

User Friendly

LACS
**A Computer and
Technology
User Group**

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**LACS IS A MEMBER OF
APCUG**

www.apcug2.org
www.facebook.com/APCUG
www.twitter.com/apcug



An International
Association of Technology
and Computer User Groups

MAY 11 GENERAL MEETING

Meeting Time: 7:00 – 9 PM – Via Zoom

6:30 to 7:00: Socializing and Questions & Answers

Topic: **Audiobooks**

Speaker: **Hewie Poplock**

APCUG Speakers Bureau,
Central Florida Computer Society and
Sarasota Technology Users Club



Many people, especially seniors, are finding more free time while confined to their homes. One technology that is not often considered is audio-books. Reading becomes more difficult as we age, but listening to someone read has become very accessible. There are many ways to get professionally read books for free, inexpensively, or by subscription. Hewie gives a brief background, and then he provides ways to find thousands of audiobooks. He will also provide a few samples of books to show the quality of audiobooks.

Meet Our Presenter

Hewie Poplock is a former APCUG Vice President and currently serves as the Windows SIG leader and APCUG Rep for the Central Florida Computer Society. He also is a member of the Sarasota Technology Users Club's board of directors. Hewie attended his first user group meeting in 1982 at an Osborne User group, and he has been active in the user group movement ever since. He likes to help computer users and to give back much of what he has learned. Feel free to attend his free monthly Win(dows) SIG meetings online. Hewie and Ron Brown host the weekly "Tech for Seniors" and the monthly "Learning Chromebooks". Links to all are on Hewie's website, <https://hewie.net>.

Tuesday, May 11, 7:00 - 9:00 PM

This meeting will be conducted via Zoom

6:30 - 7:00 Social Time and informal Q & A

More information at 310-780-3302

and <https://www.lacspc.org>

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT / EDITOR**The Future of LACS**

LACS has had quite successful meetings via Zoom for over a year. Now we are beginning to see the end to the COVID-19 pandemic, making us need to make some decisions about the future.

Virtual meetings have enabled us to avoid driving at night, and those living at a distance have been able to join us. In-person meetings require work to set up and to close up at the end. For these reasons, many members would like to continue meeting virtually.

On the other hand, we miss the social contact, personal interaction with our presenters, and the delicious refreshments.

I have been thinking of the possibility of holding hybrid meetings where some participants can join from home and others in person. But there are complications to consider. Special microphones and equipment would be needed so both groups could see and hear each other. This would necessitate having members with the technical expertise willing to take the time to set up and dismantle.

I have been thinking about this and have thought of a compromise. What about continuing monthly Zoom meetings, as we have been doing? We could then have quarterly get-togethers at a restaurant for socializing and technical discussion. This could be similar to our old lunch SIGs (Special Interest Groups). Some of you may remember them.

Let the board know what you would like to happen to LACS. Maybe we could brainstorm ideas and come up with a solution.

We have agreed with the church to store our equipment through June, and then we'll have to decide what to do.

Please let us hear your wishes, ideas, and offers of help via email or at the May general meeting. Many thanks.

Mother's Day

We wish a Happy Mother's Day for all LACS mothers. We thank all our mothers for their dedication and love.

Here is some historical data from Wikipedia.

- **Initial proclamation:** 1870 — Julia Howe wrote the first Mother's Day proclamation asking all women to join for world peace
- **Founders:** Julia Ward Howe, Ann Jarvis, and Anna Jarvis
- **Earliest beginnings:** 1868 — Ann Jarvis created a committee to establish "Mother's Friendship Day"
- **Became nationally recognized:** 1914 — proclamation signed by Woodrow Wilson
- **Founding Country:** United States
- **First celebrated:** 1908 — Anna held a memorial for her mother, Ann

Anna Jarvis put Mother's Day on the calendar as a day dedicated to expressing love and gratitude to mothers, acknowledging the sacrifices women make for their children. She was determined to keep "Mother's" a singular possessive, as marked by the apostrophe before "s." Each family should celebrate its own mother, so that individual women across the country could feel the love, even in the midst of a broad celebration of motherhood.

Memorial Day

We thank all our LACS veterans on Memorial Day and always. Please know your service is much appreciated.

GENERAL MEETING REPORT

April 13, 2021

Microsoft 365

Speaker: **Rob Truman**

APCUG Speakers Bureau

Computers Booters of Sun
Lakes, AZ



Before the meeting opened at 7:00, there was interesting and friendly discussion with Bill James, Judy Taylour, and our presenter, Rob Truman, and other visitors and members. 28 members and eight visitors enjoyed the presentation. Bill commented that computers have become like any other appliances in our homes — necessities. Leah introduced Caden Kang, a high school technology student who has offered volunteer assistance to LACS.

What is Microsoft 365?

Microsoft 365 is a subscription service that ensures the most up-to-date tools. Office 2019 is a one-time purchase, and Office Online is a free version to use in a web browser.

A Microsoft Account gives access to Premium Microsoft services: Outlook, Office, Skype, OneDrive, Xbox Live, Bing, Store, Windows, and MSN in Office 365.

Pros and Cons of Microsoft 365

Pros

- All plans include 1TB of cloud storage.
- Each user can install it on five PCs or Macs, five tablets, and five mobile devices.
- Users can share their subscriptions with up to six family members.
- User management is easy.
- You receive regular security updates and improvements.
- Ongoing tech support is available.
- You may choose between monthly or annual payments.
- You get free credits to make calls to land lines using Skype.

Cons

- New changes can be overwhelming.
- You may pay for unnecessary features.

Pros and Cons of Office 2019

Pros

- Pay once, use forever.
- It is cheaper to own the license rather than to subscribe.

Cons

- One device per license
- Only runs on Windows 10 or macOS
- No upgrades
- Support limited to five years
- Limited security updates

What Comes with Microsoft 365

- Seven Premium Office Apps
- Services: Skype and OneDrive
- Cloud-based products: To Do, Forms, Power Automate, and Sway
- Automatic updates

Microsoft 365 – Family

- \$99.99 per year
- One subscription for up to six people
- One TB OneDrive Cloud Storage per person
- 60 minutes per user of Skype calling per month per user
- No restrictions on installs: macOS, Windows, Android, IOS

Microsoft 365 – Personal

- \$69.99 per year - One subscription for one person
- One TB OneDrive Cloud Storage
- 60 minutes of Skype calling per month
- No restrictions on installs: macOS, Windows, Android, IOS
- Install on up to 15 devices

Office – Home & Student 2019

- \$149.99 – One-time purchase
- Includes three Premium Office Apps and OneNote
- No additional OneDrive Cloud Storage
- No Skype calling
- Single install, macOS and Windows.

Microsoft 365 discounts

- Retired Military can get Microsoft 365 Family edition for \$69.99.
- Some colleges will give 365 personal edition free to students and teachers.

Extras

OneDrive

- Autosave backups
- Access from anywhere
- Switch between devices
- Share files.
- A personal vault with 2-factor authentication is available.

OneDrive Sync

- Sync files and folders between devices and the cloud
- Chose what folders to save,
- Access files on demand without downloading all files

Skype minutes

- Use 60 minutes per month per user
- Skype to Skype calls are free
- Call to mobile phones in more than eight countries, and landlines in over 60 countries.
- The *Meet Now* Video Conference app is included.

Subscription Only features

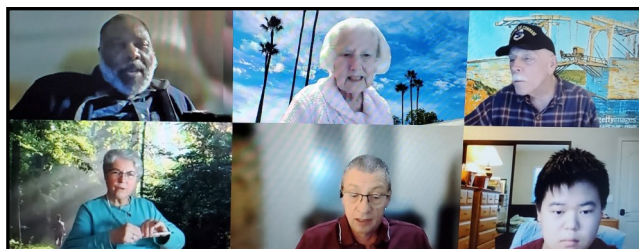
- Microsoft Editor - Spelling, grammar, thesaurus, and style refinements
- PowerPoint – Monotone pitch and speech refinement, grammar and style

refinements, design tools, and language translation

- Excel Money – Gather, organize and analyze financial information

Office Online

- Online versions of Office applications are free with a Microsoft account.
- They are stored in OneDrive, easy to share, autosaved, support pdf, and work from any device.
- They are stripped-down versions of the full applications



Discussion before the start of the meeting

TECHNOLOGY TRIVIA

Compiled by Leah Clark, LACS

The word "iPod" has become such a mainstay of modern culture that it's easy to forget it's a rather novel term to pull out of thin air. In keeping with Apple's forward-thinking and artistic character, the "Pod" in iPod is inspired by Stanley Kubrick's film "2001: A Space Odyssey." The thinking was that the music player was to be part of a computer's broader digital hub, like a shuttle docking at a spaceship. The shuttles in Kubrick's film were called pods, which resembled the look of Apple's new music player, and the rest is history. Unsurprisingly, the "i" is a nod to the internet.



AVOIDING COMPUTER-BASED SCAMS

By **Mark Presky**, LACS Director
Published in the *Santa Monica Star*

There are so many computer-based scams out there targeting YOU that it is impossible to warn you of all of them in this single column.



Scammers often place a hyperlink, commonly called a “link,” into email messages to entice you to click on the link. That link then takes you to a dangerous website, where malware is then placed or downloaded onto your computer. The email you initially see may look friendly enough. It may be designed to cause you to think that it is coming from a friend or family member. DO NOT automatically click on ANY link. Does the subject or message look like something that person (or business) would be sending to you? Is there a message with the link that really sounds like it came from your friend? Are there unusual spelling or grammatical mistakes? These can be tip-offs. Often one can hover one’s cursor over the sender’s information, or over a link, to reveal the real source of a message.

The message sent to you may often look very similar to one sent from a company you know, such as your bank, a credit card company, PayPal, or a utility company. It may contain a logo or symbol that your bank uses. This is called phishing. Don’t be fooled! Often the message warns you of a charge to your account. For example, lately, I have been receiving messages purportedly from a company with which I do business, informing me of multi hundred dollar debits to my account. I have not had transactions of this sort involving that company, so I ignore them. If one is concerned, one can always contact the company independently, NOT THROUGH THE RECEIVED MESSAGE, to report the message and ask any questions.

Or the bogus message may ask you to reply to it to confirm personal information in their files. NEVER, NEVER respond to these requests. No reputable company will ask you for personal info this way. And remember that the IRS, the police, etc., are never going to contact you by email or phone to accuse you of fraud or an impending arrest. Lastly, everyone should place a freeze on their accounts at all three (Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax) credit reporting agencies. By doing so, one prevents anyone from opening a credit account (credit card, loan, mortgage, etc.) in your name without the unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) one is issued to unfreeze the frozen account. One does have to be careful to retain the three PINs for temporarily unfreezing each account as necessary to apply for future credit. ❖

INTERESTING INTERNET FINDS

By **Steve Costello** scostello (at) sefcug.com

Google Storage Changes Coming In June

<https://davescomputertips.com/google-storage-changes-coming-in-june/>

Do you use Google’s free storage? If you use Gmail, you do, whether you know it or not. This post has the information you need to be aware of about changes coming after June 1, 2021. I suggest you read this post and make your decision before then.

How To Set Up Voicemail on Google Voice

<https://www.online-tech-tips.com/google-softwaretips/how-to-set-up-voicemail-on-google-voice/>

This post explains how to set up voicemail on Google Voice. If you don’t have Google Voice yet, it also explains how to get started with Google Voice. I have been using Google Voice for years. ❖

This work by Steve Costello is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

CROSSWORD PUZZLES ON THE INTERNET

By **Tom Burt**, Vice-President
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
<https://www.scscc.club>
tomburt89134 (at) cox.net



For the Sun City Summerlin Computer Club seniors, this pandemic has meant staying at home and doing much of their daily interactions with the outside world via the Internet. One way I like to fill my time and keep mentally sharp is to work crossword puzzles. While I still do some puzzles on paper with pen or pencil, I do enjoy working puzzles online.

To see what's available, search your favorite web browser for **online crossword puzzles**. I got 67 million hits searching via Google. You can click to follow the links and try out a few of the puzzle sites. There are varying degrees of difficulty and variations in the visual presentation and how the online puzzles handle navigation and data entry.

I prefer to work the puzzles on my desktop PC with a large screen, a mouse, and a full keyboard. It makes typing in the letters of the words much easier. Also, I don't need to erase when I make a mistake; I just type in the corrections. Plus, every letter entered is neat and easy to read.

The free puzzle websites have lots of ad content. That's OK, so do the newspapers and magazines.

Many online crossword sites offer you an option to receive running help, where the puzzle software will highlight incorrect letters in red. Alternatively, you can work the puzzle in "expert" mode, with no help offered.

While entering letters, the space bar switches from across mode to down mode and back. The tab key moves to the next word in the same orientation (across or down). The arrow

keys move horizontally or vertically within the same word. Pressing an arrow key whose direction is opposite to that of the current word changes direction and moves up, down left, or right to the nearest word with that direction. You can also click on any cell to place the cursor.

Most puzzle sites allow you to customize the above interactions via a menu link or gear icon. One choice is to enable moving to the next empty letter as you tab between words. Let's look at three free crossword puzzle sites that I visit:

- **Boatload Puzzles:**
<https://www.boatloadpuzzles.com/playcrossword> (Easy)
- **AARP Games:** <https://games.aarp.org/games/daily-crossword> (Medium)
- **Dictionary.com**
<https://www.dictionary.com/e/crossword/> (Challenging)

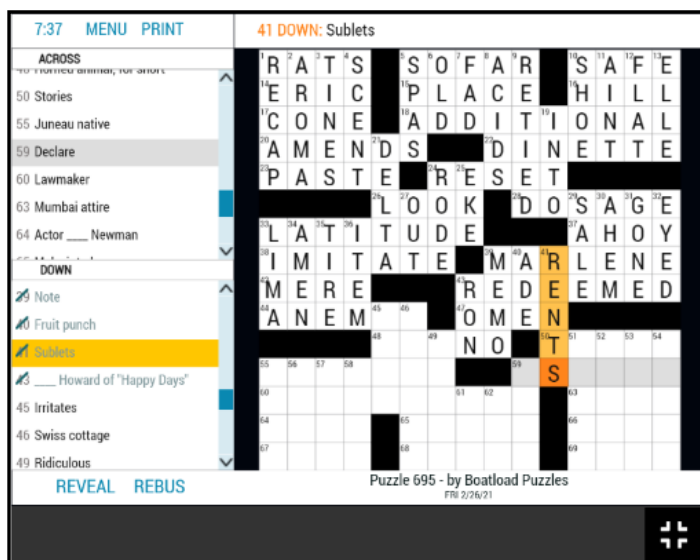
Boatload Puzzles

Boatload has 40,000 puzzles that are fairly easy for an experienced crossworder. The puzzle grid is 13x13. Their color scheme can be a bit hard to see, and the letters are not boldface. I worked on about half of the puzzle shown in about 4 minutes. If you're new to working crosswords, this is a nice site to develop your skills. Solve them free online; no registration required.

The screenshot shows a crossword puzzle interface. At the top, it says "Crossword 4625", "Score: 1212", and "High Score: 1500". The grid is 13x13. To the right of the grid is a list of clues. The "Across" clues are: 25. Baby carriages, 30. Hindu garb, 32. Promissory note, 33. Emanate, 34. Declaration, 37. _____ Thurman of "Kill Bill", 38. Brewery product. The "Down" clues are: 21. Offered in response, 22. Highway curve, 23. Cereal grass, 24. Gun owners' org., 26. Caviar, 27. Australian bird, 28. Border, 29. Bus depot (abbr.). At the bottom, there are buttons for "Solve Letter", "Solve Word", "Solve Puzzle", "Show Errors", and "Show Keyboard". A footer note says "Space bar changes between Across and Down. See the How to Solve page. Copyright © Boatload Puzzles, LLC." The Boatload Puzzles logo is in the bottom right corner.

AARP Games

The AARP game site features various games besides crosswords. This is the site I go to daily. I can typically solve a puzzle in about 9 minutes; my best time is 6½ minutes. AARP tracks your time and also scores you. I haven't determined their scoring algorithm, but it's based on more than just time to solve. The puzzles are moderately challenging. The letters are in bold and relatively large, so it's easy to read. The word and letter highlighting colors are easy to see. You can customize interactions from the menu. Interestingly, the source for AARP's puzzles is also Boatload puzzles. However, these puzzles are in a 16x16 grid and are more challenging.



As with many of the puzzle sites, you can also print the current puzzle, either blank, in its current state, or completely solved.

Dictionary.com

Dictionary.com's puzzles are moderately challenging in a 15x15 grid. Clues may feature "pop culture" references, have double or even triple meanings, or require foreign language knowledge. As shown, the letters are displayed large and bold. The highlighting of the current word is in a very pale blue, which can be hard to see. You can click the arrows in the puzzle's title bar to skip forward and back be-

tween puzzles. The clock starts when you first click on a square. You can pause the clock if you have to set the puzzle aside. The puzzles icon next to the gear displays a list of recent puzzles and their status, letting you work on puzzles you missed or didn't finish. The gear icon enables you to toggle various settings on or off. The most used key is whether incorrect letters are flagged in red.



When working on challenging puzzles, I usually have another browser tab open on Google, so I can search for answers to obscure pop culture references like who played some part in an old TV series or the former name of the city of Tokyo. Dictionary.com has its own nice Crossword Solver help feature, which offers a list of answers.

Many crossword puzzles are truly works of verbal art! Hopefully, I've given my readers some insight into online crosswording and offered another way to stay occupied.

Editors Note: After reading this article, I downloaded the Dictionary.Com puzzles. Now I have another addictive time-waster along with my online jigsaw puzzles. ❖

LACS NOTICES

WELCOME ALL

Gavin Faught, LACS Treasurer

New Members (0)

Renewals (8)

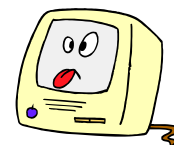
Irv Hershman	Stephanie Nordlinger
Robert Hirshon	Ruth Petrucha
Fred Kong	Rich Waters
Marcia Maiten *	Patrick Zilliacus *

* Contributor



FIX YOUR PC FOR FREE?

LACS Member and presenter, **Jim McKnight**, has an open offer to LACS members to diagnose, repair, disinfect, or upgrade members' PC's for free.



There are certain limitations to Jim's offer, so see the details by clicking the "Fix my PC for Free?" link at www.jimopi.net.

Non-members can wisely invest in a one-year new regular LACS membership (\$40.00), and Jim will fix your PC problem, too. Contact Jim for specific considerations.

JOIN OUR MAIL LISTS

LACS members can join one, or both, of the lists shown by putting just their name in the message body of an e-mail to each of the lists they wish to join from the e-mail address they wish LACS to use. It's highly recommended to join both lists.

- **PC@LACS+subscribe (at) groups.io**
- **LACSLIST@LACS+subscribe (at) groups.io**

PC is for official LACS business only.

Lacslist is for any other computer or technology – related messages and questions.

New members will no longer be automatically added to the mail lists. They will receive one invitation to join each list; they must respond quickly or follow the above instructions.

If you have any problems or questions regarding joining the lists, please contact Stephanie Nordlinger: [nordlacs\(at\)aol.com](mailto:nordlacs(at)aol.com).

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Go to www.lacspc.org. Click on **Member Forms** in the bar under the picture. Under **Membership Update**, select **Click Here** to select either the DOC or PDF form. Fill it out, email your changes to **membership (at) lacspc.org**, or mail it to LACS, 11664 National Blvd. #343, Los Angeles, CA 90064-3802.

ATTENDING A ZOOM MEETING

You should receive, via email, a link, Meeting ID, and Passcode to attend the LACS general meetings a couple of days before the meeting. Please let Leah Clark know the morning of the meeting if you don't have it. You can put an icon to the link on your desktop so it's handy at meeting time.

1. Right-click a blank spot on your desktop.
2. Select **New** from the drop-down menu.
3. Select **Shortcut**.
4. Type or copy and paste the link in the box that says "Type the location of the item."
5. Click **Next**.
6. Type a name for the shortcut.

HYPERLINKS

Note that underlined text (blue in the colored editions) in User Friendly usually indicates it's a hyperlink to a website.

LACS CALENDAR



LACS Board Meeting

Date: Monday, May 3, 2021 Via Zoom

Time: 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30 P.M.)

Where: At your home

General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 11, 2021 via Zoom

Time: 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30 P.M.)

Where: At your home

May 3: LACS Board Meeting

May 9: Mother's Day

May 11: LACS General Meeting

May 31: Memorial Day



VISIT OTHER COMPUTER USER GROUPS

Check out the URL below for information for visiting other user groups' Zoom meetings and for many more ideas for using Zoom and managing dealing with the stay-at-home restrictions.

<https://apcug2.org/tech-things-to-learn-while-sheltering-in-place/>

GENERAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS VIA ZOOM

May 11: Audiobooks

June 8: Synchronizing Your PC

July 13: All Things Google

August 10: Evernote

This schedule is subject to Change.
Check your email and *User Friendly* for updates.

ZOOM MEETINGS

To join a Zoom meeting, click on the URL on the invitation you will receive via email before the meeting and follow the prompts.

Contact Leah Clark, leahjc (at) sbcglobal.net, if you have any questions, or if you don't receive the link by the morning of the meeting day. Please enter before the meeting starts in case problems need to be solved and to ask questions. We want the meetings to start on time.

PODCASTS & ZOOM RECORDINGS

To listen to the podcasts of most of our past in-person general meetings, go to <https://www.lacspc.org/category/audio-files/>.

Click on the session you want to hear. **LACS members will receive links to the recordings of Zoom meetings via email.**

USER FRIENDLY BACK ISSUES AND INDEXES

To see back issues of *User Friendly*, go to <http://www.lacspc.org/category/user-friendly/>.

For indexes to past issues go to <https://www.lacspc.org/category/uf-index/>

To find a specific article or topic, use the search box on the top right.

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

LACS members volunteer to help other members solve hardware and software problems by telephone during the hours listed below. Select the topic from the list and then call a person whose number is listed next to it. Or you may use a Helper's e-mail address, found in your LACS Roster. We hope that you find this free service useful. **If you are experienced using a particular program or know a topic, please volunteer to be a consultant. You don't have to be an expert.** To volunteer for this list or to make corrections, please email Leah Clark at <Leahjc (at) sbcglobal.net> or call her at 310-677-2792. More Quick Consultants, and more categories are always needed. You may decline or postpone a call if it comes at an inconvenient time.

Adobe Creative Suite: PDF,
InDesign, PhotoShop, etc. - 10
Android Smartphones - 8
Apple devices - 11
Anti Malware and Backup - 7, 8
Dragon Naturally Speaking - 3
Genealogy - 8
Groups.IO - 8
Hardware - 7

Linux - 4
Lotus Word Pro, Approach - 7
Mozilla Firefox - 7
MS Excel - 8, 11, 12
MS Word - 1, 3, 12
MS Outlook - 8, 1, 10
MS PowerPoint - 11
MS Publisher - 2
Open Office - 6

Photoshop - 10
Quicken - 8, 12
Thunderbird - 7
Utilities - 7, 8
Visual Basic - 5
Websites - 5
Windows - 6, 7, 8
WordPerfect - 8
Zoom - 2, 9

Number	Name	Preferred Phone for Calls	From	To
1	Beckman, Loling	310-471-7893	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
2	Clark, Leah	310-677-2792	7:00 AM	5:00 PM
3	Hershman, Irv	310-397-9453	11:00 AM	11:00 PM
4	Hughes, Bill	424-259-1818	Any	Any
5	Ialongo, Gilbert	310-641-7906	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
6	Johnson, Carol	310-372-8535	10:00 AM	9:00 PM
7	McKnight, Jim	310-823-7829	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
8	Nordlinger, Stephanie	323-299-3244	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
9	Presky, Mark	310-780-3302	Any	Any
10	Rozek, E. J.	310-823-3811	Noon	8:00 PM
11	Van Berkomp, Paula	310-398-6734	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
12	Wilder, Joan	310-472-8445	9:00 AM	9:00 PM

OFFICERS, DIRECTORS AND LEADERS

Title	Name	Term	Telephone
President	Leah Clark	2021	310-677-2792
Past President	Stanley Johnson	2021	424-216-6984
Vice President	Stephanie Nordlinger	2021	323-299-3244
Secretary	Marcia Jacobs	2021	310-435-1457
Treasurer	Gavin Faught	2021	310-346-2637
Director	Newton Bernstein	2021	310-945-9111
Director	Open	2021	
Director	Paula Van Berkom	2021	310-398-6734
Director	Howard Krivoy	2022	310-717-7465
Director	Mark Presky	2022	310-780-3302
Director	E. J. Rozek	2022	310-823-3811
Director	Open	2022	
APCUG Rep.	Leah Clark		310-677-2792
Car Pool Coordinator	Freda Sanders		323-230-3278
Corporate Counsel	Stephanie Nordlinger		323-299-3244
CCSC Computer Lab	Loling Beckman		310-471-7893
Database Manager	Sylvia Davis		323-293-5004
Greeter	Freda Sanders		323-230-3278
Assistant Greeter	Penny McKnight		310-823-7829
Groups.IO Lists	Stephanie Nordlinger		323-299-3244
Hospitality Chair	Sylvia Davis		323-293-5004
Newsletter Editor	Leah Clark		310-677-2792
Program Chair	Stephanie Nordlinger		323-299-3244
Publicity – Press	Mark Presky		310-780-3302
Publicity – Online Media	Open		
Quick Consultants	Leah Clark		310-677-2792
Webmaster	Paula Van Berkom		310-398-6734

Mailing Address 11664 National Blvd., #343, Los Angeles, CA 90064-3802

Website www.lacspc.org

Voice Mail 310-780-3302

The email addresses on the LACS website are currently being updated. Until this is completed, please use your roster or the phone numbers above to contact any officer, board member or chair person.

A LOOK INSIDE YOUR COMPUTER (NO TOOLS REQUIRED)

Do you know every component inside your PC?

Posted by **Bob Rankin** on April 12, 2021

AskBobRankin.com

Category: [Hardware](#), [Reference](#)

Why would you want to know what's inside that plastic and metal box you call a computer? I can think of several good reasons. Here are a few of them.

If you need to call tech support, you may be stuck when a rep asks for the make and model of your video card, or the type of RAM that's installed on your PC. If you want to buy a memory upgrade, you'll need to know what sort of RAM memory is already in your PC to get the compatible kind.

If you ask for help with an unknown problem in any online forum, the first responses you get will probably be along the lines of, "What's under your hood?" If you are selling or buying a used computer, it's important to have a list of what's inside of it.



AskBobRankin.com

Microsoft Windows includes a "System Information" utility that displays information about many devices and processes on a PC. But it's limited; often, it won't tell you what you need to know, and the report it generates is not very friendly. Fortunately, there are more helpful system information utilities out there.

Here are some examples that are free and powerful, yet easy on novices. If you read this article to the end, I'm sure you'll want to download and try at least one of them.

[Speccy](#) from Piriform gives you detailed info on every piece of hardware in your PC, including but not limited to CPU, motherboard, RAM, graphics cards, hard discs, optical drives, and audio support. Speccy also reads temperature sensors built into motherboards and hard drives, giving you a means to check for overheating problems that may be damaging your components or limiting performance.

Speccy can save and reload snapshots of your system info in XML, text, or INI files for printing and other uses. I've always used the free version of Speccy, but there is a Professional version (\$20) that offers "Advanced PC insights." The website doesn't provide any details on those insights, though.

[Belarc Advisor](#) does a lot more than just inventory hardware, although it does a fine job of that. It also inventories all of the software on your PC, and can tell you if security patches are up to date. It even shows software license codes, which is handy if tech support asks for them. Here's another good reason to have those license codes handy. If you've bought a new computer or you're recovering from a hard drive crash, you can easily re-install all the software you've purchased, without having to buy another copy, or beg the software vendor to send you the license info.

The Advisor displays the status of your network, including users and devices connected to it. If you've ever wondered if anyone is secretly tapping into your Wi-Fi, this will give you peace of mind (or cold chills). Belarc Advisor is very simple to use, and is privacy-sensitive. It does not transmit any info about your system over the Internet; the report generated is a local HTML file displayed in your web browser. ❖

SAFE EXPERIMENTING

By **Dick Maybach**

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At the dawn of the personal computer age, life was simpler and more fun. Malware didn't exist, nor did the Internet, and the most valuable thing on our PC was the BASIC program Hunt the Wumpus. We continually tried new software (usually discarding it immediately). Now our PCs contain vital data, such as family photos, financial records, tax returns, and email history, which makes many reluctant to experiment. While the Internet is full of free and cheap software, much of it is tainted; we are hesitant to take a chance with anything. Modern operating systems are complex, making tinkering with their organizations hazardous. As a result, we are sitting in a vast virtual library but afraid to take a book off the shelf. You can restore the adventure to PCs by setting up an environment, separate from the one presently on your machine, where you can experiment safely. However, remember that an effective backup discipline is always your last and best defense. Let's examine three such environments, virtual machines (VMs), dual-booting, and separate hardware.

No matter which environment you choose, you will need an operating system for it. If you use Windows, you have to purchase a separate copy, as the Microsoft license allows Windows to be installed in only one environment. Windows 10 lets you achieve significantly increased security and yet stay in familiar surroundings. You could also use Linux, which opens up a whole new world of open-source software and is generally malware-free, but the environment change may be traumatic.

The easiest separate environment to set up is a virtual machine, such as Oracle's VirtualBox. Still, it requires competent hardware, at least eight Gbytes of RAM (16 is better), and 30 to 50 Gbytes of available disk space. When the

VM is running, your hardware is supporting two environments, the one on your PC (called the host) and the one on the VM (called the guest). As a result, the guest environment may be noticeably slow, but less so if your hardware supports virtual environments. The key features on the CPU are VT-x on Intel and AMD-V on AMD processors, and these are now common, even on laptops. Check your VM documentation; these features may be disabled in your BIOS.

In operation, a VM looks like an application to the host; see Figure 1, page 14, which shows the VirtualBox manager. You use a virtual manager to add, delete, and configure VMs, and this PC has four, Windows 7, FreeDOS, Tails, and Windows 10. The figure also shows a summary of the VM running Windows 10.

The VM snapshot feature is useful for experimenters. Making a snapshot is equivalent to cloning the environment, and if the current experiment isn't successful, you can restore things with a click or two. Also, since VMs are just files on the host when you back up the host, you also back up the VMs.

Figure 2, page 14, shows Windows 10 running in a VM on a Linux host. As you can see, Windows has access to the Internet. Note also the file-manager window, which is looking at a directory on the host. Both Linux and Windows can access files in this directory, making it easy for the two to exchange information. You can also copy and paste between the two. However, these features require that you install the Guest Extensions to VirtualBox (see its documentation)

Before VMs became available, I used dual-booting for experimenting. This has the advantage of making all the resources of the host machine available to both environments; using VMs, of course, means that resources are shared between the host and the guest. The drawback is that setting up dual-booting requires some expertise and

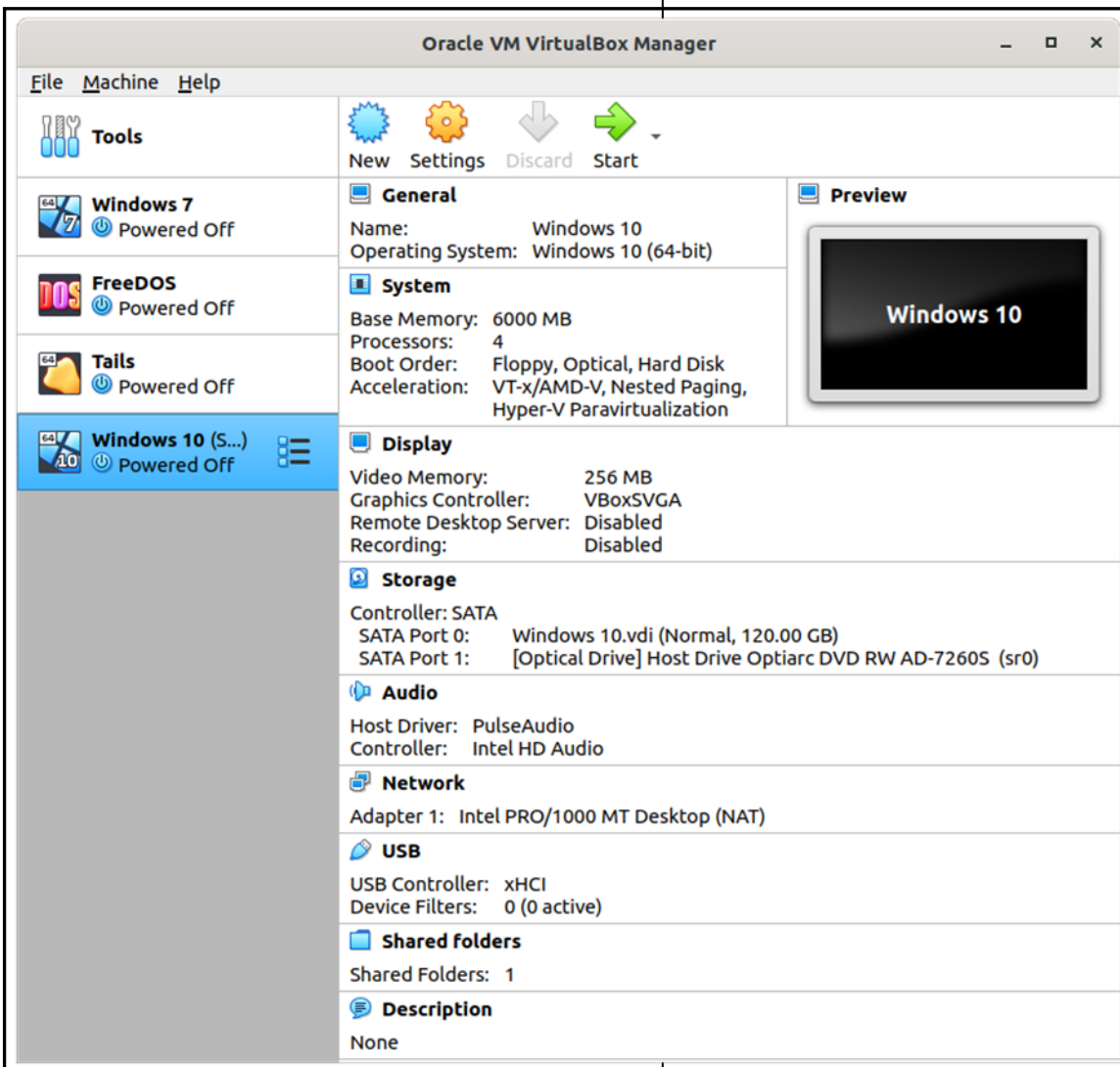


Figure 1
VirtualBox
Manager

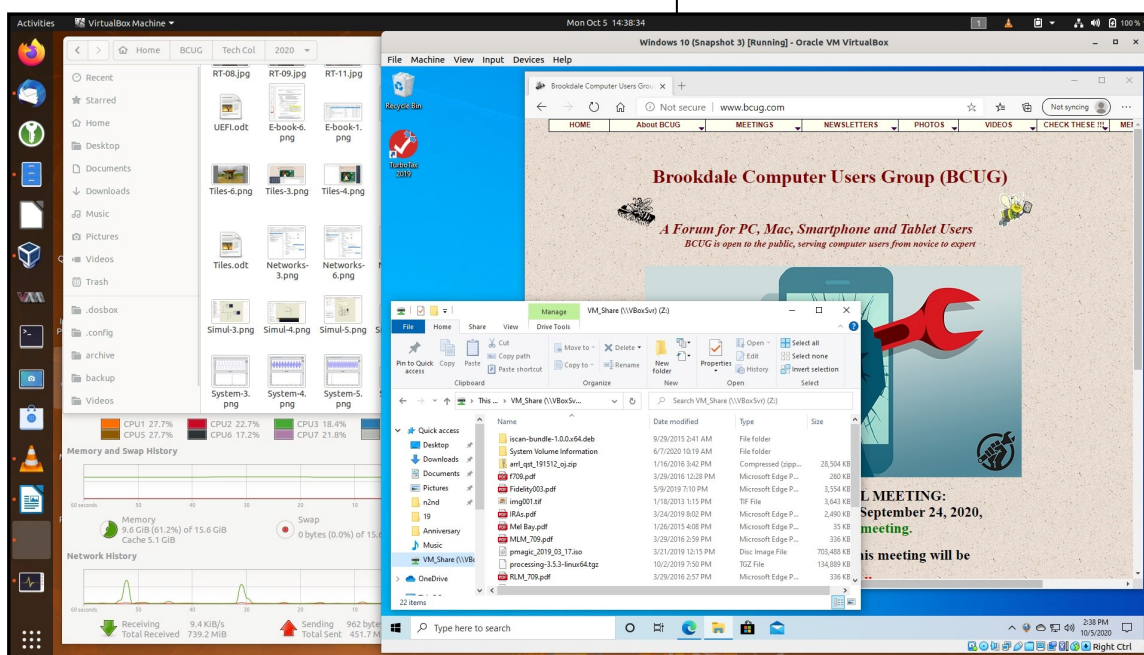


Figure 2
Host
Desktop
with a VM
Running

adds some risk. Here are the steps.

- Back up the system.
- Defrag the operating system to ensure that nothing is stored at the high addresses.
- Shrink the partition to make space for a second one above it. The second partition should contain at least 100 Gbytes. If you are short of space on your disk, you'll have to install a second one.
- Install the 2nd OS in the second partition.

This involves more risk than installing an application, so do your homework before attempting it. You also must be careful to back up the second environment separately.

The last and safest method of obtaining a test environment is to use a separate PC. Many of us have old, unused machines, making this approach very cheap indeed. Its main disadvantage is the space occupied. If you don't have an unused PC or are short on space, consider a Raspberry Pi; it is model 4 that has as much power as a PC of not that many years ago; see Figure 3. If you share your PC display, keyboard, and mouse with the Raspberry, it uses almost no space. A KVM (Keyboard Video, Mouse) switch will allow you to do the sharing conveniently. Alternatively, you can set up a remote desktop to access the Pi from your PC, making the former appear as an application on the latter.

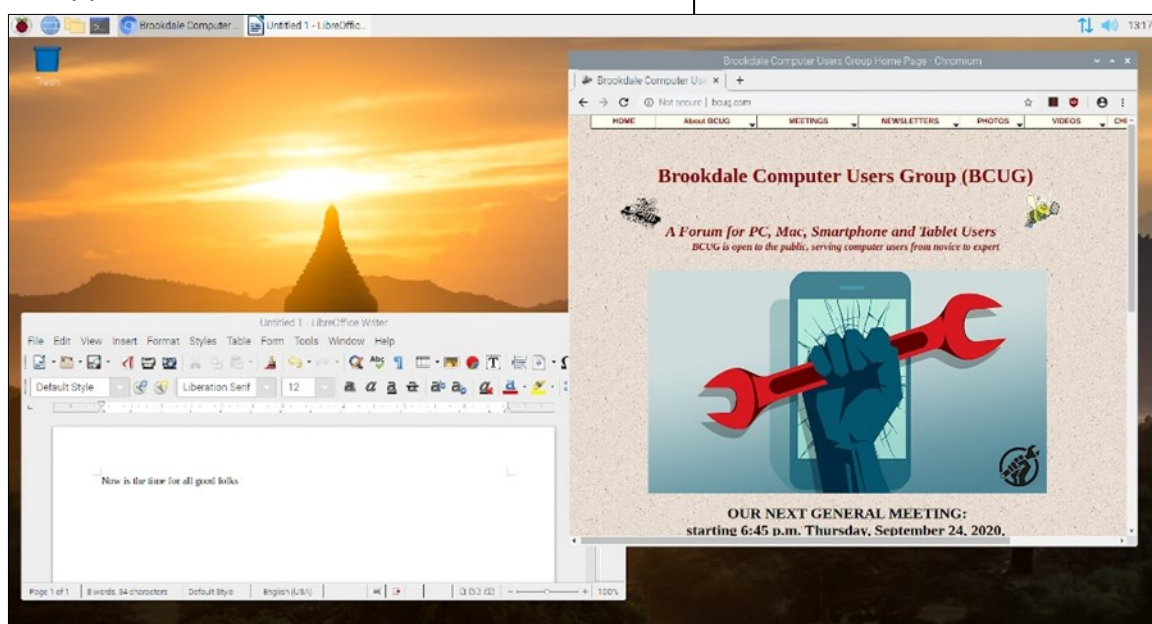
It doesn't even have to be in the same room; all both need is a connection to your home network. If you haven't used a Raspberry Pi, you should first read the introductory material on its website, <https://www.raspberrypi.org/>. Setting one up is quite different than getting started with a new PC. Instead of a hard disk, it uses a microSD card, which you'll buy separately and on which you must install the operating system that you'll download from the Raspberry Pi website. The OS is a Linux variant, which probably involves yet more study, but the whole idea of experimenting is to learn.

Once you have hardware for your test environment, you'll need an operating system. A VM and dual-booting give you the most flexibility, as you can use anything your host PC supports. With a Raspberry Pi, you'll be running Linux. Your options on a second PC depend on its age; older units may not support Windows 10, for example. You might also consider switching to Linux, as many distributions support older hardware. It also has thousands of free applications available.

Regardless of how you choose to do your experimenting, exercise care if you transfer files to your home PC; they can carry malware. When you use virtual machines and dual-booting, you are not entirely isolated from your home environment. Cross con-

tamination, while unlikely, is not impossible. ❖

Figure 3
Raspberry Pi Desktop



ALERTS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND ALARMS - OH, MY!

By **Dorothy Fitch**, Editor
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Green Bytes, January, 2021
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I have started using alerts, notifications, and alarms to get my attention. Some of these come to my phone, and some by email. Most of the time, I can choose what works best for me for each purpose. Of course, there are notifications that you get even if you didn't specifically ask for them, such as doctor appointment reminders, books that are ready to pick up at the library, and many others.

Here are some of my finds and handy tools.

Alerts

My bank's website allows me to set up alerts for activity related to the bank and credit card accounts. For example, whenever my credit card is charged, either in a store or online, I immediately get an email. If that card is ever stolen or hacked, I will know right away. I can also set up alerts for payments due, deposits, balances, etc.

We have a smart indoor thermometer that alerts us to temperature changes outside a specific range that we set up. That way, we can tell from wherever we are reading email if the house gets too hot or cold.

Notifications

You can [sign up at the AZDOT website](#) to be notified of construction activity, accidents, or delays on I-19. After you submit your email address, you can choose which areas of the state, including I-19, you wish to include. These notifications were convenient when the Irvington construction area was still active. They also



have a [phone app](#) that can notify you of highway events.

The US Postal Service offers a free [Informed Delivery](#) service to let you know what mail is coming to your mailbox. As mail is scanned in the postal processing center, an image is sent to your email address. (Lately, my email keeps showing me a picture of a postcard from the USPS that says that mail may be delayed. Ironically, that postcard still has not yet arrived!)

UPS's [My Choice](#) system tracks your packages and notifies you of their delivery. It's fun to check the map that shows the exact location of the delivery truck when it is in your neighborhood!

FedEx has a similar [Delivery Manager](#) system and offers to deliver the package to a secure site where you can pick it up if you don't want it left outside your door.

On Election Day, I learned of the phone app from [The Guardian](#) that sends alerts to my phone's "lock screen" when breaking news occurs. The Guardian is a British newspaper with an excellent reputation and worldwide coverage. So during the evening on 11/3, as election results started coming in, I would hear the distinctive tone I set up for my phone. That sound would prompt me to look at the television to see the latest results. It was very handy. I am still enjoying the breaking news. I'm using the free version of the app, though a premium version is also available.

I have also subscribed to the free [New York Times Morning Briefing](#) and "breaking news" emails. (I usually get the Guardian notifications about 5 minutes before the NYT ones!) Their Morning Briefing has a summary of news headlines and a mini crossword puzzle. To read the entire article or enjoy the complete crossword puzzles, you need to pay for a subscription. Lately, the headlines have been enough for me!

The weather station on our roof sends us an email daily with the day's high and low temperatures, wind speeds, and other data (the rain measure has never worked well, so its rainfall reports are rather suspect.) It even has its own website, which I can access from my phone. If we get to travel again, we'll be able to see what the weather is like at home!

Alarms

Alarms aren't just for waking you up. They can be great reminders to take your medicine, walk the dog, or whatever suits you. I use the Alarm feature of the Clock app on my Android phone and expect that an iPhone offers the same functionality.



Another phone alarm goes off at 6:59 PM, Mon – Fri. We're usually preparing dinner at that time, and we like to listen to "[Exploring Music](#)" with Bill McLaughlin on the radio (KUAT, 90.5 FM). This reminds me to set the tuner to the radio so we can listen.

Once a month, my husband needs to submit data for his [Rainlog](#) project, where citizen scientists report the amount of rain received in their rain gauge. So, that alarm goes off on the first day of each month at noon to remind him to do that. We have it on our shared Google calendar as a recurring task, but do we ever look there anymore? That calendar is rather empty these days.

It's nice to set up and customize multiple alarms to recur on specific days and times.

There are so many possibilities out there that you can subscribe to or set up. Give it a try! If you have a favorite attention-getter, you would like to share, reply to this newsletter and let me know. ❖

Editor's Note: I find "Alarms and Clock" in Windows 10 to be handy to keep me from getting involved in something and missing a virtual meeting or an appointment. I set alarms for several days ahead.

ROYBI ROBOT

By **George Harding**, Treasurer
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This is more than just a child's toy, although it is designed to be for a child.



In fact, it is an educational companion powered by AI (artificial intelligence).

It tutors young children in languages, with over 500 lessons, 70 categories, and a 70,000-word vocabulary in Chinese and English.

In the company's words, "Through play, children can learn a second language, practice language arts, explore scientific subjects and develop communication and analytical thinking skills."

The categories include sessions in technology, math, science, and language arts. Some of them are:

Alphabet, Continents, Places, Math,
Senses, Science, Biology, Nouns

The categories and content are updated from time to time.

The robot includes voice recognition (understands your child's responses), has a 1080p camera, has a durable body to withstand drops, is made with material that is safe for children, and has an 8-hour battery. It is powered by a connection to a USB port by the included cable.

Mandarin-Chinese and English are currently supported, but French, Spanish, German, and Russian versions are being planned.

Ages 2-8 are suggested for English use, but there is no age limit for learning a new language. An Android app is available for parent use for scheduling or directing learning.

ROYBI Robot <https://roybirobot.com/>

Price \$300, currently \$150 (4/3/21) ❖

JERE'S TECH TIPS

For many helpful tips and tricks for all aspects of computing, see *Jere's Tech Tips* at <https://apcug2.org/jerestips/>.

TECHBOOMERS.COM

teaches how to use various websites and internet-based applications.

- <https://TechBoomers.com>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2-bwYIYu1I>

SPECIAL OFFERS

Go to the APCUG website <https://apcug2.org/discounts-special-offers-for-user-groups/> for discounts and special offers for Members of User Groups. Avast Anti-virus and Acronis True Image, and several book, media and training sites offer discounts including the two mentioned below.

- Members can save at the **Pearson Technology** websites: InformIT, Cisco Press, Pearson IT Certification, Que Publishing, Adobe Press, and Peachpit Press.
Informit.com/user_groups/index.aspx
Code for print books: **ITCOMMUNITY**
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DIGITALCOMMUNITY
- See the latest books on digital imaging and photography, gaming, animation, film and video, post-production, audio, music technology, broadcast and theatre from [Routledge | Focal Press](#) today! They offer discounts to User Group members.



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LAUGHING OUT LOUD



From
"How-to
Geek"



From the Green Valley Recreation Computer Club

FINANCIAL REPORT

A LACS member who wishes to see or has questions about our financial reports may contact our treasurer.

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Annual Membership Dues:

Regular New and Renewal,	
Printed Newsletter	\$ 40
Electronic Newsletter	30
Family-Associate	12
Students	18
Contributor	50
Supporter	75
Benefactor	100
Gift Membership	20

A subscription to *User Friendly* is included with membership.

Associate members live in the same household or work at the same address as a regular member; they do not receive their own subscriptions to *User Friendly*, but may read it on the LACS website. **Students** must prove full-time status. A member may give a 1-year, 1-time **gift** to a non-member.

Monthly general meetings will be via Zoom during the pandemic stay-at-home orders. Members also enjoy these special benefits:

— **Monthly Newsletter**
User Friendly. We publish your article submissions or free classified ads to buy or sell your computer items.

— **Get FREE help** by phone from knowledgeable members who are Quick Consultants listed in *User Friendly*.

— **Get help by email** by using our LACSLIST Group Mail List. Send your questions by e-mail to lacslis (at) lacs.groups.io

— **Receive important news** and announcements via *User Friendly* and LACS's Group e-mail lists.

— **Free APCUG** (International Association of Technology and Computer User Groups) **Webinars**.

— **Free quarterly Virtual Technology Conference (VTCs)**

— **Information** on training and technical education.

— Occasional **free software and computer books**, if you review them for *User Friendly*.

— **Rewards** for recruiting; LACS will extend your membership for three months for each new regular member you recruit.

— **Annual Holiday Party**

— **Social Interacting** with others who have like interests in computers and technology.

— **Special Interest Groups** (SIGs) on various topics may be created by members.

Date: _____

Check # _____

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Please mail your dues and this form to:

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Please PRINT Clearly

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[] New / Renewal with printed newsletter - \$40.00 [] Associate - \$12.00 [] Student - \$18.00

[] New / Renewal with electronic, no paper, newsletter - \$30.00 [] Gift Membership - \$20.00

[] Contributor - \$50.00 [] Supporter - \$75.00 [] Benefactor - \$100.00 [] Other

Name: First

Last

Name of Associate: First

Last

(Same address as primary member)

Address:

City, State, Zip + 4

E-mail Address:

E-mail of Associate

Preferred Phone:

Publish Contact Info in Roster [] Yes [] No

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GENERAL MEETINGS WILL BE ON ZOOM UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Before each meeting, members and invited guests will receive an email with the URL link to the meeting. If you haven't received it by the morning of the meeting, let Leah Clark know. When you click on the link, you will enter a waiting room. Then the host or a co-host will admit you to the meeting.

Please try to arrive at least a few minutes before the meeting start-time so you don't interrupt the meeting and any problems can be solved. If you need to take a break during a meeting, do not click on Leave or End. If you do, the meeting will be interrupted for someone to re-admit you from the waiting room. You may turn off your video when you are gone.