(Approx. 949 words)

Smartphone and Tablet SIG Report

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We were not able to completely answer several seemingly simple questions during the meeting so I will report what I found after subsequent research. The first question was why in iPhone Contacts adding a second birthday came up in Chinese. It sounded like a silly question but it was quite interesting when I dug into it. Our member wanted to combine two people on a single Contact card, since they shared an email address and phone number, and list both of their birthdays. I learned that the second birthday entry is indeed for the Chinese, Hebrew, or Islamic calendars. To add a birthday using the Gregorian calendar, open the individual Contact card, tap Edit, scroll down to "Add Date", tap "Anniversary" (which appeared when you tapped Add Date), tap Add Custom Label, type "Second Birthday" or whatever you choose to call it, tap Done, and then select the date you wanted to enter and Done. That may be a better approach for our members than separating the individuals as I had originally recommended.

The second question was how to create a Group in Contacts on the iPhone. Another simple question with, as it turned out, a very complex answer after I looked into it. Apple wants you to create Groups in Contacts in iCloud using a computer. On your iPhone or iPad go to Settings, tap your name at the top, tap iCloud, and make sure Contacts has a green switch next to it. You can then leave Settings. On either a Mac or PC, go to www.icloud.com, log in to your iCloud Account and then open Contacts on the screen that appears. All of your Contacts will be listed. At the bottom of the left-hand pane click the "+" and select New Group. Enter the group name you want and click outside the box to save it. Select All Contacts in the left pane and drag and drop contacts you want to be in the new Group from the list of contacts over to the new Group Name you created. When finished, click on the new Group Name and review the contacts you have added to the group. To delete a member, select the Group Name, select the member to be removed, click on the cog at the bottom of the left pane, and select Delete. This only removes the name from the Group, not from the Contact list.

Send an email to that Group by typing the Group Name in the "To:" address field. Using the Group for Messages is difficult and not something I would recommend. Messages can be sent by email address as well as phone number so duplicate messages could be sent to individuals in the group. Also, I formed two groups and used them for email, but they would not appear when I attempted to address a message. I will continue to work on this.

Apple is proud of its emphasis on Privacy and the fine control over privacy that it's new mobile operating systems allow so we reviewed what measures exist in iOS 13 and iPadOS 13. In Settings / Privacy / Location Services we recommended turning on Location Services and then selecting under what circumstances each app is allowed to use Location Services. Apple has given users four choices that can be selected for each app: use location "Never, Ask Next Time, While Using App, and Always." Ask Next Time allows the user to allow access to Location Services just once and each time the app is opened, the user is asked whether to allow access. This is a new option in iOS 13 and this degree of control allows the user to be sure an app is not sending out their location without the user's knowledge. The effectiveness of these measures has been reported in Fast Company magazine: "Since the launch of iOS 13 last fall, the amount of background location data that marketers collect has dropped 68%..."

Apps can also request information from standard Apple apps on your phone or tablet. Did you ever suspect that an app could turn on your camera or microphone without your knowledge? Apple has given you the option of controlling what apps can access. In Settings/Privacy starting in the line below Location Services is a list of standard Apple apps. Opening each, in turn, you will see what applications have requested access to that selected app as well as either a yes/no toggle to allow or deny access or, in some cases, selection of what kind of access to grant.

The Safari browser has also been the focus of privacy enhancements. In Settings/Safari scroll to Privacy & Security. Prevent Cross-Site Tracking and Fraudulent Website Warning should be toggled on, but Blocking All Cookies should be left off as Cookies are important to the functioning of most websites. The really powerful change to Safari is the addition of the ability to change privacy settings for each website you visit. Usually, we repeatedly visit the same websites looking for news, sports information, weather, etc. By selecting AA on the left side of the address bar we can specify the Website Settings for that site every time you visit it in the future. Whether to allow Camera, Microphone, or Location access can be specified by website rather than globally for the browser. You can also choose to request a desktop version of the website and whether to call up a reader view and get rid of those distracting ads. For each website, not for all websites. That's a lot of privacy and security at your fingertips.