



# THE WYSIWYG



June 2021

Volume 33 Issue 6

**STERLING HEIGHTS COMPUTER CLUB**

PO Box 385

Sterling Heights, Michigan 48311-0385

**MAIN MEETING: TUESDAY JUNE 1  
7:00 PM**

**Same day/time as usual  
Location: Your house,  
Video conference**

*(Please use your real name when you log in, just as we all do when we attend our in-person meetings. The ZOOM event host may restrict admittance to confirmed club members only.)*

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**This Month's Main Meeting Topic:**

**“Identity Theft -  
How To Avoid It”**

**will be presented online by  
APCUG Speakers Bureau member**

**Hewie Poplock**

Guests and visitors are welcome. People can attend any SHCC meetings during two consecutive months before deciding whether or not to become a member. July and August do not count since there is no main meeting in those months. Membership includes admission to all SHCC functions and the newsletter. Membership is open to anyone. It is not limited to the residents of the city of Sterling Heights.

**DUES: \$30/YEAR**

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**CLUB E-MAIL ADDRESS:** [Info@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org](mailto:Info@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org)  
**CLUB WEB PAGE:** <http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>

## 2021 SHCC Officers – Thanks for all your hard work!!!

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### SHCC Coordinators

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### Club Dues Amounts

**T**he club dues were increased to \$30 per year at the November 2018 meeting.

This includes a digital version of the newsletter sent monthly, except for July and August, when the club does not meet.

A paper version of the newsletter is available in place of the digital newsletter, for an additional \$31 per year (increased at March 2019 meeting).

Associate memberships, for a second member of a household, remain at an additional \$15 per year.

### Two-Month Meeting Schedule

<b>SEPTEMBER 2021</b>	<b>OCTOBER 2021</b>
<b>7 - SHCC Main Meeting</b>	<b>5 - SHCC Main Meeting</b>
12 - SEMCO meeting	10 - SEMCO meeting

SEMCO Summer meetings: Sundays June 13, July 11, August 8

Newsletter submissions are due 10 days before the club meeting, but the earlier the better. They should be sent to : [newsletter@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org](mailto:newsletter@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org)

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## The President's Pen

by Don VanSyckel



The ongoing saga of a meeting place continues. I still have not heard from St. Matthews Church. In the meantime the possibility of another location has surfaced. No details about this unless it materializes a little more. Stay tuned, details as they become available.

Michigan is starting to open up. The June meeting has been scheduled to be on Zoom, so we are continuing as we have been at least for another month.

SHCC has been having a summer Gab Fest picnic for a few years, including last year. The Gab Fest for this year has been *tentatively* scheduled for the last Saturday in July, the 31st from 10AM to 2PM. We still need to check the Old Farmers Almanac, so again, stay tuned for details to be finalized. Mark this date on your calendar.

The September meeting is still up in the air whether it'll be live or Zoom. The type of meeting depends in part on social conditions and in part on meeting site availability. After this newsletter, the next newsletter will be September which will be issued in late August.

If you happen to change your email address that you have registered with SHCC, make sure you contact an officer with your new email address. We will be communicating by email about both the Gab Fest in July and the club meeting in September.

I have been "attending" the APCUG Wednesday Workshops. I only see a few other SHCC members in attendance but not many. The workshops have been good. The presenters are members of various clubs that belong to APCUG. Some are better than others but none have been really bad. I have gotten some interesting information from each of the workshops. When I send the emails about the workshops, consider signing up and attending. They are scheduled for two hours, noon to 2 PM, but usually run over a little. The price is right and the topics are interesting.

We had another SHCC virtual Gab Fest. All went good except for the technical difficulties I had getting the Zoom started. Well, I guess all's well that ends well. Interesting discussion about Tesla electric cars. You never know where the conversation will go.

In June we are pleased to welcome back Hewie Poplock from Association of Personal Computer User Groups (this is a remote meeting). Hewie will be presenting "**Identity Theft - How To Avoid It**". This should be a topic of interest to everyone. Make sure to put *June 1st* on your calendar and Zoom in to this meeting.

Last Month:

Last month we had a great remote presentation by Jere Minich from Association of Personal Computer User Groups titled "**Password Managers & Privacy Settings Windows**

10". Since it is a bad idea to use the same password for more than one site, you need to record your passwords someplace and a password manager is a good way to save them. And Microsoft sets various security settings to *their* choice which in many cases should not be *your* choice for various reasons. Jere shared many settings that he advises people change for their online (and offline) security.



## Crossing That Creepy Line

News and/or Opinion from the Editor

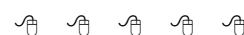
In my view, there are three types of web surfers:

- Those who are aware of the threats and risks of using certain tools and services available on the web, and choose to use them, accepting those risks.
- Those who are aware of the threats and risks of using certain tools and services available on the web, and choose to use safer alternatives to avoid those risks.
- Those who do not know about the threats and risks of using certain tools and services available on the web (including seniors as well as younger folks I've met).

We still have choices....as long as those with the most power don't suppress those with lesser power. That is, as long as the most powerful publishers of web tools and services do not become total monopolies for providing us with "knowledge" and "information", whether about tying shoelaces or baking pies or choosing our political and financial and educational futures. Just so that each of us *knows* and *trusts* our chosen sources of that information. *How* to do that is the real concern....knowing about and trusting every web site and every "app" to NOT collect and abuse our personal identity and information as we utilize them.

"The Creepy Line" is a documentary that exposes the shady methods that the large tech search/social media companies (Google and Facebook, particularly) use to manipulate society, and "blows the lid off the remarkably subtle (hence 'powerful') manner in which they do it". This documentary's "title is culled from the words of former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, when during a 2010 interview he explained Google's code of conduct: 'The Google policy on a lot of things is to get right up to the creepy line and not to cross it.'" But guess who sets that "creepy line"? It describes how Google crosses the creepy line every day. It is available on DVD, and should be required viewing for everyone who uses *any* service on the web (whether on a computer, smartphone, smart-TV, or tablet). But it is also viewable on YouTube (at least until YouTube's owner, Google, decides to ban it -- surprisingly, they haven't so far). The link to the documentary is in this month's WYSIWYG, among the Web Page Reviews on page 14. Watch it and learn why Google is possibly the largest anti-privacy and biased entity on the entire Internet, with Facebook close behind. Remember: Convenience comes with risk -- the more convenience, the more risk. Although you may be tired of hearing it, and choose to ignore it.

And that is a conscious choice....or is it??



## OH NO... It's the Blue Screen of Death

By Bob Rankin

<https://askbobrankin.com>

Fans of Windows XP may differ, but I believe that Windows 10 is the most stable version of the operating system to date. Still, it's not unheard of to see the dreaded Blue Screen of Death suddenly pop up. It's usually a warning of a major problem in your system and should not be ignored. Here's what to do if you encounter the Blue Screen of Death on Windows 10...

### Fixing the Blue Screen of Death on Windows 10

Technically, the Blue Screen of Death is known as a "stop error." Windows brings everything to a complete, sudden stop "to prevent damage to your computer." The cause of a stop error may lie in hardware or software, and it can be very difficult to track down. Here are a few guidelines to debugging the Blue Screen of Death (BSOD) on Windows 10.

An overheated CPU can cause a BSOD error. If your cooling fan is running constantly, you may need to take steps to cool things down inside of your computer case. Blow out dust. Replace heat sink thermal grease. If the cooling fan does not spin freely, install a new one or lubricate the bearing. Laptops may benefit from a lap pad designed to circulate cool air beneath the laptop. (See my article [Do You Know Your Computer's Worst Enemy?](#) for more tips on dealing with overheating.)

Bad RAM memory can cause the Blue Screen of Death error. You can run the Windows 10 memory check diagnostic routine to check your system memory. Close any open files or programs, click the Start button, type mdsched.exe and press Enter. Next, click "Restart now and check for problems". Your computer will restart and run the memory diagnostic. The results of the test will be in the [Windows Event Viewer](#).

Hard disk errors may cause a BSOD error. Run the error-checking tool on your boot drive's Properties page to find and fix errors. It's also a good idea to defragment magnetic hard drives regularly to minimize errors. Note that solid-state (SSD) drives don't need to be defragged. See my related articles [\[CAUTION\] Hard Drive Makes a Clicking Sound?](#) and [\[FREE\] Tools to Tune and Optimize Your Hard Drive](#) for more help with this.

Software errors that cause a BSOD can occur when Windows 10 does not shut down properly. Loss of power during shutdown is the most common cause of such errors. Using System Restore to restore your Windows settings to an earlier configuration may resolve a BSOD problem. See my article [Try System Restore for Windows 10](#) to learn more about System Restore.

### More BSOD Fix Options

Check the Security and Maintenance Center to see if there are any known problems or unresolved configuration errors. Click Start and type "Security and Maintenance" in the search box, then press Enter. Under the Maintenance heading, there's a link to "View reliability history". You'll be able to see if any software or system components have been malfunctioning.

Finally, Windows 10 has a Reset option that may help to resolve a Blue Screen error. See my article [\[RESET BUTTON\] Restore Your PC To Factory Defaults?](#) A Reset will install a fresh copy of the Windows operating system, while keeping all your personal files intact.

When all else fails to cure a recurring Blue Screen of Death, you may have to take the machine to a service center or ship it to the manufacturer for diagnosis and repair. Hopefully, the machine is still under warranty as this can be expensive. Be sure to make backup copies of all essential data before sending the machine in for repairs, and delete any sensitive data from the hard drive before turning it over to strangers.

One final note: Windows 10 may automatically restart after a BSOD. It can be hard to diagnose the error message on screen because the restart can happen before you get a chance to read it. I recommend disabling this setting. To do so, click the Windows button, type advanced system settings and press Enter. Click the Settings button in the Startup and Recovery section. Remove the check mark next to Automatically restart, and click OK. You'll need to restart your computer for this to take effect.

*This article is republished, with permission, from the Ask Bob Rankin web site.*



## Microsoft is Killing the Adobe Flash Plugin on Windows 10

News and/or Opinion from the Editor

Adobe stopped supporting its Flash product at year end 2020, and offered a tool to uninstall it from computers.

A few months ago, Microsoft offered an optional update to remove the product from Windows 10 PCs. Later this year, Microsoft will require this deletion in a regular update or an upcoming Feature Update. Read about it here:

<https://www.reviewgeek.com/81089/microsoft-is-killing-the-adobe-flash-plugin-on-windows-10/>



## How Reliable is Reliable Enough?

By Greg Skalka, President  
Under the Computer Hood User Group  
[www.uchug.org](http://www.uchug.org)    [president@uchug.org](mailto:president@uchug.org)

Google defines reliability as consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted. We all want our technology to perform well, as we depend on it more and more in our lives. In placing a call, turning on our lights, driving to the store, checking our bank balance, or taking a commercial flight, we all want (and perhaps expect) 100% reliability in our experiences with technology. Nothing can be completely dependable, however, and no matter what we expect, tech failures happen. Reliability can be regulated by government agencies, specified by standards, or simply provided "as-is" by the manufacturer. In the end, it is up to each of us to decide if the reliability levels we get meet our needs.

Most large companies now use an ISO 9000-based quality management system to demonstrate their ability to provide quality products and services that consistently meet their customer's needs. The basics boil down to 'say what you do' and 'do what you say'. Unfortunately, for the customer, the issue is often that not enough is said, and the only standard the customer has is their expectations about quality and reliability; these usually wind up being different from the vendor's.

I have a lot of smart home devices. Many companies make and support products and systems to remotely control lights and devices in your home. You can control them remotely through an app on your smartphone or tablet, or through an Amazon Alexa or Google Home Assistant device. In addition to immediate control, your items can be programmed to turn on and off in a scheduled manner. The manufacturers portray these smart devices as simple and easy to use, so the consumer might assume they are reliable. Unfortunately, they are fairly complex and sometimes not so reliable.

I'm typically up and out of the house to work well before my wife is awake. To make my workday mornings easier (and safer, especially in the darker mornings of winter), I program lights downstairs to come on just before I would come out of our bedroom. This gives me a little bit of light to help me see when going down the stairs before dawn. I use a Belkin Wemo smart plug, with a family room lamp plugged into it, to give me some of that light. I've programmed the ON time in the Wemo app so that at my selected time the Belkin servers send a message over the internet and through my Wi-Fi to the smart plug to turn on. Once I get downstairs, I turn the light off manually with our Amazon Echo Show as quietly as possible, using the screen icons rather than voice control. In this case, the OFF command is sent from my Show over the internet to Amazon's servers, and then passed to the Belkin servers and back over the internet to my Wemo smart plug.

This seems like a lot of complex communications, but it has worked very reliably over the four months since I set this up. Last week, however, it didn't do so well, failing to turn off correctly on two different days. On the first day, Alexa could not turn the light off; I had to go into the Wemo app to do it. On another day, even the Wemo app could not turn the light off, as the smart plug appeared as inactive in the app. I finally had to resort to pressing the button on the smart plug to shut it off. In both cases, everything worked fine again after a short time. I was happy to see it working, but was reminded of the engineering saying "Problems that go away by themselves can come back by themselves."

Though I was not happy that the smart plug worked unreliably those two days, was there anyone I could blame? Perhaps not, as Belkin and Amazon had said I could control my light in this way, but they didn't say it was guaranteed to work 100% of the time. That it had worked reliably all but two days in four months is in reality pretty good, considering the plug cost only \$20 (and the Echo Show cost \$50).

This brings up one key factor in the reliability equation: high reliability generally costs more. The successful landing of the NASA Perseverance Mars rover last week was a tremendous technical achievement, but it came at a cost of around \$2.5 billion. That kind of money can buy a lot of reliability, however. The NASA Opportunity rover, launched in 2003, cost \$400 million and had a planned mission duration on Mars of around 90 days, yet it continued exploring and communicating until 2018. NASA's Curiosity rover has been operating on Mars for the last 8.5 years, far exceeding its original 2-year mission life. Hopefully, Perseverance can demonstrate a similarly high level of reliability.

Money can't buy total reliability, however. Since its inception in 1958, NASA has spent over \$650 billion (perhaps \$1.2 trillion after inflation). It has had many great successes, putting 12 men on the moon, exploring all our system's planets with robotic probes, and currently has put five rovers successfully on Mars. It has had some tremendous reliability successes, such as the Voyager 1 and 2 probes that are still providing communications as they leave our solar system. It has also endured tragic failures, the worst of which are the losses of crews of the Space Shuttles Challenger and Columbia, and Apollo 1.

Not everything needs to be as reliable as a spacecraft, but many things, especially where failure would involve loss of life or a high economic loss, require high reliability. Structural items such as buildings, bridges, and tun-

***This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.***



## Geekly Update

By Bob Rankin

<https://askbobrankin.com>

Is your Windows PC vulnerable to over 50 security holes that could allow attackers remote control of your computer? Is your expensive new smartphone actually slower than the one you tossed in the junk drawer three years ago? And what's that annoying humming sound? Get answers in today's Geekly Update... it's jam-packed with the latest tech news. This issue is guaranteed to make you 146% smarter -- you'll see why.

Brian [Krebs on Security](#) reports that Microsoft has released fixes to [plug at least 55 security holes](#) in Windows and other software. Four of these could allow complete, remote control over vulnerable systems without any user action. Update now, and by all means, abandon the use of the Internet Explorer (IE) web browser.

Are you irritated by the constant humming of a family member or co-worker? Then imagine how NASA's Voyager 1 must feel. Its probe has detected [a persistent, monotonous humming sound](#) coming from space. The good news for earthlings is that Voyager 1 is 14 billion miles away, having spent 44 years in space so far. Hmmm.

Your shiny new flagship iPhone might be shinier than your friend's three-year-old "budget" iPhone XR, but new benchmark tests have shown that [the XR outperforms](#) both the iPhone 11 and iPhone 12. Sorry, no refunds.

Sometimes you just need the comforting care that only a robot can give. "RoboWig" is a [robotic arm equipped with a hairbrush](#) and a camera that could be a boon to nurses and aides in assistive-care settings. The robot can "see" how curly or straight the hair is, and perform a "delicate and time-efficient brush-out."

Windows 10X was supposed to be a competitive alternative to Google's Chrome OS, but it seems Microsoft has [scuttled plans to release Windows 10X](#). A ZDNet writer claims that Microsoft is instead focusing on a "new Windows" with a new user interface. Oh goodie, something new to learn.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's cyber chief says the Colonial Pipeline attack might just be [the tip of the infrastructure risk iceberg](#). The attack, presumed to be the work of Russian ransomware group Darkside, shut down the flow of refined oil for a large portion of the United States, and government officials say cyberattacks against U.S. businesses and infrastructure will become more frequent. Grab your popcorn, kids.

Tech companies have been telling us for a few years that reducing blue light from computers and mobile

gadgets before bed will improve our sleep. But that's "nonsense," according to a Brigham Young University study. They say their tests prove that Apple's Night Shift and Android's Night Mode features (and presumably other blue light limiting doodads) [do nothing to improve sleep](#). Maybe it's fear that's keeping folks awake.

Facebook has a sneaking suspicion that you're forwarding articles from the Babylon Bee without understanding that they're satire. So they've found a way to "promote more informed sharing of news articles." If you try to share a story that Facebook thinks you haven't read, they'll [hit you up with a prompt](#) encouraging you to read it before sharing. (Comprehension is another matter we'll deal with later.)

The [global chip shortage](#) resulting from the Texas freeze and a fire at a Japanese semiconductor factory has left car makers scrambling for chips required for auto safety systems and infotainment consoles. Car makers are rationing chips for their best-selling models, and jacking up prices on others.

Nasty Ryuk ransomware found entry into a bio research institute, requiring a complete rebuild of the server software, and ruining a weeks' worth of vital research. The "attack vector" was [a student who downloaded a "cracked" \(free/unlicensed/pirated\) version](#) of a data visualization software tool, which turned out to contain malware. Opsie.

***This article is republished, with permission, from the Ask Bob Rankin web site.***

*{Editor's note: If you did not know already, each of the segments in this article has a hyperlinked word or phrase (text that is underlined and in blue color). If you click on this "hyperlink", it should activate it and take you to the referenced information in its original location on the web. Depending on the tool that you are using to read the WYSIWYG, you may (or may not) need to hold down the Control key (Ctrl) on your keyboard and click the hyperlink to activate it. This applies to other hyperlinks that you find in digital documents and on web pages.*

*One definition of "hyperlink" is "an electronic link providing direct access from one distinctively marked place in a hypertext or hypermedia document to another in the same or a different document".}*



Of bad news, I'm afraid, I'm the bearer  
But your PC is showing an error  
A demand for Bitcoin  
Like a kick to the groin  
They've encrypted your files ... Oh, the terror!

## Do ISP's Track And Sell Your Browsing Data?

By Fergus O'Sullivan

<https://www.howtogeek.com>

When you're [shopping for a VPN](#) or otherwise looking into your privacy, you'll quickly run into claims that your Internet Service Provider (ISP) is collecting your data and selling it. Is that even true, though? What are the rules that govern what ISPs can and cannot do with your data?

### Are You in the U.S. or Elsewhere?

Whether or not your data is being sold largely depends on your location. If you're in a country that's a member of the European Union, for example, you don't have to worry. The [General Data Protection Regulation](#) expressly forbids your ISP from even collecting your data without your express permission, let alone selling it.

In fact, around the world, it's often illegal for ISPs to gather data and sell it to third parties. For example, [Canada](#) doesn't allow it, nor does [Australia](#).

In the United States, however, things are very different. ISPs have been allowed to sell customer data to third parties since 2017, when [Congress passed a resolution to eliminate FCC privacy rules](#) that would have banned the practice. Where before an ISP needed to ask you before putting your personal data and browsing history on the market, with the stroke of a pen, this need for permission was revoked.

Instead, ISPs are required to provide customers with an opt-out clause, which usually takes the form of a page on the ISP's website, where users need to make clear that they don't want their data sold. The default setting, so to speak, is yes.

The uproar over this change was massive in the media, and VPNs (and VPN review sites) hawked their wares as the best way to respond to this new, intrusive legislation. In response, however, ISPs were quick to pledge not to sell customer data, and enshrined those promises in their privacy policies.

After all, just having the right to do something doesn't mean that you'll do it, right?

### Checking U.S. ISP Privacy Policies

A tour of the privacy policies of all the major ISPs in the United States shows that all of them promise not to sell your data. However, some of the language used does stand out a little. For exam-



ple, [Comcast Xfinity](#) promises not to sell information that identifies you. While that could just be the legal department hedging its bets, it's not quite the same as promising not to sell data.

AT&T uses far less fuzzy language: In its [privacy policy](#), under "how we collect your information," the company makes it clear that it also collects third-party information about you, including your credit report. We would have liked to find out more details, but the company didn't respond to our queries. AT&T does pledge not to sell any data, although the [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) begs to differ and has [sued the company](#) for selling location data.

T-Mobile, however, has gone another route this year and announced that, [starting](#) in May of 2021, it will target customers of their mobile plans with ads based on their browsing behavior. Customers can, of course, [opt out of having T-Mobile sell their data](#) as per the law, but it remains to be seen how many will do that.

### The FTC's 2019 Investigation Is Ongoing

In 2019, likely worried about the many reports it was getting about data sales and other privacy violations by the large ISPs, the Federal Trade Commission decided to open an investigation into these practices. It sent out [orders](#) to Comcast, T-Mobile, Google Fiber, AT&T, and Verizon as well as the mobile arms of some of these companies.

We reached out to a few of the ISPs that received orders as well as those that confirmed that they had complied with the FTC order. However, the FTC itself told us in an email that it is still looking into the matter. The investigation hasn't yet resulted in anything.

### How You Can Protect Your Privacy

If you're worried about ISPs accessing and selling your data and you're not in the U.S., chances are that you don't have to be—although you might want to search the web for information about the laws and practices in your specific country. If, however, you're in the United States, then you may want to keep an eye out.

Even if your ISP currently states in its privacy policy that it doesn't sell data, there's really nothing preventing them from changing the policy and doing so anyway—if they aren't already.

Until Congress can be persuaded to change this, all that you can do is sign up to a virtual private network and prevent data from being collected by your internet service provider. However, a VPN isn't a magic bullet: Despite what many VPN providers will tell you, you'll also need to use [incognito mode](#) more often.

In short, a VPN lets you reroute your internet connection

to its own servers, which are shielded from your ISP's gaze (read our article on [how VPNs work](#)). Using one means that your ISP can see that you're connecting to a VPN, but not what you're accessing through the VPN. This means that, [theoretically at least](#), your browsing is private and there's no information for your ISP to profit off of.

If that sounds good to you, then check out ExpressVPN, our favorite VPN service—although, if you want lasting change, we recommend that you give your representative in DC a call or an email.

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*{Editor's note: When any article recommends a product to its readers (such as the specific VPN recommendation in this article), it often means that the writer/publisher of the article is receiving some sort of remuneration (as in "payback") for mentioning the product/service. So, treat this sort of a single recommendation lightly. Do your own homework/research when shopping for such a digital product/service. For VPNs, some of the questions to consider are: is the VPN service free or by paid subscription (do NOT use a FREE VPN service!!), how many servers does the VPN service have to support their subscribers (thousands!), how many countries are their servers located in (perhaps 30 or more), does the VPN keep logs (they should not!) of your web surfing, what is the speed latency (slowdown) that their service causes in your web surfing (hopefully minimal), is the VPN company based inside or outside (preferred) of the US (outside means that the company is not subject to certain US government legal restrictions and litigations), how easy is the product/service's device interface (GUI) to use and understand for the user, etc.*

*I have noticed that many security software publishers have started to include a VPN service in some of their software's annual subscriptions. But how do they answer to the questions noted above? Will they tell you? Probably not. A concern I discovered while testing one of them is that when I chose to connect to a foreign server location, the product is actually using a US server location as its "jump-off" server point. Also, when I chose to connect to one of their US server locations, the link actually went to a server location in Australia first. Doesn't make sense to me, but I suspect that even this sort of a VPN server network design is better than not using a VPN service at all. Is their included VPN service "free"? Not really. You are paying for the annual security protection anyway, and their VPN service is included in that paid product.*

*So....how to you know where your VPN service is actually taking you, as your Internet "jump-off" location? Check your IP Address, like at [www.whatismyipaddress.com](http://www.whatismyipaddress.com), and see where the VPN service is connecting you to the Internet world. If it isn't the same IP address that your ISP assigned to you, then your IP Address is reasonably-well masked. And remember to delete cookies each day.}*

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

## Having Fun Making Lists

By Dorothy Fitch, Editor  
GVR Computer Club

<https://www.ccgaz.org/>

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I am an inveterate list maker. I've always made lots of lists and during the pandemic, I seem to be making more and more—probably because I have additional time on my hands. Some people might dread lists, thinking only of "to do" lists, which can, I admit, be daunting. However, I enjoy making lists and find them indispensable.

What types of lists do I make, what tools do I use to make them, what are the tips I have discovered? Read on for some answers.

### Grocery Lists > using phone apps + paper

I'm a fan of the Safeway app on my phone. I make a list of items I want to purchase using it. (I found I can no longer add custom items to my list on the Safeway website.) While shopping, I click each item when I've put it in the cart. This lets me see what I still need to get. Occasionally I find "Just for You" deals at the store that I hadn't noticed at home, and I can add them. With fewer miles driven, we use our Rewards for dollars off our groceries. Using 7 Rewards for \$10 off is a better deal for us than gas discounts (especially with our Prius).

For trips to Costco, I sometimes use a simple text editor (Samsung Notes) on my phone, where I enter the items we typically purchase there. More often, I bring along a scribbled list on a scrap of paper.

### Backyard Bird List > using a spreadsheet + paper

We post a legal-sized sheet of paper on our refrigerator door where we mark every species of bird or other wildlife we see or hear every day. I created the list in Excel, and add new species to it as needed. I print a new list at the beginning of each month. For a long time, I transferred the data back into the spreadsheet after the month was over, but that was time-consuming. I could be using the eBird app, but our low-tech system is more easily accessible to both of us. It's also easier to look at the paper sheets to find out when the White-crowned Sparrows have headed north for the summer in prior years and when the White-winged Doves are likely to return in force.

### Lists of Authors' Books, in Order > using Word

My husband and I read lots of books. We try to keep track of the books we have read (though I've found I can reread the same book within a year and not remember it...). To get a list of an author's books in the order written, just search the web for a phrase like "JA Jance

(Continued on page 11.....Lists)

## Casting, Not in the Theatrical Sense – Cast Your Data to the Screen

By Phil Sorrentino, Newsletter Contributor  
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Most modern computers have HDMI outputs so it is easy to display your computer screen on a big-screen TV, but what about displaying your smartphone screen on that same big screen? Most phones do not have HDMI or, more specifically, micro-HDMI connectors. (Though I have seen some tablets with micro-HDMI connectors; in fact, I even had one that I used for teaching a smartphone/tablet class.) So, you have to find another way to get the smartphone screen displayed on the larger TV screen. Fortunately, Google has provided a solution with its Chromecast hardware device and Casting software that is becoming part of many Apps. (If your App supports Chromecast, you will see the Chromecast icon somewhere on the App's opening screen). The Chromecast device gets plugged into an HDMI input port on the big screen TV, and power is provided to the device by a micro-USB connection. A Chromecast device and an App that supports casting can turn a dumb TV into a pretty smart TV, at least for those Apps that support casting.



Chromecast Device



Chromecast Icon

Besides the Chromecast device, the only other thing you need is Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi is the mechanism used to transfer the smartphone screen information to the Chromecast device which in turn provides the HDMI interface to the big screen TV. So, to make it work, both the smartphone and the Chromecast device have to be on the same Wi-Fi network. Many current Wi-Fi routers provide many networks. Usually, the main network is in the 2.4-GHz frequency band and there may be another network in the 5-GHz band. The 5-GHz network sometimes includes 5G in the network name which can possibly be confused with the 5G wide area network provided by companies like Verizon and AT&T. (Future Wi-Fi routers can even take advantage of a new 6-GHz band.) Also, some routers may provide a guest network in the 2.4-GHz or 5-GHz band. The trick here is to make sure that when you set up the Chromecast device you choose the same network that your smartphone is using. You can see what network your smartphone is using by going into Settings on the smartphone and selecting "Network & Internet" or "Wireless", or something like that, where the network name will be shown. This is usually early in the list of settings. (When you select this screen, you will also see the other networks that are available but are not currently being used by your smartphone.)

Once you know the Wi-Fi network you will be using you can set up the Chromecast device. This will be done using your smartphone and usually the Google Home App.



Google Home App Icon

You can download the Google Home App from the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store. Apps are updated regularly and screens may change, so specific directions for this setup may be different by the time you need them, but when you do need directions, Google something like "How to set up a Chromecast device using the Google Home app". The results will probably be several tutorials or even better a few videos with up-to-date instructions. (The Google Home App provides control for many devices besides the Chromecast. Home automation lights, cameras, and switches are also set up using this App. Additionally, this App also provides control for Google's "Google Home" assistant.) Once you have set up the Chromecast device you can cast your smartphone screen to your big screen TV. (And to see what else you can do with the Home App, just find the "Discover" icon which looks like two sheets of paper. This is really an advertisement for all the wonderful things Google can do for you once you have their products.) As well as Google Home, there are other Apps that can be used to set up the Chromecast device and that support Casting, such as LoCast for Chromecast, iMediashare, Cast to TV, Mirroring360 Sender, and Plex, but I have not tried any of these.

With the Chromecast device setup, all we need to do is find Apps that can Cast. Some of the more popular Apps are YouTube, YouTube Music, Google Photos, Disney+, Prime Video, Hulu, Media Monkey, Movies Anywhere, Netflix, Crackle, Pluto TV, Tubi, Hoopla, and HBO Max. There are even a lot of Apps that appear to be cable channels like A&E, History, AMC, MTV, and TNT. Many more Apps may have this ability in the future. You may already have some of these apps on your smartphone like YouTube, but the other Apps are available at the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store. Once you've downloaded the App of interest, look for the Cast icon somewhere on the opening screen.



Hoopla App

Hoopla is an App that supports casting. This means that you can now take advantage of all the video media at your local library: videos, TV shows, and feature-length movies. You can use your phone to access the media and then cast the media to your Chromecast device plugged into any TV that has an HDMI input. Using Wi-Fi to cast the media means you are also using Wi-Fi to access the media from the library, so there is no cost associated with the whole process. You can think of that as free movies for the whole family, at least if the big screen TV is big enough to satisfy the whole family. All you have to do is supply the popcorn. By the way, Hoopla can also bring you E-books to read, audiobooks to listen to, and even music to listen to. What a bargain. If you haven't gotten the Hoopla App yet, go to the Google Play Store, or the Apple App Store and download it and start taking advantage of this very useful, and did I mention, *free* App.

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## Do You Trust Your Technology?

By Greg Skalka, President  
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**O**ur world runs on technology, yet many of our most contentious disagreements involve whether certain technologies can be trusted, or whether society can be trusted to use them correctly. Is climate change real and man-made? Is nuclear power dangerous? Are electronic voting machines accurate? Are vaccines safe? Does cell phone use cause cancer? Is it time to put on a tinfoil hat?

A strict application of the scientific method should be able to answer our questions and reveal the truth, but only if we all trust science. Unfortunately, with humans involved, there are biases, conflicts of interest, and preferences for one outcome over another. Another problem is that humans are imperfect, and so everything we make and do is also imperfect. Nothing we create is all good; there are always downsides to everything. Often the detrimental aspects of some new thing are not fully realized until much later. Asbestos seemed like a useful fireproofing technology until its toxicity became apparent. When the good aspects outweigh the bad (in some subjective determination), the tech is beneficial. Things are usually not black and white, however, so it is left to individuals and to society to judge their worth.

How we weigh the advantages and costs can be based on reputable information, but it can also come from rumors, false narratives, and speculation. Good things can get bad reputations (like vaccines), while bad things can get marketed as desirable (like tobacco products).

At the individual level, we all have choices to make concerning which technologies we trust and which we do not; which are worth the cost, and which should be avoided. Everyone approaches this differently, bringing our standards, biases, concerns, and experiences. Usually, the benefits are apparent, but the downsides of a particular technology are often hidden and difficult to confirm. They usually involve aspects of safety and security, and it is very difficult to prove something is completely free of risk. The risks are generally to our personal and financial data. Can we get hacked? Can we get tracked? Is someone able to steal from us, or just accumulate more information about us than we'd like? Differences of opinion on these risks can lead to things that are popular with many being shunned by some.

There are lots of examples of mainstream technologies that are not trusted by some nominally rational people. I have some relatives that don't feel safe flying and now only travel by car, bus, or train (though they had traveled by plane in the past). I feel from its safety record that flying is generally safe enough, but have never questioned them on why they hold this view. John Madden, the former football coach, and sportscaster is reportedly afraid of flying and used a bus to travel to games. Some attribute his fear to a Cal Poly football team plane crash in 1960. I am not aware of any specific incident that would be the cause of my rela-

tives' concern; they obviously must have a point of view different from mine on this.

I didn't think much about these differences in points of view until the start of the pandemic last year when I found some good friends who refused to use Zoom. I had set up a personal Zoom account in 2015 to use for some purpose related to UCHUG but never used it much. That changed greatly in March 2020, when we were forced to hold our board meeting virtually on Zoom. Since then, with the help of APCUG, we have been able to use their paid Zoom accounts to hold all our board and general meetings. There are some members we have not seen during this time, but we don't know why. I am aware of security concerns about Zoom but have researched them, and now have used it so much that I feel it can be trusted.

Before the pandemic, I met for lunch periodically with a group of longtime friends that I worked with at one time or another. After we could no longer meet in person due to COVID, I set up Zoom virtual lunch meetings so that we could stay in touch. Many in this group participated, but some would not; they were concerned about the security issues and "just didn't do Zoom." This is unfortunate as I would like to see more of them. I periodically remind them that they could join our Zoom lunches, but I'm always rebuffed. I'm starting to feel like I'm trying to talk them into using heroin. I don't think they are paranoid, as there are other things that these friends do that I find too risky.

There are a few popular things that I don't trust at this point. One is social networks. While I do have an account on LinkedIn (for job search and career purposes), I've never had a Facebook or Twitter account. I don't have any interest in them, and since I do have security and privacy concerns about participating in these sites, I just don't. There are no doubt some things I miss out on by avoiding social networks. My church has a private social network that would probably provide useful information, but my feelings about Facebook have kept me from investigating it further.

Some people don't trust online banking and bill payment. I once felt that way. While I do still have security concerns, the overwhelming convenience of these services has won me over. I take every precaution I can to keep my online financial activities secure, and so feel my use is safe enough. I sure wouldn't want to go back to banking in person or by phone or having to mail paper checks in for payments. The postal system seems less secure than it used to, so mail theft of my paper statements now seems a greater risk than an online breach.

I also have reservations about password managers. I have less distrust in them now but originally feared that if they were not secure and could be hacked, all your passwords would then be vulnerable. I developed my own process for managing passwords and prefer it, but would recommend a password manager to others at this point.

Voice-operated assistants (or smart speakers) can be very useful, but there are certainly privacy concerns to consider in their use. While I have several Amazon Alexa devices, I don't trust them fully. I realize I am trading some loss of

privacy for their convenience. It is the same with Amazon in general, and with Google. I love Google Maps but have concerns about all the location data I am providing when I use it. It is always a risk/reward evaluation for each service; there are some Google services I don't feel are worth the risk, and so don't use them.

A smart or connected home can be a concern for some. I have a lot of smart home devices that I feel are fairly benign, like smart lights, thermostats, and cameras. While I agree it would be handy, I'm not trusting enough to consider a smart lock for my home just yet. I was once very concerned about home Wi-Fi and kept it disabled when not using it directly. As I found reasons to use it more and hardened my home network with more secure equipment and practices, I became more trusting. Still, the majority of my home computers and the ones I use for my most sensitive computing are on my wired network.

Antivirus is something I've become less trusting of. After research and consideration, I'm now in agreement with those that believe that any external security program opens holes in the operating system and thus increases risk. I'm now using the security built into Windows 10, rather than an external antivirus program (and saving money). I am much more suspicious of security and "cleaning" programs now, as some exhibit malware-like behaviors.

And then there is Windows itself. Some don't trust Microsoft and prefer alternatives like Linux or Apple's products. I don't trust Microsoft on everything, but since I must live in a Windows world at work, I find it easiest to stick with the adversary I know best. Linux seems like a lot more work, and since I don't trust Apple any more than Microsoft, why should I pay a lot more for a computer I'm still concerned about?

No matter what technology you consider, there is probably some way it can be misused, subverted, or hacked. Each of us must consider the benefits against the risks when personally using any tech product or service. Those considerations must be made with the best, most accurate, and unbiased information available. We can't depend on the tech vendors or the government to protect us from harm; we must be our own defenders. Perhaps the best we can hope for with our tech is not trust, but a truce.

***This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.***



With computers, it's often your fate  
To stare at a chart while you wait  
An install (time consuming)  
Just might have you fuming  
If it hangs at percent ninety-eight

*(Lists .....Continued from page 8)*

books in order". Copy and paste that list into Word, print it, and check off the titles as you read them.

### **Lists of Television Episodes > using Notepad + Word**

Because our DVR's season pass for "Iron Chef America" was bringing in only episodes we'd seen (some multiple times), we decided to try "Chopped." Yes, we're a little late to that party (the show started in 2007). To check off episodes we've seen, I decided (naturally) to make a list. I found various websites listing "Chopped" episodes, but some had too much information (such as the winners). I like this website, which I can sort by season or year. I tried copying the list for a particular year and pasting it into Word, but that created issues: some of the content had active links and things that turned into checkboxes. When I tried to delete them, Word hung. So instead, I pasted the text into Notepad, a simple Windows text editor that removes all formatting and links. Then I could copy that text and paste it into Word. After a small amount of formatting, I was done and happy with the result. Let the cooking begin!

### **Opera Lists > using Excel**

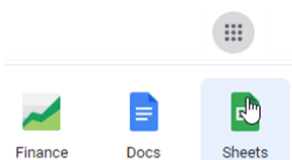
We are opera fans and keep track of the operas we have seen. We've watched many of the daily streaming operas offered by NYC's Metropolitan Opera. We have seen some operas many times now, often with different casts and productions set in different eras or locales (Verdi's Rigoletto set in 1960s Las Vegas actually worked very well!). We keep track of all the operas in an Excel spreadsheet. The list is sorted by composer, which I mark with an 'X' at the first occurrence. I also keep track of the number of different versions we have seen of the same opera. Some of the formulas I have found useful are these (they also work in Google Sheets):

- =SUM(A2:A300) — returns the sum of all numbers in the specified range
- =COUNTIF(B2:B300,"X") — returns the number of cells within the specified range that contain "X"
- =COUNTBLANK(C2:C300) — returns the number of cells in the range that are blank

There are dozens of formulas and functions you can use in Excel. Click on the Formulas tab in Excel, where they are sorted by category, or click here for a complete list.

### **Shared Lists > using Google Sheets**

As workshop facilitators for nearly all of Tucson Audubon's annual birding festivals over the last 10 years, my husband and I have had to keep track of a lot of information. The festival chair set up a shared Google Sheets file (Google's



*(Continued on page 13.....Lists)*

## QR Codes: What They Are and How to Use Them

By Dorothy Fitch, Editor  
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QR codes are popping up more and more frequently these days, and I began to wonder what they were all about. So, I did some investigating and tried creating and using them. It was a lot easier than I had expected and rather entertaining.

What is a QR code? Like barcodes on items at supermarkets, a QR code (short for Quick Response) is a two-dimensional way to store a lot of information. Known as a matrix barcode, the QR code was first designed in 1994 in Japan by Denso Wave, a subsidiary of Toyota Motor Corporation. Its goal was to "increase the efficiency in product tracking, item identification, time tracking, document management, and general marketing.... Because a QR code carries information in both vertical and horizontal directions, it can store several hundred times the amount of data carried by a bar code. In fact, over 7,000 numeric characters can be encoded in one QR code." [Read more.](#)

The QR code's design was inspired by Go, an ancient Japanese strategy game that uses black and white stones in a grid. Masahiro Hara, the person assigned to develop a solution for Denso Wave, had his "aha" breakthrough while playing Go during a lunch break. This led to the invention of the QR code.



Go board with black and white stones that are placed on a grid.

A QR code can link to a website, share contact information, send a text message, make a phone call, open a restaurant menu, allow you to check in for an appointment, play a video, and much more.

I created QR codes to link to specific websites that would be difficult to enter on a phone. By scanning the QR codes, you can immediately open up the web page. Try them out!

### How to scan a QR code:

On an iPhone, use the built-in camera, which can automatically read QR codes.

Read "Scan a QR Code with your iPhone, iPad, iPod touch" at [Apple Support](#).

On an Android phone, there are several ways to scan a QR code, depending on your specific model. There are many free apps available in the Google Play store that can scan QR codes, but you may not need one. The camera in newer versions of Android (10 and up) can scan them automatically. Try this to check: point the camera at a QR code and hold for a few seconds. If the camera doesn't scan it, long-press the Home button, then press the Google Lens icon (shown below), just to the left of the microphone icon at the bottom of the screen. Tap the shutter button to search for its meaning. You should see the URL for the website and link directly to it. I also found I could easily use a free QR code scanner without installing the app. Swipe down from the top of the phone and click the Search (question mark) icon to get to the Finder Search. Type QR, then locate and click the QR Scanner icon. Once it scans the code, press OPEN to follow the link.



Google Lens icon, referenced above

### How to create a QR code:

I created the QR codes using this free website: [gogr.me](http://gogr.me). All I had to do was type in the web address I wanted the code to take me to; it automatically generated the QR code, which I could then download. Try scanning these QR codes and see where they take you.



← What's special about February 8?



Read a good classic book! →

In addition to using QR codes to link to websites, you can also create ones that store text: not SMS text messages, but plain text, as in a birthday message or poem.



Can you read this fun limerick?

I've cheated a bit in this article. For those who prefer not to attempt to scan the QR codes, you can just click each image to access its content. Usually, QR codes are printed and you couldn't do that!

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(Lists.....Continued from page 11)

version of Excel) so we could all access and edit the content stored there. It worked wonderfully and I have since created shared Sheets for other organizations.

To create a shared Sheet you need a Google account (i.e., Gmail address). Log in to your account and at the upper right of the window, click the 9-dot grid, shown at the top of the image at the left. Then scroll down and click on Sheets.

Once you have started the spreadsheet, you can click the green Share button at the upper right of the window. You can specify individuals to gain access to the Sheet by entering their email addresses (Google will send them a notification) or copy the link to the spreadsheet. You can restrict access to just those you have invited, or allow access to anyone with the link. You can assign them Viewer, Commenter, or Editor privileges. The Sheet is always saved automatically regardless of who edits it. You can see a Version History of who made edits.

Shared documents (including Google Docs and Calendars) offer a great way to collaborate with others.

### Tech Talk: How Computers Look at Lists

To a computer, there are two types of lists: ordered and unordered:

- An ordered list has numbered items that are in a specific order.
- An unordered list (like this one) has items in no particular order. This is typically a bulleted list.

Web programmers use different tags for the two types of lists.

In most web content editors, they can simply choose a numbered or bulleted list as you can in a Word document. But, in some cases, web programmers build their own list using HTML tags.

Programmers use `<ul>` to start an unordered list and `</ul>` to end it.

Programmers use `<ol>` to start an ordered list and `</ol>` to end it.

Consider a recipe. It typically starts with an unordered list of ingredients, then proceeds to an ordered list of step-by-step instructions. If you don't follow the directions in the right sequence, you may not get the result you want!

This relatively simple recipe illustrates both types of lists. Source: [www.self.com/recipe/tomato-poached-cod-with-rice](http://www.self.com/recipe/tomato-poached-cod-with-rice)

*Tomato-Poached Cod with Rice*

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cod fillets (4 ounces each), skin removed
- 1 cup jarred tomato sauce
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1-1/2 cups cooked wild rice

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 400°.
2. Season fish on both sides with salt and pepper. Drizzle with olive oil.
3. In a medium skillet, bring the tomato sauce to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Place fish in skillet and use a spoon to cover completely with sauce. Transfer to oven and bake 10 minutes, until fish flakes easily.
4. Warm cooked rice in the microwave or a skillet over medium heat with a little olive oil. Serve fish and tomato sauce over rice.

Click to see the HTML code that generates these lists. The `<li>` and `</li>` tags start and end each 'list item' in both lists.

This article does not cover all the types of lists I make. Someday I hope I'll again make packing lists for trips.

Try some of these list ideas and see if they help you stay organized!

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*"I'm writing a book on everything I don't know about technology. It's a lot longer than I originally thought."*

## Web Page Reviews

by Paul Baecker — [webwatch@sterlingheightscomputerclub.org](mailto:webwatch@sterlingheightscomputerclub.org)



This column attempts to locate sites containing valuable, amusing, and free content, with no overbearing pressure to purchase anything.

***Our club members only*** are encouraged to submit favorite sites (a description is optional) to the e-

address noted above, for inclusion in a future WYSIWYG issue. Also check the SHCC web site (“*Web Page Reviews*”) for previous gems.

The “**Friends of the Rouge**” (River in MI) group offered 5 virtual river “trips” by kayak in 2020. On Youtube.com, search for “*Friends of the Rouge uncruise*” to locate the five virtual river trips. Each of the 5 trip videos is about 1:20 hrs. long. This link is for trip #1.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMMT32g4cFY>

**WhatsApp** now *forces* you to share data with Facebook.

<https://www.makeuseof.com/whatsapp-forces-share-data-with-facebook/>

RAM is a crucial component of every computer, but it can be confusing. Here's RAM explained in terms anyone can understand.

<https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/quick-dirty-guide-ram-need-know/>

Tired of spending \$60 on new game releases? Check out these “best” open source video games, which are mostly free!

<https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/open-source-video-games/>

The history of Android: The evolution of the biggest mobile OS in the world. Cupcakes, donuts, jelly beans, and more.

<https://www.androidauthority.com/history-android-os-name-789433/>

10 ways to boost your Wi-Fi signal.

<https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/10-ways-to-boost-your-wi-fi-signal>

Best **Dark Web** websites you won't find on Google.

<https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/best-dark-web-websites/>

Linux running too slow? Here's how to find the cause.

<https://www.maketecheasier.com/linux-running-too-slow-heres-how-to-find-the-cause/>

3 ways to batch rename files in Windows.

<https://www.maketecheasier.com/batch-rename-files-in-windows/>

If your Windows 10 edition is 32-bit, but your computer has 64-bit architecture (“32-bit operating system, x64-based processor” in Windows 10's “About” window in “Settings”), you can upgrade Windows 10 to the 64-bit edition for free, but you will lose all existing programs and data in the process. Be sure to backup important files, license keys, and browser bookmarks and stored IDs/passwords first.

<https://www.lifewire.com/upgrade-windows-10-to-64-bit-4846145#upgrading-from-windows-10-32-bit-to-64-bit-without-losing-data>

**WhatsApp** users are fleeing, due to forced sharing of personal info with Facebook — here are the best alternatives.

<https://www.tomsguide.com/news/whatsapp-clarifies-facebook-data-sharing-but-users-are-already-fleeing-for-signal>

“**The Creepy Line**” reveals the stunning degree to which society is manipulated by Google and Facebook and blows the lid off the remarkably subtle – hence powerful – manner in which they do it. (1:20 hour video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v6KBGr5IzY>

**NOTE:** Many of the links in the digital newsletter connect to the Internet if clicked. For those that do not, copy and paste the link into your Internet browser.

## Web Watch Column on the Club Web Site

**C**heck out the **WebPageReviews** section on the club's web site. There you can see past web sites reviewed in this column. They are arranged into various *keyword* categories to help locate a specific topic or site.