

# Bits & Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club



## January 2022

**Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center**

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd Suite 208 (lower level), Bella Vista, AR 72715

Website: <http://BVComputerClub.org>

Email: [editor@bvcomputerclub.org](mailto:editor@bvcomputerclub.org)

### MEETINGS

**Board Meeting:** January 10, 6pm, in John Ruehle Training Center, Highlands Crossing Center.

**General Meeting:** January 10, 7pm, "Using LibreOffice Impress for Presentations", presenter Joel Ewing. The completely-free open-source LibreOffice office suite includes a word processor (Writer), a spreadsheet app (Calc) and a presentation app (Impress). We will look at the basics of using "Impress" to create a presentation of slides that may be displayed on a digital projector or used to print handout copies or PDF versions of a presentation.

We will meet in-person in Room 1001 on the lower level of The Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Bella Vista, or you may attend the meeting on-line via Zoom. Zoom access information will be published on our website.

Visitors or Guests are welcome.

Because of COVID-19, we recommend observing current masking and social-distancing guidelines as much as possible. Consider attending by Zoom if you or others in your family are in a high risk category.

**Genealogy SIG:** No meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday).

### HELP CLINICS

January 19, 9am - noon at John Ruehle center

Members may request Remote Help on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Member Benefits ► Remote Help .

### MEMBERSHIP

Single membership is \$25; \$10 for each additional family member in the same household.

Join on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Get Involved ► Join/Renew, by mailing an application (from the web site) with check, or complete an application and pay in person at any meeting.

### CLASSES

(At BVCC Training Center)

**Wednesday January 26, 4pm-6pm, "Computer Security for Regular People, Part 1", with Justin Sell.**

Advance sign up required for each listed class (**Maximum attendance 8**): For reservations: email to [edu@bvcomputerclub.org](mailto:edu@bvcomputerclub.org), or sign up at the General Meeting. Classes are **free to Computer Club members**. Class access information will be emailed to those signed up for the class the day before class.

**Check the monthly calendar and announcements for any last minute schedule changes at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> .**

## NEW OR RETURNING BVCC MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members or members returning to BVCC after an absence since last month's newsletter:

Phyllis Gotzh

Evelyn Weigel

Glen Houts

Sharon Houts

Jeffery Knapstein

Nila Carnes

Barbara Ann Clark

---

## THOUGHTS FROM A CLICKER

By Tiny Ruisch, Vice President, Cajun Clicker Computer Club  
February 2021 issue, CCCC Computer News  
[www.clickers.org](http://www.clickers.org)  
office (at) clickers.org

Last week at one of my Zoom meetings, someone asked me if I had ever used IrfanView, an image viewer, and editor. I replied that it was one of my go-to programs about ten years ago. This chance remark gets me thinking about some of my computing experiences over the years. Technology has sure changed a lot. One of my first computer memories was when I was still in high school and UNIVAC was in the news. No one had any idea what the thing was good for. The census used one to somehow make counting the population easier. It was a different world back then and nobody much cared about a machine that was bigger than the family car and needed a special air-conditioned room.

One thing that interested me was the Texas Instruments pocket calculator. My daddy was a feed salesman and the company that he worked for provided him with one of these expensive machines. I remember him getting it out to show us how he could add 2 and 2 without making a mistake.

When I joined the Navy, I had my first experience with using a computer. I got to run the keypunch machine. If I made a mistake, a ship could easily get 10,000 pounds of butter instead of 1,000. Back then, the Navy paid us in cash. In later years, our paychecks were an IBM computer punch card. Now, most employers don't even issue checks. It's all done electronically.

In the late 1970s, computers started to catch on. IBM was the company that created the home market. Their 8086/8088 weighed about 30 pounds and had a whole megabyte of random-access memory. It blazed along at a speedy 4.77 MHz. Other companies that built computers soon started advertising themselves as IBM compatible. If you worked for IBM, you were required to wear a tie.

This is also the era when many of us hobbyists started building our first computers. Zenith Heath Kits were all the rage. They didn't work any better, but we were smarter because we built our own.

The operating system of choice in those days was PC-DOS. There were many other ones, but the home market was mainly CP/M or one of the DOS systems from Apple, Atari, or Commodore. In the early 1980s, a fellow you may have heard of buying an operating system called 86-DOS which was also known as Q-DOS (for Quick and Dirty DOS). Bill Gates later renamed it to MS-DOS for the company that he founded.

I'm pretty sure that Microsoft is still in business today.

Home computing started to take off in the '80s when Radio Shack introduced the Trash 80 (oops. I meant TRS 80). Apple's home computer was the Lisa and Texas Instruments had something called the TI-99.

I remember the first computer I bought. It was a Commodore VIC20. I loved that computer with its 5 KB of RAM and the data cassette storage, even though it often took 3-4 minutes to load a program. Incidentally, the VIC20 was the first home computer that sold a million units. In later years the Commodore 64 was even better.

The first innovative computer program to be sold was the spreadsheet VisiCalc. Like so many other successful things, clones like Lotus 1-2-3, SuperCalc, and Microsoft Excel were soon on the market. Did you know that Microsoft's Excel was first introduced for the Apple Macintosh? It was only later that it was ported to Windows. WordStar was the first commercially profitable word processor.

The real software revolution was the games. I don't think you could walk 50 feet without seeing somebody playing Space Invaders, PAC Man, or one of the many variations of Pong. I'll confess that my favorite games were made by Infocom. They specialized in "interactive fiction" games. I still remember their advertising slogan, "We put our graphics where the sun don't shine." Graphics adapters later put this type of adventure game out of business. Their first game was Zork which debuted in 1980.

In the old days, the only decision to be made when you bought a monitor was whether to have green or amber output. The only sound you could hear was the tinny beep for the operating speaker. The only mouse in the computer room lived in the wall. Printers were all dot matrix and printed about 30 characters a minute.

Of course, one of the biggest changes in computing has been the internet and the use of e-mail. I've heard that e-mail was invented by a Nigerian that had a lot of extra money to spend. The browser choices were Mosaic or Netscape. We've come a long way from logging in to the Bulletin Board.

I'm going to shut up for this month. Please remember that I've just written about some of my computing memories, so the facts may not be 100 percent correct. I'm just amazed at how far technology has advanced.

Thanks for reading.

---

## QR CODES AND MORE

***Barcodes containing useful info now show up in videos and presentations. Learn how to use those barcodes.***

By John Krout, Writer/Presenter, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society  
www.patacs.org, krout75 (at) yahoo.com

A QR code is a square 2-dimensional barcode that provides useful info such as a web page address (URL). QR codes can also contain email addresses, contact info, and just about any text. It is not the only square barcode out there. QR codes can be recognized by the square target blocks in the top two and bottom left corners.

**Illustration 1** shows a QR code example. This particular QR code provides a web page address for a site where short user-created videos can be downloaded for free. You have probably seen square QR code barcodes many other times in recent years.

My presentations for PATACS frequently include web page addresses. In this pandemic era of virtual meetings, I have decided to include not only the actual URL but also the QR code containing the URL.

Anyone in the audience who wants to copy the URL from the presentation immediately can do so simply by using their smartphone. Chances are that you won't even need to install a barcode reader app on your phone. In recent iPhones and Android 10 phones, the camera app has been augmented to act as a QR code reader.

I tried my Samsung Galaxy S10 camera app. I pointed it at the computer screen where a QR code was visible in one corner of a presentation. The camera app immediately displayed the web page URL contained in the QR code, as you can see in **Illustration 2**. I did not even have to snap a photo of the QR code. The app gave me the option of tapping the address to open that web page. Opening the web page is ideal for quickly saving the URL for later bookmarking.

Many retailers post QR codes enabling you to learn more about products.

## MUNZEES

There is an outdoor game based on QR codes printed on small stickers posted outdoors. The name of the game is Munzees. I have not tried the game, though I know a few of my geocaching friends also play Munzees, and occasionally I see the small Munzees QR code stickers outdoors. Any small QR code in a place where it does not seem to identify any product or other specific object is quite possibly a Munzees QR code.

The Munzees game has its own website, [www.playmunzee.com](http://www.playmunzee.com), and its own free phone app for communicating found Munzee QR codes to the website. That URL is encoded in **Illustration 3**.

## CREATING QR CODES

I found that my Galaxy 10 Contacts app will generate a QR code for any record in my Contacts list. When I create a contact QR code, it appears on the phone screen. At that point, I can save the QR code as a graphics image file, or attach it to an email or a text message.

There is a website, <https://www.qrcode-monkey.com/>, which creates QR codes containing the info you provide. It provides some interesting



Illustration 1: [pexels.com/video](http://pexels.com/video)

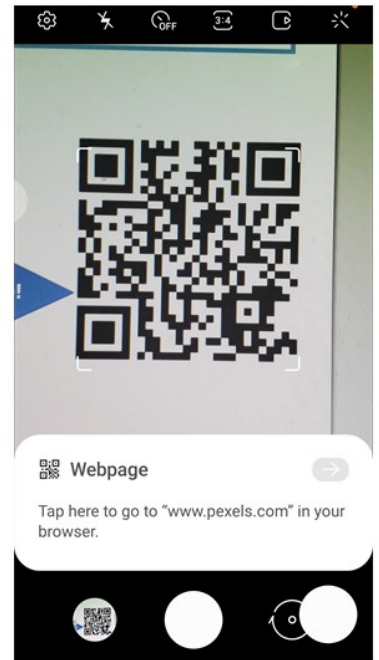


Illustration 2: Android 10 camera app reading QR code



Illustration 3: Play Munzee URL



Illustration 4: QR code monkey URL

features, such as multi-color QR codes and placement of a recognizable logo in a QR code. You can download, save, print, and share any QR code you generate on that site. The site provides this service for free. That URL is encoded in Illustration 4.

## OTHER TYPES OF BARCODES

There are several types of barcodes in wide use.

The **Uniform Product Code** (UPC) barcode on products, which enables rapid checkout and helps the retailer manage inventory, encodes information in several parallel vertical bars. That is an example of a 1-dimensional (1D) barcode. There are phone apps designed to scan UPC codes and tell you if the same product can be found for a lower price elsewhere.

If you have a driver's license, it contains both a 1D barcode and a 2-dimensional (2D) barcode. That 2D barcode is a type called PDF-417, and it includes all the text info on your license as well as some other info identifying your license record in the Virginia computer system. The **American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators** (AAMVA) created a standard for contents of the driver's license 2D barcode and updates the standard every few years. That standard is available online as a PDF document. You can read the field definitions in section D.12.5 of the PDF posted at the following URL, which is encoded in **Illustration 5**.



*Illustration 5: AAMVA card standard URL*

<https://www.aamva.org/aamva2020dlidcarddesignstandard/>

The 2D barcode on the driver's license is now scanned by Safeway at checkout if you buy alcohol. That means the Safeway computer system may capture a great deal of info other than your date of birth. Does the company save all that additional info about you? Doing so centrally would use up a gigantic amount of storage space. Possibly the stores store the info locally, on a store server. That localized info could be valuable if a company store is audited by Virginia ABC for underage sales.

Barcodes also typically show up on shipment box labels. United Parcel Service uses a 1D barcode type for machine-readable package tracking numbers. If you have received UPS parcels in person, you have probably seen the UPS driver use a barcode scanner to scan the tracking number barcode and confirm the date and time of delivery of the parcel.

While the phone camera apps will read only QR codes, other free apps can be used to read a variety of barcodes. I downloaded one Android with the rather generic name Barcode Scanner to read the Virginia driver's license barcode. The same app reads QR codes, UPC codes, PDF-417 codes, CODE 39 (1D barcode type, which appeared above the address in correspondence I received from the Arlington County Government), Data Matrix (another square 2D barcode type), and some other types. I used that app to read the PDF-417 barcode on my Virginia driver's license.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout has been writing about creative uses of personal computers since the early 1980s. Until April 2020 he was a software documentation writer, contracted to support a major federal government computer system. Now he lives on his IRA and writes whatever he wants to. He resides in Arlington Virginia with his son, many computers and cameras, and too many cats.