CAEUG Computers Are Easy User Group

Abort, Retry, Ignore....

Founded 1984 ARI is the Official Newsletter of Computers Are Easy User Group

Nov/Dec 2022
Volume XXXVIII Issue 11

Confirmed meeting dates

2022
December 3

2023
January 28

Hybrid Board Room in person OR Zoom

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Check website for dates and meeting info

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Mailing address:
CAEUG
P.O. Box 3150
Glen Ellyn, IL
60138

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PER GLENSIDE Library (Masks are optional)

INFORMATION for Saturday December 3rd meeting

The start time in person at **Library Board Room is 9:30am** or at home **Zoom is 10:00am**. This will be a hybrid meeting.

There will be a meeting invitation e-mail Thursday evening before the Saturday meeting.

Our Presenter for Saturday will be a presentation via Zoom and live by **Larry Bothe** on Computers and Airplanes in the Board Room. Update your Zoom app to the latest version.

REMINDER 2023:

$20.00 Membership dues for 2023 are due.
Mail dues to CAEUG, P.O. Box 3150,
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

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Join CAEUG meeting in Library or from Home,
Stay Safe! Update information on our website at

https://www.CAEUG.net

Lamp Post 252
November / December 2022
by John Spizzirri

Now that animal watching is over for the year, we can now set our sites on the sky. There is a camera at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada **(1)** pointed at the sky. At night, when the weather is clear, you can check for Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). The last week in October the lights were quite active. Churchill is in the Central Time zone. If you stay up really late or cannot sleep, try the Alaska Borealis cams **(2)** or Yellowknife cam in the Mountain Time zone **(3)**. Another place to try offers various cams from around the world **(4)**.

1) **https://is.gd/3RjcRQ**
2) **https://auroranotify.com/?p=63**
3) **https://auroramax.com/live**
4) **https://seetheaurora.com/webcams**

Amazon **(1)** price checking can be tedious. Amazon changes its prices continually. It sometimes does it more than once a day. You can keep track of price changes using the Camel Camel Camel web site **(2).** When selecting an item from Amazon, paste the item into Camel Camel Camel. The item will be returned with a price history (provided the item is not new) that goes back a few months. You can judge from that chart whether you are getting the lowest price or near the lowest price. Based on the chart, you may choose to wait on the purchase. Camel Camel Camel gives you some leverage in the computer marketplace.

1) **https://www.amazon.com/**
2) **https://camelcamelcamel.com/**

Live flight tracker **(1)** may be useful to you. It is a site that tracks aircraft in flight all over the world. The aircraft must be equipped with the electronics that allow tracking and the owners must allow permission to be tracked. (Military and government aircraft cannot be tracked like Air Force One.) If you are serious about tracking aircraft, the site has subscriptions **(2)** with added features such as map and weather enhancements and NO ADS. There are loads of acronyms in aviation. This site has a glossary that explains many of these terms as well as other aviation meanings for certain words **(3)**. It also has a FAQ that is very helpful **(4)**. The tracker updates about every ten seconds. Looking at a the map of the United States during the day, it is hard to believe that the airlines are not making money. The sky seems to be crowded with airliners all day long.

1) **https://www.flightradar24.com/**

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2) **https://is.gd/QUoLhi**
3) **https://www.flightradar24.com/glossary**
4) **https://support.fr24.com/support/home**

Google **(1)** wants to rule the world along with Apple **(2)** and Microsoft **(MS 3)**. Apple developed passkey **(4, 5)** technology to replace the less secure user entered password. Passkeys are device generated and Bluetooth transmitted 'random' code to authorize a user to a site or product. The only problems I see with this situation is that getting rid of the password input will take quite a while and passkeys require the user to own an expensive device that can generate the passkey based on a bio-metric of the user. A substantial number of people cannot afford these devices. Another substantial number of people will not allow a small number of corporations to hold power over their lives. There is another unknown number of people like me that do not trust facial recognition as an accurate bio-metric. My relatively new Samsung S21 cannot read my finger prints. I do not like to use the screen to read finger prints as it gets the screen dirty and thus hard to read. I won't use my phone for a passkey generator because its inability to read my finger prints and I do not trust facial recognition to recognize me as opposed to a photograph or other facsimile of me. I'll grant that storing credentials locally instead of on some data base at who knows where is better for security but the expense and inconvenience in many cases may out weigh the advantages. Letting a corporation rule your life can be detrimental to your livelihood. See the next article.

1) **https://www.google.com/**
2) **https://www.apple.com/**
3) **https://www.microsoft.com/**
4) **https://www.passkeys.io/**
5) **https://developer.apple.com/passkeys/**

Mark was a software engineer in San Francisco. During the pandemic his toddler son got a skin rash in the groin area. His doctor's office asked him to send pictures of it so the doctor could evaluate it for a diagnosis. Mark used his Gmail **(1)**. Mark used Google for everything. All the family photos were stored in Google Photos **(2)**. He used a Google phone **(3, 4)**. Google programmers developed a type of artificial intelligence (AI) software to scan all email content for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in 2018. During the pandemic that software detected Mark's pictures of his son and classified them as CSAM. That automatically triggered a report to the local police department. Two days later Mark's Google accounts were terminated by Google. Mark appealed the termination. Ten months past before he found out that he had been investigated by the San Francisco Police Department. They determined that no crime had occurred. The police had served search warrants on Google demanding all the email, pictures, and documents in Mark's account for a period of time prior to the pictures being transmitted to the doctor. Google

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complied. Mean while Mark is locked out of his life. All his email contacts are unavailable to him. His phone book is unavailable to him. All the financial institutions (banks and credit cards) he uses that required two-factor authentication could not call him because he had no cell service nor could they email him. This story was first published in August and has been republished a number of times **(5, 6, 7. 8)**. It gives me a warm feeling for artificial intelligence and the humans at Google who double check the AI and still say AI is right even when the cops say no crime was committed.

1) **https://www.google.com/gmail/about/**
2) **https://www.google.com/photos/about/**
3) **https://is.gd/E5M6b0**
4) **https://fi.google.com/about/**
5) **https://is.gd/vweKxz**
6) **https://is.gd/vDH537**
7) **https://is.gd/u4MSbf**
8) **https://is.gd/OkComs**

Between you, me and the LampPost, that's all for now.

Backup
By Dick Maybach
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Life is constantly changing, meaning we should occasionally review our habits to see if they are still appropriate, and this is true for PC backups. So let’s take a high-level look at the subject. Your situation is undoubtedly different from mine, and your approaches will most likely differ.

Two basic backup techniques are copying the entire disk (cloning) and file-by-file. Cloning saves both your software and your data but requires that your backup medium be at least as large as your disk. In addition, there may be complications if you restore to a different PC, as old software may not be compatible with its new home. On the other hand, file-by-file backups can be updated far faster because only changes are saved. You can also do partial restores, replacing only corrupted files or restoring only missing ones. However, a complete restore of a file-by-file backup is slower (perhaps significantly so) than a restore of a clone because the data is scattered throughout the backup medium.

Full disk backups protect against disk failure, software malfunction, and malware, as a restore returns the disk to its state when you backed it up. Of course, this means you lose any changes you’ve made since then. It’s less satisfactory if you want to restore to a new PC. Most users buy PCs with an

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installed operating system (OS) with an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) license valid only for that machine. When you copy the entire disk contents to a new one, it now has an OS whose license isn't valid.
Further, the software is configured for the old PC. All is not lost, however, as you may be able to mount the backup disk on your new PC and copy just the data you need from it. Be sure to test this before you need to do it, as there are possible complications, for example, if your hard disk is encrypted. When moving to a new PC, you'll probably want to retain the OS and any applications you bought with it and install your other applications from their installation media.

File-by-file backups allow you to save just your data and thus will enable you to move it to a new PC, but you must be careful. For example, Windows users should back up the entire contents of C:\Users and Linux users the entire contents of /home. Be sure you get everything, as many important items are hidden.

Consider using both strategies, clone the disk after upgrading old software or installing new, and make frequent file-by-file backups to preserve your data.

The Terabyte capacities of modern hard disks leave you only two choices of backup medium, hard disks and the cloud. (Resist the temptation to back up to a separate partition of your system disk, as a disk failure will affect your system and your backup.) For example, backing up a 3-Terabyte disk to the cloud, assuming an upload rate of 3-Megabytes per second, would require close to 100 hours. However, I see rates around 100 Mbytes/second when writing to USB-3 external disks, meaning a 3-Tbyte disk backup would need a more reasonable three hours.

Your backup software can limit your choices for your next PC. For example, I use Back in Time, available only for Linux, and the backup disk is formatted as ext4. If considering changing operating systems, use different backup software and a different disk format.

Currently, USB is the most common interface for external disks. Using something else increases the risk that a new PC may not have the same interface or replacement drives may become unavailable.

Backup disks can be either internal drive or external. An internal drive is always available, making it suitable for scheduled backups. However, a serious PC problem, for example, overheating or a power surge could damage both the PC and your backups. An external drive, especially if connected to the PC only when in use, makes it more likely to survive a PC mishap. Leaving a USB drive always connected makes it function as an internal one and can support scheduled backups. Also, it's less likely to be damaged by a catastrophic PC failure.

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What do you back up, and on what schedule? I use open-source software, and I prefer to install software from current distribution media rather than from a backup if there is a problem. This ensures the software is up to date-and free from the inevitable configuration problems that seem to accumulate over the years. This solution is less desirable with proprietary software, where you would have to reinstall from the original installation media (or the recovery disks) and then do all the updating. A better solution here is to clone your disk when you install a new program or perform a significant upgrade. Then make file backups of only your home directory.

I've found that backup programs do a poor job of error reporting. Even experienced PC users are sometimes surprised to find their backups have failed without warning. Frequently check the backup program logs. I have one scheduled every Tuesday, and once found that my medium had failed three weeks before, meaning the last three backups had failed. If you make file-by-file backups, occasionally check the process by restoring one or a few, preferably to a different location, so that you can compare the originals with the backup versions.

You can streamline your backups by organizing the file system on your PC. For example, you can create an archive area where you keep old, seldom-accessed files. If you move files to it only once a year, you need back it up only once a year. As a result, your other backups will be faster and smaller. Of course, we all should delete far more old, obsolete files than we do, but an archive accomplishes almost as much and involves less agony.

The recovery process depends on the damage. An operator error or disk failure usually involves just restoring from a backup. This can require recovering a complete copy of your disk, which I've had to do after mistakenly restarting Windows during an update. As I noted above, PC failure is more troublesome if you use proprietary software. The safe course is to use the OS you bought with the PC, restore your home directory from your last file backup, and reinstall the installation media software whose licenses permit such things.

I prefer to keep at least one backup offline that is disconnected from the PC, making it safe from even a catastrophic power surge. Once a week, I back up my home directory automatically to an internal drive, and once a month, I back up to an external one. The large capacities of our hard disks mean that our backups are most likely stored near our PCs, where they could be damaged by catastrophic events, such as a house fire or flood. While these are unlikely, they happen, and taking special precautions with your valuable data, such as passwords, key financial records, and contacts, is worthwhile. In my case, these occupy less than 20 Mbytes and are easily stored on a USB memory stick or a cell phone. Because these are sensitive data, they should reside in an encrypted volume. Memory sticks are so small that asking a friend or relative to

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keep one for you is reasonable.

When you think about your needs, you will likely decide to use more than one backup technique. After all, there is more than one risk.

QR Code Scams – Be careful where you point that smartphone

By Phil Sorrentino, Secretary and APCUG Rep
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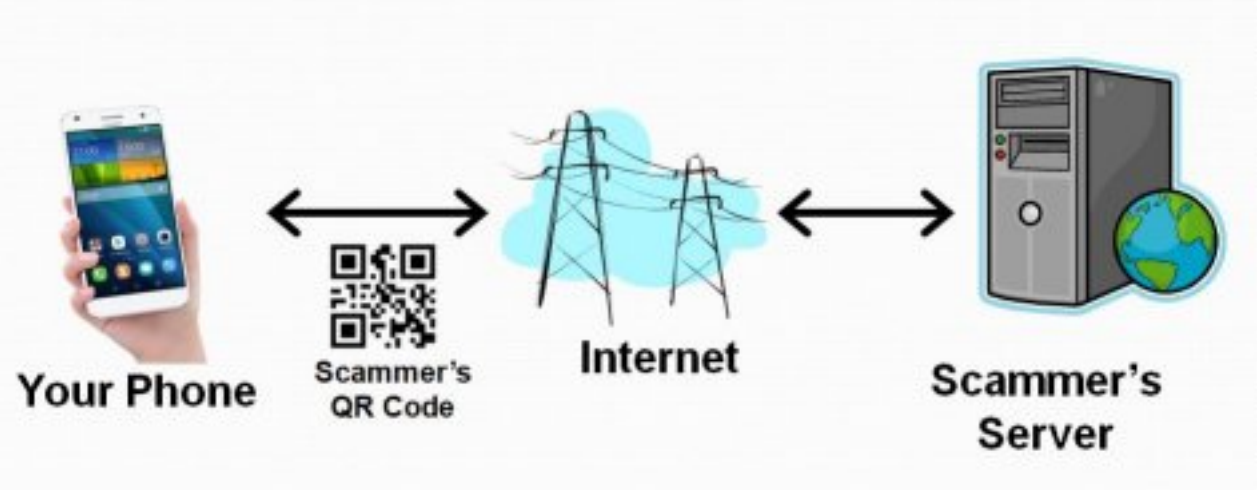
QR Codes seem to be everywhere today. You'll find them anywhere someone wants to give you more information than is possible by other means, like a sheet of paper or a machine-readable standard bar code. Initially, QR codes were created to track manufacturing processes where barcodes couldn't store enough information. However, a bar code has one dimension. A QR code is 2-dimensional and can store significantly more data than a bar code. Roughly speaking, a QR code may contain as many as 7,000 characters as opposed to a bar code that may contain up to around 40 characters. That's over 170 times the amount of data. This increased amount of information makes the QR code so worthwhile.

QR codes were invented in Japan in the 1990s. They were first used by the automotive industry to manage production but have spread everywhere. There are even websites and apps that let you make your own. A QR code is a machine-readable, 2 dimension matrix of black and white squares. A QR code may represent many different data types, such as text, a hyperlink to a website, a telephone number, an email address, or a text or email message. QR codes, like billboards, clothing labels, walls, TVs, and even tattoos, can be placed on almost anything. QR stands for Quick Response. Quick Response comes from the manufacturing industry and deals with how fast a product can be replaced on the seller's shelves. Quick Response is "the rapid replenishment of a customer's stock by a supplier with direct access to data from the customer's point of sale." A QR code is merely a data storage representation of some information using the binary code. (For example, the letter A is represented by "01000001") The little squares and patterns of the QR code represent the binary information. The actual QR code is read-only, so it cannot record or steal any personal information on its own. Nowadays, the smartphone's camera app can scan the QR code when the camera is directed at it. (Most smartphones no longer have to download a separate app from the App store for reading QR codes.)

A QR code with an embedded hyperlink to a website can connect you to a specific website quickly and easily using your smartphone. There is very little one needs to know to take advantage of a QR code. But a lot of the latest

technology is being used to accomplish the task. The three major technology components are your smartphone, the internet, and a server (on the internet, or "in the cloud"). This collection of technologies goes by the name "Client-Server Technology," and all three components have been developed to work together. For example, your smartphone has a camera App that connects the smartphone, as the client, to the server website whose URL was embedded in the QR code. (URL is the Universal Resource Locator, the term for a web address on the internet.) This allows the provider of the QR code the ability to connect your phone with the QR code provider's server when you scan the QR code. Once connected to the server, the smartphone can access all the information that the server can provide.

QR codes take people from the physical world to the online (cyber) world. They let smartphones connect to an enormous world of information quickly and easily, but unfortunately, they also allow smartphones to connect quickly and easily to a scammer's website. This is why scammers have started using QR codes in attempting to get in touch with potential victims. It gets people online with the scammer's server. It is similar to "phishing" emails and telephone calls. QR codes are another way for scammers to get in touch with potential victims.



Many scammers (aka cybercriminals) have started to exploit the technology's convenience. Scammers create malicious QR codes to connect unwitting consumers to the scammer's server and dupe them into divulging their personal information. Anytime new technology comes out, cybercriminals attempt to find a way to exploit it. This is especially true with technology like QR codes. It seems like most people can figure out how to use them, but they probably don't really know how they work, and it's always easier to manipulate people when they don't understand their technology. Scanning the scammer's QR codes won't do anything malicious to your smartphone, such as installing malware. Still, it probably will take you to a website designed to try to get personal or financial information from you.

Like any other phishing scheme, it's impossible to know precisely how often QR codes are used for malicious purposes. Experts say they still represent a small percentage of overall phishing, but numerous QR code scams have been

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reported to the Better Business Bureau. As a result, many people know they need to be on the lookout for phishing links and questionable attachments in emails that purport to be from your bank. But thinking twice about scanning a QR code with your smartphone camera isn't second nature for most people yet.

Recently a QR code scam was uncovered in a Texas city. Drivers were led to a scammer's website after scanning a QR code sticker on a parking meter. Eventually, around 30 such stickers were found. The QR code was supposed to help the motorist pay for online parking. However, instead of being taken to the city's authorized website, the motorist who scanned the fake stickers was led to a fake website that collected their credit card information. With a warning of the parking meter scam, officials in another city issued a warning to motorists after spotting similar stickers on parking meters.

Fake QR codes have even shown up in emails. Scammers may like using QR codes in phishing emails because they often aren't picked up by security software, giving them a better chance than attachments or bad links to reach their intended targets. It boils down to QR codes being just one more way for cybercriminals to get what they want and yet another threat for people to be on the lookout for.

So be careful when scanning QR codes. Here are some tips from security experts. Think before you scan. Be especially wary of codes posted in public places. Take a good look and determine if the sticker is part of the sign or display. If the code doesn't look like it fits in with the background, it may have been put there by a scammer. Be suspicious of any QR code that comes in an email. If you scan a QR code, look at the website it led you to and determine if it looks like what you expected. If it doesn't look appropriate, then leave the website. If it asks for personal information you don't think is appropriate, don't provide it. And, in the words of one of the Computer Club's past presidents, Matt Batt, "Be careful out there!"

Interesting Internet Finds -- May 2022

By Steve Costello scostello AT sefcug.com

While going through more than 300 RSS feeds, I often encounter things I think might interest other user group members. The following are some items I found interesting during May 2022.

Amazon Dropping MOBI Support On Send To Kindle Apps

https://blog.the-ebook-reader.com/2022/05/03/amazon-dropping-mobi-support-on-send-to-kindle-apps/

Kindle users do not panic! MOBI files on your Kindle will still be readable. All this means is that you will no longer be able to use ‘send to Kindle’ apps to send MOBI files to your Kindle.

I Lost My Phone With My Second Factor For Authentication. How Do I Recover?

https://askleo.com/i-lost-my-phone-with-my-second-factor-for-authentication-how-do-i-recover/

I know some people are hesitant to use two factor authentication for this reason. Leo

explains how he would recover from that scenario. (Note: I use 2FA everywhere I can, and have not had a problem. The key is to think about how to handle this and prepare for it before it ever happens.

Gas Prices In Google Maps: Here's How To Find Them

https://9to5google.com/2022/05/13/how-to-find-gas-prices-with-google-maps/

With the price of gas on the rise, it is even more useful to be able to find the best price. This post shows how to find gas prices while using Google Maps. (Note: This knowledge came in handy during a recent road trip. Prices differed by over twenty cents a gallon within a hundred miles during the trip. Without being able to see the prices in Google Maps, I would have almost surely spent a lot more for gas.)

Android Cellular Data Not Working? 8 Ways To Fix

https://helpdeskgeek.com/help-desk/android-cellular-data-not-working-8-ways-to-fix/

It is not a question of if, but when your android cellular data will stop working. When it does, refer to this post for cures most likely to work. (Note: I lose my android cellular data at least once a month for some reason but usually get it back in minutes using one of these fixes.)

Is It Dangerous To Use Free Stock Photo Websites?

https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2022/05/18/is-it-dangerous-to-use-free-stock-photo-websites/

This is an interesting article for the editors and bloggers that use photos from stock photo websites. Just because it is free from a stock photo website does not mean it is safe to use. Check out the advice in this post before using just any stock photo website photo.

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About DVD of the Month

Unfortunately, the DVD of the Month is no longer creating an income center for the club. August 2022 will be the last issue of the DVD. Starting in September, I will feature a review of a freeware program in the ARI... Some of these programs may be elaborate and complicated others may be very simple. I may include screen shots if that can be accommodated.

The Glenside Public Library address is at 25 E Fullerton Avenue, Glendale Heights, Illinois. The meeting(s) are not library sponsored Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this program and who require certain accommodations in order to observe and / or participate in the program are requested to contact CAEUG president, at least five (5) days prior to the program, so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

Members Helpline

Any member can volunteer to be on the Members Helpline.

Hardware problems, Win 7, Win 10, Linux and Virus Removal

- John Spizzirri