(Approx. 1065 words)

Stay at Home – Use the time, productively
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Now that you have the time, it may be time to catch up on all those computer projects that you have been meaning to do. Some of those projects may be more like maintenance such as backing up your data or system. And some may be more fun like organizing your picture, video, or music collections. Don't have those collections, well then now may be the time to start creating them. Anyone who has a smartphone, probably has a picture collection, though they may not be able to decide where all the pictures are located. Are the pictures on the device or in the cloud or both? Google Photos provides cloud storage for as many photos as you want to store in the cloud. (But Google Drive is limited to 15 GB.) One way to get your arms around the picture collection is to get them all on one device, your computer, and then organize and maintain them on that device. All you need to use to connect the smartphone to the computer is a USB cable that supports data. (Remember that some USB cables are only for charging a device and cannot transfer data.) File explorer is the tool to use on a PC and the Finder is the tool on the Mac. Oh, and make sure you change the name of any picture that is put into your collection from something like "IMG_20082100034" to something that makes some sense. If you have a collection of pictures that you want to show people on your phone, you can create a folder for them on the pc and then copy them to your phone. (Copy them to the DCIM or DCIM-camera folder on the phone.) Once they are on the phone you can use any picture viewer like "gallery" on an android device or "pictures" on an iOS device.


So what about music and videos? Well, Microsoft gives music and videos their own top-level folders (Under "This PC" in File Explorer) indicating they think many people will save and maybe even organize these two types of media files. Music is pretty easy to think about organizing because music distributors have been doing this for the past almost 100 years, probably since Edison began selling recordings. We can organize our music easily by artist and possibly by Genre. Music organization by Genre has been around a very long time. In fact, as part of the meta-data that is part of every music file (.mp3 being the most popular file type), there is a parameter included for Genre in addition to those you might expect such as title, artist, album, composer, year, contributing artist, album, and track number. Music players like Windows Media Player and iTunes use this metadata to organize, present, and play your music collection. Our job is mostly to collect the music, which

in most cases boils down to "ripping" our CD music collection. Ripping music from a CD is the process of moving (and possibly converting) the music file from a CD to a computer; a perfectly legal process, even if it sounds nefarious. Once this is done, the file can be played on any device with an appropriate music player. Once you have a collection of music files, the music player uses those files with the included metadata to organize the collection. And then you can create playlists within the music player to play the music selections in a sequence of your choice. So, maybe it's time to get on with ripping your CD collection, now that you have the time. Note that if you don't want to go the Rip-CDs route, you can always purchase music from one of the many online music stores such as iTunes or Amazon.

When it comes to organizing music, the task is pretty clear, but what about videos? Video file organization can be a big project. Videos can range from those short (10 to 15 second) videos that you've taken with your smartphone, to professional feature-length movies. For the feature-length movies it might be best to just let Amazon, Netflix, or YouTube keep track of them, and then you can use (and pay for) the service whenever you want to see the movie. If you have a DVD movie collection, you might try to treat them like CDs and convert the DVD files to computer files and store them in a movie database, but it may be easier to just find some shelf space and organize them alphabetically. The smartphone videos, and that could include all of those cute animal videos that get sent around attached to emails, could be collected and organized into a video database. I will not even attempt to describe a database for these because it is probably very different for each of us, due to our own special interests. The only thing to do is to start with a basic hierarchical organization and modify it as needed. Start with a folder for Videos and then create subfolders for any area of interest. I have created folders for "humor", "vacations", "friends", family", "politics", "magic tricks", "technology"… you get the idea. Create a new sub-folder whenever a folder gets too full for convenient searching. Make sure you give the videos a representative file name before you put the video into the database or you may never be able to find it again.
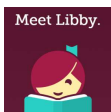
And there is one last task for those of us who have thought about taking advantage of the electronic books at the library, but never have gotten around to it. The county library system has electronic books (eBooks) and magazines you can read on your

electronic device. With a library card and the right Apps on your device, you can borrow the books, read them and return them to the library without ever leaving the comfort, and more importantly in these times, the safety of your home. (Overdrive and Libby are apps that help you borrow eBooks from the library, and Kindle and Libby are eBook readers.) I'm sure you can find a few other tasks that you've been thinking of doing, but right now it might be more fun to just find some entertaining videos on YouTube and leave those projects for another time.