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**Editor contact**  
[rotorua@seniornet.nz](mailto:rotorua@seniornet.nz)

**Website**  
[www.rotoruasenior.net](http://www.rotoruasenior.net)

Hello, members

There have been many amazing technological innovations over recent decades, which we now tend to take for granted. One that continues to amaze me is the Global Positioning System (GPS), and all that it can do for us. We are all now very familiar with finding our way round the countryside using satellite navigation on our car navigation systems or through our phones. We can even buy GPS collar tags for our cat or dog so that we can always know where they are. Similarly, we can use apps that enable us to keep track of each other, if this is what we want to do.

One thing that I find particularly fascinating is Google Maps Timeline. With a Google account on my phone and location sharing switched on, Google Maps has been keeping track of my every movement for the last nine years. I can see where I went and at what time on any day, often right down to the detail of what shops or coffee bars I visited.

Of course, this raises the question of what use is all this information. I find it useful from time to time to check where I was on a particular day. Recently, I had to drive to a meeting in another town. I had been to a previous meeting some months before, but as a passenger in the back seat of someone else's car. I was not sure that I could find the venue, and address details were scant. I consulted my Google Timeline for the date of the previous meeting. Sure enough, it showed the exact route we had taken, leading to the specific building where the meeting was to be held. Problem solved!

Isn't technology marvellous!

Regards  
Keith Garratt  
Chair

*Rotorua SeniorNet is just one of 75 local groups in the New Zealand Federation. If you would like to know more about what goes on elsewhere, OR what discounts or services are available to members, go to the Federation website.*

[www.seniornet.nz](http://www.seniornet.nz)

## Next members' forum

### Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Our monthly members' forums are at Parksyde Centre, Tarewa Place, on the second Monday of each month at 2 pm, with interesting talks followed by afternoon tea. Visitors are welcome.

This month Peter McKellar will demonstrate how citizen scientists in New Zealand can keep track of **Interplanetary intruders** using just a Raspberry Pi, some code, and a video camera. Keith will preview the launch of Senior Hangouts Version 2. We look forward to seeing you there.

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#### From Bert, Activities Co-ordinator

In the world of IT new things arrive every day. Many arrive and disappear in a short time frame because they did not catch on. Others have taken a while to get going but have become pretty much a necessary part of our lives. The use of email and internet banking spring to mind.

Some things arrive like a summer dawn with a slight lightening of the sky gradually more minute by minute ushering in the arrival of the sun bringing the promise of the new day. Recently we have seen the lightening of the sky with the announcement of work on artificial intelligence which shows much promise for the future.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages<sup>1</sup>. It is the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.

AI has the potential to change our lives in many ways. For example, AI can be used in healthcare to help doctors diagnose diseases more accurately and provide better care for patients. It can also be used in transportation to develop self-driving cars that can reduce accidents and improve traffic flow. AI can also be used in education to personalize learning for each student and help teachers provide more effective instruction.

I must confess at this point that I did not write the previous two paragraphs as I asked Microsoft Bing to do it for me. I left the article in its original Roboto font as a bit of a clue. It is not that obvious that it was not written by a human being and I could have increased the number of words by having Bing explore the many different aspects that might change all of our lives.

I also must confess that I really know diddly squat about AI. What I do know I have learned from newspapers and a recent AI Jazeera talking heads show.

A few things of interest have appeared in the past few days. One announcement was that Samsung is considering using Microsoft Bing on their mobile phones in preference to Google as a search engine. This is the first time that Microsoft has made a serious attempt to challenge Google in the search engine market. At least we should hopefully benefit from the ensuing competition.

AI is much more than a super search engine and billions of dollars are being invested by Microsoft and Google to become the leaders in this new technology. AI can be used to speed up research in the development of products such as driverless cars and in medical research identifying cancer cells both using very sophisticated image recognition. The tag "artificial Intelligence" seems to refer to programs that can be trained to carry out tasks to levels of greater and greater accuracy by exposing them to more and more examples of the problem. As an example, self-driving cars can be trained to recognise more and more different hazards that may be encountered on a busy city street.

The other message that has come through loud and clear is that probably the easiest way to monetize the use of AI is by indulging in criminal activity. This could also be said about the internet so we are not on new ground here. A lot of the money being invested is involved in solving the legal and ethical problems that are arising.

Bert Harris

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## **FYI/FYE** (For Your Information/From Your Editor)

There has been so much in the news recently about the misbehaviour of young people, accompanied by much wringing of hands and cries of 'what's gone wrong?'. Coming from a parent and teaching background that started in the 1970s, I think I can see at least part of the problem. Parents and teachers used to be allowed to say, 'No!'

Children and teenagers now believe they can do whatever they want, whenever they want and wherever they want. I well remember saying to a student, about ten years ago, that he needed to behave properly. His response was, 'You can't tell me what to do!' I pointed out that I was paid to do exactly that, so he could get over it! He did, and we had no more issues.

This is just a tiny example of how things have gone in schools. Teachers are no longer able to administer normal discipline, even the word 'no' is too strong for some.

Another large part of the problem seems to be the influence of social media, especially on the easily-combustible adolescent brain and the developing brains of younger children. It's not unusual to see even quite small children engrossed in screens of various sizes, from their parent's smart phone to a large screen television. Most of us can remember the days when TV was known as 'the idiot box' and came with dire predictions as to the consequences of viewing. How much more damaging, then, is the virtually uncontrolled content of the Internet?

Just like fire, the sharpened flint, the wheel, combustion engines, electricity and a host of other inventions over the millennia, social media is a double-edged sword and needs to be used carefully. Maybe all we can do is to hope the current fad for violent crime ends quickly and is replaced with communities who genuinely care for one another.

Ngaire Tucker

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### **Committee and Tutor Contact Details**

Chair/Webmaster	Keith Garratt	07 357 2020
Vice Chairman/Treasurer	John Somerville	021 181 5193
Secretary	Peter McKellar	07 347 1154 or 027 2216275
Committee member	Rob Grant	07 345 4222
Committee members/tutors:	Ngaire Tucker	0272907347
	Gene Rigney	027 5724363
	Bert Harris	343 7232
	Eric Cameron	027 4410567
	Alan Scicluna	0273893505
	Felix Hohener	021 737694
	Alan Armstrong	07 349 6344/021 171 0946

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