

How to Win at Snakes & Ladders:

Computer Training in Palmerston
for Seniors and People with
Disabilities

A talk by
Lamaan Whyte, B.A. Hons, Past President of the Darwin Seniors Computer Club,
presented at a Public Meeting, Palmerston Library Meeting Room,
2pm, Wednesday 3rd October, 2012.

Today, we will be talking about ways of helping seniors and people with disabilities use and enjoy their computers. More particularly, we will be looking at two major questions:

- What can *we* - collectively, as a community, including government, non-profit and business sectors of the community - do to help seniors and people with disabilities with their computers?
- What can *you and I* - as individuals- do to help seniors and people with disabilities – and maybe also help ourselves?

To help you think about this, I will walk you through the various problems faced by seniors and people with disabilities as they struggle with their computers. We will also consider some alternative ways of thinking about these problems, and how the most commonly used method can actually hinder progress. Next, we will have a quick look at what the academic community – the scientific community, if you prefer – think are the best ways of helping people with computers. This will be followed by a review of the

various ways that we – as individuals and as a community - might provide assistance. Then finally, we can have questions and discussions, and enjoy some afternoon tea.

Before I get started, however, I should make plain my objectives in all of this. My club, the DSCC, has been running a particular type of training program in Casuarina for many years now, and I thought it might be a nice idea if we began to hold the same sort of meeting here in Palmerston.

Now, I cannot do this alone. Running almost any kind of computer training is a team effort, involving a mix of trainers, front-of-house workers, and back-room people. There are a million jobs to be done: organise publicity, raise funds for room hire and for refreshments, welcome the guests, and so on. So, I thought, I'll hold a public meeting and ask for volunteers to help me.

As soon as I mentioned the idea of a public meeting, however, people began to say to me, "Well, while you are at it, can you get some volunteers for this or that project as well?" Suddenly, my one little meeting was turning into the King Kong of training!

So, I thought, I'll put the word out that other forms of training are needed besides my Monthly Meeting, but I'll leave it up to you to decide what you want to do with the information.

Just so long as some of you at least put up your hands to help out with a Monthly Meeting for Palmerston!

Definitions

We commence with a few basic definitions. One of the problems we have in talking about complex issues is words often have multiple meanings, in the sense that different people give them different meanings when they hear them.

- **Seniors:** One word that can cause problems is 'seniors'. Depending on who you talk to, a 'senior' is a person over the age of 45, 50, 55, 60, or even older. For researchers into computer training, however, a 'senior' is almost always somebody old enough to be in retirement. The reason for this is simple: people in the workforce (and many full-time students) face computer-related problems that are often very different from those faced by retirees. So, when I talk about 'seniors', I mean: older people who are neither in full-time study nor in the workforce.

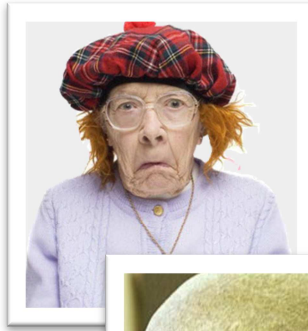
- **People with Disabilities:** Here I mean people with the kinds of difficulties that actively interfere with normal computer usage or enjoyment. Examples are poor eyesight, hearing, physical strength or mobility.
- **Computers:** A computer means anything large or small capable of connecting to the Internet: a Desktop, Laptop, Tablet, or Smart Phone.
- **Computer Access:** by this I mean: the ability to conveniently access and use computers and the Internet. Not everybody who uses a computer needs to access the Internet, of course, but 'computer access' means the ability to access the Internet if they ever change their mind. And in this, 'convenient' is a critical word. That means: the ability to gain access affordably, at convenient times, and for useful durations. For some people, occasional access to a library computer for an hour at a time is all they want; for others, anything less than an Internet-connected computer at home is useless.

Four Steps to Wizardry

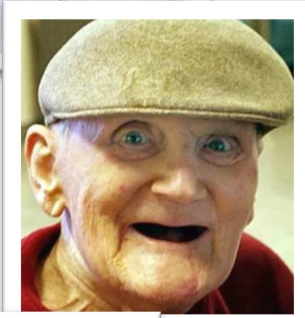
Now we get to the nitty-gritty: the processes by which people learn to use a computer (and especially a home computer); and what we, as individuals and as a community, can do to aid in this.

So far as computers are concerned, everybody begins life as a non-user - that is, somebody who knows little or nothing about computers, and even less about how to use one. Some, after a while, acquire so many skills that other less-skilled people think their skills are magical, and call them names like wizard, genius or maestro.

In order to progress from non-user to wizard, people must jump through many hoops - involving a wide variety of investigations, decisions, anxieties and learning processes. For practical, everyday purposes, we can summarise all of this into four distinct steps or stages:



1. The Non-User: This is the sad person who cannot use a computer: Pays too much for everything! Can't get emails! Can't visit Facebook! Can't apply for jobs! Useless, on life's scrapheap...



2. The Beginner: Struggles with: 'technology anxiety'; finding a teacher; acquiring a 'practice computer'; remembering to practice enough; and finding a 'killer app' (literally, "an app for which I'd kill"; that is, a strong personal motive for going through the pain of learning to use a computer)...



3. The Battler: Struggles with: home computer maintenance (looking after the hardware and software; installing programs and coping with viruses); locating tutors; finding affordable Internet; dealing with rapidly changing technologies...



4. The Wizard: suffers from the same struggles as the Battler, but has a well-developed sense of self-efficacy and training-autonomy-: that is, Wizards knows from long experience that they can solve most problems by themselves, and can train themselves. The mark of a Wizard is that they can help others.

So, what are we to make of this? How are we to progress from knowing about these four stages, to the practical actions of helping our own progress, and of helping the progress of others? For this, we need a metaphor - a mental device to help us focus on the key aspects of the problem, and to identify possible solutions.

The Digital Divide

The ruling metaphor for dealing with computer learning is the "Digital Divide". This metaphor has been around since the mid-1990's, and asks us to concentrate our thoughts on the statistical fact that, so far as computer access is concerned, *some* people in society are haves, while *others* are have-nots. Seniors and people with disabilities, the statisticians have been telling us for at least 15 years, are firmly on the wrong side of the divide.

Consider this news story from 2011:

"Seniors isolated by digital divide"

A study called: "*Older Australians and the Internet: Bridging the Digital Divide*" was undertaken last year by Queensland University of Technology researcher Dr Sandra Haukka for National Seniors.

The report said:

The Internet would enrich the lives of older Australians but many of them think that using it is all too hard.

There was increasing awareness that the internet could provide the convenience of email, health advice, online shopping, bill-paying, banking and keeping in touch with family, friends, news and events in their community.

But many people were deterred by concerns such as the cost of buying a computer and Internet or broadband connection, a lack of knowledge and skills, confusion about technology, worries about computer security and access to computers particularly in regional areas.

Older people with low internet skills are unable to conduct business or access important services over the web, can be isolated from their community and family at a time in their lives when feeling connected is very important.

In short, the report said, "they are often on the wrong side of the digital divide".

Now, this so-called 'digital divide' does not really exist - not in the sense of there being a physical space dividing one person from another. It is merely a metaphor - a poetic device intended to get us to think of what might be wrong or unfair, and to spur us on to some kind of action.

The purpose of a metaphor is to **dramatise** – to impress upon us:

- (1) the **fact** of relative *social disadvantage*;
- (2) the **need** for *social remedy*.

But is it actually accurate, or, even more importantly, is it useful? The short answer to both questions is: no!

Out-of-date: The Digital Divide no longer really exists within Australia, and in particular within the Darwin Region, at least in the sense that there are no large groups

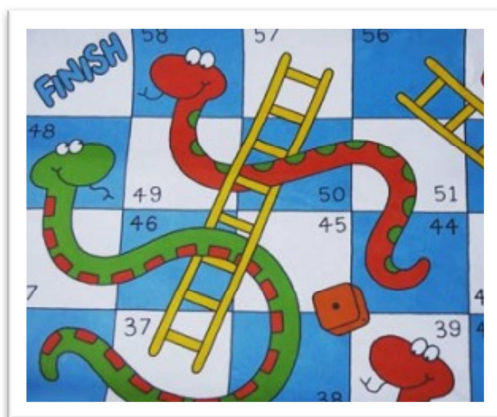
within our community who are **totally** left out of the Digital Age. About 80% of people - including seniors - have at least *some* access to computers, and know how to use them, at least *a little bit*. To give you an idea, I'll mention the fact that local classes for beginners, which just five years ago were packed, now struggle to find customers.

Useless: With regard to the second question - as to whether the concept of a Digital Divide helps us to correctly identify problems, and to select suitable solutions - once again the answer is 'no' - except this time it is an even more resounding 'no'. Indeed, I think it gets fairly in the way of finding solutions!

Let me show you why! The Digital Divide metaphor...

- Invites idea of single *easy* solution. In fact, none of the problems are easy; neither are any of the solutions;
- It focuses on '*social solutions*' not individual. "To fix the Digital Divide, *we* build a bridge for *them*." Does this also mean that we are going to carry everyone else across on our backs? In the end, no matter how much we do to help others, there is some hard work that individuals must do to help themselves. In the end, they have to walk across the bridge themselves;
- It also hides the fact of multiple Digital Divides. As we shall see, there are many Digital Divides, each of which requires its own solution;
- Finally, it invites idea that 'once across, always across'. As we shall see, this is the worst and most misleading aspect of this metaphor. The reality is that, for the ordinary person, the road to Wizard is more like playing Snakes and Ladders than crossing a Digital Divide: either you climb a ladder, or slip back to the beginning.

Digital Snakes & Ladders



Rules: Go back to NON-USER if...

- you don't have a computer...
- you don't practice enough...
- your computer becomes too old...
- There is nobody to help you...
- Etc etc etc

In short, move up, or risk dropping out!

Snakes into the Abyss:

There are just so many different causes for people to slide back to Non-user status. Over the years, I have taught beginners' skills to many retired IT professionals, including at least two former people who were once senior government IT managers. Even an IT degree, it seems, is no protection against relegation to non-user!

For people without an IT degree, and especially for people who have not yet reached the rank of Wizard, the risk of relegation is high. Lack of attendance at classes; lack of adequate practice time, and lack of adequate motivation – these are just a few of the reasons why people are relegated.

Learning to use a computer is not at all like learning to ride a bicycle. Learn to ride a bike once, and you have learned for life. Learn to drive a computer, however, and immediately they change the model. Only a few years ago, the mouse was a novelty; today, it is old technology, and about to be replaced by touch screens (and who knows how long *they* will stay around for!).

Ladders to Heaven:

Meanwhile, some people struggle onwards and upwards. Once people have learned the basics, they face a series of challenges in learning to apply their knowledge. The challenges are:

- 1) To understanding the computer's various processes;
- 2) To achieve familiarity and confidence with the computer;
- 3) Applying skills in one aspect of the computer to other contexts;
- 4) Creatively applying skills to new contexts.

This sequence of skills development is the move from 'cookbook' computing to creative computing; from only being able to access emails by clicking on *this* particular icon, to being able to access emails any which way – even if there is no icon at all. And being able to do this, every cookbook user will assure you, is true Wizardry!

The Research: What we ought to be doing.

So how do we go about creating Wizards? Let's look what the academic researchers have to say about computer training for seniors. Among other things, this will give us an idea of what we *should* be doing, as a community.

The first things that we can note is that seniors need special training - training that is different from that for younger folk. The reason for this is simple: seniors are different. On average:

- Seniors make more mistakes than younger people
- Seniors require more time, practice, and technical assistance to acquire computer skills; and, most especially...
- Seniors need age-appropriate training materials.

So what sort of training is needed? We can condense everything down into this simple mnemonic: **VIP PEARLS**

- VIP: Everything focused on Volunteers, Instructors and Peers;
- PEARLS: Permanent Extended Appropriate Ragbag of Learning and Support;

Let's work our way through these, starting with PEARLS.

- **Permanent:** The academic research stresses the importance of permanent, on-going, never-ending training and support. To coin a phrase, school is never out for computer users. There are three reasons for this. The first and most obvious reason is that constant training is needed to deal with constantly changing technologies. Especially amongst home users, there is a real risk that people who fail to keep abreast of new technologies run in great risk of becoming non-users once again. The second reason is that the world of computer skills is so large that not even 24/7 training can ever be enough. Finally, there is strong evidence that people who attend computer training gain direct benefits in their physical and mental well-being, quite apart from the benefits they may get from using computers.
- **Extended:** 'Extended' reminds us that people want to be able to explore computing in depth; they want it extended and comprehensive.

To explain: seniors have a number of apparently contradictory needs with regard to computer training. On the one hand, if seniors wish to know about something, then they want real, genuine, heavy-duty information, and not the five-minute pre-digested Farax version of it. On the other hand, they cannot handle the whole story all in one big bite. Younger people, for example, might be able to handle a full-on week-long, day-and-evening course on advanced Microsoft Office skills, but older people can't. What they need is for the topic to be divided up into little nibble-sized portions, each of which is a complete lesson to itself, and for these to be presented one or two a week for as long as it takes. Now, if this sounds like a regular week of training merely spread out a little, it isn't! In the case of seniors' training, each nibble must be a stand-alone course in its own right, so that a person should be able to attend the session in any old wrong order, taking time

out occasionally to attend the doctor or look after the grand-children, and still get value!

That's 'extended' training.

- **Appropriate:** This means: the course contents must be personally appropriate or relevant to the trainee. That is, it must be 'age-appropriate' (or 'disability-appropriate' for when we get around to talking about training for people with disabilities). Training should target issues of strong personal interest. Few seniors are interested in training for training's sake; what they want is answers to life's immediate problems. Thus, for example, lessons in accessing medical websites will tend to be popular, while classes in using Facebook will be sparsely attended. (By contrast, the opposite will usually be the case for younger people.)

I should, of course, offer a warning here. The seniors community is extremely diverse, containing exceptions to every rule. Thus there will always be a few odd-ball seniors on any given day looking for Facebook training, while we know from at least one academic source that as many as 30% of seniors will absent themselves from a medical-website training session if given a chance. So what are we to do? The answer, it seems, is this:

Whenever possible, focus training on issues of wide relevance to seniors. Just think about beginners' training, for instance. Traditionally, this has always been presented in a very general way, as if the ultimate goal of computer usage is to shift folders around, and to open and close files. 'Appropriateness', however, reminds us to think again, and to redesign the course so that the same micro-skills are taught, except with the ultimate goal being to use the computer in some particularly useful way – such as accessing medical websites. Thus the relevance and importance of every single micro-skill can easily be seen by the trainees.

And this, the researchers assure us, is bliss for the learners!

- **Ragbag:** The next item on our list is 'Ragbag' or 'extreme variety'. This tells us that seniors need their training delivered in a very wide variety of forms, including classes, one-on-one tuition, meetings, manuals, and lots more.

I am not talking about 'horses-for-courses' here, with each person choosing training to suit their own personal preference. Instead, I am talking about encouraging each individual to take training in a wide variety of forms, because

each form of training brings its own unique benefits. Choosing only one form of training results in an impoverished person!

How come? The answer is – developing autonomy, and creating different kinds of interpersonal exchanges.

Developing Autonomy: In the start, at beginners' level, most people require personal instruction, such as in classes. But, as discussed earlier, the aim of all training must be to develop the attitude of self-efficacy (belief in one's own skills), and training-autonomy (having the skills to train one's self). Thus, right from the beginning, students should be exposed to training activities that help them develop these attitudes and skills.

Interpersonal Connections: Training, it seems, is not just about learning to use a computer; it is also, in part at least, about social interactions. It is also about gaining respect from one's peers and from skilled trainers. Indeed, some researchers say that social interactions are the major league.

So what does all of this tell us? It says that seniors need their training in many forms:

- With interactions with a mix of instructors, expert peers, and peers of similar skills to themselves;
 - Training in groups, one-on-one and solo (from manuals, videos, websites and interactive software);
 - Training focused in issues of high personal interest, and 'blue-sky' training (that is, in topics of no known value).
- **Lessons:** To be able to maintain computer access, most people need both support and lessons. I'll talk about support in a moment, but for now, we can focus on lessons.

A lesson is generally defined as a formal instruction in a topic, and can be *skills* training, such as one person showing another how to use a computer mouse – or *knowledge* training, such as explaining how a mouse works. Lesson can be delivered in many ways, including in a classroom, over the telephone or on a webpage.

The general guidelines for lessons will be familiar to most experienced trainers:

- Classes should be small, with lots of opportunities for questions and personal assistance.
 - If a class contains a mix of skilled and unskilled students, then each unskilled student should be paired with a more skilled student. This helps both students. The unskilled student receives extra help, which helps them from becoming discouraged, while the skilled student is kept too busy to become bored.
 - If the aim is to teach a skill, then it is important to provide step-by-step detailed instructions, and opportunities for hands-on practice;
 - Instructor- or video-based lessons are usually better than manual-based;
 - Unnecessary technical jargon should be avoided;
 - Lessons should be held in familiar relaxed environment, ideally in the early morning, which is an optimal time for seniors.
- **Support:** Support, in this context, refers to the sort of help that computer users in the workforce take for granted. It includes both technical and emotional support – technical support, such as replacing a faulty hard-drive; and emotional support, such as helping the computer owner grieve over the loss of six months' worth of important files that were on the hard-drive, and that 'somebody' forgot to back up elsewhere! People in the workplace take this kind of support for granted, but many seniors go without. All, however, need it, and get eaten by snakes if they don't get it. Given that money is an issue for many seniors, the trick is to be able to deliver as much free or low-cost support as possible. Mutual-help support, such as through a computer club, is one way of doing this.

This then is PEARLS. So what about VIP? VIP reminds us that the help seniors need will need to be delivered by Volunteers, Instructors and Peers.

- **Volunteers:** Volunteering could be an ultimate win-win for all of us, but instead is currently utterly lose-lose! We, as a community, need volunteers desperately, and we are suffering badly for lack of them. At the same time, we, as potential volunteers, are also suffering for lack of properly managed volunteer activities. By ignoring our community and individual needs for volunteers, and to be volunteers, governments at every level have let us all down most horribly.

There are about 2.5 million seniors in Australia, most needing very regular computer lessons and support. If the Government were to pay for just two hours per month of training for each senior computer user, then *at least* 10,000

trainers would be needed – at a cost of half a billion dollars a year in salaries alone. Somehow, I don't see Wayne Swan, our national Treasurer, agreeing to this!

In the end, to deliver the lessons and support that seniors need, extensive use of volunteers will be needed. These volunteers, however, need to be trained, lead and insured. Asking volunteers to lead and train themselves, as well as to fund-raise the necessary money for insurance is just too much, mostly resulting in unhappy, de-motivated ex-volunteers. Ultimately, government has to step in, as it has done with sport and the arts, and create a professional infrastructure for the management of computer volunteers.

Government neglect of computer volunteers has a second negative effect, which is that the volunteers themselves miss out on the benefits of volunteering. Volunteering is an important method of helping people move to Wizard status, and one of the principle methods for helping Wizards maintain their Wizard status. Government backwardness in this regard has exacted a bad price in the community.

- **Instructors:** As mentioned, there is at present a need for at least 10,000 trainers Australia-wide. At least! Not all of them, however, need to be fully trained professional trainers. Researchers into these matters tell us that anybody can become a reasonable teacher, just so long as they have good teaching kits, with good lesson plans and teaching aids such as Powerpoint presentations and handout notes. Researchers are adamant about this: even a block of wood can be a good teacher if it has a good teaching kit; by contrast, brilliant teachers all turn into instant blocks of wood without one.

So what we need is a relatively small number of skilled teachers preparing good teaching kits, and then every man and his dog delivering them. That way, we can get all the lessons our hearts could desire. And if the man and his dog are both volunteers, then we will all be able to afford this training!

Shortly, I will be calling for volunteers to help me present regular computer training here in Palmerston, and what I need is even just one or two people willing to prepare the teaching kits, and some more willing to follow them. Both brilliant teachers and blocks of wood are encouraged to volunteer. I might add that lots of pre-prepared teaching kits are available online and through our club's national body, ASCCA.

- **Peers:** Finally, we are reminded that computer training and support from professionals is well and good, and often just what the doctor ordered – but in the end, seniors also need to hear from their peers. The academic researchers stress the importance of peers in the mix of computer training and support needed by seniors. They also stress the different roles that peers can play in, highlighting in particular peers as expert demonstrators (showing you, for example, how easy it is to use a particular device, even if your hand is shaking ten to the dozen), and as fellow students struggling to do things with shaking hands.

Learning with peers has been shown to be extremely beneficial. Not only do seniors learn better, but the interaction with their peers brings many independent benefits – as I am sure that anybody here who has had contact with the Men’s Shed program will recognise.

People with Disabilities:

So far, I have been talking about computer training for seniors. Let’s turn momentarily to the needs of people with disabilities.

For our purposes, we can define people with disabilities as anybody, of any age, who cannot use a computer in the normal way, or who needs some special kind of training or support. For example, they cannot see the computer screen, or hear what a teacher is saying; or understand or remember what the teacher just said; or cannot get their wheelchair into a small training room; or cannot physically control a mouse.

By and large, the research that applies to seniors also applies to people with disabilities. They need training and support, including lots of peer support. Basically, whatever is done for seniors, also needs to be done for each group of people with disabilities.

Towards Solutions and Projects:

So we come to the final stage of this talk, when we review the various activities that would be helpful to seniors and people with disabilities.

Firstly, a quick overview of what is currently available:

- **Non-Users:** Non-Users are fairly well set for services. The Club runs a website and a telephone information service that are used by people from all over Australia and New Zealand. These services provide information about Beginners’ classes and other training in Darwin.

- **Beginners:** Beginners are also very well served, with classes for them locally at the Palmerston Library, and elsewhere at Taminmin College, and in Darwin City at Spillett House.
- **Battlers:** Battlers are the people who miss out in Palmerston. There is not one single service for them within the Palmerston City borders.
- **Wizards:** Finally, there are the Wizards. Wizards need two types of facilities: self-paced teaching opportunities, many of which are available online; and volunteering opportunities, some of which are supplied by DSCC. So I guess they are somewhat well-off.

My Wishlist

Drawing on the academic research for guidance, I come up with a number of possible projects for you to consider. All aim to help Battlers and Wizards.

Before I talk about these possible projects, I should raise the topic of a computer club for Palmerston.

For at least ten years, and possibly longer, people have been talking about the idea of a computer club for Palmerston, or, more precisely, one with the word 'Palmerston' in its name. I am not sure if that is necessarily such a useful thing. Let me explain why.

Until a computer club takes on a project, it is little more than a random collection of people. Indeed, it may be nothing more than a pile of old computers in a corner. The only thing that makes a club worth the paper it is written on is its projects – the things its members do to help each other and the community. Starting a Palmerston Club without also starting up a project is a total waste of time.

Meanwhile, Palmerston already has a computer club. Indeed, it has three. What it lacks is any local projects.

To start with, Palmerston has a regional computer club (DSCC), with members and committee drawn from across the three local government areas of Greater Darwin. Its membership is open to all adults over the age of 21. Its constitution allows it to undertake almost any activity or service provided that it helps seniors and people with disabilities use and enjoy computers.

There are also at least two other computer clubs servicing the people of Palmerston. One focuses on computer games, the other on Linux computers. If the aim of a computer club is to provide opportunities for socialising and for volunteering, then

Palmerston is quite well served. It is only when one thinks of local projects to help seniors and people with disabilities that there is any problem.

It is this shortage of useful projects that I wish to address. One, a regular monthly training session, is ready to go, needing only a few more volunteers. I have four others for your consideration.

When I have finished describing these five projects, I am going to invite you to register your interest in whichever takes your fancy. To do this, I will invite you to put your name and contact details on the sheets of paper you will find on the side table.

Project 1: Special Lessons

There is a need for ‘special lessons’ – lessons, that is, aimed at people who have completed beginners’ training. To provide such lessons, we would need a venue, administrative staff to handle bookings, teachers (who can include volunteers), and fittings, including computers. Such training is currently offered by Darwin City Libraries; perhaps Palmerston Library might consider doing likewise.

Project 2: Social Surfing

‘Social surfing’ is our term for a peculiar social activity, in which a group of friends come together to surf the Internet, read emails, chat, drink coffee, and generally have fun. Whenever possible, there will be a tutor on hand to help anybody with computer or Internet problems. Providing a venue for this was, of course, the original function of our Club.

Currently, the only social surfing venue in the Top End is in Malak, provided jointly by ourselves and Darwin Community Arts. This facility is used by a wide variety of community groups.

There are calls to introduce something like that in Palmerston, which I think would be a really good thing. But social surfing centres do not just happen by accident; they have to be created. The raw materials are venue, staff and fittings:

- **A Venue.** Somebody has to provide a venue, or provide the money to rent a venue. To rent a venue, you need a bucket-load of money, plus a legal organisation (such as ours) to receive the money, and to sign the lease. You also need people to rustle up the money.

- **Staff:** Somebody has to manage the premises. Somebody has to make sure that it is opened up in the morning, and closed at night. Somebody has to handle bookings, and manage the volunteers.
- **Fittings for the venue:** Tables, chairs, coffee cups, computers – finding these is not so difficult.

If you would like to participate in this project, please put your name to the form.

Project 3: Home Tuition and Support

This is arguably both the hardest service to supply, and yet the most needed of all services. It is *wanted* by a veritable army of people, most of whom can give no better reason for having the service than they are too lazy to leave their homes. It is also *needed* by a variety of people with disabilities, who have no choice in the matter; if they cannot get the service, they cannot use their computers. Surprise! Surprise! Because this service does not exist, very few disabled people have computer access.

Requirements are:

- **Client Administration:** an organisation is needed to assess recipients of the service for eligibility, and then manage bookings;
- **Volunteer Administration:** an organisation (not necessarily the same as the first organisation) is needed to manage volunteers, and provide them with support, training and insurance.

If you represent an organisation that can help set up this project, or you are willing to create such an organisation, please put your name on the appropriate form.

Project 4: Self-Paced Learning

One form of training is ideal for seniors and people with disabilities - or, more precisely, those able to train themselves. Training is provided from books, manuals, computer programs, video tapes or websites. This method has the distinctive feature that not so many people want it, but for those who do, it suits them very well indeed.

In the past, the main organisations offering this type of training have been my Club, while we were in Nightcliff, and the public libraries. I am not sure how to rate the success of the various offerings here, but I think there is a lot of room for improvement. As I see it, there are opportunities to make the training more relevant, and to improve its availability. If you are willing to help make such improvements, please leave your name on the appropriate list.

Project 5: Monthly Meeting

Finally, my pet project!

For the past five or six years, DSCC has been running a Monthly Meeting in Casuarina. This Meeting consists of a mixture of computer lessons, a roundup of relevant computer news, socialising, peer-contact, and volunteer opportunities. Attendance is free, though we welcome a donation; and everybody is welcome, not just Club members.

Now, we hope to extend this Meeting to Palmerston. Being a local resident myself, and one of the founders of the Casuarina meeting, I plan to lead the project here, at least for a while. To make the meeting possible, I will need a number of co-workers: at least two or three teachers; and maybe half a dozen other people to take on the various back-room jobs. If you volunteer, you will most likely be committing yourself to a few hours each month, with time off for holidays or whatever. Please fill out the form to volunteer.

Assuming that we receive the support we need, this meeting will begin next month. The inaugural Monthly Meeting for Palmerston will be held one month from today, on Wednesday 7th of November, at 2 o'clock.

Conclusion

This concludes my talk. Thank you for listening.

Selected References:

Previous reports by Lamaan Whyte into computer issues. These were published in 2008.
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The National Seniors Report into the Digital Divide 2011

http://www.nationalseniors.com.au/page/Driving_Change/News/Press_Releases/2011_Media_Rel_eases/Isolated_by_digital_divide/

A recent paper into issues of computer training for seniors

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818317/>