



Computers Are Easy User Group

Abort,
Retry,
Ignore....

Founded 1984 ARI is the
Official Newsletter of
Computers Are Easy User Group

October 2022
Volume XXXVIII Issue 10

Confirmed
meeting dates

2022

October 22
December 3

Hybrid
Board Room
in person
OR Zoom

:: ::

Check
website for
dates and
meeting info

:: ::

Mailing address:

CAEUG
P.O. Box 3150
Glen Ellyn, IL
60138

:: ::

PER GLENSIDE Library (Masks are optional)

INFORMATION for Saturday October 22nd meeting

The start time in person at **Library Board Room is 9:30am** or at home **Zoom is 10:00am**. This will be a hybrid meeting.

There will be a meeting invitation e-mail Thursday evening before the Saturday meeting.

Our Presenter for Saturday will be a live presentation via Zoom by APCUG speaker Norbert (Bob) Gostischa. In keeping with **Cyber Security Month** Bob will present Cyber-safety in the digital age. in the Board Room. Update your Zoom app to the latest version.

REMINDER:

\$20.00 Membership dues for 2022 are due.

Mail dues to CAEUG, P.O. Box 3150,

Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

Table of Contents

Page

- 2 Lamp 251 by John Spizzirri
- 4 Avidemux Review by John Spizzirri
- 5 President's Corner How Reliable is Reliable Enough
by Greg Skalka
- 8 Interesting Internet Finds by Steve Costello

Join CAEUG meeting in Library or from Home,
Stay Safe! Update information on our website at

<https://www.CAEUG.net>





Lamp Post 251

October 2022

by John Spizzirri

Now that animal watching is over for the year, we can now set our sites on the sky. There is a camera at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada (**1**) pointed at the sky. At night, when the weather is clear, you can check for Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis). The last week in October the lights are quite active. Churchill is in the

Central Time zone. If you stay up really late or cannot sleep, try the Alaska Borealis cams (**2**) or Yellowknife cam in the Mountain Time zone (**3**). Another place to try offers various cams from around the world (**4**).

- 1) <https://is.gd/3RjcRQ>
- 2) <https://auroranotify.com/aurora-links/>
- 3) <https://auroramax.com/live>
- 4) <https://seetheaurora.com/webcams>

Former CAEUG President, Larry Bothe, wrote me about offers he was getting via e-mail to buy Microsoft (MS) (**1**) Office for a ridiculously low price, 2021 version for \$59 and 2019 version for \$47. He wanted to know if this offer is legitimate or is it a scam? The site making the offer is a Certified Download Center (**2**). After some investigation I found that the product keys are real, but that they may have a limited life span ((**3**), (**4**)). There is no service available. You can get no help from MS, if things go wrong. The product key may not last long. A week, a month, or 5 years, it's a crap shoot. The product key can become non-working at any time. If you can put up with the lack of service and the possibility of losing all your purchase price, it might be worth it.

- 1) <https://www.microsoft.com/>
- 2) <https://is.gd/octv5p>
- 3) <https://ofl.me/?p=33234>
- 4) <https://is.gd/AtaTbe>

Our presenter, Bob Gostischa, will be talking about Internet Safety. He is a former employee of Avast Anti-virus (**1**). If you decide to purchase Avast and have the free product already installed, you may need to uninstall (**2**) it in order to install the paid product. Bob does NOT recommend purchasing the product. He thinks the free product works just fine. If you have Norton Anti-virus (**3**) installed, you will need the Norton uninstaller (**4**). If you have a different product, check their website for an uninstall tool. As far as I know Bob has not changed his mind. He still does not recommend buying Avast Anti-virus.

- 1) <https://www.avast.com/>
- 2) <https://is.gd/tTqxi0>

3) <https://us.norton.com/>

4) <https://is.gd/sSYYZN>

In keeping with Cybersecurity Month (**1**) I found a site (**2**) that compares various security products (anti-virus, VPN, password managers, parental controls) for use on various platforms (Windows, Mac, Linux, Android, iOS, Chrome). It features news about Internet safety. It has a blog about various issues that some may find controversial. It has a vulnerability scanner, a strong password generator, anti-virus comparison tool, and a WordPress (**3**) vulnerability checker. Safety Detectives is the name of the site. They quote prices in various currencies. Various languages are available. They make their money by kick backs from companies on the site that you may click on. They have the Ultimate Internet Safety Guide for Seniors in 2022 (**4**) that even covers smishing (**5**).

1) <https://is.gd/bCSzKL>

2) <https://www.safetydetectives.com/>

3) <https://wordpress.com/>

4) <https://www.safetydetectives.com/?p=3283>

5) <https://is.gd/jLucvk>

“I have read and agree to the Terms” is the biggest lie on the web. That line is the headline on the Terms of Service Didn't Read (**1**) website. Terms of service (TOS) documents are always very long and involved with legal mumbo jumbo. TLDR (too long, didn't read) is the comment many people have for TOS documents. This website has a short and simple explanation for many website TOS documents. Insert the name of the site in the dialog box and the explanation will appear, if it is in the data base. Give it a try.

1) <https://tosdr.org/>

Spear phishing (**1**) is a focused form of phishing that is more apt to fool the unwary into responding and thus lose money or worse (identity). Yahoo Life has some tips to prevent spear phishing (**2**). Examine the e-mail address that sent the e-mail. Is it actually from the company or person on the name showing (hover over the name to see the actual address)? Call the person or company to see if the e-mail is valid, if possible. Verify facts in the e-mail from independent sources.

1) <https://is.gd/WhrWLW>

2) <https://is.gd/1UbjmQ>

If you need a portrait photograph of a person for a website or a presentation but do not want to pay a royalty, this person does not exist (**1**) is for you. The web site creates pictures of people using various tricks of artificial intelligence and existing photographs to create portraits of people that do not exist. The

portraits have no copyright. Every time you refresh the site you get a new photo.

1) <https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>

Between you, me and the LampPost, that's all for now.

Avidemux Review

By John Spizzirri

Avidemux is an ultra simple, free video editor for cutting, filtering, and encoding video files. It supports many file types, including AVI, DVD compatible MPEG files, MP4, and ASF. It allows effortless conversion between any of these file types. Tasks can be automated via projects or scripting. It is licensed under the GNU GPL. It is cross platform (meaning it runs on Windows, Mac, Linux, BSD, and OS X). The web site is here (**1**). The documentation is online here (**2**). There is a forum of users helping users available here (**3**). Downloads and screenshots are available on the web site.

To use the program, start Avidemux from the Start menu. Click the open Icon or File -> Open from the Menu and navigate to a video file that you wish to modify. It will take a few seconds to open. At the bottom left corner of the screen are the play and mark command icons. There are left and right arrows for frame by frame movement through the file. There are left and right double arrows for 10 second movement through the file. There is an 'A' button to mark the start of a segment and a 'B' button to mark the end of a segment. Once marked a segment may be saved as a file. Before saving it is a good idea to select the Output Format you wish the file to be saved in.

If you have multiple files you want to merge into one file, make sure they are all in the same format to start. Load the first file. Once loaded, use the file manager to drag and drop each file you want added to the end of the file string on top of the file display in Avidemux. When you are ready to save, select the Output Format you wish the file to be saved in and save the file to a new name.

There are ways to program scripts to do various functions automatically, if you want to get into programming. There are Youtube videos describing in detail how to do it.

You can add subtitles to commercial AVI and MP4 movies that you have downloaded from various sources such as Youtube (**4**). Downloading extensions such as Easy Youtube Video Downloader Express (**5**) allows Chrome and Firefox users to capture videos in 1080P and 720P quality MP4 files. If you have a commercial AVI or MP4 movie that you want subtitles for, there are a number of sites that have them. OpenSubtitles (**6**), Podnapisi (**7**), English Subtitles

(**8**), Subscene (**9**), YIFY Subtitles (**10**), Addic7ed (**11**), Subtitle Seeker (**12**) are just a few of the subtitle sites available. This list is not exhaustive. If you look around, you can find more.

If you want subtitles on a commercial movie that you downloaded, download the subtitle file that you think is the correct one for the file you have. Load the video into Avidemux. Set the Video Output and the Output Format. Under Video Output click the Filters button. Click Subtitles. Click SSA/ASS/SRT then Add the subtitle file you previously downloaded. It should be an SRT file extension. You will be asked to convert it to an SSA - click yes. Once that is complete, click the preview button to see if the movie and the subtitles are correct. You do not have to view the whole movie. Move to a few scenes and see if the subtitles are correct. Click save if all is well. If not try an different subtitle file from a different source. Start the process from the beginning.

There are many, many more controls and tweaks you can use to alter your videos. The product does not produce videos of the quality of paid products, but it does a respectable job and is very easy to use for simple tasks. You can make it a simple or as hard to use as you want. Have fun with it. Its worth every penny you pay for it.

- 1) <https://avidemux.sourceforge.net/>
- 2) <https://www.avidemux.org/admWiki/doku.php>
- 3) <https://www.avidemux.org/admForum/>
- 4) https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=movies
- 5) <https://www.yourvideofile.org/>
- 6) <https://www.opensubtitles.org/en/search/subs>
- 7) <https://www.podnapisi.net/>
- 8) <https://english-subtitles.org/movies-subtitles/>
- 9) <https://subscene.com/>
- 10) <https://yts-sub.com/>
- 11) <https://www.addic7ed.com/>
- 12) <https://subtitleseeker.in/>

President's Corner
How Reliable is Reliable Enough?
by Greg Skalka, President,
Under the Computer Hood User Group
www.uchug.org
president (at) uchug.org

Google defines reliability as consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted. We all want our technology to perform well, as we depend on it more and more in our lives. In placing a call, turning on our lights, driving to the store, checking our bank balance, or taking a commercial flight, we all want (and perhaps expect) 100% reliability in our experiences with technology.

Nothing can be completely dependable, however, and no matter what we expect, tech failures happen. Reliability can be regulated by government agencies, specified by standards, or simply provided “as-is” by the manufacturer. In the end, it is up to each of us to decide if the reliability levels we get meet our needs.

Most large companies now use an ISO 9000-based quality management system to demonstrate their ability to provide quality products and services that consistently meet their customer’s needs. The basics boil down to ‘say what you do’ and ‘do what you say’. Unfortunately, for the customer, the issue is often that not enough is said, and the only standard the customer has is their expectations about quality and reliability; these usually wind up being different from the vendor’s.

I have a lot of smart home devices. Many companies make and support products and systems to remotely control lights and devices in your home. You can control them remotely through an app on your smartphone or tablet, or through an Amazon Alexa or Google Home Assistant device. In addition to immediate control, your items can be programmed to turn on and off in a scheduled manner. The manufacturers portray these smart devices as simple and easy to use, so the consumer might assume they are reliable. Unfortunately, they are fairly complex and sometimes not so reliable.

I’m typically up and out of the house to work well before my wife is awake. To make my workday mornings easier (and safer, especially in the darker mornings of winter), I program lights downstairs to come on just before I would come out of our bedroom. This gives me a little bit of light to help me see when going down the stairs before dawn. I use a Belkin Wemo smart plug, with a family room lamp plugged into it, to give me some of that light. I’ve programmed the ON time in the Wemo app so that at my selected time the Belkin servers send a message over the internet and through my Wi-Fi to the smart plug to turn on. Once I get downstairs, I turn the light off manually with our Amazon Echo Show as quietly as possible, using the screen icons rather than voice control. In this case, the OFF command is sent from my Show over the internet to Amazon’s servers, and then passed to the Belkin servers and back over the internet to my Wemo smart plug.

This seems like a lot of complex communications, but it has worked very reliably over the four months since I set this up. Last week, however, it didn’t do so well, failing to turn off correctly on two different days. On the first day, Alexa could not turn the light off; I had to go into the Wemo app to do it. On another day, even the Wemo app could not turn the light off, as the smart plug appeared as inactive in the app. I finally had to resort to pressing the button on the smart plug to shut it off. In both cases, everything worked fine again after a short time. I was happy to see it working, but was reminded of the engineering saying “Problems that go away by themselves can come back by themselves.”

Though I was not happy that the smart plug worked unreliably those two days, was there anyone I could blame? Perhaps not, as Belkin and Amazon had said I could control my light in this way, but they didn't say it was guaranteed to work 100% of the time. That it had worked reliably all but two days in four months is in reality pretty good, considering the plug cost only \$20 (and the Echo Show cost \$50).

This brings up one key factor in the reliability equation: high reliability generally costs more. The successful landing of the NASA Perseverance Mars rover last week was a tremendous technical achievement, but it came at a cost of around \$2.5 billion. That kind of money can buy a lot of reliability, however. The NASA Opportunity rover, launched in 2003, cost \$400 million and had a planned mission duration on Mars of around 90 days, yet it continued exploring and communicating until 2018. NASA's Curiosity rover has been operating on Mars for the last 8.5 years, far exceeding its original 2-year mission life. Hopefully, Perseverance can demonstrate a similarly high level of reliability.

Money can't buy total reliability, however. Since its inception in 1958, NASA has spent over \$650 billion (perhaps \$1.2 trillion after inflation). It has had many great successes, putting 12 men on the moon, exploring all our system's planets with robotic probes, and currently has put five rovers successfully on Mars. It has had some tremendous reliability successes, such as the Voyager 1 and 2 probes that are still providing communications as they leave our solar system. It has also endured tragic failures, the worst of which are the losses of crews of the Space Shuttles Challenger and Columbia, and Apollo 1.

Not everything needs to be as reliable as a spacecraft, but many things, especially where failure would involve loss of life or a high economic loss, require high reliability. Structural items such as buildings, bridges, and tunnels, and transportation items like aircraft, trains, ships, and cars, all need higher safety and reliability standards. You may sit in both, but you justifiably have greater concerns and expectations about safety and reliability for your automobile than for your La-Z-Boy recliner.

One way to mitigate risks when reliability and safety are not deemed sufficient is through back-up systems. Hospitals may add back-up power generators to compensate for a power grid that is not totally reliable. There probably are measures that should have been taken (and now likely will) to harden the Texas power grid against the extreme cold weather it experienced recently.

Our computers hold information internally in rotating magnetic platter hard drives and SSDs, but these are not immune to failure, so prudent users back up that information. Automobile tires can fail for a variety of reasons, so automakers offer several back-up systems, including a spare tire and changing tools, puncture sealant, and run-flat tires. Tire pressure monitoring systems are

now required for all automobiles, as a safety backup.

We have continued to add safety features to motor vehicles over the years to reduce the number and severity of accidents. Safety glass, power steering and brakes, seat belts, airbags, energy-absorbing bumpers, and rear back-up cameras all add safety to cars through technology. Despite these enhancements, however, over 16500 Americans died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2020. Now automakers are looking to add self-driving technology to our highways; will it be safe and reliable enough?

Sometimes reliability is not as important as other factors, such as cost or convenience. Often new technologies are not as reliable initially, but in time may improve (or wind up being shunned by consumers). I like my Amazon Alexa devices, but I don't always get the responses I expect. Considering the complexity of the system, low cost to me and less than a critical need for the information, a less than perfect performance is acceptable. Alexa may not always provide the information I'm looking for, but I'm easily able to recognize this and so am not really harmed by her "incompetence".

Some kinds of unreliability are more acceptable than are others. If your smart home lock is unreliable, it might be better if it occasionally fails to unlock when you get home, rather than sometimes not locking when you leave. It is the same with computer security; it is better to err on the side of being too restrictive than too permissive. Users can put up with only so much in unreliable access, however. New technologies such as fingerprint scanning and facial recognition for login, though more convenient than passwords, won't gain wide acceptance if valid users are not reliably recognized. If the convenience difference is great enough, however, users might be willing to accept having to scan multiple times for access.

Reliability in our technology is important, but the need for it varies with the product and the potential downsides. Our sensitivity to quality issues should be greater for a Boeing 737 MAX airplane than for a wireless router. We as individuals and as a society will have to weigh the cost, quality, and risk trade-offs to determine in each case how much reliability is enough.

Interesting Internet Finds

December 2021

By Steve Costello

scostello AT sefcug.com

While going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might interest other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during November 2021.

How To Disable The Smart Compose Feature In Gmail

<https://techviral.net/disable-smart-compose-gmail/>

I keep the Smart Compose feature turned off because I distrust the AI figuring out what I want to say. So if you have not turned this feature off in your Gmail, I suggest you do it now.

Is Charging Your Phone Overnight A Bad Idea?

<https://www.online-tech-tips.com/smartphones/is-charging-your-phone-overnight-a-bad-idea/>

This question pops up from time to time. The people at Online Tech Tips answer this and some other questions regarding battery charging.

HTTPS vs. VPN: 5 Reasons You Do Need Both

<https://www.makeuseof.com/https-vs-vpn-reasons-you-do-need-both/>

If you don't have a VPN, always use HTTPS. However, if you have a VPN, this post explores why using both is a good idea. (Note: I always use both when I am away from my home network. Sometimes, I even use both, especially with banking and shopping sites.)

Five Simple Rules For Spotting A Scam

<https://cynmackley.com/2021/11/22/five-simple-rules-for-spotting-a-scam/>

I am sure you keep hearing about scams; I know I do all the time. This post has some simple and easily remembered tips for spotting scams. Check this post out.

How Using BCC Reduces Spam

<https://askleo.com/bcc-reduces-spam/>

Everyone should know this already, but I still get things from others who don't know or don't care. (Note: As a former user group officer and newsletter editor, I learned to use BCC early on, and I think everyone should too. If I see multiple recipients in an email, I flag future emails from that sender to go to a specific folder and email the sender back requesting that they use BCC in the future.)

The 6 VPN Features That Matter Most

<https://www.howtogeek.com/758704/the-6-vpn-features-that-matter-most/>

If you are in the market for a VPN, check out this post to see what features you should be looking to have.

My Debit Card Was Hacked

<https://firewallsdontstopdragons.com/my-debit-card-was-hacked/>

In this post, the author explains how his debit card was hacked and provides some advice gathered from the experience.

This work by Steve Costello is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

As long as you attribute this article, you can use it in part, or whole, for your newsletter, website, or blog.

About DVD of the Month

Unfortunately, the DVD of the Month is no longer creating an income center for the club. August 2022 will be the last issue of the DVD. Starting in September, I will feature a review of a freeware program in the ARI... Some of these programs may be elaborate and complicated others may be very simple. I may include screen shots if that can be accommodated.

The Glenside Public Library address is at 25 E Fullerton Avenue, Glendale Heights, Illinois. The meeting(s) are not library sponsored. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this program and who require certain accommodations in order to observe and / or participate in the program are requested to contact CAEUG president, at least five (5) days prior to the program, so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

Members Helpline

Any member can volunteer to be on the Members Helpline.
Hardware problems, Win 7, Win 10, Linux and Virus Removal
- John Spizzirri

CAEUG OFFICERS

President	Carl Wallin
V.P. (Programs)	Roger Kinzie
Secretary	Position OPEN
Treasurer	Kathy Groce
Newsletter	Kathy Groce
Board Member	Frank Braman
Board Member	Joanne Beauregard
Webmaster	John Spizzirri
	webmaster(at)caeug.net