

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN UPGRADING OR ACQUIRING A COMPUTER

There are many options for choosing a personal computer. What you may perceive to be your present needs can expand after attending courses and workshops at SeniorNet Wellington.

Do you already have access to a sturdy computer but find it does not have adequate capacity for the latest applications. An upgrade of the innards can be very cost effective. This is a good time to move to Windows 8.

An alternative option is a new machine at bargain prices. It can be helpful to talk to someone who is knowledgeable and can read between the lines with often conflicting claims to levels of excellence. What about the advertisements? Seemingly attractive offers are to be found on television and newspaper flyers. Do these have regard to what your needs and requirements are, or might become.

Do the vendors have premises in Wellington, and do these premises have workshop facilities. Not an essential requirement, but how long can you manage without your computer, and how much will it cost if anything goes wrong?

Notebook computers, also called laptop computers, have vastly improved. These are very convenient and are portable devices so can be taken into the warmest room. There may be hidden costs, so allow sufficient budget to cover setting up wireless internet access plus the need to subsequently purchase programs for which trial versions are initially supplied.

Name brands may have better access to spare parts but these frequently need to be ordered in from overseas. Remember too very few laptop machines will still be serviceable after 5 years. The batteries will have expired, at least.

Desktop computers, these no longer have to occupy as much space as hitherto. Mini-tower boxes can contain mind boggling processing power and storage capacity for all the downloading capability that has become available with EBooks', music and television programmes.

You may need advice as to how to assess value for money. Robustness and reliability is important. Some proprietary brands of desktop computers can be difficult to service and use expensive in-house components.

What are the prospects for support now and what is likely to be the availability of replacement parts in the years to come?

Most new computers will have the Microsoft Windows 8 operating software. Microsoft Windows XP, now twelve years old, will no longer be supported from April 2014 and should probably not be installed on replacement equipment.

SeniorNet students are eligible for Student and Home versions of Microsoft Application Software; this may be less costly than validation of trial programs pre-installed on a newly purchased computer. You can discuss this with your Tutor at SeniorNet.

Assistance and sound advice is available at the SeniorNet Centre on a frequent and regular basis for those attending our Special Learning Group meetings.