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## From the Chairman

Dear members

A feature of the digital age has been the development of social media. These can be a boon in providing instantaneous ways of communicating. However, they can be a means of malicious gossip and bullying, particularly affecting young people, sometimes leading to self-harm and suicide. As the generation with hopefully older wiser heads, we need to be alert for warning signs among our children and grandchildren and provide support where necessary.

A major concern is the use of social media to spread misinformation and conspiracy theories. It is particularly serious in the USA, where it has played a major role in the presidential election and the events that followed.

However, even in the local scene in Rotorua, we are not immune to the use of social media to spread misinformation. My wife and I have had personal experience of this. Back in January, we submitted a letter to our local paper in which we spoke of the positive experiences and feedback we had during the holiday period hosting visitors and showing them the best of what Rotorua has to offer. This precipitated a torrent of critical responses on the Facebook page of a local organisation. This included an attempt by a prominent member of the Rotorua community to discredit our opinions by posting blatant untruths about us. This has taught us that, even in the local scene, we cannot trust claims made on social media.

With council elections coming up later in the year, there is no doubt that social media will be used as a campaign tool. We all need to be alert to the irresponsible use of social media to influence the outcome. Watch out for selective use of information, deliberate disinformation, questionable accusations, exaggeration and personal attacks.

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.rotoruasenior.net](http://www.rotoruasenior.net)

## Next members' forum

### Monday 13 June 2021

### 2 pm

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: Come along for another afternoon of interesting and useful technical tips and entertainment, followed by the chance to socialise over afternoon tea in the Parksyde café.

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#### **From Bert, Activities Co-ordinator**

I have had a couple of enquiries recently where people who have long ago paid for earlier versions of MS Office are finding that they are no longer supported and are being offered what is effectively an annual rental scheme. This has come about following a new trend within the software industry, driven by their accountants, to charge an annual rental for their software. This has the advantage to them of "smoothing" their cash flow.

Who would have believed that an internet giant would need to worry about "Cash Flow"? In my own case I am still using MS Office 2010 so they have not had a cent out of me for 12 years.

As I mentioned earlier, Office 2010 is no longer supported. There are no updates. No one to call if you have a problem. This is not an urgent problem for myself at the level I work on at home. However, it did start me thinking about the alternatives that are out there.

We "Seniors" need to ask the question, "do I really need to be renting an Office product when there are free alternatives?" Many of us are only occasional users of our word processors and /or spreadsheets. Very few deal with enough data to warrant using a database and a few may give talks using slide presentations. Many of us do not need a full 'bells, light and whistles programme' to meet our needs.

Those who only occasionally use MS Word will find that there is a perfectly usable "lite" version called Wordpad already loaded into Windows 10. For those of us who feel a bit daunted by the number of ribbons in the grownup's version, Wordpad has only two ribbons and for most purposes is fine for any writing we may need to produce. (Back in the 'old days' we used to teach this programme to computer beginners.)

A full-scale office programme is available in Google Drive. It is comparable in its scope to MS Office and provides a large amount of cloud storage. I have found it to be particularly useful writing this newsletter each month. I can forward the text to Ngaire, our SeniorNet newsletter editor, with a couple of clicks of the mouse. Another feature of Google Drive is that it saves my work every few seconds. I have found this to be really helpful. Constantly needing to save your work can be a distraction. Google provides 15 GB of storage of which I am using 2 GB. I recently did a huge clean up of old files and reduced it from 2.4 GB.

I have, over the years, tried a number of open source free "Office" programs A quick Google search offers immediately "Open Office" and "Apache Office". There are many more out there, although some are not as free as they advertise.

I personally now use a program called Libre office which is close enough to the MS format to allow me to easily adapt to using it. I still switch from time to time between Office 2010, Google Drive and Libre. The basic short cut keys are all similar and the commands are generally pretty obvious as to their intent. I use Libre because the program is loaded into my computer and unless I get hacked it will remain in my computer. I am not against using the cloud, but I do like to have the option to opt out when necessary.

Bert Harris

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**Looks like we're going to need another computer instructor ...it only took them a day to drive this one nuts.**

## FYI/FYE (For Your Information/From Your Editor, Ngaire)

*Ah, the modern days...*

*I just saw a grandpa help a youngster, who was staring into his phone, to cross the street.*

(<https://www.scarymommy.com/jokes-seniors>)



Curiosity drove me to investigate the dangers of cell phone use – on the Internet, of course – and almost all of the articles I found were about the possibility of developing brain cancers as a result of radiation from the phones. What I was actually looking for was some sort of research on the other dangers of cell phone use – walking and texting, using while driving, crossing roads while distracted, ‘supervising’ small children while distracted, and so on.

After some more investigating, I found some statistics from the USA for 2020. This stated that handheld cell phone use continued to be higher among female drivers than male drivers; although, the difference has been decreasing in recent years. In previous years handheld cell phone use was found to be highest among 16- to 24-year-old drivers and lowest among drivers 70 and older.

So, it looks like we are still less addicted to our phones than the younger generation(s). Like many inventions, cell phones (mobiles) are both good and bad. It’s up to us to use them wisely and appropriately.



**“Where do you want me to wait?”**



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