From The President March 2020

David Stonier-Gibson

President's special raffle

At the monthly meeting this week, everyone who registers with their membership card and wears a name tag (your card or anything else) will receive a ticket to my Special Raffle. I'm not sure what the prize will be, but I'll think of something of immense value and collectability.

iHelp

I keep on hearing stories of members shelling out money to *commercial* computer help services and winding up feeling disappointed. Maybe they are not aware that one of the most valuable services Melb PC provides members is iHelp, our own computer assistance provided by a band of dedicated volunteers. iHelp processes approximately 900 cases per year, and is ***free*** to members. There are many ways to access iHelp – details at https://www.melbpc.org.au/ihelp

Perth PCUG

Sad to say, Perth PC User Groups has shut down after 35 years of existence. With an ageing membership and no fixed abode, as SIG leaders withdrew their SIGs were closing down. Their committee had been pretty much the same people for many years. Very sad to see. According to their rules (we have a similar rule) any money they had left had to be given to a like-minded organisation. PPCUG had to seek permission from their state government, but eventually we "inherited" just over $5,000 from them. In recognition we are attempting to extend some privileges to their last remaining members, such as access to iHelp and online access to PC Update.

The lesson in this for us seems clear: We do own our own premises, we do have money in the bank. The club has the resources, and the committee has the will, to adapt to changing times and exploit that huge asset. Hence all the activities and events the committee is initiating, hence the changes to the club rooms, hence transforming the club into something relevant to the 2020s.

Maker Room

We intend to rename the training room to Maker Room, and we continue working on the transformation.

Work has slowed down because people are back to normal daily lives after the Christmas slowdown. Also, the Maker room work is being done by pretty much the same people who are running the Coder DoJo, many of whom are still non-retired. A prototype workbench has been completed, and you will be able to see it next time you are in Moorabbin.

Thinking may have changed a bit regarding furnishing the Maker Room. I am now in favour of concentrating on modifying the existing computer desks so everything comes off the desk surface and frees them up as general purpose work spaces.

Coder Dojo

Coder Dojo is a movement that introduces kids 7-17 to computer programming and related STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) topics in a fun environment. I attended on Saturday 29th January with my grandson. It was fantastic to see young parents and kids enjoying and learning. One 8-year old was especially impressive. This is an excellent forum to spruik the club to the attendees, who are largely non-members (aka potential members). Overall a great success and I know the team are

working to make it better.

Dylan, Jackson and Oliver at Coder Dojo

3D Printing workshop

As mentioned last month, on 22nd February we ran a "Getting started with 3D printing" workshop. The session was run by Dave Williams, one of our young committee members. Printers were provided by Fashion3d a local 3D printer importer/reseller, who also provided tech support on the day. The number of attendees was limited by the number of working training computers. We had 8 adults and 3 children. Two of the adults were non-members, one of whom is joining the club.

Several printers have been left set up in the Borret room, and will be available to club members to use.

Dylan, Jackson and Bernie at Introduction to 3D Printing

Arduino Day, 21st March

Arduino is the tiny computer/controller board that many of us like to use in out technogeek projects. Arduino's 15th birthday is coming up, and will be marked by events all over the world. We have partnered with a local reseller, Pakronics, and with our 3D printing partners, Fashion3D, to run a "Build Your Own Robot" on that day.

The robot is "Otto DIY", a cute little open source humanoid robot with some cool dance moves. Pakronics will supply the electronics kits (which cost $65 up, depending on how many fancy extras you want). Fashion3D will be helping out with case printing (we'll probably do some ourselves now we have functioning printers!)

Emergency Automatic Defibrillator (AED)

Our AED has been delivered to Moorabbin, and is just awaiting a volunteer to mount it on the wall. It should be up by the March monthly meeting.

Socialising at the monthly meeting

For the monthly meeting I had the kitchen volunteers set up the round pub tables with biscuits etc in the Maker Room, so people *had* to see the changes. It worked, with an unexpected consequence that the room buzzed. Putting the people together in a small room, standing around tables, really seemed to encourage socialising.

Of course one member accosted me and demanded to know where we will now hold our training courses. I pointed out that in my 5 years with the club there have been, AFAIK, one training course when we rented the room to an outside company.

Coffee cups

An informal show of hands at the February monthly meeting was solidly in favour of no longer using disposable cups in the break. The kitchen volunteers are now onboard, and will use regular mugs.

It would be good if you could bring your own "Go Cup" to the monthly meeting, then we can see how it goes and find the best way forward.

Training computers

The club has 12 ancient desktop computers for training. At present they have been moved out of the erstwhile training room into the Borret room. These are really old machines, not suitable for training on modern software that needs Real Grunt like PhotoShop, video editing, or Computer Aided Design for 3D printing. I think the last time the old boxes were used for training was when we hired out the training room to an outside company over a year ago. I am seriously considering our options and what is appropriate moving forward into the 2020s, when almost everyone owns a laptop. The computers are occupying desks that, if cleared, would provide work surfaces for the Maker Room.

I have started a discussion about this on Yammer/All Company. Please use your Melb PC login to access and join in. https://www.yammer.com/melbpc.org.au/threads/562945783898112

Video dropout

There was a dropout of the streaming video at the February monthly meeting. Needless to say this was unexpected. Monitoring software is being deployed to try and catch the cause of any future failures.