

Oct 2023

PC MONITOR

Durham Personal Computer Users' Club Newsletter



DPCUC General Meeting

**Our Club meets monthly on the second Thursday of each month.
All meetings are currently held using Zoom.**

We hope some day in the future to be able to meet in person again.

Please visit the Club Web Page for all the latest links and information

<http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/>

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Next Meeting

Microsoft Power Toys

by Peter Camilleri

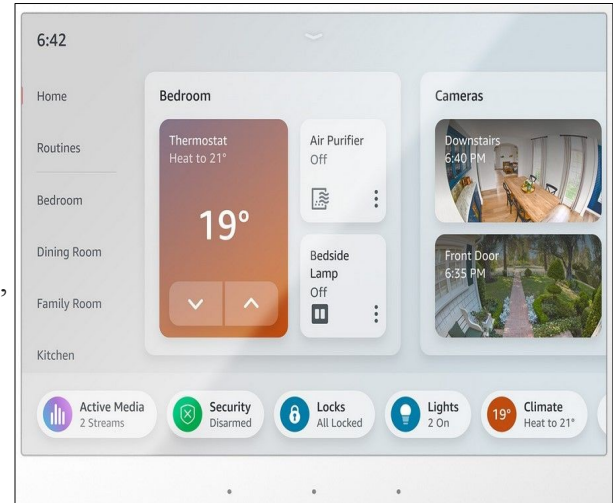
On ZOOM – Thursday, Oct 12 2023, 7:00PM

FYI

- By Dan Delong

Amazon Echo Hub – coming

In the gadget world, Amazon reins supreme. Amazon's latest device mimics an 8-inch tablet, and can be mounted on a wall, or propped on a stand. Power and Internet arrives over an unobtrusive Power Over Ethernet cable (PoE), and from your own Wi-Fi signal (no data plan). When in stand-by mode, the [Echo Hub](#) displays time, schedules, and weather. Anyone approaching the device wakes it up, whereupon it presents a bright touch screen for controlling almost any household Wi-Fi, IoT device, like the doorbell, cameras, lights, and locks. Touch input, or voice input, manages these tasks. To extend the number and range of Amazon devices connected to the **Hub** (for larger estates, farms or communities) use **Sidewalk** [a secure wireless, mesh-like extender (in the U.S. only, for now)]. The **Amazon Hub** will cost about \$240 CAD. <https://www.club386.com/the-echo-hub-is-arguably-the-coolest-smart-home-gadget-from-amazons-latest-lineup/>



Guest Accounts, and On Your Router

Microsoft offers up some recommendations for guest accounts with respect to its Windows operating systems. <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/security/threat-protection/security-policy-settings/accounts-guest-account-status>

But, what about guests on your home Wi-Fi network? Setting up a guest Wi-Fi broadcast, as a separate signal, with its own name and password, is advised for connecting smart home devices, along with drop-in guests, and for kids not yet knowledgeable concerning online browsing. The guest account for kids can further restrict access to safer locations, and be ON/active for them at only certain times of day. Guests, who may inadvertently bring in a device infected malware will be limited in their susceptibility to infecting your network.

The admin account for your router will likely offer up some settings for creating a **guest** wireless signal, with a password different from the rest of the network.

[If your router sends out 2.4 mHz, 5.1 mHz and 5.2 mHz, you can choose which signal to implement for 'Guest', and, optionally, you can set up filters for content, individually, on each signal. In other words, all three signals can each be a different Guest account.]

My ASUS router gave options to hide the SSID/name of the signal, to limit hours of access, and to set up a password/key for up to two guest accounts on each of its three transmitting frequencies. Additionally, this router can activate default connections to **Alexa** on any of these three frequencies.

[YouTube offers many tutorials for many routerbrands, but the administrator help file for your router (if accessible) might be the best source for instruction.]

Post-partum Bleeding – still a killer



A Washington University professor has advanced the early detection of hemorrhaging, after giving birth. Worldwide, this is still a major cause of death for new mothers; in the US post-partum bleeding causes 1 in 10 maternal deaths. This is a wrist-worn device, using emitted light, that can detect a sudden drop in blood pressure within the first minutes, hours, or days, after giving birth. This gives medics a chance to treat and save the mother. The only drawback... Development of the device is now in the hands of a private company, under the expectation of making money – as happens with a lot of publicly funded inventions.

<https://source.wustl.edu/2023/01/obrien-team-wins-nih-prize-to-further-develop-maternal-health-device/>

Remember this “not-a-Blackberry” phone?

The T-Mobile G1 (aka **HTC Dream**) was the first Android smart phone; it was sold in New York in 2008, fifteen years ago. The first Apple iPhones came out one year before, and has since then have been the strongest competitor to Android phones. Android phones, always cheaper than iPhones, now comprise about 70% of the market. The author of this article looks back fondly on his first Android phone [as I do on my first Windows phone (still on the network, despite Telus’s involuntary removal of some previously enjoyed features)].



<https://www.cnet.com/tech/mobile/i-bought-the-first-android-phone-ever-it-wasnt-pretty-but-i-loved-it/>

While on the subject of Google phones, specs and pricing for the latest Pixel 8 and Pixel 8Pro smartphones have been leaked. Canadian prices hover around the 1200 to 1700 dollar mark, while, in the States, this deal may be sweetened with a ‘free’ Pixel 2 Watch.

<https://mobilesyrup.com/2023/09/25/pixel-8-pro-leaks-pricing-camera-specs/>

reBOOT Canada



When club members once met, in person, each month, at the church, great ‘pickings’ could be had at the **give-away tables**. In case our members are encumbered by old hardware, another alternative (for hardware donors) might be **reBOOT** (for reviving old donated hardware to those who need it, and for supplying the needed expertise to use this hardware.) Nearby locations are in Toronto and Peterborough.

<https://www.rebootcanada.ca/>

Microsoft BING Ai Chat/Search



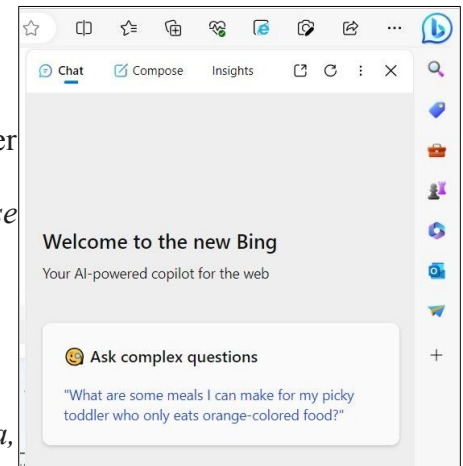
Bing AI

Although not quite ready for mobile, Edge and Chrome browsers now offer natural language answers to queries using BING Ai.

[A mobile version of Bing Chat (a non-Ai version) is available to Enterprise customers.] Just click on the Bing logo in the top right corner of the updated browser to activate the **right side-bar for Bing Ai Chat/Search**.

Such inquiries could involve summaries for web pages, comparisons of brand name products, cooking or gardening advice, and more. *[When I entered the name of a British actress, “Olivia Coleman,” Bing Ai composed a long paragraph about her, and showed the source references as coming from Wikipedia, IMDB, and Britannica, while supplying prompts to “get more relevant responses, other awards she had won, more facts about ‘The Crown’, and some other cool facts.”]*

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge/features/bing-chat>



Windows 11 23H2

If this major upgrade has not auto-installed, you can get a preview, standalone, installer [HERE](#).

Among the 150 changes... **CoPilot** with AI, a changed **File Explorer**, a new Windows **Backup** app, Microsoft **Paint** enhancements, new **Outlook**, and more. If you are a Paint user, one of the most sought after features would be the free Ai background blur and the free Ai background remover for digital images.

*[Actually, the MS Paint upgrades are available in the **Store**, as a separate item, should you not wish to wait for a fully stable 23H2.]*

<https://techviral.net/windows-11-kb5030310-23h2-direct-download/>

Microsoft Office 2007 download

Although Office 2003 still runs on one of my computers, it might be nice to move up to Office 2007. Why? The introduction of the new ribbon interface, PDF handling, and generation of the XPS file format, along with an overall improved ease of use.

[Without a valid user key, (or a way to create one) the installation of 2007 will not complete. If you know someone who still uses 2007, see if they'll share the key.]

Office 2007 requires less space for its installation, so it will function on older hardware, and it will work well on Windows 7 and Up.

This **Techviral** article (*link below*) explains how to download and install Office 2007, in detail, including a work around for a valid key.

<https://techviral.net/microsoft-office-2007/>

KODAK Luma 75/150/350

The Kodak name lives on, in these small, portable, digital projectors. The least expensive model offers enough features to satisfy most users: HDMI, USB, micro SD, for input, and for output... DLP, a small speaker, and a stereo audio out port. Image size can reach 100 inches diagonal, at 16:9 ratio, in 1080p. As with most digital projectors on the market, Lumas have a short throw, along with keystone correction along both axis. The battery lasts for about 2 hours. Upgraded models offer larger screen sizes, Apple Play, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and an Android OS for streaming. A current sale at Best Buy Canada sells the Luma 75 for about \$260 and the Luma 150 for \$320.



<https://www.kodak.com/en/consumer/product/audio-visual/projectors/portable-pocket-projector/>

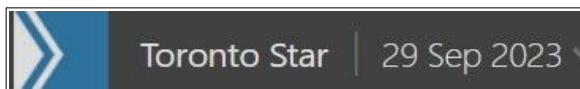
Ember Mug 2

What can possibly make a coffee cup worth almost \$200? According to **Ember**, a company that donates a small portion of profits to the environment, it is all about temperature. As in the Goldilocks tale too hot, or too cold, is not 'just right', since coffee and tea drinkers desire a 'just right' temperature for their beverage. When placed on the induction charge plate, this mug maintains a preferred temperature, in the range from **120F to 145F**, as set by the smart phone app, for an indefinite duration. When removed from the charge plate, a **battery** maintains this temperature for hours. Two mug sizes are available, a 10 ounce and a 14 ounce. Hand washing is advised.



<https://ca.ember.com/products/ember-mug-2>

The Toronto Star – September 29, 2023—Opinion Re: Ai



This excerpt, from an article by Armine Yalnizyan on pages B1 and B4, discussing the benefits and perils of artificially intelligent bots, and the continuing need for coders in the future. This article names the current big players in AI (all funded indirectly by us - the users of the Web).

One paragraph reads thus,

“The globe— straddling companies competing to advance this technology are bigger than most nations, and their platforms can unleash change at a pace and scale never experienced by humanity. They include Amazon-AWS/Anthropic, Google/Bard, Meta/Llama, Baidu (the Chinese equivalent of Meta) and Microsoft(which partnered with the open-source OpenAI to offer paid access to ChatGPT—4 through Playground), and Alibaba/Tongyi Qianwen. Tesla/Dojo is the latest player in this field.”

DALL-E 3 – images from text

DALL-E creates realistic digital images, based on a string of text descriptors, using ChatGPT for the Ai component. In the past DALL-E had been criticized for re-creating images in the style of living artists, for inserting images of living people, for racial bias, and for x-rated content. All of this has been fixed in this 3rd generation image generator. The link (*below*) contains impressive examples.

https://www.thestar.com/business/technology/openai-unveils-dall-e-3-newest-version-of-its-ai-image-generator-what-does-this/article_9f8a939d-7849-5b62-b1a1-8638937a4d2b.html

Flip phones—on a come-back.

Smart phones have increased in price and size over time, in order to handle today's high resolution content. They are so good at replacing still cameras that many users count on them for all of their photo and video needs. Not everything in the smart phone world is rosey. Batteries are usually non-removable (*a situation soon to change in Europe*); but heavy use of the screen plummets battery life. Smart phones are still phones, and can be used for voice calls, but most user seem to prefer text messaging over phone calls.

The much cheaper **flip phones of yore** (not folding screen phones) could, and still can, make phone calls, view web content using data on 4G (when not equipped with Wi-Fi circuitry), and they stay charged for days on stand-by. Their small size fits better in pockets and purses, and the screen is well protected when folded. **Flips** offer a real keyboard as well. Availability of new flip phones depends on where you live. Bell, Telus, Rogers, and Wind all sell at least one 'Flip', most having dual SIM slots, and an earbud jack. [*Earbud cables are also the antennae for FM radio reception.*] Usually the cameras in flip phones are nothing to brag about.

Which flip phones models are available? A search on Amazon Canada reveals too many to count, in the \$100 range. Turning on filters for touch screen, Wi-Fi, or higher screen resolutions pretty much eliminated flips from the list. Should you find a suitable flip phone online, be assured that it will be 'unlocked' as to carrier, in compliance with Canadian law. [*However, the SIM card, or eSIM, will be locked to a carrier, once activated.*]

Bell/Virgin/Lucky, Telus, and Loblaws all sell an \$85 ZTE Cymbal 2, with Wi-Fi and hearing aid compatibility. Rogers/Chatr/Fido has a TCL Flip for \$110. [Use the search field to find it. Much cheaper at Walmart.] Interestingly, Walmart Canada can sell the **NOKIA 2660 FLIP** for \$153.

Fairphone 5 – future proof to 2031- environmentally kind

This Android smart phone, from the Netherlands, may not be much cheaper than equivalents, but it is easily repaired and upgraded (11 parts are customer replaceable, including the battery, with at least five upgrades from Android 13, with software security updates to 2031 and a 5 year phone warranty). In addition Fairphones employ environmentally responsible sourcing of materials, from fair trade sources and recycled sources. They'll offer a discount for old phones that have a recycling value.

[*My not-so-old Motorola g8 plus is not worth anything to them, nor is another similar-phone, the Terracube 2e... both with Android 10.*]

Fairphone 5 has a **Qualcomm Octacore long life chipset** and three cameras: - 50 Megapixels front and back, a 15 Megapixel wide angle, and stabilization for videos. The screen is a bright 6.5 inch OLED display. The Android 13 OS will arrive with no extra software installed – **no bloatware**. The cost before taxes is about \$1000 CAD. Battery life may now be improved with a newer battery. One slot is for the SIM, and the other takes micro SD cards up to 2TB, boosting the existing 256GB internal memory. Canada and the United States are among many non-European countries to which Fairphones cannot be shipped, although plans are in the works to change this.

<https://www.fairphone.com/en/>

Traffic 21 Institute at Carnegie Mellon University

Given enough data, and a robust infrastructure, artificial intelligence can solve many traffic problems. **Traffic21** can warn drivers about flooded roads, traffic jams, and re-route traffic during sudden emergencies. Automated roadside digital billboards convey some of these messages, which are simultaneously conveyed to those with in-car connectivity. In future, inter-car connectivity will improve traffic flow to the point that driver-less cars can navigate automatically. One current safety feature, using predictive Ai, is the lengthening of green lights when sensing a driver who may try to 'run a red'. Smart Mobility intends to create flexible routing plans for hot meal deliveries, busses, and reduce conflicts between bicycles and cars.

<https://www.cmu.edu/traffic21/>

“Socially aware temporally causal decoder recommender systems” [opinion]

That's the academic title for a Google Research study! Now, the task here is to decode this '*bafflegab*'. I believe it refers to introducing digital content (text, audio, books, videos) to kids and adults, at the best times, and in the best ways, so as to encourage take-up/engagement of the content. The best times may be time of day, or time of life (age and stage). This is not new. Google and Facebook have long used the knowledge they possess about each subscriber to bring up the NEXT, Next, next... and so on, with engaging content, in a continuous page feed. To put a shine on this study, researchers also focus on the potential educational benefits of presenting the right educational content to each learner, such that they will stay engaged for a period of time, while better absorbing this content. Attention is also paid to long term retention, through periodic review of key areas of understanding, also known as 'reinforcement learning' - not "drill and kill". Artificially intelligent algorithms, that is, machine learning, runs this operation, without human/teacher intervention. No doubt, students will become better readers. But, will they be critical readers?

<https://blog.research.google/2023/08/study-socially-aware-temporally-causal.html>

Microsoft Azure Quantum Computing

Research, at Microsoft, is also heavily into machine learning/artificial intelligence, hoping to integrate it with a future quantum super-computer, currently under development. The link (below) leads to tutorials which explore possible breakthroughs in coding, chemistry, and quantum computing. Coders can try it.

[Azure Quantum | Azure Quantum Homepage \(microsoft.com\)](#)

EcoFlow Wave 2, a unique heat pump

This may seem an odd season to feature a portable heat pump, but this device **can both heat and cool** a camper van or a tent, under battery power or plugged in, making it an all-season device for RVing. It can heat/cool a room as well. Cooling capacity is equivalent to 5100 BTUs, while heating, at max., is 6100 BTUs. As with less costly conventional portable room air conditioners, **a snorkel-like duct tube (supplied) must be attached for the exhaust air**. When used for cooling, some water, extracted from humid air, must be drained through a small hose. The complete unit, including accessories and battery, weighs about 50 pounds. The Wave 2 can supply power to other devices through two USB charging ports. Expect to pay about \$1600.00 CAD.

<https://youtu.be/IFGfh2a0uuY?si=iqU5FQ9GJogOe059>

<https://www.thecabindepot.ca/products/ecoflow-wave2-portable-air-conditioner>



Bluetti Power

This item is more timely for urban and rural occupants, in that power outages are inevitable these days, be it summer or winter. Short of buying an outside, in-place gas generator, or a big inside uninterruptible power supply/battery, this solar-panel-charged, **Bluetti lithium battery**, with lots of outlets, might be a good option. Each solar panel costs about \$1000 CAD, and is included with this \$2700 model.

<https://www.bluettipower.ca/pages/ac200p-promotions>



350W Fast Charging
5.3 hrs to full charge

Discord – 250 million users, vs WhatsApp – 2 billion users

Young social media enthusiasts tends to partake in platforms not populated by older generations. **WhatsApp** and **Discord** have attracted them in droves. Whereas both have voice and video chats, texting, and private groups, WhatsApp ads location sharing and 2-way encryption. Discord was designed more for **Gamers**, to gather into communities, for group discussions and screen sharing. Discord groups are called, “**servers**”, which can be customized by the server creator with rules for participation. Still, Discord users can create server off-chutes, or **private channels**, to exchange one-to-one with another user. Subscribers are supposed to be older than age 12 years. In summary Discord still attracts mostly young Gamers, while WhatsApp has a Business bent, and is for personal use by teens and adults.

Free Linux Wallpaper



DPCUC President's Notes

by Peter Camilleri

A few years back, I gave a talk on the Raspberry Pi credit-card sized computer. Well just recently the latest device, the Pi 5 was announced. It sports a 2 to 3 times boost in performance of processor and storage speeds, enhanced dual 4K 60fps video outputs and even provision for a PCIe interface to allow for even faster solid state drives (SSD).

The downside is predictable; the new machine requires 70% more power than the previous model and now needs a fan to keep cool as well. I can only hope that the Pi 4 will stick around for a while. I am hoping to snag some discounts so I can implement my long delayed project of adding an Ad Blocking facility called a Pi-Hole to my system. Expect to hear more about this as progress is made and I hope to do a presentation on it soon thereafter.

In club news, the executive continues to investigate venues for a return to in-person meetings. The trick is to do so without incurring extra costs to the members. A lot depends on how many of the members are actually interested in attending in person.

So maybe help us out? Send me an email at peter.c.camilleri@gmail.com telling us your stance on in-person meetings. For them? Against them? Don't care? Any and all answers would be appreciated.

And again, pray for peace in Ukraine.

Peter Camilleri, President DPCUC.

Linux in the News

by Alex Morrison



[Bazzite: Distro for Linux Gaming on Steam Deck and PCs](#)

Bazzite is a new Fedora-based distro that designed for gaming on Linux desktops and even the increasingly popular Steam Deck.

[21 Useful Terminal Shortcuts Pro Linux Users Love to Use](#)

Become more efficient in the Linux terminal by mastering these super useful keyboard shortcuts.

[Raspberry Pi 5 Announced for End of October, Here Are the Specs](#) [0 Comments](#)

Raspberry Pi 5 single-board computer announced with 2.4GHz Quad-Core 64-bit ARM Cortex-A76 CPU and VideoCore VII GPU.

[LibreOffice 7.6.2 and 7.5.7 Released to Address Critical WebP Vulnerability](#)

[1 Comment](#)

LibreOffice 7.6.2 and LibreOffice 7.5.7 are now available for download to address a critical security vulnerability in the WebP codec. All users are urged to update as soon as possible.

[Firefox 119 Promises to Let You Import Some of Your Chrome Extensions](#)

[0 Comments](#)

Firefox 119 web browser is now available for public beta testing with support for importing Chrome extensions when migrating from Google Chrome, an improved Firefox View feature, and more.

[Ubuntu 23.10 Beta Released with GNOME 45 and Linux Kernel 6.5](#)

[3 Comments](#)

Ubuntu 23.10 beta is now available for public testing with the latest GNOME 45 desktop environment and powered by Linux kernel 6.5. Here's what's else is new!

[The 6 Best Tools to Create a Bootable USB From an ISO in Linux](#)

- [Linux Journal](#); By George Whittaker (Posted by [bob](#) on Sep 30, 2023 12:01 PM EDT)
- Story Type: [News Story](#), [Roundups](#); Groups: [Community](#), [Distributions](#), [Linux](#)

Creating a bootable USB drive is a cornerstone skill for anyone interested in exploring different operating systems or working in system administration. A bootable USB drive allows a user to boot into a different operating system, independent of the primary OS installed on the machine. This is particularly useful for system recovery, testing new OS builds, or installing a new system altogether.

- [Full story](#)
- [Read more](#)
- [0 threads and 0 posts](#)



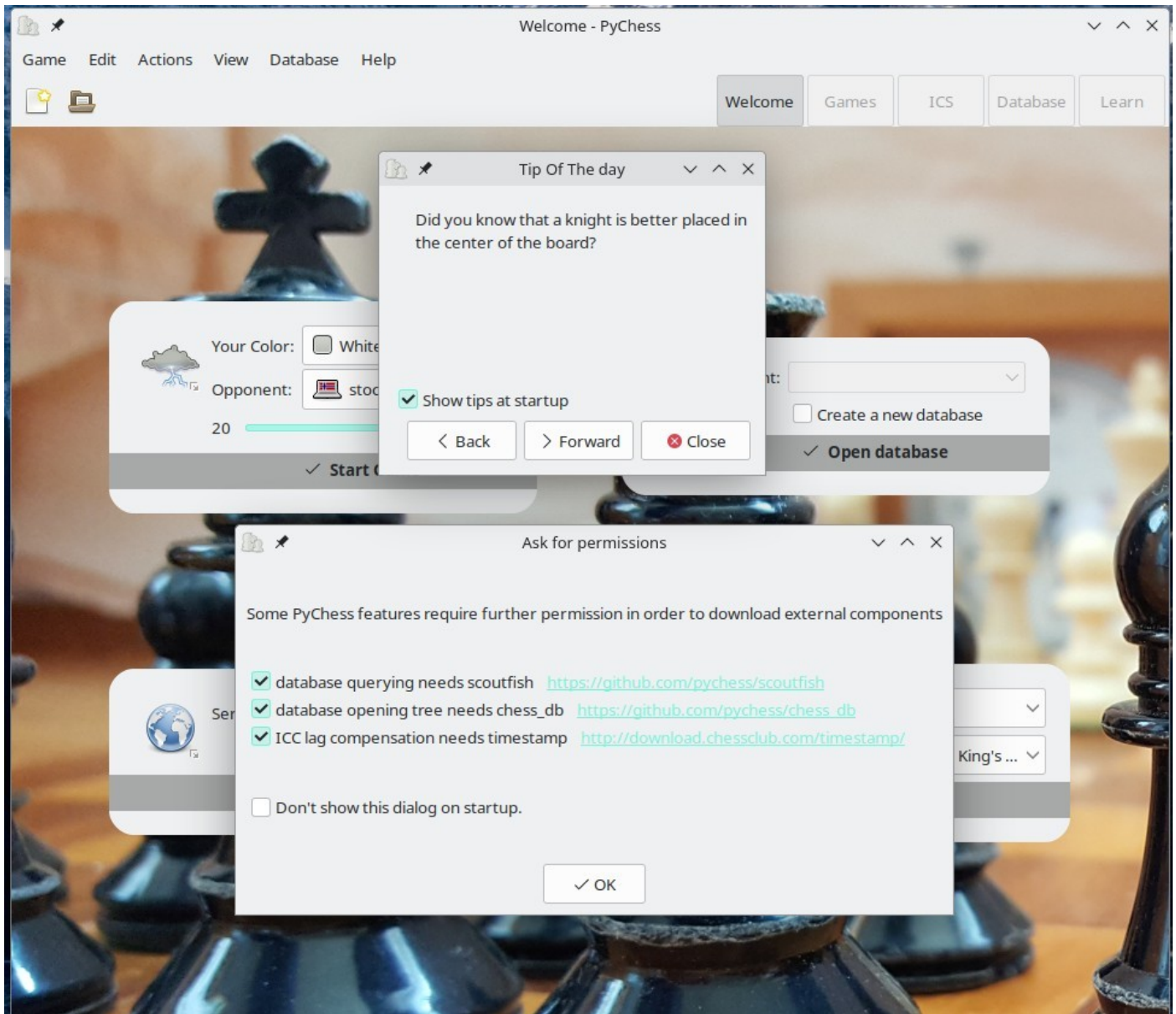
Linux – PyChess

By Alex Morrison

I like a few games that I can play on my PC. As a long time chess player of course I like some of the chess games.

PyChess is a game that has improved over the years.

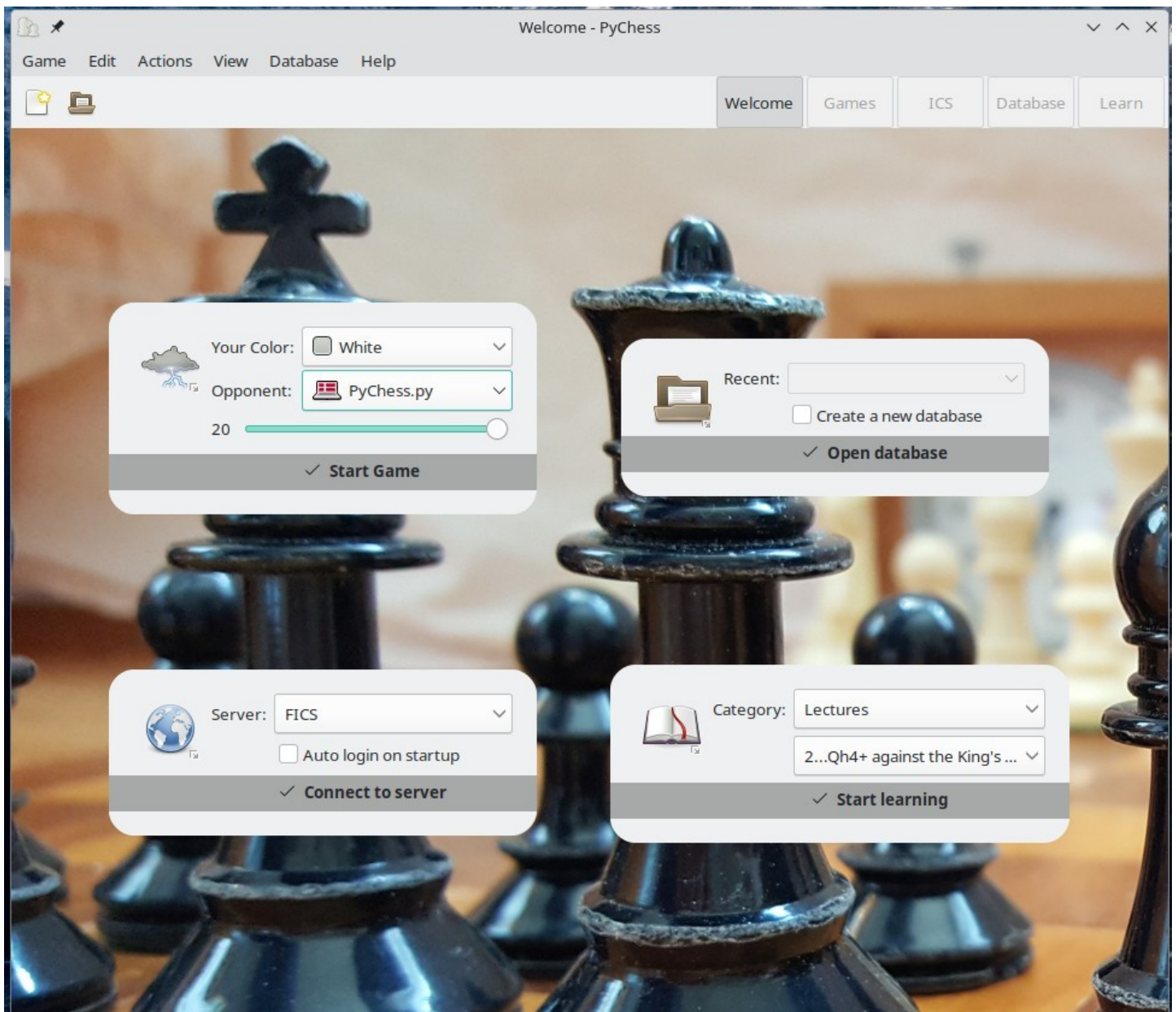
This is what it looks like when you first launch the game.



You will see a few windows open. Tips can be closed after reading it or just turn it off if you aren't interested.

Check any permissions you might want.

Now we see the main start up window. Here you have options to connect to a server, Open or Create a database, or pick your color and opponent. PyChess supports their own engine PyChess.py and Stockfish [Stockfish is very strong]. Also under the Category option you can view lessons, puzzles, and lectures.

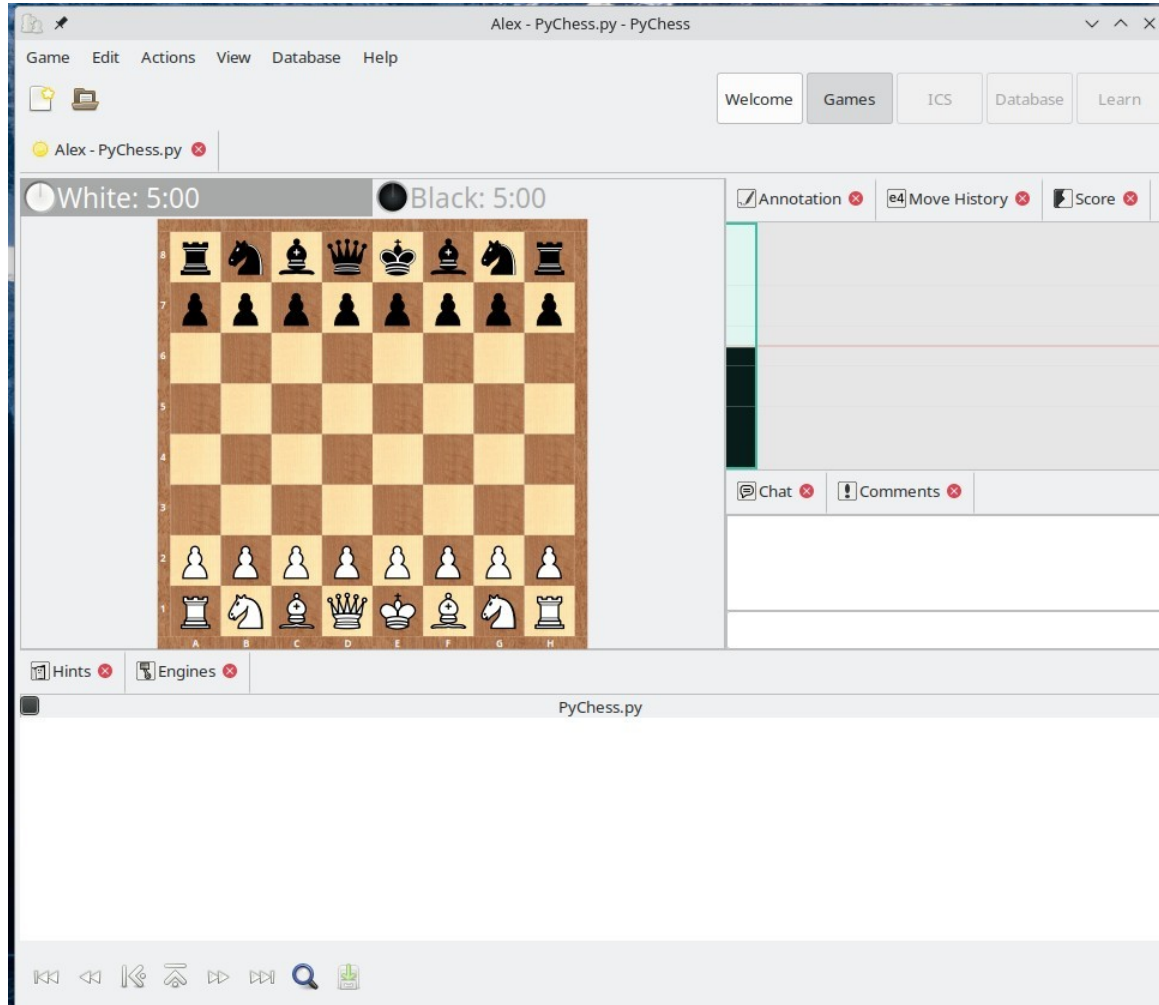


To play at once just click the Start Game button under the Colour and Opponent section.

Look at the next image to see the screen after pressing Start Game,

As you play you can see the Move History as if you had recorded it yourself. You can make annotations and keep a record of your scores [win or lose].

PyChess supports several chess engines. If you click Hints at the bottom as you start the game you will get some very good hints from the Stockfish chess engine.



Below the next line is what appears in a konsole window when I type 'man pychess'

NAME

pychess - chess graphical user interface for several chess engines

DESCRIPTION

pychess provides a fully featured, nice looking, easy to use chess client for the gnome-desktop.

The client should be usable both to those totally new to chess, and those who want to use a computer to further enhance their play.

Features

- * Tabbed interface
- * pgn+epd read/write support
- * Hints and spymode
- * xboard/cecp engine support
- * Builtin python based engine
- * Openingbook using sqlite
- * Clean interface and dialogs
- * Builtin move validator
- * Legal move highlighting
- * Supports drag'n'drop.

Homepage <http://pychess.googlepages.com/home>

Sudoku

October 2023

by Alex Morrison



EASY

		9		2				
7			6					3
	2	6	3	5	9	1		
				4	7		5	
	4					2		
			8					
		3	1	6				
	7					8		3
	5		2					

Sudoku

The game boards on this page were produced using **Sudokuki** on PCLinuxOS 64 Bit running KDE Plasma.

The objective is to fill in the missing numbers ensuring that every 3 X 3 grid has the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats and every full column or row has the numbers 1 through 9 again with no repeats.

If you have troubles solving the puzzles send an email to me and I will send you the solution.

Have fun! Alex

MED

				6		8		
5		9		2	1			
		6						
		5						
			8	7	6	1		
				5	3		4	
7	9		1	8		6		
	3				4		2	
1								

HARD

						7		
5			7	6	8			
			1	2			3	
7				8				9
					1	2		
	6		2					
		5					1	7
	1				9		6	
9			3					8

If you don't Like Sudoku puzzles – try these pages

<https://www.boatloadpuzzles.com/playcrossword>

<http://www.freegames.net/puzzle-games.html>

<https://www.cryptograms.org/play.php>

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS SIG's

Special Interest Groups are for members only.

SIG's are really free monthly seminars with question and answer sessions following the presentation(s)

Members of SIG's enjoy a feeling of community and share common goals and interests.

Most SIG's are informal and members who attend them set the agenda for the meeting based on their own needs.

New ideas for SIG groups are welcome.

Special Interest Groups

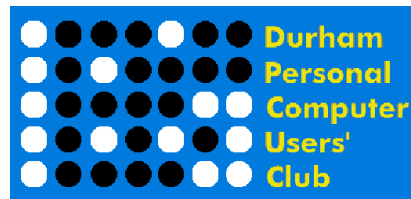
Durham Linux User Group

Coordinator: Ed Goudge

Our Linux group meet on the first Thursday of every month.

All meetings are currently held using Zoom.

We hope some day to meet again in person.



DPCUC EXECUTIVE

2022-2023

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HOME PAGE --- <http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/>

Newsletter Information

PC Monitor is the official publication of the Durham Personal Computer Users' Club and is published monthly at Oshawa, Ontario. The DPCUC mailing address is

PMB # 110, 27-1300 King St East, Oshawa, ON L1H8J4.

The PC Monitor cannot be responsible for errors or inaccuracies in the content, although efforts will be made to publish information accurately.