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"When Knights Go Dark" A week without the internets.



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By knightwise

On the edge of real and Cyberspace .. there is one place you can go .. and you found it. Welcome to the next edition of the Knightwise.com Docucasts. After returning from my annual holiday I came home with a couple of nice idea"s for the podcast, and this is one of them. I love creating audio and video content, but I also like to sit down and write out a nice article once in a while. Unfortunately I haven't had a lot of time to sit down and write, and some of the articles that I DO post on the website , go unnoticed by the listeners who only get their knightwise.com kicks via the Media Feed. So I thought it would be a good idea to combine both. Aside from you weekly podcast / screencast fix, i'll be shoving a "weekly article" into the media feed. With ebook

readers and tablets on the rise it is the "next media" I would also like to serve and I thought a "weekly article" would be cool. So stand back as I flex my fingers and serve up the first in these weekly series of articles. Stand by to crack open your Ipads, Xooms, Ebook readers or TFT screens .. because here we go.

When knights go dark.

Once in every year there is a time that the flow of information shrinks down to a trickle. Where outgoing Tweets, Posts,

Podcasts and content seem to slow down to an almost unmovable crawl. Where incoming datapackets suddenly find themselves going unnoticed into the oblivion. When emails remain "unread" for days.. when servers go down and routers huddle in the dark eclipse of their disconnection. Once a year ...

Knights go dark.

We had been looking forward to our annual holiday for quite a few weeks now. For that one time in the year where we



pack up the essentials into our suitcase, take the dogs to their luxurious puppy hotel (mum in

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law) and blast towards the rolling hills of the south of France. And so it was this year. Our annual trip (we need to go AT LEAST once a year) to the wonderful city of Carcassonna in the south of France. A

medieval city amid the rolling mountains of the scorched landscape of "la pays d'oc" where the Occitanian tongue (a strange mixture of spanish and french) still echoes against the countless ruins of castles and fortifications from a time long gone. A

land where silence is broken by the constant chirping of the crickets hiding beneath the vineyards, where you can savor the scent of fresh oranges on the weekly market, where the horizons whisper stories of medieval battles long past. In the few years we've come here I have found this to be a magical place. Walking through the Medieval city (late at night, when the tourists have gone), Sitting on the square of the "porte Narbonnaise" while watching people go by or just admiring the cathedrals main glass mosaic, or eating marvelous food at "La Cotte Demaillies", our favorite restaurant of which the patrons have become friends over the years.

Somehow "La Pays Cathare" (The land of the Heretics) with its rich history, wonderful scenery and countless castles has become a "mirror universe" to my digital lifestyle. The one place where "Knightwise" can lay down his digital arms and wander in a different place .. Devoid of the interwebs, filled with castles, cathedrals, ruins, fortifications and ... digital silence. A place where I can be a "Different Knight" so to speak.

Rest assured, I am no fool.

Of course I went out there prepared for whatever digital debacle I would encounter. Besides from not PLANNING on using any of it, I did pack the bear essentials of a road warrior before I left. My digital Camera and the Ipad touch where the first things to drop into the bag. Capturing the moments and having plenty of music to listen to is very

important. No tech-podcasts where hoisted onto the Ipod.. only music. Next up was the Ipad (for reasons I still need to figure out). I think the Ipad has somehow become a part of my anatomy over the last year.

For safety I packed up the Sony PRS 505 Ebook reader with some "extra books" on it (about 250 of them) because the Ipad is barely unusable in the harsh sunlight of "La Midi" Add some headphones and I was almost packed. I did

doubt a long time wether or not I would take the Macbook Air along. Since I wanted a "safe alternative" to "offload" any pictures we took to a hard drive I decided on taking it along, just in case. So together with the appropriate chargers, an external USB drive (just in case) and some spare batteries, it all went into the bag. My cellphone was tucked in there as a "voice only" solution to making phone calls, but I insisted on not answering it when it rang and only calling back the people I absolutely needed to.

But what did I use.

To be extremely honest .. I hardly used ANY of it. The one piece of gear that we DID use a lot (even more then our Digital SLR camera) was the Ipad touch ! It's "easy to carry" form factor proved extremely handy for making cool snapshots. (Since we've been to Carcassonna before we HAVE all the nice an fancy arty pictures you can take over there.) And since the weather was poor we didn't plan extensive "photo walks" or anything. The ipod touch was small, light, fast and provided us with the exact ammount of convenience vs quality we needed. Even for recording some audio and video, it once again proved to be up to the task. For the 300 measly euro's it has cost us, this device continues to "give". Podcast player, music player, HD video recorder, snapshot camera, audio recorder. Coming to think of it, its amazing what you can do with this device.

... And for the rest ...



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Practically nothing. I didn't boot up the pc once. Had the Ipad in my backpack (just in case) and that was about it. The two books I was reading where ... Paper ones ... my wife suggested I should read. I did find it annoying that I could not find an Epub copy of the books before I left, for reading them on the Sony would have been much much more pleasant. Even in the technological "dark age" of my summer holiday, I still think paper books are heavy, too big and impractical when you compare them to an "e-paper" enabled reader.

Digital deprivation syndrome.

And how does an "over connected" digital cyber-citizen cope with the absence of a routable IP address for at least 2 weeks ? Hmm.. tough question. I had "eased out" of the information stream for a couple of days before we left, so the shock of loosing Facebook, Twitter, Email and the www connection was not all that sudden. I did "think" (read : have unpleasant dreams) about the number of unread emails and issues that would be stacking up in my inbox, and that very thought kept me from going to a local McDonalds and hooking up the Ipad via the free wifi hotspot. A holiday is a holiday.



Communications, problems, issues, podcasts .. it will need to wait. Otherwise what is the point of "going away" The one thing I DID miss was the access to the "information database" of things like Wikipedia. Quickly googling stuff about sites we visits, having satellite images of the locations where we where going on a walk. having a constant update of the situation with the awful French weather .. that I did miss. We where thrown back into the dark age of having to wait for the "weather forecast" on TV or sneak peaks at newspaper stands to find out if it was going to rain some more .

Away from the shallows.

But in the end .. do we really NEED to be connected to these fast moving information streams all the time ? Do we need to catch every tweet, have every RSS feed read, post all of our lives on Facebook ? Finish EVERY level of Angry Birds ? Do we NEED to know every Apple rumor ? The answer is : Not really. Cyberspace is a fast moving entity but it can also become 'the land of the shallows'. Where information and interaction is plenty, but depth is rare. I've found that "being away" from those streams (and those distractions) offered me the opportunity to consume and appreciate information (and the reality around me) with more depth. Don't get me wrong, I miss the social interaction, but "going dark" does give you the chance to "wade deeper" into some of the subjects you are interested in.

Connectivity gives us power, knowledge, a direct line with sentient beings across the globe. But that party never stops and that dances to a faster beat every day. "Going dark" does give you the ability to "think things over" without being "distracted" by the next piece of information that comes along. It gives us the ability to consume and create content in a more relaxed and focused fashion. As paradoxical as it sounds, "Disconnecting" might be the only way to "Reconnect" with the person "outside" those streams. An interesting book on the subject here is "Hamlets Blackberry" and it deals with the way an over-connected environment impacts your lifestyle. For in the end there IS one thought that matters. If you've aimlessly been surfing Facebook, your RSS feeds of are anxiously waiting for your twitterfeed to update , just to have something to DO behind the computer ... Technology is no longer working for you. You have become enslaved by the never ending information stream that draws you to your screen. You have become so focused on the little screen of your mobile device that you miss out on the sunset happening right behind you. You constantly get distracted from focussing on what you are doing .. and the people around you. Sometimes its not a bad thing to "go dark" and rethink on how you want your technology to work for YOU ... and not the other way around.