

Radio Days – 2012-12-15

Tip of the Week – The End of the World!

Yesterday, Friday 21 December 2012, was supposed to be the end of the world. This was because the current cycle of the Mayan calendar finished on that day. Surprisingly, for the end of the world, there were supposed to be some places on Earth where you could stand and find that the world did not end. The logic of this surprises me, but there you are! For the first time in my life I have lived through the end of the world and come out alive at the end of it!

Does anyone know how to make a booking for the Restaurant at the End of the Universe?

For those of you who do not know the book, it was written by Douglas Adams as a sequel to The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy and answered the most important question in the world: What is the meaning of Life? For those who do not know, the answer is 42.

Because of all the work done in the lead-up to the year 2000 there were no major problems with computer programs. This, of course, was despite my dire warning to a client who loved to worry that all the cars driving at midnight on 31 December 1999 would fall out of the sky as the clock turned over to 1 January 2000. She had a good three months worrying about that possibility before discovering that it was a hoax. I am not sure that she has forgiven me yet!

Yes, the world will end. The sun will expand to make the Earth too hot for life, but this will not happen in our lifetime so there is no need to worry for the rest of this millennium. You, your children and your grandchildren will be able to live secure in the knowledge that this will not happen in their lifetimes.

It May Not Be Your Fault!

During the week I had an email from a listener who could not access the internet. Her description was that the internet “stuttered” rather than displaying smoothly. This happened with all the websites that she tried to access so, according to her, was a problem with her computer.

This was not her fault or the fault of her computer. She knew this because, when I rang her the next day, everything was working correctly. She had done all the obvious things: turned her computer off then unplugged it from the wall before turning it back on again. She repeated this procedure with her modem or router and all should have been well.

This was obviously a problem with something outside her control. I suspect that her ISP was having major problems and that it was fixed once her ISP had been informed that there was a problem.

There are a number of other problems which worry people, but which are not their fault.

Website Won't Load

Another problem which worries people is when a needed website does not load. In most cases this is a problem with that particular website and not with your computer. There is usually a simple test to determine if there is a problem with your computer: try to access this problem website with another computer. If it is available on that other computer then the problem is with your computer; if the other computer also cannot load the website then it will be a problem with the website itself.

If the other computer can load the website then you know that the problem is with your computer. The only time that I remember this happening was when a client could not log into his bank's website. I tried to log into my bank's website and got a helpful message stating that I needed to allow cookies for my bank's website to work. Allow cookies, and both my bank's website and my client's banking website worked like a charm.

Please do not assume that a website which will not appear on your screen is your fault. There is many a potential slip between that website and your computer!

Emails Don't Arrive

I have had many clients who were convinced that there was a problem with their computer when a friend informed them that their email was not working. The friend swore, black and blue, that the email had been sent and then complained when my client had not replied. On investigation it usually turned out that the email had not been sent or had been sent to the wrong person.

I was then able to show the friend who was annoyed that my client had not replied to their email just how to make sure that an email has been sent correctly. In one case the email address was wrong in her address book and she had not noticed that the email could not go because the email address was invalid (the usual reason being that a comma “,” was used in place of the expected full stop “.”). These two keys are next to each other on the keyboard, and they are easy to confuse when you are in a hurry, and it is too easy to miss the difference. All email programs produce an error when an invalid address appears in an email, but you have to actually read the screen to see that there is an error message!

Just because an email does not arrive does not mean to say that it is your fault!

Nothing Works on the Internet

The weirdest problem that I had to fix was that nothing on the internet would work. Once I arrived at my client's home I realised that there was a problem: there were only three lights on the modem instead of the expected four lights. This meant that there was a problem on the telephone side because the ADSL light was out.

To check the obvious I tried to make a telephone call using the handset attached to the modem. This was impossible because there was not dial tone. A quick look out of the window showed that the telephone line was down: a tree had fallen across the line during the storm overnight. A quick call to the telephone company (using a mobile phone, of course!) started the process of repair to the line.

Once the phone line was repaired the internet, and the phone, worked just fine. Sometimes the obvious really is the problem!

Further Information

Nothing this week.