

Interface

Lorain County Computer Users Group
LCCUG.com (or) info@LCCUG.com
Volume 33 Number 6 June 2022



2022

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Tuesday
June 14, 2022



snapseed

Presented By
Chris & Jim Gould

Using Zoom & In Room Meeting

Our links can be found at:

LCCUG.com/links, There you will find many interesting places to visit. Check them out and see what you can find interesting

NOTICE: THIS MEETING WILL BE A HYBRID MEETING

LCCUG Meetings will be happening on ZOOM & in Person

At a new time: from 10 am. - noon

Please Email: info@lccug.com if you have any questions or concerns!

A Word From Our President



I hope we can have our members continue to attend our meetings whether in person or on ZOOM!!!

We need our audience. Our members are our most important ingredient! If there is anything that would make it easier for you to attend in person or online – let me know.

Our April meeting was about using a fantastic app that can be used on cell phones “Google Lens” that performs like magic. Thanks to “Geeks on Tour” for sharing their tutorial that explained what this is and how to use it. If you would like to discover this cool tool: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEeNawgt6WI>

Our May meeting was a presentation by Bob Gostischa. He had lots of information about protecting ourselves in these days of ever changing technology. Links to the many great resources he gave us can be found on our website: <https://lccug.com/links/> You will also find links to his recorded program and his recommended resources under “Bob on the Internet”. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn more.

In June we will continue with Geeks on Tour. This time Chris will show us how to “Beautify” your photos with the free Snapseed app for iOS and Android.

We will watch a Button Show recorded by Chris and Jim Gould of Geeks on Tour. They will demonstrate how to use the app, Snapseed, to improve photos you take on your Android or iPhone. You will be amazed to see what can easily be done. She will also show that this can work on a Chromebook!

I hope you are enjoying the recent programs that involve using smart phones. I find myself doing more and more on my phone.

LCCUG Officers For 2022

President	Sandee Ruth president@lccug.com
Vice President	Vacant vp-programs@lccug.com
Secretary	Don Hall secretary@lccug.com
Treasurer	Micky Knickman treasurer@lccug.com
Newsletter Editor	Pam Rihel newsletter@lccug.com
Web Page Editor	Richard Barnett webpage@lccug.com
Statutory Agent	Sandra Ruth statutory_agent@lccug.com
Director of Membership	Vacant membership@lccug.com
Director of Advertising	Richard Barnett advertising@lccug.com
Director of Education	Neil Higgins education@lccug.com

If you have questions about using your phone, come to our Troubleshooting workshop that is usually on the Third Tuesday of the month. Watch for the email announcing it so you can reserve a spot. That is required!

See you June 14 – online or in person.

Sandra Ruth
LCCUG President

Tuesday
June 14, 2022



snapseed

How to "Beautify" your photos

Presented by

Chris and Jim Gould

This month we will learn how to "Beautify" your photos with the free Snapseed app for iOS and Android.

We will watch a **Button Show** recorded by Chris and Jim Gould of Geeks on Tour. They will demonstrate how to use the Snapseed App to improve photos you take on your Android or iPhone. You will be amazed to see what can easily be done. Be sure to join in and learn all about this app.

Woohoo!

Your renewal dues have been changed from \$15.00, To 3 years for \$15.00. When everyone else is raising their prices our Computer Club is lowering their dues, so tell your friends to come and Join in the fun and learn computer information.

Tell your family and friends about this great deal. Once in a lifetime opportunity.



The Lorain County Chapter of OGS

is having its next meeting online:

Check our webpage for the next program.
<http://loraincoogs.org/events.html>



We are having our meetings virtually using bluejeans.com.

To join the meeting on a computer or mobile phone:

<https://bluejeans.com/5006724159?src=calendarLink>

Also a link will be sent to you before the meeting.

North Ridgeville Library, 35700 Bainbridge Rd. North Ridgeville, Ohio. Meetings are free and open to the public. Social time is at 6:30 PM and the program begins at 7:00 PM. **Cancelled Until further notice due to Covid-19**

John Kolb

secretary@loraincoogs.org

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Executive Board Meeting Minutes

MAY 3, 2022

The board Zoom video meeting for May was attended by Sandee Ruth, Don Hall, Micky Knickman, Pam Rihel, Richard Barnett and Neil Higgins.

Next week's program will be Bob Gostischa's "Cyber Safety in the Digital Age." Richard to send out a notice this will be a hybrid meeting.

A program for next month was discussed. Sandee will check out photo editing videos.

The board discussed Staples cartridge recycling program. Sandee and Neil will look for an alternative market.

Raffles were discussed with no solution found.

Neil moved, Pam seconded the meeting be adjourned.



General Meeting Minutes

MAY 10, 2022

President Sandee Ruth called the hybrid meeting to order. A motion to accept the minutes as shown in the May issue of the *INTERFACE* was made by Micky and seconded by Elaine D'Andrea. Motion passed by voice vote.

Sandee announced the June program will be a video to show working on photos.

Bob Gostischa presented a program "The 10 Most Dangerous Malware and Security Threats in 2022." The message was how to clean up your digital footprint because the internet never forgets so clean up your digital garbage.

Elaine D'Andrea moved, Pam Rihel seconded the meeting be adjourned.



Member of Association of Personal Computer Users Groups

Newsletter Editor: Pam Rihel using Microsoft Publisher, 2016

This Month's contributors: Micky Knickman, Sandra Ruth, Pam Rihel, Don Hall, Neil Higgins, Michael John Neill, Steve Costello, Cal Esneault, Greg Skalka, Scambusters, Ask Leo, APCUG, Google images, Microsoft Office art online,

Newsletter is now
Online at:
lccug.com/newsletters or lccug.com

Computer Club News

Don't Forget to Bring in Your Used Ink Cartridges
LCCUG is collecting empty ink Cartridges



Recycle & Help Our Club Too!

MEMBERSHIP WITH LCCUG:

Yearly dues are now \$15.00. For more information contact:

LCCUG
Director of Membership,
membership@lccug.com.

Meeting Location:
At a new time: from 10 am. - noon
in a new location: LCCC facility at
201 W. Erie, Lorain

Our meeting space is on the first floor – easily accessible – larger – refreshments available! Please email info@lccug.com if you have any questions.

Lorain County Computer Users Group

2022 Calendar of Events

<http://lccug.com>
email: info@lccug.com



Using Zoom & In Person

Meeting opens at 10 am – program starts at 12 pm

*2nd Tuesday of each month. Changes are announced on the webpage and the newsletter.
All meetings are open to the public*

January 11, 2022 - Useful Websites and Utilities presented by our Board Members and Our members

February 8, 2022 - Preserving Digital Photos By Mark Schulman

March 8, 2022 - The Pro's and Con's of BACKUPS; introducing “Tech for Senior”

April 12, 2022 - Geeks On Tour Presented by Google Lens

May 10, 2022 - Cyber-Safety in the Digital Age Presented by Norbert “Bob” Gostischa,

June 14, 2022 - Snapseed – Presented By Chris and Jim Gould

July 12, 2022 - To Be Announced

August 09, 2022 - To Be Announced

September 13, 2022 - To Be Announced

October 11, 2022 - To Be Announced

November 8, 2022 - To Be Announced

December 13, 2022 - Holiday Lunch

Please check our website LCCUG.com for more updates. If you have anything you would like to know about, PLEASE let up know. We would really like your input.

LCCUG



amazonsmile

You shop. Amazon gives.

Thinking of shopping with Amazon? Well you can now go to our lccug.com website and just click on the amazonsmile link and start shopping.

Our club gets rewarded for any items purchased from our website. So the more you buy the better it is for our club. SO START SHOPPING.

Genealogy Tip of the Day

michaeljohnneill, 31 May 09:24 AM
Rootdig.com mjnrootdig@gmail.com

Tracking Online Searches

When querying genealogical databases, it's not always necessary to keep track of what searches you conducted—particularly if the individual is easily found.

But when a family cannot be easily located in the 1860 census, instead of pounding away harder at the keyboard or swearing, keep a list of the searches you have conducted. Track the options you used. Track how you formulated wild-card searches. Track the nicknames and diminutives you searched for as well. Track the range for year of birth if that was one of the search parameters.

It's impossible to troubleshoot your search process if the only place you keep tabs on what you are doing is in your head.



NEED HELP?



Here's Who to Contact:

Neil Higgins

440-985-8507 - higgins.neil@gmail.com
Evenings 6 p.m. -10 p.m. + Weekends
Hardware, Linux & Windows Operating Systems,
Chromebooks, Tweaking your system

Micky Knickman

440-967-3118 - micky@knickman.com
Daily 6:00 am to 4:00 pm. Leave message if no answer.
General Software Configuration, Hardware Installation, Basic to Advanced Windows

Richard Barnett

440-365-9442 - Richard216@aol.com
Evenings & Weekends
General Software Configuration, Hardware Installation, Basic to Advanced Windows & Web Page Design

Sandee Ruth

440-984-2692 - sandee29@gmail.com
Basic Word Processing, Windows, & Web Design
Advanced Internet

Pam Casper Rihel

440-277-6076
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 pm Monday thru Thursday
Genealogy help
prihel1947@gmail.com

Denny Smith Unavailable at this time

440-355-6218 - dennis.smith@windstream.net
Microsoft EXCEL
Leave message on machine if no answer

If any of our members are interested in helping other users with what programs you are adept at, please contact any of our officers with you name, what program or programs you would be willing to give help with, you email address and or phone number and when you would like to have them call you. Thanks



LCCUG ONGOING WORKSHOP

MOST ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Problem Solving Workshop

Date: Thursday- June 21, 2022

Time: 10AM-12PM **Instructor:** Micky Knickman, Neil Higgins, Richard Barnett

Place: LCCC @ 201 W. Erie Ave., Lorain, OH

Learn how to repair or update your computer by changing hard drives, memory, CD ROMs, etc.

Members MUST make an appointment by emailing Micky or Neil at troubleshooting@lccug.com. This workshop is limited to LCCUG members in good standing. If there are no appointments, this will be cancelled.

The Problem Solving Workshop is being held at our new building, LCCC, 201 W. Erie Ave. Lorain, Ohio

You are asked to bring in your computer, laptop and other electronics that you need help with.

Learning About Electronics

Date: Thursday - June 21, 2022

Time: 10AM-12PM **Instructor:** Sandee Ruth

Place: LCCC @ 201 W. Erie Ave., Lorain, OH

Learn how use you electronic devices.

Members are encouraged to bring their tablets, iPod, kindles, etc. for assistance from Sandee and any other knowledgeable members. The public is welcome to sit in on these classes.

LCCUG WORKSHOP Class Ideas?

Neil may be starting up his workshop soon and he would like some ideas on what type of projects you are interested in learning about. Contact:

Neil Higgins Education@lccug.com.

On aging and technology

One of my (many?) pet peeves are those folks who consider themselves "too old" for computers, mobile phones, and technology in general.

Some of them are even younger than I am! Here's the thing: they've defeated themselves before they even begin. They've given up. And it's such an unnecessary waste.

Age isn't the limiting factor; it's all about attitude.

by [Leo A. Notenboom](#)

Too old for technology? No.

Negative self-talk may convince you you're too old to "get" or learn about technology. Nothing could be further from the truth, regardless of your age. If you have limitations, they are generally not age specific, and can be compensated for. Success with technology, or any endeavor, is significantly more about attitude than it is age; just ask the 95-year-old computer instructor or the 100-year-old blogger. Being willing to learn, and knowing that you can, will help you stay mentally fit and young.

The remarks I see

Questions I receive often include self-deprecating remarks like "I know I'm too old to do this" or "Put it in extra simple small-word terms because I'm too old."

My reaction — which you mostly don't see or hear, of course — is a frustrated sigh, a shake of my head, and sometimes an actual cry of "bullsh*t!"

You. Are. Not. Too. Old.

What I also see

Some years ago, I stopped by the local senior center to check in on their computer-related offerings. After we chatted for a while, the gentleman in charge of teaching several classes on

Android phones and related devices asked me how old I thought he was. I'm pretty bad at that, but I threw out a guess of early 70s. At 95, and not just using, but teaching technology.

I know of octogenarians and nonagenarians who are having the time of their lives with technology. One of my favorite bloggers recently crossed into centenarian territory.

They still have questions — *everyone* does — but they're using their tech to stay active, connected, and interested in the world around them. They're using technology to stay young. They do not let age get in the way.

Attitude trumps age

It doesn't matter how old you are. I see "younger" folks (whatever definition of "younger" you like) who struggle with technology as well.

What matters much more is your approach, your attitude, and your willingness to learn and grow.

That's true at any age, but particularly as we age, it's part of staying mentally fit. It's not the problem; it's part of the solution.

Ignore the negative stories

Negative age-related self-talk is reinforced by rampant ageism in much of western society.

People often include their ages as some kind of apology or excuse to hide behind. They apologize for not catching on to something, or not catching on as quickly as they feel they should be able to.

The perception is that younger people are more capable.

I say again: bullsh*t. Don't buy into the lie.

Limitations are ageless

Many people confuse limitations with age.

Be it poor eyesight, poor fine-motor skills, or even a perception of being unable to accom-

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(Continued from page 7) Ask Leo

plish things as quickly as others, these limitations and others, while perhaps more common as we age, *are not limited to the aged*. Pick any difficulty you think you experience, and I can assure you, there are people much, much younger who face the same or worse.

There are more people of all age groups facing limitations than you might think.

Limitations can be overcome or accommodated.

It's often not about you at all

Technical gobbledeygook, as I like to call it, is a huge issue. Some of the biggest barriers to technology are the terminology, the concepts involved, and how they're presented. If you don't understand something, it's not your age; it's the writer's inability to communicate in an understandable way.¹

People of all ages have trouble with technical gobbledeygook.

I've commented before that feel like I'm a glorified translator, turning technical gobbledeygook into hopefully understandable English.

"Just wait until you're older"

This is not a new pet peeve of mine, and I've talked about it before. A common reaction is, "You just wait until you're older, buddy!"

As I write this, I'm closing in on my 65th birthday. Many people who tell me they're "too old" are younger than I am.

Short of severe physical or mental disability, I expect to be doing what I'm doing, or something similar, until the day I die. I hope that's many, many years from now. I'm having too much fun.

Sure, I might encounter new limitations along the way, but that can already happen at any stage in life. I'll cope as best I can.

Do this

It's probably obvious by now, but this is some-

thing I'm passionate about.

Whatever your age, stop using it as an excuse. There's an entire world of possibilities you're selling yourself short on. You're stepping away from it every time you make that assumption and every time you have that internal dialogue with yourself.

Foster an attitude of learning. Do it at your own pace, but know that you can.

You're not too old for this, and I really, really (in case it's not clear), **really** want you to stop thinking that.

It's bullsh*t.

One thing that'll help: [subscribe to my weekly newsletter, Confident Computing!](#) Less frustration and more confidence, solutions, answers, and tips in your inbox every week.

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Interesting Internet Finds



By Steve Costello
scostello@sefcug.com

How Using BCC Reduces Spam
<https://askleo.com/bcc-reduces-spam/>

Everyone should know this already, but I still get things from others who don't know or don't care. (Note: As a former user group officer and newsletter editor, I learned to use BCC early on, and I think everyone should too. If I see multiple recipients in an email, I flag future emails from that sender to go to a specific folder and email the sender back requesting that they use BCC in the future.)

10 STEPS TO AVOIDING A BOGUS CREDIT CARD OFFER: INTERNET SCAMBUSTERS #600

Can you spot the difference between a genuine credit card offer and a scam?

We've got 10 things you should be aware of in this week's Scambusters issue, plus information of what to do if you have bad credit.

And in our Alert of the Week we highlight another phony credit card deal -- this time one that comes with bogus airline tickets.

Let's get started...

WHY THAT GREAT CREDIT CARD OFFER COULD BE A SCAM

It's a pretty safe bet that at some time in the past year -- and lots of times before -- an enticing credit card offer has dropped into your mailbox, either online or at the end of your driveway.

And you've probably had your share of tele-sales calls offering you similarly "great deals." Some offers, especially the snail-mail variety, come from genuine card companies -- and mostly they end up in the trash (after being shredded of course -- you do shred them, don't you?).

But some are simply bogus, while others, even if "genuine," impose such restrictions on the user as to render them worthless.

Often they bear a name you've never heard of, or one that sounds similar to, but is slightly different from, a well-known brand.

Usually too, they offer a great deal, like rock bottom interest rates or guaranteed acceptance, even if you have a bad credit record. That makes such cards very appealing to the very people who can least afford them, but, in

truth, any of us might be tempted -- if we don't check them out carefully.

More Scam Reports: Real Estate Scam Offers Sky-High Property Deal -- For a Fee

A few months ago, the Office of the Comptroller of Currency warned of "a fictitious entity" calling itself a bank and claiming to be associated with a legitimate bank (which it was not) offering credit cards.

Applicants were told they had to pay an upfront "deposit" of up to \$900. Deposit checks were cashed but applicants didn't get a card.

In another incident, people who applied for a card were asked for a substantial fee. When applicants received their cards, they found they could only be used in certain retail outlets and catalogs selling outrageously overpriced goods. However, it's not always as easy as you might think to detect phony credit card offers.

For instance, referring to the two examples just given, sometimes legitimate issuers will ask people with a bad credit record to pay a deposit and will also usually severely limit the initial line of credit.

These are known as "secured credit cards" and the deposit may be returned after a year of good repayment history.

And, of course, it's certainly not unusual for card issuers to charge an annual fee, though this is usually quite modest, in the \$50 to \$100 range.

So what can you do to avoid falling for the scam deals?

Here are 10 actions you can take.

EMAIL & DIRECT MAIL

1. A mailed offer should include the name of the "chartered depository institution" behind the offer. Check this with the [Federal De-](#)

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posit Insurance Corporation to see if the bank is registered.

2. A solicitation should include a customer service phone number. Call it and quiz the rep about the bank making the offer. No number? No deal.

3. Most legitimate issuers don't charge application or processing fees. Even if they do, the sum should be just a few dollars. If it's a three-figure sum, skip it.

4. If you must apply for a secured credit card, contact reputable banks or credit unions yourself to make an application, rather than responding to solicitations.

5. Be on your guard if the card on offer seems to be of special status like "VIP," "Platinum" or "Gold."

This is not always a red flag since legitimate companies, such as American Express, do make these offers -- but it is a red flag if it comes from someone you've never heard of and never done business with.

TELESALES

6. If it's an automated, recorded call, it's almost certainly a scam since "robocalls" are illegal.

7. If you've registered with the [Do Not Call Registry](#) and receive an unsolicited offer, it's likely also a scam because you shouldn't be receiving such calls.

8. If the call seems to come from a bank or card issuer you already do business with, remember that you can't be sure who's really on the end of the line and shouldn't give information or take action based purely on that call.

9. It's also illegal for a third party, such as a telemarketer, to charge an upfront fee for supposedly guaranteeing to get you a card.

10. In general, you don't to pay anyone to

get you a credit card anyway. Speak to the card issuers or banks yourself.

That won't cost you a cent and is just as likely to succeed as any third party service.

[More Scam Reports: Airport Travel Scams: Watch Out For These Airport Tricksters](#)

And, if you do have credit problems, consider getting professional counseling support before applying for cards.

The [National Consumers League](#) warns: "Fraudulent credit card companies may also claim that they can repair your bad credit for a large upfront fee. But you can correct inaccurate information in your credit files yourself for free, and no one can erase negative information that is accurate."

To find a local counseling service (free or very low cost) contact the [National Council for Credit Counseling](#) or by calling 1-800-388-2227.

Alert of the Week: Did a free pair of "US Airways" tickets just turn up in your mail or inbox along with a solicitation to apply for a free air miles credit card?

Sorry, but the tickets and the card offer are worthless and any information you supply will be used for identity theft. Check out US Airways' [Scam Alert](#) page.

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Interesting Internet Finds



By Steve Costello
scostello@sefcug.com

The 6 VPN Features That Matter Most

<https://www.howtogeek.com/758704/the-6-vpn-features-that-matter-most/>

If you are in the market for a VPN, check out this post to see what features you should be looking to have.



First Look at GNOME 40 Desktop

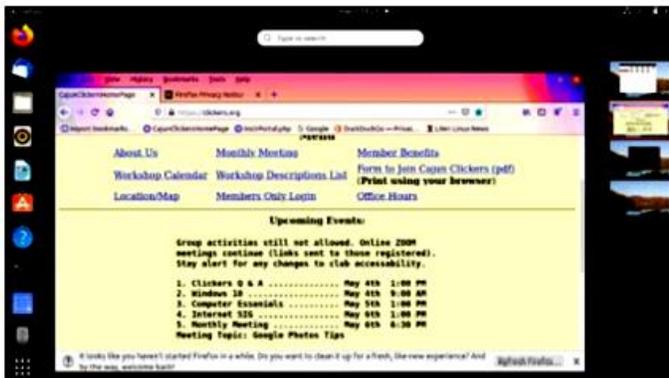


By Cal Esneault, Cajun Clickers Past President and leader of many Open-Source Workshops & SIGs June 2021 issue, CCCC Computer News www.clickers.org office@clickers.org

By Cal Esneault, Cajun Clickers Past President and leader of many Open-Source Workshops & SIGs June 2021 issue, CCCC Computer News www.clickers.org office@clickers.org

The GNOME 3.x desktop has been a favorite for many Linux distributions. Recently, the GNOME Project updated its toolkit series from the GTK 3.x family to the new GTK 4.x series. New desktops concurrent with this upgrade will now be numbered differently, starting with GNOME 40 as the initial offering. I made a quick comparison of GNOME 3.36 (from Ubuntu 20.04 LTS) to GNOME 40.0 (from Fedora 34).

The GNOME 3.x paradigm emphasized panels and virtual workspaces located on the sides of the screen (see below). Since most computer monitors are wide (for example, 16:10 ratio), this gives more working area for the actual application. Because most designs traditionally used horizontal panels (top or bottom), this required some break-in effort, but, overall, it has been effective and accepted by many.



GNOME 40 has reverted to a more horizontal layout (see next column), with launcher panel

being centered at the bottom (more like Mac OS design). In “Activity” view, the adjacent workspaces are visible and easily scroll left and right in a very natural motion. There are also workspace thumbnail icons at the top for quick access.



The GNOME 40 program launcher has the same icon grid view as the previous series. However, images for the virtual workspaces are also displayed above the grid (see below).



This allows the user to drag an application to any desired workspace to launch it. My previous approach had always been to go to the desired workspace first and then launch the app. This looks like a fast and intuitive solution to a common action.

Of course, this summary does not do justice to a major desktop upgrade, but I wanted to see the new layout for myself since I had heard it was quite different. It looks interesting, and I will eagerly await the adoption of this change when it arrives for one of the distro’s I normally use (note: due to the recency of this desktop, some distro’s have not had time to incorporate it at this time)



President's Corner

Taking Technology Too Personally

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood Users Group

<https://www.uchug.org>
president@uchug.org

When I was growing up, there seemed to be more universal and unifying experiences in our lives related to technology. We had much less tech than today, but it served us well and was more common in its applications and experiences. While there were the 'have' and 'have not' divides initially, new devices were often adopted relatively quickly and usually went to fairly high usage levels across society. This provided a common basis of experience for most people.

Television often provided a common topic that many strangers could discuss. With few channels and limited programming, a large number of people were watching the same things. You could talk to your friends about the shows you watched the night before as they likely watched some of the same ones. Telephones were very basic but provided a capability that everyone had to have. The instruments were all very similar as Ma Bell controlled the technology and the market. The rotary dial of the phone and the channel knob on the TV provided simple, common user interfaces. Anyone versed in using a phone or TV set could likely operate anyone's phone or TV. Operating a car was the same; with its standardized controls, almost anyone could drive any vehicle (even use most of the accessories). Our homes had very standardized appliances and lighting systems, providing a common user experience.

Today we have much more technology, much more complex technology, and more diverse technology. In addition to more capabilities, we have more choices, with more competition in the marketplace. As a result, there is much less standardization and much more personalization. Choice can be good, but with more options, there is often less consensus. There are more ways to personalize your experiences, which means fewer people use the same things, watch

the same things or do the same things. This can result in fewer people caring about the same things as you do. While our technology supposedly enables greater communication, the countless choices, versions, and variations we have can sometimes be an isolating factor in society.

It is great to have thousands of choices of what to watch on television, but having a shared cultural baseline is more difficult when everyone watches something different. Choices don't end with content; how you watch can be personal. Fewer people watch "broadcast" television (over the air); we often choose cable, satellite, or streaming. Music is consumed in the same ways with the same multitude of choices. If you don't like what is playing, tell Alexa to skip to the next song. More and more, our entertainment is "on demand." At one time, we more often watched shows or listened to music with others; now, we are more likely to consume media individually. Instead of getting together to listen to that new album, we have our own playlists.

The introduction of the "personal" computer may not have started the trend, but it seemed to accelerate it. First, families used to sit around the radio in the evenings for entertainment; later, the focal point was the living room television. The personal computer pushed everyone to their own devices. I remember having four computers in our house when our two children lived with us. There are only two of us here, but we do have more than four computers in the house.

Smartphones are the ultimate in "personal" devices. Almost everyone has one. They are not the same. However, they could be iPhone or Android, and any number of makes, models, and screen sizes. Even the same phones can be loaded with personalized apps, photos, media, and cases. Unfortunately, no one shares them, so everyone is alone with their individualized device. I've seen this sad scene far too many times: a family out at a restaurant, and each member, while sitting together, is intently manipulating their own smartphone. And they don't appear to be communicating with each other.

(Continued on page 13)

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There are now so many choices in the tech world and so few standards. Email used to be pretty standardized. Remember the AOL voice saying, "You've got mail." It was once so culturally universal that it was the title of a movie. Now there are so many email clients, web hosts, and types of devices to get mail on that everyone's email experience can be unique. I don't know if that is good or bad, but it is the direction most things are going. It is probably not hard to name five different ways of doing anything, from listening to a podcast, viewing a movie, placing a voice call, or writing a document.

Tech companies are just giving us what we want. More choices, more things we "need," more opportunities to buy their products and services. While there can be dominant providers in the market, being dominant does not necessarily make them the best. With so many things to have and so many choices for each, how can anyone optimize their lives? What is the best photo editor? The best streaming service? The best smartphone? The best family car? The best internet provider? These are hard questions to answer as they are. When you add "for me" to the end of each, it gets even more complicated. Do you spend so much time researching your choices that you never get to enjoy your things? By the time you have finished your research, is the item you chose out of date? Do you pick what your friends are using or what you have seen in commercials? Do you keep a suboptimal service because it is a hassle to change?

Our technology is much more powerful but also much more complex. At one time, you simply had to turn on the TV power switch to watch something. Now you may also have to select a signal source, app, or service, using a remote control with dozens of buttons on it. For example, to drive a car, you unlocked the door, put the key in the ignition switch, turned it, put the transmission in gear, and drove. Now you may have a remote fob to unlock it, you may press a button on the dash to start it (assuming the fob is near), and the pedal you press may inject more fuel into an internal combustion engine or may provide more current from a battery to an electric motor. Finally, one day you may get in and tell the car where you want to go.

As our things become more and more complex, they sometimes don't do what we expect them to. Sometimes this is our fault, as we may not fully understand how to use them. For example, my parents have had to buy a new dishwasher and a new washing machine in the last year, and though the new items are more energy-efficient and do more things, they are more difficult for them to operate. They bought a Samsung dishwasher with the controls on the top edge (rather than the face) of the door. This is confusing even to me. On their old dishwasher, you closed the door and set the controls to run it. On this new one, you set it to run and then close the door, as the controls are inaccessible with the door closed. Their old clothes washer had a big knob on the panel to control it; the new one has buttons to move LED indicators to set modes. It does more but is more challenging to figure out how to set.

Other times, our devices are so complex that they don't operate in a stable and consistent manner. Unfortunately, with our internet-connected devices, that which works today may not work the same tomorrow, as updates change features, fix bugs, and introduce new bugs. We have a lot of smart home devices in our house, including various Amazon Echo smart speakers and internet-connected light controllers of different brands and styles. I've been using the light device apps to turn on lights at certain times in the morning and then turn them off manually with our Echo Show in the kitchen. Recently I've been having problems controlling the lights through the Echo Show reliably. My wife uses the Show as a timer for cooking. Recently she has been setting timers, but the alarm never goes off. It seems like the Show got a bad update.

With all the choices and options available, tech means something different to each of us. We can tailor our devices and services to our preferences for experiences that are uniquely ours. However, if our devices don't act the way we want them to, it is not clear who is to blame or who will sympathize.

