

From The President April 2020



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What a difference a day makes!

I have started measuring time in Corona weeks and months. Things are happening so fast in this new, weird, wacky, and scary world we suddenly live in. Last week's reality, its truth, now seems like months ago, and today there's a different truth. The situation changes by the hour and by the day. In just one week a team at Oxford University developed a ventilator that repurposes components that are already in plentiful supply within the UK National Health System, and can be made in quantity very quickly. Many within the hobby 3D printing community have turned their efforts towards making things like masks and face shields. YouTube is full of DIY mask plans, and warnings against using them.

Almost a full 180!

Three weeks (6 Corona months) ago I was concentrating my attention on things like creating a Maker Room at Moorabbin, teaming up with a 3D printer company to help equip that room, and running robot workshops for kids. I wanted to run daytime monthly meetings for members who won't venture out at night. Now, suddenly, that's all on the back burner and everything is about online activities. Just this morning, Saturday, I e-tended the club's Coder Dojo (programming workshop for kids) online with my grandson, along with other kids and parents all over South East Melbourne. The session was very successful, with about 12 kids taking part while having fun and learning. The next session will be even better with the learnings gained.

We held our recent committee meeting by teleconferencing. We made it just about our response to the CV19 (as I call it) situation, and the things our club can do to keep members engaged. The meeting ran very well, in many ways better than a face to face meeting. Right now there is also a conversation going on about running our AGM online. More on that as we start finding answers.

Get social

There has been a noticeable increase in the use of Yammer, our private social forum. Not only have I seen more users, but also more posts. Yammer is a great way, and a safe way, to stay in touch with fellow members. In case you are unsure of how to use your Melb PC log in to access Yammer, Hugh Macdonald is writing up some instructions elsewhere in PC Update.

BCNU on Yammer!

iHelp - still here for you

And if you are struggling to sign in to Yammer, remember that you can always contact iHelp. This is our members-only computer help service that is there to help you with any computer problem. It is run by a band of dedicated volunteers, and handles an average of 2 to 3 jobs per day, 365 days/year. The majority of computer problems are software related, so most can be fixed without face to face contact. You can contact iHelp via iHelp@melbpc.org.au or on 03 9276 4088. You can also post any problems on Yammer and have several hundred members eager to help. If you leave a call-back number, a landline is preferred; it costs your club more to call mobiles.

Tip: *Stick the iHelp phone number on your fridge or notice board in case your computer can't get online.*

SIG meetings

By now all face to face SIG meetings will be suspended. Some SIGs will have already found ways of moving online. But we (committee) are working to create a uniform recommended set of tools for all SIGs to use. It's taking some time because there are actually several use cases (scenarios) we are trying and cater for. But hopefully in a few days we will have some firm recommendations (no obligation attached) and will communicate them to the SIG conveners.

Monthly meeting

We are working hard to move the monthly meeting online. We have a technical plan that should accommodate many more e-tendees than we normally get for the streamed meeting. I have even got a really interesting guest speaker who lives too far away to present in person, so there's a win for us! We will try and provide a usable mechanism for questions and feedback from everyone. It's not going to be as slick as Aunty's Q&A, but we are giving it our best shot.

Ideas please!

I am constantly wracking my brains (some presidents do 'av 'em!) for ideas to engage and occupy members. Most of us are stuck at home now, and need to avoid cabin fever. So if you can think of some activity, online event, game or anything to make life interesting in the Corona Age, please let me know. You will find that by championing an entertaining activity that other members can benefit from you will have more purpose while you are in isolation. Two members have already agreed to help out with a couple of competitions. The committee will do whatever we can to help you implement good ideas that will benefit all our community. Maybe you have a skill you would like to share? An interest that others might join in on? Let me know. president@melbpc.org.au

Stay safe! And don't expect this to be over by Easter!