

NAWG Workshop:

Help for Technophobia

by Kevin Machin

Hello and welcome to the workshop. My name's Kevin Machin and I'm a member of the NAWG committee.

My main role is to help develop and manage the technology we use, but I can often be found doing other tasks, such as presenting workshops.

Workshop Goals

- To break down some of technology's bits & pieces
- To make you (at least a bit) less technophobic
- Mainly about computers and the internet



Here are what I think will be some useful goals for the workshop.

When I talk about technology, I'm mainly referring to computers and the internet, but we may cover other things as well.

Agenda

- Part one: presentation (approx. 30 mins)
 - Who am I?
 - General things
 - Devices
 - The Cloud
 - Backups
 - Software
 - Topics for follow-up workshops
- Part two: questions and answers (approx. 30 mins)
 - You have the floor!

The workshop is in two parts, roughly half an hour each.

The first is this presentation, where the aim is to break down some technology into some hopefully manageable sized pieces.

Then it's over to you for questions which I'll do my best to answer.

Who is Kevin Machin?

- Avid reader and sometimes writer
 - Favourite genre: science fiction
- Have assisted NAWG, on and off, for many years
 - Mainly with technical matters
- Software engineer by trade
- Have a strong dislike of smart phones!



Here's a little bit about me. As you can probably tell from these snippets, I've always been interested in science and technology.

Having said that, not all technology is suitable for everyone. In my case I don't like smart phones. You can ask me why in the questions & answers session later.

General Things

- Technology...
 - Is your friend; not your enemy - most of the time
 - Helps you be more productive
 - But can take a bit of learning (which itself can be fun)
- Try not to think of it as one big scary monster
 - There are many aspects and component to it
 - You can use a much or as little as you like



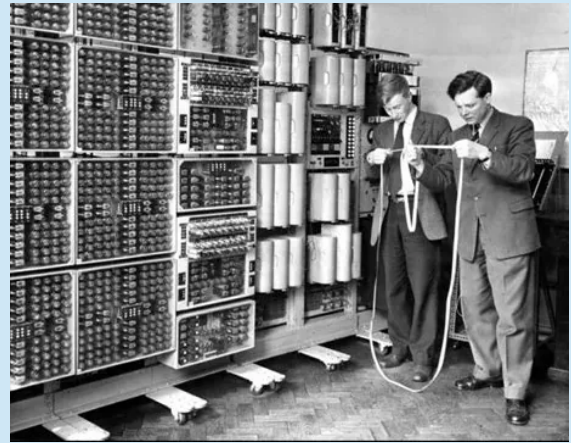
Here are some general things to consider when thinking about technology.

It's easy to fall into thinking that it's all one big thing that you either buy into or don't.

However, it's useful to think of it as a selection of things that you can cherry pick from.

Devices

- Desktop PCs
 - A dying breed?
- Portables
 - Laptops & Tablets
 - Just as powerful as desktops these days
- Phones
- Others
 - E-readers, e.g. Kindle



Whether you want to run technology, that's helpful for writers, locally or over the internet, you'll need a device of some sort. The fact you're here means you have at least one.

This is a list of some of the devices you could use. For most people, portability seems to be important, so I think fixed desktop computers are slowly dying out.

The Cloud

- What and where is "The Cloud"?
 - Anywhere on the internet
 - Essentially "someone else's computer(s)"
- Uses:
 - Centralising information and services
 - Avoids tying things to a particular personal device



The exact meaning of "in the cloud" is not that important. What's important to understand is that it means things that are running on somebody else's computers, rather than on your personal devices.

Putting things into the cloud has the advantage of retaining your work and your tools, even if you change your device for any reason.

Backups

- Why? To avoid loss, due to:
 - Theft of devices
 - Physical damage and/or hardware faults
 - Software errors ("bugs")
- Saving work online
 - Dropbox
 - Google Drive
 - Microsoft OneDrive
- Using external devices you can connect physically (or perhaps over wi-fi)
 - Disk drives
 - Memory "sticks"

It's important that you back up anything that's important to you, especially your writing work!

If you don't do this regularly, then you're taking risks. These days there are tools to help you do this automatically. You should also regularly check you can retrieve what you've backed up.

You can back up your work to the cloud and there are free tools to do this, some of which are listed here.

You can also do local backups, in case the internet is not available, by copying your work to a storage device that you plug into your PC or portable.

Software (for Writers)

- Office (not necessarily Microsoft)
 - Word processing
 - Spell checking and grammar checking
 - Planning and plotting: drawing tools, spreadsheets, mind mapping
 - Tools for creating presentation slides!
- Organising
 - Scrivener and similar tools (I used to use yWriter)
 - Organise work in terms of chapters, scenes, notes, plots, synopses, etc.

There's a huge amount of software available that could be useful for writers and, believe it or not, you can get quite a lot of it for free.

Word processing is the most obvious, but there are many more tools that can help with the other aspects of writing, besides putting words onto the page.

This slide lists just a few of them.

Topics for Follow-up Workshops

- Artificial intelligence.
 - Impact on writers and writing
 - Pros and cons.
- Safety and security.
 - Be careful who and what you trust
 - Protect your systems and information

Here are some possible topics for follow-up workshops. If there's time, we could touch upon these in the questions and answers session.

They're just suggestions. If you have some other topics that you'd like to be covered, then please let me know in the questions and answers session coming next...

Question Time

Ask me anything,
but please be aware I'm not an expert in
everything!

Now we're onto the second half of the workshop, where you'll be able to ask me questions.

So we don't all try to speak at once, if you have a question then please raise your hand. You can do this with the Zoom controls, or just physically if you prefer. So I can see you, I'll now stop displaying these slides.

I don't like phones because...

- * Good for output; terrible for input.
- * Many aspects of modern life *force* their use.