

# Glendora's Computer Club Gigabyte Gazette



August 2019, Volume 24, Issue 24  
Editor: Judy Taylour

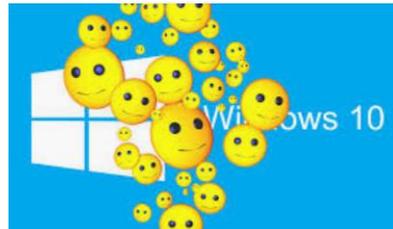
**Meetings**  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday  
1:00 – 3:00 pm  
La Fetra Community Center  
333 East Foothill Blvd.  
Glendora CA 91741  
626 914 8235

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

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Planning Meeting  
after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday  
membership meeting  
All are welcome to attend



## Windows 10 Rules! Cyn Mackley, Tech Whisperer

It's been a long, slow climb but Windows 10 is finally the most popular operating system out there. Windows 10 is found on nearly 41% of desktops and laptops while Windows 7 is running 38%. That's a good thing since support for Windows 7 ends in January 2020.

Which operating systems rule the roost? Let's check out the numbers according to NetMarketShare.

Windows is found on 87% of desktop and laptop devices. Mac OS is a distant second at just under 10%. That leaves 2% for various Linux operating systems. Chrome OS runs on about 1/3 of a percent of devices.

- If you break it down by version of the operating system: Windows 10 is found of 41% of devices,
- Windows 7 on 38%, and
- Windows 8.1 on 4.5%.
- Mac OSX 10.14 and 10.13 each take about a 4% share of devices.
- Incredibly, Windows XP is still hanging in there on just over 3% of devices, 5 years after Microsoft ended support. I hope none of those PCs have anything important on them.

Now, let's talk about phones.

- Android is the clear leader, running on 70% of devices.
- iOS comes in second. It's found on 28% of mobile devices.
- The tablet race is a little bit tighter. Android

## USB 101

**Author: Cyn Mackley, Tech Whisperer**

**August 21, 2019**

**<https://cynmackley.com/2019/08/21/usb-101/>**



A reader wanted some help understanding types of USB :

*“As I start shopping to replace my aging desktop with a laptop, I find I don’t know enough about USB ports. I hear about USB 1, USB 2, USB 3, and now USB 3.1. I understand the newer ones are faster.*

*Are they compatible? Do you need special ports for the newer services? special software? And what really is the difference between them? If you move to the newer ones, do you have to pitch the older ones? Any enlightenment would be appreciated!”*

USB stands for Universal Serial Bus. The standard was invented to come up with one way to connect devices to computers instead of each type of device requiring a different type of port. USB connections are capable of not only transferring data, but powering and charging devices.

USB 1, 2, and 3 connections look pretty much identical externally. If you look closely, though, the color of plastic visible inside the device lets you know which generation it is. USB 1 is usually white, 2 is black, 3 is blue.

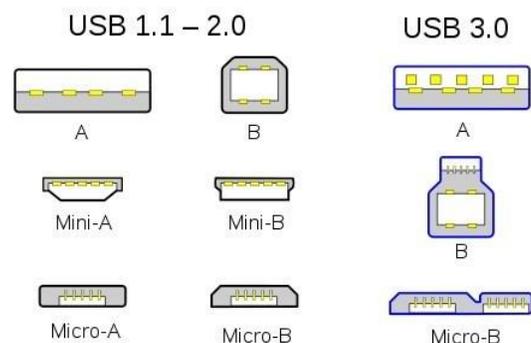


USB 1 made its appearance 23 years ago followed by USB 2 in 2000. USB 2 is 40 times faster than USB 1. USB 2 devices were backward compatible with USB 1 ports, but you didn’t get the same speed.

USB 3 and then 3.1 in 2014, and 3.2 in 2017. To compare speed rates, USB 1 has a transfer rate of 480 Mb per second while USB 3.2 can transfer up to 20 GB per second. USB 3 is also capable of powering larger devices.

You can use a USB 3 device in a USB 3 port and a USB 2 device in a USB 3 port, but you won’t see the speed increase unless both devices are USB 3.

USB ports in your PC or plug are normally the type A connector that you see on a standard flash drive. The plugs on the other ends of cables have come in a variety of shapes over the years to fit cameras, printers, phones, and other peripherals. Mini-A, Mini-B, and Micro-A have fallen by the wayside with USB 3. You’ll normally see an A connection, the squarish B connection that often connects to audio devices and printers, and the Micro-B which is usually for phones and other small devices.



With USB 3.1 and 3.2, you will sometimes see the USB C connection. This an attempt to standardize the connections for all devices. USB C cables can transmit large quantities of data and are also capable of transmitting enough power to charge a laptop, doing away with the need for proprietary charging plugs. USB is compatible with USB 3.0 ports. In many ways, USB C is attempting to do what USB was created for in the first place, come up with a truly universal port and plug.



If your new computer only offers a USB C connection, you will need a hub to use USB A devices and drives. However, if having a super-light easily portable computer is a priority, it might be worth it. For a desktop, I'd want several USB 3.1 or 3.2 ports. These ports should be compatible with USB 3 and 2 cables, drives, and devices. (Though if your devices are as old as USB 2, there's no guarantee they'll work. And remember, external drives and thumb drives don't last forever. If you have one that's 15 years old, it's probably time to transfer your data to something newer or the cloud before it gives up the ghost).

And heads up, USB 4 is coming our way, you'll likely see the first products at the end of 2020 and it will use the USB C connector. But don't worry, USB 4 will be compatible with USB 3.

## Interesting Internet Finds – July

**Author: Steve Costello**  
**scostello (at) sefcug.com**



*While 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 July 2019.*

**Trying to stay off your phone? Turn the screen grayscale**  
<https://www.lifesavvy.com/5053/trying-to-stay-off-your-phone-turn-the-screen-grayscale/>

**lifesavvy**

A simple, yet effective way to avoid distraction. Since reading this, I set my phone to grayscale whenever I need to concentrate on something. Also, I put the phone in airplane mode.

**Search smarter with the DuckDuckGo search engine**

**ask dave taylor**

<https://www.askdave.taylor.com/search-smarter-with-the-duckduckgo-search-engine/>

Are you using DuckDuckGo as your default search engine? You should be if you are serious about not having everything tracked. That said, searching with DuckDuckGo is a little different than searching with Google, Bing, etc. Dave Taylor explains how to search smartly with DuckDuckGo in this posting.

**Cord-cutters beware: Amazon's TV antenna listings are rife with dubious claims**

<https://www.techhive.com/article/3409624/amazons-tv-antenna-listings-are-rife-with-dubius-claims.html>



Cord-cutting is becoming very popular. This means higher demand for TV antennas. As with anything else, if you decide to go the antenna route make sure you do your research so you don't end up spending your money on useless things. This post explains some of the things to look for.

**ONLINE TECH TIPS**

**How to use a public computer safely**

<https://www.online-tech-tips.com/computer-tips/how-to-use-a-public-computer-safely/>

We are in the travel season now, which makes it more likely you will be using a public computer. Read this post from a reminder of ways to keep safe while using one.

**6 Ways to Prevent Computer Eye Strain**

<https://www.elegantthemes.com/blog/business/prevent-computer-eye-strain>

This post contains tips everyone who is using computers should know.

These are nothing new, but from time to time reminders of how to keep eye strain at bay are needed.



**“How should you destroy old USB flash drives so that sensitive information cannot be recovered from them?”**



<https://langa.com/index.php/2019/07/16/how-should-you-destroy-old-usb-flash-drives-so-that-sensitive-information-cannot-be-recovered-from-them/>

The question is specific to USB flash drives. The answer applies to any hardware form of data storage.



**The most important thing to check before buying a Chromebook**

<https://www.computerworld.com/article/3405893/buying-a-chromebook.html>

It is almost time for back to school, the holiday season, and the end of Windows 7 support, which means there will be more and more interest in Chromebooks. This Computerworld article explains important things to check before purchasing one.

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**Thoughts from a Clicker - August**  
**Author: Tiny Ruisch, Member,**  
**Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA**  
**August 2019 issue, CCCC Computer News**  
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This month I'm going to rant, rave, criticize and complain just a little. About a year ago, before I moved to the Baton Rouge area, my wife and I were in one of the home improvement stores. I thought that it would be a good time to pick up a new water filter for our refrigerator. I went over to appliances and told them I needed a new filter for a Whirlpool. He immediately asked me which of the nine filters I needed. Of course, I

didn't have the filter number memorized. So, I found our refrigerator on the sales floor and told the salesman, "One to fit that model." I got home and found that it was the wrong size filter. When I went back to exchange it, I found out that a different model year almost always uses a different filter.

What does all that have to do with computers and electronics? It got me to thinking about some things I hate about technology. I've probably got 10 or 20 different USB cables in the junk box in my computer room. Every time you buy something that is USB supported, you get another cable. Why is this? It's because each manufacturer has their own proprietary plug. They have to include a cable because none of my other 20 cables will work with the darn thing. I recently got a new cell phone. Same manufacturer, different model. You guessed it. I've got another USB cable in my collection. Wouldn't it be nice if everything had a standard plug and didn't have the cable included? Think of the money that could be saved. Wait a minute! Then they couldn't sucker people into paying \$20 for 3 dollars' worth of wire.

Another thing that makes me mad are End User License Agreements (EULA). I'm one of the few people who research them before installing anything on my computer. My complaint isn't the fact that lawyers write them by lawyers. I can use the internet to explain the legal terms. My objection is that I have seldom found a EULA that can be read full screen. Instead they write them in a little window that usually covers about a tenth of my screen. I think this is done to discourage people from reading the agreements. Just get them to click "I agree" and get it over with.

I can live with SPAM (I usually don't even see it). I don't mind getting bombarded with internet advertisements (I can always go to other sites). What I hate it when websites pop up a window asking for information that they will likely never use. For instance, there is a website that I won't name that wants to know my age, sex and country. They then store the data in a cookie on my computer. When I tell them that I'm a 28-year-old female, I get the same advertisements as the dirty old men get. Why do they waste my time? I also dislike software that isn't user-friendly. Some programs have windows that can't be resized. I'm getting older and my eyesight isn't what it used to be. If I can't make the window bigger and read the font, I likely won't use the software. Then there is software that won't let you choose where to install it. I don't install all programs into "program files". Many times, I don't even install them on the C drive.

I wonder if Microsoft will ever fix one little thing that has bugged me for as long as I remember. When you use file explorer to copy, move or delete a list of files; Windows estimates how long it will take. If you're doing an operation on a lot of files, the estimated time will change every time you check it. On older systems it can be even more aggravating. Wouldn't it be nice if the estimate was close once in a while?

Hate might be too strong of a word, but I've always disliked how companies will use a proprietary document format. The perfect example is word processing. Why must each program have a different extension? Is it good for a business to make consumers remember .doc, .odf, .wps, .docx, .odt, .txt, .rtf, .abw, .abi and hundreds of others? Almost all word processing software has a save as feature to save files to other formats. They can't be that much different. Why isn't there a standard where all programs save in a standard format? After all, this idea seems to work well for HTML internet files.

That's enough ranting and complaining. Next month I promise to write something useful for the newsletter. By the way, did I mention that the two water filters had two different prices? Does that remind you of anything else technology related?

Keep on clicking and thanks for reading.

## **File Explorer – Files, Folders and Beyond!**

**Author: Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer,**

**The Computer Club, Florida**

**July 2019 issue, The Journal**

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File Explorer is an integral part of Windows 10 You might have even heard that it is the “Keys to the Kingdom” (If you attended the File Explorer class you definitely would have heard that.) File Explorer, as you probably know, provides the ability to work with, and manipulate, the Files and Folders on your computer Files are the basic elements that we collect and use Folders are the infrastructure that we create to allow us to manage the store house of knowledge that is in the collection of files So with File Explorer you can create new folders to organize your data. You can Move or Copy files and/or folders to new locations. You can even examine the properties of a file or folder And File Explorer is the component of the Operating System that provides a Graphical Interface so we don't have to remember any arcane commands for a command line interface These basic features have been available as long as File Explorer has been part of the Windows Operating System (circa the hazy past when Windows 95 was new).

A File Explorer window provides a lot of information about your computer There are three main areas of interest in the window, the (context sensitive) Ribbon, the Navigation pane, and the Contents pane (Yes, I know you can add a third pane to the right of the Contents pane which then provides further information about the item selected in the Contents pane, but that's just icing on the cake.) The Ribbon provides the set of tools that can be used, based on the selection in the Navigation pane and the Tab (above the ribbon) selected The Navigation and Contents panes are below the ribbon, Navigation on the left, and Contents on the right These two panes allow you to review and modify the collection of files and folders on your computer When you highlight an item in the navigation pane, the contents thereof are shown in the contents pane This allow you to easily move or copy items using “Drag and Drop”, always moving items from the right (Contents pane) to the left (Navigation pane) Of course you can also use the keyboard commands for Cut (Ctrl-X), Copy (Ctrl-C), and Paste (Ctrl-V) to accomplish the same move or copy.

When you first open a File Explorer window, it will be focused on the Quick Access area by default (unless you have attended the File Explorer class and have made the suggested change to focus on “This PC.” This can be done by selecting the View Tab and then clicking on the “Options” button, choosing “change folder and search options, and finally selecting “This PC” in the popup window). Focusing on Quick Access doesn't provide many new features, but if you change the focus to “This PC,” either manually by

clicking on “This PC,” or making the change described above, you will have the ability to get to some useful areas.

Here are the controls you will have available when you focus on “This PC” It is probably obvious that “This PC” is your computer, whereas, Quick Access is quite different. Quick Access is an automatically populated list of recently accessed files and frequently accessed folders, which will probably change automatically, over time. (This may lead to confusion if you get used to using Quick Access because of the fact that its contents may change without your provocation or knowledge.)

The first item that is available on the ribbon is “Properties.” Click it and you will see information about your computer’s Hardware and Software. Yes, this is the Control Panel’s System page, but now it is easily available whenever you have a File Explorer window open. Next on the Ribbon are Network features. If you have a home network of computers this can be helpful, if you don’t have a network move on to the System group. Here you can immediately get into Settings by clicking on “Open Settings” (this is probably not terribly valuable because Settings can easily be accessed via the Start button which is always available on the Taskbar). The next item in the System group may be more useful; it is “Uninstall or change a program.” This is a quick way to get to the App option in Settings. Here you will see a list of all of the Programs (Applications) installed on your computer. This is where you can Uninstall a program or possibly modify its operation. The next item, “System Properties” is another choice from Settings; the “System-About” screen This screen shows the Hardware (Device Specifications), gives you the ability to “Rename this PC,” and provides a summary of the Security features being employed by Windows, such as “Virus & Threat Protection” and “Firewall & Network Protection.” Clicking “See details in Windows Security” immediately gets you to the Windows Security page in Settings.

The last item in the system group is Manage. This provides entry to “System tools,” “Storage,” and “Services and Applications.” I know you can get there via the Control Panel by selecting “Administrative Tools,” and finally selecting “Computer Management,” but this is a much easier way to get to these areas. System Tools includes a few useful tools like a Task Scheduler and Performance monitoring tools. Storage provides “Disk Management” which allows you to look deeply into your hard drive partitions. This is a place you may only want to view, and not try to change anything unless you have very good directions and the phone number of someone who can get you out of any trouble, should you get into trouble. The last area is “Services and Applications” which provides a view into the “Services” that are part of Windows 10. Services are software programs that are part of your system. The Services view shows you all the many Services and whether they are running or not. This view allows you to change how some of the services are started and how they run. This area should mostly be considered Off Limits, again unless you have very good directions for a particular change. (And you may someday find yourself in this area if you’re trying to troubleshoot a strange problem, but most of this should be left to someone with a lot of “under the hood” experience.)

All of the tools mentioned so far are available because “This PC” has been selected in the Navigation pane, and the “Computer” Tab was selected. (Remember that the ribbon is context sensitive; meaning that, based on the selection in the Navigation pane and

the Tab selected, certain tools will be available on the ribbon). So, there are other tools that are specifically for use with your disk drive that become available on the ribbon when you select your hard drive, typically the C: drive in the Navigation pane and then choose the “Drive tools” tab. Here you will find tools for Optimizing, Cleaning Up, and Formatting disk drives. You may not use these tools very often, but when you need them they will be easily found File Explorer’s ability to organize and access our data with all of these tools and features, guarantees it will continue to be the “Keys to the Kingdom.”

## **Making Your Tech “Fit” - Tech and Your Eyes**

**Author: Debra Carlson, Technical Advisor,**

**CVC Computer Club, CO**

**Q1 2019 issue, Tech Notes**

**[cvc.computer.club \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:cvc.computer.club@gmail.com)**



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Words like “ergometrics” and “accessibility” fly around when talking about tech devices but what does that mean practically – to the user?

First, a definition:

Ergometrics is an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things people use so that the people and things interact most efficiently and safely — called also biotechnology, human engineering, human factors  
[merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ergonomics](http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ergonomics)

This quarter we’ll talk about how tech interacts with EYES.

COMFORT can be an important guide for dealing with eyes and tech.

1. Ambient lighting should complement light from the screen.

Lamps pointed directly at the screen cause reflection making it harder to see what is printed. If you are typing from notes, however, it is important to have that document well-lit to prevent eye fatigue. Avoid setting a monitor where it will get direct sunlight for the same reason.

2. Most monitors (*hardware*) and operating systems (*software that controls how interactions occur within various computing components like hardware or programs used to browse the internet or create documents*) have light level controls in addition to color and size settings. Tempering the background color and complexity of any graphic that “shows through” your viewing windows will lessen the need for more lumens (*the amount of light*). Sometimes changing to dark background and yellow or white print is less taxing to the eyes ... making it easier to see.

3. The position and angle of the monitor are important! You might be surprised how much raising the monitor, or tipping it slightly, will improve screen visibility.

4. Some find “computer glasses” help arbitrate the distance to a monitor if using a desktop or laptop regularly ... and some find glare is cut (*particularly with cataracts*) by using “yellow lens” sunglasses (*slipovers or clip-ons*).

Safety is assisted by comfort, but it is a **DISCIPLINE**. Eyes, balance, circulation, joint health, and physical health in general benefit from:

1. Adjusting the monitor so you can see it easily. Perhaps getting a riser for it (*if you are taller*) so you will sit straight in the chair.
2. Look away from the screen often. When you look away from the screen, shake out your hands.
3. Plan to stand and walk regularly – some suggest every 10 minutes ... most at least every half hour.

Don't be afraid to experiment with screen resolution or font size. Just remember the following:

1. Before a change, take note of what it is you are having trouble seeing. Every solution makes "changes." But making the **most efficient change** for your problem will be the most helpful. It also makes it easier to "undo" if your needs evolve.
2. Make one change at a time and see if (or how well) it works for you. This may seem pedantic, but it will assist you in knowing what part of the system, changed, helps you most.
3. Don't forget – color change can be as or more effective than size change in some circumstances.
4. Many programs have "options" or "preferences" that can be set to make viewing easier. Where these do not exist, third-party "extensions" can provide additional modifications not included by the developer.

Don't forget about using ZOOM to make individual pages larger or smaller when needed, rather than changing the entire machine unnecessarily.



Hopefully, you got an idea or two in this. In coming issues, we will talk about:

- Does size matter?
- Things in your hands
- Cords, Voice, Sound, and other hazards

Note from Judy: View your documents in Page Width (View>Zoom>Page width)  
Make Everything Better (Settings>Ease of Access>)

Make everything bigger

Change the size of apps and text on the main display

[Change the size of apps and text on other displays](#)

[Change the size and color of your cursor and mouse pointer](#)

## Very Large Array (VLA)

**Author: George Harding, Treasurer,  
Tucson Computer Society, AZ  
July 2019**

**[www.aztcs.org](http://www.aztcs.org) / [actuary110 \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:actuary110@yahoo.com)**



The VLA is a physical structure about 50 mile west of Socorro, New Mexico. It consists of 27 large disk radio telescopes in a “Y” arrangement, a Control Center and various auxiliary structures. The purpose is to capture and analyze radio waves being emitted from space to create meaningful pictures and data about outer space objects.

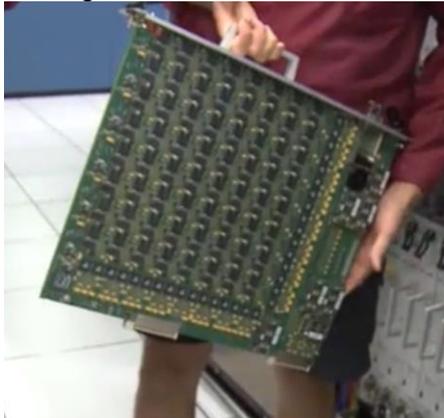
It was originally created in 1980 and has been significantly improved since then. It is used by astronomers and others as needed in their respective occupations.



Each disk is massive, weighing 220 tons and is 82 feet in diameter and 94 feet high. It can rotate and tilt so as to aim in any given direction. Any disk can be moved along special railroad tracks. Since each disk presents such a large surface, they are subject to damage in high winds. In this event, the disk is parked pointing upward to present the least surface for the wind.

Each leg of the “y” formation contains nine disks, which can be rearranged in several ways. The configuration changes periodically from fully spread out along the “Y” to fully compressed and to two intermediate designs. The effect is to widen the aperture of the telescopes or to narrow them.

The signals from each disk are transferred by fiber optic cables to a system which translates the analog data to digital. The process is quite complicated but is performed by a supercomputer called the correlator.



Each of the boards comprising the correlator contains some 180 ICs each with from 250 to 600 pins. VLA personnel state that it is five times faster than the fastest general- purpose computer in the world!

Anyone can access the data produced, for whatever purpose desired. The VLA can be requested for a particular job needed by an astronomer by submitting a proposal. If approved, the proposal is translated into a script for controlling the array for a specific period of time. After completion, the results are given to the requestor and after some months made available to the general public.

The facility is open to the public and a visitor center is available. Tours are provided from time to time.

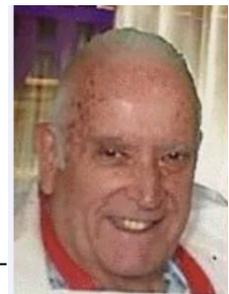
The site of the VLA is the plains of San Augustin, selected to be as far away from other electronic emanations as possible. Cell phones, for example, emit a radio signal several hundred times louder than the faint signals from outer space. Visitors are asked to keep their phones in airplane mode to mask these signals. In addition, the plains are surrounded by mountains which help to shield the array from man-made radio noise.

For more information see  
<https://public.nrao.edu/telescopes/vla/>

The Very Large Array is owned and operated by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory.



**A few of my favorite things (aka websites)**  
**Author: Lou Torraca, President Emeritus,**  
**The TUG – MOAA User Group, HI**  
**August 2019 issue, The TUG Newsletter**  
**[www.the-tug.org](http://www.the-tug.org) / editor (at) thetug.org**



“Time for an update of My Favorite Things...can you hear Julie Andrews signing the song: Raindrops on roses and Whiskers on Kittens; Bright Copper Kettles and Warm Woolen Mittens; Brown Paper Packages tied up with Strings, These are a few of my favorite things.

We all spend lots of time on the ‘net, but the sheer size of it makes it hard to find lots of neat places unless someone tells us, so, I’ve made a list of some of my favorite things (aka web pages) and I’ve added a few brief comments on each, but you really need to go there yourself and see what’s there and in some cases try out the program.

<https://alternativeto.net>

It’s really easy to find any alternatives for a software program that you don’t want to spend big bucks on when you use the search function at this website.

<http://www.nasa.gov>

Hard to beat this one for kids of all ages. Lots of great information and images, things to do and games for everyone.

<http://www.wpclipart.com>

This is where some of the clipart you see at the top of this column comes from. The owner, Mr. Paul Sherman has posted them for public use, free of any restrictions. So, feel free to use them in your letters, e-mails or whatever. Thanks, Paul!

<http://www.musipedia.org>

The folks at Musipedia are busy building a searchable, editable, and expandable encyclopedia of tunes. And you're invited to take part in the action. Their Melodyhound can find a tune even if all you know is the melody. Or, see the next one.

<http://thenostalgiamachine.com/>

Pick a year and you will get a list of that year's hit to listen to

<https://www.popularmechanics.com/>

Pretty much anything you can think of is probably on this webpage!

<https://radio.garden/listen/wpkn/e0ID4oHy>

This is one you will love. Search the globe for radio stations anywhere in the world!

<http://www.merriam-webster.com>

If you do any amount of writing, whether for the office or just e-mails, I'd be surprised if you haven't found this one, which, along with the Encyclopedia Britannica are essential tools.

<http://twitter.com>

After blogs, this one was inevitable...you "twitter" (yes, it's a verb) by answering the question "What are you doing?" in 280 characters or less. It looks like more of a fun thing than a serious one as you can see from the example of how little 280 characters is.

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org>

This page is an incredible online learning site from the Goodwill Community Foundation. On the site, there are thousands of video lessons covering 125 topics, taught by professional educators. Topics are geared to everyone from kids, to college students, to people who want to learn English, or even adults who need to beef up on job skills, like learning to write a resume or using Microsoft Office.

<https://www.travelblog.org>

This is a place where you can write an ongoing blog documenting your travels. It's a great way to share stories and chronicle your trip.

<https://www.afi.com>

Here you will find an amazing amount of information about films you have seen or wanted to...complete story lines, a list of the top 100 films and lots more to explore. If you are a film buff, you will love this site.

Hope you enjoy exploring these sites; have fun out there on the www, but remember to be safe! Aloha, Lou

## **Musings on Medicine and Computers**

**Author: Maryellen Amato, M.D., Member,  
ICON Users Group, MO**

**April 2019 issue, The ICON Newsletter**

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When Mary Phillips asked if I would be willing to write an article for the ICON newsletter, I didn't want to say no, even though I was a newbie. After all, Mary had done so much for me. When I attended the Mercy Seniors' Computer Course last year, she sat next to me, guiding me on my journey into Windows 10 which I had never before used. She was forever patient and encouraging.

Mary also introduced me to the ICON meetings at our local libraries, and I soon joined ICON and tried to attend as many of the meetings as I could. Month after month I would observe Mary arriving early and staying late, lugging equipment and paperwork in and out of these meetings, using her time and skills as a top-notch teacher to lead and guide our group into new worlds of technology. From Mary as well as from our guest speakers, I learned about things ranging from genealogy to drones.

I did not want to admit to anyone that I had worked with computers for many years in a limited setting.

You see, the computers that I used at the hospitals or out-patient facilities where I worked had already been purchased, set up, turned on, and preloaded with the programs and apps that we needed to use. In addition, there was a group of savvy computer information technologists at our beck and call if there was ever a question or problem.

So what can I, someone with somewhat "limited" computer experience, discuss in our newsletter?

That got me thinking. Since I am trying to cultivate an attitude of gratitude, I thought I would share my gratitude for computers in Medicine, which have changed all of our lives, mostly for the better.

When I started medical school in 1977 (Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio), we had a refrigerated room full of large bulky computers tucked away somewhere, but we never worked with them. If I wanted to better understand something or look something up – in medical school or in my early years of medical practice – I had to make a mad dash to the medical library to search for a book that might have the information I might need. (...and I would be praying that book was not checked out!) As I progressed in my studies and years of experience as a diagnostic radiologist, my mad dashes became less frequent, but occasionally a disease we didn't see too often or a pressing question caused me to hit the books. This was especially difficult when I was

on call in the middle of the night, the only physician available, and was even worse if the medical library was locked. It was also very time consuming and took me away from my patients.

Voila! The biggest benefit of having a laptop or an iPhone connected to the internet was that medical information was now at my fingertips. The mad dashes to the library became things of the past.

In addition, when I was on call at night, for most of my career, I would have to physically be present at the hospital or drive in from home at 3 a.m. or whatever ungodly time I was called. Now I could sit in front of a computer screen at my home and call up the x-ray images I needed to read. I did not even have to get out of my pajamas or bunny slippers to make the harrowing drive through fog, ice, and snow.

Computers also translated into great benefits in a number of other helpful ways. When I started my career, patient requisitions for imaging tests were written out by hand and had to make it down to the X-ray department. Imagine the frustration we felt when we got a requisition for a test “to be done TODAY” at 6 p.m., particularly noting the test was ordered at 1 p.m. Computers did away with these delays.

Our reports of completed tests also got out sooner. For many years, after interpreting an x-ray, I dictated my findings into a machine that was transcribed by a pool of transcriptionists. It sometimes took a couple of days for the report to be typed. Toward the latter part of my career, this time was chopped since we were now typing our own reports or using voice dictation algorithms. Signing a completed report was also much easier. Back in the day when each report was typed using carbon copies, if we altered a single word on the page (such as changing the word left to right, a critical change), the entire report had to be retyped for just that one word and sent back to the typing pool. That might cause a delay of an additional few days. Now we could just pull up the reports on our computer monitors, make changes ourselves, push the button, and send the report on its way immediately.

The way that x-rays were taken and stored also evolved during my career due to computer technology. We went from using film (like film in your old camera, only bigger and heavier film) to using digital images that were quicker to acquire and easier to store and retrieve.

With our old-fashioned x-ray film, we had to take time to put the films up on lightboxes and take time to sort through dozens of old films in heavy folders to search for comparison views so we could assess for new or interval changes. Sometimes those old films were even stored in the bowels of the hospital and we had to wait hours to get them, delaying our final interpretation. Even worse, sometimes the old films were lost!

I had a ruler, a magnifying glass, and a “hot light” sitting next to me on my desk. My “hot light” was bolted down, but sometimes someone would “borrow” my ruler or magnifying glass and I would become irate. These tools are no longer needed since computers come with their own measuring and magnifying tools, and the background and intensity of images can be “dialed” up or down. This also slashed the need for radiologic

technologists to re-take films if an image was over or underexposed. This translated into less radiation for the patient as well as great time savings.

Many computerized imaging studies which we use commonly today were also either not in existence or only being dreamt of in the 1970s. This includes the CT scanner, invented by British engineer Godfrey Hounsfield (a Nobel Prize winner that I had the privilege of meeting). The “C” in CT stands for computerized – and CT is shorthand for computerized tomography. This allows for making x-ray slices of body parts, improving our diagnostic capabilities. Without going into all the computer detail and physics involved, let me simply say that this was revolutionary. Diagnoses are now made more quickly, more accurately, and often with less pain for the patient because of CT and computers.

When I started my radiology residency in 1981 at Washington University, it took an entire hour to do a CT scan on a patient’s chest. This meant that the patient had to hold their breath multiple times and the images were more likely to be degraded by motion artifact. In addition, only a limited number of patients could be scanned in a day and there was a waiting list so we scanned into the night hours. Today, it only takes a matter of seconds or less to scan someone’s chest (or other body part), so it can be done on a single breath-hold. It actually takes longer to get the patient on and off the scanning table than it does to do the scan itself! This means quicker diagnoses and increased patient “throughput.”

Virtually all of our current imaging modalities are dependent on computers, ranging from digital mammography to MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

I have just touched the tip of the iceberg here, but I think you get the idea. Computers in Medicine have been extraordinary and they are here to stay, unless they are replaced by another technology that is currently in someone’s imagination.

### **A Birthday you might have forgotten :-)**

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**September 2019 issue, Drive Light**

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September 19 is the birthday of something you might use every day. At the very least you are familiar with it even if you do not text, write emails, handwritten notes or communicate with other humanoids. In fact, it came into existence before there even existed text messages, the Internet, or email

Back in 1982, none of our modern digital communication methods, or even the networks that evolved, existed. On university campuses there existed something called USENET boards. USER Network message boards on which the locally connected users could carry out discussions, some scientific, some not as much.



Well... It all started on a Usenet message board on September 16, 1982 because some guy wanted to know how a drop of Mercury would react in a falling elevator. (Evidently the Physics department guys had a strange sense of humor.) After several rounds of remarks, some of them with attempts at humor, there developed a discussion about how to indicate to the readers that the message should be read as a playful joke, and not so seriously interpreted.

You can read an excellent summary of the message board conversation here:

<https://www.ttlq.com/forums/showthread.php?t=73941>

The key entry was on Sunday, September 19, 1982, by Professor Scott Fahlman of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

*401298269,0,0*

*19-Sep-82 11:44 Scott E Fahlman*

*I propose that the following character sequence for joke markers:*

*:~)*

*Read it sideways. Actually, it is probably more economical to mark things that are NOT jokes, given current trends. For this, use:*

*:~(*

These symbols, composed of normal keys used in standard text, and available on our keyboard, have long been used, albeit in simpler forms, for a very long time.

A summary discussion of the Emoticon at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emoticon>

An entertaining version, at <https://www.kidscodecs.com/history-of-emoticons/> credits Victor Hugo with perhaps the first digitally transmitted emoticon

*in 1862, Victor Hugo sent a telegram to his publisher with a single character, ?, to ask how his new book Les Misérables was selling. The publisher, equally clever, sent a single character telegram back, !.*

So happy birthday to the smiley face Emoticon :~)

#### **Tech Humor One-liners**

Some things Man was never meant to know. For everything else, there's Google.

CAPS LOCK – Preventing Login Since 1980.

To err is human – and to blame it on a computer is even more so.

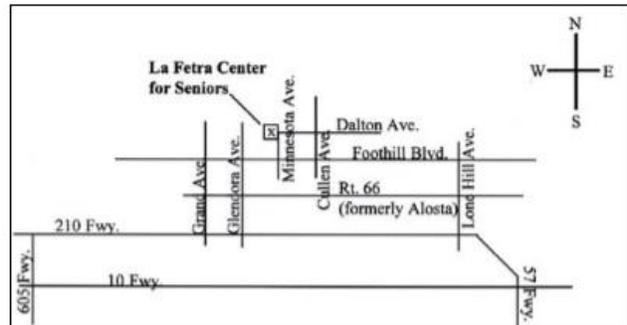
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