Our Club

RCSI is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) group open for membership to anyone interested in computers and new technology. Established in 1981, our aim is to provide an exchange of information between users of digital devices. We are not in any way affiliated with any computer manufacturer or software company, and *we do not sell your data or email address*.

Program Meetings

No admission fee for non-members. Everyone is welcome! Second Tuesday of every month, except September, from 6:30pm – 8:30pm.

Help's Half Hour (Q & A) 6:30pm – 7:00pm. *Members and Guests are welcome to attend and bring their computer related questions with them to get answered*.

7:00 – 7:15, Club Business

7:15 – 8:30+, Main Presentation

Come and join in the fun and enjoy a snack! **You are welcome to bring a guest**.

Become a Member

The club would like to have you as a member, and your subscription will help to keep us going. Go to our website, www.rcsi.org, and download a printed form for use by the Post Office mail, **or** enter your info online and pay with a credit card or PayPal, **or** attend a meeting.

The Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

a computer/tech club open to everyone

M NIT R

**March 8, 'Take Control of Your Passwords'
by Joe Kissel via remote location**

**April 12, 'Emerging Technologies'
videos presented by Tony Dellelo**

In This Issue

TEMPORARY, NEW MEETING PLACE, details inside

Don't Open This Package!

By Cyn Mackley

Photo by Anna Tarazevich

Cybercriminals are sending USB devices loaded with dangerous BadUSB ransomware that can infect systems. According to the FBI, "Since August 2021, the FBI has received

"Your Computer User Group of the Air", Saturdays from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm, with Nick Francesco, Dave Enright, and Steve Rae. Broadcasting on JAZZ 90.1 FM (WGMC) from Rochester, NY. Call 966-JAZZ (585-966-5299) or 800-790-0415, **www.jazz901.org** *Sound Bytes is the longest running computer call-in show in the known universe.*

We have stopped printing the Monitor newsletter. Digital copies can be emailed or obtained from **www.rcsi.org** or my **Pcloud** storage at **https://tinyurl.com/tonydel-rcsi** (*this link works in PDF version only*). Also includes presentation slides and articles too large for this newsletter.

Some Past Presentations:
The New Space Race, 2021
Tech of South America
Autonomous Cars and Robots
Open Source and Free Software
Protecting Your Identity
Tablets, the Programs and Uses
Personal Finance Software
Amazing Browser Tips
Linux is Like Cars
Drones and Their Many Uses
Gifts and Gadgets for the Holidays
Cut the Cord, Streaming Services
Keeping Mobile Devices Secure
3D Printing, ENABLE project
Internet Security and Privacy
Flash Drives-Not Just for Storage
Features, Mac OS X & Windows

reports of several packages containing these USB devices, sent to US businesses in the transportation, insurance, and defense industries."

These packages have arrived via both UPS and the Postal Service. There are two versions of the scam. One claims to be from the US Department of Health and Human Services and comes with a letter claiming the USB device contains important new COVID guidelines.

Another version masquerades as an Amazon delivery and comes in a decorative gift box along with a thank-you letter. According to the FBI, both contain LilyGo USB devices. Some contain ransomware, other thumb drives trick your computer into thinking they're a keyboard and command it to download malware that gives attackers access to your computer.

As always, be very suspicious when things you haven't ordered show up. Just as you wouldn't click on a strange link, don't connect an unknown USB device to your computer.

Reprinted from https://cynmackley.com/2022/01/15/dont-open-this-package/.

Why Your "Unimportant" Accounts Matter
Even the unimportant ones can cause you problems.
by Leo Notenboom, https://askleo.com/
Making Technology Work For Everyone
Regardless of your initial thoughts, every account is important, and we are all targets.

One of the pushbacks I get when I reiterate the importance of securing your online accounts relates to accounts you might consider "unimportant". You may feel that extra security measures are more hassle than they're worth. As a result, you might use a poor password, re-use a password, or fail to set up recovery mechanisms.

My concern is twofold. First, accounts often become more important over time. Second, a breach of even a so-called "unimportant" account can still cause you massive headaches.

Unimportant accounts do matter
Regardless of what you may believe, your accounts — all of them — are targets for hackers. Even if you think you have nothing a hacker would want, you do. Recovery from an account hack, even for an "unimportant" one, can be more painful than expected. There's no reason not to secure all your accounts properly from the start.

Let me debunk the most common reasons I hear for downgrading the risk of even "unimportant" accounts being hacked.

"I'm not a target, I have no money."
To put it bluntly, this is flat-out wrong. First, hackers won't know you have no money until *after* you've been hacked! Second, be it your bank, PayPal, credit card, or other financial accounts — *every account is a*

target. Even if you have no money and no credit, hackers can use your accounts to perpetrate fraud, credit scams, and more, all in your name. If that happens, you may not find out until it's much too late, leaving you with a mess to clean up.

The same is true for shopping accounts. Even without money or an associated payment method "on file", scammers can still cause you grief by using those accounts for various forms of fraud and mayhem.

Your accounts are valuable to scammers for a variety of reasons, all of which will impact you negatively should the worst happen.

"I don't use this account for anything important."
You might think this about a secondary email account set up to stem the flow of marketing or spam headed to your primary, private account.

Once again, it doesn't matter what you use the account for; spammers want it. They want access to your contacts so their spam and scams are more likely to be opened by the people who know and trust you. If you're using this as an alternate email account, they want access so they can compromise your primary one.

Once your email account — any email account — is compromised and spammers get hold, it's *your* reputation taking the hit and it's *your* mess to clean up.

You may think, "If it's ever compromised, I'll just walk away from it." Good luck with that. It's a good bet you have, in fact, used this "unimportant" account for something you'd want to keep. You won't realize it until it's much too late. It's a story I hear often enough.

Importance grows over time
It's possible your account truly is unimportant at first. If it gets compromised early, perhaps the ramifications are small. It's annoying to have even an unimportant account get hacked, but it's typically not more than that: an annoyance. The longer you hold an account, the more you use it, the more you rely on it, and the more important it becomes.

My Hotmail account, for example, was originally and for a long time a truly unimportant throw-away account. I set it up to experiment with Hotmail shortly after Microsoft purchased it. Today, it's one of my most important accounts because it's my Microsoft account, used for logging into several of my Windows computers.

The longer you have an account and the more you use it, the more important it becomes. If you treated it as unimportant when you set it up, it's likely you didn't set up the recovery and security information that will allow you to regain access to the account — and to everything for which it's a gateway — should it ever be compromised.

Related
It all starts with a password. How Do I Choose a Good Password?

There's no real excuse

Honestly, there's no real excuse to do at least the bare minimum to secure any account, no matter how "unimportant" you think it may be today.

- **Set a strong, unique password**. 12 characters minimum, with random characters preferred, used nowhere else.
- **Set recovery info**. Be it a phone number, an alternate email address, or something else, set it and keep it up to date.

Really, that's the bare minimum, and it's just not that hard. Using a password vault lets me quickly assign new random 20-character passwords to every account I create these days. There's just no reason not to.

Before you dismiss the account you're creating as "unimportant" and before you assume you're just not a valuable target, think again. Every account is more important than you think, and everyone is a target. Take a few seconds at account creation time to protect yourself. Someday, you'll be glad you did.

Do this

Secure your accounts from the start. Then, once you've done so, subscribe to Confident Computing! Less frustration and more confidence, solutions, answers, and tips in your inbox every week.

End of Article # #

Taking Technology Too Personally

by Greg Skalka, President
Under the Computer Hood User Group

When I was growing up, there seemed to be more universal and unifying experiences in our lives related to technology. Yesterday, we had much less tech, but it served us well and was more common in its applications and experiences. While the 'have' and 'have not' divides initially, new devices were often adopted relatively quickly and usually went to fairly high usage levels across society. This provided a common basis of experience for most people.

Television often provided a common topic that many strangers could discuss. With few channels and limited programming, many people were watching the same things. You could talk to your friends about the shows you watched the night before as they likely watched some of the same ones. Telephones were very basic but provided a capability that everyone had to have. The instruments were all similar as Ma Bell controlled the technology and the market. The rotary dial of the phone and the channel knob on the TV provided simple, standard user interfaces. Anyone versed in using a phone or TV set could likely operate anyone's phone or TV. Driving a car was the same; with its standardized controls, any driver could drive almost any vehicle and use most of the accessories. Our homes had very standardized appliances and lighting systems, providing a common user experience.

Tidbits of probably useless information

The reason firehouses have circular stairways is from the days of yore when the engines were pulled by horses. The horses were stabled on the ground floor and figured out how to walk up straight staircases.

The sentence "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog." uses every letter in the alphabet. (Developed by Western Union to Test telex/twx communications.)

Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history: Spades - King David
Hearts - Charlemagne
Clubs -Alexander, the Great
Diamonds - Julius Caesar
In summary, the court cards in decks of playing cards were not initially identified by name. The assignation of identities to the kings (as well as the queens and knaves) was a temporary practice unique to French card masters that began around the mid-15th century, was not standardized for some time, and was discontinued at the end of the 18th century. The royal figures on modern playing cards no more represent specific persons than do the kings and queens in chess sets.

Q. If you were to spell out numbers, how far would you have to go until you would find the letter 'A'?
A. One thousand

Q. Which day are there more collect calls than any other day of the year?
A. Father's Day

Today we have much more technology, much more complex technology, and more diverse technology. In addition to more capabilities, we have more choices, with more competition in the marketplace. As a result, there is much less standardization and much more personalization. Choice can be good, but with more options, there is often less consensus. There are more ways to personalize your experiences, which means fewer people use the same things, watch the same things or do the same things. This can result in fewer people caring about the same things as you do. While our technology supposedly enables greater communication, the countless choices, versions, and variations we can have can sometimes be an isolating factor in society.

It is great to have thousands of choices on television, but having a shared cultural baseline is more difficult when everyone watches something different. Choices do not end with content; how you watch can be personal. Fewer people watch "broadcast" television (over the air); we often choose cable, satellite, or streaming. Music is consumed in the same ways with the same multitude of choices. If you do not like what is playing, tell Alexa to skip to the next song. More and more, our entertainment is "on demand." We more often watched shows or listened to music with others; now, we are more likely to consume media individually. Instead of getting together to listen to that new album, we have our personal playlists.

The introduction of the "personal" computer may not have started the trend, but it seemed to accelerate it. First, families used to sit around the radio in the evenings for entertainment; later, the focal point was the living room television. The personal computer pushed everyone to their own devices. I remember having four computers in our house when our two children lived with us. Now there are only two of us here, but we do have more than four computers in the house.

Smartphones are the ultimate in "personal" devices. Almost everyone has one. However, they are not the same; they could be iPhone or Android, and any number of makes, models, and screen sizes. Even the exact same phones can be loaded with personalized apps, photos, media, and cases. But, unfortunately, no one shares them, so everyone is alone with their individualized device. I have seen this sad scene far too many times: a family out at a restaurant, and each member, while sitting together, is intently manipulating their smartphones. And they do not appear to be communicating with each other.

There are now so many choices in the tech world and so few standards. Email used to be fairly standardized. Remember the AOL voice saying, "You've got mail." It was once so culturally universal that it was the title of a movie. Now there are so many email clients, web hosts, and types of devices to get mail on that everyone's email experience can be unique. I do not know if that is good or bad, but it is the direction most things are going. It is probably not hard to name five different ways of doing anything: listening to a podcast, viewing a movie, placing a voice call, or writing a document.

Tech companies are just giving us what we want. More choices, more things we "need," more opportunities to buy their products and services. While there can be dominant providers in the market, being dominant does not necessarily make them the best. With so many things to have and so many choices for each, how can anyone optimize their lives? What

Windows & Android Tips

HOW TO INSTALL OR UNINSTALL THE GOOGLE CHROME BROWSER – Largely based on Google's open-source Chromium, Google Chrome is one of the most popular web browsers on Windows, Mac, Android, iPhone, and iPad. Installing and uninstalling Chrome on each operating system takes just a few steps.
How to Install or Uninstall the Google Chrome Browser (howtogeek.com)

ANDROID USERS NOW HAVE AN OFFICIAL APP TO TRACK AIRTAGS – Apple has given Android users an official means to detect and track AirTags with its new Tracker Detect app. With Apple's AirTags sometimes being used for nefarious purposes, Android users have been asking for a way to detect them that doesn't require using a different smartphone. The new Tracker Detect app allows them to do just that, but some users are disappointed with the app's limitations.
Android Users Now Have an Official App to Track AirTags (lifewire.com)

GOOGLE CHROME WILL HELP YOU TRACK PRICE DROPS – Google is bringing some cool shopping features to its Chrome browser. The company is adding a price tracker and the ability to search for products with your phone's camera on mobile and the ability to see what's in your shopping cart from the new tab page on a desktop.
Google Chrome Will Help You Track Price Drops (howtogeek.com)

is the best photo editor? The best streaming service? The best smartphone? The best family car? The best Internet provider? These are hard questions to answer as they are. When you add "for me" to the end of each, it gets even more challenging. Do you spend so much time researching your choices that you never get to enjoy your things? By the time you have finished your research, is the item you chose out of date? Do you choose what your friends are using or what you have seen in commercials? Do you keep a suboptimal service because it is a hassle to change?

Our technology is much more powerful but also much more complex. At one time, you simply had to turn on the TV power switch to watch something. Now you may also have to select a signal source, app, or service, using a remote control with dozens of buttons on it. To drive a car, you unlocked the door, put the key in the ignition switch, turned it, put the transmission in gear, and drove. Now you may have a remote fob to unlock it, you may just press a button on the dash to start it (assuming the fob is near), and the pedal you press may inject more fuel into an internal combustion engine or may provide more current from a battery to an electric motor. One day you may just get in and tell the car where you want to go.

As our things become more and more complex, they sometimes do not do what we expect them to. Sometimes this is our fault, as we may not fully understand how to use them. For example, my parents have had to buy a new dishwasher and a new washing machine in the last year, and though the new items are more energy-efficient and do more things, they are more difficult for them to operate. They bought a Samsung dishwasher with the controls on the top edge (rather than the face) of the door. This is confusing even to me. On their old dishwasher, you closed the door and set the controls to run it. You set it to run on this new one and then close the door, as the controls are inaccessible with the door closed. Their old clothes washer had a big knob on the panel to control it; the new one has buttons to move LED indicators to set modes. It does more but is more difficult to figure out how to set it.

Other times, our devices are so complex they do not operate stably and consistently. Unfortunately, what works today may not work the same tomorrow with our Internet connected devices, as updates change features, fix bugs, and introduce new bugs. We have many smart home devices in our house, including various Amazon Echo smart speakers and Internet connected light controllers of different brands and styles. I have been using the light device apps to turn on lights at certain times in the morning and then turn them off manually with our Echo Show in the kitchen. Recently I have been having problems controlling the lights through the Echo Show reliably. My wife uses the Show as a timer for cooking. Recently she has been setting timers, but the alarm never goes off. It seems like the Show got a bad update.

With all the choices and options available, tech means something different to each of us. We can tailor our devices and services to our preferences for experiences that are uniquely ours. If our devices do not act the way we want them to, it is unclear who is to blame or who will sympathize.

Reprinted from the May 2021 issue, DRIVE LIGHT, www.uchug.org, president@uchug.org.

Scam Alerts
www.consumer.ftc.gov

Scammers PRETEND to be from an organization you know.

Scammers often pretend to be contacting you on behalf of the government. They might use a real name, like the Social Security Administration, the IRS, or Medicare, or make up a name that sounds official. Some pretend to be from a business you know, like a utility company, a tech company, or even a charity asking for donations.

They use technology to change the phone number that appears on your caller ID. So the name and number you see might not be real.

Scammers say there's a PROBLEM or a PRIZE.

They might say you're in trouble with the government. Or you owe money. Or someone in your family had an emergency. Or that there's a virus on your computer.

Some scammers say there's a problem with one of your accounts and that you need to verify some information.

Others will lie and say you won money in a lottery or sweepstakes but have to pay a fee to get it.

Scammers PRESSURE you to act immediately.

Scammers want you to act before you have time to think. If you're on the phone, they might tell you not to hang up so you can't check out their story.

They might threaten to arrest you, sue you, take away your driver's or business license, or deport you. They might say your computer is about to be corrupted.

Useful Tips on How to Use an Old and Broken Mobile Phone in Different Ways?

By Angelika Muderris, September, 2021

Before trashing your unused old phone, have you considered finding a new use for it? This article provides you with ways on how you can make your old devices useful rather than leaving them in a drawer to collect dust or throwing it away and letting it sit in a landfill.

Do you have old and/or broken mobile phones that are collecting dust in your drawer? Are they still functional? You have a new smartphone on hand, are you planning on throwing those old phones in the trash?

If your old devices can still be used despite being an older model or having a shattered or cracked screen, you shouldn't throw them out. Your old mobile phones might just end up in some landfill and thus, will pollute the environment.

Your smartphones are mostly full of toxins or harmful materials such as lead, cadmium, arsenic, among others. If these materials are disposed irresponsibly, they would leak into the environment and pollute the air, water, and soil. This will lead to several health hazards that you really don't want to happen.

Another thing about how throwing your old phone can pose a danger is the fact that lithium-ion batteries may explode. Believe it or not, damaged lithium-ion batteries explode. According to a report by USA Today, 65 percent of fires at waste facilities in California in 2017 were caused by lithium-ion batteries.

So what can you do with your old phones? What are the things you can do to your old and/or broken phone?

There are several things you can do to your old phones that can benefit you and at the same will not do harm to the environment. Here's what to do with old broken cell phones:

- Repurpose it. If your smartphone is an older model, you can do some kind of project with it. Your old mobile devices might be outdated, you can still find a new use for them. You can make it into a media player while you are on a drive or you can transform it to a smart surveillance. If you have a creative mind and a DIY attitude, the possibilities on how to repurpose your old phones are endless.

- Activate it. Is your old mobile phone still working? Rather than letting it gather dust in your drawer, why not activate it for yourself or for someone in your family? Its not a bad idea to keep a spare,unactivated phone on hand as a backup in case something happens to your main device.

- Donate it to charity. If it can still be used, you should consider donating your old smartphone to a charity. There are programs

Interesting Internet Finds
www.genealogyexplained.com

Free access to genealogy information is just a few clicks away – no membership required! You might find anything from copies of your grandparents' death certificates to a newspaper article about your great-grandfather's business. Your free ancestry search starts here!

- **Family Search** – The largest free genealogy website in the world.

- **National Archives** – Federal military, census, immigration, land, naturalization records and more.

- **Library of Congress** – Access free digitized images of newspapers, books, films, maps, personal narratives, photos, prints, and drawings.

- **Chronicling America** – Part of the Library of Congress website, Chronicling America has searchable images of US newspapers from 1792-1963.

- **Allen County Public Library** – Located in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Allen County Public Library has one of the largest genealogy collections in the United States.

Pro tip: a great way to get your feet wet in this hobby is with a free trial at one of the big genealogy sites. MyHeritage has a free 14-day trial which gets you instant access to 11.9 billion records and over 3.5 billion family trees. Click here to learn more about this offer.

like the Cell Phones for Soldiers and National Coalition Against Domestic Violence that will find your old working phone a new home. Also check your local shelters to see if they would like to take your old phone off your hands.

- Sell or trade it. You can actually sell or trade your old phone to Glyde, Gazelle, or with one of the other used device middleman services. For example, you can get cash for selling your old phone to Gazelle. They will let you know how much it is worth and if you accept their offer, they will send you a shipping label and even pay for the shipping. In some retailers that accept old devices, the phones you sold or traded in go through a repair and inspection process to turn it into refurbished smartphones that are in perfect working order. If you choose to take on the work yourself and sell it to eBay or Craigslist, you will get to keep all of the proceeds of the sale instead of a cut.

- Recycle it. If your old mobile phone is broken beyond repair or completely obsolete, you will have to dispose of it. However, as previously mentioned, you shouldn't throw it away in the trash but rather, you should find a recycling center that accepts electronic devices. More mobile phone manufacturers are now offering take-back recycling. However, your better bet would likely be to recycle your old phone through the plan provider than the manufacturer.

How to repurpose your old phone?

If you opt to hack, modify or use your old phone in a project, here are some ways you can make use of your device.

- Alarm clock. You can turn your old mobile device into a bedside companion that can help you fall asleep or wake you up for school or work. What you should do is to download an app to your phone that can help guide you into a deep sleep and gently wake you up in the morning. Since you will not be utilizing it for other purposes like the way you use your main phone, you can leave your old phone turn alarm clock on your bedside to recharge.

- Smart surveillance or home security camera. Thinking of turning your old mobile phone as a home security camera? Sounds crazy, right? However, with the use of the built-in camera and a WiFi connection, you can turn your old device into a security system. You can mount the device in your house for added security. All you need is your phone, WiFi connection, charging cables, a mobile security app. There are apps on the market that allow motion alerts, live streaming, and cloud storage.

- Baby monitor. Believe it or not, your old phone can actually make a great baby monitor, especially when you are out traveling and you want to check in with your baby. You can download a baby monitor app which you can use to send you an alert if your baby starts making noise. You can also use your phone to soothe your baby back to sleep by talking to them.

Around the World

World Cancer Day 2022

Created in 2000 to be **held every February 4**, World Cancer Day is a global initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to face one of our greatest challenges.

2022 Campaign Theme: Close the Care Gap / Realising the problem https://youtu.be/qCcB9C2We0o?t=23

UICC launches three-year campaign to create more equitable access to cancer services. The first year of the 'Close the Care Gap' campaign is all about understanding and recognising the inequities in cancer care around the globe. This is the year to question the status quo and help reduce stigma; to listen to the perspectives of the people living with cancer and their communities and let those lived experiences guide our thoughts and actions.

That's how we can begin to imagine a better way of doing things and to build a fairer vision of the future—a future where people live healthier lives and have better access to health and cancer services, no matter where they are born, grow, age, work or live.

"By 2030, it is estimated that 75% of all premature deaths due to cancer will occur in low- and middle-income countries. Importantly, this care gap is not only between high- and low-resource settings." **– Prof. Anil d'Cruz,** President of the UICC, Director of Oncology at Apollo Hospitals, India

- Music player. Use your old mobile phone as a separate music player. You can also turn it into a radio you can use to stream music from all across the country.

- Wireless webcam. If you don't have a webcam for your desktop computer or the built-in camera on your laptop is not working, you can turn your old smartphone into a webcam. There is free software you can download which can let you turn your mobile phone into a webcam for your computer.

- E-book reader. Are you a fan of novels? Do you love books and comics but you don't want to buy an ebook reader? You can use your old phone. Just download an ebook reader app of choice and sync up your purchases, free ebooks, and titles borrowed from the library.

How to turn your old phone into a cool project

Regardless of what brand your old mobile phones are, whether it's an Android or an iPhone, you will find that each of those devices have some sophisticated circuitry inside. While your devices might be obsolete you can still find uses for old cell phone parts. You just need to get creative and come up with cool projects for it. Here are some:

- Create an untraceable phone. The threat of a hacker having access to your personal information looms nowadays. If you have an extra mobile phone, you can turn it into a "ghost phone" or a burner phone which will be completely untraceable. Having a ghost phone can be beneficial. One of which is its ability to keep your identity secure on online dating sites or if you are selling something on Craigslist. This device is handy as you can use it any time you want to take a data-sensitive online action. It will keep you more secure than your everyday phone.
  Here's how you can turn your old device into a burner phone:
    1. First, install one of the apps that provide a burner phone number.
    2. Next, add a secure VPN service that encrypts all data going out of your phone.
    3. You create a new Google or Apple account from the phone. Remember, don't sign in with your existing account on the app stores. Likewise, create new accounts for any app you want to use.
    4. Keep in mind that you shouldn't buy any app or service as online transactions leave a money trail.

- Turn it into a wallet or piggy bank. Believe it or not, you can actually turn your old broken mobile phone into a wallet or piggy bank. However, you should keep in mind that this project requires you to take apart the old device and remove all the parts inside. You will only need the outer case and nothing else.

- Contribute to science. You can actually use your old phone for science for a good cause. You can donate your old smartphone to the HTC Power To Give. They use your phone to connect to the University of California, Berkeley's BIONC app. And then, they will tap on your mobile device's unused computing power. They

will utilize it for crowdsourced science, making your old phone a significant help for a good cause. You can also help researchers in Australia fight cancer by utilizing the DreamLab app, or if you want to help detect possible earthquakes, you can use the MyShake app.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Angelika Muderris is a passionate writer who heads the operations at QwikFone, A UK-based company for refurbished smartphones & tablets.

End of Article # #

* * * * * BITS and PIECES in the NEWS * * * * *

> **Editor's Note**: To continue reading the following articles, you may copy the long URL at the end of the article and enter it into a web browser **or** click on the URL in the web version of this newsletter.

7-Eleven Stores in Japan Are Getting Touch-Free Floating Holographic Self-Checkouts

The war on germs is about to score a major victory in Japan.

By Andrew Liszewski

As convenient as self-checkout machines can be for quickly getting out of a store, they're also a convenient way to expose yourself to a touchscreen that thousands of others have used. To make the machines more sanitary, some 7-Eleven stores in Japan will be installing floating holographic displays that work without any physical contact.
Even with the immense popularity of online shopping, the supply chain issues that have arisen as a result of the ongoing pandemic have proven that brick-and-mortar shopping experiences won't be going away anytime soon. They offer many advantages to buying stuff online, but that doesn't mean that there aren't ways physical stores can be improved. Amazon's cashless convenience and grocery stores take the cashier and the use of money completely out of the equation and as a result, seem like a better approach to safer shopping during a pandemic.

Upgrading a store so that shoppers can simply walk out the door with their wares requires expensive and complicated upgrades, but 7-Eleven in Japan is introducing a more affordable way to make in-person shopping safer.
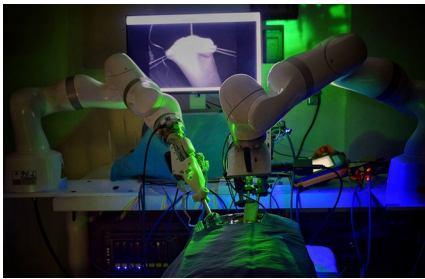
It's rare to find a Slurpee machine at a Japanese 7-Eleven, but you will find a wider selection of household wares and prepared meals than what American versions of the convenience store chain are offering. As a result, 7-Eleven stores are very popular in Japan, with about 30,000 of them operating across the country (there are less than 10,000 of them in the United States) so it makes sense for a chain that size to start trialling the self-checkout of the future.

Unlike Amazon's stores where shoppers can simply leave with bags of carts full of goods, the upgraded 7-Eleven stores still require shoppers to stop and individually scan their items before paying. What's different is the lack of the traditional LCD touchscreens, which have been instead

Odds and Ends

Laparoscopic Robot Performs First Autonomous Surgery

By [Conn Hastings](#) [GI](#), [Surgery](#)

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University developed and now successfully tested the Smart Tissue Autonomous Robot (STAR), a self-guiding surgical robot that can perform challenging laparoscopic procedures in gastrointestinal surgery, including intestinal anastomosis. The robot can adjust its surgical plan in real time, just as a human surgeon would, helping it to adapt to changing conditions during surgery. The researchers hope that such technology can allow every patient to enjoy the potential for optimal surgical outcomes, regardless of the surgical skill and experience that is available in their locality.

Surgical robots are advancing in complexity and in the range of tasks they can assist with. However, a fully autonomous surgical robot has yet to emerge, until now. This latest technology has shown that it can perform a particularly tricky surgical procedure, almost completely independently.

Study in *Science Robotics*:

[Autonomous robotic laparoscopic surgery for intestinal anastomosis](#)

Reported on https://www.medgadget.com/2022/02/laparoscopic-robot-performs-first-autonomous-surgery.html

replaced by a [system developed by Toshiba](#) called Digi POS that creates the illusion of a touchscreen interface simply hanging in the air in front of a shopper, while those behind them in line don't see anything at all.

Checkout this video, [YouTube - Seven & i Holdings Official Channel](#)

Read the rest of the article at https://gizmodo.com/7-eleven-shows-off-touch-free-holographic-self-checkout-1848452133.

Cheap and Portable COVID-19 Test Lab

By [Conn Hastings](#) [Diagnostics](#), [Medicine](#), [Public Health](#)

Researchers at Queen Mary University of London have created a low-cost, portable COVID testing kit intended for use in remote, low-resource regions of the world. They describe the approach as a lab-in-a-backpack, and it makes use of a recycled computer hard-drive as a centrifuge. The test assay relies on loop mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) rather than PCR, and costs just $51 to produce. Using a LAMP assay means that the test does not require thermal cycling, unlike PCR, meaning that the required equipment is much simpler.

The pandemic continues, and with the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant many more people will get COVID-19. Testing services have been stretched to their limit in developed countries, but what happens in remote and low-resource regions? In many such places, getting access to a COVID test is very difficult, particularly gold-standard PCR tests which typically require bulky and expensive lab equipment. This makes it next to impossible to track the spread of the virus, and implement basic public health measures to curb transmission.

To address this, researchers are developing low-cost, portable testing options that can still deliver high sensitivity and accuracy. This latest testing technology is based on a LAMP assay, which requires an incubation step at just one high temperature, rather than the repeated temperature cycles required to amplify viral DNA in a conventional PCR assay. This means that the required equipment is less complex, smaller, and cheaper.

Another bonus with the LAMP approach is that it works with saliva samples, rather than the invasive nasal swabs required for PCR. The researchers showed some ingenuity in the inexpensive equipment they used, and deployed recycled computer components to create a small centrifuge with which to perform the LAMP assay.

Study in *PLOS One*: End-to-end system for rapid and sensitive early-detection of SARS-CoV-2 for resource-poor and field-test environments using a $51 lab-in-a-backpack

Via: Queen Mary University of London

* * * * * CLUB and REGIONAL NEWS * * * * *

RCSI

The **planning meetings are held online** the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:00 pm and are open to any member. We use Jitsi, and a link will be emailed to members before our next planning meeting. *Save the link, as we will reuse it next month*. ANY CLUB MEMBER MAY ATTEND and voice their opinions about club operations.

Help's Half Hour   Notes by Jan Rothfuss

Q: Has a couple of older 4 GB computers. Shall he load on Chromebook or Linux?
A: Both should work. One might work better, depending on the system speed. Linux Mint is recommended. Another option is Leenix as a starter program. He may bring the laptop along next month.

Q: Is FIRST Robotics being held this year?
A: March 9 the RIT will be hosting the Finger Lakes FIRST Robotics.

Q: A member has Windows 10 on a flash drive and wonders if he will need a license code when he attempts to install?
A: Microsoft is not giving as much credence to license codes lately. Windows 11 is available for those with Windows 10.

The 46th Annual TCF, (Trenton Computer Festival)
A FREE Virtual Online Event see WWW.TCF-NJ.ORG
Saturday, 19 March 2022 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Hosted by The College of New Jersey (TCNJ).
Enjoy an exciting day of talks, workshops and demonstrations with 10 separate Tracks and including a full-day devoted to using technology to disrupt climate change.

Got Questions?:
Send an email to either person below and they will get back to you. The questions can be related to the OS (Operating System) or hardware related issues. Please give them time for a response, as they do this service on a volunteer basis. Thank you.

Windows OS: . . . . . Arpad Kovacs, podcomputer@gmail.com

Linux & some Mac: Carl Schmidtmann, unixgeek@faultline.com

New Meeting Place
Our Usual Meeting Place is being renovated.
St John's Meadows at Johnsarbor Drive, is on the left, past Clinton Avenue, when going West on Elmwood Avenue. The opening in the white fence is Johnsarbor Drive. At the 'T', turn right. The meeting is in the SECOND building on the left – **Chestnut Court**.
Our meeting place can change. Please check our website before each meeting. **www.rcsi.org**