

Vista Royale Computer Club Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2022

Mike Johnson opened the meeting; we have 66 members presently. Vicky Getz gave away a Roku 4 streaming device as she has upgraded.

“Computer Concierge Services in Retirement Communities”

Steve Getz talked about an article he read in the Wall Street Journal about high end retirement communities offering tech help to residents at a cost of \$12.50 to \$25.00 PER 15 MINUTES to help with the issues seniors face with tech. Compare that with the \$20 fee you pay PER YEAR to be a member of the computer club. We posted the article on the bulletin board outside the Lab if you want to read it really quickly. Really interesting.

STREAMING was presented by Vicky

Streaming Services

Watch with Cable services.

One reason to stream is to get better OnDemand content from your cable provider. Most onDemand content has been moved to streaming, and many individual channels have onDemand only through the streaming app. The apps for the channels from your cable subscription are included in your cable service at no additional cost to you.

Free Services

Another reason to stream is there are many free channels that have alternative programming with shorter commercials than standard cable channels.

Premium Services \$\$

Many people stream to get premium commercial-free bulk content (Netflix, Disney+, Apple+....)

Rent movies online \$\$\$

And still others stream to rent movies online. Renting online is still more expensive than renting a DVD from the Redbox.

Cable Replacement services \$\$\$\$

Cable is dying. In 2020 Vicky opted out of having cable service at her northern residence, because there was no major league baseball. She could stream her Florida service and combined with local over the air service had everything she wanted. When MLB finally started playing games, she tried HuLu's cable replacement package for 2 months. In 2021 she tried to sign up for cable TV again. She wanted to get AT&T U-verse to make it easier to have the same procedures north and south. She found that AT&T U-verse has not been available to new customers anywhere since March of 2020. Then she tried Xfinity (comcast), again they no longer offer traditional cable services with the set top box, they only offer streaming to new customers. Then she tried her previous cable company and again, no traditional cable was being offered to new customers, only streaming.

Streaming differs from a download, because the movie or music is played while it is being received, with a download the content is downloaded before it can be played. Because of this you need a good and steady downloading data stream.

To stream you need a subscribed speed 20 Mbs or better (a single HD stream will use about 6Mbs)

High data cap

SD 1 GB per hour
HD 3 to 5 GB per hour,

4K 20 to 30 GB per hour

Many of the condos at Vista Royale suffer from Wi-Fi congestion on the 2.4 GHz band of Wi-Fi because the signals travel so far when there are no obstructions that all of their neighbors' signals flood their condo. 5.0 GHz has a much shorter range so you will not have the same congestion issues.

Vicky subscribes to 300Mbs service here in Florida. Because of the Wi-Fi congestion her download speed on the 2.4 GHz band is considerably slower than it is on the 5GHz band.

2.4 GHz band download speed 3-10 Mbs
5.0 GHz band download speed 216-260 Mbs

You'll also need a streaming device. When choosing a streaming device, you'll want to know:

1. Does the streamer have an app for the content you want to stream?

While most of the content you want is available on all streaming devices that is not always true. Google and Amazon had a 3-year war where they wouldn't stream content from the other services on their devices. And last year Roku banned streaming from YouTube TV for 3 months until an agreement was reached.

2. Does it support 5GHz Wi-Fi, or wired Ethernet (this is an important Vista Royale consideration) If you were buying for use in a typical single-family home, this would not be an issue.
3. Does the remote have voice control for easy searching?
4. Does the remote have TV controls for power and volume.
5. Does it have an app for your smartphone to allow your phone to be used as a remote control?

Streaming devices include computers, tablets, smart phones, Blu-ray players, gaming consoles and dedicated streaming sticks.

Advancements

No matter how much you paid for your smart device, typically within 5 years there will be some changes that make it obsolete. So, at some point you will probably need a new dedicated streaming stick to replace your current streamer or to replace the smarts of your SmartTV.

Dedicated streaming sticks generally are faster and have more updates than Smart TVs, Blu-ray Players and Gaming Consoles.

Applet is overpriced at 169 to 199, it doesn't seem to offer anything that is not available in a Roku Ultra 99.

Chromecast

Amazon Fire TV stick

Roku

Vicky couldn't tell us much about the pros and cons of the Chromecast, since all the comparison articles were full of misstatements about the Roku and Firestick, she didn't want to rely on the articles she read.

Amazon has two streaming services: Prime Video and IMDB. Of the 75 different streaming services that Vicky uses, only two have lip sync issues. They are Amazon's Prime Video and IMDB. While this only affects about 25% of the Amazon content, it is a much-discussed problem in the Roku forums. Amazon also makes the Fire TV Sticks and many Smart TVs are based on the FireStick OS. Vicky purchased a FireStick hoping it might play the videos from Amazon. It didn't help. Instead of curing her lip sync problem, the problematic videos caused the Firestick to crash out of the Prime Video app.

Vicky demoed the Firestick 4K and the Roku 4K Stick. She recommended streaming the movie *The Imitation Game*, about Alan Turing the father of computer science. This is a movie that is offered on several free services including IMDB, but on IMDB it doesn't stream well. It was also offered on Tubi and Pluto. She recommends watching it on Tubi because she likes the way Tubi handles commercials. Tubi always starts out with a commercial before it plays any content, but the commercial breaks are announced in advance, are about 1 minute and 30 seconds in length, and if the commercial server isn't ready Tubi skips the commercials. Pluto starts playing the movie right away, but Pluto doesn't handle commercial breaks well. If the commercial server doesn't respond, you look at a black screen for the whole length of the commercial time, which is more annoying than the commercial itself.

FIRESTICK

FireStick Cons

Doesn't handle Amazon's apps as well as the Roku

Menu too busy for me to find the focus

Search results are Amazon-Centric

Slow to switch from one app to another.

Very slow operation from the remote and mobile remote.

No mirroring from the iPhone

No Siri support

Limited Hey Google support

Remote is shaped to work its way into couch cushions

FireStick Pros

Firesticks have an AT&T U-verse App that is not available on the Roku or Apple streaming devices. The U-verse App allows live streaming of any of the U-verse channels that have a standalone app. The advantage of that is that you only have to log in once, and it doesn't take an eternity to change to a different channel. If you have a Firestick this app is a great addition to your App library.

ROKU

Roku has 9 models but only 8 of them are suitable. Each model has different features, so the Roku can remain competitive.

Roku Ultra, retails for \$99.99 often goes on sale for as low as \$69.99 it has all the bells and whistles and is probably the best streaming device currently available.

Roku 4K Stick is a close runner up to the ultra. It retails for \$49.99 and often goes on sale for \$38.99.

AVOID the Roku Express HD model as it has no 5GHz support, no tv volume controls and no voice control.

All streaming sticks go on sale several times a year. Pick your model, and then wait for the sale.

Thanks to Vicky & Steve Getz for doing our weekly program.

This was a very comprehensive presentation on this subject and we all learned a lot. Vicky will be back next week for our next to last program of the season. The discussion will be about Windows 11 and the new software that replaces Movie Maker that we are used to using on the Lab computers after we digitize our VCR movies.

Regards, Sandy McKenny, sec.