User Friendly

*LACS
A Computer and Technology
User Group*

NOTE: Refer to pages **2, 8, and 19** for updates on the new dues-paying system and for the amount due in 2023.

IN THIS ISSUE

Watch your email for APCUG workshops and other upcoming events.

LACS IS A MEMBER OF APCUG
An International Association of Technology and Computer User Groups
www.apcug2.org
www.facebook.com/APCUG
www.twitter.com/apcug

NOVEMBER 14, 2023 GENERAL MEETING

Meeting Time: 7:00 to 9:00 PM — via Zoom
Socializing and Questions & Answers: 6:30
Topic: Useful Utilities and Accessibility
Speaker: Judy Taylour, APCUG Regional X Advisor and Speakers Bureau,
SCV User Group President and Webmaster

Useful Utilities − A utility is an app that performs a specific task and adds functionality to your computer or helps your computer perform better. We all have our favorites: system monitoring, backing up, system maintenance, password management, virus protection, and more. Judy shares some of her favorite apps. Please plan to share one or two of your favorites during the Q&A part of the meeting. Hopefully, we will all learn about at least one new utility we want to try.

Accessibility – Help! Can't See, Can't Hear, Can't Touch. Accessible and assistive technology has been designed for the needs of many different users. To the extent there is enough time, we will explore software, hardware, peripherals, and accessible and assistive technology to help make the computer, phone, or tablet easier to use.

Meet Our Presenter

Judy co-facilitated the Southern California Regional User Group Summit (SCRUGS), a group of computer clubs in Southern California that met quarterly to share ideas, presenter information, solve problems, etc. Judy taught adult education computer classes for 22 years through her local high school district. She firmly believes in life-long learning and enjoys giving presentations via APCUG's Speakers Bureau. She is a Pierce College Computer Applications and Technologies Department Advisory Committee member. They meet annually to suggest courses and hardware for the next school year. Judy is also a Los Angeles FBI Senior Scams Working Group member.

LACS members on the PC groups.IO list will receive the Zoom link to this meeting before or on **November 12**. Guests may ask for the link by emailing LeahClark424 (at) gmail.com before or on **November 12.**
More information about LACS is at www.lacspc.org

🌼 FROM YOUR PRESIDENT / EDITOR 🌼

LACS 2024 BOARD

At the October general meeting, these members were duly reelected to the LACS Board for 2024.

President: Leah Clark
Vice President: Stephanie Nordlinger
Secretary: Marcia Jacobs
Treasurer: Gavin Faught
Directors: Loling Beckman, Howard Krivoy, and Mark Presky
They will appreciate members helping them in any way. Please ask them how you can help.

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS TO LACS

Gavin Faught, LACS Treasurer

New Members (0)
Renewals (5)
Guy Clark,   Leah Clark
William Oppenheim
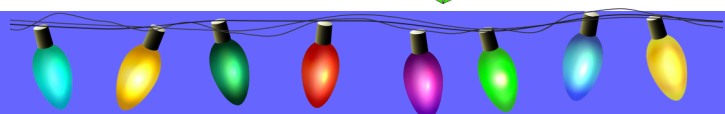Kim Stocksdale, Supporter
Paula Van Berkom, Contributor

WARNING: THE FULL ANNUAL DUES AMOUNT IS DUE IN JANUARY, 2024 FOR ALL MEMBERS.

Beginning in 2024, **all** LACS members' annual dues will be payable in January. You may pay your 2024 dues in November or December, 2023 or in January,2024. Use the following chart to see the prorated amount you will owe for the remainder of 2023. When paying by PayPal, Zelle, or check, please note for what year and level you are paying.

HOLIDAY PARTY
DECEMBER 2, 1:00 PM
SEE PAGE 4 FOR INFORMATION.
LETS CELEBRATE!

NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

October was Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Because the information from the National Cybersecurity Alliance was too late for the October issue of User Friendly, I perused it later and selected the article on page 5 to share.

Also, here are links to their four easy ways to stay safe on line.

1. **Turning on multi-factor authentication**
   https://tinyurl.com/3uyd2txd
2. **Using strong passwords**
   https://tinyurl.com/2ynwnuas
3. **Updating software**
   https://tinyurl.com/yc7krfjd
4. **Recognizing and reporting phishing**
   https://tinyurl.com/mr27tty3

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
TO ALL LACS MEMBERS, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS	Yearly Rate	Monthly Rate	Dec.	Nov.	Oct.
New/Renewal with Newsletter	$40	$3.33	$3.33	$6.66	$10.00
New/Renewal with Electronic Newsletter	$30	$2.50	$2.50	$5.00	$7.50

Select the month you are renewing or are joining LACS.

GENERAL MEETING REPORT
October 10, 2023
By **Leah Clark,** LACS President/Editor
Topic: Members' Favorite Programs, Apps and Websites
Speakers: LACS Members

Our vice president, Stephanie Nordlinger, organized a meeting for members to share their favorite programs, apps, and websites to give an opportunity for LACS members and guests to learn from each other. This report lists the sites that were discussed.

PBS Passport

Ruth Petrucha said this is cheaper and safer than personal traveling. PBS Passport is a benefit for members of PBS SoCal and KCET for $60.00 per year. You can watch thousands of travel and other documentaries in the comfort of your home. https://www.pbssocal.org/support/passport

Zoom Webinars

Stephanie Nordlinger likes the many webinars, particularly Washington Post Live and Genealogy webinars, which you can watch — all free. There are webinars on any subject you are interested in. She also likes **Windows 365**, **Quicken** for managing finances, **Legacy Family Tree** for genealogy**,** and **online newspaper subscriptions**, much cheaper than paper editions and less clutter.

APCUG Website and YouTube Channel

Stephanie finds lots of webinars, links to places to explore, and technology information here. https://www.apcug2.org. She especially likes the Washington Post Live and genealogy webinars. She uses **Zoom** and **Google** for information about hobbies, news, publications, Consumer Reports, government agencies, Mayo Clinic, or anything you might be interested in.
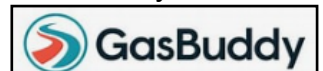
The Memory Book by Harry Lorayne and Jerry Lucas, **Remember It** by Nelson Dellis, and **Ageless Memory** by Harry Lorayne

Irv Hershman recommended these books for improving your memory. He gave examples of techniques, like visualizations and word associations, taught in these books.
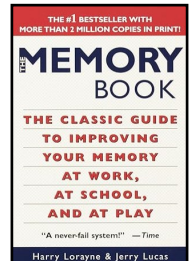
Gas Buddy

Donna Benton uses Gas Buddy to locate the cheapest gas stations in an area.

Waze

Donna likes Waze for finding driving directions, and current road and traffic conditions.

Quicken

Donna uses Quicken for bookkeeping and tax records. Stephanie also finds it helpful for keeping records of purchases and payments.

ZIMAS
(Zone Information and Map Access System)

Donna finds Los Angeles City public records like permits and zoning information on ZIMAS, handy in her real estate business. The L.A. Department of Building and Safety is also helpful. https://ladbs.org
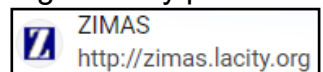
Libby (Overdrive)

Freda Sander's favorite app is Libby, (previously called Overdrive) for connections to multiple libraries to download eBooks and audiobooks.

TimeTimer

Freda finds TimeTimer helpful for keeping focused for a specified period of time. Elapsing time is shown graphically. It is available at the App Store for iPhone and iPad.

MyChevrolet Mobile App

Freda uses MyChevrolet to remotely check the functions of her car like tire pressure from her phone. *(Editor's note: Download the app and sync it with the infotainment screen of your vehicle. Ask Google how it works.)*

FindMyCar

Freda then mentioned that FindMyCar is useful for finding where she had parked.
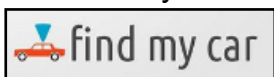
Everything

Stephanie demonstrated Everything, a free file search utility. She finds it quick and useful for finding where files are on her computer. Files can be sorted by date, location, etc.

Stephanie showed how Google easily provides definitions, spellings and calculations. She demonstrated putting data into Excel to do calculations. She suggested putting the Windows calculator in your taskbar.

Wizard of Odds

Howard Krivoy told us about the Wizard of Odds app for getting the rules for gambling games and for calculating the odds when in Las Vegas. It also gives information about online gambling sites.

Old Time Radio Player

Howard enjoys Old Time Radio for listening to radio programs of the past like Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, Twilight Zone, Fibber McGee and Molly, Burns and Allen, and all the other good old programs we remember. ❖
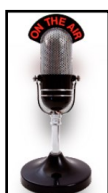
HOLIDAY PARTY

By **Mark Presky,** LACS Director

With resounding accolades after last year's glorious event, we're again having our annual Los Angeles Computer Society Holiday Party on **December 2, at 1 PM** at **Fu's Palace: 8751 West Pico Blvd, West LA**, nearby intersection of West Pico and South Robertson. There is plenty of parking right behind the restaurant. You may bring guests.

Appetizers and soup will be served at **1:10 PM**, followed by luncheon at **1:30**. There will be vegetarian, seafood, chicken, and beef dishes served.

Appetizers: Vegetable Spring Roll
                      Pork Steamed dumplings
Chinese Chicken Salad, without chicken
                      for vegetarians
Soup: Wor Wonton Soup
Main courses:

- Honey Walnut Shrimp
- Broccoli Beef
- Sautéed Garlic Chicken (not spicy, but chili will be available on the tables)
- Chicken AND Vegetable on Pan Fried Noodles (one of each)
- Buddha's Feast (mixed vegetables)
- Fried Rice and Steamed Rice

There will be NO "at the door" payment admissions. To reserve a place, please send **$30** payment, per person, via PayPal to Gavin, our treasurer, noting that the payment is for the party. OR, payment may be made via a check payable to Los Angeles Computer Society postal mailed to Mark Presky at 3560 Ashwood Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90066, by **November 28, 2023**. On the check, please include all attendees' names.

Payments must be RECEIVED, whether by PayPal or check, by November 28, 2023. ❖

HACKED ACCOUNTS: WHAT TO DO RIGHT NOW

From **The National Cybersecurity Alliance**
October 2023

If you think your social media or email account has been hacked, wrestle it away from the bad guys by acting fast.

Hackers use many different tactics to try to compromise people's email, banking, social media, devices, and other online accounts. Sometimes, they do this to spam your friends with coupons, but other times, they want to steal your money or identity. You can often retake control of your hacked account by alerting authorities and following a few steps.

However, fast action is crucial. If you suspect your digital account has been hacked, do something about it as soon as you can. Here's what you need to know right now!

How Does an Account Get Hacked?

Security breaches happen in many ways – sometimes, you might click on a bad link, or the company in charge of the account could be attacked. This is why cybersecurity is so important to us all and why we at the **National Cybersecurity Alliance** are so hyped up about it!

Commonly, an account is hacked through phishing. This is when cybercriminals use misleading emails, social media posts, phone calls, texts, or Direct Messages (DM) that lure you to click on a bad link or download a malicious attachment. If you take the bait, the hackers can get access to your device or account.

Another common way your account could be hacked is if there is a data breach that reveals your username and password. The company controlling the account in question could be hacked, for example. If you reuse passwords and any platform you use is compromised, cybercriminals might know your password for many accounts. This is why you should have a unique password for each account and change your password ASAP if you find out a platform you use has had a breach.

Signs Your Account Has Been Hacked

Does something seem off about one or more of your online accounts? Know the common symptoms of a hacked account.

1. Your social media profile publishes posts that you didn't create. Ditto for direct messages – hackers might use your account to send phishing DMs or posts to your followers. Often, these posts encourage your friends to click on a link, download an app, or buy something through an online store.

2. Friends and followers tell you that they received emails from your email address that you never sent, or DMs through social media that you never authored.

3. A company tells you your information was lost via a data breach. In many places around the world, companies are required by law to tell you if they lost your data in a breach or cyberattack.

What Are 4 Things To Do When Your Account is hacked?

If you think an account is hacked, snap into action and take a few quick steps to staunch the damage. You have the power to give cybercriminals the boot!

1. Change the account's password. This will likely lock out the hacker. Unfortunately, it can also work the other way around: the hacker might change the password and lock you out. In this case, try using the "forgot my password" function to reset it. If that doesn't work, contact the platform ASAP. If you used the same password for other accounts, you should change all of them and start using unique passwords for every account. Use a password manager to generate and store all your passwords.

2. Notify your contacts that your account was hacked. Let them know they may receive spam messages that look like you sent them. Tell your contacts they shouldn't open these messages or click on any links contained in them. When the situation is cleared up, let everyone know that your accounts are secure again.

3. Make sure your security software is up to date. Scan your system for malware, especially if you suspect your computer might be infected with a virus. Antivirus software will scan your device to check for any security issues.

4. Contact people who can help you. If you suspect someone has stolen money, this might mean calling the police and your bank. If a work account was breached, let your IT department know. If a social media or email account was hacked, alert the platform and seek their help. If you think someone has stolen your identity, it is worth contacting the FTC at https://www.ftc.gov. Let trusted friends and family know what you are going through so they can be on the lookout for weird messages or posts from your account.

How To Protect Your Accounts from Hacks

As with most things in life, an ounce of cybersecurity prevention is worth a pound of cure. Follow our "Core 4" to show hackers you mean business.

1. Use long, complex, and unique passwords. Every password should be at least 12 characters long and include letters, numbers, and symbols (like % or $). Ideally, your passwords should be random strings of characters, not recognizable words. Very importantly, each account should be protected by its own unique password. To create and store all these passwords, use a password manager!

2. Switch on multi-factor authentication. Multi-factor authentication (MFA), sometimes called 2-factor authentication, adds a whole other level of security beyond your password. MFA will use biometrics, security keys, text messages, or an app to make sure you are you, even if a hacker gets access to your password. Enable MFA for any account that allows it!

3. Think before you click. Learn how to identify phishing messages, which will often try to inspire panic or urgency. Take a few seconds to read through the message and who sent it. With a little knowledge, you can spot most phishing attempts within moments.

4. Turn on automatic updates. The best way to get the latest, strongest security is to install software updates as soon as they are available – and the best way to know when they are available is to turn on automatic updates! Set it, forget it, and you won't regret it!

Resources

Here's where to turn if you have an account with one of these popular websites and you think it has been hacked.

eBay, https://tinyurl.com/4c7ucxf6

Facebook, https://tinyurl.com/5n7ws72v

Google, https://tinyurl.com/yc87tb9m

Instagram, https://tinyurl.com/mr3t65bb

Outlook, https://tinyurl.com/mrdvaw9k

PayPal, https://tinyurl.com/2s4ka4hs

SnapChat, https://tinyurl.com/56pee3m8

TikTok, https://tinyurl.com/67xt36fk

Twitter (now X)**,** https://tinyurl.com/y9p83wkb

Yahoo, https://tinyurl.com/mt2cy9wv

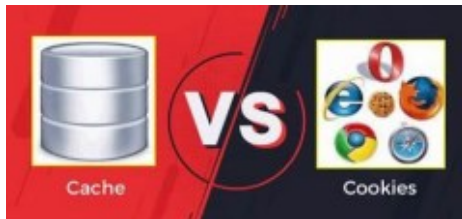**YouTube**, https://tinyurl.com/3vmvepzm ❖

COMPUTER CACHE AND COOKIES

By **Hal Bookbinder**

The Jewish Genealogy Society of the Conejo Valley & Ventura County (JGSCV)

Originally published in the July 2023 issue of *Venturing Into Our Past, JGSCV* Newsletter.

You may have been advised to clear your cache or delete your cookies to resolve an online problem. Indeed, clearing them can solve a variety of issues. And clearing them rarely causes much computer grief. So, understanding cache and cookies and being ready and fearless to clear them can be an easy fix to vexing web problems. Web pages are "cached" or copied to fast internal storage in your computer to speed access to the Internet. Retrieving a page from internal storage is significantly faster than downloading it.

Your browser has various ways to determine whether the cached page is still current. Sometimes it is wrong. Other times, the cached page is broken. Clearing the cache forces all pages to be freshly downloaded from the Internet. New copies will then start being cached.

Cookies are small files used to store data to facilitate your use of a specific online site. They might contain your preferences for that website, speed your logging into the site, and permit you to stay logged in for the duration of your session. But, sometimes, the website might not be able to interpret the cookie; sometimes, the cookie is broken.

Clearing cookies can provide a fresh start. If a page you are trying to access will not load, looks weird, or is acting funky, the problem might be in your cache and cookies. So, you might try clearing them before calling your favorite techie. You will hardly notice anything different when you clear the cache.

Temporarily, web pages may load more slowly. This will likely not even be detectable. So, start by clearing the cache. If this does not resolve the problem, go after the cookies.

Since your website-specific preferences are stored in cookies, once cleared, these preferences will be "forgotten", and you will have to re-enter them. You may need to tell the site again to "remember" you on this computer, that your nickname is Joe, or that you prefer sports stories rather than politics.

Cache and cookies are specific to each browser and reside in that browser's storage area. So, if you use Chrome and Firefox, you will have two separate sets of cache and cookies, one for each. Clearing your cache or cookies from within Chrome will not clear your Firefox cache and cookies and vice versa. I periodically clear my cache and cookies, just "to clear the cobwebs" and possibly prevent future problems.

It is only partially true that cache and cookies are "temporary". They generally have expiration dates. But these dates may be far into the future. The longer they hang around, the more likely they become dated or broken. This article in PC Magazine provides instructions for clearing cache and cookies for all common browsers. Read it and practice so that you are ready.

Shield Your Internet History: How to Clear Your Cache on Any Browser | PCMag ❖
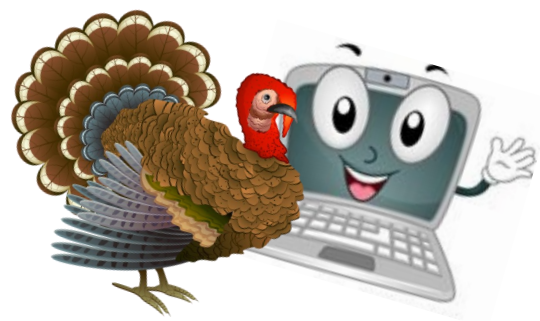
LACS INFORMATION

PAY DUES BY PAYPAL OR ZELLE

To pay by PayPal, go to this link: www.paypal.com/paypalme/00001024 and then click on **Send**. You'll be asked to log in to your PayPal account or sign up for an account so that PayPal will know where to get the money to send. Follow the prompts. Once you have entered your dues amount, click on **Add a note**. Tell us of any updated information: physical address, email address, phone number, and what type of dues you are paying: regular, electronic *User Friendly*, etc. or if you don't want your contact information published in the roster.

To pay by Zelle, log into your bank with your username and password. Select **Transfer Money > Send Money with Zelle.** Follow the instructions. The name of the recipient is **Los Angeles Computer Society.** Select **Send by email**. The email address is: **lacomputersociety@gmail.com**. The wording may be a little different on your bank's site. Email questions to Gavin at gmfaught@gmail.com .

HOW TO JOIN LACS'S MAIL LIST

LACS now has **one** active general list: PC@LACS.Groups.IO. Use this email address to ask questions, to offer any comments or suggestions, and to conduct official LACS business.

New LACS members should receive an invitation to join our list with two weeks to accept. LACS members who want to join the list should send an email to LACS+subscribe@Groups.IO from the email address they want to use with their name and phone number. Stephanie, our Groups.IO Coordinator, will check your membership and add you to the PC list. Contact her at nordlacs@AOL.com

FIX YOUR PC FOR FREE?
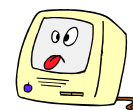
LACS member and presenter, **Jim McKnight**, has an open offer to LACS members to diagnose, repair, disinfect, or upgrade members' PC's for free. There are certain limitations to Jim's offer, so see the details by clicking the "Fix my PC for Free?" link at www.jimopi.net.

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

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, and email it with your changes to Membership@lacspc.org or snail-mail it to
Los Angeles Computer Society
11664 National Blvd. #343
Los Angeles, CA 90064-3802.

ATTENDING A ZOOM MEETING

LACS members who are on our PC email list will receive a link, meeting ID, Passcode, and instructions to attend the LACS general meetings a couple of days before the meeting. **Please let Leah Clark know by the morning of the meeting if you don't have it or have any problem.**

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.

LACS CALENDAR

LACS Board Meeting, November 6
Time: 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30 P.M.)
Place: Wherever you are via Zoom
Please log in early so we can start on time.

LACS General Meeting: November 14
Topic:
Time: 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30 P.M.)
Place: Wherever you are via Zoom
Please log in early so we can start on time. Allow extra time to be sure you have the link, to get or update your Zoom software if you have not used it before or recently, or to solve other issues before the meeting starts.

November 5: Daylight Saving Time Ends
November 6: LACS Board Meeting
November 11: Veterans Day
November 14:: LACS General Meeting
    Topic: Useful Utilities and Accessibility
November 23: Thanksgiving
Watch your email for the dates of APCUG Wednesday Workshops and Saturday Safaris.

VISIT OTHER APCUG COMPUTER USER GROUPS AND SEE THEIR NEWSLETTERS

Many APCUG groups allow members of other groups to attend their meetings. LACS heartedly welcomes visitors from other user groups, and we are welcome to join other groups' meetings.

Go to www.APCUG2.org . Click on **Member Benefits**, then on **Groups Sharing Meetings** or on **Newsletters Online**. A list of groups sharing meetings is arranged by time zones.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

November 14: Useful Utilities and Accessibility

December 2: Holiday Party

Check your email and *User Friendly* for updates to this schedule.

ZOOM MEETINGS

Members on our PC email list will receive, via email, an invitation to join LACS Zoom general meetings. Click on the URL in the invitation before the meeting and follow the prompts. Contact Leah Clark at leahjc@sbcglobal.net   if you have any questions or if you don't receive the link by the morning of the meeting day.

ZOOM RECORDINGS

LACS members will receive links to the recordings of Zoom meetings via email.

HYPERLINKS

Underlined text (blue in the color editions) in User Friendly usually means it's a hyperlink to a website. Copy and paste it into your browser's search or into your address bar. Or click on the link on the online version to see the referenced place.

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 or during the hours listed below. Select the topic from the list and then contact a person whose number is listed next to it.

Find a helper's email address and phone number on your roster. If you don't have your roster, call 424-261-6251. Only members in good standing may receive a roster. We hope you find this LACS free service useful.

If you are experienced using a particular program or hardware, 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@sbcglobal.net or call her at 424-261-6251.

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
Lotus Word Pro, Approach - 7
Mozilla Firefox - 7
MS Excel - 8, 11, 12
MS Word - 1, 3, 8, 12
MS Outlook - 1, 8, 10
MS PowerPoint - 8, 11
MS Publisher - 2
PDF 24 - 8

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

Preferred Time for Phone Calls			
Number	Name	From	To
1	Beckman, Loling	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
2	Clark, Leah	7:00 AM	5:00 PM
3	Hershman, Irv	11:00 AM	11:00 PM
5	Ialongo, Gilbert	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
7	McKnight, Jim	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
8	Nordlinger, Stephanie	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
9	Presky, Mark	Any	Any
10	Rozek, E. J.	Noon	8:00 PM
11	Van Berkom, Paula	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
12	Wilder, Joan	9:00 AM	9:00 PM

Note: Times are Pacific Times

OFFICERS, DIRECTORS AND LEADERS

TITLE	NAME	TERM
President	Leah Clark	2024
Vice President	Stephanie Nordlinger	2024
Secretary	Marcia Jacobs	2024
Treasurer	Gavin Faught	2024
Director	Loling Beckman	2025
Director	Howard Krivoy	2025
Director	Mark Presky	2025
Director	Irv Hershman	2024
Director	E. J. Rozek	2024
Director	Annette Tossounian	2024
Director	Paula Van Berkom	2024
Immediate Past President	Stanley Johnson	
APCUG Representative	Leah Clark	
Corporate Counsel	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Database Manager	Loling Beckman	
Groups.IO Email Lists	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Newsletter Editor	Leah Clark	
Program Chair	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Publicity – Press	Mark Presky	
Publicity – Online Media	Open	
Quick Consultants	Leah Clark	
Webmaster	Paula Van Berkom	

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

Website: www.lacspc.org

Contact the President/Editor at 424-261-6251. Follow the prompts. This is a Google Voice number.

Please use your roster for **email addresses and phone numbers** to contact any officer, board member or other member, or you may leave a message at the above number. If you don't have your roster, please contact Leah Clark at leahjc@sbcglobal.net and she will mail you a copy. Only LACS members may receive a roster.

WITHOUT A MANUAL, CAN UNDERSTANDING BE AUTOMATIC?

By **Greg Skalka**, President
Under the Computer Hood User Group
https://uchug.org/
president (at) uchug.org

Not long ago, writing was the primary format for human knowledge. Our knowledge was stored this way once we graduated from cave drawings to the written word. Information was preserved and passed on through writing, from stone tablets to books. Though a picture may be "worth a thousand words," it often needs some explanation. Libraries were the repositories of knowledge from ancient times through just recently. The Internet and the World Wide Web are now in that position.

While stone tablets have lasted for many thousands of years, and printed books have been around for a little over a thousand years, the Internet has existed for only about 50 years, and the World Wide Web for a little over 30 (the Web runs on the Internet.). It has been estimated that all the books ever printed would be equivalent to about 175 terabytes of storage; that is only 175 of those one-TB hard drives you probably have. In contrast, the amount of data estimated to be on the Internet in 2022 is 94 zettabytes (an unimaginable 94×10^{10} one TB hard drives.) We are generating more data than we know what to do with. It is believed that 90% of the world's data was developed in the last two years.

Product user manuals used to be actual printed books, but now they are migrating to the Web. In the best case, the manual is a pdf. In most cases, however, the only product information is web pages, separate articles, and user forums. The printed manual for many products consists only of some basic connection and power-up directions, along with a web link to additional information. The manual information is sometimes built into a help menu in the product.

A few types of products remain where detailed paper user manuals are still usually provided; automobiles are one example. However, the manual is very limited or non-existent for many of our most complex high-tech products. Computers, televisions, cell phones, and most software have little or nothing for user manuals. Since those hardware products heavily depend on software, I guess it is unsurprising. Since software and software-based products can be easily updated and changed, making a detailed manual would be like aiming at a moving target. For particularly complicated and widely used products, sometimes third-party vendors provide manuals confused users can purchase (the "for Dummies" series, for example.)

What is a Windows 11 user to do with a question or problem? Do they go to the Microsoft website to search for answers? Do they turn to a search engine and comb the Web? Do they turn to friends, family, or the tech guru they hopefully know to get advice on their problems? Do they look for a product forum online for answers? Do they join a user group? Do they figure things out by trial and error? Do they just remain frustrated?

Today's tech products are too unfamiliar, complicated, and unsupported for many seniors. For example, the smartphone is probably the most complex consumer product ever made for its size and weight.

Even when put into the hands of someone familiar with the concept and use of a conventional telephone, its menus and features can be overwhelming. In the last year of his life, my 85-year-old father went through several cell phones and smartphones (some "senior-friendly"), looking for one he could understand and use. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful in his search. He was not technology-challenged; my father had used and even built computers for many years. He was losing his tech edge with age but struggled to learn a new tech tool. While it is a device that

young children can often pick up and use (at least in some way), he could never utilize a smartphone to his satisfaction.

Even I feel behind the curve on smartphone knowledge. I am sometimes frustrated with my limited understanding of the features and capabilities and the lack of documentation. I admit I wasn't an early adopter of smartphones as I thought they were too expensive. I still feel that way, but I now appreciate their importance in our society. I used my first smartphone, a Samsung Galaxy J3, for five years and have had my second, a Samsung S22, for almost a year. I thought I knew something about using smartphones until I got my new one. While from the same manufacturer and using the same OS (Android), the new instrument and the new OS version were sufficiently different to require some relearning. There was no user manual to help guide me.

The lack of standardization in products does not help in understanding products. My old phone had four hard buttons, while my new one has only three. A lot of the basics of operation were the same, but one of the first problems I had with my new phone was shutting it off. On my old phone, holding the power button (the unpaired side button) would bring up the phone's power-down menu. On my new phone, doing the same brought up Samsung's Bixby app (a voice-activated assistant similar to Google Assistant). I finally figured out that I had to simultaneously press and hold the power and volume down buttons to get the power-down menu on my new phone.

I have learned some new phone tricks for my Samsung S22, but they were difficult to figure out. I imagine every software developer believes the features they add to a product are "intuitive" and don't need any explanation or directions. Unfortunately, intuition does not seem standardized in humans; what is obvious to one person may not be to another. A good friend with the same S22 phone showed me a neat capability in the new Android ver-

sion – the ability to nest icons in icons. Instead of having all apps represented by icons at the same screen level, he showed me that I could create a Home Control icon and put all my home control app icons into it (like a folder on the screen for grouping icons). It is a good feature, but now I can't remember how to do it again (I have no manual to refer to). It does not seem as intuitive as when he first showed me.

I paid my friend back by showing him a new feature he did not know about. I don't recall where I found it, but if you double-press the power button, it brings up the phone camera (and bypasses the PIN entry). This is handy if you need to take a quick photo with the phone. Another new feature I found is that a quick double tap on the screen will soft start the phone (the same as a quick press of the power button).

There are some things I have not figured out, and so far, I've not found the answers on the Web. For example, in some Samsung TV commercials, phone users were shown taking selfies using Google Assistant ("Hey Google, take a selfie"). I tried this at the time (a month ago) and was successful. Unfortunately, now this no longer appears to work for me. I did get a recent Android update, which could have changed things. My web searches give various instructions for doing this, but none seem to work for my phone now. What I'd give for a manual (that is, of course, accurate and complete).

Whenever there is more than one way to do something, there will be a different opinion on how it should be done. One example of this is the low battery charge indicator on a product. I have three different products, each indicating battery charge with a single LED indicator that is different.

My old Philips Norelco rechargeable electric razor has a single LED to indicate battery charging status. When the charging cord is first plugged in, the LED turns on

solid to show the battery is charging. When the razor's battery reaches a full charge, the LED switches to flashing. My Cygolite rechargeable rear bike light has a single red LED that can flash in various patterns to indicate my presence to cars approaching behind me. When the charging cable is plugged into it, the LED flashes low to indicate the battery is charging. When the battery reaches full, the LED switches to a low-intensity solid.

My Wyze Night Lights have a single LED to indicate battery status. When the charging cord is first plugged in, the LED turns on solid to show the battery is charging. The LED switches off when the Wyze light's battery reaches full charge.

Each of these charging indicator methods is valid, but with the razor and the bike light, I can never remember which situation indicates a full charge. When I return a few hours later, I'm typically scratching my head, wondering if flashing means fully charged or still charging. The Wyze method seems the least ambiguous. Why can't everyone do the same? ❖

TRY THESE 40+ FREE RESEARCH TOOLS

By Bob Rankin, Ask Bob Rankin
https://askbobrankin.com/askbob.html

Depending on what you're looking for, the Web can be a gold mine, a cesspool, or both. So how can you find answers to your questions, and the helpful, authoritative information you need? Check out my list of more than 40 of the best free online reference and research tools.

Free Online Search (and Research) Tools

There are plenty of websites with dubious experts, opinionated blowhards, and others who would lead you in a particular direction that benefits them more than you. So where do you turn when you have a problem and you need to find reliable answers from true experts, researchers, and the recognized leaders in a particular area?

I've got a list of websites that I have personally found to meet those criteria. Some are newcomers, but most of them have been around for over a decade (or two), proving their worth by their longevity.

Artificial (and Human) Intelligence Tools

Artificial Intelligence is popping up everywhere you look. Tools like ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Bing Chat let you pose natural language questions on almost any topic, and will generate human-like responses. In addition to answering questions, these tools can write complete articles, tell jokes, or generate computer code.

Just for fun, I asked ChatGPT to write a 5000-word essay on the pros and cons of feeding squirrels in urban settings. It whined a bit, but got the job done. Bard dutifully churned out a Fortran program to generate the fibonnaci sequence, but couldn't list the first 100 prime numbers. ChatGPT and Bard both refused to tell me a blonde joke, but Bing Chat happily complied.

Wolfram Alpha, which bills itself as a computational engine, has been around for over a decade. It can solve mathematical equations, has knowledge of chemistry and physics, and will generate answers related to finance, nutrition, linguistics, and many other topics.

Quora relies on humans to answer questions. Users can ask questions and get answers (or opinions) from people who identify as experts on a given topic.

General Reference Tools

In a library, if you don't know where to look for a reference book, you go to the Reference Librarian. On the Internet, if you don't know where to look for answers, you go to RefDesk.com. At first glance, the sheer amount of useful links on the 1995-themed

RefDesk home page can be overwhelming. But it's really quite well organized, useful and up to date. I recommend that you click the dropdown next to REFERENCE DESK at the top right, and select an option from the list.

Encyclopedia.com gives you credible answers from published reference works. Enter your search words and it will search multiple encyclopedias, dictionaries and thesauruses.

The Britannica Online Encyclopedia is another very credible source. Today the home page highlights Julia Child and "The French Chef", the first program aired on PBS. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?

At Dictionary.com, you can look up a word in either a dictionary or Roget's Thesaurus (to find synonyms and antonyms). The site also offers Word Facts 101, the Word of the Day, daily crosswords & word search puzzles, and a huge list of links to other online dictionaries, including hundreds of non-English ones.

At the Infoplease Homework Center, students will find useful information by subject area, develop better writing, note-taking and study skills, and search through previous questions and answers from other students.

WordReference offers free online translation dictionaries. Enter a word and it will first translate it into Spanish, French, Italian, German or Russian, then it will display the dictionary definition for that word in the chosen language.

The Internet Archive has been building a digital library of Internet sites and other "cultural artifacts" since 1996. You can search through 700 billion web pages, 40 million books, 15 million audio recordings and live concerts, 8 million videos, 4 million images and over 800,000 software programs. Of special interest is the Wayback Machine, which has snapshots showing how many websites looked in years past. (Take a look at AskBobRankin.com from June 2005.)

Need a synonym, antonym, or related word? Try this RhymeZone.

The Farmers' Almanac is filled with entertaining short stories, good cooking, fun, facts, forecasts, timely household tips, calendars for fishing and of course gardening. "Guessing the future since 1818."

The CIA World Factbook, by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, has data on almost every country in the world, including maps, background, geography, people, government, economy, and the military.

Medical Questions

WebMD is one of the leading medical reference websites. This authoritative website contains thousands of articles on medical conditions, diseases and how to stay well.

The Mayo Clinic's Symptom Checker prompts you to choose a symptom, enter related factors, and view possible causes. (I heard one comedian refer to this as YouProbablyHaveCancer.org)

MedlinePlus is a service of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the world's largest medical library. You'll find information on health, wellness, disorders, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, supplements, and articles about diseases, symptoms, tests, and treatments.

Business and Financial Research

Hoover's Online provides company capsules and profiles that give comprehensive company, industry, and market intelligence to investors and business professionals.

EDGAR - The SEC requires public companies to file registration statements, periodic reports, and other forms electronically through EDGAR. Now you can access and download this information for free.

Zack's Investment Research has tools that enable individuals to research, select and track their investments more effectively.

It includes company news, profiles, stock prices and more.

Weather

In addition to local weather maps and forecasts for thousands of cities around the world, The Weather Channel website offers many other useful features such as the free Desktop Weather software for Windows, Inbox Weather (e-mails you the forecast daily) Pollen Reports, Air Quality Forecast, and the Interstate Forecast planner.

For the weather junkies, Weather Underground has everything you'd expect from a weather site, including yesterday's forecast.

Check the BBC Weather Centre for weather forecasts for the UK and cities around the world.

Movies

The Internet Movie Database (IMDB) lets you search for a movie or video by its title, and tells you everything you could ever want to know about that movie and its actors.

Ever wonder if a movie is appropriate for your family? Common Sense Media has detailed reviews and age-based recommendations for movies and TV shows.

Rotten Tomatoes is a site for both casual movie-goers and film buffs alike. Millions each month use *Rotten Tomatoes* as a dependable resource and objective coverage of movies and videos. With more than 100,000 titles and 360,000 review links in its ever-gro wing database, *Rotten Tomatoes* offers a fun and informative way to discover the critical reaction on movies from the nation's top print and online film critics, neatly summarized via the TomatoMeter.

Music and Lyrics Research

Try Lyrics.com if you want a searchable database of song lyrics covering many different genres.

Kiss This Guy is a website devoted to misheard or misunderstood lyrics. Finally, you can find out why Manfred Mann had a boulder on his shoulder in the song "Blinded by the Light."

U.S. Government

Visit Congress.gov and find up-to-date information on who's really saying what on Capitol Hill. This site, formerly known as THOMAS, is a service of the U.S. Congress to make legislative information publicly available. It contains full text of legislation (both House and Senate bills searchable by keyword or by bill number) and full text of the Congressional Record. No spin, bias, or sound bytes here... Just the raw data from which you can draw your own conclusions.

USA.gov is the U.S. government's official web portal, a guide to finding government info and websites on a wide variety of topics, including Benefits and Grants, Consumer Guides, Environment, Energy, and Agriculture, Health and Nutrition, Money and Taxes, Public Safety and Law, Science and Technology, and Voting and Elections.

Language Translation

Google Translate does computer-assisted translations from English to Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian -- and back again, sort of. In addition to entering or pasting your own text, you can select a document to translate. Supported formats include txt, rtf, doc, pdf, ppt, and xls. Over 100 languages are supported, and it does a pretty good job of figuring out what the input language is, when you're not sure. You can click an icon to hear the phrase spoken in the target language.

Microsoft's Bing Translator is a similar service, covering about 60 languages.

Maps, Topography and Astronomy

Google Maps will help you find your way from point A to point B, providing detailed turn-by-turn directions. Google Earth lets you virtually fly to any point on Earth and view

streets, houses, buildings, and terrain from satellite imagery. The built-in Google Sky component lets you zoom out into outer space to view planets, stars, constellations and galaxies.

Microsoft's WorldWide Telescope turns your computer into a telescope. This jaw-droppingly cool tool blends images and data from ground and space-based telescopes to allow for seamless panning and zooming across the night sky. You can also take guided tours, narrated by astronomers, featuring interesting places in the sky.

CitySearch helps you explore city life, from Las Vegas hotels to New York restaurants, Chicago events to Seattle coffee houses. Find recommendations, ratings, reviews, tips and more.

Genealogy

Cyndi's List is a comprehensive index to over 100,000 genealogical resources on the Internet. You'll find a list of links that point you to genealogical research resources in many different countries, all categorized & cross-referenced. It's like a "card catalog" to the genealogical collection in the immense library that is the Internet. Over 1000 new links are added each month!

Find more genealogy resources in my article Genealogy Research Online.

Air Travel

Are you meeting a friend at the airport? Track a flight, with this graphical real-time monitor that shows the flight path on a map, along with the aircraft's altitude, speed and estimated arrival time. Also, try the FlightAware Flight Tracker.

My article Here's How to Get The Lowest Airfares Online will point you to some specialized online search tools, and more tips and tools for flyers. Read on…

Miscellaneous Research Tools

Bible Gateway is a tool for reading and searching the Bible online, covering over 100 languages and translations. It provides advanced searching capabilities, which allow readers to find and compare passages based on keywords, phrases, or scripture reference.

FinAid is the most comprehensive collection of information about student financial aid on the web. FinAid is free and has a stellar reputation in the educational community as the best Web site of its kind. Make it your first stop on the Web when looking for ways to finance an education.

Zillow.com offers free automated house valuations on more than 80 million homes across the United States. You can see the estimated value of your house, your neighbor's house, or just about any other home in the country -- whether it's for sale or not. Zillow pulls information from public real estate records, tax rolls and other sources to compute a house value. Zillow also offers a forum where you can chat with pros, as well as other home buyers and sellers.

Need to find someone's phone number, address, or other personal info? Check out FastPeopleSearch and search a name, phone number, or address. In the past I've recommended WhitePages.com, but I've found this site offers more information, fewer ads, and doesn't constantly try to sell "premium" services.

Specialized Google Searches

Visit Google and type in a phone number, stock symbol, or Fedex tracking number to see what happens.

Learn more about Google's secret search tools in my article Here's How to Strengthen Your Google Fu. ❖

AskBobRankin.com

FOR MANY HELPFUL TIPS AND TRICKS

Go to https://www.apcug2.org for all aspects of computing and operating systems.

SPECIAL OFFERS

Go to the APCUG website at 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.**
Code for eBooks: **DIGITALCOMMUNITY**

- See books on digital imaging and photography, gaming, animation, film and video, post-production, audio, music technology, broadcast and theatre at Routledge | Focal Press today! They offer discounts to User Group members.

TECHBOOMERS.COM

For learning how to use internet-based websites and applications for free.

- https://TechBoomers.com

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2-bwYlYu1I

LAUGHING OUT LOUD

- As a computer, I find your faith in technology amusing.

- Computer (dfn): A device designed to speed and automate errors.

- Definition of an Upgrade: Take old bugs out, put in new ones.

- I hit the CTRL key but I'm still not in control!

- Would you like to buy a second-hand computer? I'm afraid not. I'm only able to type with one hand as it is.

- Why did the computer go to therapy? Because it had too many unresolved issues with its user!

They say that the new super computer knows everything. A skeptical man came and asked the computer, "Where is my father?" The computer bleeped for a short while, and then came back with "Your father is fishing in Michigan." The skeptical man said triumphantly, "You see? I knew this was nonsense. My father has been dead for twenty years." "No", replied the super computer immediately. "Your mother's husband has been dead for twenty years. Your father just landed a three pound trout."

Thanksgiving Turkey

- Why did the turkey cross the road twice? To prove he wasn't chicken!

- What did the turkey say to the computer? Google, Google, Google

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION and BENEFITS of MEMBERSHIP

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 are via Zoom. In-person or hybrid meetings may take place in the future.

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 or email (See your roster) from knowledgeable members who are Quick Consultants listed in *User Friendly.*

— **Get help by email** by using our group email list. Send your questions to PC@LACS.Groups.IO

— **Receive important news** and announcements via *User Friendly* and LACS's email list.

— **Free APCUG (**International Association of Technology and Computer User Groups) **Webinars, virtual conferences, programs, and technical information.** Check *User Friendly* and your email to see what's offered.

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

— **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.

NOTE: See page 2 of this issue for an update on the new dues-paying system and for the amount due for each category of membership in 2023.

Date: _____

Check # _____

LACS   **New or Renewal Membership Application**

See note above for amount changes for 2023

Please mail your dues and this form to:

Los Angeles Computer Society, **11664 NATIONAL BLVD. #343, LOS ANGELES CA 90064-3802**

Please PRINT Clearly   [ ] New   [ ] Renewal

[ ] 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 a primary member)

Address:

City, State, Zip + 4

E-mail Address: E-mail of Associate

Preferred Phone: Publish Contact Info in Roster [ ] Yes   [ ] No

Did a member of LACS invite you to join? If so, who? If not, how did you hear about LACS?

First Class Mail

Los Angeles Computer Society

GENERAL MEETINGS ARE ON ZOOM.

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 technical 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.