Bits & Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

August 2018

Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd Suite 208 (lower level), Bella Vista, AR 72715

Website: http://www.BVCompClub.org Email: editor@bvcompclub.org

HOW TO FIND US

All meetings are on the lower level of the Highlands Crossing Center in Bella Vista. You may use entrance A on the West side or entrance C on the South side and take the elevator or stairs to the lower level. Turn left (West) to reach the General Meeting room, right for the John Ruehle Training Center. Additional information is on our web site.

MEETINGS

Board Meeting: August 13, 6:00 pm, John Ruehle Training Center

General Meeting: August 13 (2nd Monday), 7:00 pm, Community Room 1001.
Program: "Panel of Experts Q & A", with Justin Sell and Woody Ogden. **If you already know your question, email it to Q.and.A@bvcompclub.org .**

Bring a guest! New Members and Guests are always welcome at the General Meeting

Genealogy SIG: August 18 (3rd Saturday), 10 am – noon, John Ruehle Training Center

HELP CLINICS

Saturday, August 4, 9am – noon
Wednesday, August 15, 9am – noon
Saturday, September 1, 9am – noon

Help clinics are a free service held in the Training Center for BVCC club members

Bring your tower, laptop, tablet or smartphone for problem solving.

CLASSES

"Computer Security for Regular People, Part 1" – Justin Sell, 1.5 hrs
Tuesday, August 7, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Part 2 will be offered on Tuesday, September 4th.

"Microsoft Excel", Joel Ewing, 4 hrs
Thursday, August 16
Part 1, 9am – 11am; Part 2, 1pm - 3pm

Pre-registration for classes required: call/text Joel at (479)831-5748, email to edu@bvcompclub.org or sign up at the General Meeting on July 9. Classes are **free to Computer Club members** and are at our John Ruehle Training Center. **Check the monthly calendar and announcements for any last minute schedule changes at http://bvcompclub.org .**

MEMBERSHIP

Single membership is $20; $10 for each additional family member. Join by mailing an application (from the web site) with check, or complete an application and pay at a meeting. **With free access to Help Clinics and classes, BVCC membership is a real bargain.**

Check your Membership Card to see if it is renewal time. We value each one of you.

RECYCLE CENTER HELP WANTED

The BVCC needs your help. If you have an hour or more of time you can give to the Bella Vista Recycling Center, they need greeters to assist people dropping off their recyclables. Our income is derived from dues and from grants from the Recycling Center based on hours donated and credited to BVCC.

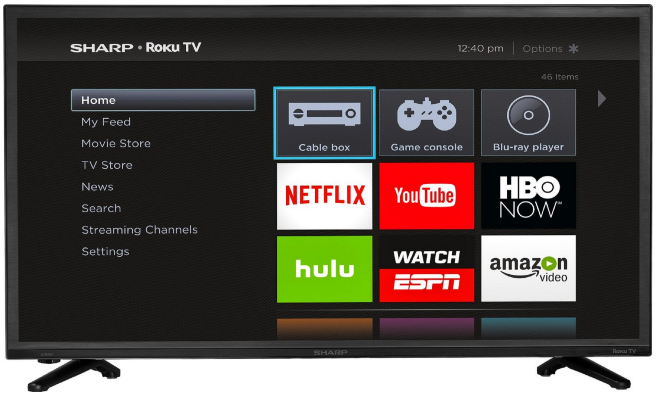
AUGUST ELECTION CANDIDATES

At the August 13 meeting we will vote for four officers and one Board member whose terms will start in September. Officers serve for a term of one year, and Board Members serve for two-years with overlapping terms.

At this point the Nominating Committee has been able to confirm the following candidates:
President: Joel Ewing
Vice President: Woody Ogden
Secretary: Kathy Fourt
Treasurer: Barbara Maybury
Board Member: Barry Andrews

Please give serious consideration to volunteering to participate in leadership positions to keep BVCC a viable organization.

SEPTEMBER RAFFLE FOR SHARP ROKU 32" TV



As part of the September 10 General Meeting we will hold a fund raising raffle for the TV that was used for the July program presentation. This is a 32" Sharp Roku TV, model LC-32LB591U, that is compatible with cable, Internet streaming, and over-the-air antennas. Raffle tickets may be purchased at the meeting at 1 for $1 or 6 for $5. You must be present and a member of BVCC to win. More details may be found at www.sharptvusa.com/tvs/hd/lc-32lb591u

Some Internet streaming channels are free. Others require a subscription to access content. There is also a free Roku mobile app for IOS (iPhone/iPad/Mac) and Android, which is supposed to provide more remote features and also support casting data from your mobile device to the TV.

I AM NOT A ROBOT

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA
President's Corner, May 2018 issue, Drive Light
www.uchug.org
president (at) uchug.org

You've seen the wavy, distorted text to translate on log-in pages on the web. You've had to match images to words to be allowed to buy concert tickets. You've even had to check a box that says "I am not a robot" to sign up for a web service. What's going on here? Why must we be inconvenienced? Are robots taking over the world?

The problem is not with robots, at least in the traditional sense. Robots are machines that can perform a complex series of actions, under computer or program control. These include industrial machines, military UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) and the Roomba cleaning your floor. Google is not trying to keep C-3PO from signing up for a Gmail account.

A computer running a program could also be considered a kind of robot, as it is a machine performing an action. An ATM machine is a kind of robot, programmed to provide you with cash (if you have money in your account). Programs that catalog the web could be considered robots. These kinds of robotic programs can help us find things. Unfortunately, there are more unsavory applications for these web robots, like spreading spam and capturing user information. If there is a limited amount of something desirable for sale on the web, a program could be written to go out on the web and buy up all of it the instant it goes on sale - concert tickets, for instance. It is not the poor robot program that is at fault, but the bad people behind its actions.

To prevent these misdirected online bots from buying all the tickets, spamming all the blogs and signing up for all the email addresses, tests were developed to try to filter out the bots and only let real humans sign up on web pages. Initial tests used CAPTCHA codes; CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing[1] test to tell Computers and Humans Apart. These tests involved things that humans should be able to do, like recognize numbers and letters that appear melted, but that are difficult for machines or programs to understand and complete. After going through several different types of these tests to defeat ever-smarter AI (artificial intelligence) web bots, Google has gone to a test where the way you click on a box that indicates "I am not a robot" can reveal your humanity.

This may help protect your opportunity to go to Comic-Con, but it does nothing to stop the proliferation of robots in our society. The capabilities and uses of robotic devices and their programs keep increasing as advancements are made in AI. Robots are just like any other technology we use; they can have benefits and drawbacks.

Like recognizing melted letters, it is commonly thought that there are things that only humans can do. These things usually involve creativity, like writing a novel or painting a masterpiece. Computers may be able to quickly make decisions and complete calculations but lack an aesthetic sense and artistic capability. As processing power, memory capacity and algorithm sophistication all increase, computers will get better at these things as well.

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1 "Turing Test" comes from English Computer Scientist Alan Turing (1912-1954), who proposed in 1950 that a machine might be considered to exhibit "intelligent behavior" when a human evaluator could not distinguish between the machine and another human through a text-only, natural language conversation This term is now frequently used for any test to distinguish machines from humans. [B&B Editor].

I would have loved to have a robot writer to write my newsletter column this month, as I started on this article way past my normal deadline. There now are news-writing bots that can quickly create basic stories for newspapers and magazines, using AI. While a great tool for journalists, some are concerned it could also be their replacement. Computers and AI are making inroads in other fields, such as law, where they are increasingly used to sift through documents for passages relevant to their casework. Computers are even using AI to claim some of that creativity that humans hold dear; there are programs that claim to create art, compose music and write novels.

Are we ready to accept more robots into our workplaces and our lives? The robots referenced in our popular culture are mostly the same - usually somewhat humanoid in configuration, often good, sometimes evil. Gort from the film The Day the Earth Stood Still, Robby the Robot from the 1956 film Forbidden Planet, the Robot from Lost in Space, the droids C-3PO and R2-D2 from Star Wars and the Terminator robots have all shaped our perception of what a robot is. Yet we now have many robots among us, and few have a humanoid appearance.

AI has helped computers beat humans at their own games. Watson, the IBM computer that competed and won against human contestants on the TV quiz show Jeopardy, is now being used to improve healthcare delivery and weather forecasting, among other things. Deep Blue was an IBM chess-playing computer that beat a reigning world champion human. AlphaGo, a program using Google's DeepMind AI, was able to beat top-ranked human players.

Other robots use AI to navigate, build and answer our questions. Self-driving cars are in development and testing by many companies. If successful and accepted by consumers, they will be a transforming technology in our society. They promise to reduce traffic, free up our time spent traveling, increase road safety and provide transportation for those that cannot drive. They may greatly change our driving-oriented car culture and affect our lives in ways we cannot anticipate. Robotic trucks are also under development, with the goal to make shipping safer and less expensive.

We already have UAVs and drones, many of which can take off, fly and land under computer control. Our robotic space probes have surveyed all the planets and even left the solar system. Our robotic rovers continue to drive around on Mars, helping us explore and learn about our neighboring planet. Back on Earth, robots help us build cars in our factories. Our Roombas sweep and mop our floors. Voice operated assistants like Amazon's Echo and Google's Home Assistant provide support in our lives.

All these robots touch our lives every day in positive ways. Perhaps we should not be so ready to segregate into us and them. Just as John F. Kennedy expressed solidarity with the citizens of West Berlin in his 1963 speech, saying "Ich bin ein Berliner", perhaps we should be saying
49 20 61 6D 20 61 20 72 6F 62 6F 74
(Translation from ASCII Hexadecimal: I am a robot.)

[Typical robots roaming the Internet have only very modest AI capabilities, but AI is getting closer to true autonomous vehicles and even partially autonomous weapons. Science Fiction writers and many serious scientists have long cautioned of serious moral issues and risks that must be considered and addressed before fully autonomous AI devices are, if ever, put in control of lethal force. Although transportation vehicles are not designed as a weapon, they are capable of lethal force and have even been used as weapons; so we are not that far from a time when these issues may need to be addressed. B&B Editor]