



## August 2018

Visit our website at [www.pcs4me.com](http://www.pcs4me.com)

Ken Johnson, Newsletter Editor



# CALENDAR

SIG = Special Interest Group



### This Week's Schedule

**August 11 - Saturday - 1:05-2:50 PM**

[General Meeting](#) - Leader: Ray Carlson

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

### First Hour: A World without Passwords

As the next step, Google is promoting a USB-type drive it developed called the Titan Key. The drive includes security information that identifies the user. Google required that all its staff use this Key for a couple of years, and the result was that its staff experienced no phishing attacks. This session will look at how the Titan Key works, its pluses and minuses, and whether it can remove the need for user passwords. Google expects to start selling this device very soon, but, in the meantime, it recommends a less sophisticated Yubico version that is already for sale.

**Second Hour:** Phil Ball will present Tips and Tricks with insights into various topics that assist with regular computer activity.

**In addition to the presentations, the following are typical events which take place at our General meetings:**

- 1) We hold an informal Flea Market in which you are encouraged to bring in your excess computer equipment or software and make them available for others to enjoy at no charge. Please deposit give-away items on the table in the back marked "Free Stuff." Any items left here at the end of the meeting are subject to disposal.
- 2) If you have items that are just too good to give away, you may set up a separate table and hold your own sale.
- 3) We conduct a raffle of gift cards at the end of the meeting, so make sure to get a pair of tickets from whoever is in charge and place one on the item you'd like to win.
- 4) We will also accept your used ink and toner cartridges for recycling. They are turned in to Think4Inc for credits which PCS uses to purchase office supplies from them.

### Future Meetings

August 14 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

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**Future Meetings-(cont'd.)**

**August 14 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM**

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

**August 18 - Saturday**

No PCS meeting is scheduled.

**August 21 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM**

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

**August 25 - Saturday - 1:05-2:50 PM**

[Smartphone SIG](#) - Leader: Murray Smolens

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

John Carter will discuss interesting topics related to smartphones.

**August 28 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM**

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

*Note that these dates are correct at time of publication but are subject to change.*



**Prescott Computer Society**  
**Current Officers & Board of Directors**

<b>Officers:</b>		<b>General Directors:</b>	
President	Ray Carlson	Joan Baum	Murray Smolens
Vice Pres	Phil Ball	Dick Mason	Ken Johnson
Secretary	JB Burke	John Carter	
Treasurer	Edi Taylor-Richards		

### Home Automation and Security

The President's Pen by Don VanSyckel

January 2018 issue, WSIWYG

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I've been looking at home alarm systems and thermostats. I guess it's a sign of the times. Many of these have connectivity via your home Wi-Fi and some have built-in cellular connectivity.

Most offer remote control via a web site accessible from your PC or from a dedicated smart phone app.

My neighbor tells me his garage door opener can be status checked and controlled remotely.

Then there are refrigerators that have cameras in them, so you can, supposedly, check out your supply of stuff while you're at the grocery store. Hopefully you never park a tall or big item in front of the camera.

I've also seen advertised door locks that can be remotely monitored and controlled.

There are other home automation systems such as X10 and Zwave products that offer most of the features on the individual products listed above, but in one integrated system.

The issue, or possibly more accurately my reservations about these systems, is that most are not controlled or accessed by you directly. Most only 'talk' to the manufacturer's web site and you 'talk' to the same web site. You get the illusion that you're communicating directly but you're not. So, what. Well, companies come, and companies go, so what happens if the manufacturer of one or more of your products goes out of business? What happens to the web site that you're dependent on? Possibly another company will take it over, but I would bet that in this case a fee would be involved. Can anyone spell "Edsel" or "Hudson?" Another 'feature' of most of the new systems is they're totally dependent on batteries. Granted some system / battery combinations can run several years before requiring a battery replacement. They still need replacing.

Members were asked to keep some of these issues in mind for their January presenter, Mr. Derek Bricknell from Best Buy in Madison Heights, who presented "Home Security and Automation." It should be an interesting presentation.

*Note from Judy: Do you have a Best Buy in your area? You might want to ask the store / general manager if someone can give a "Home Security and Automation" presentation to your group. Don't forget to mention that the Sterling Heights Computer Club had one at their January meeting. They might ask you to get in touch with the Best Buy home office to request the presentation. They also might donate something, along with the presentation.Ω*

### E-mail Basic Review

Back to Basics

By Jim Cerny, Forum Leader, Sarasota Technology User Group, Florida

December 2017 issue, Sarasota Monitor

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I am going to assume you already have an email address and are enjoying sending and receiving emails. But perhaps you are not aware of the fun and helpful options available in all email applications. Hopefully something in this article will push your curiosity button and encourage you to "ask google" for more information. Although each email provider (app or program) may look different on your device (and even the SAME provider can look quite different on a Windows computer than on an iPad, etc.) all are capable of doing the following:

Entering people in your "TO:" box – If you just start typing the name of someone, your email will search your "contact list" or "address book" to find a match and list what it finds. Just click on the name you want. Be sure to keep your contact list of email addresses current. It is easy to click on a name which may have an OLD email address. If no name matches, you have to enter the email address yourself. Why not add that person to your contact list for next time?

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Learn to use “group” email addresses. You can use your contact list to create a “group” email such as for a club or family group. This means you only have to enter the group name, and ALL the email addresses in that group will be placed in the “TO:” box for you. This is a great time saver. Of course, you need to keep the group current. It is easy to learn how to “add” or “delete” people from a group.

Clean out your “inbox” by deleting old emails or keeping only the emails you want by moving them to a folder. Your “inbox”, “deleted emails”, “drafts”, etc., are all folders or places – you can add your own folders to this list and move the emails you want to keep to them. I have a folder for STUG emails and for another club I belong to. This keeps the emails in my inbox to a minimum.

Learn to SEARCH for emails in any or all folders. You can search and find words in the subject line or in the emails themselves. You can search for all emails to or from a specific address too. This is helpful if you forget where you put an email.

Emails you delete will go to the “deleted emails” folder and they need to be deleted again from that folder to be deleted forever. Check to see if your email has an automatic delete setting for this folder. I have my email set to delete emails older than 90 days from my “deleted emails” folder. Do NOT keep thousands of emails! (Yes, there are people who like to keep everything, they call them “hoarders” and they have their own television show!).

Sharing photos using email is easy. You just “attach” the photo (or ANY file) to your email before you send it. Yes, you can attach more than one, but don’t go crazy and attach too many, usually three or four is plenty. Photos take a lot more time to send than text.

Learn to access your email on another device. This is very helpful when you are traveling or need to use another computer to get to your email. You should always be able to access your email by going to your email internet webpage and entering your email account and password there. I highly recommend that you try this to be sure you can do it when you need to.

Please “ask Google” or use YouTube and watch a

Short video about your email and the possibilities it provides. There is always more to learn, and I hope this information will be helpful for you to find and use the tools you need for better emailing!Ω

### Alexa... What can you do?

By Phil Sorrentino, Newsletter Contributor

December 2017 issue, Sarasota Monitor

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Alexa is a Digital Assistant. If you have access to an Amazon Echo or Amazon Echo Dot, ask Alexa “What can you do?” Alexa will tell you “A lot. You can tell me to turn up the volume, play music, create a To Do list, or look up a topic on Wikipedia.” Finally, it will suggest, “To find out more, check out the Things to Try page in the Alexa App.” (If you don’t have a device, befriend someone who has one and give it a try.) When you go to the Amazon Echo App and choose Things to Try, you will see quite an impressive list headed by “What’s new?” (new things Alexa can do), and Echo Show (an ad for the new Echo Show device). And 28 more topics, alphabetically arranged, starting with “Ask questions,” “Calling and messaging,” and “Check your calendar.” These are many of the things that you can try after you get over asking: “Alexa, what is the temperature,” “Alexa what time is it,” and “Alexa, tell me a joke.”

A Digital Assistant is a complex piece of software that can perform many tasks or services for the user. A Digital Assistant typically includes access to large databases and includes Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities. The Digital Assistant software runs on a Server, aided by the App running in the local device (smartphone, computer or dedicated device like the Echo). Remember Client-Server Technology? Digital assistants typically are voice controlled and provide verbal and/ or action results (like answering a question or turning a light on or off). Amazon’s Alexa is just one of the digital Assistants that are finding their way into regular use. Others that you may be familiar with are Google’s “Ok, Google,” Apple’s “Siri,” Microsoft’s “Cortana,” and Samsung’s “Bixby.”

(Siri has been around the longest and appears to have the largest user base, followed by Google and Alexa.) All of these can provide answers to basic time and weather questions, and even basic information lookup questions. Alexa is unique in that it is accessed by use of the Amazon Echo, Echo Dot, or Echo Show devices, not by a com-

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puter or smartphone (though you need a smartphone to setup many of its capabilities). Google's Assistant, which is like Alexa, can be accessed by a smartphone (or tablet), and the Google Home device. The Google Home device is like the Amazon Echo device.

Going back to Alexa's list of "Things to Try," there are many things that can be very useful in your daily routine, such as Control of smart home devices, Control music, check your calendar, setting alarms, timers and reminders, Creating ToDo and Shopping lists. Some of these things are inherent and are part of Alexa, and some of these require additional support in the form of "skills." Skills are Amazon's term for additional support from a source other than Alexa or the Alexa App. To see a comprehensive list of these skills, just Google "Amazon Skills," and select "Amazon.com: Alexa Skills."

- Setting a timer is built into Alexa. All you have to do is say "Alexa, set a "Name of timer" for "number of minutes," for example: Alexa, set a "Cook the rice" timer for "15 minutes." In 15 minutes, Alexa will announce "Cook the rice timer" is done." Alexa will continue to announce it until you acknowledge it by saying "Alexa, Stop." (I know battery operated kitchen timers are cheap and reliable, but you typically can't set them by voice.)
- You can also set Alarms for specific times, like "Alexa, set an alarm for 7 in the morning." The alarm, when it occurs, is a pleasant sequence of gentle tones. Again, to stop the alarm tones, just say "Alexa, Stop."
- Another nice feature built into Alexa is the ability to create and maintain a ToDo list and a Shopping list. To add an item to the ToDo list just say, "Alexa Add "Item name" to the ToDo list, like "Alexa add Check the Oil" to the ToDo list. And similarly, to add something to the Shopping list, just say "Alexa, add "Food name" to the Shopping list, like "Alexa, add Butter to the Shopping list." After you make either of these requests, Alexa will respond and indicate that the item has been added to the requested list. Creating a list is all well and good, but the nice benefit here is that when you look at the Alexa App on your smartphone, your Shopping and ToDo lists are there and

immediately updated. So, now your shopping list is available the next time you are at the food store, and your ToDo list is available when you get to Home Depot parking lot and wonder why you drove there.

Another feature I found useful was the ability to check and maintain my calendar. Alexa can be set up to use many calendars, including the Google Calendar. Once the calendar is set up, you can inquire about the activities on your calendar just by saying "Alexa, what is on my calendar for today," or "Alexa what is on my calendar for the next two days." (Alexa can report the activities on your calendar for today, tomorrow, or even four days from now, but will not report activities that happened in the past.) You can even add items to your calendar just by saying "Alexa add "Appointment" to my calendar," like "Alexa, Add "Dentist next Tuesday at 10 in the morning" to my calendar." Alexa will respond that the appointment has been added for the desired date and time. And just as you would expect, when you look at your calendar, on your smartphone or computer, you will see the new appointment. And of course, you can delete items using Alexa. And, you still have complete control over the calendar with your computer or smartphone.

Home automation is another area where Alexa can be very useful. Home automation can take the form of controlling lights, locks, thermostats, and a security system. To accomplish these types of tasks, an appropriate Alexa compatible device and a "skill" for that device will have to be set up. But, once these things are in place, Alexa (as well as your smartphone) can control those devices. I set up a tp-link, Alexa compatible, LED light and obtained the tp-link skill, and once set up I was able to control the light just by saying "Alexa turn on (or off) the living room lamp". (Very cool, sure beats the old X-10 control system.) Maybe an Amazon Echo or a Google Home can help you with some of your daily activities. [Ω](#)



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## One Dongle to Rule Them and In the Darkness, Bind Them

By Chris Woods, Member, Under the Computer Hood UG

February 2018 issue, Drive Light

[www.uchug.org](http://www.uchug.org)

When you get a wireless mouse, keyboard or any other of a myriad of wireless devices, what is common is that they all come with their own dongle. Most operate within the 2.4 GHz range and are mated to that device. Lose the dongle and you might as well kiss it goodbye. Ever noticed, on some of these devices, a tiny orange asterisk tattooed upon its surface?



The orange asterisk symbol stands for Unifying Receiver, one of the dirty little secrets of peripheral manufacturers. Why have all your USB ports taken up with dongles when only one is required, the Unifying Receiver?

Logitech introduced its Unifying Receiver back in 2009. At first, it was only for Logitech's line of devices, and it was limited to keyboards and mice. Many manufacturers have quietly included the same function on their peripherals. One of the pieces that make this magic work is the Logitech Unifying Software ([http://support.logitech.com/en\\_us/software/unifying](http://support.logitech.com/en_us/software/unifying)).

The software acts the same as a Bluetooth pairing, mating the device to the receiver. To set up this pairing you first download the software. Then plug in the Unifying Receiver to a USB port and allow its driver to load. Finally, you run the software. When you run the software, there is a prompt that will ask you to turn each device (mouse, keyboard, etc.) off and on. If the device is compatible it is paired to that one receiver. To add other devices later you run the software again and follow the prompts.

Right now, it's still limited to six devices per receiver. A space saver for systems that are port limited, provided the device is recognized as compatible. As of this writing, according to Toms Hardware: "

A Logitech Receiver will pair up to 6 Logitech and non-Logitech peripherals, provided they both have the symbol. A Microsoft Receiver will pair most devices...but not Logitech."

*I have not seen any compatibility lists, but I can confirm from a tech standpoint that most peripherals that have the symbol pair without issue. I have a user at work that has a Logitech Unifying Receiver with an Asus keyboard, a Logitech mouse, and a Wacom drawing tablet. The limiting factor seems to be if your OS sees the device as an HID (Human Interface Device). For someone using many wired HID's and wanting to switch to wireless to open USB ports the Unifying Receiver can come in very handy.Ω*



## Prescott Computer Society

Where you share  
what you know,



## Need Help With C.omputers?

Did you know that the Prescott Public Library has a program of Computer mentoring on a one-on-one basis? They have several experienced volunteers who will work with you using one of the Library computers.