

***THE
GIGABYTE
GAZETTE***

The Monthly Newsletter
of the

***SUN CITY SUMMERLIN
COMPUTER CLUB***

www.scscclub.com

November, 2020

Table of Contents

President’s Message.....	1
General Membership Meeting	2
November 2020 Calendars	2
Submissions Welcome	2
SCSCC Board of Directors Actions	3
Welcome New Members	3
Special Interest Groups (SIGs)	4
Kaffee Klatches	6
Seminar Offerings	7
Tom’s Tech-Notes	8
Kretchmar’s Korner.....	12
APCUG Guest Article	14
Lab Monitor Schedule.....	16

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Tom Burt	Peggy Cushman
Kathy Kirby	David Kretchmar
Jeff Wilkinson	Matt Batt



President's Message

by Jeff Wilkinson

A Chromebook may be worth a look!

The monthly general meeting of the Computer Club this month will feature a video on Chromebook as an alternative to a Windows or Mac laptop and the versatility and cost-effective advantages.

So, you ask, what is a Chromebook? A Chromebook is a laptop computer which runs Google's Chrome OS. The Chrome OS is a Gentoo Linux-based operating system designed by Google. It is derived from the free software Chromium OS and uses the Google Chrome web browser as its principal user interface.

From their initial introduction in 2011, Chromebook computers have been improving with the ability to accomplish more tasks and even run Android apps. The Chromebook is built around Google's Cloud service. This eliminates the need for large local storage capability and updating of the operating system (since much of it is contained in Google's cloud, unlike Windows or IOS). This offers many advantages. For instance, without the need for a large hard drive weight and power consumption are significantly reduced.

At our repair SIG on Tuesday afternoons, we often see older laptops running Windows 7 or even Windows XP that are just not worth upgrading to Windows 10. They would be almost unusable because they would be so slow. When we deliver that news, the user inevitably asks if I get a new computer what should I get? The usual round of questions ensues as we inquire about the primary use of the laptop. More often than not, the answers are: checking email, searching the web, making airline reservations, online banking, and online shopping not necessarily in that order. It's difficult to recommend a \$600+ laptop when a Chromebook would be just fine in most cases.

My first experience with a Chromebook was when I traveled to Mexico and decided this was an ideal device to remain connected. Its lightweight and small size were ideal for travel. With an internet connection the complete Google Suite of applications is available and, if you have your devices synced, most everything you need is at your fingertips.

If you are in the market for a new computer, a Chromebook may be a viable alternative! With Black Friday fast approaching, give some serious consideration to a Chromebook as either a primary or backup computer or as a gift.

Keep safe and healthy!!

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

General Membership Meeting

Our November General Meeting will be held at 2 PM on Thursday, November 5th via Zoom webcast. Our program will feature a presentation on Chromebooks”.

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

November 2020 Calendars

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

http://www.scsccl.com/Calendars/scsccl_calendar_2020-11Nov.pdf

Submissions Welcome

We are always looking for new information to share with our club members. If you have computer or technical information 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.

SCSCC Board of Directors Actions

The Computer Club Board of Directors took the following actions on October 14, 2020

George Wolff made a motion that the **minutes of the September 9, 2020 Board Meeting be approved as submitted**. The motion was seconded by Tom Burt and unanimously approved by the Board.

In discussion, it was decided to leave the annual dues rate at \$10 per person.

Tom Burt is investigating adding a feature to the club website to allow club members to pay annual dues online via credit card.

Howard Verne made a **motion** that the meeting adjourn. Chuck Hagen **seconded** the motion and it was unanimously **approved** by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Welcome New Members

The following new members have joined the Computer Club from September 27th to October 25th.

Marti Brandon
Bruce Bullard

Ken McCracken
Sheldon Rosenberg

As of October 27th, the club has 585 paid memberships for 2020 and 14 paid memberships for 2021.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Currently, all seminars, SIGs, Q&As and Kaffee Klatches are being conducted as Zoom webcasts. Unless explicitly stated, advance registration is not required for SIG sessions.

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. All of the following meetings are held in the Classroom. <W>, <M> or <H> indicate whether a SIG would be of interest to a Windows, Macintosh or Hand-held Device user.

Apple Q&A <M/H> DARK

1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 9 a.m.

Next meeting: January 6th & 20th

Gail Weiss

Bring your Apple iPhone, iPad, Watch or MacBook to get one on one help with your questions about how to use any Apple device and popular iOS or MacOS apps.

Apple SIG <M/H> DARK

4th Wednesday, 9 a.m.

Next meeting: January 27th

Gail Weiss

Bring your Apple iPhone, iPad, Watch or MacBook for a presentation and discussion about Apple's PCs and devices and popular iOS or MacOS apps.

Genealogy Q&A <W/M> DARK

4th Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon in the Lab

Next session: TBA

Karen & Ray Ristic (702-749-6489)

Genealogy is one of America's most popular and rewarding hobbies. With billions of records now available online, researching your family tree has never been easier – if you know where to look and which keywords you'll need to use to create an accurate family tree from start to finish.

Karen and Ray Ristic have been doing family history research for over 40 years, teaching classes, members and officers of genealogy societies, and have published two family history books.

Hardware / Software Repair Lab <W/M >

Reservation Required

Every Tuesday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Chuck Wolff (702-233-6634) and

Chuck Hagen (702-418-2614)

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.***

Internet Investing <W/M/H> via Zoom

3rd Thursday, 9:00 a.m. in even months

Next meeting: December 17th

Tom Burt (702-341-7095)

The Internet Investing SIG provides a forum for members interested in using Internet resources for researching and managing investments to meet, discuss, and learn more about the topic. The SIG's target audience is members with intermediate computer skills and investment experience, but all members are welcome.

Networking SIG <W/M/H> via Zoom

2nd Thursday at 9 a.m.

Next Meeting: November 12th

Robert Ambrose (rna@muttsoft.com)

This SIG is a discussion forum on computer network technology including modems, routers, firewalls, protocols and ISPs.

~~**Windows 10 SIG <W> DARK**~~

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

Bill Wilkinson (702-233-4977)

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 Win 10 SIG / Q&A sessions. At each session, attendees will explore several topics of interest to beginners and near-beginners. Topics are always announced a couple of days in advance via email 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.

Kaffee Klatches

Currently, all Seminars, SIGs, Q&As and Kaffee Klatches are being conducted as Zoom webcasts. Advance registration is not required for Kaffee Klatch sessions.

Kaffee Klatches provide a forum for general discussion on all computer-related subjects. Admission to all Kaffee Klatches is on a first-come, first-seated basis and is subject to the maximum allowed by fire code regulations. The following meetings are held in the Classroom. <W> or <M> or <H> indicate whether a SIG would be of interest to a Windows, Macintosh or Hand-held Device (iOS or Android) user.

Kaffee Klatch <W/M/H> via Zoom

Every Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.

Sandy Mintz (702-838-2525)

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.” Since our SCSCC is built on “neighbor helping neighbor,” if you have a tip or information, we encourage you to bring it in and share. The fellowship is great, the coffee is good, and the education received from the KK attendees is priceless. Stop by on Tuesday morning and have a cup of coffee with us.

Seminar Offerings

Currently, all Seminars, SIGs, Q&As and Kaffee Klatches are being conducted as Zoom webcasts. Unless explicitly stated, advance registration is not required for Seminar sessions.



Seminar - “Setting Up Your Roku”

Wednesday, November 18th 9 AM

Presenter: Jeff Wilkinson

Location: Zoom Webcast

Jeff will discuss and demonstrate how to connect, set up and use your Roku Smart streaming device, including activating, adding channels and using your Roku to stream Internet TV content.



Seminar - “Quicken – Getting Started”

Thursday, November 19th 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM *via Zoom*

Presenter: Tom Burt

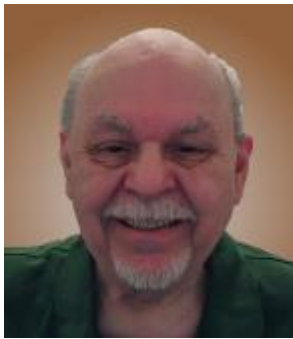
Location: Zoom Webcast

As we move toward the end of the year, it’s a good time to think about getting your finances and record keeping organized for the coming year and for the annual tax filings. For eons at Casa de Burt, we have used the Quicken bookkeeping system to handle these chores.

This 1½ hour session will introduce you to Quicken and the basics of using it for your financial record keeping. If you connect Quicken to your financial and brokerage accounts, it can automatically download almost your financial transactions. It can also automatically track all your investment portfolio transactions and assets.

The presentation handout will be available about November 20th at:

<http://www.scscclub.com/smnr>.



Tom's Tech-Notes

A Brief Tour of the VLC Media Player

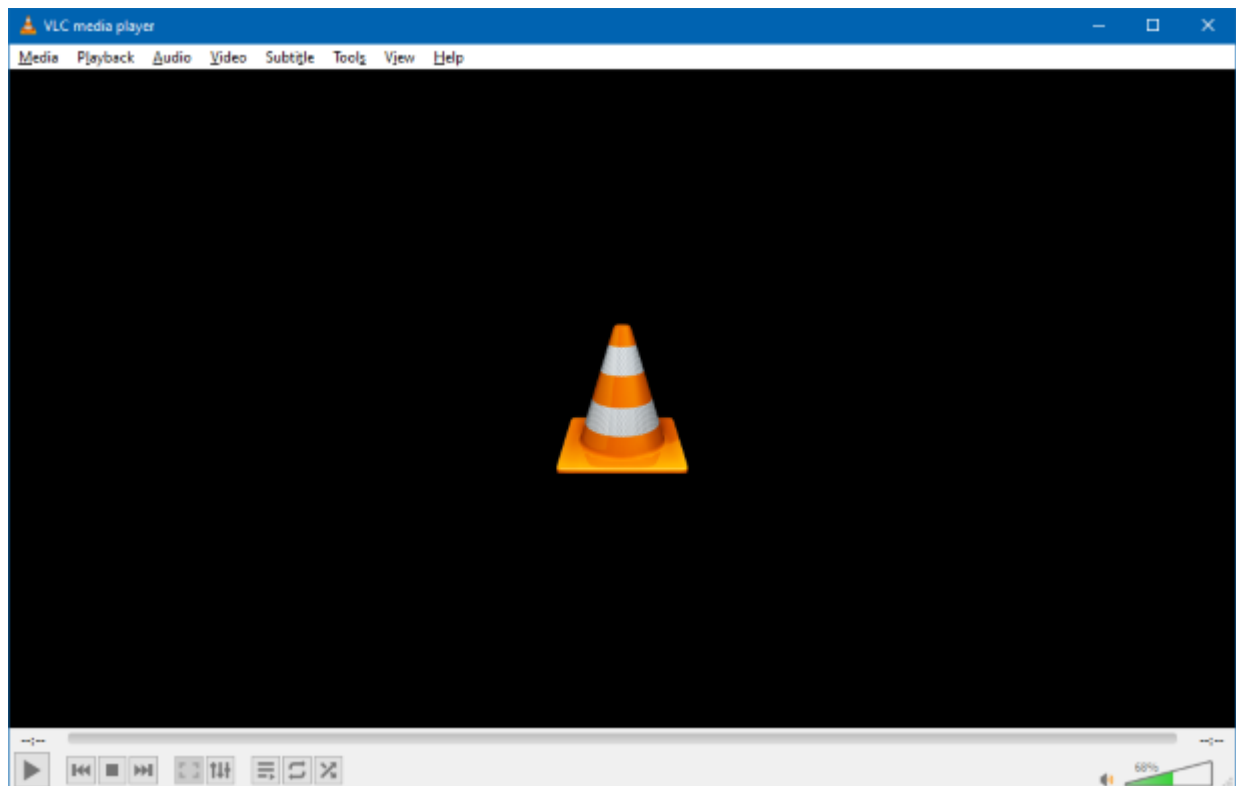
Tom Burt, SCSCC Vice-President

Updated from October 2015

The free **VLC Media Player**, by non-profit VideoLAN Corporation, is a useful and powerful program for playing all types of audio and video files, including video DVD and Blu-ray disks. It also is able to convert audio and video files from one format to another.

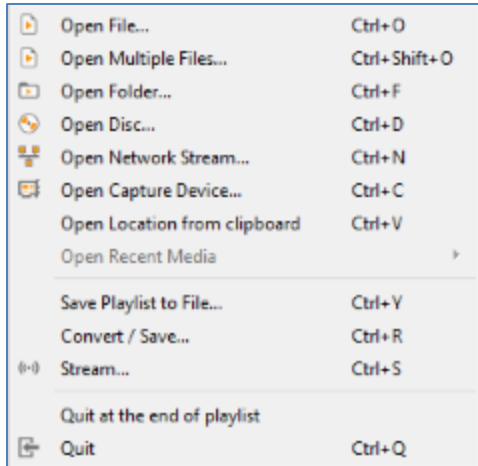
The VLC Media Player has versions for Windows, Mac OS and LINUX. You can download it from: www.videolan.org. The VLC installer from the VideoLAN website does not attempt to install any extra junk-ware, but always pay attention as you click through the setup dialogs. During the setup, you can choose the audio and video file types for which VLC will become the default player. Once VLC is installed, double clicking on one of its file types, such as .MP4 files, will launch VLC to “play” that file.

VLC can directly play Adobe Flash Videos (.FLV files) downloaded from web video sharing sites such as YouTube.com. This can be helpful if you want to build your own collection of YouTube videos and play them on your PC monitor or even stream them to your HDTV.



As you can see in the above screen shot, the VLC user interface is quite simple, featuring a menu bar at the top, the main video window and then player and volume controls at the bottom.

Media Menu

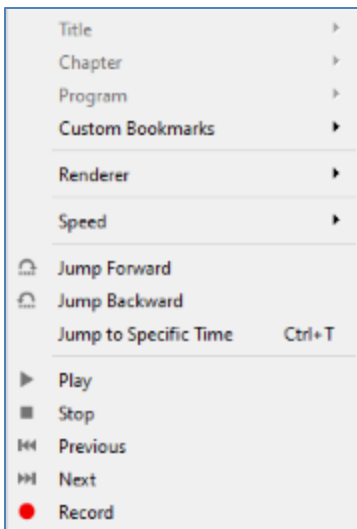


The VLC **Media** menu is the gateway to all operations involving files. Commonly, if you have double clicked a media file, VLC will just start up and play that file.

However, VLC can also play audio/video directly from a capture device, such as a camcorder or it can play audio/video from a network stream, such as an Internet radio or TV station.

The Convert / Save function allows you to convert a set of files from one type to another – for example from .WMV to .MP4 or from .AAC to .MP3. We'll look at this in more detail below.

Playback Menu / Control



The Playback menu allows you to control the playback of the media file. Within a file you can control the playback speed (faster or slower), jump forward or backward or to a specific time.

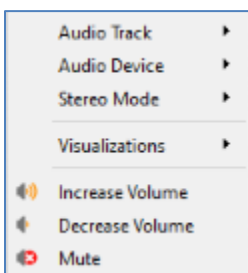
If playing multiple files or a playlist, you can skip forward or backward to the next or previous file.

You can also **record** whatever is playing. This can be handy if playing a streaming video.

The Playback control at the bottom of the VLC window offers a set of *graphical* controls to manage playback.



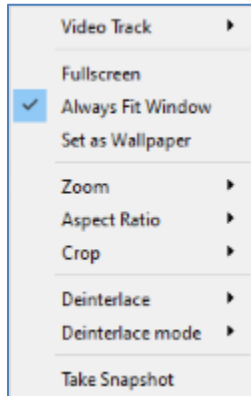
Audio Menu



When playing an audio file, the **Audio** menu lets you control the audio playback, including turning on visualizations, stereo mode (stereo, left track, right track), what audio device to send the sound to, which track to play of a multi-track set, such as a CD.

You can also control the volume, although that is easier to do with the Windows volume control at the lower right of the screen.

Video Menu



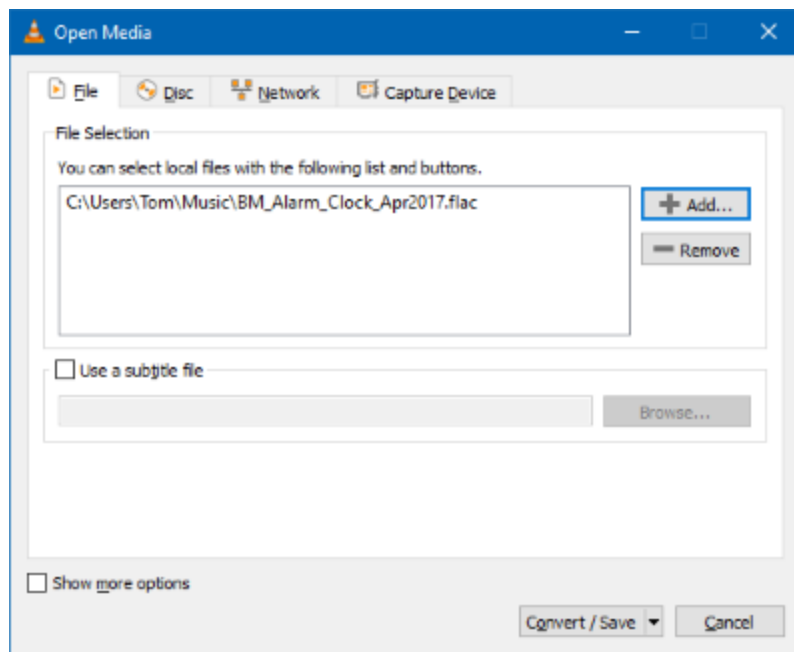
When playing a video file or disc, the **Video** menu lets you control the video playback. You can control which video track is played, switch to full screen and back and set the zoom factor and the aspect ratio of the video window.

You can crop the original video to only show part of the video on the screen. You can specify whether and how the original video should be deinterlaced. And you can grab a particular video frame as a single image.

Media File Conversion

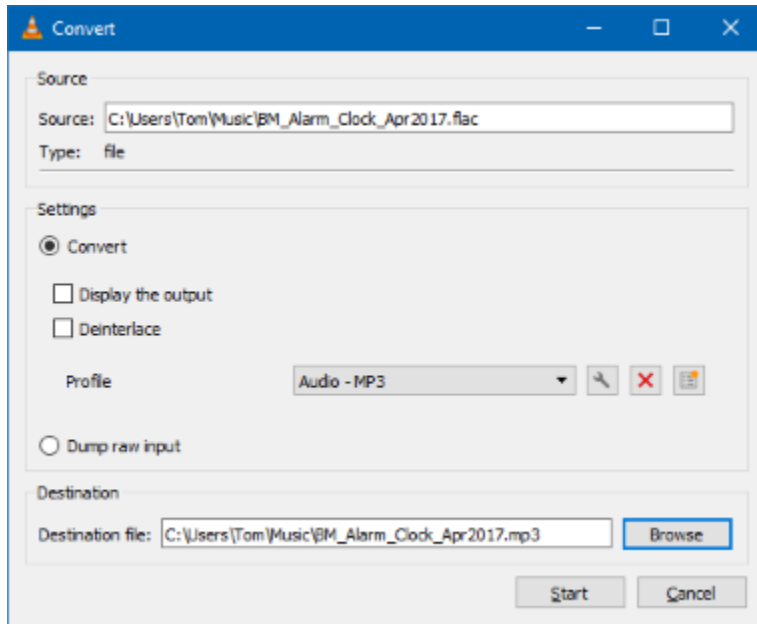
Finally, let's explore the VLC Media Conversion tool.

On the Media menu, click "Convert / Save". The following dialog will open with an empty file list. Click the Add... button to add one or more files to the list to convert. The Convert/Save dropdown at the bottom right will become enabled. Click the down-arrow and then choose Convert.



That will open a second dialog (see below) showing the name of the source file. In the dropdown at the middle, choose the desired resultant file type.

In this example, we are converting a music file format called .FLAC to the more common .MP3 file format. However, you can convert to and from many audio and video file formats. A common format conversion is camcorder .MOV video files to .MP4 video files for posting to YouTube or Facebook.



Once everything is set up, just click the Start button in the lower right of the dialog and the file conversion(s) will proceed.

The time required by VLC to perform a conversion will depend on the size and complexity of the file. Audio files are usually done in a few tens of seconds. Videos may take quite a bit longer.

So that's a quick look at some of the features of VLC. I've only covered the basics. There are many more features in this very powerful program. Give it a try yourself.

Until next month ...



Kretchmar's Korner

By David Kretchmar, Computer Technician

Knowledge is Your Best Defense

Windows Defender and Firewall

There is a lot of confusion regarding Windows computer security. Some reviews of anti-virus software will state that **Windows Defender** is very poor, while others will say that it is very good. I would personally call it entirely adequate while lacking some features.

Microsoft Windows Defender originally was considered pretty weak. However, over the past 5 years, beginning with Windows 8 and continued in Windows 10, Microsoft has upped its game. Windows Defender, through several upgrades to Windows 10 and weekly updates, has become a real challenge to malware developers.



Windows Defender was originally known as Microsoft Security Essentials back in the days of Windows 7, when it was offered as a separate download. Now it's built into Windows 10 and is enabled by default.

I've been using only Windows Defender and Windows Firewall from the day I moved to Windows 10 in 2015, and I have not found a virus infestation in any of my four computers.

Different protections

There are different types of malware protection available which many people wrongly think are the same and label it under antivirus. Within antivirus software there are multiple parts; the two major ones are "Scan time Detection" and "Run time Detection".



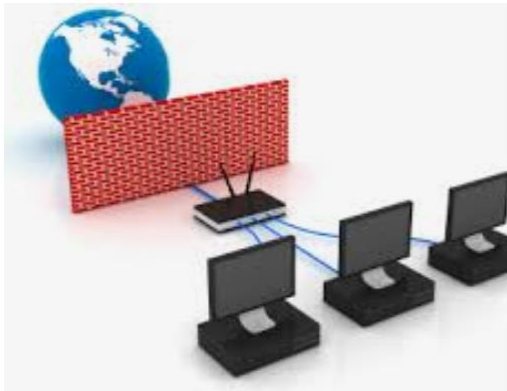
Scan time detection detects malware based on analyzing an application's software executable and is only as good as its latest virus definition updates. Scan time protection depends on recognizing known malware signatures and types and uses that information to determine an executable's validity (or bogusness). Virus definitions need to be periodically updated so its definitions

include the latest discovered malware.

Run time detection detects malware based on the way it runs, system functions it calls and system files it accesses. The run time A/V software then analyses this information to determine whether the application is malicious or has similarities to known malicious software. This is also known as heuristic analysis. Heuristic analysis is incorporated into more advanced security software to detect new threats before they cause harm, without the need for a specific signature. New viruses are called “zero-day”. The best protection against these is a real-time scanner which analyzes how software behaves on your PC. Recently this is one area where Windows defender has excelled.

The firewall

These days the firewall is a major part of the security system, preventing unauthorized connections to your system by malicious software.



The **Windows firewall** does the exact same job of blocking incoming connections as any third-party firewall. Third-party firewalls like the one included with Norton may generate pop ups more often, informing you that they’re working and maybe asking for your input. The Windows firewall just quietly does its thankless job in the background.

Windows firewall is enabled by default and should still be working unless you’ve disabled it manually or installed a third-party firewall. You can find its

interface under Settings, Updates and Security, Firewall & network protection.

You are the best defense

Some experts feel that if you know how to use a personal computer, what to browse on the web, where to click, where not to click, which software to install and which link to click then you don’t need an anti-virus software. But you need to always be aware. Think before you click on anything, and never download third party software onto your system unless you understand exactly what it will do (generally, you don’t).

Free alternatives to Windows Defender

If you don’t feel Windows Defender is adequate, and you don’t want to pay for protection, I suggest you look at the Avast or AVG free antivirus editions. Both can do a good job of protecting your computer. These third-party products offer some features that Windows Defender lacks, such as on-line monitoring for potential exploits. They are available from:

Avast: <https://www.avast.com/en-us/index#pc>

AVG: <https://www.avg.com/en-us/free-antivirus-download>

I have used both and they are very good.

APCUG Guest Article

Protect Your Computer Against Power Outages

By Matt Batt, Past President, Sun City Center Computer Club
www.sccccomputerclub.org mattbatt (at) gmail.com

The two main causes of damage to computers, TVs, modems, and other sensitive electronics are a sudden loss of power and power fluctuations. Basic power strips do not protect your PC from any sort of electrical fluctuations; surge protectors can protect against power surges, but they offer no protection against drops in line voltage or loss of power.

To protect your computer against power outages or voltage fluctuations, you need a battery backup. UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) units are basically surge protectors that contain a battery inside. In the event of a power failure, your computer will seamlessly switch over to battery power and continue to run. This gives you time to shut down your machine without any damage.

Many UPS units come with software that can detect when the unit switches to battery power and shut down automatically in your absence.

There are many different UPS offerings on the market. There are small units that can keep a desktop computer running for 5-10 minutes or longer, more expensive units that can keep multiple computers running for hours.

The most important step in choosing a UPS is to buy one that has enough power to give your computer system enough time to shut down properly. While it is possible to calculate the power usage of a computer system by analyzing all of its components, for purposes of this article we can estimate the requirements of a typical computer user in our club.

UPS systems are rated VA (Volt-Amperes). Ignore how it is calculated, but a typical low-end desktop needs a UPS rated at about 480 VA while a high-end computer with a high-end video card would need a UPS rated as high as 1200 to 1500 VA.

Two types of UPS units have an application to home electronic systems:

The least expensive is a Standby UPS. This type of unit charges its battery and waits. When the power cuts off it will automatically switch to the battery for backup power. The switch takes milliseconds and is fast enough so that most electronics do not shut down.

For a higher cost, you can get a unit with Automatic Voltage Regulation (AVT) that corrects power fluctuations without switching to battery power. This feature protects you from instabilities in line voltage often experienced in lightning storms.

There are a few other considerations to note:

Some units include software for your computer that senses when the UPS switches over to battery power and can automatically initiate the shutdown process.

UPS units generally have a mix of power + surge protected and surge protected only outlets. Make sure that there are enough outlets for your needs.

Some UPS units include surge-protected filtered ports for your Ethernet and Coax cables. Personally, I don't use these as I've had problems with ethernet cable performance degrading through a UPS.

Be sure to get units that have user-replaceable batteries. UPS batteries last 3-5 years. When a battery fails, you'll either need to buy batteries or but a whole new unit.

I've used Cyberpower and APC UPS units and they all worked as advertised. The two pictured below from Amazon both have shutdown software and replaceable batteries. The APC is rated at 500VA and costs \$55.00. It has 5 outlets with Battery backup and two with just Surge protection. It's the model I use on most of my computers and TVs. The Cyberpower has AVR, is rated at 1000VA, and costs \$109.00. It has 5 outlets with Battery backup and four with just Surge protection. I use one like it for my main computer, Internet mode, router, and my phone system.



Be careful out there! Think about having a UPS system on your computers, TV, home theater system, and even your phone system to prevent damage caused by power surges and power loss.

Lab Monitor Schedule

Facial coverings and social distancing of 6 feet required.

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

November	Monitor Schedule
Jeff Southwell Linda McMullin	Saturday 11/7/2020
Fred Cohen Gail Weiss	Saturday 11/14/2020
Mary Hedin John Zuzich	Saturday 11/21/2020
Karen Ristic Ray Ristic	Saturday 11/28/2020