July 2017

Gizmoe

This is the fourth edition of *Gizmoe* in 2017.

Gizmoe will also be posted on www.seniornet.co.nz from 24th July 2017.

At the risk of being a tad boring – What terrible weather we are having this winter! Okay, we have also had some terrific sunny days but the storms have certainly reminded us that winter is well and truly here. Some of our Learning Centres have noted lower attendances in classes with people staying at home when the storms have hit – who can blame them!

The 2018 AGM and Symposium venue has been booked. All Learning Centres we notified a few weeks ago but as an additional reminder the event will be held on 8th and 9th May at the Hamilton Airport Hotel. It will be limited to 120 attendees, so you may wish to pencil in the dates?

If you were unable to attend the 2017 AGM/Symposium and would like to look at the presentations simply click onto the AGM banner on www.seniornet.co.nz . The page has been updated to also include videos of the Symposium presentations. We thank Ken Cashin from Dargaville Learning Centre for all his work in filming the videos and then preparing them for access on our site – you're a star Ken!

It's an election year and with it comes opportunity to hear the pledges from each party on how much better life will be if they were able to influence change. So….. the Federation has written to every political party pointing out the value of SeniorNet, the important role we have in improving digital literacy in New Zealand and asking what financial support they would offer. We pointed out that due to the shift in education priorities funding to SeniorNet was withdrawn in 2015. Each party has until 31 July to respond. We will let you know how they respond, it may help you decide how you vote in September?

Remember, learn something new every day!

Grant Sidaway Executive Officer.

Virtual Reality and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

Have you ever wanted to sit with the Orchestra, maybe next to the lead violinist or even hear what it really sounds like from a percussionist viewpoint? You may even harbour the thought of conducting? You guessed it – there is an app for that.

It's possible with 360-degree virtual reality technology and apparently, it's one of the first in the world of this type.

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra has released a fully immersive VR (virtual reality) experience of the 90-member Orchestra performing at Wellington's Michael Fowler Centre.

Viewers can stand on the conductor's podium next to the Conductor or move at any time among the different sections of the Orchestra as it plays, including first violins, cellos, horns and percussion.

The company that created this, Wrestler, used 360-degree video and sound from five different camera positions.

A Holophone microphone was used to record the music in 360 degrees so that the sound of the performance also changes, depending on where you place yourself.

The NZSO VR Experience can be downloaded from Google's Play Store for Android phones and Apple's App Store for iPhone.

If you don't have a Smartphone or VR headset a version of the video will be placed on the NZSO's Facebook page and YouTube, allowing the viewer to use their mouse to pan in 360 degrees while the NZSO performs.

Cardboard (the android App) puts virtual reality on your smartphone. So perhaps if you don't have a VR Headset (not many of us have them stashed away in the sideboard… yet), then download the Cardboard App if you have an Android phone and you're off on the VR experience.

Here is a YouTube link that will tell you more:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE8CnLEhjPc

SeniorNet Membership – a wealth of knowledge

What an astounding bunch of people. During my time with SeniorNet I have the joy of meeting so many interesting people and learning what they did before joining our ranks. Yes, everyone has a tale to tell, but without doubt SeniorNettters would have to be one of the most interesting group of people I have ever met. One such person is Brian Say from the Tasman district. Brian can't get enough of SeniorNet…. He's a member of both Nelson and Motueka Learning Centres. He kindly agreed to share some of his past with us – thank you Brian.

I started work life in December 1953. I was employed in the civil service, initially, working at the fuel research station in London I also got married at the age of 19 and after working for three years decided I must get some accommodation for my wife and family. I therefore moved to a research facility-hydraulics research-in Wallingford and Berkshire. This job gave me access to a council house and after living there for three years I was offered the opportunity to learn how to program computers to analyse data.

This was in 1960 and was the start of my Systems career until I retired in 1998.

At that time, I prepared computer instructions on paper tape, all data was submitted on paper tape and the calculated results were printed out. This was excellent from my point of view as up to that date I had been carrying out all the calculations on an electric calculator, which consumed many hours of my working day the computers used were installed at high well-the atomic energy research establishment.

The computers used up to that time were:

The Ferranti Mercury machine equipped with 400 locations to store data. These calculations used to take many hours to complete.

Figure 1 Perhaps Brian at his first computer?

In 1963, I saw an advertisement for a data analyst at the European space research organisation for which I applied. I heard nothing for 18 months and was then the surprised to be invited to attend an interview in Germany. As I had not been abroad up to that point I had to find out how to get from home to the location given in Germany. The travel agent sorted all the details out for me and I subsequently flew to Frankfort. The hostess offered to take me to the railway station and I managed to convey to the ticket clerk that I wanted to go to Darmstadt. On arrival, a taxi took me to the hotel. I then had to substantiate how to get to the interview location for the following morning. When this was successfully achieved I could relax.

However, at the interview and the time which followed I was subsequently turned down for the job in Germany and was surprised when I was called for another interview in London about eight weeks later I was then successful in obtaining a position in the European space research organisation based in Holland. I sold up my house and went to start work in Delft and the family sold the house and subsequently moved to Delft three months later.

At the European space research organisation in Holland I was involved in running and writing programs which calculated satellite trajectories and looking at the various physical parameters that the satellite was subjected to.

In 1967 the division which controlled the computer facility were moved to Germany and I requested that I be considered to take over the management of the computer facility. This was accepted and I moved into a position of computer manager. I was involved in writing systems to analyse satellite data from the first satellite to be launched by what today is now the European space agency and various other projects up to 1970.

In 1970 I obtained a position with the Westminster city council in London and moved back to the UK to pursue that opportunity. In that organisation I was deputy head of server management services reporting to the head of management services. We then embarked on a large project to update and expand the systems for the Westminster City Council. In 1974 I saw an opportunity to go to New Zealand and was interviewed at New Zealand house in London and subsequently offered the position. When I arrived in Wellington I was met by a ministry of health person, given a box of food and shown to a motel and told to report on Monday. All a bit of a shock as Wellington airport at time was a much more basic setup than it is today at the Ministry of health I was a senior advisory office and however this only lasted three months when I was swept into a project to automate the whole of the national health service across the country under the guidance of consultants.

The health service computer organisation consisted of a head office in Wellington, and two data centres one in Auckland and one in Christchurch. These were to service all 29 hospital boards with computer facilities and the first three systems to be developed were, admission and discharge and a laboratory system. The only one to survive to the current day was the admission and discharge system

I was involved in administering the government contract with Digital Equipment Corporation and subsequently became the data centre manager in Auckland.

Subsequently, I approached the computer consultants to ask about working in the United States. I flew to Detroit in 1977 and my timing was perfect as the existing director of systems at Henry Ford Hospital was leaving and I secured the position for myself. This involved managing staff of up to 150 people and installing many new systems.

An opportunity occurred in 1984 to move to the Detroit Medical Center and manage their systems development for the next five years during this time, I implemented a management information system for all senior executives so that the they could see at a glance what the current status was with the hospital and its staff and patients.

The systems involved were patient management and accounting, a management information system, and many other hospital systems. In early 1989 I was approached and accepted a position as chief information officer at Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia. During the three years with Hahnemann University Hospital I was responsible for the project to install a brand-new phone system providing many of the facilities that you now have on smart phones. By this time desk top computers were becoming quite common in the work environment and we were beginning to see and use this new product called the Internet.

All the equipment used since I went to Henry Ford Hospital have been large IBM mainframes using Fortran and COBOL has the programming languages also, from 1984 we were providing support and systems to people using desk top computers.

In a management reshuffle in 1992 I was made redundant and provided with excellent facilities and training to obtain new employment. I decided to travel down to New Zealand to see what was available at home and when I landed in Auckland and bought the evening paper there was a one page advert for staff at the now Waikato District health board. One position interested me which was the general manager of computer services. I applied for the position, stayed an extra week in New Zealand and was awarded the position before returning to the USA. I returned back to the United States and was back in New Zealand at the beginning of September 1992 ready to commence by position at health Waikato.

My achievements at health Waikato were to install a fibre optic network for all users of terminals and equipment in the hospital, promoting it to the medical staff and carrying out development work with the Department of dermatology conducting remote interviews with patients.

Our favourite app WHATSAPP!! - a contribution from Ian Grant

Yes I think it's great - FREE and so easy to use especially for those of us who are not especially techy! I have found it especially useful while travelling overseas, no need for expensive SIM cards or data deals.
It was great while travelling in India, I was able to share photo, videos, voice messages, location pegs, and even international phone calls!

It really added to my sense of safety while travelling, when the earthquake struck we were in touch with family in New Zealand immediately.   My sibling all sent messages to our family group, so we all knew everyone was ok, and left phone lines free for emergency services. It was also just 1 message that was required and everyone knew that everyone was ok, my brother messaged that he had checked in with our elderly parents.

I have a few WhatsApp groups, one with my siblings, and another with my children, and another with friends. It's a great way to keep in touch, is very private and secure. Try it you will love it! Easy to use.

More than a billion people in over 180 counties use WhatsApp. It's available for both Android and iPhone Smartphone users.

As a foot note to Ian's article:
Just this week the Guardian Newspaper reported that China had partially blocked the popular messaging service WhatsApp, as authorities tighten their grip on the internet ahead of a major leadership reshuffle in Beijing. Photo, video and voice messages sent by the Guardian from Beijing were all blocked, but text messages were not affected. Dozens of users in China complained of a total ban on sending any type of messages on WhatsApp. The block appeared sporadic, similar to when Chinese authorities first banned Google's Gmail in 2014 before instituting a total blackout. The ban comes as Chinese officials are preparing for a twice-a-decade leadership shuffle later this year, with various factions within the Communist party jockeying for control of key positions and president Xi Jinping likely to further consolidate power.

New SeniorNet Flyers, Posters and Template advertisements

"No man is an Island" - John Donne (1572-1631), in short, we can't survive alone!
Also true for SeniorNet. Regular advertising pays dividends. To help Learning Centres and to provide consistency of our brand a new set of Flyers and posters have been developed and are ready for learning centres to use. Also available a template for newspaper advertisements. Each unit is able to be customised to make it relevant to your Learning Centre. Posters and Flyers have been printed and can be sent to Learning Centres at cost – just email me and we shall arrange: grant@seniornet.co.nz


You can also download them from here if you wish to print your own:
http://www.seniornet.co.nz/usefulinfo-flyers.html

Smartphones and Photographs

It's predicted there will be 7.5 billion people in the world in 2017, and about 5 billion of them will have a mobile phone. Let's say about 80% of those phones have a built-in camera: around 4 billion people. And let's say they take 10 photos per day – that's 3,650 photos per year, per person. That adds up to more than 14 trillion photos annually (14,600,000,000,000).

A more conservative view perhaps might be; if only one billion people have cameras or phones, and take less than 3 photos per day/1,000 pictures per year, that's still 1 trillion photos captured in 2017.
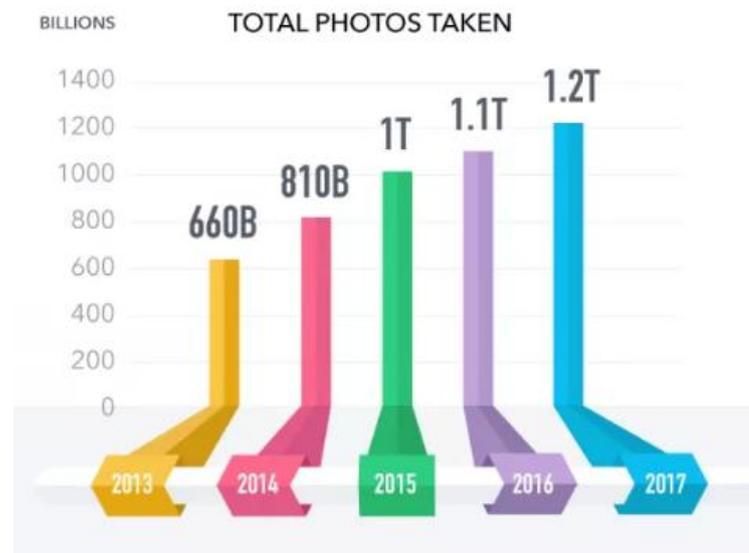
The truth is most of us simply point and click without consideration or care. Actually thinking about the quality of the image collected appears to be of little concern – why should it be as we haven't had to outlay any money to by film or to have it processed. Actually in many ways it seems a shame, as how many times have you taken a "snap" only to look at it latter and think if only I had taken a few seconds to frame it correctly.

Here's four tips that may help:

1. Follow the "Rule of Thirds". More often we are inclined to place what we are shooting in the centre of the frame. It is however more appealing and interesting to have the subject off centre. Most smartphone or tablets will let you switch on a grid that divides the screen into thirds to help you with this.

2. Frame your subject. By using things such as, overhanging trees, arches or other shapes to frame your subject it makes more interesting pictures and draws the viewer's eye to what you want to feature and get them to focus on (this works especially well with landscapes where there is not a lot of detail to make the image more engaging).

3. Use leading lines to lead the viewer's eye. Look for lines that will drive the viewer towards a focal point of the subject. This could include stairs, lines, roads or shapes.

4. Foreground, middle ground and distance. Often, landscapes can produce dull photographs. The trick is to compose the picture so there is something of interest in the front, middle and distance e.g. it can be a fence in the front, a line of trees in the middle and then mountains or cloud filled sky in the distance. Look for an angle that builds in elements at each of these three areas. It may tell more of a story and make for more interesting pictures.

Kin2Kin – Private and safe way for Grandparents to connect with grandchildren

This Kiwi made app works best on your smart phone or tablet and allows you to share photos and videos and communicate with those closest to you, in a **private network**.

It was specifically designed to connect grandchildren with grandparents despite distance, time zones and busy schedules.

With kin2kin you can see all your family in one place, and photos and videos are grouped by who is tagged in them. It's simple and safe for all generations to share and respond to these organised memories.

kin2kin is helping families feel closer and more connected than ever before.
The great thing is SeniorNet has partnered with Kin2Kin to provide our members with the free premium Kin2Kin facility.
Click here to get started. https://kin2kin.com/f/seniornet

Remember to support our supporters