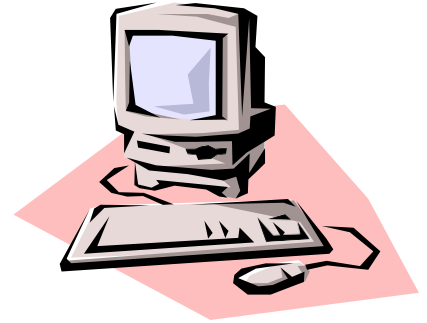# COMPUTER
CORNER

Columns by:

Mike Blackledge, Lark Robart and John Farris

VOICE VS. VISION
SPEAK, SCREEN!

By Mike Blackledge, AGS Member

We have many members in AGS who are advanced in years (yeah, like me!). An advantage of the eQuarterly is that you can increase the Adobe Reader print view to 'any' size.

Recently my brother-in-law Dick, age 90, sent me this inquiry:

"My vision is going pretty rapidly and I don't think I'll be able to read much longer, maybe six months. I'm familiar with dictation to print out, such as on Apple and Google [e.g., voice-to-typing]. Is there any software that will read something out to you, like financial info?"

Here is my response to my brother-in-law:

There are many good answers to reading software/services, depending on what you want to read. I will mention two of them:

Library of Congress Books for the Print Disabled:

I have had two (2) guys in my book club use this service. Basically it is a free service where the LOC will send you Books on Tape—any book you can name, they can send you the book on tape, and apparently they send you the machine to read it also.

Read about it at *www.loc.gov* for the application. Note that even though the ABQ Libraries are closed to the public now for at least the rest of this month, the librarians are working inside the library.

TakeABreak-equipment illustrated.

Reading stuff on your computer screen:

This is relatively easy to do since you have Windows 10 on your computers (and the equivalent on your iPhone). Windows has long offered a screen reader and text-to-speech feature called Narrator. This tool can read web pages, text documents, and other files aloud, as well as speak every action you take in Windows. Narrator is specifically designed for the visually impaired, but it can be used by anyone. This software is already built into your computer. All you have to do is turn **Narrator** on.

Narrator is an accessibility feature in **Windows 10** that **reads** your **computer screen aloud**. You can turn Narrator on or off by opening the Settings app and going to the Ease of Access section. You can also turn Narrator on or off quickly using the **Win**+CTRL+Enter keyboard shortcut.

Once you've turned on the functionality of Narrator while viewing a screen or document or census record, you just move your cursor to the area of text you want Narrator to start reading.

Here are three links to learn more about **Narrator** on your desktop computer.

www.businessinsider.com: Article on Narrator.
www.support.microsoft.com: How to read text aloud with Narrator.
www.pcmag.com: I like this article the best - these folks can write!

Dick, try this out. It will read text on your screen in any language, in any accent, like British or Australian. And it is already built in to your computer!

NOTE: VoiceOver is a screen reader built into **Apple** Inc.'s macOS, iOS, tvOS, watchOS, and iPod operating systems. By using VoiceOver, users can access the **Macintosh** or iOS device based on spoken descriptions and, in the case of the **Mac**, the keyboard.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING A CHROMEBOOK? POINTS OF VIEW FROM TWO AGS MEMBERS

By Lark M. Robart and John A. Farris, AGS Members

LARK'S VIEW:

In February 2018, prior to a visit to Denver to hang out with my twin granddaughters while their parents were away, I remembered there was no longer a computer in my son's home.

When I arrived in Denver, I headed for an electronic store where I looked at several top-rated laptops and Chromebooks. I purchased a Samsung Chromebook Model #XE510C24 and by the time the girls were home from school, I was up and running and pleased with my purchase.

Before getting into the PROS and CONS, let me tell you that Wikipedia defines Chromebook as "a laptop or tablet running the Linux-based Chrome OS as its operating system. The devices are

primarily used to perform a variety of tasks using the Google Chrome browser, *with most applications and data residing in the cloud* [emphasis added] rather than on the machine itself.”

PROS

1. Price! $574
2. Lightweight *and* compact! Weighing only two pounds, it's perfect for traveling or the back patio.
3. Speed! The internet speed is exceptionally good.
4. Screen and keyboard! The 13½ inch screen is large enough for those long research stints. And the keyboard is full size.
5. Touch screen! I wasn't sure about this at first, but it's turned out to be a feature that I appreciate.

CONS (and my work-arounds)

1. Lack of storage. Work-around? I email downloaded photos and documents to myself for permanent storage on my desktop.
2. Low speaker volume. Work-around? I purchased a small external speaker.
3. Must have Wi-fi in order to operate. Work-around? When traveling, I use a hotspot. When I don't need Internet access, I work offline through Google Drive.
4. Ten hour battery life. Work-around? I haven't found this to be a problem.

The Chromebook has been an excellent choice for me. I don't foresee a time when I will give up my desktop, but a Chromebook has turned out to be a great traveling companion, whether out-of-state, downtown to our own research library, or just around the house.

JOHN'S VIEW:

I realized in early 2015 that I needed a laptop computer to make a presentation to AGS and that it needed to have an HDMI port so that I could plug it into the cable in the Main Library auditorium to connect to their projector. My initial goal was to find a used Windows-based laptop that had an HDMI port.

Then I saw a Best Buy ad where I could buy a new Chromebook for $129 plus tax. I went to the store and heard the sales pitch, tried it and purchased it in April 2015. It is an ASUS 13.3" Chromebook model C300MA-BBCLN12 with 2 GB memory and 16 GB flash memory and with an HDMI port. I wish it also had a touch screen, but thus far that is my only complaint.

I agree with all of Lark's PROs. I would add that it comes with the Google programs built in that are the equivalent of Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. I really like the fact that each time I turn on my computer, these three Google programs as well as the virus protection are automatically updated without my doing anything. I used the "Google Slides" presentation program to give my next DNA talk to AGS and it worked flawlessly. Later, I transferred all of these slides to PowerPoint and I only had to reformat two of my slides. I also agree with Lark's list of CONs except that my speaker volume is OK. I find the ten-hour battery life better than

most other laptops and it has been more than enough for my trips to our Genealogy Center at the Main Library. I never even bring the power cord with me.

One curious thing about a Chromebook is that it has a five- to seven-year life after the date of manufacture. After the drop-dead date your Chromebook still works, but the virus protection and program updates cease. The sales person is supposed to tell you this before your purchase – mine hadn't been properly trained. Indeed, they even have a URL where they give you this date. It is: *https://www.xda-developers.com/chrome-os-chromebook-end-of-life-info-settings/*.

In short, I have been very pleased with my Chromebook even though my drop-dead date is March 2021. It has done everything I have expected it to do.