



Email: wellingtonseniornet@gmail.com www.wellingtonseniornet.co.nz

Newsletter February 2022

From the Chair



I hope that you had a relaxing and enjoyable Christmas /New Year break. We are only just over a month into 2022 and it is already shaping up to be another year of uncertainty and change, as we face the onslaught of Omicron across the country.

SeniorNet is also facing an uncertain future as a result of a shortage of volunteers to keep SeniorNet operating effectively. We need members to come forward to volunteer for the Executive Committee as well as work in the office. These shortages are not new. We were in a similar position in 2017. We cannot continue to rely on the good will and commitment of a few. Over the coming months the Executive Committee will be looking at options for a more sustainable model of operation that reflects the difficulty in attracting volunteers. We will keep members informed as we work through this process.

In the meantime SeniorNet Wellington plans to offer as much of our usual programme as possible, with the necessary Covid Protection processes in place. However, we may need to make changes at short notice in response to the spread of Omicron and changing Government policy. Changes will be posted on our [website](#) and notified in the weekly news. It is essential that members register for all learning sessions at Anvil House so that we can ensure that we comply with social distancing requirements and, equally important, so we can notify registrants if a learning session has to be cancelled at short notice.

Please consider helping out as a volunteer either in the office, on the Executive Committee or as a tutor/tutor helper. It can be very rewarding being a volunteer and seeing the difference you can make and everyone

CONTENTS	
From the Chair.....	1
Our Office Volunteers...2	
2022 Courses.....	4
Video to Digital format...5	
Youth-giving benefits of your smartphone.....	7

has something to contribute. If you are able to help, in any capacity, and would like to know more please contact me through the SeniorNet office email wellingtonseniornet@gmail.com or phone 4731510.

Pam Fletcher

Introducing our office volunteers

In this issue we'd like to introduce you to some of our members who keep the admin side of the organisation ticking over, dealing with membership, sending out the weekly SeniorNet news, staffing the office and doing other tasks.

Chantal Pearce - office volunteer and weekly SN News team member

I joined SeniorNet in 2003; I wanted to acquire some knowledge which might help with my duties of membership secretary for a social club that used Excel for its database. Until then, I was self-taught at home after we acquired a Mac in the mid-90s for my husband to do some reports for his work projects and on the insistence of our teenage son "for school work" supposedly. At SeniorNet in those pre-smartphones days, one learned through structured classes useful for people who hadn't used computers at work.

In spite of my lack of administration work background, I joined the Office team in 2016 and had to become familiar with Outlook, then with Gmail's basics ; I was soon interested by some of the intricacies of the Access-based program created by George Barna and Allan Chee for the database which we began to use that year. It has been a challenge at times but stimulating too; we learn/discover aspects of the program as they come up and the other office duties keep us on our toes too. It is interesting to be closer to the 'engine room' of the SeniorNet Learning Centre and to help it run smoothly.

Cristina van Dam – office volunteer

When I left work my tech abilities were non-existent. I joined SeniorNet about four years ago and started to learn, then decided that because the people I met were so good and kind, that I wanted to give back to the organisation. I joined the office volunteer team two or three years ago because it was something I could do for SeniorNet. Also I'd been looking after grandchildren and becoming a volunteer was something I could do for myself. Now I know I can ask questions or go to the Help Centre, and

am in the right place to hear of developments in technology and be with nice people.

Celia Simpson – office volunteer

When I left work in the Faculty of Science at Victoria University I was 71 and was used to having the support of the in-house technical staff and my younger colleagues who were more adept with the devices than I was. I had been using Word and the specific database used in our office. At home I only had a PC and regularly used it for emails and Google searches.

However, once on my own I decided that I needed more knowledge to enable me to use Excel for doing my tax returns and keeping track of my Visa and daily outgoings. I also needed to be able to reset the margins and paragraph settings which I discovered I could not do on Word once at home without any available assistance. This was my situation once I was retired and needed to get my new life in order. I paid about \$120 one day for an hour of assistance from Geeks on Wheels.

In about 2011-2012 I read about SeniorNet in an article and went along to a 'visitors' day. There was a very efficient and friendly woman Janet who had set up the Office functions and I volunteered for assisting with the administration of SeniorNet and have been there from that day on.

Les Dyne – office volunteer

Well, from my point of view this is another challenge in life and it would be easy to say we just do what we do without much philosophical thought, but here goes.

I feel I have lived through an interesting exciting time witnessing many changes. Most of my work has been quietly assisting people. Dianne and I spent ten years assisting the hospitals with a product at a time when imports were erratic. Then we started Golding Handcrafts and spent over 45 years helping people with their projects. We assisted people who were in tears because of evening schools ceasing craft classes. This worked two ways as the ladies of Wellington also helped us to develop our craft classes. We will always be grateful for their encouragement and assistance.

I believe we live in an interdependent society where we help each other as best as possible. Since retiring, it would be easy to become absorbed in a few major projects to the exclusion of a wider picture. I am also conscious of stalling off the time of living in a diminishing limited world,

when really we can continue to help ourselves and others by both giving and receiving.

Personally, I joined SeniorNet to obtain help with these new smart phones and computers. The resultant help has been fantastic with encouragement to handle both the technical and also with the interpersonal. My sincere thanks to Allan & Alan, Graeme, Michael, the two Peters, Celia and Pam, just to name a few.

At home when Dianne asks "How did you do that" I continually remind her, "Oh I learnt that at SeniorNet".

Aspirations? The momentum of SeniorNet must be maintained with help from many members.

Workshops and courses February – May 2022

by Allan Chee, Chair Education Committee

Happy New Year to you all. Well Covid-19 is still with us and now we are operating under the "Traffic Light" system, and the country has switched from "Orange to Red"; no doubt there will be new protocols we have to deal with to help keep us safe.

We are trialling a **free Zoom session** for one hour duration for members who can't make it to our premises for help or to attend the free SIGs. The first session will be on Tuesday 15 February, 11am-12noon, and if successful, every 3rd Tuesday of the month. The format will initially be a Q & A format but fronted by a panel of 3-4 tutors to answer questions.

The Education team met in January to discuss what we offer in the first part of the year. The following is a brief description of what we have planned.

Managing Emails will be offered in March. An analysis of members on our database shows that over 56% of the members use Gmail and 25% use Xtra. Given the rise in email scams lately we think it's appropriate to update our members about email security and how to manage our emails.

Jonny Smith from WCC Library is keen to come and address us again hopefully in March.

In April we plan to run a course on **Photo Albums**, how to create them, and how to store and catalogue photos.

We hope to run a refreshed **Smartphone Drivers Licence** in May as well as the popular **Google Tools and Search**, and a workshop on the topic of the **"Internet-of-Things" (IoT)**.

Whether these courses will actually run will depend on what happens with Covid-19 and the Red light protocols that SeniorNet is operating under.

So keep an eye out on our web page and our weekly newsletter for the dates these courses and workshops will be offered and for any changes in our situation.

Transferring Video Tape To Digital Formats

By Ricky Berg



At SeniorNet meetings, an often asked question is how do I get my old video cassette recording onto a hard drive or flash drive ... in other words, how do I transfer the analogue tape recording to a digital format that can then be used on any

computer or television? Ironically, it really isn't that difficult once you have the appropriate equipment and software, and what follows is a brief explanation of the process. In terms of equipment, you will need (of course) a video cassette player (any old workable VCR will do), a set of video cables (the familiar ones that are coloured red, yellow and white), a computer, and a video-capture device with its software. The video capture device and set up looks like this –

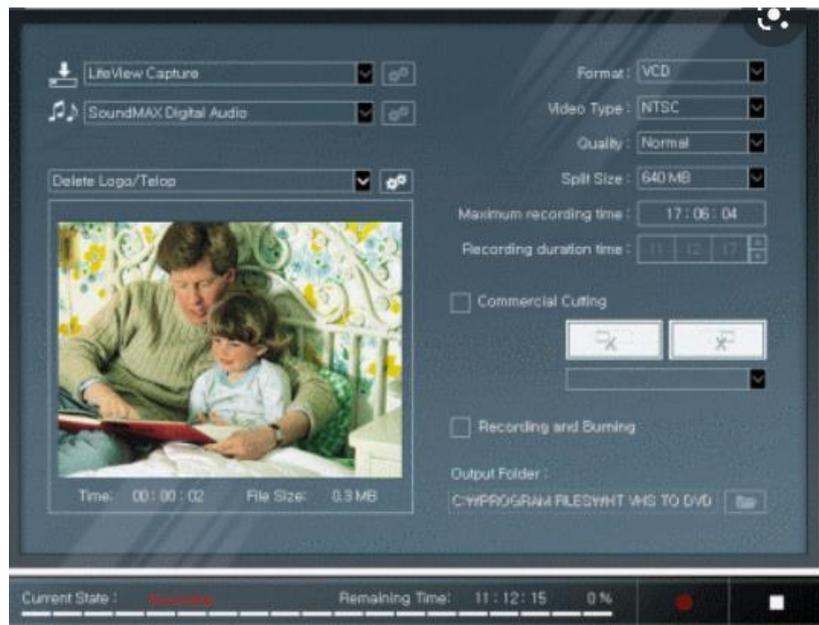


As can be seen, the main part plugs into a computer's USB port, whilst the cables connect to the VCR's "output" sockets (both video and audio).



We all know that the quality of VCR videos is, these days, very poor compared with modern TVs and computer monitors, but it may be possible to improve the quality depending on the output port types on the video player being used (Composite vs Component vs S-Video, and L/R audio vs single cable) ... essentially, the more cables used, the better.

The USB video capture device will come with the software you need to actually 'capture' the sound and picture coming from your VCR, and once installed will display a screen of the tape being played, similar to this –



The software also allows you to manipulate several settings in order to obtain the best quality image, and some even have video editing capabilities. You can easily find out which is best for your tape/s by making a few test runs before committing to the entire cassette. Using the software is as simple as putting a tape cassette into the VCR and pressing the Play button, and then clicking the Record button on the software ... the software also mimics the usual buttons of a VCR, e.g. Record, Pause, Stop etc. One important factor to remember is that the recording/transfer takes place in real time. That means that the video in the player has to be played as if you were watching it on a TV, so set aside time for this (or use a spare computer).

Once the video tape has finished (or stopped by you), and the software recording too, the software will automatically Save that recording session on your computer in a digital format, usually as an MPG file, which can then be copied to any Folder you wish, saved to portable flash drive, or even burned to a DVD.

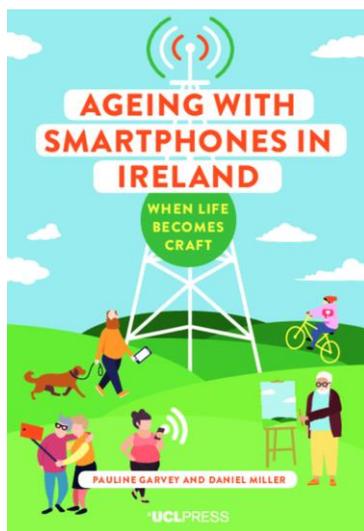
SeniorNet would be willing to arrange a Workshop demonstration for this process if sufficient members are interested ... just let us know at wellingtonseniornet@gmail.com.

The youth-giving benefits of your smartphone

by Mary Newman

Smartphone use has been typically associated with young people. But does using a smartphone as an older person make you feel more youthful? That's a proposition made in an [international study of smartphone use by older people](#) in nine countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America which found smartphones are for everyone, not just young people.

There's no doubt that smartphones have become associated with young people and it is common to deride their use by the young: texting rather than talking to people around them, fixation on screens, and screen addiction. Older people are often negative about smartphones, concerned about echo chambers, surveillance, and privacy. These negativities conflict with our own use of devices, though we are generally happy to live with ambivalence.



A report from the study that focuses on Ireland refers to smartphone use within the broader context of what it calls "screen ecology" which includes smartphones, tablets, computers, landlines and smart TVs. Many people own several of these and use them according to their needs or preferences. A young person might watch TV or movies on their computer or phone while an older person will choose a smart TV with a large screen for better accessibility. Some people will prefer a laptop to a smartphone for ease of navigation of websites. Others like the portability of their smartphone when out and about but prefer to use

a tablet or laptop when at home.

When it comes to "social ecology" smartphones are often the preferred device for keeping in touch with family and friends. In turn this makes women the 'natural' smartphone user and they generally use smartphones and social media more than men.

We are finding we have to improve our skills or learn new ones to do everyday tasks, deal with online bureaucracy or participate in online chats with family and friends. Skills and knowledge that older people have built

up in different ways can seem devalued by smartphones and easy access to information through Google.

When young people claim that the phone is 'intuitive' it can be embarrassing to ask for help navigating your smartphone or when it doesn't work. There is also an array of perplexing terminology to get used to, such as 'download apps', 'the cloud', or 'go on the internet' and 'wifi'. There are worries about doing something irreversible like deleting emails or photos, and the intricacies of service providers' phone plans.

However, there is a more positive way to view smartphones. Mastering the smartphone has a positive effect, reversing feelings of incompetence or being out of touch. Mastering skills seen as youthful results in older people seeing themselves as more youthful. Some participants in the study used 25-30 functions and apps. Inbuilt features used included: voice phone, texts, camera, clock or alarm and torch. The most popular apps were: Whatsapp, Gmail, calendars and internet browsers such as Google or Safari. Additional commonly used apps were for transport, news, photos, radio, airlines, video, music streaming, maps and others for social media and entertainment.

Many people customise or personalise their phone. They might organise their apps into groups or hierarchies or link apps to perform tasks. How a person uses the phone or organises it can reflect their interests, personalities or values.

An interesting finding was a change in how cameras are used. Initially the smartphone was used in the way we would use a camera: to photograph holidays or events i.e. to remember the past. But the phone allows functional photography: taking photos of an event notice or books as a way of easily retaining and recording information.

To describe the phone being always available the study's authors coined the term "[perpetual opportunism](#)". We can always be online and that can change the way we interact with the world around us. The phone's user can take a photo and share it immediately, record information, or contact someone quickly if they have a fall. It is suggested that the phone is not so much a device but a place we now live; we can have 'spaces' for certain tasks, others for social interaction and others for entertainment. People can become isolated or lonely due to decreasing mobility or other reasons. While there may be a loss of capacities with increasing age, the smartphone can offer new ones and be a social place to live rivalling a physical home.

While we may view our phones as both a blessing and a curse the study concludes:

"Our evidence is that most of its effects are simultaneously contradictory. It both joins you to people and separates you from them; it provides a focus but also a distraction. There are gains and losses in capacity. These contradictions are what make the smartphone so powerful – and so much like ourselves."

Resources

Aging with smartphones in Ireland: when life becomes craft by Pauline Garvey and Daniel Miller can be downloaded [here](#) for free from UCL Press.

A BBC programme [Thinking Allowed: the Smartphone](#) in which sociologist Laurie Taylor discusses the study's findings with Daniel Miller. Fast forward to 12 minutes in if you don't want to listen to the whole programme.

Short YouTube videos: [The Smartphone between generations](#) (1.5 minutes) and [Photography in retirement](#) (2 minutes)

The study's Facebook page [Anthropology of Smartphones and Smart Ageing](#). Here you can read snippets of study findings from the nine international sites.

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