

***THE
GIGABYTE
GAZETTE***

The Monthly Newsletter
of the
***SUN CITY SUMMERLIN
COMPUTER CLUB***

<https://www.scscclub.com>

September, 2023

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David Kretchmar

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President's Message

September News

by Jeff Wilkinson

We will have a *Welcome Back* social event with ice cream and cookies this month with a speaker from the Clark County Library District. Come learn of all the available services you can partake of with a FREE library card. **Thursday, September 7, at 2 PM Desert Vista Room 5.**

Our popular help sessions for iPhone/iPad and Android phone users are offered monthly. These are hands-on, individual help sessions addressing your particular issues. The weekly Repair SIG has been operational all summer and is considered one of the best bargains in Sun City. Each Tuesday, beginning at 12:30 PM, we open the classroom for assistance with your computer issues. With live Windows 10 Classes on selected Saturday mornings and Zoom classes along with the weekly Kaffee Klatch, your club is active and thriving.

If there is a class or subject you would like to see addressed or a suggestion for a speaker for our monthly meetings, please let me know.

Jeff Wilkinson, President
(702) 527-4056 pres.scsc@gmail.com

General Membership Meeting

The club's General Meeting will be at **2 PM on Thursday September 7th** in Desert Vista Room 5. The program is a Welcome Back ice cream and cookies social. The featured speaker will be from the Las Vegas / Clark County Library to update us on the latest in available resources offered via the public library.

For Club information: go to www.scsccl.com, contact Jeff Wilkinson, President at (702) 527-4056 or email him at pres.scsccl@gmail.com.

SCSCC Board of Directors Actions

The Computer Club Board of Directors took the following actions on August 9, 2023

Neal Gronich made a motion that the **minutes of the July 12, 2023 Board Meeting be approved as submitted**. The motion was seconded by Jerry Sanderson and unanimously approved by the Board.

Tom Burt made a **motion** that the **meeting adjourn**. Howard Verne **seconded** the motion, and it was unanimously **approved** by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 AM.

September 2023 Printable Calendars

To view this month's printable classroom and lab calendars, click the following hyperlink:

https://www.scsccl.com/Calendars/scsccl_calendar_2023-09Sep.pdf

Submissions Welcome

We are always looking for new information to share with our club members. If you have computer or technical information or tips you would like to share with members of the club, send your articles to editor **Tom Burt** at tomburt89134@cox.net. Thank you to everyone for your contributions.

Welcome New Members

The following new 2023 members have joined the Computer Club
from July 29 to August 28, 2023.

Tom Carroll
Mark Herbeck

Suziane Hollins
Jane Horwitz

As of August 29th, the club has 529 paid memberships for 2023.

As of December 31st, 2022 the club had 570 paid memberships for 2022.

The Computer Club is now accepting new and renewed memberships for 2023.
Annual dues are \$10 per person.

Special Interest Groups and Kaffee Klatches

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) provide a forum for general discussion on a specific computer-related subject. Admission to all SIGs is on a first-come, first-seated basis and is subject to the maximum allowed by fire code regulations. <W>, <L>, <M> or <H> indicate whether a SIG would be of interest to a Windows, Linux, MacOS or Hand-held Device user.

Android Help <H> *Live in the Classroom*

Gene Koch

Third Thursday at 1 PM monthly

Next meeting: Thursday, September 21st

This hands-on Q&A session offers one on one help to Android phone and tablet users.

Apple iPhone / iPad Help <H> *Live in the Classroom*

Zane Clark 702-332-5747

First Wednesday, 9 a.m. monthly

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 6, 2023

The help session offers one-on-one help with your questions and problems. Come anytime, leave anytime.

Internet Investing <W/M/H> *via Zoom*

Tom Burt (702-341-7095)

3rd Thursday, 10 a.m. monthly

Next meeting: Thursday, August 21st

The Internet Investing SIG provides a forum for members interested in using Internet resources for researching and managing investments. The groups meets to discuss, and learn more about investing, finance, tax, estate planning and legal matters. The SIG's target audience is members with intermediate computer skills and investment experience, but all members are welcome.

Kaffee Klatch <W/M/H> via Zoom

Jeff Wilkinson (702-527-4056)

Every Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.

This Kaffee Klatch is an open, free-form discussion group for all users, from beginning to advanced. KK discussions are not restricted to any one subject, computer platform or computer-knowledge level but should be computer or technology related. We will try to answer your questions, help you keep your systems updated and provide some useful “tips and tricks.”

Repair SIG <W/L/M> Live in the Classroom

Chuck Hagen (702-418-2614)

Every Tuesday, 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Repair Lab provides **CLUB MEMBERS ONLY** with no-cost assistance for those having upgrades and / or hardware and software problems with their computers. Bring in only your PC tower, your Mac or your laptop and your problems. Our TECH team will give you our best effort. ***Be sure to mark your cables so you can re-connect when you get home.***

Windows 10/11 SIG Live in the Classroom

Bill Wilkinson (702-233-4977)

First and Third Saturdays at 9:30 a.m.

Next meetings: Saturday, September 2 and September 16, 2023

If you are a novice or near-beginner computer user, or if you just want some refresher information together with a refreshing cup of coffee, then jump-start or recharge your computing knowledge by attending these Windows 10/11 SIG / Q&A sessions. At each session, attendees will explore several topics of interest to beginners and near-beginners. The topics are always announced a couple of days in advance via e-mail to SCSCC members who have subscribed to the club’s SCSCCNews mailing list. Each topic is presented in a step-by-step manner and is supported by “how to” notes that can be easily and conveniently downloaded from the SCSCCBKK.org web page. Following each “up front” presentation of one or more topics (approximately 60 minutes in duration), an informal open-ended Question and Answer period takes place for those who wish to participate, listen, reflect, or inquire.

Class and Q&A Offerings

The club's educational sessions are being conducted either as Zoom webcasts, live in-person or a hybrid of the two. Check the weekly calendar on the [club website](#) to see which mode the session is using. Unless explicitly stated, advance registration is not required for these sessions.



Burner Phones – How to Use

Thursday, September 14th at 1 PM via Zoom

Presenter: Mary Lou Miles

Location: Zoom Webcast

Mary Lou will reprise her interesting class on the ways to take advantage of “burner” phones.



Google Docs

Saturday, September 23rd 9 - 11 AM Live and Zoom

Presenter: Gail Weiss

Location: Classroom

Google DOCS is a **FREE** word processing application much like MS Word and can be accessed from your computer and all mobile devices (both Apple and Android). You can open a MS Word document in Google DOCS or download a DOCS file to your PC in MS Word format and open it in MS Word. Your Docs files will automatically be saved to your Google Drive cloud space, and you will also be able to share those documents with others. Come and explore this application with me.

This class will be held in the Computer Club Classroom, so please bring your own laptops or mobile devices if you want to follow along. For more information about this class or if you have any questions or ideas for future classes, please email me at gmweiss5@gmail.com.



Android Smartphone Photography

Thursday, September 28th at 10 AM via Zoom
Presenter: Tom Burt

This month I'm reprising a session dedicated to helping our members get the best possible photographs and videos when using their Android phone. We'll begin with a basic review of general principles of photography – composition, light, focus, stability – and how these principles work when your smart phone is your digital camera.

We'll also review the features of the Android Camera app. Along the way, we'll take various photos, including selfies. We'll also look at a Google app that lets you use your smart phone camera as a portable scanner. We'll also spend some time on how to move your photos from the phone to storage in the Cloud or on your personal computer. As time permits, we'll demonstrate some simple image edits you can do using Google Photos.

Presentation notes will be available about September 24 at:
<http://www.scscclab.com/smnr/AndroidSmartphonePhotography.pdf>

This session will be recorded and posted to the club's website.



Tom's Tech-Notes

YouTube as a Knowledge Resource

YouTube (www.youtube.com) is Google's online platform for user-created videos of all kinds. Over the years, users have posted an amazing collection of videos and the collection grows larger every day. YouTube is my "go to" resource when I'm looking for arcane bits of knowledge – especially "how to" examples. This month we'll look at a few examples of YouTube videos that quickly convey useful knowledge in an audio-visual format.

Example 1 – Adjust the Brakes on a Walker

I have serious back issues, so I use a 4-wheeled rollator walker to get around. The rollator has brakes for the rear wheels. Every couple of years, the brake cables need to be tightened. I browsed to YouTube and entered into the search window the phrase: "**how to adjust brakes on a drive rollator**". I immediately got about 7 hits of varying detail that showed me exactly what I needed to do. I watched a few, just to be sure everything I needed to know had been covered. It's a very simple adjustment, requiring only a pair or two of plyers.

Example 2 – Replace the Hard Drive in a HP Laptop with a Solid-State Drive

Among the various computers in Casa de Burt is a 2014 vintage HP Pavilion laptop that originally came with Windows 8. Its disk drive is a 500 G-byte 5400 RPM hard drive. Its CPU is an AMD A8 and it has 4 G-bytes of RAM. I upgraded the operating system to Windows 10 in early 2016.

After that upgrade, this laptop became so slow it was almost unusable for about 15 minutes after booting, even with software tuning to minimize Microsoft's "instrumentation". Windows 10, after booting, launches a variety of scans of the hard drive, all running at the same time, that fight each other and overwhelm the system. While this was going on, it would often take Windows over a minute to respond to a mouse click.

The Computer Club experienced this same effect with laptops in our training lab. The club's volunteer maintenance team eventually mitigated the problem by installing solid state drives in those laptops. However, the procedure to do this is complex and requires careful handling and sequencing of the steps to disassemble and reassemble the laptop.

I decided to look into what it would take to do the upgrade to a solid-state drive on my own HP laptop. I browsed to YouTube and entered the search phrase: "**replace hard drive on hp pavilion 17z laptop**". YouTube offered me a selection of similar searches, one of which I picked. I got an excellent selection of hits on "step-by-step" videos that detailed the procedure. I played a few of these to get a sense of how complex the upgrade would be. In the end, I decided to

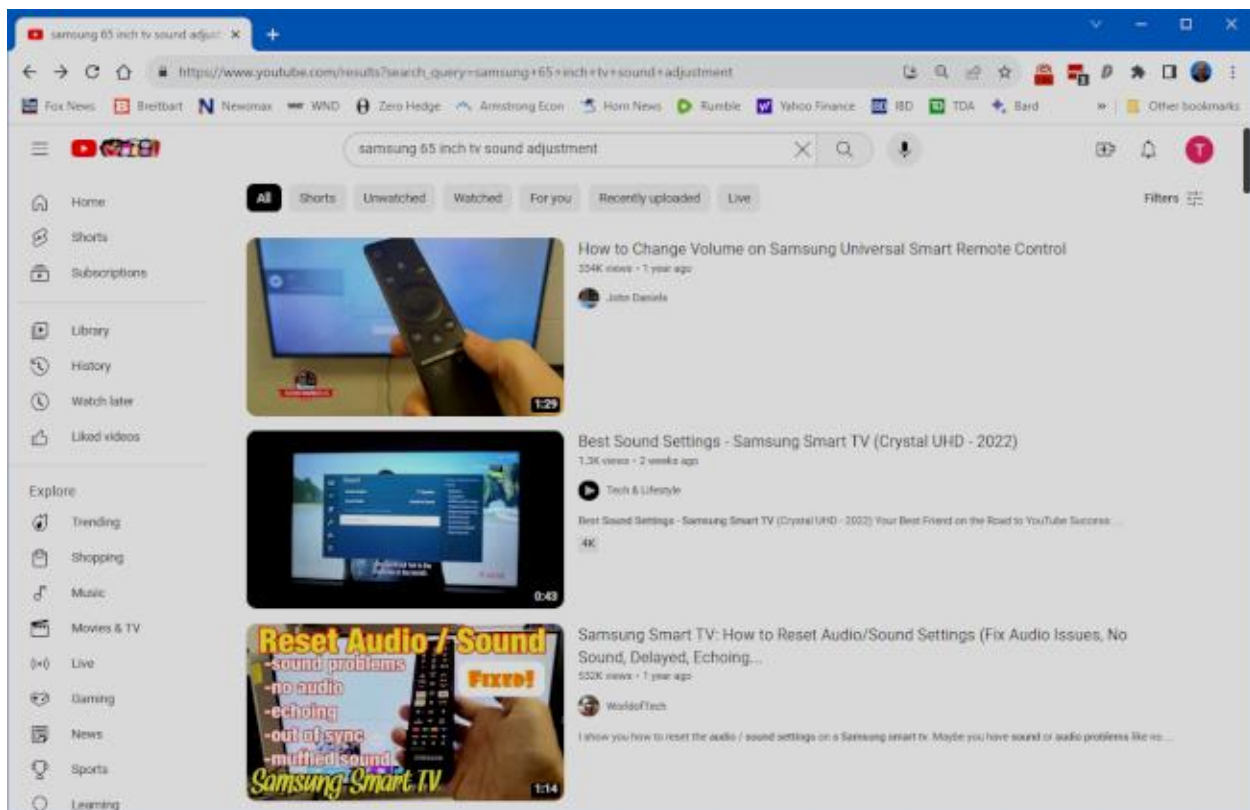
pass on the upgrade, not because I felt I couldn't do it, but because, even after upgrading the laptop with a new SSD, the rest of the system components were over 8 years old and the other hardware specs (CPU, RAM, chipset) would not be compatible with Windows 11. My conclusion was that it would be better to install Linux Mint in place of Windows 10 on that laptop.

This was an example of YouTube helping me decide NOT to do something.

Example 3 – Adjusting the Sound Settings on My Samsung Smart TV

A few months ago, I “cut the cord”, abandoning DirecTV in favor of streaming YouTube TV, Paramount+ (CBS), Amazon Prime Video and its companion FreeVee, the free tier of Peacock TV (NBC) and Samsung’s own 100+ channel free streaming TV service. The video quality of all of these services has been excellent and I’ve got more content available than I could ever watch. One frustration, however, has been that the sound level varies a lot between the various services. This means I have to frequently adjust the TV volume depending on which service I’m currently streaming.

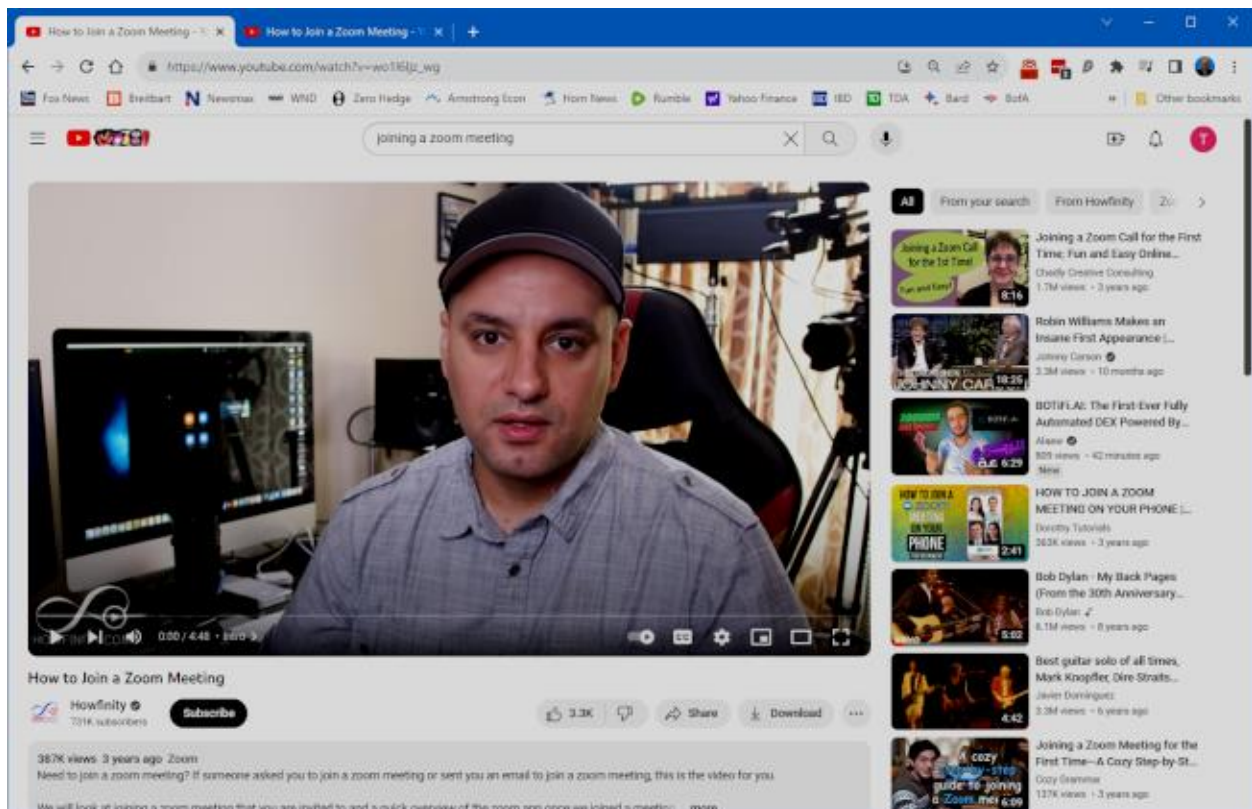
I decided to see what YouTube could tell me. I browsed to YouTube and entered the search phrase: “**samsung 65 inch tv sound adjustment**”. I got several useful hits as shown below. The middle hit video showed an advanced setting for Adaptive Sound that was what I needed.



Example 4 – Tutorial on Using Zoom

I do two teaching sessions each month – one on investing and one on some technology topic of current interest, such as AI, networking or photo editing. My preferred presentation venue has become Zoom, so can teach from my home office. Zoom works well, but one problem has been that some of our Sun City seniors have found getting Zoom to work to be a difficult challenge. It would be nice to teach a class on using Zoom; however, teaching a class on Zoom via Zoom is a classical “catch 22”. What to do?

I browsed to YouTube and entered the search phrase: “joining a zoom meeting”. I got a number of useful video hits. Below is a screen shot of one of the videos.



The video was a simple tutorial focusing solely on how a novice user could join a Zoom video session. That is the only procedure my class attendees would need to attend my Zoom class sessions. Once I had reviewed the video, I copied the URL of that video so that I could include it in my email notice of the meeting as a helpful tutorial aid for beginners.

Closing Thoughts

The possibilities for finding online tutorials on YouTube are incredibly vast, and all available for free. Alas, in this article, we’ve barely scratched the surface. A caveat is that, like all Internet content, there’s no guarantee that it’s up-to-date or even factually correct. The quality of videos can vary, and many are made by speakers with difficult-to-understand accents. Patience is the key to finding the gem that you are seeking.



Kretchmar's Korner

The DealDash (Penny Auction) Scam

David Kretchmar, Hardware Technician

I've recently noticed a return of TV ads promising products as much as 95 percent off retail at DealDash.com. DealDash advertises itself as offering fair and honest auctions, but are they



really? Millions of people have signed up for a chance to buy items at penny auctions at a fraction of the retail price. Who wouldn't want to buy a new iPad for \$30? But think about it, who would really want to SELL that iPad for \$30, when it cost several hundred dollars wholesale? It is worth noting that the "penny" in

penny auctions refers to the bid increments, but your actual cost could be many dollars.

Consumers are buying more items online every year, and have come to appreciate the convenience, selection and often substantial cost savings. So, these penny auctions would appear to be an extension of that money saving online buying concept.

Most consumers are familiar with online auctions at sites such as eBay where interested individuals bid up the price of an item until time expires. The high bidder at the end of the auction wins the item at the winning bid price.

However, another form on online auctions, internet penny auctions, have expanded in recent years. While some of these sites are *technically* legitimate, many of their business practices are questionable, and most consumers would be better off avoiding them completely.

Wha Are Penny Auctions?

Online penny auctions are internet bidding sites that share some similarities with legitimate auction sites like eBay. The BIG difference is that consumers who bid on penny auctions must

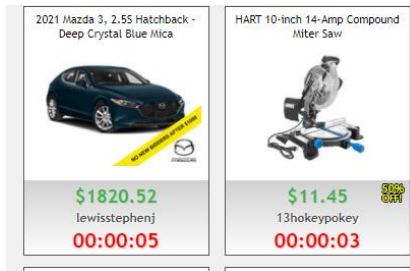


pay for *each bid* they make regardless of whether they win or lose the auction.

Generally, anyone interested in bidding in a penny auction must pay a registration fee before gaining access to bidding. This fee, while not required by all penny auction web sites, is often described and charged in what many consider an underhanded way. Typically, a consumer will make an inquiry regarding an online penny auction and, if the consumer provides credit card information, that credit card is immediately charged \$60 - \$99 as part of the registration process. Often consumers provide credit card information without realizing they are authorizing any payment.

An Auction Example

As stated above, penny auctions' business model is to immediately charge anyone furnishing them a credit card number at least \$60, which buys a bidder 100 1-cent bids.



Most new bidders bid on one or two auctions, lose their 100 bids (\$60 worth), and quickly realize getting a bargain wasn't as easy as it looked. These sites count on the addictive nature of *almost* winning an auction; maybe losing by a penny or two, to encourage a percentage of bidders to buy more bids. Sometimes a substantial discount is offered – for example if

you sign up right now you can get 200 bids for the same \$60.

Penny auctions usually allow losing bidders to apply at least part of the money spent on bidding towards buying the product at *the auction site's* retail price. However, penny auction sites, including DealDash, often substantially overstate the retail price of items, so buyers are usually either overpaying or getting completely ripped off.

How a Penny Auction Works

The bidding for an item typically begins at \$0 and then increases by one cent each time someone bids. There is a countdown clock that restarts every time someone places a new bid. Some Web sites even allow users to set up automatic rebids if they are out-bid. The total price of the item “won” is determined by the number of bids, so you could end up paying well over the retail value of the item you're bidding on. Generally, if you lose the bid, you have also lost the money spent on the bids you used.

Let's say the auction is for a new computer with a stated retail value of \$599. The bidding starts at \$0, increases in 1 cent increments, and one “lucky” bidder “wins” the computer for \$30 (300 1-cent bids). The winning bidder is given a credit for the bids he has “spent” at \$0.60 each. It is not unusual to see individuals bidding hundreds of times. So, if the winner in this example bid 300 times (at a per/bid cost of \$0.60) that winner paid \$180 for their 300 bids. Still, this does not seem like a bad deal for the winner; \$180 for a \$599 computer, even if it is a system you could get on Amazon for \$399.

If a penny auction item sells for \$180 in bids, the auction site has received 18,000 incremental 1 cent bids, which cost the bidders as much as \$10,800! Penny auction sites often promote themselves as “social media” buying and stress the social nature of their sites. What they don't advertise is how addicting these sites can be. \$10 gift cards can go for over \$20 when bidders' egos apparently overrule all common sense. And I can virtually guarantee YOU will not get that computer for \$180.

An individual cannot determine which penny auction sites are “legitimate”. Some state attorney generals have found that certain penny auction Web sites use *shills* that automatically outbid people, making it virtually impossible to win items at a reasonable price. Some of these shills are software programs that show a fake username to persuade consumers that they are bidding against a real person. A number of penny auction sites have simply disappeared

without ever shipping items won. Other sites have sold financial information about users or put additional charges on credit cards without permission.

Conclusion and Recommendation: Avoid Penny Auctions

While online penny auctions may sound like an attractive deal at first, consumers should be very wary before handing over any money or credit card information. It is very unlikely that consumers will save any money by using the service to purchase goods, and much more probable they will be ripped off.

APCUG Guest Article

Reflections on the PC Environment

By Dick Maybach, Brookdale Computer User Group
www.bcuq.com n2nd (at) att.net

The PC world was far simpler when I began writing PC tech columns in 1992. Many of us relied on diskettes for storage; if we had a hard disk, it held only a few hundred megabytes. Software was distributed on diskettes, and its box usually contained a manual. Windows 3.1 appeared that year, and it was the first Windows version that was really practical. But many continued to use DOS. Significantly, Windows required a hard disk; when we used DOS, two diskette drives provided adequate storage.

The PC was undergoing a transition from an experimental and educational toy to an essential information appliance. The Internet was available only to governments and large corporations, although some exchanged messages through software bulletin boards, which they accessed (slowly) over telephone lines using dial-up modems — even simple configuration changes required opening the system case to access jumpers and expansion cards. There were frequent PC shows where dozens of vendors sold hardware and software. Bookstores had extensive collections of PC books and magazines. It was an exciting time for us.

The situation is far different today. Most PC users, excluding those reading articles like this, have no interest in what goes on inside the box. They would no more open a PC case than a dishwasher cabinet. As a result, PC books, magazines, and parts vendors have largely disappeared. This is good for most folks who want to communicate with friends and family, surf the Internet, and prepare taxes. But it can be frustrating for those of us who see the larger potential of the PC. However, the barriers are superficial, and the experimental and educational world is still alive, well, and accessible on the PC. We must exercise more care while experimenting with our PCs than we did years ago because it's become a vital tool in our lives and holds valuable information we have to protect. Let's look at some of the opportunities.

For years, I took pictures with a 35-mm camera, and film and processing cost about a dollar a click. Editing required a darkroom, expensive equipment, and smelly chemicals, and few did it. Today, we don't use film; bytes are free, and image processing software costs vary from reasonable to free. Any imaging program can do things that darkroom users couldn't even imagine. When you've finished the processing, you can send the results anywhere in the world for free or, if you have a suitable printer, commit it to paper. Image editing can be complex, and it takes some effort to learn, but there are very few photos that can't be improved, many substantially. I use the free **GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP)**, <https://www.gimp.org/>, to retouch JPEG image files. Your camera compresses images to produce JPEG files and discards information in the process. You can often recover this by working with images before they are compressed, using **RawTherapee**, <http://rawtherapee.com/>, or **Darktable**, <https://www.darktable.org/>. These are complex programs that require some effort to master.

Early PCs limited your programming to BASIC, which, as its name implies, has quite limited potential. However, we have a much wider choice today, including **Python**, <https://www.python.org/>, which provides an accessible start to programming and includes features widespread among all programming languages. In addition, the required software is free, and although some support tools are not, they aren't really necessary.

Experimenting with operating systems does require care, as what seems like a simple configuration change can wreak havoc and sometimes require re-installation. (Ask me how I know.) For this, I prefer using a virtual machine, such as one managed by **VirtualBox**, <https://www.virtualbox.org/>. In the past, I used dual-booting to install an alternative OS, but this requires re-partitioning the hard disk, which is risky, and the UEFI BIOS in modern PCs has features to protect the installed OS. Working around these requires non-trivial expertise. Your OS views each virtual machine as an application, which avoids all this risk and complexity. If you want to experiment with Windows, you'll have to buy the software, as the virtual machine is legally a different machine. Of course, you can experiment with Linux for free.

Arduino, <https://www.arduino.cc/>, provides an inexpensive way to experiment with both hardware and software. This microprocessor (mounted on a small board) plugs into a USB port on your PC, which supplies the power for the board and communicates with it. You program in a variant of C++, which you compile on your PC and download to the Arduino. It's easy to connect the Arduino board to external circuits, so this provides a way of learning circuit design and programming. Since all the action takes place off your PC, the risk is minimal.

The **Raspberry Pi**, <https://www.raspberrypi.com/>, provides a considerably more complex environment than the Arduino. This is a complete PC on a circuit board about the size of a playing card. While the Arduino is a controller that runs only a single program at a time, the Pi is a complete computer running Linux. You'll need a display, mouse, and keyboard to get started, making this more difficult than an Arduino. However, you can use its peripherals if you have a desktop system. (You might use a USB hub to consolidate the keyboard, mouse, and printer cables. Then you could switch between your PC and the Pi by swapping just two cables, the USB from the hub and the HDMI from the display.) After configuring the Pi, you can connect it to your home network and access it using remote desktop software on a PC; it won't need dedicated peripherals until you install a new OS on the Pi.

Fabricating objects used to require a shop and tools, but now it can be done with only a **3D printer**, about the size of your existing one. You design an object using CAD software, transfer the file to the printer, focus on something else, and (perhaps some hours later) return to find the completed object sitting in the printer. This is an emerging technology and presently is quite limited. Printing is slow, set-up is fussy, and the material is usually plastic, but things are rapidly improving. For example, I recently saw a device, <https://snapmaker.com/>, that could also machine aluminum and cut sheet material and create with plastic. Currently, the projects are limited to small enclosures, key fobs, game tokens, or similar small objects, but this will surely improve.

To learn about electronics, instead of acquiring a collection of tools, parts, and instruments, you can run experiments with a circuit simulator, such as **KiCad**, <https://www.kicad.org/>. It lets you build circuits with simulated resistors, capacitors, inductors, transistors, and integrated circuits,

then test the result. The next step would be to use an Arduino with a prototype board into which you plug physical components to build circuits you've simulated. Kits that facilitate this are available from such vendors as **Adafruit**, <https://www.adafruit.com/>. Because you are using Arduino to generate signals and detect the result, this approach limits you to low frequencies.

If you play a musical instrument, you probably have a collection of scores, some of which are barely legible. However, you could input them into a score composing program such as **MuseScore**, <https://musescore.org/en>, to make corrections, transpose them to a new key, or just clean up the appearance.

These examples reflect my interests and my preference to use open-source software. Your interests and preferences are undoubtedly different, but perhaps these examples will inspire you to search for some that would help you. In the past, we relied on PC magazines to suggest areas to explore. There are many more interesting and useful tools today, but it takes more effort to find them without magazines. Don't let your PC become just an appliance; it can be a wonderful tool to help you enjoy life.

Lab Monitor Schedule

The Open Lab session is held once per week: 9 am to noon on Saturdays.

September	Monitor Schedule
Jeff Southwell	Saturday 9/2/2023
Fred Cohen Ann Warhaftig	Saturday 9/9/2023
Marilyn Gramms Frances Sasaki	Saturday 9/16/2023
Linda Muench Frances Sasaki	Saturday 9/23/2023
Linda Muench	Saturday 9/30/2023