



August 2019

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Ken Johnson, Newsletter Editor



CALENDAR

SIG = Special Interest Group



This issue was late due to health and other personal problems for which I apologize. It will be necessary for me to discontinue preparing this newsletter soon. If anyone would be willing to take over this job that I have taken over from Phil Ball in 2012, please contact me.

The National association sends articles every quarter so it is mostly a “cut and paste” deal, although I have written about six articles over the years at my own discretion.

PCS provides the printer and reimburses for the ink and paper so the only expense is the small amount of power consumed and your labor which amounts to about 2 to 3 hours a month.

Ken Johnson-928 925 7070

Future Meetings

August 24 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM

[Smartphone SIG](#) - Leader: Murray Smolens

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

Murray will talk about the the wonderful world of 5G and where we are in it; all 2.7 million Android apps (well, some of them, anyway); and some tips and tricks to keep your phone purring like a Lamborghini (only quieter).

August 27 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

August 31 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM

[Special Topics SIG](#) - Leader: JB Burke

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

In JB's Special Topics #52 we'll ask (answer?) questions, such as ... are we alone in the universe? (Perhaps not?) How do I climb into the Invisible Web? Are we, collectively, sinking? (Do you sometimes get that sinking feeling?) Our phones have batteries - what are we gonna do, what are we gonna do? Plus Flash Drive Mania. Security, a free ticket to Special Topics #53.

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security, security. And, of course, videos, music, laughs and much, much more. Special Offer ... every attendee will receive a free ticket to Special Topics #53.

September 3 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

September 7 - Saturday

No PCS meeting is scheduled.

September 10 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

September 17 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

September 21 - Saturday - 1:00-3:00 PM

[General Meeting](#) - Leader: Ray Carlson

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

First Hour: To be determined

Second Hour: Phil Ball will present Tips and Tricks with insights into various topics that assist with regular

*Note that these dates are correct at time of publication but are subject to change.
Up to date information [can](http://www.pcs4me.com) be found on our website, www.pcs4me.com*



**Prescott Computer Society
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Officers:

President Ray Carlson
Vice Pres Phil Ball
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Aukey USB Outlet with Night Light Plug-in

Curt Potsic, Webmaster, Space Coast PCUG, FL

June 2019 issue, The Space Coast Journal

www.scpcug.com

[cmpotsic \(at\) att.net](mailto:cmpotsic@att.net).

I spotted this Aukey USB outlet with Night Light Plug-in on Amazon one day. It was on sale for \$6 off the \$19.99 price and I thought it was a good deal for \$13.99. <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B074MVWM6V>

It's a wall outlet that has 4 AC receptacles and 2 USB charging ports on the sides along with a night light on the front. Plus it also has surge protection. It can be used in a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, etc.



We have it in the kitchen where it's ideal for charging cell phones and tablets. The photo on Amazon's site shows it charging a cell phone resting on the top ledge but I found it also works fine with 7" or 8" tablets resting on its top ledge. Also the night light brightness varies with how dark it is and can be turned off with the circular button below the light panel.

What intrigued me was this looked like a great way to charge my wife's Fire HD 8 Tablet. She has a compatible 7th generation tablet which has "Show Mode." The HD 8 Tablet in Show Mode has basically the same functionality as an Echo Show which has a 10" screen but sells for \$229.99. With the Aukey Outlet serving as a stand, the tablet in Show Mode was perfect just resting against the wall above the kitchen counter. This sure beat buying Amazon's Show Mode Charging Dock for \$39.99 (<https://www.amazon.com/All-New-Charging-Compatible-Generation-Tablets/dp/B07BNXZDJ3>).

Plus with Amazon's Charging Dock you have to remove the tablet's protective cover for the dock's charging socket to fit into place. With the Aukey unit the tablet's protective cover stays on

Brain Dead In San Diego

By Art Gresham, Editor, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA

May 2019 issue, Drive Light

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and a standard USB charging cable is used.Ω

Sunday, March 31st, was "World Back Up Day." Even if you don't do a complete system backup, please back up your important documents (i.e.- photos, videos, office docs, PDF files and any other files you deem important to you) to a USB drive, CD/DVD, external HD or the Cloud. Take the pledge and spread the word.

THE WORLD BACKUP DAY PLEDGE

"I solemnly swear to back up my important documents and precious memories on March 31st." I will also tell my friends and family about World Backup Day - friends don't let friends go without a backup.

Did you read the World Backup Day information in UCHUG's March newsletter? The editor sure did. He (by which I mean I) put it there. So for the 64-cent question. Did I do a backup? No. Bad on me I guess. But no harm done. Right? Not so

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As I started building the current newsletter (and following the scare raised by the Email issue our President reported this month) I was looking at the screen when it began having very weird patterns of color flashing over the entire screen. Quick as a wink I thought I should get a photo of it in case it turns in to something. Fishing my cell phone out of my pocket, and looking up, suddenly the color patches were gone. Back to normal screen. Strange but oh well. Grab the mouse and go back to work.....work... come on mouse WORK. Nope. No Work. No keyboard, No mouse, no Nuttin.

Power off, by brute force (power strip) and back on. Nothing. Not even the familiar Beep Beep, and CMOS screen. Nothing. Cycle power and try again. Nothing. Deep breathing. Go practice some Yoga. Or VooDoo. Calmly go to bed and hope it heals itself over night. Hey, it's been known to happen.

So now it's the next morning. Power on. YEAAAA, it boots like normal; everything is well again..... for about two minutes then.... Color patches. Frozen mouse and Keyboard. Dead.

So now I need a spare computer to use and try to get back on track. Perhaps the hard drive is still intact. I calmly disconnected the machine - a Gateway brand. Fortunately I have my older generation computer, a Dell, still sitting beside my working system (which is no longer working). The Dell boots up right where it left off last October when last it was powered up. A starting point. Pull it out and remove the Gateway hard drive and place it in the Dell. They are similar 1 TB drives so no real compatibility issues. I expect it will work, with just slight performance reduction because of a slower CPU.

At this point many, or most, of you are saying. Wait. You can't just swap a hard drive into a completely different CPU box. The operating system will complain and you will have to go through a bunch of fixes to get it to recognize all the different hardware. Wrong. You must think I am using some proprietary operating system like Windoze 7 or 8 or 9 or 10!!? Nope. Both systems were running Linux, Mint 17 and 18. More significantly, upon taking my up-to-date system hard drive, putting it into the older CPU box, and giving it power -- it instantly recognizes everything, mouse, keyboard, internet connection. Boots up to exactly where I left it on the broken

machine yesterday morning. I have lost nothing much more than time and some worry. Of course the operations are slightly slower. But much faster than DEAD.

So at this point you may think I resumed building the Drive Light. You would be wrong. The first thing I did was to start a backup And there is the moral of the story. Back up, Back up, Back up! You never know when the computer will die and you may not be so lucky as to be able to perform a 'brain-ectomy' to bring your data back to life. Moving on now. Got a newsletter to put together.Ω

Google Fi – Short for Fidelity, maybe a country code for Finland, or a new network?

By Phil Sorrentino, Secretary & APCUG Rep
The Computer Club, FL
www.sccccomputerclub.org / philsorr (at) yahoo.com

All are correct, but it is the new service that Google is making available that is the real news. At the last meeting where I had a chance to ask, "how many have a smartphone," there was a resounding show of hands that indicated almost 100 % of the attendees had one. (There were actually a few "flip phone" hold outs.) Although this was a "technically inclined" group of people, it is still amazing since the smartphone was only invented in 2007. In just 11 years the smartphone has had an enormous market penetration. Actually the statistics show that 95% of all Americans own a cell phone and that 77% of all Americans own a smartphone. That's around 250 million people in the US using smartphones.

The smartphone is the device that we come in contact with and are most familiar with, but it is the underlying network that the smartphone uses that allows it to connect to all the people and servers that we want to contact. Yes, we use the smartphone to contact people by voice, video and texts, but we also contact and communicate with servers like Google, Yahoo, Facebook, Amazon, Wikipedia, Alexa, Twitter, CNN, SunTrust, etc. to do our bidding. None of this contact would be possible without the network that connects these servers to our clients (smartphones, tablets, and computers).That's

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right, our smartphones are the clients in the Client-Server arrangement that makes our phone so useful. (If you had attended one of my internet related classes you would have known that.) So, without the network, our clients would not be able to contact the servers and the servers would just be left idle. But there is a network; in fact there are 4 major networks in the United States that offer nationwide wireless services: AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon. (Listed alphabetically, not by size or customer service quality or any other quality.) US Cellular also provides regional wireless services, but not quite nationwide.

And now Google is proposing another network service. No, it's not going out and building cell phone towers; it is putting together the already available cell phone tower networks from some of the other network operators and making them available through a service called Google Fi. Google Fi will provide your phone the best of any of the three networks, Sprint, T-Mobile, or U.S. Cellular, by intelligently switching to the best network at that time and location. (Notice the two missing providers.) And it will use Wi-Fi to make calls and send texts whenever it can, thus possibly saving data. And when it connects via Wi-Fi, it automatically employs a Virtual Private Network (VPN) which encrypts all of the communications to keep them safe. They say that calls and texts work on Wi-Fi just as they do when you're using mobile data, and you can continue your phone call as your phone switches between the networks. To do all this magic, Google Fi uses a special Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card. A SIM card usually identifies the phone (device) to the network. This special SIM card can identify your device to all three networks, T-Mobile, Sprint, and U.S. Cellular. And the really neat feature is that it can switch between the networks on-the-fly, based on many factors. You can order a free SIM card during the sign-up process or you can purchase one at an authorized retailer. SIM cards are now available at Best Buy and online from their website. The SIM card costs \$10, but it comes with a \$10 account that essentially makes it free.

Not all phones can be used on Google Fi, only unlocked phones can be used with the service. Recall that a locked phone can only be used on one specific network. (If you purchased your phone through Google Fi or the Google

Store, your device is unlocked.) So, the phone you use must be unlocked. If you aren't sure if your phone is unlocked, you can contact your current network or the place where you purchased your phone. Also, you need to make sure you don't owe any payments on your device. All Android phones must be using Android 7.0 as a minimum and have LTE bands 2 and 4 (again, the place you bought your phone could probably help you with this.) The Samsung Galaxy 6, 7, 8, and 9, as well as the Motorola G5, 6, and Z 2 & 3 will probably work. And all iOS models must run iOS 11 or higher. The Apple 5, 6, 7, 8 and X should also be ok. (Phones that have been designed specifically for Fi, like the Pixel 2 or 3, sold by Google, will probably give you the best experience.)

The cost for the Google Fi service is not cheap but its billing is fairly straightforward. You pay \$20 per month for unlimited talk minutes and texts, and a flat rate of \$10 per gigabyte of data used (in .1gigabyte increments) until you get to 6 Gigabytes (\$60) for the month. At that point you enter the "Bill Protection" level and effectively you have an unlimited plan for the rest of that month. That way you can use as much data as you need for the month without paying over \$80 total (\$20 base + \$60 data). Most of us would probably never get to the Bill Protection level, but if you did by accident you would be protected with this maximum expense cap. (There is another change at 15GB but most of us will probably never reach this.) With this type of billing, you don't have to pay for an "unlimited" plan every month, but you  have one for any month when it may be required. This may be interesting for frequent travelers because the Bill Protection applies to international data usage as well as data usage at home. You can also set up a Group Plan for up to six people to share a single account. With the Group Plan, each additional person is \$5 less for the base plan charge, or only \$15 per month. Billing is handled by the account owner who is charged for the total bill, though it can be set up for each individual Group member.

So now you can get your network service through

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Google Fi, which tries to give you the best experience from three networks, instead of your smartphone being married to one specific network as most phones are.Ω

Write Right

By Frank Petrie

May 2019

<https://ympnow.com>

I have been reviewing software and hardware for about two decades. Sometimes the words just flow, other times I need to pry them from my skull. In college, I had a professor who always said, 'writing is re-writing.' Too true.

He died long ago but his guideline has revisited me in the form of an incredible app, ProWritingAid. <https://prowritingaid.com/>

Good writing is about more than just grammar.

ProWritingAid is the best free writing app out there. It includes a fantastic grammar checker but also goes way beyond grammar checking to help you improve the style and clarity of your writing.

The editing tool analyzes your text and highlights a variety of key writing issues, such as overused words, sentence structure, punctuation issues, repeated phrases, consistency, dialogue, pacing and readability. It helps you learn as you edit, making you a stronger writer.

I admit to at least 70% of the infractions above (but I WILL argue over the Oxford Comma until the day I die!). Ironically, one sentence and a paragraph in the block quote above was flagged by the app.

This app is incredible. You can check your work in a multitude of ways, covering every conceivable metric. You can check it with a comprehensive summary. But you can also granularly check your grammar, your diction, look for redundancies, and clichés. There are roughly two dozen checks you can perform. For an extra fee, you can purchase different numbers of plagiarism checks (great for schoolwork).

Mercifully, it includes my dear friend the Thesaurus and even occasionally encourages me to use it (HUZZAH!). You can also set your own filters or ignore ones that they suggest.

ProWritingAid's Desktop App allows you to open, edit and save your Scrivener projects without losing formatting. It also works with other formats such as Microsoft Word, Open Office, Rich Text, HTML and Markdown.

If you're writing a short story, your blog or the great American novel, there is room for disagreement with their suggestions which is allotted. I'm a musician and composer. In the same manner as a musical composition flows, your words should have a rhythm. This is your 'voice.'

In my opinion, if you're writing a scholarly piece or business presentation, ProWritingAid is a valuable tool. Not to say your great American novel doesn't have its share of incorrect grammar, punctuation, or other literary offenses but I believe ProWritingAid is better suited for business and academia.

It is to writing what the Pomodoro method is to productivity. It enables you to focus because you feel like your boss is standing next to you making sure you get the job done. ProWritingAid took me back to middle school, writing an essay as my teacher hovered over my shoulder.

There is one function that I found absolutely fascinating: Word Explorer. Pick any word and it will present you with an endless list of options.

This app pointed out why my English grades were so pitiful. But it was a great help in improving my writing. I could still use my 'voice' but now had to justify my wording. After writing reviews for all these centuries, it was somewhat humbling.

ProWritingAid is available as part of your Setapp subscription or can be subscribed to in three plans: the Free subscription (which has limitations), the Premium Plan for US \$60 annually (fewer limitations), and the Premium+ Plan for US \$70 annually (there's 50 plagiarism checks included per year). APIs are also available for developers. That also comes at a premium, however.

And there's a trial version available. Give it a bash.Ω