

The Space Coast PC Journal



Cable or Air? – What’s your choice?

By Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer, The Computer Club

December 2019

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Most TVs default to Cable, so if you get your TV programming via a cable company like Spectrum or Frontier, you don’t have to answer this question. But if you want to get “broadcast TV,” you will have to select “air” when given the choice. (Your specific television may use the term “broadcast” or over the air (OTA) instead of “air”.)

Way back in the 30’s/40’s when Television was being developed, the inventors had to establish the bandwidth for a broadcast television channel. Based on the video and audio information needed to be packed into the signal, the decision was made to allocate 6 MHz to a broadcast channel. So every television broadcast channel signal was designed to take up 6 MHz of bandwidth.

Remember, that was in the

prehistoric days of Analog television signals. We are now in the digital television age, as evidenced by the many nice slim, large screen TVs around us.

If you’ll remember, this transition took place way back in 2009, June 12, 2009, to be exact. That was the day our old Television sets could no longer bring us entertainment and information unless we acquired an analog to digital converter box.

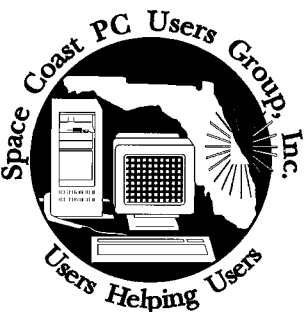
The government even gave us the opportunity to purchase two of these devices for \$35 each, in advance of the transition, so we could make the transition and not miss a single television show. (I only had one TV at the time, so I only purchased one of these devices, and believe it or not, I still have it. I used it for a while until I stepped into the digital television age. Anybody still need a converter box?)

Now we have digital television, but we still have the 6 MHz television channel bandwidth. The bandwidth of a signal is related to the modulation scheme used to

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All work on the Journal is performed by unpaid volunteers.

Submitting Articles to the Journal

We encourage all of our members to submit original computer-related articles for publication in The Space Coast PC Journal.

Writing a Product Review

It is really not that difficult to write a good review for The Space Coast PC Journal. These guidelines will help you get started:

Product information

- List the product name, release level, and manufacturer.

Use

- What does this product do?
- How easy is it to learn and use? Is it for beginners or does it have advanced features?
- List and describe some of the features. If this is an upgrade, what is new to this version?
- What did you like or dislike about it?
- Did you have to call Customer Support? What for? Were they helpful?

Installation

- How much disk space did the product take?
- How long did it take to install?
- Was it difficult to install?
- Specify requirements such as: DOS level, Windows level, Windows type, etc.

Recommendations

- Would you recommend this product?

Remember these are guidelines. They are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor should they limit your creativity. But all of them should be included as part of your article. Then the review will practically write itself!

Preparing Your Articles

To assist us in incorporating articles into the Journal, it would be helpful if certain minimum standards were followed. Use this quick-step guide:

Format: The preferred format is ASCII text files. We can also work with other formats, but check with the editor before using them.

Text: Single-space the text—even between paragraphs. Don't indent paragraphs. Use hard returns only at the ends of paragraphs. Use only one space after periods, colons, and question marks. Follow standard capitalization rules.

Use left justification only. Do not right justify or block your text. (Word processors add extra spaces between words to justify the text and each of those extra spaces must then be removed.)

Graphics: The preferred format for graphics accompanying your text is TIFF—in separate files from the text. Embedded graphics are not useable. Most image editing programs have a "resize" option to alter the size of graphics. Please try to keep your graphic file sizes to around 1 meg in size. Call the editor if you have questions.

Be sure to include your name and phone number so we may contact you if we have any questions. Anonymous articles will not be published.

Submit your article by uploading the file to ringram728@earthlink.net or bring your disk and hardcopy to the Monday meeting or mail to:

Editor, SCPCUG Journal
Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.
1360 Mayflower Avenue
Melbourne, Fl 32940-672

3Articles must be received by the 28th of the month to appear in the next issue, and all are, of course, subject to editing. □

From The Editor

I just forwarded the UCHUG Newsletter to the same mailing list I used to send this Journal to you. I added myself to the last group to be sure it got out, and that the link provided would produce a readable copy of their newsletter. The copy I received worked as advertised, so I hope it worked for all.

I truly wonder how many of you are abiding by the "stay-at-home" directive. Visits to "Essential" locations, such as grocery shopping, are allowed as long as you follow the contact separation rules.

I had occasion to go to Walmart recently. The store personnel all wore protective masks and gloves, and periodically cleaned surfaces that customers might touch. Separation markers were on the ground at the entrance lane as well as the approaches to checkout points. One-way lanes for shopping were clearly marked through the store.

Sadly, the customers were not doing as well, particularly among the teen and young adult groups. No face masks, no separation or following the marked lanes. They apparently believe it can't affect them, and ignore that they might pass it on to their elders.

I hope this goes away soon and we can get back to normal. □

Ron Ingraham, Editor

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Professional also includes DriveScrubber, a utility that can securely erase data from hard drives. This is necessary when donating a

If there is a program not listed that you feel comfortable with, let us list you as one of our helplines contact ringram28@cfl.rr.com

**The SCPCUG Home Page is at:
http://www.scpcug.com
Check it out!!!!**

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Presentation
May 21, 2020

COVID-19

Closed the Library

No Meeting

Bring Some Friends

Cable or Air?.....from page 1

create the modulated signal. The modulated signal must fit within the bandwidth allocated, otherwise, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will be very unhappy.

(First, just a quick technical explanation. Modulation is the process of putting a signal (video or audio) on a carrier frequency signal. The carrier frequency signal (think WCTQ is on 96.3 MHz) is the frequency used to carry the signal from the transmitting antenna to the receiving antenna. Then at the receiving television set, the modulated signal is demodulated to recover the original signal. End of explanation.)

So when the transition to digital was being explored, in the latter days of the last millennium and the early days of this millennium, the broadcast industry and the cable TV industry had to decide what type of modulation scheme to use with the new digital television signals.

(By the way, here’s a nearly useless piece of trivia, the analog television modulation scheme was called Vestigial Sideband modulation.)

When TV was invented there was only one industry, that was the broadcast industry, but now there two ways of getting television signals to customers, over the air, and over the cable. Due to the differences in transmitting signals over the air and transmitting signals over a cable, the two industries decided on two different modulation schemes.

Here are two other pieces of trivia. The Over the air signal is modulated using an Eight Level Vestigial Sideband (8VSB) modulation technique and the cable signal is modulated using a Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM) technique.

The meaning of each of these is not germane to this discussion except for the fact that they are different. And it is that fact that forces the television manufacturer to include both types of de-modulators on the television. So, all digital televisions are capable of using either signal. Most, if not all, are defaulted to use the cable signal, probably because nowadays most people receive their television from a cable TV provider rather than over the air.

So, if you are a cord-cutter, you will have to go into the settings of your TV and find the location where “Air” or “Cable” is chosen. Once you have made the “Air” choice, you will have to let the TV scan for all of the channels in your area. Once scanned, your TV will be set up for your local, over the air, television channels. (A cord cutter is someone who has decided to stop receiving their television entertainment from their cable provider, which means they no longer get cable channels. They receive over the air television channels using an antenna, and they stream entertainment from such providers as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu, over their internet connection. Streaming services require a subscription, and there are some streaming providers that include cable channels.)

Now we still have a 6 MHz broadcast channel but, because we have digital modulation schemes which are more efficient than the older analog modulation schemes, the television stations can now fit more channels into the 6 MHz bandwidth. That means that where we may have had one analog channel, say channel 8, we now have multiple digital sub-channels, maybe 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3. In fact, WEDU, the local educational channel has six sub-channels, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, all transmitted within the basic 6 MHz bandwidth (isn’t digital wonderful).

Typically the base sub-channel, the .1 channel is a High Definition (HD) channel, and the other sub-channels are Standard Definition (SD) channels. (High or Standard Definition refers to the quality or resolution of the picture displayed on the television screen. HD is referred to as 1080p or sometimes 720p, while SD is referred to as 480p.

(The number is the number of horizontal lines used to create the picture and the “p” indicates a progressive scan, as opposed to an interlaced scan that was used for analog TV.) SD is about the same quality as the old analog TV picture. HD channels will also typically provide 5.1 audio, but that’s entirely another story.)

So it turns out that the original decision to allocate 6 MHz for a television channel seems to have been a pretty good design decision. Or, at least the designers of the digital television equipment have been very clever in using the allocated bandwidth to their and our advantage.◻



From the Cashier's Cage

Financial Report for Month
Ending April 30, 2020

CHECKING

Beginning Balance	190.96
Sympathy Plant- Pearson Family (55.22)	
Website renewal to 6/12/22 (215.87)	
Transfer from Savings 100.00	
Ending balancee - includes \$18.41 snack fund	19.87

SAVINGS

Beginning Balance	405.05
Transfer to Checking (100.00)	
Interest	.03
Ending Balance	305.08

TOTAL ACCOUNTS BALANCE 324.95



"Of course I give money to those who are less fortunate than me! My limo driver is less fortunate than me, the crew of my yacht is less fortunate than me, my private jet pilot is less fortunate than me, my personal chef is less fortunate than me..."

Same Old, Same Old

Ron Ingraham, Editor

While browsing through some old Journals, looking for ideas that might be useful in current issues, I ran across this editorial from the December, 2007 issue, thirteen years ago. Didn't you just read the same thing several times here recently?

From page 2, Space Coast PC Journal, December 2007.

As I go through the exercise of putting this Journal together, it occurs to me that during earlier years we had many more articles written by our own group members. Recently we have had several product reviews written by our members, as well as comments gleaned from e-mails on subjects discussed at the meetings.

But these have been generally scarce for most of the past year.

The articles provided by APCUG which I frequently use, are a good example of what some of the other user groups are producing. Even there, a relatively few people in any given group are putting forth the greatest effort. Without that effort, this Journal would probably be reduced in quality, perhaps even in size.

I'm fortunate that quite a few of the professional writers and publications allow me to reprint their articles at no cost. In particular I am indebted to Smart Computing Magazine for their support to User Groups, as well as Scott Finnie, and Fred Langa in the past. I should also thank Bob Click, who happens to be a member of our group, even though he lives in Orlando.

I'd like to encourage any of you who have encountered and solved problems, or found new and useful software, to write it up. Don't sweat the details. I'll be happy to proof and edit anything you submit. Just give me the facts, sir or ma'am. □



Dan's Desk

We seem to be stuck in limbo for the foreseeable future with regard to starting in-person club meetings again. It appears that the Brevard libraries are partially open, in that you can drive up to pick up books, but patrons are not allowed inside yet. Until they do, and figure out how to safely allow meetings of people, we'll continue to stay the course. Perhaps moving to the large auditorium will replace our use of the smaller conference room on Saturdays, but we will have to wait and see.

One topic that was suggested to me by Irene was to explore the many ways to transfer and preserve photos. This is probably the single most common activity that practically all of us perform. Let's break this into two parts – A) the actual transfer of the picture files; B) how to store them.

A) The source of pictures can be varied, although I'm sure the most common today is via Smart Phone. The most common way to transfer pictures from a phone is to use a direct USB cable connection. The phone usually appears as a storage drive to the Windows file explorer and allows you to identify those files that need to be manipulated (copied/moved/deleted/edited/etc.) as you would with any file stored on any of your storage drives. They may also come from an actual camera using a storage card or even through a direct WiFi connection that is available on some models. Of course, pictures may also originate as email attachments or as downloads from web sites. Some of these allow direct transfer to a directory / library / folder located on your local PC.

B) By default, Windows 10 creates a folder called Pictures for *each* user account on a PC. This allows each user to maintain their own library of files separate from other users on the same PC.

As with any collection of files, you want to think about how to organize them into sub-folders to allow for easy access later. The fact that picture files from phones and cameras will have additional information stored internally, such as the date and place the picture was taken, which will allow for ease of searching and categorizing later. This information is stored as part of the picture file as Exchangeable image file format for digital still cameras (EXIF) standard. The storage can be on whatever is convenient and appropriate for what you want to do with them.

So for ease of portability, a USB memory stick can be ideal – cheap and readable by practically any device with a USB port. A SD memory card is common in many cameras and the micro SD card is commonly used in many other types of devices, such as android phones and other recording devices. CDs and DVDs were quite common ways to backup pictures a few years ago, but they have fallen out of use due to accessibility, speed, capacity, longevity and cost considerations.

Of course the best way today to ensure that you can always access your pictures is to use one of the many cloud services, many of which are already tied to your phone and PC. Refer to the April 2020 journal for a complete discussion of cloud storage options.

If you have suggestions for topics that you would like to see explained, please let me know! ☐



Webmaster Wanderings

Jere's Tech Tips

Windows, Android, Linux tips from Jere Minich, Advisor, Region 5 (AL, FL, GA, SC).

New Items

- How to Spring Clean Your Electronics
 - How to View Saved Wi-Fi Passwords
 - Social Distancing for Seniors
 - Tech to Help the Elderly Through Isolation
 - 12 Tips to Troubleshoot Your Internet Connection
 - How to See Who's On Your Wi-Fi
 - How to Access Your Wi-Fi Router's Settings
 - 10 Ways to Boost Your Wi-Fi Signal.
- <https://apcug2.org/jerestips/>

May 21 Meeting is TBD (To Be Determined) in view of the Merritt Island Library being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (coronavirus) with no estimate yet for reopening.

Effective Friday, Mar 13, 2020 - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic (coronavirus) all meetings for April at the Merritt Island Public Library are cancelled. The library is closed. No word yet on when we may resume.

1 New Link

Florida's COVID-19 Data and Surveillance Dashboard - Interactive Map from Florida Department of Health on COVID-19. Check Total Cases, Hospitalizations, Deaths, Testing by Florida State, County, Zip Code as well as USA and World. Also has Charts of Cases for All Time and Last 30 Days.

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/96dd742462124fa0b38ddedb9b25e429>

As an alternative, a Short Link for sharing with friends & family is <https://arcg.is/0Hfi5O>

[com/infolink.html](https://www.floridahealth.gov/about-us/press-releases/2020-04-29-florida-health-department-launches-covid-19-data-and-surveillance-dashboard-interactive-map)) - [Reference Links](#)

The Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 Data and Surveillance Dashboard Interactive map now allows residents to check how many confirmed cases of coronavirus are in their direct neighborhoods. The new feature can be found by checking the "cases by ZIP code" tab on the bottom of the interactive map.

Misc Items

Windows 10 Security: Use PINs In Place Of Passwords

The next version of Windows 10 will bring changes to security options. Microsoft wants users to start using PINs in place of passwords. The Windows 10 20H1 update will likely bring feature tweaks impacting everything from Cortana to Bluetooth connectivity & improvements to Notepad. Changes to security options are also expected. MS is moving toward a passwordless future for all users. MS is pushing for a passwordless sign-in to Microsoft accounts on devices. This will be optional via "Settings/Accounts/Sign-in options" using a new settings app that is slowly replacing the old Control Panel. An option will be to "Make your device passwordless." Microsoft says it will improve security & provide a more seamless sign-in experience. They say "This will strengthen your device sign-in by switching all Microsoft accounts on your device to modern multifactor authentication with Windows Hello Face, Fingerprint, or PIN, eliminating passwords from Windows."

PIN Codes Are Safer Than Passwords

The reasoning is if someone somehow obtains your PIN they only get access to a specific device & not complete ownership of your Microsoft account. The important difference between a password & PIN is that the PIN is tied to the specific device on which it was set up. The PIN is useless to anyone without that specific hardware. Someone who steals your password can sign in to your account from anywhere. But if they steal your PIN, they also need to steal your physical device. A password can be intercepted in transmission or stolen from a server. A PIN is local to the device. It is not transmitted anywhere & it isn't stored on the server. When the PIN is created, it establishes a trusted

Continued.....page 8

[General Information Links page](#) (<http://www.spcug>).

Webmaster Wanderings..... ..from page 7

relationship with the identity provider & creates an asymmetric key pair that is used for authentication. When you enter your PIN, it unlocks the authentication key & uses the key to sign the request that is sent to the authenticating server.

Firefox 75 Address Bar for Faster Searching

In addition to the usual bug fixes & improvements the Firefox browser update to Version 75 brings an improved Address Bar which allows faster & smarter searching. The changes include a refreshed look, with larger font, & shorter URLs. This improved look is optimized for smaller laptop screens. Searches on the Address Bar are also slightly smarter. Additional popular keywords are now highlighted when one is searching for something. Also top sites are now put on the Address Bar. Clicking on the Address Bar will now show your most visited sites so you can quickly open them right from the Address Bar. If you already have one of those sites already opened in a tab you will get an indication to jump to the existing tab rather than opening a new one. □

President's Corner

Tech Trek - Traveling with Technology

Part 1 - Planning and Booking

Author: Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood UG, CA

November 2020 issue, Drive Light

www.uchug.org
president (at) uchug.org

We all use a lot of technology in our everyday lives - various devices and services that make our lives better. They help us communicate, keep us safe and well, inform us, get us where we want to go, get us the things we need and entertain us. When we travel, we usually want to take all those benefits along with us.

There are many travel-related capabilities in the technology currently available to us. The travel industry, from transportation and lodging to hospitality and entertainment, has embraced the internet and mobile devices to make the traveler's life easier.

There are lots of new ways to protect ourselves while traveling and protect the home and stuff we left behind. There are a lot of devices we can take with us to enhance our traveling experience and even save us money. All these added capabilities carry a price, however, in added equipment to take, costs to buy and use, additional restrictions to follow and additional risks in loss.

Technology has become important in all aspects of travel, occurring before, during and after the trip. Selecting a destination, planning a trip, comparing costs and bookings components of the trip are all made easier by the internet and all the web-related travel resources now available. It may not have decreased travel times any as compared to ten years ago, but travel is now on average more fuel-efficient, reliable, safer and easier to arrange, and in some cases lower in cost, all due to technology.

While motor vehicle average passenger and cargo spaces have decreased, and airline average passenger seat space and free baggage allowances have decreased, the tech stuff we want to bring along on our trips has only increased. Smartphones may be small and provide a lot of capabilities, but it seldom stops there for most travelers. When you add in laptops, tablets or e-readers, digital cameras, music players, noise-canceling headphones, GPS devices and all the extra memory cards, batteries and chargers to support them, you've typically got a big bag of heavy tech gear to cart around, get through TSA screening and protect against theft or loss.

I really like to travel, though I don't get the opportunity to do so all that often. For various reasons, it had been more than a year since our previous overnight trip when my wife and I took a week-long anniversary vacation trip this last month. I've always been a tech user and tech traveler but was surprised at how much more dependent on it we had become since our last trip.

As expected, we relied heavily on the internet for our pre-trip planning and arranging. In the old days, one might consult with a travel agent to select a destination, price the arrangements and book the travel and lodgings. Now the commissions that paid for the agent's time have been reduced or eliminated, and most companies prefer to sell on the web directly to consumers. We did all our planning and made all our arrangements on the web, with (almost) no human

interactions, and believe we got a very good deal on our trip.

The internet can be of great benefit for travel planning, as it is easy to do price comparisons to come up with the lowest-cost options. Comparing other factors can be done, but you can wind up spending a lot of time on the web researching. Our first plan for an October trip was to visit our nephew and see the fall colors (leaves turning color) in New England. Our nephew had just started school at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, and the photos my sister forwarded when they dropped him off there looked inviting. I figured we could also visit Niagara Falls, which is somewhat nearby. When my wife determined that the optimal place to see the fall colors was in Stowe, Vermont, the trip became more complicated than my week of vacation could accommodate. To hit all three locations would require flying in and out of two destination cities, one-way car rental and a rapid pace. It would also be a bit expensive from San Diego.

Our second plan was to go to New Orleans, a place we'd both wanted to go to and would have earlier this year, were it not for other issues. I was concerned about going at this time of year, however, so we abandoned that plan.

Our third and final plan came courtesy of a Southwest Airlines sales email, which advertised \$49 one-way non-stop flights to select cities. From San Diego, these included mostly Northern California, Nevada, and Arizona destinations. We considered the Bay Area, but one of our last trips was to Napa. I was interested in going to Sacramento, to see the California State Railroad Museum, as well as destinations related to the gold rush. My wife was more interested in going to South Lake Tahoe, and I thought that would be OK as well. When I compared flight prices, however, I found you could fly about once an hour all day to Sacramento for \$49 with this sale, but the lowest price to fly to Reno/Tahoe was \$112 one way, with that price good only a couple of flights per day. I'd already compared days and found the lowest costs and greatest availability were for flying mid-week, so I was targeting flying out on a Wednesday and returning on the following Tuesday.

Frustrated with the large price difference between going to Sacramento and Reno, I looked at the map of where Southwest flies in order to get other ideas and

noticed that the distance between the two cities was not that great. With only a 2.5 hour drive to get from Sacramento to Reno, it made more economic sense to fly to Sacramento, rent a car and then drive to Reno (or South Lake Tahoe). I even found that renting a car at the Sacramento airport was less expensive than from the Reno airport. I didn't shop around much for rental cars as I'd found over many trips that Costco Travel always seems to offer the best prices on rental cars. Thus the combination trip concept was born, where we would fly to and from Sacramento, but stay three nights there and three nights in South Lake Tahoe. This allowed each of us to get what we wanted, at a very low price.

Once I'd booked our flights on the Southwest web site and the car on the Costco Travel site, it was time to make our hotel selections, as well as decide which city we would stay in first. Once again, the internet provided an easy way to locate and price prospective hotels. This process can be quick, but to get the best pricing, many iterations and a fair amount of time searching are necessary. My wife got to choose where we stayed in South Lake Tahoe, and for Sacramento, I looked to a hotel chain we have used frequently, as I determined we could get one night free there through redeeming our accumulated points.

Through web pricing comparisons, I found both of our prospective hotels were less expensive for the first half of our trip (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights) and more expensive for the second half (Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights). This was not too surprising. What was a surprise was that the Sacramento hotel was only about 20% more in the second half of our trip, while for South Lake Tahoe the price doubled. Thus the internet showed it would save us money to stay in South Lake Tahoe first, and then in Sacramento for the last three nights (which is what I thought would be best anyway). After looking at the South Lake Tahoe hotel my wife liked on a number of travel sites, I booked it on Hotels.com, as it was as low there as anywhere else, and I could earn hotel points on the site for free future stays.

There were still pricing games to be played with the Sacramento hotel. I had previously checked the hotel chain's web site to determine I had enough points for one free night there, and it required the same number

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Traveling with Tech.....from page 9

of points regardless of the day of the week. For the two nights I would be paying for, it did matter, as the cost could be different for each day of the week. I found our Saturday night stay would cost the most if purchased, so I made the points redemption reservation online for that night, and the paid nights (Sunday and Monday) were made on a separate online reservation. Up to this point I'd made all of our travel arrangements online, but now I had to break down and call someone at the hotel to make sure I had selected the same room type in the two reservations (for points stay and paid stay) to be able to get the same room and not have to vacate between reservations. I didn't trust that this would work out if all I did was send them an online message.

Before making the final hotel reservations, I did look a bit at the hotel reviews online, to make sure there were no problems mentioned repeatedly, or a lot of unsatisfied guests. I also went on Google Maps and used Street View to look at the area around the hotels to make sure they looked to be in safe neighborhoods. I learned this trick when booking hotels for the night of my wife's company Christmas party. She works for a company based in Los Angeles but works remotely on her own in San Diego. She is always invited to the company party, which is held in a nice restaurant in the LA area. Since I don't know the restaurants or the area very well, we have to be cautious when looking for a hotel to stay at so we don't have to drive back that night. You can't tell much from the Google Maps satellite view, but street view will reveal if the building next to the prospective hotel is covered in gang graffiti, or the hotel has fortress-like barricades around it. Those are the ones I avoid.

We researched and booked a few things to do on our trip through the web, like a boat ride on Lake Tahoe and bike rentals so we could ride the river trails in Sacramento. That completed all our travel arrangements. Now all that was left to do before we traveled was to figure out which tech devices to take along, and what needed to be set up at home to protect our stuff and make it look like we never left. □

Coronavirus Scammers Target Work-at-Home Job Seekers

By Keith , Scambusters Newsletter

Follow these steps to avoid a Covid-19 work-at-home scam: Internet Scambusters #906

Work-at-home jobs could be the future for many people in the wake of the Coronavirus lockdown. But they're also the source of a new batch of scams. In this week's issue we cover all the main actions you can take to avoid home-job-related con tricks. And if you've found work as a grocery delivery person, we have a warning for you about "tip baiting."

Let's get started...

Coronavirus Scammers Target Work-at-Home Job Seekers

Among the millions of people forced to stay home, hundreds of thousands who've lost their jobs or suffered a pay cut because of the Coronavirus lockdown are likely seeking work-at-home employment.

Even if things start resuming and reopening, many will never go back to their old jobs and are thinking about reframing their lives and careers by working from home longer term.

And since work-from-home schemes have always been a well-practiced con trick, the Covid outbreak is a golden opportunity for scammers. People desperate to find work, often facing financial difficulties, are highly vulnerable, and you can be sure the crooks will show no mercy.

While it may be true that more and more firms are looking to employ people as freelancers or independent contractors to work from home, their opportunities are easily outstripped by those from the con artists.

The most common red flag that signals a likely work-from-home scam is an offer of big money for what seems to be a relatively easy job or small amount of work. Often, fake job ads include phony testimonials from people claiming to be earning thousands of dollars every month.

Or they fail to mention that in order to jump on the bandwagon of whatever work they're peddling, applicants have to pay for supplies, training, registration or any one of many other ruses to get their hands on your case.

Worse, some of the scams are actually fronts for criminal activities. These are the type of jobs in which the victim has to forward packages abroad or cash checks and wire the proceeds to an untraceable destination. These forwarding or "mule" jobs are invariably the final stage in which other victims have been tricked earlier into paying money to scammers or have had their card details stolen and used to buy goods online. Although usually innocent victims, mules can find themselves on the wrong side of the law, potentially facing a jail sentence.

Pay a Fee

And then there's the simplest of all work-from-home employment scams: people claiming they can find you work if you pay them a fee.

Getting caught out by one of these scams usually happens at the worst possible time — like after a Coronavirus job loss or furlough. It's prompted the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to issue a renewed warning. "Ads offer a variety of work-at-home jobs – internet businesses, shipping or mailing work, selling goods, and more," says FTC attorney Lisa Weintraub Schifferle. "But many of these 'jobs' are scams, aimed at getting your money, and won't deliver on the claims they make."

Taking a cautious approach can help you avoid these tricksters. Here's how.

- Don't believe an easy or big money at-home job ad. It's almost certainly a fake.
- Never pay upfront to anyone claiming they can find you a job. Reliable employment agencies earn their money from employers, not employees.

In particular, watch out for fake federal government jobs. Often these are posted by scammers posing as job finders; they label the work as "previously undisclosed" jobs — implying that they somehow have privileged access to this work, so they want payment for it. In reality, information on government jobs is free from usajobs.gov.

- Don't pay in advance for supplies, equipment, training, medical/drug tests or anything else that's supposedly a requirement before you can start work.
- Thoroughly research any individual or organization offering work to find out if they're legit. What do others say about them? Do they have a verifiable business address?

Under its Business Opportunities Rule, the FTC requires work-from-home employers to give candidates a "disclosure" document with key pieces of information you can use to check them out.

- Beware of unsolicited contact from a potential employer. They may say they found your details on a jobs board. If you didn't post them, you know it's a scam. If you did post them, follow the step above.

- Don't work for someone who offers you a job without apparently knowing anything about you and without them interviewing or checking you out.

Likewise, don't be convinced by a phone or video interview that a potential employer is legit. You still must check up on them.

- Don't provide information about yourself to someone you haven't thoroughly checked out. For example, they may say they need your bank details so they can forward payment when they're really identity thieves.
- Don't accept a job offer that involves forwarding goods or money. You may get paid but that's no good if you're behind bars.

Finally, there are several sites that list legitimate work at home jobs, such as FlexJobs. Find others using an online search on a term such as "legitimate work at home companies."

You can also learn more about the most common fake work-from-home jobs and how to spot them here: FTC Work-at-Home Businesses.

Coronavirus Scams Update

In a recent update on Covid scams, the FTC said it had received more than 20,000 complaints by mid-April and that victims had reported losses of more than \$15 million. The real numbers are likely significantly higher

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since many scams go unreported.

Among the latest tricks is another scam perpetrated by unethical folk and aimed at people who've found work with the growing army of grocery home delivery providers.

It's a new scam called "tip baiting." When placing online orders, customers enter a big tip as an incentive to the delivery service, perhaps to get preferential treatment or delivery of difficult-to-find items.

When the item is delivered, the customer invents some kind of complaint and reduces or wipes out the tip, which can often account for half of the deliverer's total pay.

If you're a delivery person, there's not a lot you can do to avoid this scam beyond being wary about apparently big tippers and reporting any suspicions you have to your employer.

That's it for this week. Stay tuned to Scambusters for details of more Coronavirus and other scams. It could save you a fortune.☐

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Phony Facebook friend requests are putting you in danger – how to spot them

BY KOMANDO STAFF, KOMANDO.COM

APRIL 27, 2020

If you've been using Facebook for years like most people, you're probably familiar with the insane amount of notifications that can hit you at once. You'll see things like upcoming birthdays, events from your groups and a plethora of other random activities from people you know.

One kind of notification generates far more excitement than others, though: a friend request. It can absolutely make your day when someone new (or familiar) reaches out to you and tries to connect, but it can also be a sign that your profile

isn't as private as it should be. [Tap or click here to see the privacy settings you need to adjust.](#)

And sometimes, that request you get might not even be a real person at all. Data harvesters and cybercriminals sometimes pose as (not so) innocent Facebook accounts so they can scan your profile and share your data. Some even go as far as sweet-talking you into giving up personal information. Here's how you can spot the phonies.

Fair-weather friends

Fake Facebook friends requests can come for a variety of reasons — some harmless, some malicious. These are some of the types of bad actors you're likely to encounter in your request notifications:

Scammers

Scammers create fake Facebook profiles and send you a friend request to access to your personal data, like contact details, or other personally identifiable information that's restricted to "friends only"

This information would be useful in setting you up for a phishing attack

Malicious link posters

Some requests come from attackers sharing malicious links that lead to malware or phishing sites. These can end up in your Facebook News Feed after you accept their friend request.

Catfishing

Catfishers create extremely detailed fake profiles to trick people for romantic or financial gain. They'll often use photos of beautiful models in an attempt to hook victims. Tap or click here to see the damage a catfisher can do.

Exes and ex-friends

o If you unfriend someone who you'd like out of your online circle, they can still find their way back to your Facebook account by creating a fake profile. People aren't always who they say they are, and befriending you using an alias lets them know what you're up to without you knowing.

- **Jealous partners**
 - o Your current significant other could be questioning your devotion and trying to bust you. This sometimes occurs when jealous people want to “prove” your loyalty or test to see what you’d do when confronted by suggestive situations.
 - o This information could be recorded with the intent of using it against you later. This is textbook abuse, and should not be taken lightly. Tap or click here to find out more about stalkerware, another type of spying tool used by jealous partners.
- Private investigators
 - o Much like scammers, investigators will sometimes use fake friend requests to learn more about you, as well as see information that you’d normally restrict as “friends only.”

How do you spot a fake friend request?

It might seem tricky to suss out real people from fake ones on Facebook, but there are obvious signs that point to an automated or fraudulent account. Accounts run by real people with fake information are more difficult to spot, but there are still several red flags that usually give the game away.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before accepting any friend request that comes your way:

- **Is the request someone familiar, or are they friends of friends?**
 - o If you don’t recognize the person or ever recall meeting them, the profile could be fake.
 - o Check the requester’s friends list to see if there are mutual friends or anyone you may know. Facebook will usually highlight the number of mutual friends you share in the request.
- **Is the request from an attractive person?**
 - o Everyone is beautiful in their own unique way, but professional modeling headshots are a dead giveaway for a fake profile.
 - o This goes double for profiles with provocative profile pictures. If it looks like a professionally lit and shot photo of a person in a sexy pose, ignore the request (unless, of course,

- you’re friends with several models in real life).
- **Is their Facebook history limited?**
 - o Check the user’s timeline and see how old the account is. If it was created in the last few days or weeks, that’s a major red flag.
 - o Legitimate Facebook users tend to have a long history of content — with their timeline dating back several years. Of course, some people are late to the game and may just be getting started with Facebook, but it’s better to be safe rather than sorry.
 - **Do they have limited friends or are they all the same gender?**
 - o An account with all-male or all-female friends isn’t just unusual, it’s a red flag for a fake profile. This is more true for accounts with all-female friends — especially if the account has a provocative or model-tier profile picture. This is designed to bait people, not connect with them.
 - **Is there limited personal content on their timeline?**
 - o Fake profiles typically feature very few day-to-day posts, which take more effort to create.
 - o There might be some pictures or links, but they usually won’t have many status updates.
 - o This doesn’t apply to catfishers, who tend to dedicate far more time to crafting their fake persona. These can be spotted by how overly “perfect” their life seems to be, but that’s not too different from the average Instagram user. Look carefully to make sure the information they post lines up with who they say they are.

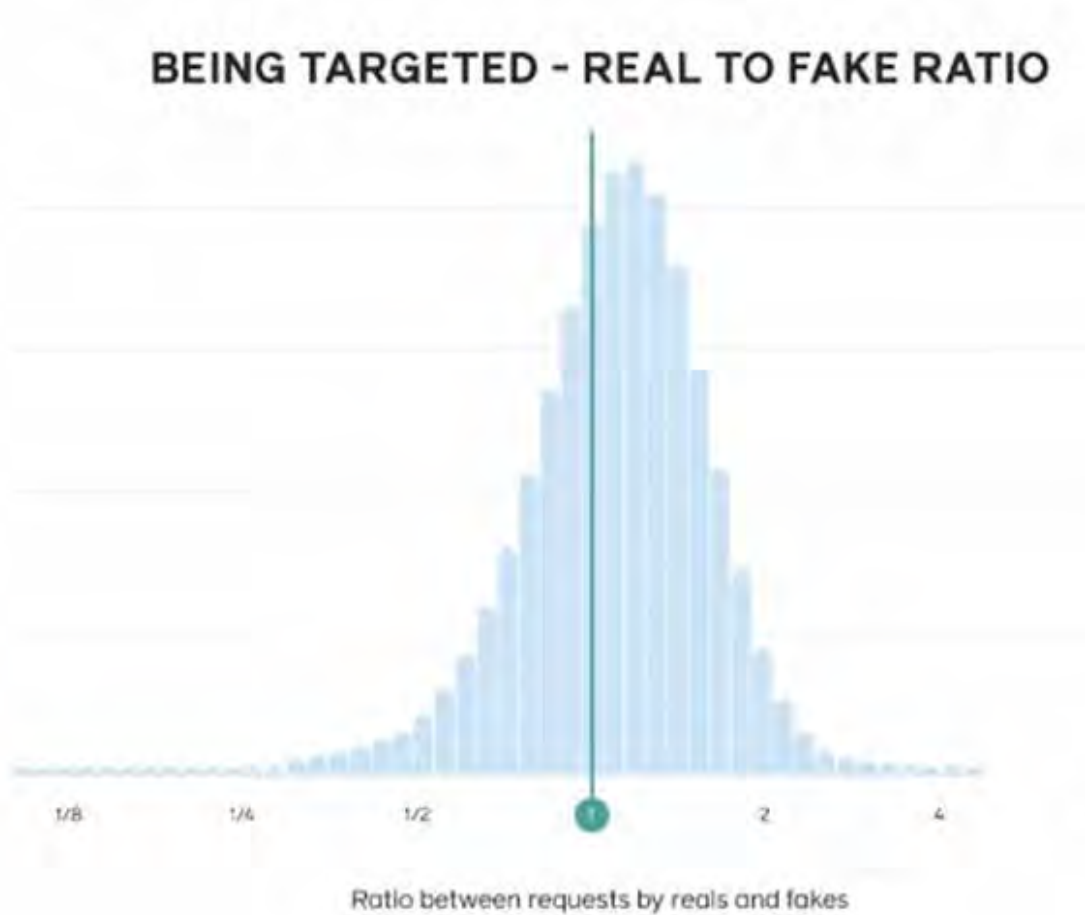
People who accept more friend requests have a higher risk for fake ones.

If you seem to keep getting fake friend requests in spite of your best efforts, you may have already accepted too many in the past. Researchers from Facebook and Harvard have determined that friendly users who are overly-welcoming to friend requests may be putting themselves at risk for more fake friends.

Source: Facebook.com

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Phony Facebookfrom page 13



Using a mathematical algorithm, they were able to verify with high accuracy that highly-accepting users are much more valuable targets for scammers and creators of fake profiles.

In the graph above, people on the >1 side of the plot are more likely to receive requests from real people, while people on the <1 side are more likely to receive requests from fakes. Using this method, they were able to accurately deduce which profiles were fake, which helps Facebook remove the profiles before they have a chance to do more harm. And it's a good thing when these profiles get removed, especially now of all times. In light of the COVID-19 quarantine, cybercriminals and scammers are using Facebook messenger and fake profiles to trap users with phishing links.

According to an alert by The Better Business Bureau, scammers have started to message users they aren't friends with about the latest coronavirus treatments and prevention tips, as well as "deals" on masks and PPE. These links, of course, are not legitimate. If you click one, you'll be directed to a scam site that steals your personal data.

If you receive a random friend request from someone you don't know, don't get too excited right off the bat. Take time to ask yourself the questions above and work to narrow down whether the user is real or fake before clicking "accept."

Social media isn't a race, and the user with the most friends doesn't end up winning anything. In fact, your experience might be better off with just a small circle of close friends you know and love.

And hey, that’s one way to reduce the annoying conspiracy posts clogging your timeline. **Tap or click here to see how to spot fake COVID-19 news on Facebook.** ☐

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www.komando.com

Kim can be heard locally in Melbourne: WMMB 1240AM, Saturdays starting at 10am-1pm; in Cocoa: WMMV 1350AM Sim WMMB, Saturdays starting at 10:00 AM - 1:00PM.



“Do you need a laptop if you don’t often take it with you places?”

by [Fred Langa](#) 2020-04-17

Answer requested by Benjamin Woods)

Laptops and notebooks don’t have to travel at all to be useful. I use a laptop as my main PC, and it’s never been out of the house.

I like a laptop because it’s smaller, quieter, and uses less energy than a desktop PC. I like that I can close the cover to protect both the screen and keyboard from accidental damage, especially when we have young guests in the house. I like that I could, if I needed to, pick it up and be out the door in a in a flash during a sudden emergency, such as fire or earthquake. Or, in a more deliberate move, instantly pack up my office — everything important is in the laptop — relocate, plug in, and pick up where I left off, just like that.

I like that it has a keyboard, camera, microphone, and speakers built in. I like that its battery serves as a kind of UPS, carrying the system through minor electrical grid glitches. (I do use an external power conditioner and surge protector to protect the laptop.)

And although its never (yet) been out of the house, my laptop does move around to other rooms for things like movie-watching, videochat sessions, and so on. That’d be a lot tougher with a desktop system

But those are preferences and conveniences, not needs. So, if you meant your question literally, then no: If you have no need for real portability, you don’t need a really portable device.

But the compact size and all-in-one nature still are very useful — even if they don’t rise to the level of true need. ☐

To see more of this type article check out <https://langa.com>

Fred’s articles also appear in askwoody.com from Woody Leonhard whose staff includes among others

Fred Langa, and Susan Bradley. You’ll find all sorts of things in many areas of technology.

Thoughts from a Clicker

By Tiny Ruisch, Member, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA

July 2019 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News

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Ever since I learned how, I’ve always been an avid reader. My parents didn’t have a television until I was about ten years old. That never bothered me. The library always had a lot of entertainment. In later life, when I was in the Navy, I seldom watched the ship’s movie. I was busy finishing reading one more chapter before lights out. These days, I still read about 20 magazines each month. I am usually reading four or five books at a time. I’ve got my bedside book, bathroom book, digital book and an audio book for my morning walk.

I could not even estimate how many thousands of dollars I’ve spent buying reading material of one form or another. In the past three or four

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PC Organization

Author: Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer User Group, NJ

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We are cursed by the low cost of modern disks, on which we can store several terabytes for under 100 Dollars. As a result, our PCs often hold thousands of files, hundreds of e-mail messages, and dozens of applications, often making it difficult to find what we want. Organizing the information on a PC after several years of use is such a daunting task that it's easy to put off. Instead, treat getting organized as a goal, realizing that you'll probably never reach, but as you make progress, you'll find you're getting more efficient.

Application Menu Bar — Space here is precious, so I reserve it for my most-used programs, about a dozen. To access the others I use the Windows key (⊞), then type a character or two to see a short list, one of which is almost always the one I want. Often, even this isn't needed, as a double-click on a filename will launch the appropriate application, or a right-click will give you a choice of alternative ones. This is usually faster than searching a cluttered menu bar or desktop.

Desktop — I prefer to keep mine clean, and it now holds just two icons, the trashcan and one folder (my equivalent of a to-do list). I often have several windows open and would have to move or minimize these to access icons on the desktop. Keeping them elsewhere speeds up my work; see Figure 1.



Figure 1. A Barren Desktop.

File System — We all use a hierarchical structure of directories in which we store our files. Storing is the easy part; it's the retrieval that's difficult. Using descriptive directory and file names will help greatly, although this may take some adjustment if you began using PCs in the DOS days, where you were limited to maximums of eight characters for filenames and three for extensions. I find it useful to have an archive directory where I move

files and directories that I seldom need but haven't worked up the courage to discard. Your file browser can help you identify candidates for trashing. Configure it to sort the files by their creation date, with the oldest shown first, and to display them as a list so you can see their creation dates, which will help you find old files that are no longer useful. My approach here is much like that for my desktop and menu bar; almost every file is in a directory with very few loose ones in my home directory; see Figure 2.

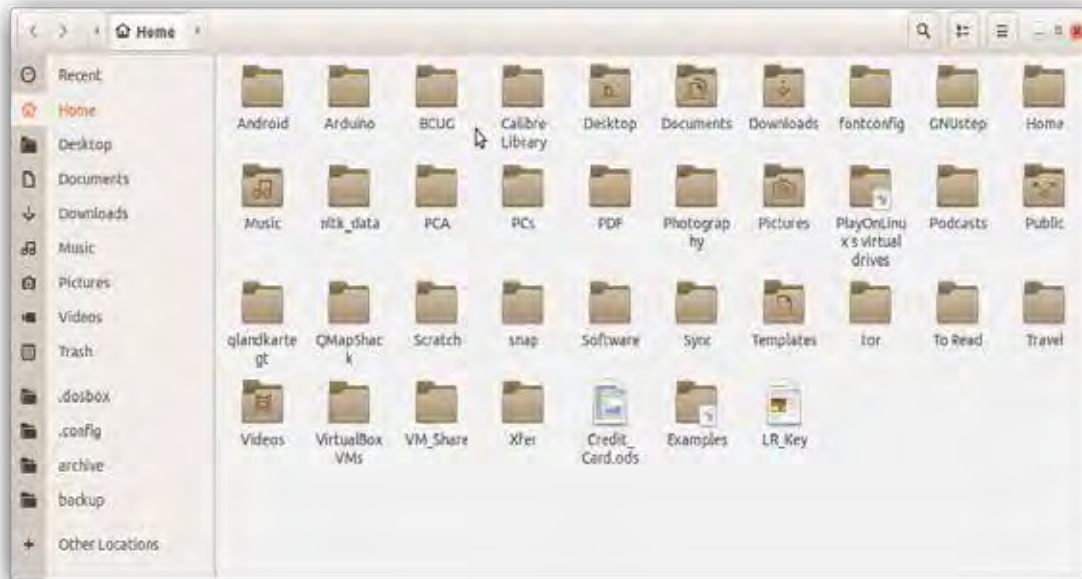


Figure 2. Home Directory.

Mail — Most of us also keep our messages far too long, with the result that our inboxes are overflowing. You can create folders and even sub-folders within your in-box with descriptive names, such as Orders, Travel, Finance, and Medical. Review your messages and discard those that are no longer useful, reservations for completed trips for example. The great majority of messages are worthless and should be deleted immediately. Many others are valuable for only a short time; I periodically delete all that are over a year old (and yet my inbox contains hundreds).

Favorites — I keep only my most-used few on my browser menu bar. The rest are organized in folders, so I can quickly find what I need. Here too, you should perform house cleaning and delete those that are obsolete or unused. Our interests change over time, and some sites that we used to check every day now just clutter our list. Many browsers provide a cloud service that synchronizes the favorites on all your devices, which greatly eases the job, assuming you use the same browser everywhere, of course.

Media — You may use specialized applications to store and retrieve photos, songs, and the like. Often, these can create playlists that access the files in the order you prefer, without having to duplicate or move the files. I prefer to keep my media files on my disk rather than in the cloud, although this means that I have to back them up. I also prefer to organize my media files using the file manager, although this means I have to rename them to make them appear in the correct order. Some years ago I used a photo organizing application for this, and when its vendor discontinued it, I lost several slide shows. I still had the photos, but they weren't in a logical order and were no longer associated with the title slides.

Passwords — I consider a password manager application essential. This organizes them into folders and stores

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them in an encrypted database. Some also can store associated information, such as PINs, security questions and answers, and URLs. They also can generate strong passwords, which removes the temptation to use the same one on different accounts. I have no idea what most of my passwords are, but I don't need to as they are available on my PC and cell phone, once I enter the database password (about the only one I do know). I use KeePassXC, <https://keepassxc.org/>, which is available for all operating systems, and there is a compatible variant for Android. As a result, my passwords are always available, but still secure. Figure 3 shows the application. I have some work to do here; there are far too many items in the Internet category, and I should split it up to make them easier to find.

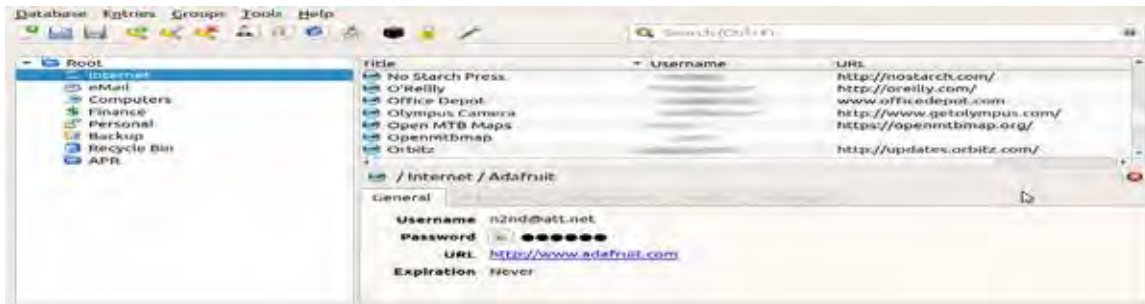


Figure 3. KeePassXC.

Notes — We all make notes, as the success of Post-it shows, and keeping track of them can be difficult. Fortunately, there are applications to help. I use CherryTree, <https://www.giuspen.com/cherrytree/>, which stores both formatted text and images and is available for Windows and Linux. I keep some only a short while, for example, while I gather information for an article, but some I retain and modify for years, for example, those on photography and PC operation. Each major topic is a separate file, and each is organized like a directory tree. Unfortunately, it has no cell-phone equivalent, but I can export the notes as a PDF for display on my cell phone. Figure 4 shows my notes file for this article.



Figure 4. Cherry Tree Notes

Organization is personal, and what I find efficient may frustrate you. Pay attention to how you spend your time, and if you find yourself repeating the same routines, look for ways to streamline them. Perhaps you can change how you store things, or there may be an application to make retrieval faster. Pay attention to the ten percent rule, “We spend 90 percent of our time on 10 percent of the tasks.” □

Interdrone Conference

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The Interdrone Conference, as you might guess, is about drones: how they are being used in industry, agriculture, first response, fire, police and more.



The Keynote speaker, Dan Ewell, FAA Deputy Administrator, said that there are now 1.4 million registered drones and 50,000 drone pilots that have passed Part 107 (which is required to fly drones other than for recreation).

Interestingly, drone use is now much less personal leisure and more commercial utility. Many of the sessions at this conference were oriented to first responders.

As the conference was occurring, a hurricane was wreaking havoc in North Carolina. Several of the panelists were from North Carolina and were dividing their time between sessions and communicating with the Governor! A few left the conference in order to be on the scene at the coast.

I was surprised by how many fire, police, and rescue organizations had formed their own drone teams, with a well-thought-out training plan and organized practice field exercises.

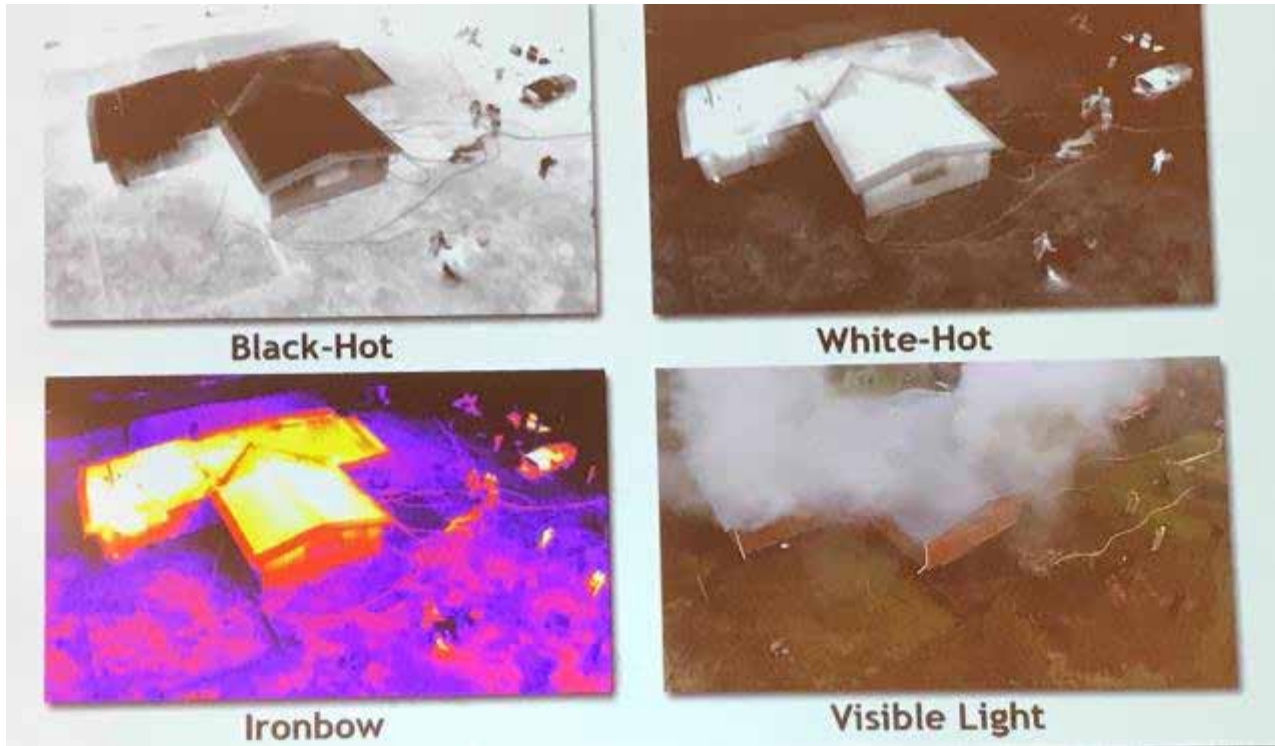
There were several panels put on by fire first responders, showing how they employ drones to do work that would be too dangerous for firefighters to attempt. One of the newest tools for fire groups is FLIR, an acronym for Forward Looking Infrared Radar. It can be used to identify hot spots that cannot be seen by our eyes.

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There are filters that can be used by a FLIR device to make the image more understandable: black hot, which makes the warm object black; white-hot, which makes the object white; ironbow, which makes the object golden. Each is useful in certain circumstances.



Author: George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ □

The Samsung SmartSwitch app

A utility for copying apps and data from one Android smartphone to another when you upgrade

Author: John Krout, Member, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS)

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In December 2019, I upgraded from a Samsung Galaxy S7 phone to a Samsung Galaxy S10 phone.

As with any upgrade, I was eager to install my contacts, my apps, and my data on the new phone.

About two years ago, I upgraded from an S5 to S7. At that time, I used the Verizon Wireless app called Content Transfer to copy items from the S5 onto the S7. That app left a lot out of the transfer, most notably my Memos but also a large number of apps.

This time around, hoping for a more complete transfer, there is a new kid on the block, a competitor: the Samsung data transfer app called SmartSwitch. The app, like ContentTransfer, provides a capability to transfer data wirelessly between two phones running the app. In this case, to use the wireless method, both phones must be Samsung smartphones.

SmartSwitch will also work even if your old phone is not a Samsung phone. The Samsung Galaxy S10 includes an On The Go (OTG) adapter, which gives the S10 a USB-A socket, just like the USB sockets on your computer. You can connect the old phone’s USB cable to the Samsung Galaxy S10 via that OTG adapter. Then start up SmartSwitch on the S10, and it will treat the old phone as a USB peripheral and reads its contents for transfer onto the S10.

I do not think that the OTG cable transfer method will work at all if the old phone is an iPhone. But it should work on most Android phones.

In my case, since both were Samsung phones, I ran the SmartSwitch app on both. I told the old one to send data, and I told the new one to receive data. Each phone recognized the other quickly using a wireless technique, possibly Wi-Fi or Near Field Communication (NFC).

I decided to write this article because I realized that the apps do not provide useful guidance about what they can and cannot accomplish. I can report what SmartSwitch did and did not accomplish it for me at the end of 2019.

Illustration 1 depicts the SmartSwitch app’s main screen that I used the wireless transfer method. Note the

two arrows. For wireless data transfer, the app must be running on both phones, the two phones must be close together (no more than 4 inches apart), and the appropriate arrow of each app must be tapped at roughly the



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same time. Tap the Up arrow on the old phone to send data. Tap the down arrow on the new phone to receive data.

The SmartSwitch app said about 7 gigabytes would be copied from the S7 to the S10. The transfer took about 18 minutes. That is a data transfer rate a bit less than 0.4 gigabytes per minute.

What got transferred into the S10?

APP TRANSFER

Most of the S5 apps got transferred. The app layouts on the Home screens were almost identical to the layouts on those screens on my own phone. This made it very easy to compare screens to confirm that S10 apps were in place.

A few apps were not transferred, perhaps because they were stored on my microSD card. The Firefox browser and Keeper Security showed up as ghosted gray icons on the S10. When I tapped each gray icon, SmartSwitch installed those apps using the Google Play store.

One app, Amazon Kindle, did not show up at all. I re-installed it from the Google Play Store.

Another exception was Yahoo Finance, which was installed but was not present in my Money folder. So I put Yahoo Finance into the folder.

And the Memos app was missing, or so I thought. Read on.

DATA TRANSFER

My contacts got transferred to the S10. That was my primary goal. My 200+ custom ringtones got transferred also.

Most of my data in the phone's internal storage got transferred, including the photo for the Lock Screen and the photo for the Home screen. I was pleasantly surprised about that since the photos themselves were originally on the microSD card. Android must have copied the two photos to internal memory when I assigned the photos to screens.

My text message conversations got transferred.

I was especially concerned about the 400+ saved geocache files that I stored using the c:geo app; those are stored in internal memory, but I had backed up the files onto my S7 microSD card just in case those were not transferred. As it happens, those geocache files were indeed transferred by SmartSwitch and usable by the c:geo app on the S10.

The Memos app itself did not get transferred. When I realized the Memos app did not get transferred, I guessed that perhaps another app with a different name and icon might do the same thing. I came across the Samsung Notes app by accident while browsing to identify bloatware on the phone, opened that app out of curiosity, and realized I could see it was loading all my Memos. So my Memos were transferred successfully but to a different app.

SOME CONFIGS TO BE DONE

Some types of configuration data did not get copied onto the S10.

I had to supply the password for the S10 to log onto my home router Wi-Fi.

I had to re-initialize TypeApp, my primary email app, with the email account ID and password. I had to re-initialize the Yahoo Mail app with my ID and password. I had to re-initialize the Keeper Security app with my ID and password. Like email services, Keeper Security has an encrypted backup of my data on its servers, and copies that to my phone when I enter the ID and password I established years ago for that app.

Luckily, Keeper Security on the old phone kept working after the phone was no longer on the phone network, so I could look up those ID and password combos.

In the Google Pay app, I had to re-enter the CVC numbers for the two credit cards I use via that app. One, American Express, also required me to enter a confirmation code sent as a text by American Express to me. These are reasonable config matters considering that neither Google's servers nor the credit card issuers were familiar with my new S10 phone.

Another config issue: on the old phone, I had configured the WeatherBug app to include many cities I have visited in the past two years: Richmond, Boston, Cincinnati, El Paso Dallas, Atlanta, Omaha, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Jackson, Bozeman, and Twin Falls. That config did not get transferred. I had to re-enter those cities. The effort did not take long.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Overall, I think the Samsung Smartswitch app did a reasonably complete job. The exceptions I noted above are, in my opinion, few and minor, easily resolved.

I will admit I suspect Verizon's ContentTransfer app probably has been improved quite a bit since I last used it. That app may remain the most widely applicable solution for anyone upgrading from one phone brand to another on the Verizon Wireless network, especially if neither one is a Samsung phone.

I also had about 60 gigabytes of data on a microSD card on the old phone, primarily music and photos. I physically moved the microSD card to the new S10 phone.

However, if instead I had a blank microSD card big enough to contain the data and I put that blank card in the new S10 phone, SmartSwitch can also be told to copy the microSD card data. Give the data transfer rate of fewer than 0.4 GB per minute, a 60 GB transfer would take more than 2 hours and might exhaust the batteries on both phones. So I am glad I did not try that. It might transfer at a much higher rate via the USB method.

The alternative solution is to use a computer to load the data onto the blank microSD card. That will take a few minutes rather than 2 hours.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout is a past president of the Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC). After his tenure, the group merged with another to form the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS). He has been taking photos since the early 1960s and writing about the uses of personal computers since the early 1980s. His digital photos won a first and second prize in the 2018 Association of PC User Groups (APCUG) digital photo contest. After many years working as a software engineer using C and C++, now John is a tech writer for the Thales Group, supporting the use of that company's advanced automatic fingerprint matching technology in the computer system of a major federal government agency. □

Major Antivirus Flaw Deletes Files, Corrupts Windows

By John Lister on April 28, 2020 Infopackets Newsletter

A security company says it found a simple way to turn antivirus [software](#) into a weapon for attackers. Most major manufacturers have now fixed the problem, but it's a reminder to keep such software updated.

The discovery by Rack911 Labs effectively meant that a hacker could force the antivirus software to delete files on a computer. That would mean the hacker would need to have gained access to a computer first - whether internally on a [network](#), or remotely using malware.

The exploit is based on one of the most fundamental actions of any antivirus software: they scan files, check if they are a threat, and then either move them to a "quarantine" location or outright delete them. For this to work, the antivirus software needs [administrator](#) access, the highest level of access to a computer.

Deletion Instructions Corrupted

The problem comes in the split second between antivirus software issuing the [decision](#) to delete or move a file and the computer doing so.

The exploit involves what's effectively a race by the attacker to jump in during this split second and use one of two methods to force the computer to mix up a legitimate instruction with a bogus one. (Source: [engadget.com](#)) One option is using a directory junction, where Windows creates a link between two directories. This doesn't require administrator privileges.

The other option works on any PC operating system, but normally requires privileged [access](#). It's called a symlink (short for symbolic link) and involves creating a new file which simply acts as a shortcut to an existing file. With both options, an attacker could effectively alter the instruction of which files to delete.

Rack911 Labs staff were able to use these methods to trick the computer into deleting key [files](#) in either the antivirus software or Windows itself. The former would stop the antivirus software from working while the latter could corrupt Windows to the point a fresh installation was needed.

Major Manufacturers Affected

The researchers say they were able to exploit the problem in more than 20 leading antivirus packages including those from major names like AVG, Kaspersky, Malwarebytes and Sophos. They say the process itself was "trivial" to carry out and the only real challenge was in getting the timing right. (Source: [rack911labs.com](#))

The good news is that the researchers kept their findings secret for a long time, other than telling [antivirus](#) manufacturers starting in late 2018. They say they are going public now as every antivirus vendor they've spoken to has had at least six months to fix the problem.

Most have now issued [updates](#) to fix the problem or are expected to do so imminently. However, it's possible some lesser-known security software could still be vulnerable.

What's Your Opinion?

Were the researchers right to keep this from the public for well over a year? Are you surprised that almost all leading software could suffer the same vulnerability? Is it worth worrying about such threats or is there only so much a [user](#) can do?



Security threats for people working from home are increasing. I'll review steps you need to take to keep yourself, your company, and your job safe.

Many more people are working from home (WFH) than ever before. Now that we know it can work for so many people, I expect it will remain popular even after the current crisis is over.

The bad guys know this, and they're sharpening their focus to take advantage of folks working from home perhaps for the first time.

A recent episode of [The CyberWire podcast](#) listed five steps to improving your security when working from home. I want to visit those, elaborate on why they're important in the WFH environment, and, in at least one case, disagree a little.



The steps will be familiar to most.

1. Stay up to date

If you've been putting off getting your system as up to date as possible, do it now. This applies not just to [Windows](#) (or whatever operating system you're using), but to [the applications you use](#) as well — especially those you use at work.

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Five Tips.....from page 25

Your workplace may have strict, even automated policies that keep your equipment up to date — you never have to think about it. At home, it's easy to let things slide.

If you brought company equipment home, it's even more important, since those automated systems may or may not work when disconnected from your company's [network](#). You don't want to be the employee that allows [malware](#) (like, say, [ransomware](#)¹) onto company property when it could have been easily prevented by keeping things up to date.

2. Use [two-factor authentication](#)

For every account that offers it, including accounts you use while working from home, [enable two-factor authentication](#).

Again, bad guys target the stressed and overbusy employees of high profile (or high value) companies working from home for the first time. While we're all being told over and over to pay attention to our personal hygiene, it's very easy to overlook [password hygiene](#) in times of chaos and stress.

Two factor (or multi-factor) authentication is a strong layer of additional protection. Even if someone gets your password, they won't be able to sign in, because they won't have the additional factor (typically your phone, but often as simple as an alternate email address) that proves you are who you say you are.

3. Don't reuse passwords

Make certain that every account you have — especially work-related accounts — [has a different password](#). [Make it long](#) and strong, and [use a password vault](#) to keep track of them all.

When those bad guys happen across a password — either by successfully hacking you, or because it's been exposed in a data [breach](#) — they use what's called “credential stuffing” to try that password, along with your email address, at a wide variety of other online services. If you used that same password at the other services, bingo, you've been hacked again.

If that happened to be an account related to your work — which of course hackers would love for it to be so they could perhaps gain access to your company's network or data — the repercussions could be significant.

I know many people pooh-pooh credential stuffing, but it does happen (the fact it has its own term should be a clue), and it's a common way hackers take advantage of those of us who get lazy.

4. Avoid getting phished

I expect [successful phishing](#) to increase. Particularly as we work from home, it's easy to be fooled by an email that looks like it came from your company, or even your boss. It's particularly dangerous since you may not have the quick and easy resources at hand to verify the message is legitimate, such as walking over to and asking your boss if they really sent it.

As forced WFH continues, [phishing](#) attacks will focus on impersonating business scenarios in order to gain access to sensitive corporate credentials and information. Sadly, we all too often hear of data breaches — and, as I

mentioned earlier, ransomware — traced to a single employee falling for an email they shouldn't have.

Don't be that employee.

5. Use a [VPN](#)

This recommendation took me a little by surprise, for two reasons.

First, for many companies it's a requirement, not a suggestion. In order to connect to your company's resources, you are required to connect through your company's VPN. Without it, all you can do is work on your local machine, without the resources you might need from your corporate network.

Second, [a VPN from home](#) doesn't protect you from much. Sure, if you have reason to distrust your [ISP](#), or if there are other machines on your home network that you might not be able to trust, it could protect you from them, but those are rarely huge issues. We tend to recommend VPNs when you're travelling for use at the coffee shop's open [Wi-Fi](#), or from a random location like a hotel. Working from home doesn't have the same issues. There's certainly no harm [using a VPN from home](#), assuming the performance and functionality is acceptable; it's just not something I'd put on my shortlist.

Related Video

Footnotes

1: I've read that medical facilities are being targeted because the encrypted information is time-sensitive and needed immediately. Paying the ransom is likely to be seen as the quickest way out of the problem. □

Taming E-mail

By Dick Maybach, Member, Brookdale Computer User Group, NJ

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Like many others, I rely on e-mail as my primary means of communication, and almost every day I deal with messages that are important to me. The problem of course is to sort them out from the deluge of those that are not. My e-mail vendor does a good job of removing most spam, but still much of what I do see is unimportant. Today I'll be discussing strategies to make the important messages more accessible than those that are less so. The implementation details will depend on how you access your mail, in particular whether through a Website or with a client program on your PC.

Back in the communications-by-paper era, common advice to improve your efficiency was to touch documents on your desk only once. That is, deal with them the first time you see them. Today the equivalent advice is to move messages from your e-mail inbox the first time you read them. For most messages this is read-and-delete, but you will probably want to file a few, such as those with purchase receipts. Touch-once is a goal, but for me at least, an unattainable one. However, by working toward it you will be improving your efficiency.

I use the Thunderbird e-mail client program, which has a message filter feature. This scans fields in each incoming message, looking at the sender, subject, body, age, size, etc., and acts according to their contents. Each can be deleted, put in a folder, marked as read, etc.

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Taming E-Mail.....from page 27

Most e-mail clients and Webmail sites have similar tools.

If you correspond with only a few, you might classify as spam all messages except those on an OK list, such as your address book. You will probably have to check the spam folder fairly regularly to be sure you don't miss something important. This strategy wouldn't work for me as I run an organization's Website and sometimes get questions from its members. I do want to see these, even though I may never have communicated with the senders. Instead, I accept all messages except those that meet specific criteria.

I have found that most forwarded messages are unimportant, and many are frivolous. As a result, all messages with subjects beginning "Fwd:" are immediately sent to the FWD folder. I do look here every day or so, because these are often from friends, although almost never do they require a response, and I don't want pictures of cute animals cluttering my inbox.

There is also an Ads folder, and incoming mail from many merchants immediately goes there. This isn't spam, as I do deal with the senders and will again, but some send me several messages a week, and I have no need to deal with them immediately. Of course, it takes a while to develop a set of filters. When I get a new ad, I have to decide if this is likely to be frequent enough to make it worthwhile to define a filter. Every day or two, I do scan through the Ads folder in case there is something interesting (there seldom is) and delete everything else.

My ISP does a good job of filtering spam before I see it. Sometimes too good, I occasionally find valuable messages in the Website spam folder.

Most e-mail programs have a feature similar to what Thunderbird calls the message filter. For example, Figure 1 shows the filter to file forwarded messages.



Figure 1. FWD Message Filter.

As you can see, any message whose subject contains "Fwd:" is sent to the local folder FWD. Note that some fields are drop-down lists. For example, Figure 2 shows the alternate choices to these. As a result you have considerable flexibility in setting up your filters.

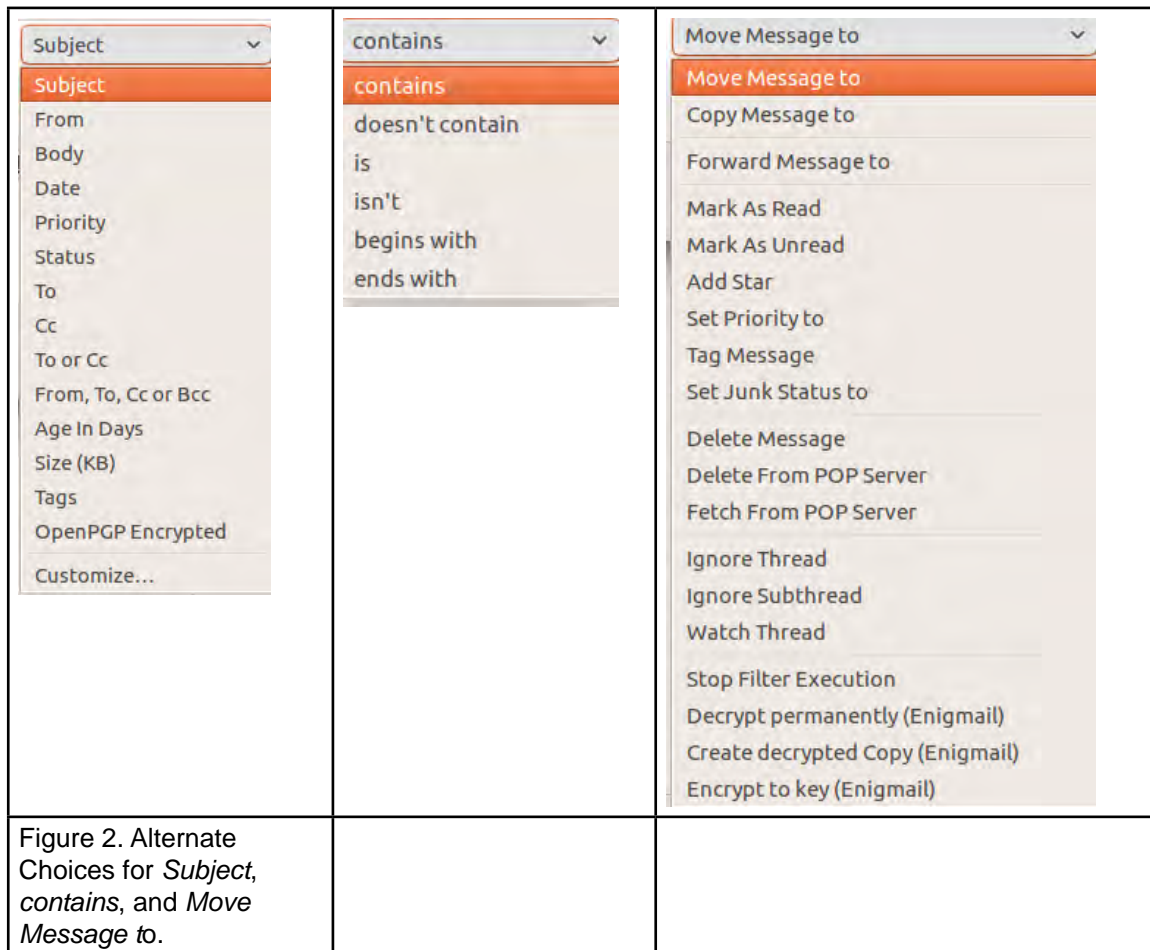


Figure 2. Alternate Choices for *Subject*, *contains*, and *Move Message to*.

Figure 3 shows the AT&T Webmail screen to define an E-mail message filter, which has features similar to Thunderbird's.

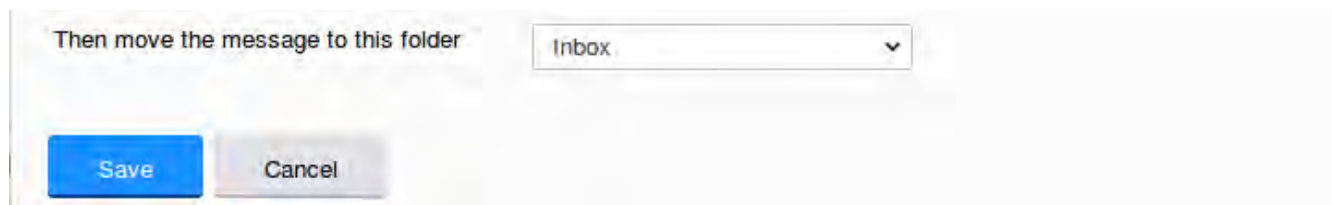


Figure 3. AT&T E-mail Message Filter Definition.

So far, we've discussed diverting messages from the inbox, but you probably also want to organize the storage of mail you've read but need to retain. For this purpose I've created folders to collect those messages, such as BCUG, Finance, Medical, Orders, Personal, and Travel. This makes them easier to locate than if they were somewhere in my inbox.

Every so often, I delete most of the old messages, regardless of in which folder they reside. Once I've returned from a trip, I really don't need its boarding passes, and once an order is delivered, I don't need its tracking number.

Periodically, check the server, even if you download all your messages to client software on your PC. You may find a valuable message in its spam folder. It's also a good idea the clear out old messages, as occasionally there are reports of ISP break-ins. You may feel you have nothing to hide, but they probably contain details of your life you don't want in the wrong hands.

You most likely use e-mail differently than I do, and you probably use different tools to manage it, but you probably also get dozens of messages each day, making it worth taking a little time to develop an appropriate strategy to deal with them efficiently. □

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Brevard Users Group Secretary's Report

By Bill Middleton

Monthly General Meeting Report,

**BREVARD USER GROUP MEETINGS
UPDATE**

As April fades, we want to look forward when we can again share knowledge, learn a bit and complain about our computer devices as a group. We can look forward, but our meeting venues will most probably remain closed for meetings through the month of May. One Senior Place has no meetings scheduled for the month and only one small lecture toward the end of May. Public access to the libraries will continue to be denied at least through May 15, but it is expected that this will be extended through the end of the month.

Please note that the libraries are open to borrow and return books, audiobooks and DVDs, but it must be done by ordering through your computer (Brevard

County Libraries) and curbside pickup. All library branches are open for curbside pickup from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday.

So, we may get back to our meetings in June, but probably with socialized distancing (sorry, Alice - couldn't resist). So far our County has not been hit terribly hard by this new evil virus, but precautions should be observed as long as considered necessary, maybe a little longer.... We will update you as soon as new information becomes available.

Hope to see you in June.

Many thanks. Hope you folks up North are staying healthy.

Bill M

Thoughts From a Clicker...from page 15

years, my reading has all become either digital or audio. I haven't been in a bookstore or looked at a magazine display rack in at least two years. For me, it's all been for the better. In this article, I'm going to tell you how you can do the same.

I've saved a lot of money with e-books and audio books. One of the reasons is because it is so easy to check the material out from your local library. From my easy chair I can check out a vast number of books (both digital and audio), magazines, comic books, movies and much more. There are many internet sites where electronic books can be downloaded for no charge.

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Bug Club Treasurers Report

By Loretta Mills , Treasurer

Checking Account	July 1, 2019
Beginning Balance	\$ 1052.36
Ending Balance	\$ 1052.36
Saving Account Balance	\$ 1087 65
Combined Balances	\$ 2140.00

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Calendar of Events

COVID-19
Closed the Library
No Meetings
Possible

May 31, 2020 - Deadline for Journal Input

**Going North for the summer
or coming back?**

Don't miss a single issue of your

Space Coast PC Journal

If your email address will be different

Please give us the correct email

For your temporary location

*****Reminder*****

We need your e-mail addresses!

We'd like to keep in touch with you,
especially if there is a last minute
change in venue for the club meeting.

Please send e-mail addresses and changes to
Linda Glassburn glassburn@earthlink.net

**Are you having problems with your
hardware or software?
Did you find the solution yourself?**

How about sharing that information with your
fellow club members? Sit down for a few minutes
open up that word processor and put your ideas
to paper. Aside from the value to the members,
you'll get your name in print!

**Don't worry about the details, we'll
edit it for the best appearance and
presentation.**



Port Canaveral
505 Glen Creek Drive
Cape Canaveral, FL 32920
321-868-2226

Riverside
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Melbourne, FL 32940
321-242-8999

Casual Waterfront Dining
Live Entertainment
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Presentations Schedule

May 21, 2020

COVID-19
Closed the Library
No Meeting

Bring Some Friends or Neighbors

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Bring Your Questions
Get Technical Help
Share Your Knowledge**

at Your SCPCUG

Learning Center

**Open 1st, 3rd, 5th Saturdays,
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Please restrict your visits to
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Bring your hardware or
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We'll do all we can to help.

If you bring a desktop computer
please bring the keyboard, mouse,
and power cord

Call Ron Ingraham, 321-777-2578,
for more information.

The Space Coast PC Users Group Journal

is produced using

Adobe InDesign CS3

*All SCPCUG club members are entitled to
receive the electronic version of the Journal
in pdf format. You'll need Adobe's widely
available Acrobat Reader X.X (free) to view the
eJournal.*

Contact Ron Ingraham
ringram28@cfl,rr.com to get on the
eJournal mailing list

***Space Coast PC Users
Group is proud to be a
Charter***



The Space Coast PC Users Group's
Computer Doctors
Make House Calls

Free to
SCPCUG Members!

Dan Douglas, owner of
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(321) 301-1075

After a phone call, a house call may be
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Free Remote Support
For those using Windows 10
Quick Assist



The above member will help you with *a particular* computer glitch on your personal (not business) computer. In some cases, he may even make a house call. But, please do not expect him to install your computer nor teach you how to use it. If you have continuing problems or need additional help, please take a class, or check the ads in the *Journal* and hire a consultant, etc.



Computers 4 Kids

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for

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Membership Dues
\$25.00 [] Check [] Cash

Check No. _____

NAME _____ [] New [] Renewal

ADDRESS _____ Date _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone (Optional) _____

E-mail _____

Would you like to attend: a class for BEGINNERS? []
 an ADVANCED DOS class? []
 a WINDOWS class? []
 an ADVANCED WINDOWS class? []

What other topics would you like covered in a class? _____

Do you have expertise that you would like to share? Please describe. _____

Would you be willing to be listed in the Helpline of the *Journal*?
 If so, what subject? _____ Calling hours: _____
 Phone _____ E-mail _____

Would you like to help the Club in the following areas?
 Resource Center Staff _____ Journal Staff _____
 Computer Doctor _____ Room Setup _____ Teach Class _____
 Other _____

What topics would you like to see for monthly programs?

What can the SCPCUG do to help you and others?

If you were told about the SCPCUG by a club member, write that member's name here _____

Make check payable to: Space Coast PC Users Group
Mail to: SCPCUG , 801 Del Rio Way, #304, Merritt Island, FL 32953

Are You CPU

Bewildered?

DRAM
HTML
Windows
Modem

Join the
Space Coast PC Users Group
 and learn the lingo!

Membership benefits:
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 Computer Literacy Classes
 (e.g. Windows 7-10)
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 help - **FREE!**
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 Door Prizes!
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Join Now!

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* = Discount from regular monthly rate. Discount applies to ads running in consecutive issues.

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- Half page: 7" x 4 3/8" or 3 3/8" x 9 1/4"
- Quarter page: 3 3/8" x 4 3/8"
- Business card: 3 3/8" x 2"

Camera ready ad copy is due by the 28th of the month to ensure that the ad will appear in the next issue. Mail ad copy to the Editor at 1360 Mayflower Avenue, Melbourne, FL 32940-6723 Prices will be quoted for design work. Questions? Call (321)777-2578.

All advertisements are subject to the approval of the Editor.

SPACE COAST PC USERS GROUP, INC.
801 Del Rio Way, #304,
Merritt Island, Fl , 32953

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Space Coast PC Users Group is an independent, not for profit, computer group open to anyone interested in computers. It is not affiliated with any business. Our purpose is to serve as an educational, scientific, and literary organization designed to enhance computer literacy.

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BENEFITS: Members get the monthly *Journal*. In addition, *only* members can:

- copy from the Shareware library
- participate in meeting drawings
- attend special seminars/workshops
- talk to one of our computer ‘doctors’
- use the Helplines

NEXT MEETING

Canceled by COVID-19 Closing Library

Merritt Island Library Auditorium 1185 North Courtenay Parkway, Merritt Island, FL

To get to Auditorium after entering the front door, go to the second door on the left.

Guests are always welcome at the Space Coast PC Users Group meeting.