(Approx. 551 words)

Dan’s Desk

What is Streaming?

By Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG, Florida

March 2020 issue, Space Coast PC Journal

www.scpcug.com

datadan (at) msn.com

On the surface, we have been ‘streaming’ since the days of radio. Basically, you have a receiving device, like a radio, and a ‘broadcast’, like a radio frequency that you use the device to select and play. The same concept applies to TVs as well. You select a particular channel on the TV to play a selected broadcast frequency received through an antenna.

Streaming in the current sense is very similar; we use an application (app) to select a particular stream of data through the internet. In effect, we use the app to communicate to a remote server to request that a particular file is sent to our device. The app and the

device then decode that file in a way that is appropriate for the user. On a smart TV/Roku/Apple TV/Fire TV stick/Chromecast/etc., an app like ESPN will allow you to select a particular show (like a channel or data stream) for playback on the TV. For a computer, it is the same; the app will select a particular data file to be displayed on the monitor and/or played through the audio system. The advantages of subscribed or paid apps versus free ones are usually two factors: fewer or no commercials and access to more content. Many apps, such as Hulu have multiple tiers of use: Free, limited commercials, no commercials, live TV channels. Some apps such as CBS All Access may offer shows such as Star Trek Discovery or Picard to only the subscribers of that channel.

Common Streaming Devices

Smart TVs – TVs connected to the internet that have apps available to playback content from free or subscribed providers.

ROKU, Apple TV, Fire TV Stick, Chromecast, etc. – a standalone box that connects to a display of some sort, like a TV, that contains access to various apps that provide for streaming content from free or subscribed providers.

Web Browsers (Microsoft Edge/Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.) - the web browser is an app running on a PC Operating System (Windows, Mac OS, etc.) that allows you to select a server to connect to through the use of the Uniform

Resource Locator (URL), or more commonly called the web address. The address itself can be the actual stream that is then played through various web browser functions.

Popular Apps

Here is a list of some of the frequently installed and mentioned apps across all devices in no particular order. You can go to the website for each for details on content, pricing, etc.

Movie Streaming

Netflix, VUDU, Movies Anywhere, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Disney +, Apple TV +, Fandango Now, Tubi (free), Google Play Movies & TV, Roku Channel (free), Acorn TV, BritBox, YouTube (free), Crackle (free)

Live TV Watching

Hulu, AT&T TV, Sling TV, YouTube

TV Channels on Demand

CBS All Access, PBS (free), Showtime, NFL, ESPN, HBO Go, A&E, ABC, Fox, NBC, SYFY, USA, BBC America, AMC

Music

Amazon Music, Stingray Qello Concerts, Sirius XM, Pandora

Plus thousands of others with more being created every day it seems. No matter what your tastes are, there is an app for it! I hoped this served as a general introduction to streaming and now enjoy!