User Friendly

*LACS
A Computer and
Technology
User Group*

IN THIS ISSUE

Watch your email for APCUG
workshops and
other upcoming events.

apcug

**LACS IS A MEMBER OF
APCUG**
**An International
Association of Technology
and Computer User Groups**
www.apcug2.org
www.facebook.com/APCUG
www.X.com/apcug   **(Twitter)**

FEBRUARY 13, 2024 GENERAL MEETING

Meeting Time: 7:00 to 9:00 PM — via Zoom
Socializing and Questions & Answers: 6:30
Topics: 1. Comparing Windows 11 with
       Windows 10
    2. Chromebooks

   1. Comparing Windows 11 and Windows 10. They look quite different, but much of what we like to use is still the same. Bill will describe what's new, what's changed, and what is no longer included. Then, he will try to help you to decide if Windows 11 is for you now or if you will stay with Windows 10 for a while. You have until 2025 to make up your mind.

   2. Chromebooks: Bill will give you a hands-on demonstration of his Chromebook. He believes it can be a great alternative laptop, and he would love to show you its capabilities.

Meet Our Presenter

Bill James joined the Oklahoma PC Users Group in 1992. It became the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. He has been a member of the club's Board of Directors since 1998. He is now VP of Operations and their eBulletin curator. He often gives presentations on software to his club and APCUG groups. Bill is the APCUG Region 8 (AR, KS, LA, MO, OK, and TX) Advisor and Secretary of the Board of Advisors.

He retired in 2007 from the Federal Aviation Administration as a Supply Systems Analyst for the FAA Logistics Center in Oklahoma City, OK. . He worked there for 38 years.

Bill spoke to us in March 2023 on "Everything Google."

LACS members on the PC groups.IO list will receive the Zoom link to this meeting before or on **February 11**. Guests may ask for the link by emailing Leah Clark at LeahClark424 (at) gmail.com before or on **February 11.** See more information about LACS at www.lacspc.org.

🌼 FROM YOUR PRESIDENT / EDITOR 🌼

WELCOME NEW AND

Gavin Faught,
LACS Treasurer
New Member: (2)
U.A. Sexton
Cecilia Ball
Members Who Renewed This Month for 2024: (10)
Mary Chiu
Ray Crovella
Juan Dominguez   Jeri Speed
Clara Harris   David Speer
Irv Hershman   Roger Wagner
Michael Napoli
Stephanie Nordlinger

EARLIEST TECHNOLOGY

Stone tools are widely recognized as the earliest form of technology invented by humans. Dating back to the Paleolithic era, which began around 2.6 million years ago, stone tools were crafted and used by our ancient ancestors. These tools were created by chipping, flaking, or grinding rocks to form sharp edges or specific shapes, and they served various purposes.

Stone tools were a significant milestone in human evolution as they provided early humans with a means to manipulate their environment and adapt to different challenges. They allowed for tasks such as cutting, scraping, chopping, and piercing, revolutionizing hunting, gathering, and survival techniques.

IF YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR LACS DUES FOR 2024, PLEASE DO SO NOW.

H
a

YOU DO NOT WANT TO MISS ANY OF THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP.
See pages 8 and 19 for information for paying by PayPal, Zelle, or check. If you have questions, please contact our treasurer, Gavin Faught.

WELCOME TO APCUG'S NEW GROUP!

The **Willow Valley Computer Club** is in Lancaster, PA. Lancaster County is home to many Amish and Mennonites and there are beautiful farms and rolling hills here, but few know that before Covid, Lancaster County had about 11 million visitors each year. Even fewer know that the county has many retirement communities.
Willow Valley Communities has approximately 2,700 residents and 1,500 team members. Residents are 55 and older.
Our Club members are residents and team members of Willow Valley Communities. We have 854 members and are growing.

The Club's interests span Android, Apple, Linux, and Windows. We have monthly meetings and publish a monthly newsletter. Topics of general interest are presented at our monthly meetings.
We provide training in classroom-like settings and also offer topics of specific interest in the same settings. Our training includes Gmail, modems and routers, backups, Windows productivity features, personal computer routine housekeeping, and understanding TiVo. We're developing training for Bitwarden Basic and Bitwarden Advanced.
We also have volunteers who have expertise in a variety of areas and provide help to the residents.   Al Williams, President
From https://APCUG2.org

GENERAL MEETING REPORT

January b9, 2024

By **Leah Clark,** LACS President/Editor

Topic: Recommended Websites

Speaker: Stephanie Nordinger
LACS Vice President

Before the meeting, Stephanie sent LACS members handouts with lists of the sites she discussed. listed. Attendees and LACS members received a link to the recording of the meeting.

Stephanie began her presentation with LACS member **Jim McKnight's Website** at http://www.jimopi.net. Jim has many self-help tips, including information on Windows, malware topics, interesting articles, podcast sites, and many general topics. He has a link to his offer to LACS members to fix their PCs and to set up new computers for free.

Computerworld, https:www.computerworld.com, has information and articles on many topics.

Hal Bookbinder, https://www.tinyurl.com/SafeComputingArticles, is a retired IT for UCLA Health Center. He has written numerous articles — more than 100 are on his site.

Hewie Poplock, https://www.hewie.net, is a member of the APCUG Speakers Bureau. He co-hosts **Tech for Seniors** and **WinSIG.** You can see his past talks on his website.

APCUG, https://www.apcug2.org, shows many of the benefits of APCUG, lists user groups that invite members of other groups to join their meetings, and many valuable tips.

LACS, https://www.lacspc.org, gives you our current and past presentations, User Friendly issues, and other group information.

Ninite, https://www.ninite.com, is a convenient site for installing and updating programs and apps.

Malwarebytes, https://www.malwarebytes.com, efficiently gets rid of malware.

SuperAntiSpyware, https://www.superantispyware.com, removes cookies that give you lots of ads. It also removes other spyware and malware.

Belarc, https://www.belarc.com, tells you what's on your computer, your licenses, model numbers, and more.

Kim Komando, https://www.komando.com, gives much tech news and tips with lots of good information.

The following four sites permit APCUG user groups to use their articles in their newsletters. See pages 5-7 and 12-17 of this issue for articles from these sites .

- **How-To Geek**, https://www.howtogeek.com, will answer your questions.

- **Bob Rankin**, https://www.askbobrankin.com, has a long list of categories he discusses.

- **Leo Notenboom**, https://www.askleo.com, has many varied computer and technology articles.

- **Dave's Computer Tips,** https://www.davescomputertips.com, has a lot of short articles giving useful tips on how to do things.

Windows Defender is a recommended free antivirus program that is part of Microsoft Windows. Many other antivirus apps have free and paid versions.

Password Managing Software: There are several good choices. Check reviews and download them from the manufacturer or at www.ninite.com.

Stephanie discussed the pros and cons of online shopping. Check reviews carefully for reliable websites.

Pandora Radio was recommended by Mark Presky. Pandora is a subscription-based music streaming service that "learns" what

you like. You can choose the genre of music you want to hear. For music, Stephanie mentioned **Camera Pacifica**, the **L.A. Philharmonic**, and other orchestras.

Shockwave, https://shockwave.com, has jigsaw puzzles and a variety of other games.

Movies and TV

- https://www.IMDb.com has tons of information on current movies, TV, reviews, awards, trailers, and where and when they are available.

- **Motion Picture Academy Museum**, https://www.academymuseum.org/en, has information on exhibitions, programs, etc. in the museum.

- Irv Hershman likes **Saturday Cinema,** https://www.yourclassical.org/playlist/claddical-24, for listening to music from movies on the radio.

Epic Gardening, https://www.epicgardening.com, is a useful website for gardening techniques and problem-solving. It has a lot of pretty pictures.

The Sierra Club (West L.A.) Camera Club has a beautiful newsletter.

Health and Medicine (Be careful because there is fake information out there.)

- Mayo Clinic, https://www.mayoclinic.org

- Cleveland Clinic, https://my.clevelandclinic.org

- Web MD, https://www.webmd.com

- U.S. Government Department of Health and Human Services and the Food and Drug Administration

- University Health Centers and Hospitals

Current Events

- **Washington Post**, https://www.washingtonpost.com

- **Washington Post Live**, https://www.washingtonpost.com/washington-post-live/, has webinars with influential public people.

- **New York Times**, **L.A. Times** and other newspapers have online versions.

- **TED Talk**, https://www.ted.com

- **Local, state, and national news and political sites**

Stephanie has many other informative websites on her handouts. ❖

THE SCAM THAT TRICKS YOU TO SAY "YES"

By **Ron Wynn**, Realtor
Submitted by **Mark Presky**

Protecting Your Identity

In the digital age, where scammers and fraudsters lurk around every corner of the internet and phone lines, it's crucial to stay vigilant and protect your personal information. One prevalent but often overlooked scam capitalizes on your willingness to say "yes." You might unknowingly expose yourself to identity theft and various problems by simply answering a call with that affirmative response. In this article, we will delve into the scam that tricks you into saying "yes," discuss the tactics used by scammers, and provide tips on how to protect yourself.

The Caller's Ploy: Can You Hear Me?

One common technique scammers use is to begin a conversation by asking, "Hello, can you hear me?" This seemingly innocent query is designed to get you to say **"yes"** without thinking much about it. By recording your affirmative response, scammers can later use it to their advantage.

The "Do Not Call List" Ruse

Another solicitation tactic involves the scammer posing as a representative from an official-sounding organization, such as the FCC or a local regulatory agency, claiming to reduce illegal solicitation. They'll then ask a seemingly harmless question: "Would you like to be added to the 'do not call list'?" This question is intentionally designed to elicit a **"yes"** response.

Why Saying "Yes" Matters

So, why is saying **"yes"** so critical to these scammers? The answer lies in voice manipulation technology. Scammers can extract and manipulate your recorded "yes" response, using it to authorize unauthorized charges, sign up for services, or confirm fraudulent transactions on your behalf. They can also use your voice to impersonate you in various situations, potentially causing financial and legal problems.

What to Do in These Cases

- **Be Cautious:** Always be cautious when answering calls from unknown or suspicious numbers. Consider it a red flag if the caller begins with, "Can you hear me?" or a similar question.

- **Don't Say "Yes":** It's crucial not to say "yes" to unknown callers or questions that may be used against you. Instead, respond with a neutral statement like, "Who is this?" or "How can I help you?" without confirming your identity.

- **Verify the Caller:** If someone claims to be from an official organization, ask for their name, contact information, and the purpose of their call. Hang up and independently verify their legitimacy by searching for official contact information online.

- **Use Call Blocking:** Utilize call-blocking apps or features on your phone to filter out unwanted calls.

- **Report Suspicious Calls:** Report any suspicious calls to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or your local law enforcement agency. They can investigate and take action against scammers.

The Consequences of a "Yes"

Saying **"yes"** to a scammer can have severe consequences. It can lead to financial losses, damaged credit, and a tarnished reputation. Protecting your identity is essential in the digital age, and understanding the tactics used by scammers is the first step in staying safe.

Conclusion

The scam that tricks you into saying "yes" is a real threat. Following the steps mentioned above and staying vigilant, you can safeguard your personal **information and avoid falling victim to these manipulative** schemes. It's better to be safe than sorry when it comes to unknown callers. ❖

HOW-TO GEEK'S BEST OF CES 2024 AWARD WINNERS

A look ahead at tech coming this year

Here are a few of the items from this report.

By **Dan Helyer, Joe Fedewa, Jordan Gloor, Nick Lewis, Corbin Davenport, and Cory Gunther**

Best Router: TP-Link Deco BE65 Pro Mesh Router
Hannah Stryker / How-To Geek

While wireless devices that support the Wi-Fi 7 standard aren't common just yet, you can prepare for them with the TP-Link Deco BE65 Pro Mesh Router. A mesh Wi-Fi system is ideal when you need to cover a lot of ground with your wireless network and can't rely on the weak performance of Wi-Fi extenders. The BE65 Pro system supports a multi-gig network with a 2.5 Gbps WAN port on the base node, along with two Ethernet ports hitting aggregated speeds of 5 Gbps.

It also boasts what TP-Link calls "AI-Roaming technology," promising a seamless experience as you move from room to room with your wireless devices. A mobile yet reliable connection will be critical for using the latest AR headsets and gaming handhelds.

Best Bluetooth Speaker: JBL Go 4
Justin Duino / How-To Geek

JBL makes some of the best portable Bluetooth speakers on the market, and it announced a few new models at CES. The JBL Go 4 is its new small, portable speaker with Auracast technology, which lets you connect multiple speakers together for a bigger sound. The Go 4 has a cute rounded-rectangle design with a sturdy strap, and it's available in six colors.

It's often hard to get a sense of audio quality at trade shows, but our own Jason Fitzpatrick had a chance to try out the JBL Go 4. He said, "The Go series has always sounded pretty solid for its size, but the Go 4 is surprisingly good" and "The first palm-size Bluetooth speaker I'd actually consider regularly using."

JBL says the Go 4 is rated for 7 hours of battery life. It's IP67 rated, has Bluetooth 5.3, and Bluetooth LE audio. It will be available in June for only $50, which is $30 cheaper than the JBL Clip 5, the company's slightly larger portable speaker.

Best Mouse: Cherry M64 Pro Wireless Mouse
Hannah Stryker / How-To Geek
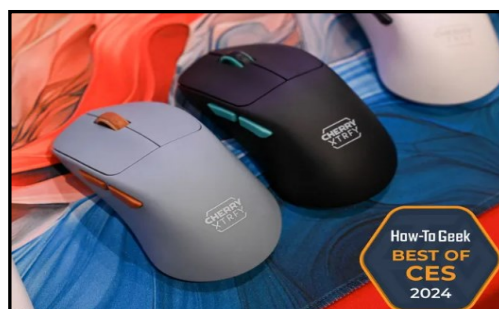
Already acclaimed for its mechanical keyboard switches, CHERRY acquired a Swedish esports gear manufacturer in 2023 to form the CHERRY XTRFY gaming brand, and its debut releases were on display at CES this year. Well, we liked what we saw, with the M64 Pro taking our pick for the best mouse at the show.

Designed with input from professional esports players, the M64 Pro features a slender and ergonomic design and launches alongside the M68 Pro, a symmetrical model with identical specs otherwise. We definitely preferred the ergonomic design, which felt very comfortable in the hand. It had good mouse-feel.

Marking XTRFY's sixth generation of mice (though this is the first under the CHERRY XTRFY brand), the M64 Pro offers better grip and control than previous M4 and M8 models while cutting the weight to an airy 55 grams.

The highlight feature, though—and what separates the pro mouse from its non-pro counterpart—is its 8,000Hz polling rate. Most gaming mice only offer 1,000Hz, making the M64 Pro up to eight times more responsive.

That means smoother cursor movement, sharper control, and some of the lowest click latency ever measured on a wireless gaming mouse.

Launching alongside keyboards, microphones, and other CHERRY XTRFY gaming gear, the M64 Pro will be available for $139 in Q2 of 2024.

Best Health: Withings BeamO
Justin Duino / How-To Geek

The all-new $250 Withings BeamO is a multiscope of sorts and a 4-in-1 health tracking tool that fits in your palm. This isn't your average thermometer, as it also features a stethoscope, an EKG for electrocardiograms, and a pulse oximeter to read blood oxygen levels.

Like Withings' other thermometers, the BeamO features a contactless system thanks to second-gen infrared temperature sensors. Then, there are those green LED PPG sensors found on smartwatches to track your heart rate and electrodes on the side for taking EKG readings. Doing all of that, plus having a stethoscope, makes this a pretty nifty device.

More importantly, during Telehealth sessions, you can stream audio from the stethoscope directly to your provider. None of these measurement tools are new or novel; getting all four in one relatively affordable device makes it a great all-in-one health tool for families.

The EKG still needs to clear FDA processes, but Withings is aiming for a June release date for its "thermometer of the future."

Best Robot Vacuum: Roborock S8 MaxV Ultra
Justin Duino / How-To Geek

Robot vacuums have gotten progressively more advanced over the years, and now Roborock is taking things up a notch with appendages. The Roborock S8 MaxV Ultra was announced at CES with a small flip-out arm. While it's not a literal arm that can pick up items that are in the way, this can help the vacuum reach those tough spots.

The arm pushes the typical robot vacuum spinning brush out farther away from the body, which should help it get into corners. There are also mops for cleaning hard floors on the back, and they can also stick out to reach nooks and crannies. Guiding the cleaning are cameras on the front and back, along with a new voice assistant called "Rocky." It's a similar idea to Ecovacs' "Yiko" assistant.

Another cool feature is the option to buy a base station connected to your home's plumbing. That means you'll never have to refill or drain the mopping tanks. Our Justin Duino was at the show to check out the vacuum, and he had this to say: "Being able to auto-refill the water tank and dump dirty water through your home plumbing takes even more work off of your home cleaning responsibilities. Add in the extendable brush arm, and the S8 MaxV Ultra should keep your home looking as clean as possible."

As expected, all this tech comes at a price. The Roborock S8 MaxV Ultra costs $1,800 and will be launching in April. ❖

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 has an active general email list: PC@LACS.Groups.IO. Use this email address, which goes to all members on the list, to ask questions, offer 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   nordlacs@AOL.com   and

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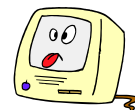
LACS member and presenter, **Jim McKnight**, has an open offer to LACS members to diagnose, repair, disinfect, or upgrade members' PC's for free. There are certain limitations to Jim's offer, so see the details by clicking the "Fix my PC for Free?" link at www.jimopi.net.

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.

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

February

LACS Board

Meeting, Monday, February 5 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: Tuesday, February 13

Topics: **1.** Comparing Windows 10 with Windows 11, and **2.** Chromebooks

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.
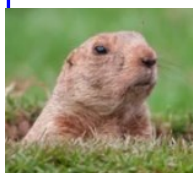

February   2: Groundhog Day

February   5: LACS Board Meeting

February 10: Lunar New Year, Year of Dragon

February 13: LACS General Meeting

February 14: Valentine's Day

February 19: Presidents Day

VISIT OTHER APCUG COMPUTER USER GROUPS AND SEE THEIR NEWSLETTERS

Many APCUG groups allow members of other groups to attend their meetings. LACS heartily 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**. The list of groups sharing meetings is arranged by time zones.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

February 13, 2024:
1. Comparing Windows 11 with Windows 10 and **2.** Chromebooks with Bill James
March 12, 2024: Social Media & Facebook Safety with Judy Taylour
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.

If you have any questions or if you don't receive the link by the morning of the meeting day, contact Leah Clark at leahjc@sbcglobal.net

ZOOM RECORDINGS

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

HYPERLINKS

Underlined text (blue in the color edition) in User Friendly usually means it's a hyperlink to a website. Click on the link in the online version to see the referenced place. You can also copy and paste it into your browser's search or address bar.

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 - 8
Photoshop - 10
Quicken - 8, 12
Thunderbird - 7
Utilities - 7, 8
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
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	**Open**	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.

IS YOUR SMART TV SPYING ON YOU?

Yes, and Here's How To Stop It

By **Bob Rankin**

https://askbobrankin.com/askbob.html

Almost every television sold these days is advertised as a Smart TV. Behind the screen, these TVs are computers with an operating system, a hard drive, and Internet connectivity. They also have cameras, a microphone, and sophisticated software that allows them to collect and sell your viewing data. And because they are constantly connected, the same risks (malware and hacking) that apply to computers also apply to smart TVs. Read on to learn about smart TVs' privacy and security risks and what you can do to minimize them.

How to Stop Smart TV Spying

What makes a smart TV smart? When they were first introduced, it was the ability to connect to the Internet and to bring streaming channels and movies into your living room. Later, built-in microphones and cameras added features such as voice commands, hand gestures, and facial recognition, allowing you to control your viewing without so much as picking up the remote.

But both the internet connectivity and those advanced interaction features can be a liability. If a hacker gains access to your connected TV by exploiting a vulnerability, they could use those built-in cameras and microphones to spy on you and your conversations, while you sit transfixed on your couch. And if they hack your smart TV, they can use your Wi-Fi network to gain access to other devices on your home network, such as desktops, laptops, baby monitors, and even your "smart" appliances.

One article I found on this topic said something to the effect that "a bad actor can take control of your television" and do nefarious things like changing the channel or showing inappropriate content to children. That made me laugh and reminded me of the early-1990s Good Times Virus spoof (rutgers.edu) If a hacker gains access to your TV, they won't out themselves by doing something as obvious and stupid as that.

Why do I mention the possibility of your smart TV getting hacked? According to a Wikileaks article from 2017, the CIA was doing precisely that to some Samsung models. http://tinyurl.com/af82wars That vulnerability has been patched, but you can be sure there are ongoing efforts in this realm.

But the more significant threat to your privacy comes from within. Smart TV sets use a surveillance technique called **Automatic Content Recognition** (ACR) to figure out what you're watching. By "watching what you watch," whether it's on streaming services like Netflix, cable, satellite, or broadcast TV channels, or even DVDs or video games, ACR can identify the content by comparing snippets of onscreen data with a database of known recorded works. If you've ever used Shazam on your phone to identify a song, you can see how this would work on your TV.

ACR does have some legitimate uses. It can be used to identify copyright violations and also personalize your viewing. If it can determine what kind of shows you watch, it may be used to recommend similar content. However, it exists primarily to collect and sell your viewing data to data brokers. Your viewing profile is bundled with your IP address, from which your approximate location and socioeconomic status can be determined. You can then be targeted with ads on your TV, smartphone, and desktop computer for products that fit your profile.

A study done by Northeastern University found that many smart TVs sent the ACR data to Amazon, Facebook, and Google. ACR viewing data was also sent to Netflix, even if

the service was not present or activated on a set. Targeted ads are common on the Internet. You visit a website selling shoes, and you see ads for shoes. The same is happening as you "surf" the content on your TV screen.

In 2017, Vizio was fined $2 million by the FTC for selling this data without disclosing the surveillance to customers. Such disclosures are now mandatory. The "permissions" are granted (on an opt-out basis) by the user during setup, and the option to disable data collection is available in the TV settings. Each manufacturer calls it something different, and it can be hard to find the privacy settings. Samsung calls it **Viewing Information Services**, and on Vizio sets, it's **Viewing Data**. LG calls it **Live Plus**, and Sony has **Samba Interactive**.

Consumer Reports has instructions for turning off ACR at http://tinyurl.com/mwtafu5w on most major TV brands, including Hisense, Insignia, LG, Philips, Samsung, Sharp, Sony, TCL, Toshiba, and Vizio.

You should also check the privacy settings on any streaming services you use. Here's how to find those settings for Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube, and Roku at http://tinyurl.com/5dekck3j

You'll want to check for things like deleting your watch history, ad tracking/personalization options, Data Monitoring settings, and turning off interest-based ads.

What About Those Cameras and Microphones?

Built-in cameras can be used to enable hand gestures to control your TV. LG sets with embedded cameras have supported hand gestures for a decade. Sony's Bravia Cam allows you to use hand signals to pause, adjust volume, or turn off the TV. But it will also scold you if you're too close

to the screen. Microphones and speech recognition tech allow you to change the channel or search for a show.

As I mentioned earlier, a determined hacker with knowledge of a remotely exploitable vulnerability could use your TV set as a way to watch you. Even if you're not concerned about hackers, do you really need to control your TV by pointing or grunting?

Check the settings to see if these features can be disabled on your TV. Or if you can find the camera on the face of your smart TV, a piece of black tape can be used to cover it.

In closing, here are a few more tips to boost the privacy and security of your smart TV:

- Find out what kinds of data your specific model is collecting, what is done with that data, and how you can limit that. This information should be in your manual or on the vendor's website. Search online for your TV's model number and the word "privacy."

- Don't rely on factory settings. Explore the privacy settings on your set, and change any default passwords if you can.

- Check the manufacturer's website to see if there are any updates or security patches that can be applied.

Your thoughts on this topic are welcome. Are you concerned about your smart TV spying on you? Please tell me what you think, and what you've done about it. ❖

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GOOGLE LENS – PART 2

By **Stuart Berg**, Dave's Computer Tips
dave@davescomputertips.com
*(See the December 2023 issue of User Friendly for part 1 of this article.)*

Windows With a Chrome-Based Browser

In Windows, you **may** have another way to use Google Lens. I say "may" because it only works for some Chrome-based browsers, not all. My experience shows that it works with Google Chrome and Brave browsers but not with Microsoft Edge. I haven't tested it for other browsers.

This other way to use Lens allows you to right-click on any image and choose the "Search image with Google" option. I much prefer using Lens in this way because it's available with a right-click on any image. This is what you do in your Chrome-based browser to get this capability:

1. Open your Chrome-based browser.
2. Where you normally type the web address (URL), type **chrome://flags** and press **Enter**
3. Enter **Enable Lens features in Chrome** in the **Search flags** box. If it finds this option, your browser can use Lens on images by right-clicking, so go on to step 4 below.
4. On the right side of this option, click on where it says **Disabled** and choose **Enabled**. Your browser might not have the "Enabled With Side Panel," as shown below, but I don't see much difference in the results for the two Enabled options.
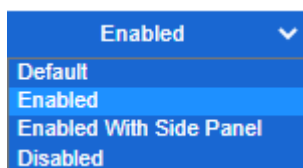
5. Relaunch your browser, and you can now use Google Lens by right-clicking on any image.

Android

Google Lens on Android offers many ways to get Lens. Go to the Play Store and install Google Lens, the Google app, the Google Photos app, or the Google Assistant app (only available for some Android phones.) You may even have it already in your Camera app on some phones like Pixel. Another way is by using your browser to go to google.com. There you will see the Camera icon. When you click the Camera icon, it opens Google Lens, and you can do a live search with your camera. It also shows you the images on your phone, which can be Google searched.

Other options include:

1. **Translate** any text from the language in the image to another language.
2. **Text** will copy text if there is text in the photo.
3. **Search** can tell you about what is in the photo.
4. **Homework**: Take a photo of a homework question to search.
5. **Shopping** to find where to buy the item in a photo.
6. **Places** can point at buildings for information.

iOS (iPhone or iPad)

There is no Google Lens app you can download to use Google Lens on an iPhone or iPad. Your iPhone might already have it installed within your camera app. However, if it is not in the camera app, there are at least two other Google apps you can download that include Google Lens. Even not installing either app should still let you use your browser to go to google.com for any search where you will have the Camera icon to click on to launch Lens. Two apps that include Lens are the Google app and the Google Photos app.

The Google app is best for the iPhone because it includes doing a live image search using the camera on your iPhone. The live image search is not available on the iPad. For the iPad, it is recommended that you install the Google Photos app.

Your feedback on this article is welcome.

About The Author

Stuart Berg has played with, worked with, and built computers for over 55 years. With an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a master's degree in electric power engineering, he was shocked when his first job offer was in the information technology department of a major electric utility company. That led to a life full of engineering and financial application development and management. Many nights were spent teaching computer science as an adjunct professor at a local community college for 12 years. Now retired, he enjoys focusing on helping people solve their computer problems. ❖

IS CHANGING MY PASSWORD ENOUGH?

By **Leo Notenboom**
https://askleo.com

I regularly hear from people who've had their email or other online account compromised, can recover access to it, and change their password, only to have the account stolen again almost *immediately*.

The problem is simple, but the solution is a bit of work.

First, you have to realize that while someone else has access to your account, they have access to *everything* related to that account.

As a result, *changing your password isn't enough*. You need to do more.

Recovery Information

You authenticate with most online systems by providing a user name and a password. Your username might be publicly visible, but your password must only be known to you.

Most systems also provide a mechanism to recover or reset your password should you forget it. They use a variety of means, but they all boil down to the same thing: they use one or more additional pieces of information — often referred to as *recovery information* — to validate that you are who you say you are, and thus entitled to regain access to the account.

It's that recovery information that presents the greatest risk once your account has been compromised.

Let's look at some examples of what I mean, why it's a risk, and what you should do about each, in addition to changing your password.

Email Addresses

Many, if not most, online accounts require your email address. In the case of an email account there's also often an "alternate" email address.

Systems often provide the ability to send a password reset message to the email address of record, or the alternate email address, should you lose your password. Since only you could have set it up, by definition, that email address should be yours. Your ability to receive a message at that address confirms you are the rightful account holder.

Once your account has been compromised, a smart hacker will immediately change the email address or alternate one to which they have access. That way, if you request a password reset, *they'll* get it, not you. Similarly, if you change the password, all the hacker has to do is request a password reset, and she'll regain access to the account.

What you should do: Once you've regained access to your account, immediately verify that all email addresses associated with that account are yours. If they aren't, change them right away.

Secret Questions

It's falling out of favor these days, but as a second layer of security, many systems have you set up answers to security questions. The answers you choose verify your identity should you lose your password, and so are questions only you should know, such as your mother's maiden name, the name of your first pet, or your favorite teacher. If you forget your password, the system asks you one or more of these questions. If your answer matches what you originally set up, you must be who you say you are, and you regain account access.

One of the problems with the technique is that often, the answers aren't secret at all. Even a little browsing on your social media sites can tell potential hackers a great deal about you, including many of the answers to these so-called secret questions.

Once a hacker has access to your account, he can change all the answers to his own. If you regain access to the account and change the password, she can invoke the password recovery mechanism and regain access.

Once you've regained access to a hacked account, change all your secret answers *immediately*. Even if they've been untouched, the attacker could have written them down. Change them to something new — answers that are completely unrelated to the questions but that you'll remember in the future.

Mobile Numbers

Many service providers are now replacing secret questions with the use of mobile or phone numbers instead. The concept is that when account recovery is needed, they can text or voice call that number with a code. You provide that code to prove you have the phone. You must be the authorized account holder since you set up that phone number.

Once a hacker has access to your account, they can change that number to be their own. Any mobile-based account-recovery attempts are now redirected to the hacker.

As soon as you get back into your hacked account, confirm that the phone numbers associated with it are still your own.

Billing Information

It's rare, but some systems use billing information, such as a credit card number already on file, or your billing address, in account recovery-and-validation attempts. If you have this kind of information on file

a) A hacker may be able to start using it, potentially racking up charges that you may or may not be liable for.

b) A hacker can change it, so if it's used for account recovery purposes, it's the hacker who regains access, not you.

You should change or remove this information as soon as you get your account back and immediately check with your credit card provider for any improper charges.

The Bottom Line

Any and all information that can be used to recover your account should be validated, removed, or changed the instant you get your account back. That includes personal information, PINs, secret questions and answers, alternate email addresses, and more: anything the system you're dealing with might use for account validation and recovery.

If you don't, and the individual who hacked your account has even half a clue, it's possible you could recover your account only to find it hacked again within hours or minutes.

You should also consider increasing the security of your account by adding **two-factor authentication** to prevent future hacks, as well as setting up any single-use or predefined recovery codes for those systems that support it. ❖

LENOVO'S THINKBOOK PLUS 5 HYBRID RUNS WINDOWS AND ANDROID

A capable Android tablet that doubles as a full Windows 11 laptop

By **Cory Gunther**
https://howtogeek.com

We're all familiar with 2-in-1 laptops and know what to expect from these convertible devices. At CES 2024, Lenovo delivered a wildly different hybrid you'll want to see. Its new ThinkBook Plus 5 runs Windows 11 and Android, giving you the best of both worlds.

Most manufacturers think of Windows 2-in-1 as the ultimate productivity machine, but we all know that Windows 11 works best as a laptop, not a tablet.

That's why with Lenovo's crazy new hybrid, the bottom packs everything you need for a capable Windows 11 computing experience, while in the top half (behind the stunning display), you'll find all the Android bits.

Arc GPU, 32GB of DDR5 RAM, a 1TB SSD, all-day battery life, Harmon Kardon speakers, USB-C, a fingerprint reader, etc. Everything you want and need from a laptop.

In laptop mode, the experience is similar to any other clamshell. The Lenovo ThinkBook Plus 5 Hybrid packs a powerful Intel Core Ultra 7 and Intel Arc GPU, 32GB of DDR5 RAM, a 1TB SSD, all-day battery life, Harmon Kardon speakers, USB-C, a fingerprint reader, etc. Everything you want and need from a laptop.

However, Android comes to life once you yank the impressive 14-inch 2.8K OLED display from the keyboard dock. Up top and inside the display is an Android-friendly Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Plus Gen 1 processor, 12GB of RAM, another 256GB of internal storage, and more. The tablet has another USB-C port, front and rear cameras, four little 1W speakers, and a 38 Whr battery.

Essentially, it's a fully-featured standalone Android 13 tablet. However, when you want to build a presentation or be more productive, snap it into the keyboard that houses all the Windows 11 goods and get to work.

This might be one of the craziest devices we've seen at CES this year. It's worth noting that, at least right now, the two operating systems don't play nicely together. By that, I mean you can't work on a project or program in Windows 11, then yank off the screen and continue working from Android while sitting on the patio or a plane. They are two entirely separate systems. However, there is a hybrid folder that will automatically sync files you need to both devices.

These days, there are plenty of great 2-in-1 laptops to choose from. However, Lenovo says the ThinkBook Plus Gen 5 Hybrid should arrive in Q2 and run you about $2,000 if you want to try something unique and new.

About The Author

Cory Gunther is a staff writer at Valnet, covering cutting-edge EVs, automotive, and more at How-To Geek and MakeUseOf. He's covered Android, cars, and technology in general for over a decade.
He's covered CES, SEMA, Mobile World Congress, and CTIA and reviewed countless phones, TVs, speakers, EVs, e-bikes, and mobile accessories. Before Valnet, Cory worked for *GottaBeMobile*, and his writing also appeared on *SlashGear AndroidCentral*, and *Newsweek*. He's written over 9,000 articles. ❖

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

Computer Industry Acronyms

PCMCIA People Can't Memorize Computer Industry Acronyms
WWW World Wide Wait
COBOL Completely Obsolete Business Oriented Language
MIPS Meaningless Indication of Processor Speed
WINDOWS Will Install Needless Data On Whole System
DOS Defective Operating System
BASIC Bill's Attempt to Seize Industry Control
IBM I Blame Microsoft
SAP Slow And Painful
Yahoo You Always Have Other Options

NOTICE
The columns, reviews and other expressions of opinion in *User Friendly* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Los Angeles Computer Society. LACS became a California non-profit corporation on July 17, 1991. Its predecessor was the UCLA PC Users Group.

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 use the same mailing 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.

- - - - - - - - - - ✂ - - - - - - - - - - ✂ - - - - - - - - - - ✂ - - - - - - - - - -

All renewals are due in January. New members dues may be prorated by the starting month.

Date:_____

Check # _____

LACS   New or Renewal Membership Application

Dues may be paid by PayPal, Zelle, or check.
If paying by check, 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?

Revised Dec. 2023, ljc

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.