

Members:

President Mike Johnson welcomed 29 members and guests to our 21 Feb 2019 meeting. We have 139 paid members. He reminded everyone to make sure that they sent in their Vista Royale proxy so the Association has a quorum and can conduct the Annual Meeting. You can also send in your ballot to vote for new board members before March 6, 2019.

He also reminded our members of our own upcoming election of officers for next year. There will be no Genealogy meeting on Wed, Feb 27.

GADGET SHOW AND TELL.

Sandy McKenny started off the Gadget Show & Tell with some of the Lab cables: USB to Ethernet and USB to Ethernet hub which are used to hook up to a network when your laptop does not have an Ethernet port. These ports are faster and more reliable than WIFI.

She then showed a couple of chargers where the USB ports are on the side making them easier behind furniture. One of her new favorites is a battery operated digital Sony recorder with case and SD card. It has a built in USB port and she uses it with a USB extension cord so it is easier to connect to the back of her laptop. When she demo'd her Targus laser pointer /mouse she reminded everyone that they should remove the batteries when not in use as corroding batteries will destroy your item.

USB Ethernet Adapter

Most new computers don't come with Ethernet adapters anymore. There are some benefits to using a Wired connection. Wired is always faster than wireless. We have USB Adapters in the lab. Although we have now added member wireless connectivity in the lab, you may still want to use wired in the lab, especially if you want to use your device in the lab on Thursday morning when the member wireless is turned off to make sure our presentations run smoothly.

USB Hubs

We talked about USB Hubs. New computers come with a very limited number of USB connectors and Power hubs are becoming more of a necessity if you have lots of USB devices. If your computer doesn't have enough USB ports, chances are it also doesn't have enough power to support extra USB ports either. Sandy had a USB hub with rocker switches to turn the individual ports on and off to address this problem. Vicky had a USB hub with its own power supply.

The USB with its own power supply has several advantages. It can be used as a stand alone USB phone charger. It can support 4 USB connections simultaneously.

Warning GEEK Speak - The BIG advantage to a USB with its own power supply is all your devices can retain their port number. If your device isn't truly PnP (Plug and Play) the devices software or driver settings may expect the device to have the same port number. Not all devices expect the same port number, but enough do to make this an issue.

When choosing a hub, go with a USB 3.0 version. The 3.0 will be fast enough to run any USB device. It will be more expensive than a USB 2.0 hub. But if it saves you buying a second hub when you find the 2.0 is not fast enough, you will be money ahead.

USB POWER BLOCKS

Not all USB power supplies are configured with the USB outlet in the same place. This can be a problem when you are using your surge protector strip. Replacement USB power blocks can be purchased in many different configurations to neaten up your work space. Just be careful to match the output specs.

Another hint, before you buy your surge protector, take a look at the orientation of the plugs. Some sport a huge number of outlets, but the spacing and orientation can severely limit the usability.

USB THUMBDRIVES

We have inexpensive thumb drives in the lab for a cost \$5.

When using a USB drive as a music source in your car, you should use a low profile version like the Sandisk Fit to keep it out of the way.

Alexa ECHO

Grace Rousseau showed her Echo, also known as 'Alexa'. When you want it to do a job for you like telling you the weather outlook for the day. She explained that the music is great and you can get it from Prime or Pandora; it can even read a kindle book to you. You can also sign someone in as a guest. If you want to use it to order merchandise, you must activate that feature. Grace likes the the great sound it offers when playing her music. She said the sound was better on her Echo than on the smaller Dot Version. She can message or call almost anyone hands-free.

The device was easy to configure, and Alexa could be renamed. She also said if you were worried about Alexa always listening, the microphones could be turned off to insure privacy

You can find lots more information here:

<https://www.amazon.com/all-new-amazon-echo-speaker-with-wifi-alexa-dark-charcoal/dp/B06XCM9LJ4>

FITBIT

Next we moved into fitness with Fitbits.

Fitbit Alta

Sandi Adams showed her wristwatch Fitbit Alta and explained that she loved getting reminded and cheered on with her exercise routine. You can find it here: <https://www.fitbit.com/alta#features>; it has a great video. The Alta has All-Day Activity; Reminders to Move; Smart Track; call, text & Calendar Alerts; clock and a Tap Display.

Fitbit Versa

That flowed right into Sandy McKenny next gadget: a Fitbit Versa wristwatch which has a much larger face.

Fitbit: <https://www.fitbit.com/versa>

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This is one place to keep track of food, water, sleep, exercise, heartbeat, etc. like all **Fitbits**.

When it is paired with your smart phone... it vibrates when you get a text or phone call and shows who it is from.

The Dashboard keeps track of and shows your steps, pulse, stairs and how you are handling your goals.

You can post the food you eat either on your laptop or phone and get the calories you have consumed.

It is water resistant, although Sandy has not worn it in the water. She did put a protective glass over the face. You can listen to free music with bluetooth ear buds.

The watch display is digital or analog and there is a timer and alarm.

It holds its charge for approximately 4 days, & charges on a small USB charging station that comes with it.

fitbit pay: you can set it up to pay for a purchase at a cash register

MOBILE HOTSPOT

Don Polifka told us about having your own portable hot spot or jet pack. Mobile hotspots use cellular data to provide internet connections. He has had one from Verizon for about 10 years and is just upgrading to a better model. Apparently it operates off cell towers so having unlimited data is best and ten devices can use it at the same time. On a boat it work out to about the ten mile limit. You can get a veteran,s discount and the battery is rechargeable. The price is contingent on whether you are a Verizon customer or not. A member said that Verizon has a plan for over 55+ and FL residents; something to consider.

Can't smart phones do that? Yes they can but not as well, and not with as many benefits.

There are a number of benefits of using a mobile hotspot.

Cost effectiveness: If expense is a concern, a mobile hotspot is a good choice because it does not come with rental fees or a contract. You can purchase a pay-as-you-go mobile hotspot that is convenient and will provide you with uninterrupted service while you roam.

Connectivity: Unlike tethering your phone, when you use a mobile hotspot you can connect as many as ten devices without it impairing your connectivity. You will also get a better connection because a mobile hotspot has a bigger antenna than your mobile phone.

Energy: Because you're not using the battery on your phone, it will keep its charge longer. When fully charged, a mobile hotspot will give you several hours of uninterrupted connectivity.

Convenience: You can keep your phone with you at all times, rather than having to leave it with your devices which need to maintain Internet connections. This means you will always be available for calls and messages even when you're online.

User-friendly: All you need to do is turn the device on and it will locate the Wi-Fi network. Simply follow the prompts and you'll be connected to the Internet within minutes.

Shareability: Your friends and family are free to use your mobile hotspot device. You can connect to game consoles, laptops, and tablets all at the same time.

Flexibility: Depending on which mobile hotspot you opt for, you may be able to choose from a number of different payment plans, so you can choose one that suits your need and your budget.

Speed: A mobile hotspot provides a much faster Internet service than you can get from tethering your phone.

NUC

Vicky showed us her NUC. NUC'S are very small light-weight computers. NUC's are kit computers for the true geek, but they can be bought already assembled with an operating installed. NUC's are more expensive than a similarly spec'd desktop tower or laptop. You have to add a screen, keyboard and mouse and speakers or headphones to the cost. In addition, while portable, these are not "mobile" so you can't haul it with you to the library, or on a trip. So who would want one? Someone who wants a very large monitor, full size keyboard, lacks the space to use a laptop.

A NUC is great for someone with more money than muscle, a 17" laptop weighs about 8 pounds without its power brick, the NUC weigh in at 1 pound 6 ounces without its power brick.

External Pioneer BluRay/DVD Writer

Most new computers don't have optical drives. The computer club has an external Pioneer BluRay/DVD writer that can be borrowed if you need load software from a CD/DVD or need to view or write a Blu Ray or DVD. This device requires 2 USB slots.

Desk with Charging station

Sandy McKenny ended the meeting with a look at the modular office equipment that she purchased online from Ballard Designs. The components come by UPS and are already assembled. She was able to unpack and place the pieces herself. One of the cabinets even has a charging station in place of one of the drawers. If you are interested, wait for a sale or free shipping. <https://www.ballarddesigns.com/>

https://www.ballarddesigns.com/furniture/home-office/collections/oho/?cm_re=Furniture+HO+Modular+LP-_-MJJ15-_-OHO

Our next meeting as usual is at 9:30 a.m. Thursday morning February 28, 2019 in the kitchen of Pine Arbor Clubhouse with Dr. Carl DiLella who is a well respected local Orthopedist with specialties in shoulders and sports medicine. Bring all your orthopedic questions with you. His portion of the program will start at 10am, but we will have some tips or information for you until he arrives from the hospital. Please bring a spouse/neighbor/friend as we would like a larger than usual audience.

Sandy McKenny, sec.

Vista Royale Computer Club, Pine Arbor Clubhouse, Vero Beach, FL 32962

Please go to our <http://www.vrcc.info/> website for archived Meeting Minutes, Calendar of Events, Genealogy Resources and more. You can also set your own computer home page to <http://www.vrcc.info/home.html> to make it match the home page on our Lab machines