

The

Computer Link

July 2011

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

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for **NEXT ISSUE**,
One week after meeting

Internet Radio

Steve Nelson of WIGO-FM spoke to the NNCUG about **Internet Radio**.

If one has **Wi-Fi access, a router, and an Internet radio** one can listen to stations from all over the world. **Using Windows Media Guide** one can

identify many sources. The connection to these stations does not require a computer. Steve brought a radio to the presentation, and it was the size of an average portable radio.

One can be **purchased for \$100.00 and up**. These radios are not found in most stores; however, there are vendors online. An example is C-Crane

(www.ccrane.com). Either a radio with a built in speaker or a radio tuner/receiver that uses separate speakers can be purchased. It is important that the Internet connection be high enough speed to listen to a streamed signal. **Dial up Inter-**

net connections are not sufficient. To receive a particular station, it must offer streamed radio. There are **thousands of streaming radio stations throughout the world**, but WIGO does not stream. It has a very nice web site at www.middlenecknews.com.



Steve Nelson

Photo by Chris Christensen

How to know **which streaming radio stations are available? The Windows Media Guide** offers different ways to narrow the choice, e.g., search by genre, station call letters, or location. **Pandora Radio** allows one to “create” a radio station stream of music that is similar to a selection that the listener chooses.

Steve indicated that it is **not possible to set up an Internet radio in a car**. There are problems with reception. For instance, Sirius radio has some dead spots in this area, static

interference from power lines is common, and there is no fix.

Unfortunately, the Wi-Fi connection in the meeting room was not working, so Steve was unable to give us a live demonstration. This gave him some time to ad-lib regarding the history of radio broadcasts, pirate radio stations, discussion of problem reception spots on the Northern Neck, and a humorous overview of these subjects.

For example, Steve described his first meeting with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). He started his disk jockey career as a kid with a Revco AM transmitter that he hooded up to a larger antenna that allowed the signal to cover an area about the size of a block. He and the FCC had a conversation!

Steve, thank you for talking with us about a lesser-known use of Wi-Fi and the Internet!

Anne Moss

Genealogy SIG Meeting

The Computer Genealogy Group will meet at Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury on Thursday, **July 14 at 1 PM**. Those attending will have the opportunity to hear two **speakers from the Historic Christ Church** describing aspects of **computer technology** at the Church.

Robert Teagle, Education Director, will speak on the gallery interactive computer stations (computers in the museum) and computer upgrades and networking at HCC.

Robert Lumsden, Chair - Research Committee, will speak on the Robert Carter Descendants Database, and the change over from Family Tree Maker 2006 to 2011. For those who have upgraded and those who are considering it, this will be an excellent opportunity to see what is new.

Ann Thompson

Cloud Computing

By Dick Maybach

n2nd (at) charter.net

Although you can hardly pick up a computer publication without being assaulted by references to **cloud computing**, the term has been abducted by marketing organizations to the extent that it means almost nothing. Today, "cloud" is to computing as "natural" is to food. Although the term means little, the **concept is very valuable**, and is something that most computer owners use every day. I **define cloud computing as using storage or processing resources on the Internet**. Most of us already use cloud computing far more than we realize; for example, every e-mail we receive sits on our ISP's disk until we download it to our PCs, and when we use Google Maps, much the processing and all of the storage occurs on Google's hardware. In the extreme, cloud computing could evolve to the point where our computer would consist of only a keyboard, mouse, display, and perhaps a printer, with just enough processing power and software to support a Web browser. Google foresaw this as the future of home computing and began developing their Chrome operating system to support it.

A **simple example** of cloud computing is a **backup service**, which continually backs up all your data whenever you are connected to the Internet. You don't have to think about it, and because your backups are stored at a different location, they are safe even in case of a local catastrophe. A similar use is synchronizing data among several computers, where the data might be files, contacts, and your favorite Web sites and (with care) their passwords. Many people also use the cloud to share information with others, for example by using Facebook for personal information, Flickr for photos, or Google Docs for documents. Cloud storage is both convenient and inexpensive; indeed, many vendors offer up to two gigabytes free.

All the above examples are data storage

ones, but there are also cloud processing services, such as Google Docs. Google Docs supports the common office tasks such as word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations, which means you can perform these without purchasing an office suite and having to keep it updated. It also allows on-line collaboration (where, for example, several people edit the same document), although few home users are likely to need this feature. **Like cloud storage, cloud processing is inexpensive or even free.**

By now, you may be thinking, **“What's the Catch?”** Somebody has to pay for these services, as providing them requires non-trivial costs for computer hardware, support staff, and communications. In some cases, the free service is a limited sample to entice you to purchase a more versatile one. In others, you are the product being sold. Your habits and preferences are valuable commodities that advertisers will pay to learn about. For many of us this is a fair trade; in return for the convenience of Google's search engine, we tolerate the ads in the sidebar and being directed to sites that want to sell to us.

However, there are some **security and safety caveats** involved. **Security is complex for a cloud vendor**; your data are stored on the same disks, the same memory, and pass through the same processors as everybody else's. The process is much like what happens in a commercial laundry or dry cleaner, where everybody's clothes are tagged and thrown together into a large machine. Afterwards, somebody looks at the tags to get them back to their proper owners. Contrast this to a bank deposit vault, where only your key can open the box where you place your documents. Even at such competent vendors as Google, there have

been instances of data leaking from one customer to another, and many cloud vendors are start-ups who have much less expertise than Google. This means that you should take responsibility for safeguarding your data. For example, if you back up your disk in the cloud, encrypt any files (such as those containing passwords or on-line banking data) that present security risks. I store my passwords using KeePassX, <http://www.KEEPASSX.org/>. Its file is always encrypted on your PC's disk, and you can safely back it up anywhere. I also use Gnu Privacy Guard (gpg), <http://www.gnupg.org/>, to encrypt files and e-mail. (Both of these programs are available for the Windows, Mac, and Linux platforms.) By the way, when you encrypt a file, be sure that only the encrypted version is ever placed in a directory that is backed up in the cloud.

Safety also is not trivial. Vendors do go out of business and, even if they keep operating, they may find that providing cloud services isn't profitable. Not all of them back up their storage, which means that their hardware failures and software bugs can destroy your data. If you use the service for back-up or synchronization, this isn't a problem because the chances of simultaneous failures in the cloud and on your PC is negligible. However, if you store your only copy of your photograph or music collection in the cloud, you are risking disaster. In the case of cloud processing, you should also be concerned about the format in which your data is stored. It does little good to download the file containing your novel if it's stored in a format that only the (now out of business cloud vendor) could read.

Finally, **cloud computing is new, so you should expect some glitches.**

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NNCUG Honors 50th Anniversary of the Lancaster Library.

In honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Lancaster Community Library (LCL), the NNCUG Board authorized the **donation of a large wall mounted projector screen** to the Library. Over the years, the LCL has been very supportive of the NNCUG. In the past, Membership Meetings were held in the Conference Room, and the Photo SIG continues to use the facility. The Board wanted to express its appreciation for use of the Library, and to recognize the contributions that the LCL has made to the greater community.

There has been an ongoing discussion over the years about the need for a projection screen in the Conference Room of the LCL. Many users of the facility, the Photo SIG, and the Library itself have recognized the need for a better viewing environment than the current one of simply projecting images onto the walls of the Conference Room. One key issue that has always surfaced is what type of projection screen system could be installed in the facility. It was thought that a true projection screen could not be mounted for a variety of reasons.

The **Board asked Bruce Mc Millan to research screens** that could be painted onto a wall of the LCL Conference Room. He carefully examined the available space in the Conference Room, as well as the projection equipment currently owned by the LCL and the NNCUG. Then Bruce reviewed quality and “value based” painted projection screen systems. He found that they required a great deal of skillful surface preparation and care in applying the special paints to achieve good results. In doing this research, Bruce met a professional installer of projection screens for a school system in the Middle Peninsula. The installer made several suggestions, and Bruce then more closely examined the feasibility of installing a projection screen system in the LCL Conference Room. Finally, it became apparent that a screen would be most useful in two locations in the

Conference Room, and that long term plans for the Library may require removal of any screen to a new facility.

The **Board accepted Bruce’s recommendation to donate a retractable wall projection screen system** with mounting hardware on two separate walls to allow for flexibility of use in the LCL Conference Room. The screen is a **Da-Lite brand that is 60 inches high by 84 inches wide** and 100 inches on the diagonal measurement. This is the largest screen that could be used with the current fixtures in the facility.

President **Chris Christensen**, Vice President **Brian Riley**, and Bruce **met with Lindsay Gardner**, Director of the LCL, to ensure that our proposed gift would meet the needs of the Library. She was most appreciative of the support shown by the NNCUG!

George vanZant, who is both a **member of the LCL Board and NNCUG**, reported that the Board was most impressed with the generosity of the gift.

Thanks to the LCL for its 50 years of support to the community and to the NNCUG!

Ed.

E-Books

Curious or confused about the many devices used to read e-books?

Then come to the **July 16th NNCUG Membership Meeting** at the Rappahannock Westminister-Canterbury Auditorium.

Lindsay Gardner, Director of the Lancaster Community Library (LCL), will **discuss** these devices, the various formats that are available for **e-books**, and where to obtain e-books, including **the LCL lending program**. Coffee and donuts will be available at 09:30 a.m., with the meeting beginning at 10:00.

Brian Riley

June 18 MEETING Notes

MEMBERS ATTENDING: 25.

TREASURER'S REPORT: 112 members.
Treasury Balance: \$3953.82.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: **Chris Christensen** reported that he, **Brian Riley**, and **Bruce Mc Millan met with Lindsay Gardner**, Director, Lancaster Community Library (LCL), to present **NNCUG's planned gift of a large pull down projection screen** for the Library in honor of the LCLs 50th Anniversary.

SIG REPORTS:

PHOTOGRAPHY: **Jim Sapione** encouraged all who are interested to attend. The group meets on the **second Tuesday of the month from 9:30 to 12** at the Lancaster Community Library in Kilmarnock. Bring a laptop or a flash ("thumb") drive with your photos on the assigned topic. The group is testing different formats for the meeting; under consideration are field trips and reviving photo contests.

GENEALOGY: The Genealogy SIG will meet on Thursday, July 14, 1:00 p.m., at Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury. The subject is "Computer Technology Usage at Historic Christ Church".

Q and A: A member is experiencing a problem that when he is online (ISP is Kaballero) and goes to Internet Explorer, it defaults to work offline. When he clicks off IE, Kaballero turns off. Possible solutions were to check proxy settings, go to another browser (although this may happen anyway), or may have to reset manually. It was brought up that the **AVG anti-virus program**, free version, will scan a computer, provide a list of problems, and do a one time clean up for free. Another question pertained to losing the Internet Explorer icon when updating from version 7 to version 8. When Internet Explorer does an update, it does not always create a new icon; create a shortcut and if needed, move to desktop. A free program called **Solutio** (currently in beta) was recommended to determine what programs are being loaded on computer boot up, and which are necessary upon booting up, or can be delayed or paused. A program named **Secu-**

nia was also mentioned which will **analyze drivers and security aspects** of programs to determine if they are up to date. Drivers are constantly changing, especially printers and cameras.

SPEAKER: Steve Nelson of WIGO-FM spoke about Internet radio.

RAFFLE WINNERS: Roger Fortin – San Disk 16GB flash drive; Anne Moss – Office 2010 for Dummies manual; and George Cadmus – Sharper Image Internet weather station.

Anne Moss, Secretary

Membership Report - June 2011

Welcome - None

RENEW July 2011 - Norm Farley, John Hess, Bev Thompson, Margaret Welch

RENEW June 2011 - Carolyn Bridgers, Alan Christensen, Chris Christensen, Richard Davis, David Herndon, Ann Thompson, Steve Zukor

Membership dues are \$20 annually. Please send to:
George Cadmus, Treasurer, NNCUG, 150 Pine Drive,
White Stone VA 22578

The Computer Link

Northern Neck
Computer
Users' Group
150 Pine Drive
White Stone, VA 22578

NNCUG Meeting Dates

NNCUG GENERAL MEETING
Third Saturday, 10:00 a.m.

Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room

BEGINNERS SIG

*Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666*

GENEALOGY SIG

*Meets bi-monthly, 2nd Thursday, 1:00 p.m.—RW-C
Contact Ann Thompson at athompson@kaballero.com
to get on the mail list for announcements.*

PHOTOSHOP SIG

*Second Tuesday, every month, 9:30 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831
or message Bird@kaballero.com*



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Coming Attractions

*Membership - July 16, Lindsay Gardner, E-Books
Genealogy - July 14, Computers at Historic Christ Church
Photo SIG - July 12, 09:30 am, Lancaster Community Library*