

If You Missed It

Fairfax Meeting

At the December 13th meeting “Learn 30,” PATACS member Mike Pafford gave a live demonstration via Zoom online teleconference of the Multi User Virtual Environment (MUVE) that he and colleagues developed at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (<http://www.jhuapl.edu/>) for the US Army’s Project MOSES (Military Open Simulator Enterprise Strategy, see <http://militarymetaverse.org/>).

MUVE is a virtual world built upon the Open

Source OpenSimulator software (http://opensimulator.org/wiki/Main_Page), similar to that in Linden Lab’s “Second Life” and the EA Maxis “Sims” games. Mike used Singularity Viewer (<http://www.singularityviewer.org/>) to control his avatar (virtual world 3D character) in MUVE using his keyboard arrow keys; up and down to walk forward and back, left and right to turn around in a virtual 3D landscape populated by a variety of buildings, a Humvee vehicle, and other structures. Mike also demonstrated how his avatar could ascend and hover above the virtual terrain using the Page Up key, fly with arrow keys, and descend and land with the Page Down key. JPEG images and streaming video can be displayed on the walls of the 3D buildings. Mike



directed his avatar into the clothing/general store building to show how a can build an avatar and edit its appearance. Mike’s avatar also visited a virtual classroom, and Mike was clearly excited about using this capability to reach more stu-

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**Happy
Valentine’s
Day**

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device, free client software, and Internet access to participate in online training. Some advantages Mike pointed out include students can control their viewpoint to zoom in on material being presented, so no more “eyechart” presentations, and the instructor can easily identify students in the class as each student’s avatar is flagged with a name.

Sharon MacInnes, PhD, Programs Chair of the Mount Vernon Genealogical Society (<http://www.mvgenealogy.org/wp/>) and Coordinator of the Fairfax Genealogical Society (<http://www.fxgs.org/>) German Special Interest Group, gave the main presentation, “Virtual Roots: A Case Study of Techniques for Finding and Using Online Genealogy Sources.” Dr. MacInnes’ slide presentation traced the threads of her search for ancestors Mary Ann Herring and Daniel Cook in the 1800’s. Since records sometimes use phonetic name spellings, Dr. MacInnes recommends trying spelling variations if an online search for a specific spelling fails to produce expected results. Some of the online resources referenced during the presentation included Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/>), Ancestry.com (subscription and free library editions), Archives.org, the National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/>), Fold3.com, Pennsylvania archive and Minnesota genweb sites, Heritage Quest Online (<http://www.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/index>) and PERSI periodical archives (both sometimes available for free through local library web sites). Some less obvious online resources include voter registration lists, tax records, and land records at the US Bureau of Land Management BLM (<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>). Dr. MacInnes showed that some land records provide current reference points with a Google Earth overlay. For those who use the Ancestry.com service, Dr. MacInnes recommended using site links to contact those who contributed information on a subject of interest. She also

recommended purchasing a subscription one month at a time (fees are \$198 per year or \$19.99 per month for US records, with a free 14-day trial period). She said it was the “best investment you can make.” However, online resources provide a starting point with only the tip of the iceberg on the Internet. Dr. MacInnes said footwork is really required and recommended visits to family sites and local record repositories. She mentioned that D.C. area residents should visit the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Library (<http://www.dar.org/library>) and the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/>), too. Regarding Genealogy software, programs on the computer are useful to aid search and capture information. Dr. MacInnes uses Legacy (<http://legacyfamilytree.com/>), which she finds to be user-friendly. Another option is Ancestry.com’s Family Tree Maker (<http://familytreemaker.com/>), but only for Microsoft Windows PCs (i.e., she does not recommend the Apple MacOS X version). [Editor’s Note: Open Source software enthusiasts should evaluate Gramps (<https://gramps-project.org/>), though Dr. MacInnes did not mention it.] Most of this information is summarized in the handout that Dr. MacInnes provided, which is available as a PDF download on the PATACS Recent Meetings web page (<http://www.patacs.org/recmtgspat.html>). One web site that she mentioned for immigration records that is not in the handout is One-Step Webpages maintained by Stephen Morse (<http://stevemorse.org/>).

Last but not least, Roger Fujii and Nick Wenri staffed the PC Clinic in the Social Annex and worked on fixing several member PCs with updates and removing unwanted pop-up ads, while I attempted to recover deleted photos from a digital camera SD memory card using PhotoRec software (see Open Source software on page 5.).

Linux and Open Source News by Geof Goodrum

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Systemd: One Init to Rule Them All?

Unix-based operating systems including GNU/Linux use a process called 'init' to manage system services such as network interfaces, generate system logs, the sound system, mount local and network filesystems and much more when booting up or changing runlevels (i.e., single user, multiuser, network, X Window System, system halt). The init system also handles dependencies (e.g., initialize network card before starting network services). For more information, read the Wikipedia article at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Init>.

The traditional init process has several limitations. It is relatively slow, starting services in serial order by executing shell script files (readable text commands). It does not take advantage of modern Linux kernel functions dbus for service notification messages and cgroups to limit use of and isolate system resources.

Red Hat, Inc. developer Lennart Poettering introduced a new init approach called systemd to address these limitations.

Pros:

- Initializes and boots the system faster using executable utilities and parallel execution
- Integrates with Linux dbus and cgroups features
- Replaces functionality from ConsoleKit, which is no longer maintained

Cons:

- System logs and configuration files are not human-readable plain text

- Does not follow Unix philosophy of basic tools that do one thing well; introduces a tightly-coupled system with dependencies that can make errors more difficult to diagnose

- Linux-specific dbus and cgroups integration mean systemd is not portable to other Unix-based systems like BSD derivatives.

For these reasons, adoption of systemd by GNU/Linux distributions has been very controversial, with some very debates ending up in malicious and angry responses. Developers like systemd as it provides software interfaces to manage the system. System administrators don't like systemd because it could make system problems harder to diagnose and fix. Unix purists don't like systemd because it abandons the Unix philosophy (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unix_philosophy) that has guided GNU/Linux distributions up until now and is not transferable to other Unix-like systems.

The developers of the Gnome desktop environment created a dependency upon systemd in future releases. For this reason and others, most major GNU/Linux distributions adopted systemd in recent releases, including Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7, Fedora, Arch, OpenSuSE, and SuSE Enterprise Server. After much public debate, Debian, one of the oldest and most respected GNU/Linux distributions, decided to adopt systemd in Debian 8 (Jessie). Mark Shuttleworth of Canonical, Ltd, publisher of Debian-derived Ubuntu Linux, announced that Ubuntu will follow Debian's lead.

There has been backlash and holdouts. There was a web page (apparently removed) advocating a boycott of systemd. The build-from-source-code Gentoo distribution allows a choice of traditional or systemd. Patrick Volkerding, publisher of the venerable Slackware distribution, has also held out against the rush to adopt systemd. Debian users and devel-

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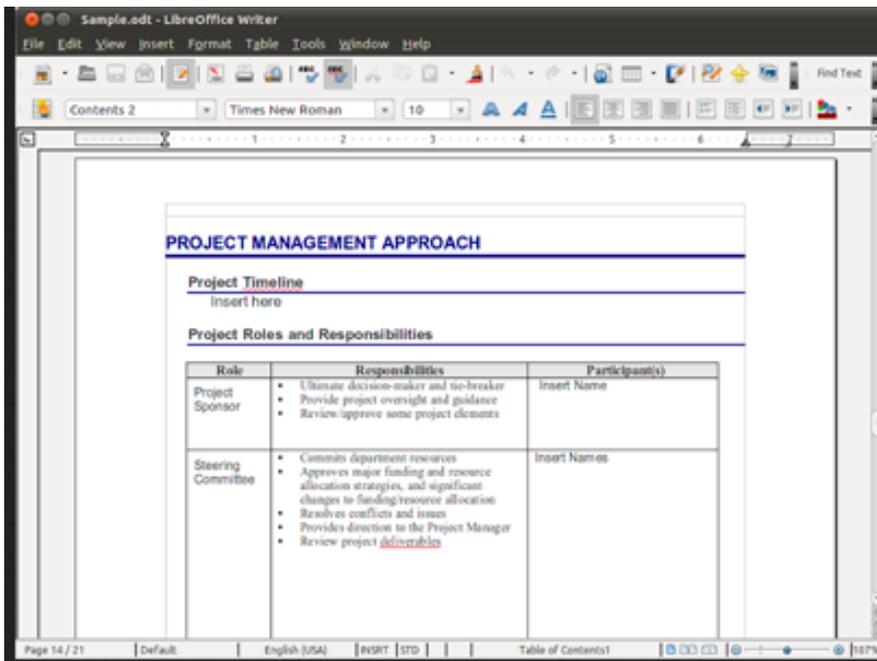
developers who opposed the vote for systemd announced a fork of Debian called Devuan (<http://www.devuan.org/>) without systemd.

Soapbox time, as I am not neutral on this issue. I resent being forced to use systemd to keep up with new GNU/Linux distributions (I currently use Debian 7 “Wheezy”). I see systemd as akin to Microsoft’s adoption of the Windows registry, which had similar pros and cons, but was widely ridiculed by Linux users at the time as putting all the eggs in one basket. So what happened since? GNU/Linux distributions usually provided choice, and the best solutions survived and improved. Diversity is a strength in the Open Source community, unlike the monoculture of Microsoft Windows (enjoying Windows 8, yet?). If systemd fails, a lot of GNU/Linux users will be sunk, and I will not recommend a systemd-based distribution in any mission-critical operation. I want the option of sele

no longer the case in most lecting the init system upon installation, but this is distributions. I want Devuan to succeed and may contribute, but forking a distribution like Debian is a tough job. I could go back to Gentoo, which I used before Debian, but Gentoo requires more effort to configure and maintain properly. I can stick with Debian 7 (or other pre-systemd distribution), but eventually they won’t be supported with bug and security fixes. Perhaps the situation will sort itself out with some sort of compromise, but this course is not apparent at the moment. If Linux cannot provide choice, I may switch allegiance to OpenBSD, which was too closed development, slow-moving and boring to me, but these characteristics prove to be an advantage compared to the disruption of systemd.

For more information on system, see see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systemd>.

Featured Open Source Software of the Month: February 2015

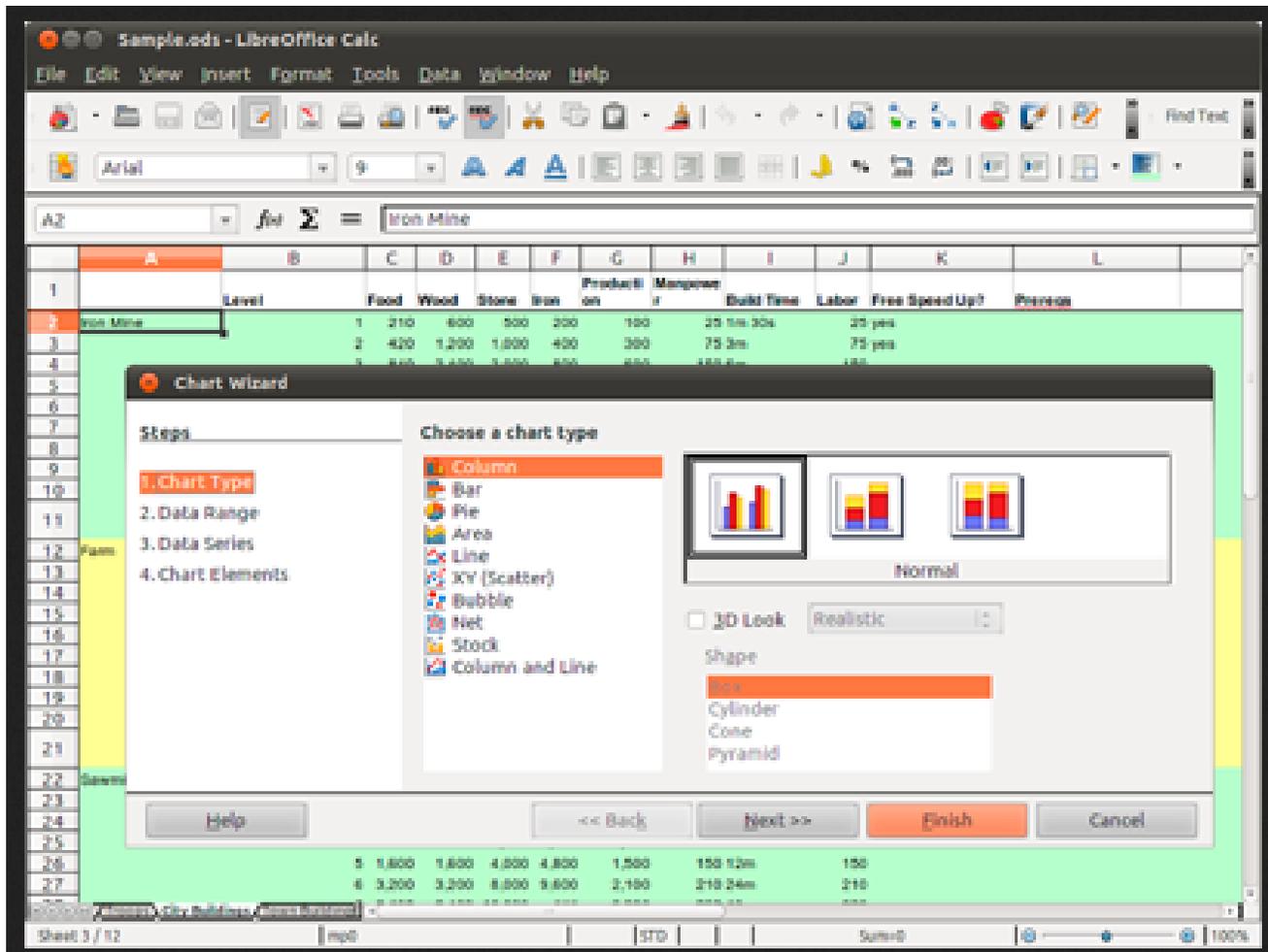


The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the PATACS Fairfax meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

LibreOffice – v4.3.5. Free Mozilla Public License source code and executables for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X®, and GNU/Linux® by The Document Foundation and LibreOffice contributors. LibreOffice is an integrated suite of office applications including a full-featured word processor, spreadsheet, drawing/flowchart editor, database manager, and presentation manager. While the default file format is the ISO OpenDocument standard, LibreOffice applications also read and write Microsoft Office file formats, export (and limited import) PDF, and many others. LibreOffice supports 110 languages in the user interface (menus, help, right-to-left text flow) and has writing aids (thesaurus, hyphenation, grammar, spell check) for more than 140 languages. LibreOffice supports extensions (over 240 LibreOffice and over 750 OpenOffice.org extensions) and program macros. Version 4.3.x is the current release from the

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“Fresh” branch, which features bug fixes, enhancements, and new features, and is considered stable and suitable for all users.

MisterHouse – v3.1 <http://misterhouse.sourceforge.net/>. Free GNU General Public License Perl scripts for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X®, and GNU/Linux® by Bruce Winter et al. MisterHouse is a modular framework written in Perl script language that allows a computer to control almost anything through external interface devices, such as Home Automation of lights, appliances and environmental controls, control of video recording, monitoring network traffic, logging and uploading of weather station data, vehicle location reporting and much more. MisterHouse also supports voice control and speech output. Editor’s Note: More Linux and Open Source Home Automation resources are available at <http://www.linuxha.com/index.html>.

PhotoRec – v6.14. <http://www.cgsecurity.org/wiki/PhotoRec>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X®, and GNU/Linux® by Christophe Grenier. PhotoRec is file data recovery software designed to recover lost files including video, documents and archives from hard disks, CD-ROMs, and lost pictures (thus the Photo Recovery name) from digital camera memory. PhotoRec ignores the file system and goes after the underlying data, so it will still work even if your media’s file system has been severely damaged or reformatted. Important: As soon as a picture or file is accidentally deleted, or you discover any missing, do NOT save any more pictures or files to that memory device or hard disk drive; otherwise you may overwrite your lost data.

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Sierra On-Line's Police Quest I

ScummVM – v1.7.0. <http://www.scummvm.org/>.

Free GNU General Public License SDL source code and executables for Microsoft® Windows®, Apple® OS X®, and GNU/Linux®, AmigaOS, Sony PlayStation 3, Google Android, SamsungTV, WebOS, Haiku and others by Eugene Sandulenko et al. ScummVM (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion Virtual Machine) is a cross-platform interpreter for many point-and-click graphic adventure games.

This includes LucasArts® SCUMM games (such as Monkey Island 1-3, Day of the Tentacle, Sam & Max, ...), many of Sierra's AGI and SCI games (such as King's Quest 1-6, Space Quest 1-5, ...), Discworld 1 and 2, Simon the Sorcerer 1 and 2, Beneath A Steel Sky, Lure of the Temptress, Broken Sword 1 and 2, Flight of the Amazon

Beneath A Steel Sky, Lure of the Temptress, Broken Sword 1 and 2, Flight of the Amazon Queen, Gobliiins 1-3, The Legend of Kyrandia 1-3, many of Humongous Entertainment's children's SCUMM games (including Freddi Fish and Putt Putt games) and many more. Even if you don't own copies of the original games, publishers released many classic games as freeware downloads (see ScummVM website).

Kernel Source – v3.18.1. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

Chip Shots ITworld By Andy Patrizio

<http://www.itworld.com/article/2699672/hardware/get-ready-for-clean-out-your-computer-day.html>

Get ready for Clean Out Your Computer Day

It's amazing how poorly some PCs are maintained. Amazing but not surprising. Here's what you can do to prolong the life of your PC and perhaps improve performance.

When I purchased my Toyota Camry in mid-2012, I was given a schedule of maintenance for pretty much the life of the car. They wanted it in very 5,000 miles, with varying levels of overhaul at set intervals. For example, at 30,000, 60,000 and 90,000 miles, the car should get a heavy maintenance check, while every 5,000 miles is an oil change. Airlines do this with their planes as well. They have a ranking of A checks, a basic check done once every 500 hours, to a D check, which takes up to 20 days and inspects the plane down to its screws. Why, then, do people deploy a PC and then never once check the thing until it goes ka-boom, by which point it's probably too late?

February 10 is National Clean Out Your Computer Day, where you are encouraged to give that machine a good scrubbing inside and out. Not in a literal sense, of course, although one of the recommended steps is to blast the insides clean.

Internal Cleaning

If you have a tower PC, take it outside to do this. A friend once did a cleaning inside his home, inhaled the fumes, and became deathly ill for several days. Open the case, stand with your back to the wind, and blast the daylight out of it with a can of compressed air. This stuff is sold in every store that sells PCs. Best Buy, Staples, you name it.

Make sure to pay attention to the vents and cooling fans that blow out of the PC. They tend to be the most clogged. Get the heat sink fan as well and the entrances in the front of the PC where air is sucked in. Failure to clean a PC will inevitably lead to dust buildup, which causes fans to seize and lead to overheating. Those cans of

compressed air are not for cleaning crumbs off your desk, they are for the PC. And don't breathe the stuff, whatever you do. Also don't shake it, and if you use it a lot, you'll notice the can gets very cold. Put it down for a while and let the contents settle down.

For laptop users, it's a little easier. Just give the keyboard a nice blast to get rid of food particles and check under the case to see if any dirt is in there. In my experience, most laptops do a good job of keeping food and dust to a minimum.

Clean Up Your Files and Folders

It's easy to dump a file on the desktop until your desktop is completely full of icons. This is a great way to slow your PC down, especially if it's a low-end PC. Start by getting rid of every non-essential icon on your desktop and putting it in a folder. Your PC will speed up from this because it doesn't have to refresh all those icons. Next, Windows 7 users should go into the Start Menu -> All Programs -> Accessories -> System Tools and run Disk Cleanup. It will present all the junk files you should remove. It will be backup files, crash dump files and temp files from Internet Explorer, all of which can go. If you have Windows 8, just start typing "disk cleanup" from the Modern UI and it will automatically find the app.

Then you should manually look at every folder and see how things are organized. People toss files and folders around the PC, thinking they will get to it later, and later never comes. Move files around, and if you can, move them off the PC if you are pressed for space onto a backup drive, cloud storage or a thumb drive.

Utilities to Help

All of the system maintenance utility vendors will be in full promotion mode between now and February 10, so it might be a good time to hunt for a bargain.

For starters, you should do a deep virus scan. All of us have antimalware installed on our PCs that do a quick scan on startup. But deep scans are not common because they are intrusive and slow a PC down drastically. Launch your antivirus program, set it to do a deep scan, and go to lunch or leave it running overnight.

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There are many good utilities to clean up a PC, but online services like DoubleMySpeed.com and PCMatic.com have been found by reviewers to be effectively worthless.

You need a locally-installed utility to do the clean-up job for you.

I have two favorites. First is [CCleaner](#), which is free. It will clean your PC of everything from junk files to tracking cookies. It's accurate and doesn't destroy necessary files, which some utilities are known to do.

Second is [System Mechanic](#), which has a 30 day free trial. It's a bit more comprehensive in that it can optimize the PC for maximum speed by tweaking internals, along with standard features like scheduling regular maintenance of the PC.

You can find a whole bunch of recommended links at the official website, along with other PC management tips, like cord management. You wouldn't drive your car without checking the filters from time to time. Clean your PC once in a while so you can avoid this.

Google Chromecast - Inexpensive Competitor to Cable and Satellite Entertainment

By Ira Wilsker Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX Radio & Talk Show Host.
iwilsker@sbcglobal.net

Websites:

<https://www.google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/index.html>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromecast>
https://www.google.com/intl/en_us/chrome/devices/chromecast/index.html
<http://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/devices/chromecast/index-opt-a.html>
<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/streaming-chromecast-passes-apple-tv-150024539.html>
<http://www.cnet.com/products/google-chromecast/>
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2422300,00.asp>
<https://www.google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/apps.html>
<https://support.google.com/chromecast/?hl=en#topic=3447927>
<https://support.google.com/chromecast/answer/2998336>
<https://www.google.com/chromecast/backdrop/>

Introduction

You may have seen the recent TV commercials for a new device from Amazon called Fire Stick, which is so new that it is just starting to be shipped.

Another device which recently came on the market with great fanfare is the Roku Streaming Stick.

Several other comparable devices are in development, or recently came on the market creating a crowded field of competitive products. One that has been on the market since the summer of 2013, is Google's Chromecast, which has become well established with "millions" sold, according to a July, 2014 statement from Google. One may wonder what all of the buzz is about,

How did Google manage to sell "millions" of Chromecast devices (their words) in the first 12 months that it was available?

The answer is simple - these relatively inexpensive items have become an entertainment tool that for many users, can somewhat compete with satellite or cable TV at a fraction of the price.

Background

One of my daughters recently "cut the cable", even though she was on a very good fiber optic system with hundreds of TV channels, dozens of movie channels, and other features, because in her eyes the monthly cost was becoming prohibitive. She also has a separate very high speed in-

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ternet service which she believed could be better utilized for entertainment purposes, as well as providing a reliable connection for her chosen digital telephone service.

She and her husband like streaming movies, sports, music, features, and other entertainment; living in the Dallas area, all of the local TV stations, both local and network, are available over the air for free, using an inexpensive digital antenna hooked up to the TVs around her house.

By connecting her TVs to the internet, using some of the readily available and inexpensive devices, she has found that there is nothing that she is really missing from her former expensive cable service, other than a large monthly bill.

By her calculations, she believes that she is saving about \$150 per month using these alternative devices to connect her TV to the internet in her home.

Some of the newer "smart TVs" that recently came onto the market do not need external devices to connect to the internet, as they are already capable of receiving alternative internet based entertainment through an Ethernet or Wi-Fi connection.

Since she does not (yet) have a new smart TV, one of the devices that she uses is the Chromecast device from Google.

About A Chromecast Device

A Chromecast device, which Google refers to as a digital media player, looks very similar to a common USB flash drive, and is about the same size and weight, but has an industry standard HDMI plug, rather than the USB plug found on a typical flash drive.

Specifically a Chromecast device is 2.38" long, 1.38 inches wide, and 0.47 of an inch thick, and weighs 1.2 ounces. Inside, where the magic takes place, is a Nexus Q microprocessor (CPU), with 512 MB of fast DDR3L RAM, and 2 GB of storage. Power is supplied through a standard micro USB plug and power source (included), similar to the chargers and plugs used on most of today's smart phones.

The standard HDMI plug on the end of the Chromecast plugs directly into an available HDMI port on the TV (most newer TVs have multiple HDMI inputs), and Chromecast receives the digital media through Wi-Fi utilizing the common 802.11 b/g/n protocols at 2.4GHZ. Obviously, the user needs to have a decent home Wi-Fi system in order to utilize the Chromecast. The device itself is readily available in the big box stores, discount stores, online retailers, and direct from Google, and carries a suggested retail price of \$35. Bargain shoppers can currently find the Chromecast on sale online for as little as \$22 including a bundle of digital media streaming services.

Installation of the Chromecast is a simple and fast three step process; Google says, "Plug in and Play" which consists of plugging the Chromecast into an available HDMI port on the TV and powering the device through the included micro USB plug, connecting the device to the home Wi-Fi, and then "Enjoy - Cast apps from your mobile device to the TV."



Chromecast Device

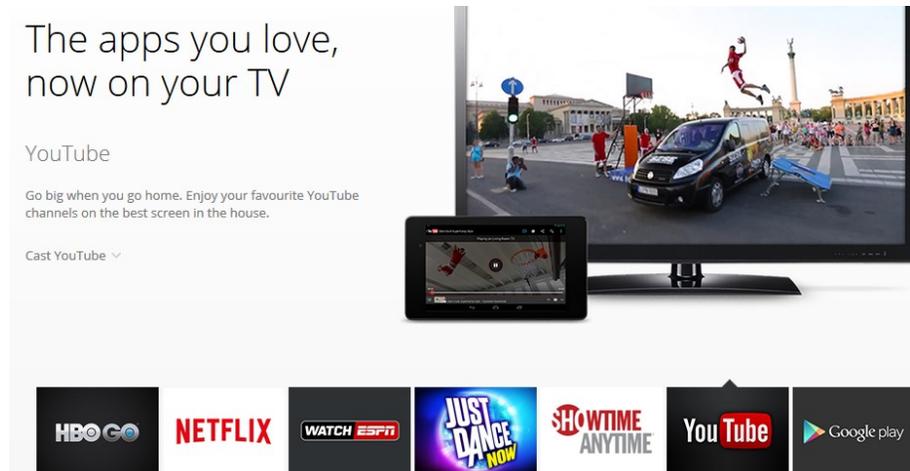
Casting Apps

Casting apps is the process of selecting entertainment channels using any compatible smart device attached to the home Wi-Fi, such as a phone or tablet, including Android tablets and smart phones, iPhones and iPads, Chrome for Windows, Chrome for Mac and Chromebooks.

In effect, the hand held smart device becomes the remote control, and the apps are the selected streaming media sources.

The list of streaming media apps that are available for the Chromecast is extensive, and includes a large selection of both free and paid subscription services.

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GOOGLE'S APP DIRECTORY

Google has an updated app directory at google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/apps.html and as to be expected from Google, is totally searchable, or content can be displayed by genre'.

Among the category headings are Featured, New, TV & Movies, Music & Audio, Games, Sports, Photos & Video, and "More".

Selecting a media source from these app directories connects directly to the appropriate download; if it is a paid or subscription app, such as Netflix, that information is clearly displayed prior to any purchase.

Among the more popular casting apps are HBO GO, Netflix, Watch ESPN, Just Dance Now, Showtime Anytime, YouTube, and the large assortment of digital media available from Google Play.

FEATURED

The "Featured Apps" include the most popular apps, and includes in addition to the more popular apps listed above, Nickelodeon, Hulu Plus, Comedy Central, Sesame Street, Pandora, game shows, Disney, Starz, Encore, iHeart radio, Major League Baseball, Crackle, NPR, Vudu, and dozens of other apps.

MUSIC AND AUDIO

The "Music and Audio" lists hundreds of domestic and international streaming music sources, including some local and international

MUSIC AND AUDIO

The "Music and Audio" lists hundreds of domestic and international streaming music sources, including some local and international radio stations.

GAMES

Personally I am not into digital games, but the "Games" section lists about 75 streaming games that can be played on the Chromecast.

SPORTS

I would expect that one of the major uses of Chromecast would be to watch sports, and the "Sports" selection may satisfy fans of most major sports.

Included in the Sports apps are:

- WatchESPN
- UFC.TV
- MLB.TV Premium
- MLS MatchDay
- NFL Game Pass
- MLS Live
- Red Bull TV
- a high school sports channel
- several foreign sports channels

MORE

The "More" category includes dozens of casting apps including PBS for Kids, TED Chromecast, UDEMY (online classes), ABC News, Funny or Die, FM radio stations, a baby monitor, QVC, iFood TV

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and Recipes, religion channels, local and international TV news stations, and many other apps.

SCREENCASTING

Often, we may see something online or on our smart phones that we would like to view on the big TV screen; Chromecast can handle that.

According to Google, "Whatever you're listening to or watching -- you can cast it straight from your Windows, Mac, or Chromebook directly to the TV.

To cast from your laptop, just add the Google Cast extension to your Chrome browser."

Owners of Android smart phones or tablets can broadcast directly from their screen to the TV using the appropriate app.

Chromecast and Similar Devices Popularity

Chromecast devices are popular, with users receiving over 400 billion programs in the (first year (source, Google). According to the news site Gigaom, in an article dated December 7, 2014, "Streaming on Chromecast passes Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV in US", the author Kevin C. Tofel explains, "What happens when you offer the combination of a simple user experience, a growing choice in streaming apps and a low cost? You sell a lot of that product and people use it. That's what happened in 2014 to the Chromecast according to Parks Associates, who say that Google's \$35 streaming stick now trails only Roku players in the U.S. when it comes to streaming content."

While Roku released a competitive stick device during the summer of 2014, larger Roku streaming players have been on the market much longer than the Chromecast. Amazon, who is no slouch when it comes to introducing and implementing new technologies, will be shipping by the time that you read this its new \$39 Fire TV Stick, as a direct competitor to Chromecast and similar devices, but offers improved Wi-Fi connectivity, more internal memory, a more powerful dual-core processor, and other technical enhancements. Basically, the Fire TV Stick offers much the same content as Chromecast, but adds the hundreds of thousands of movies and TV shows currently available at no additional cost to Amazon Prime subscribers (currently \$99 per year) which for

many users is price and selection competitive to Netflix, plus offers a lot of benefits in addition to streaming media, such as free second day delivery of most items from Amazon. The Fire TV Stick also includes a separate remote control device, or the user can use a free smart device app as a remote control. In terms of disclosure, I pre-ordered an Amazon Fire TV Stick at a greatly discounted price, and will review it when it arrives. Since I already have an Amazon Prime account, I will be able to utilize Amazon's massive video and TV library when the Fire TV Stick arrives.

Helpful Suggestion

One suggestion that many readers might find helpful if considering using one of these Wi-Fi connected stick devices to provide digital content to a flat screen TV; if the TV is physically located in close proximity to the Wi-Fi router, such as in the same room, signal strength should be fine.

An easy way to roughly figure Wi-Fi signal strength is to connect a smart device to the Wi-Fi, and note the signal strength (bars) precisely at the location where a stick device would be connected.

In my house, our bedroom TV is a distance from the Wi-Fi router, with several walls in between, giving only a "3 bar" Wi-Fi strength where the Chromecast is currently connected to that TV.

To improve the signal strength, I purchased a deeply discounted, factory refurbished, major name brand "Wireless-N Range Extender", and mounted it on the stand directly below the HDMI port on the bedroom TV; now my phone shows all 5 Wi-Fi signal strength bars, indicating a very strong signal, which has dramatically improved the performance of the stick device.

Conclusion

Either as a replacement for, or as a substitute to cable and satellite TV service, these stick devices may be a very cost effective way of "cutting the cable" as my daughter did.

As inexpensive as these stick devices are, and with the entertainment capabilities that they provide, one of these new stick devices may be a worthwhile investment.

Editor's Note: I have both a Roku and a Chromecast device, and prefer the Chromecast, because it is easy to share from my Android phone, or tablet. As an Amazon Prime account holder, I am able to view the Amazon Prime video and TV library on the Roku with no problems.

Intelligently Starting a New Paragraph By Allen Wyatt

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Thousands of free Microsoft Word tips can be found online at <http://word.tips.net>

If you use styles in your documents, there is a very powerful feature you can use. The Next Style feature is defined when you set up a style and indicates what Word should use as the style following this one.

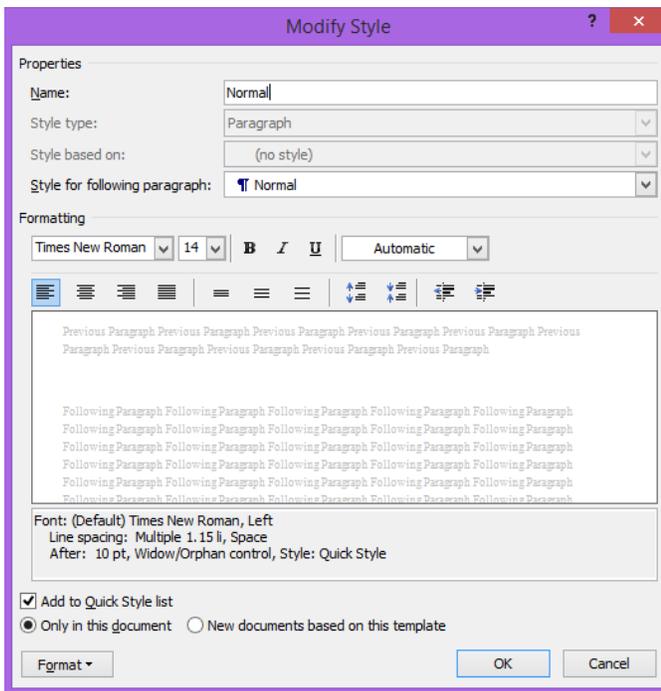


Figure 1

For instance, let's assume you have two styles defined—Figure and Caption. The Figure style is

used for figures in your document and it is always followed by the Caption style, which is used for the figure caption.

You can set the Next Style for the Figure style so that when you press Enter, Word automatically makes the next paragraph a Caption style.

1. Display the Home tab of the ribbon and then click the small icon at the bottom-right of the Styles group. Word displays the Styles task pane.
2. In the list of styles shown, hover the mouse pointer over the name of the style you want to change. A drop-down arrow should appear at the right side of the style name.

3. Click the drop-down arrow and choose Modify. Word displays the Modify Style dialog box. (See Figure 1.)

4. In the Style For Following Paragraph drop-down list, select an existing style that you want to follow this style. In the above example, this would be the Caption style.

5. Click on OK.

6. When you are done, close the Styles task pane if desired.

When modifying a style, you may want to select the radio button called New Documents Based On This Template. This saves the changes you are making in the template file for use in other documents.

WordTips is your source for cost-effective Microsoft Word training. (Microsoft Word is the most popular word processing software in the world.)

This tip applies to Microsoft Word 2007 and 2010. You can find a version of this tip for the older menu interface of Word here: [Intelligently Starting a New Paragraph](#).



Computers, Technology, and User Groups

Computer user groups keep users informed, join one and become an active participant.



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Interesting Internet Finds

By Steve Costello,

Boca Raton Computer Society

editor@brcs.org <http://ctublog.sefcug.com/>

In the course of going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members. The following are some items I found interesting during the month of December 2014.

An Introduction and a Quick Guide to Sandboxie
<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/introduction-and-quick-guide-sandboxie.htm>

You have probably heard Sandboxie mentioned at the Freeware SIG, or a general meeting. If you use Microsoft Windows, using Sandboxie is recommended. This post tells what Sandboxie is and does, as well as a quick guide to using Sandboxie.
Android 5.0 Lollipop Review: An Ambitious Start Down Android's New Path

<http://www.greenbot.com/article/2850968/android-50-lollipop-review-an-ambitious-start-down-androids-new-path.html>

If you have been hearing about Android 5.0 Lollipop, but have not been able to get it yet, read this post to learn what it is all about, and what it means to you.

How To Use Skype On Android For Beginners

I have found that a lot of Android users don't know they can get Skype on their smartphone/tablet. If you are one of these Android users, check out this post from MakeUseOf.

All the Wget Commands You Should Know

<http://www.labnol.org/software/wget-command-examples/28750/>

Do you remember Wget? This post has 20 examples of using the utility.

Wikipedia says: "GNU Wget (or just Wget, formerly Geturl) is a computer program that retrieves content from web servers, and is part of the GNU Project.

Its features include recursive download, conversion of links for offline viewing of local HTML, and support for proxies. It appeared in 1996, coinciding with the boom of popularity of the Web, causing its wide use among Unix users and distribution with most major Linux distributions. Written in portable C, Wget can be easily installed on any Unix-like system and has been ported to many environments, including Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X, OpenVMS, HP-UX, MorphOS and AmigaOS."

Most Fridays, more interesting finds will be posted on the *Computers, Technology, and User Groups Blog*:

<http://ctublog.sefcug.com/tag/interesting-internet-finds/> The posts are under Creative Commons licensing.

Presentation February 21, 2015 Switching from PC to Mac,

Presented by Lorrin Garson

Why would someone switch from PCs to Apple computers? In terms of functionality, how do PCs compare with Macs? What about price, support, repairs, software availability, backup and recovery, user interfaces, culture...? What about moving files from PC to Mac?

Which changes are the most challenging? How painful is switching? What about mixed PC/Mac environments? What about the social implications of switching? Learn about the experience of one family's move from PCs to Macs. Lorrin Garson had a long career in technical publishing of chemical information. His presentations to our computer groups are famous for their thorough research and clarity in explaining topics such as cryptography, encryption of personal data, cloud storage and the origins of personal computers.

February's "Learn 30"

Presented by Tom Gutnick

February's "Learn 30" will feature two topics by PATACS' member Tom Gutnick: Copy-and-Paste - The Basics; and "Clipboard Management on Steroids - for Windows, MacOS, and smartphones / tablets." Help Wanted: Meeting Speakers

Future Meeting Topics

Refer to the PATACS Event Calendar on the back cover or <http://patacs.org/mtgdetpat.html> for meeting locations.

March 21, 2015 (Fairfax)

Is Your Toaster an Insider Threat?

Presented by Bob Flores

April 18, 2015 (Fairfax)

What is Computer Forensics?

Presented by Bob Osgood

Editor's Note: At press time, there are no topics for Arlington meetings nor Fairfax Learn 30 sessions from January onward. Look for the latest meeting information on the PATACS web site and in announcement e-mails.

Micro Center® In Store Clinics

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

Topics may change and clinics may be cancelled without notice. Please verify the schedule with the store before leaving and register online for e-mail updates (http://www.microcenter.com/instore_clinic/sign_up.html).

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

Start Time is 2pm

Virus & Malware Troubleshooting

Saturday, Jan. 31 and Sunday, Feb. 1

Troubleshooting Windows® 8.1

Saturday, Feb. 7 and Sunday, Feb. 8

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February 2015 PATACS Event Calendar www.patacs.org 703-370-7649

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 7-9pm Arlington General Meeting	5	6	7
8	9 Clean Out Your Computer Day	10	11 7-9pm Online Zoom Meeting	10	13	14
15	16 President's Day 7-9pm Arlington Board Meeting	17	18	19	20	21 12:30-3:30pm Fairfax General Meeting
22	23	24	25 7-9 pm Arlington Technology and PC Help Desk	26	27	28 April Newsletter Articles Due

Arlington: Carlin Hall Community Center
 57114 4th Street South
 Arlington, VA 22204

Fairfax: Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
 4210 Roberts Road
 Fairfax, VA 22032