org
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Director, Meeting Setup:.....Bill Walsh, 703-241-8141, director14(at)patacs.org
Director, APCUG Liaison:.....Gabe Goldberg, director10(at)patacs.org
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Windows Support:..... Jim Brueggeman, 703-450-1384, windows(at)patacs.org

Newsletter Editor:.....Kathy Perrin, editor(at)patacs.org

Columnists:..... Volunteers Needed

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OPCUG / PATACS Saturday Meetings

Meeting Information and Agenda

In person meetings are not currently being held due to COVID-19. Join us on ZOOM.

In June and December, a PC Clinic / Tech Help session is run concurrently with the meeting from 1 PM in the Annex.

See: https://www.patacs.org/clinicpat.html

1:00 – 1:19: Q&A – detailed responses may be deferred to post-meeting communication.

With the concurrence of presenters, meeting sessions are webcast using the Zoom.us cloud meeting service.

1:20 – 1:50: 'Learn in 30' Presentation

Dues-paid members may 'attend' from remote locations, using the meeting number information provided on the PATACS website.

1:50 – 2:00: Break in Break Room / Annex

2:00 – 3:20: Featured Presentation

3:20 – Door Prize Drawings (at in-person meetings). Eligibility - group members only.

Please see: https://www.patacs.org/mtgdetpat.html#3rdsat

3:30 – Adjourn (Expect some flexibility in scheduled times. Order may be varied to accommodate scheduling needs of our valued presenters.)

Need more information about Zoom? Contact: webinarhosts@patacs.org

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 Arlington VA 22204-1141

# First Class

AFFIX  
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TEMP-RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

August 2020 PATACS Event Calendar  
 Call (703) 370-7649 for Meeting Announcements

| Sun   | Mon                                     | Tue | Wed  | Thu | Fri | Sat  |
|-------|---|-----|--|-----|-----|--|
|       |   |     |  |     |     | 1  |
| 2     | 3                                       | 4   | 5<br>7-9 pm<br>Online Meeting<br>By Zoom     | 6   | 7   | 8  |
| 9     | 10                                      | 11  | 12   | 13  | 14  | 15<br>1-3:30pm<br>General Meeting<br>By Zoom |
| 16    | 17<br>7-9pm<br>Board Meeting<br>By Zoom | 18  | 19<br>7-9pm<br>Online Meeting<br>By Zoom     | 20  | 21  | 22   |
| 23/30 | 24/31                                   | 25  | 26<br>7-9pm<br>Tech&PC<br>HelpDesk<br>ByZoom | 27  | 28  | 29   |

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