

## Notes on Meeting 13/03/2020

Hope you are all keeping well and coping with the enforced lock down. Sorry for the delay in getting this email out to you.

Our session on 13th March was probably the last U3A meeting before the lock down the following Monday. The suspension of all U3A activities meant that the Spring Newsletter, already printed, could not be distributed at the originally planned Wednesday meeting. I rehashed it to reflect the change in circumstances; hopefully, you received it in my round robin email the following week. If by any chance you missed it, both versions are available on the 'Newsletters' tab of our web site, ...  
<https://u3astowmarket.wordpress.com/newsletters>

We had 11 members present at the meeting with 6 apologies.

**Online Forum:** It is now more than 6 months since any queries have been posted on the forum, suggesting it's run its course for our group and of is no interest at all to the wider U3A membership. **Dave P** raised the question again about notifications; if you click the appropriate box when you post or answer a query, you'll get an automated notification when anything new is added. Either way, in the event of a posting I'll always notify everyone.

**Last meeting:** We reviewed the notes from the December meeting. **Ann W** had sent a response to several items and I've appended as appropriate.....

### 1) New things to do on your phone or tablet,.....

- Ann gave us an update on the 'Tile' Bluetooth tracking device which can be attached to keys, bags and the like or even cats, say. Using an app on Android or iPhone 'lost' items can be found and also, in reverse, the phone can be located from a tile. The new 2020 version with replaceable battery is available on Amazon for £14.99, for 1, £50.00 for 4 -<https://tinyurl.com/wfkwygq> . Among other things it can be operation via 'Alexa' (see below)

**2) A couple of years ago**, we had a session discussion on the '**smart home' and associated gadgets**. At that time there was very little enthusiasm amongst members for such items as the Amazon Echo with 'Alexa' and the Google Home speaker. These devices have since become very popular, so I asked if any of our group had decided to give them a try and what they thought of these devices.....

- **Ann.** 'I have a Fire TV stick on our kitchen TV, and do find it useful to use the TV as a smart speaker, as the Echo is often in another room, though my subscription only allows one device to stream at a time. I also find it faster to access BBC i-Player with the Fire Stick than the TV control when I want to catch up on Gardeners World or the Antiques Road show while I am cooking!'
  - Ann also discovered that 'Alexa' on the Fire stick could be used control 'smart plugs' in the home – which in turn led to the question "What is a smart plug?"
    - A smart plug is a power receptacle that plugs into a traditional electrical outlet and integrates it into your smart home network, allowing you to control whatever you plug into it from an app on your smartphone or with your voice through a virtual assistant.

**3) A reminder** about updating Windows 10. The latest version, an update to v 1909, is quite innocuous.....

.....Raised the question: '**Can I still upgrade from Windows 8 to Windows 10, and if so and need to free up memory how do I preserve my documents such as Kindle Books?**' (Philip W)

- In recent months there have been many articles in Computer Active about upgrading from Windows 7 or 8 to 10. Perhaps the simplest way is to start afresh with a new installation of Win 10. CA are currently (until 30th April) selling this for £29.99 as opposed to the commercial rate of £119.99. Go to [www.snipca.com/33869](http://www.snipca.com/33869) to buy.

- Minimum requirements for Windows 10 installation - RAM: 1 gigabyte (GB) for 32-bit or 2 GB for 64-bit, and hard disk space: 16 GB for 32-bit OS or 20 GB for 64-bit OS, although it's always better to have more for wriggle room. If you do need to release HD space, any document etc. can be moved to a separate HDD or high capacity USB stick. In the case of Kindle books, however, this is irrelevant as they are stored on the Amazon servers and can always be downloaded from the 'Accounts & List' tab then 'Manage your content and devices'. We looked at this using my account as example.

#### 4) New local learning resources: 'At home': BT 'Skills for Tomorrow'.

<https://www.bt.com/skillsfortomorrow/daily-life/mastering-the-basics.html>

- We looked at this in more detail on screen. Courses are free and aimed mainly at the beginner but with something to offer to those with more experience. We briefly looked at some - 'Before you start', 'Using email', 'Digital Tools – Office programmes, etc.', 'Internet skills' and 'Discovering Social media'.
- There's also a wider range of learning/information courses on, e.g., 'Keeping Sake at home', 'Managing money', 'Accessing public services' and 'Enhancing your (digital) well being'.
- It is necessary to sign up/subscribe to take part. This led to some discussion as, to some, 'subscribing' means paying money; in general on the internet, however, this just making yourself known to the site so that they can keep track of their regular users and can recognise you when you return.
- **Dave P** recommended, on these occasions, using a different email address to the one you use for your personal use (on line banking etc.). It's noted that you can have as many Gmail accounts as you like.
- **Dave** also wanted to warn about hackers being able to subvert 2FA, **Two-Factor Authentication**, shortly to be mandatory for all on line banking. This is a convoluted process involving your phone when the hackers, posing as you, manage to get a new SIM which then directs the SMS message to them, not you on your old number. There's too much detail to go into here, but he gets around this by using an old phone with a new SIM card in solely for this purpose. If you find that your 2FA message is not coming through instantly, it may be that your account has been compromised and you need to take immediate action.
- **Oh!** and don't forget the GCF Learn free site, <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/subjects/tech/>

#### 6) Further tips and resources to explore

- **Sharing and controlling other computers:** ..... A recently discovered, easy to use, method is **Google Remote Desktop**. You can find all the details here <https://tinyurl.com/tz3evxn>
  - *Further investigation* has indicated that this is **not too reliable** and can be difficult to set up for people who are less tech savvy.
  - A much better alternative is '**Team Viewer**' which we've mentioned before. This business tool is *free to private users* and easy to set up – the programme just has to be installed on both machines and can then be used to either share your screen with the other party to demonstrate a point, or they can give you permission to take over their machine so you can show them how to navigate a particular problem. Read all about it here ..... <https://www.teamviewer.com/en/products/teamviewer/>
- **Google Location History:** We looked at how Google can track you (your Android phone, laptop or tablet) using Location History. We talked about the pros and cons – but Location History is turned off by default for your Google Account and *can only be turned on if you opt in*. Read the details here <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3118687?hl=en>
  - **Ann.** I did follow up the link to information about Google location history. I couldn't remember if I had it turned on or off, so that was useful. However from the places I have visited recently, it just showed how boring my life is at present! I was also able to remove our now defunct business from Google Maps with the information I found.

#### New Items we looked at.....

#### 1) 'How can I uninstall Avast Antivirus?'(Hazel F)

- Avast Antivirus has a special **Self-Defense** (American spelling) mode that prevents malicious software from uninstalling Avast from your system. Unfortunately, this means you can't uninstall it through normal means either.
- If you need to know how to uninstall Avast Antivirus, just follow the steps in the attached PDF (to the original email) for detailed instructions on how to disable Avast's self-defence feature and uninstall the software.
- These days, it's perfectly safe to rely on the built-in Windows Defender anti virus software.

**2) 'Trio Office'.** This *third party* software is offered free from the Microsoft app store and is completely compatible with all MS Office formats any many other legacy file types

- The main components are Writer (Word), Calc (Excel), Impress (PowerPoint) and Draw (Publisher and others)
- The programmes are completely compatible with their Office counterparts
- Limitations; can be slow to start up but OK when running; if you want to import files including pictures and/or wish to print anything then it's necessary to purchase the 'full' version, approximately £13.00.
- But see below.....

**3)** Prompted by the above, Dave P asked about **Microsoft Office licence keys** available to purchase off Ebay

- John H has bought via this method on more than one occasion and has never had any problems.
- There are many offers on Ebay, a typical one here <https://tinyurl.com/y7r2nzrl> . Costs £8.90
- Sound like a bargain, but these licences are so cheap you can't help but be suspicious? (To quote: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!).
- Suggest you consider Libre Office instead, <https://www.libreoffice.org/> . Totally compatible, legitimate and free!

**4) 'Ask Leo'.** Subscribe to the Ask Leo Confident Computing Newsletter

- In case you haven't come across it, Ask Leo (Leo Notenboom) <https://askleo.com/> is a very useful resource for all things computing. He offers sensible advice in a weekly newsletter and it is easy to search a vast database of past articles.
- New subscribers are offered a free copy of his booklet, 'Guide to Staying Safe on the Internet'. Here's the subscribe page <https://tinyurl.com/y7y2s3e6>
- Attached (*to the original email*) is a PDF copy of a recent article on refining you Google searches, The most important Skill you can improve.
- Even with the American slant, overall, highly recommended.

We all agreed that this had been a very useful meeting and I was heartened that so many had attended in spite of the looming Covid-19 crisis. When things are resolved and if it's what everyone wants, we could perhaps consider changing to every 2 months rather than 3?

As time has now passed and it's clear that 'normality' is some time away, we could look at an alternative. As some of you are aware, we had a Photography Group on-line conference meeting on the 8th April using <https://8x8.vc/> (not Zoom because you are restricted to 40 minutes) which is free and easy to use. Apart from some connection issues and with some without camera and/or microphone, we had great fun and were able to go through our pictures with Roy Fidler on Photoshop as normal. We spent about 1½ hours together. We have another planned for 29th April next week.

Please let me know if you would be interested in doing the same kind of thing for our C&T group. If so, I will arrange accordingly.

Keep well!