

SeniorNet: Magazine Notes for August 2016

All the magazines reviewed below are held in the SeniorNet office and are available for borrowing.

Australian Personal Computer (July)

Are you tempted? There are, reportedly, many films of interest available overseas through such sites as Netflix, which consumers in New Zealand can't get access to. (Netflix allows consumers in the US to have access to a much larger store of films than it lets New Zealand and Australian subscribers view.) Why this is the case is not clear - but then not everything in the commercial world makes immediate sense. This limitation irritates Australian Personal Computer, and it has decided to do something about it. The main articles in this issue live under the forthright rubric: "GET UNRESTRICTED ACCESS: SMASH INTERNET GEOBLOCKS: VIEW ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE: THE SERVICES, APPS AND TECHNIQUES YOU NEED TO KNOW". Well, the articles look suitably technical, detailed and helpful, and what they outline could work. So, by jumping through a considerable number of tight hoops, you could get what you want. But in the corner is Jiminy Cricket and he is asking whether what you are proposing to do is in fact legal. The editor of Australian Personal Computer says that "while there aren't any Australian laws specifically protecting the circumvention of geolocation blocks, there aren't any that prohibit it either." But how authoritative and encompassing is this view? And is the editor an expert in media law? These questions aren't answered. Worse, the editor seems to be writing primarily for an Australian audience. I have been unable to find what he thinks the position is for New Zealanders, operating in New Zealand. So, while I report the existence of this information, I'm advocating that we exercise notable caution in following it to its logical conclusion.

Imagine that you're hard of hearing. You don't find hearing aids particularly comfortable, but could certainly use some amplification on certain occasions. You have an iPhone and are aware that it has a jack for an earphone. You've wondered if your iPhone could be used to give you better hearing. The answer is yes. There's a helpful review in this issue (p.40) "Hear - Advanced Listening" of a free app, <http://hearapp.io/> which would be worth a try. The review says that "this real-time processing can actually allow you to boost the audio signal and make it seem like you have superhuman hearing" Would that there was something similar for Android!

Otherwise, how much is there of interest for most SeniorNet members in this issue of the magazine? I don't think there's a huge amount. But as in most areas of computing, if you have a problem and in picking up a computer magazine you find the answer to it, then that makes reading the issue

worthwhile. So what could assist? Well, there's a potpourri of potentially useful articles here, e.g.:

- Windows 10 command line tricks (P. 68 ff)
- Solve Windows 10 install problems (P. 76 ff)
- Fix audio issues in Windows 10 (P. 78 ff), and
- Build an AirPrint server (P. 82 ff).

Further, if you're looking for computer-related equipment, there is, as usual, a slew of excellent reviews.

PC & Tech Authority (August)

The key focus of the issue is a group test of inkjet and laser printers for the home and small office. This is essential reading if you're about to buy a printer. Good research makes for happy customers, and there is plenty of good research here. Not only is there general advice aplenty, but there are also sharp, specific recommendations. The best printer in the bunch was the Brother MFC-J570DW. The comments about it included that "the printer ... is dirt cheap: when you look at how capable and easy to use it is, it's hard to believe it's the third cheapest option here. Better still, Brother doesn't rip you off on the ink." Now, contrast that with the Epson WorkForce WF-2630. The assessment of the latter device was that "it's such a slow and undistinguished printer that it's hard to recommend at any price."

Elsewhere, there are valuable reviews of the Apple MacBook 2016; and the Asus Transformer Book Flip; not to mention the hot phone of the moment, the Huawei Mate 8.

We have a strong group of digital photographers in SeniorNet. SeniorNet members are characteristically on the outlook for a bargain. These two sets come together in Google's publication of a bundle of "Pro-grade photography plug-ins for Photoshop and Lightroom (and, on the Mac, Aperture)". Australian Personal Computer points out that this suite of programmes used to cost \$US 500, and is now available freely at Google.com/nikcollection.

From the Strange World department: technology doesn't only trickle down. It can trickle up. A writer in this issue reports that because so many youngsters have been playing a PlayStation game named "Call of Duty", it makes sense for current recruits to the Tank Regiment that "the firing mechanism in the Challenger tank ... has been deliberately modelled on the PlayStation controller."

TECHLife Australia (August)

Revolutions cast their shadow before. Think the French, American, and Russian tsunamis. But not all revolutions are of course political. Think the Industrial Revolution, and the revolution which is currently engulfing us, the Computer Revolution. Now consider what's coming: this issue of TECHLife Australia accurately identifies two more revolutions which are about to hit us. They are known by their acronyms, VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality). In these cases rather more than others, seeing really is believing. You have to wear a headset, but then the world as we know it no longer exists (at least until the batteries run out). Are SeniorNet members ready for all this? Will we ride the wave or be submerged by it? The present issue attempts to prepare us. Its main feature is: "VR on the Cheap: Complete guide how to get on-board the Virtual Reality Revolution for next to nix!" There's a lot of material here with "Getting started with Smartphone VR"; "Low cost VR Headsets compared"; "VR-ready Gamepads on test"; "Best Smartphone VR Apps, Games and Movies"; "Shoot your own VR Movies"; and "VR beyond the Smartphone" (see pp.54-73).

It is almost a law: the greater the complexity of any device, the more problems can be expected with it. As you know, computers prove the rule. But what do you do if your problem occurs on a Tuesday, and you have to wait six days for the next Clinic on a Monday (not public holidays)? Well, TECHLife Australia suggests you might consult "Bleeping Computer" on the web. That site is described as "usually the first place we consult when trying to solve PC problems", and as "a great and thorough resource for a range of solutions, whether simple or complex". IFIXIT also receives high praise. Also recommended are our old friend, CCleaner, and two other potential acquaintances - Tweaking.com, to fix many common Windows-related problems; and Unchecky, which helps us not to download probably unwanted programmes (PUPs).

This issue contains a useful article on Windows 10. It's called "Make your Windows 10 PC easier to use" (pp.88-89). By the same token, there is a helpful article "Make moving to a new Android device easy: nifty tips and tricks to help get your new Android set up faster". The article even covers Google syncing, and music backups. If you're into Android, sooner or later you will need this. The same could well apply to an article in this issue about Netflix. See "Five tools and tricks for better Netflixing" (pp. 96-97).

On hearing related issues: TECHLife Australia well aware of the importance of subtitles/closed captions for people with hearing loss. It notes that while many TV streaming services (e.g. Lightbox) do not have subtitles, Netflix does.