

From The President September 2020



David Stonier-Gibson

To be honest, it is a little difficult to find much to report on during a stage 4 lock-down. Does the fact I visited the clubrooms a couple weeks ago to collect the mail (and possible cheques!) count? I suppose compared to the excitement of a walk to my own letterbox it is a big deal, and putting out the bins is the Event Of The Week!

Stop press! Policy on non-member e-tendance at SIG meetings

The committee has just voted in favour of a revised policy regarding non-member e-tendance to SIG e-meetings.

Subject to a mechanism to capture contact details of non-members prior to attendance, it is committee policy to make it easy for non-members to attend online SIG meetings. Ideally, the e-meeting sign-in process will identify non-members, and SIG leaders will be encouraged to “sell” the benefits of club membership to visitors. At the same time, we will develop some kind of “COVID special” offer to non-members who join during the COVID crisis, possibly a bonus 3-month extension on a 12-month membership.

I initiated this because I have observed that moves to make meetings accessible have been hampered by a preoccupation with freeloaders, lapsed members who continue to attend meetings, and the traditional “three freebie” policy. There may be a few cases of freeloaders, but I doubt it is widely spread. By putting up barriers to entry for non-members, it becomes harder for members to gain access to SIGs. COVID represents a fresh opportunity to recruit new members via the e-meetings, just as it allows us to give easier access to all SIGs by all members. We cannot squander that opportunity by obsessing over a few freeloaders and convoluted processes to keep them out.

A fundamental rule of marketing is that you make it easy, not difficult, to try before you buy. What this policy says essentially is “You are welcome to visit, we just want your contact details so we can follow up with you and try and sell you a membership.”

Besides, will it do any harm if we offer some kind of cabin fever relief to people in our community who are stuck at home during the crisis?

Membership renewals

I am happy to report that so far there has been no significant loss of members due to COVID and the curtailment of real-world operations. And we are trying hard to get mechanisms in place to make our club stay attractive in the virtual world. One little point: If you are renewing please try to make the payment some way other than by cheque. As I alluded to above, cheques in a letterbox out on the street are not a good idea. If thieves don't get them the snails will. The online renewal has a credit card payment option. If you are hesitant about that just call the office number (9276-4000) with your membership number and

credit card to hand, and do it verbally. By the way, if you renew online please check and update your membership details, especially your mobile phone number.

Finding opportunities

So COVID sucks. I think we all agree about that. It has stopped many of us in our tracks. My Google calendar email reminder has been pretty much the same for the last umpteen months:

[Google Calendar](#)

gadgettrak.dg@gmail.com, here is your schedule for:

Sat 29 Aug 2020

All day Mon 16 Mar – Sat 7 Nov **Isolation David Stonier-Gibson**

[Google Calendar](#)

But we have to do something, don't we? The committee is trying hard to extend all SIGs to all members and also to non-members (aka potential new members). But maybe we can do more than that, think of new online activities? I myself am hatching a plan to run some classes within my area of expertise and interest (Hint: A few years ago I ran a basic electronics course at Moorabbin, which was quite well attended).

But can you come up with some ideas that you would be willing to work on to make a reality? I don't think it needs to be very specifically about computers. After all, we have very active SIGs already in photography, genealogy, and video. Do you have artistic talents? Creative writing? Can you run a trivia contest? Online easy cooking classes? Would you run an online book club for members?

It is not possible for me and the other committee members alone to instigate everything, let alone do the work. But we will support, resource and publicise member initiatives that benefit members.

Office 365 transition

The Office 365 transition team have been making progress. The early process tested was found to be too manually intensive from a support point of view and some time and effort has been expended developing a high tech process that is much more automated and less of a support burden. The team have thus developed a "high productivity" process. Given there are nearly 1600 accounts to move, productivity is a real issue when we only have a small number of volunteers doing all the work, particularly of support. The emphasis is ~~initially~~ on a smooth transfer of all email to the corporate Gmail service (or G Suite package?) and making the transfer as user friendly as possible.

Right now the team is working on a second batch of pre-migrations, involving about 160 members. Pre-migration is where the vast bulk of the member's data gets copied across to Google. Moving the data is not instantaneous, so we do that quietly in the background and let it take the time it takes. Once that is done the member will be notified, issued a temporary password, and the small balance of their data will be moved. The user logs in and checks that it all looks good. A new account is then established in the user's email client (Thunderbird or similar) so that emails then look the same as they did previously.

Zoom for SIGs

Making licensed (paid) Zoom available to all SIGs is an important project, because it underpins the ability for all Melb PC members to access all SIG meetings. As I write this I have just been in the first SIG meeting to have been accessible to all by broadcasting its URL on Yammer: the Video Production SIG. The ambition, however, goes far further than that: To make all SIG meetings accessible also to non-members, so they can become part of our new member recruitment strategy. To achieve that we need a way for a non-member to pre-register and to be tracked.

Kirsten Greed has been working on the Zoom side of the project. Rob Brown is heading work on the registration/tracking side. The plan is to leverage an existing CiviCRM/Zoom integration so non-member e-tendees will be registered and tracked, and will become marketing contacts. This package will also help members reach out and attend any SIG meeting they choose with Events in CiviCRM being a key part of the scheduling of the Zoom meetings.