

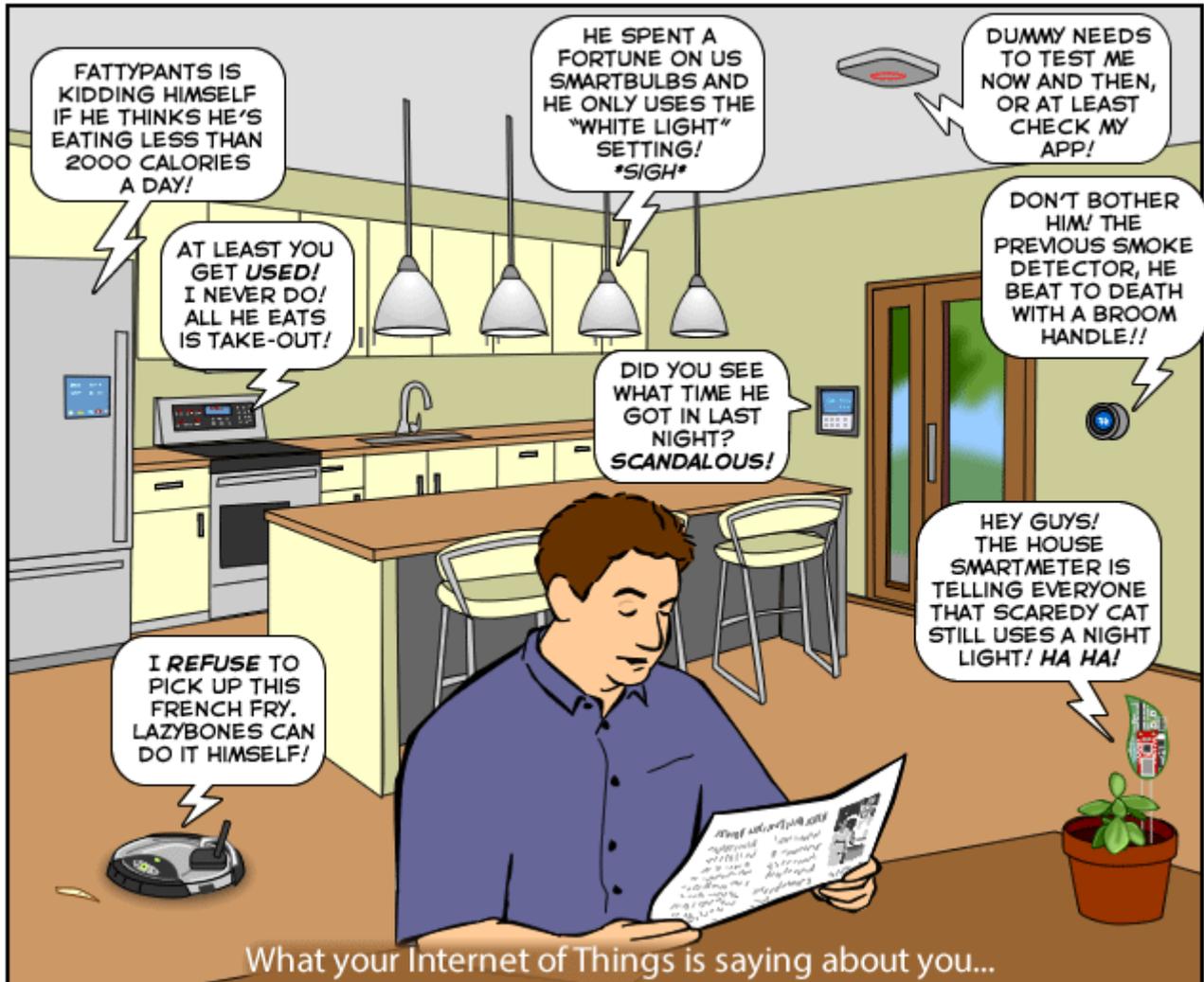
Hamilton Computer Club

Exchange information and share skills



The Joy of Tech™

by Nitrozac & Snaggy



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joyoftech.com

<http://www.joyoftech.com/joyoftech/joyarchives/1947.html>

THE ROM

February 2014

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President's Report

The club has got off to a good start this year, our first workshop went well and we've got many good ideas and leads for future presentations. Our first Thursday meeting this year will cover programming in Python.

There was a time not so long ago when computers did not boot to a desktop or even an operating system like DOS. Early personal computers booted directly into the BASIC programming language and doing anything at all required at least a little knowledge of BASIC commands.

Computers have come a long way since then and most people use them today with no thought of the software that makes them work, but programs for them still have to be written by someone. That's one reason you might want to learn programming; to develop applications.

There are other reasons you might want to learn a programming language even if you don't intend to write any useful software; programming teaches logical thinking, it's good exercise for the brain. It will also give you a much better insight into how computers do things, which helps with understanding why an application or operating system does things a certain way and how to make most efficient use of your computer.

This month's presentation will cover more than just Python too. William will also talk about some of the other tools that let programmers test and debug smaller pieces of code and work collaboratively on large projects.

If you're interested in learning Python we'll be starting evening classes at Te Whare o te Ata 6pm - 8pm, from Wednesday 12th onwards.

Bruce Kingsbury, Club President.

February meeting

Venue: 'Te Whare o Te Ata' Community House, 60A Sare Crescent, Fairfield, Hamilton

Date: 13th February 2014

Topic: The Python programming language

Speaker: William Mckee from Waikato University

Python is an Open Source programming language that is versatile and powerful, but also easy to understand and learn (and being Open Source its free).

Next workshop:

Venue: 'Te Whare o Te Ata' Community House, 60A Sare Crescent, Fairfield, Hamilton

Date: 15th February 2014 from 10am to 3.30pm

HOWTOs

The absurdly simple guide to backing up your PC | PCWorld

<http://www.peworld.com/article/2065126/>

I know we have covered this often before, but it is the most important and most “not done” task. This guide from PC World starts from first principles so you can choose the system to suit you.

How to Cope with an Expanding Data Closet | MIT Technology Review

<http://www.technologyreview.com/view/522926/>

It's easy to get trapped by your data. Create a personal storage management plan.

We live in a world in which our digital closet space doubles every year, so we never need to throw anything out. But if we don't learn how to manage our storage space, we'll never be able to find anything, either.

What's more, even most non-technical people I know have a growing inventory of storage sitting around their homes. Typically there's a drawer of 1GB and 2GB USB flash drives—it seemed like a lot of space at the time—camera cards, old CDs and DVDs, and usually a few external drives. What's on those drives? Can they still be read? Are they safe to throw out? Who has the time to find out!

So before you click that button and buy more storage, it's useful to take a few minutes and create your own personal storage management plan. This involves writing down what you are storing, the threats that your data face, and the technical measures you are employing to protect the data. Without such forethought, there's a good chance that you'll end up losing irreplaceable data in this age of plenty.

What's the best format for storing digital movies?

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/askjack/2014/>

Scott wants to convert his DVDs so he can save space and watch them on different devices, including his iPhone and iPad. Which file formats should he use?

[The Guardian's Tech advisor canvases the various options. -Ed]

How to change your email address without losing your friends

<http://www.peworld.com/article/2062241/>

Mohammad Anwar has to change his email address. He asked for advice on handling the transition.

Think of all the places where your old email address resides, outside of your immediate control, waiting to give people plenty of false information. There are other people's address books, old messages in people's inboxes, Web sites that use your address as your logon name, and your business cards.

Changing your email address can be quite a chore.

Software

Many uses for VLC Media player

The official Playing features are here <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/features.html>

and the Streaming features are here <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/features.html>

VLC can play and/or convert media files and/or media streams of different settings and formats, and also broadcasting them over a network or the internet. Other possible uses include remotely controlling playback from a browser, recording directly from a webcam, watching and saving Youtube and other videos for viewing without a browser, managing internet video, radio and podcasts, playing and normalising audio, copying and ripping DVDs. The one I have found most useful is recording broadcast streams for later use.

Documentation for using VLC features is in the help menu

https://wiki.videolan.org/Documentation:VLC_for_dummies

but it is probably easier to follow one of the more understandable guides from HowtoGeek , Makeuseof and Maketecheasier and their related links.

<http://www.howtogeek.com/173222/>

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/7-top-secret-features-free-vlc-media-player-si/>

<http://www.maketecheasier.com/4-more-things-you-didnt-know-vlc-could-do>

<http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/2686/how-to-copy-a-dvd-with-vlc-1.0/>

VLC is also available in a portable version which enables you to take your music and videos along with you, as well as something to play them with.

Draft - a New Era online word processor

Perhaps better described as a text content generator/editor for the internet and mobile world.

One of PCMag's undiscovered apps <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2428803,00.asp>

Draft <https://draftin.com/>

Modern word processors aren't that different from 20 years ago—they still conform to a printed-page paradigm, even on screen. The modern Web app for word processing—like Draft—knows better. Draft is quick and easy, saves to services you use daily (like Dropbox, Evernote, or Google Drive), and offers simple document collaboration.

Looking at their website <https://draftin.com/> I see you can use Draft with any web page you can write to. Features include controlling versions of your documents, importing documents from other cloud services (changes you make in Draft are automatically synchronised back to the source account), publish to a wide range of web services and more. It even includes tools for transcribing audio and video.

You have to sign up to use the free App. The terms include using it only for legitimate purposes and the right to terminate your account immediately without notice for breaching the conditions.

Unique browser features

<http://www.zdnet.com/six-clicks-can-your-browser-do-these-tricks-7000025319/>

By Ed Bott for The Ed Bott Report | January 17, 2014

Each of the popular browsers has a unique useful feature

- Google Chrome: highlights noisy tabs
- Internet Explorer: On-the-fly Tracking Protection Lists
- Internet Explorer :(Windows 8 only) Reading View
- Safari: Shares web pages with just one tap
- Firefox: Master Password
- Opera: Speed Dial

News/Trends

Windows XP refuses to die

<http://www.v3.co.uk/v3-uk/news/2327793/>

Windows XP cut-off: Microsoft pressures SMBs to migrate as 60 day deadline passes

by Michael Passingham 10 Feb 2014

Microsoft's director of Windows small business marketing Jay Paulus reiterated the company's warning that continuing to run XP presented numerous risks.

"After Windows XP reaches end of support on 8 April, 2014, businesses still running the old operating system face increased security risks, increased costs and lack of technical support," he said.

Microsoft revealed in January that it would continue to support Windows XP's Security Essentials until July 2015, but did not extend the deadline for other technical support. Despite this, the market share for Windows XP rose in January, with 29.23 percent of web users still running the outdated software.

Who really owns anything in the digital age?

<http://readwrite.com/2013/10/31/>

Rise Of The Renter Class: In A Spotify World, Need We Own Anything?

The more we put into our digital devices, the less we seem to own it. Something's got to give.

Matt Asay October 31, 2013

Who owns what in the digital age? Matt Asay ponders this vexed question.

What makes Stories go viral?

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/elements/2014/01/>

The Six Things That Make Stories Go Viral Will Amaze, and Maybe Infuriate, You

Posted by Maria Konnikova January 21, 2014

What is it about a piece of content—an article, a picture, a video—that takes it from simply interesting to interesting and shareable? What pushes someone not only to read a story but to pass it on?

[See if you can guess before you read it. It certainly made me think. -Ed]

Security

Use pre-encryption for safe cloud-based storage

<http://windowssecrets.com/top-story/pre-encryption-makes-cloud-based-storage-safer/>

By Fred Langa on December 12, 2013 in Top Story

I must confess: Until recently, I deeply distrusted the security of cloud-storage services such as SkyDrive, Google Drive, and Dropbox.

But now, thanks to pre-encryption software, I'm comfortably using several cloud services — with no worries about the security and privacy of my files.

[Fred Langa shows how he uses his chosen Boxcryptor pre-encryption software to safely use cloud-based storage - Ed]

Resources

A website worth checking out

<http://www.pcmag.com/>

I first noticed the Tips and Howto section - their Get Organised series. This includes items Email management, Clean up your Inbox, Tips for using DropBox, Photo organising makeover, etc.

You can use the search facility or you can browse for tips on your current topic of interest using the Categories sidebar. In the Browser category I found The Best Firefox Extensions and Add-Ons of 2012 which includes AutoPager

“On many websites, you have to slog through page after page to read an entire article. (Yeah, yeah, we know.) If you're sick of clicking "Next," try AutoPager. It works with a wide variety of popular sites, turning multi-page articles into one long page, automatically loading the next page when you get to the end so the scrolling never stops.

The review section also seems to be useful. Subsections on (mobile) apps, software, security, and hardware (laptops, tablets, phones, Printers, cameras). You can look for free or in a price range.”

Other sections for news, opinions, features, business generally seem to be pretty good.

Cyberspace

Google is cornering the talent market in Artificial Intelligence and robotics

<http://goo.gl/oH1LrO>

Google is cornering the talent market in AI and robotics to dominate the next era of computing.

Dan Rowinski January 29, 2014

Over the past couple of months, Google has been playing its own peculiar game of Moneyball. It may not make a ton of sense right now, but Google is setting itself up to leave its competitors in the lurch as it moves into the next generation of computing.

Google has been snatching up basically every intelligent system and robotics company it can find. [.....]

All Google needs to do is make artificial intelligence a reality and plug its components into its large, seething network and see what happens. That is both very exciting and mildly terrifying at the same time.

The Internet of Things

The shift from desktop to mobile and the internet continues apace. The next stage is the “internet of things” where every item you can think of is connected to the internet and able to send and receive data, and often interact with other things, or even control or be controlled by them. Some glimpses of what is ahead:

Mobile technology is leading to The Internet of Things

<http://readwrite.com/2014/01/10/mobile-everywhere-smart-devices-internet-things>

Dan Rowinski January 10, 2014

Think your smartphone is smart? You ain't seen nuthin' yet. The technology that powers mobile is in the process of spreading, well, everywhere—and the world around us is going to be radically transformed as a result.

Think of it as the next big phase in the evolution of mobile computing. Cars, televisions, factories, clothes and other wearable items ... you name it, and the innovations that were developed for smartphones are going to help define the new things they'll do and how you'll use them.

The first phase of mobile was about turning our cellphones into what are essentially powerful pocket PCs. This posed unique challenges because of the size of the device and data connectivity issues. Over the past seven years (dating from the launch of the first iPhone), engineers worked to make everything smaller and faster while software developers created apps and systems to turn a cellphone into an "everything" device. The second phase will be to take that concept of everything and spread it everywhere. The connected home, the smart car, the television and commerce are all being informed by the advances that have been made in mobile.

Intel's Edison: One Card To Smarten Up Dumb Gadgets And Connect Them All

<http://readwrite.com/2014/01/08/intel-edison-tiny-computers-everywhere>

Alex Salkever January 08, 2014

Intel's just-announced Edison computer—the one the size of an SD card—illustrates the corollary to Moore's Law. If you can jam more and more circuits on a piece of silicon, you can also make computers that are smaller and smaller. And this heralds a whole new way of thinking about computing, clouds and connectivity.

[.....]

The prospect of ubiquitous tiny computers could dethrone the smartphone from its emerging role as a "hub" device for the Internet of Things—and that's a good thing. Essentially, if you can move the network node structure out of the smartphone and into anything that's connected (or that can be connected) to a relatively intelligent and configurable computer, then all of a sudden a true mesh network emerges—one that's most likely much less dependent on human interaction to function, because no one has to take their phone out of their pocket to make the thing go.

This could exist as a nearly passive entity, an underlying framework that rides beneath all our networks. Granted, this is Matrix talk, and it's still early days. But the smaller the computer and the greater its the power, the bigger the possibilities.

Optical Interconnect Paves the Way for Low-Power, High Performance Chips

<http://www.technologyreview.com/view/522811/>

MIT Technology review December 17, 2013

The wires that ferry electronic data across microchips are too power hungry for future microchips. But photons can now do the job instead thanks to a new generation of ultralow power optical interconnects.

Michael Watts and pals at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge say they've designed and built the first photonic modulator that operates at this ultralow power level.

At the very least, it should make possible a new generation of powerful chips operating at lower power than ever before.

The Hamilton Computer Club website is hosted by:



February meeting

Next meeting: Thursday 13th February 2014, 7:30 pm.

'Te Whare o Te Ata' Community House, 60A Sare Crescent, Fairfield, Hamilton, New Zealand

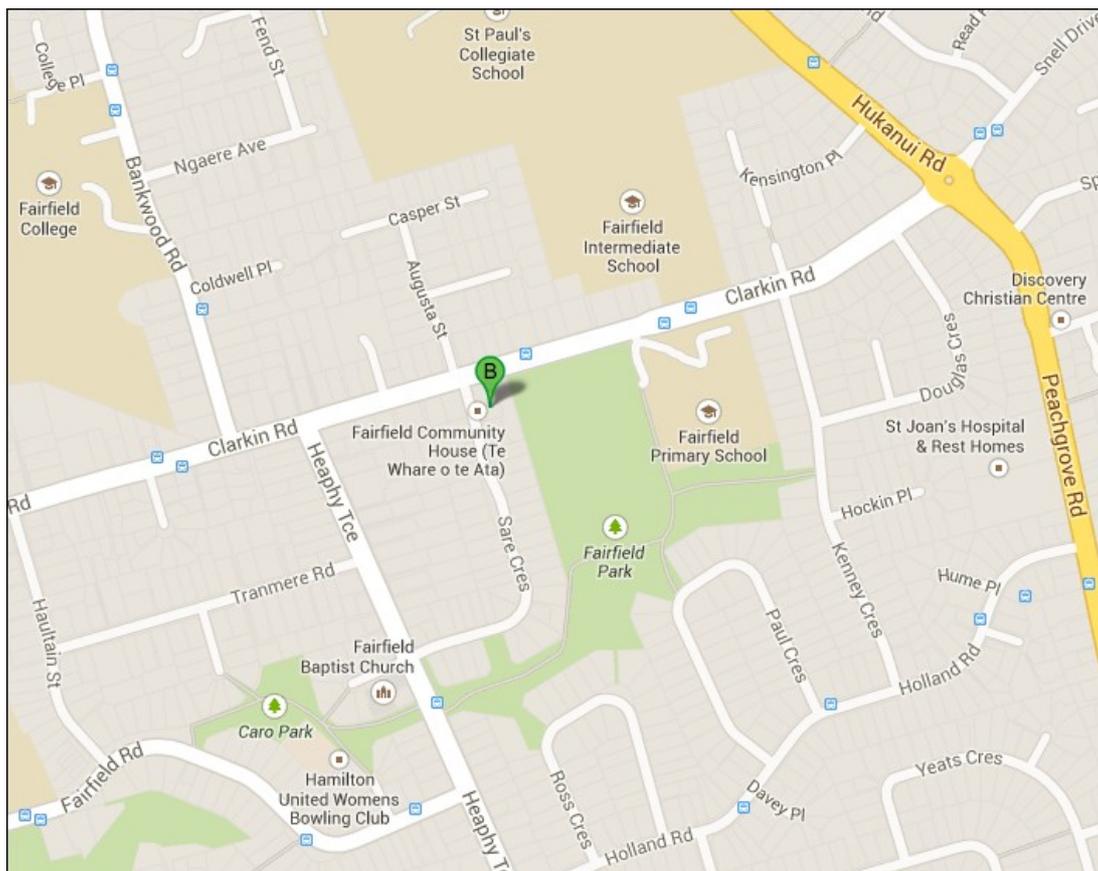
Topic: The Python programming language

Speaker: William McKee from Waikato University

Next workshop: Saturday 15th February 2014

Time: 10:00am – 3:30 pm.

Venue: 'Te Whare o Te Ata' Community House, 60A Sare Crescent, Fairfield



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