

The Luddite Lounge

Episode 3 Transcript, 09/22/15

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You're listening to The Luddite Lounge where we're serving up news, views and how-tos for the digital world we've all come to depend on—whether we like it or not!

Hey there glad you can join me today in The Luddite Lounge. I'm Elizabeth Kricfalusi, publisher of the Tech for Luddites blog and Chief Luddite.

This is Episode 3 of The Lounge and I'm making a slight change in how I describe Five Five Tech episodes like this one. Previously, I said that they would cover five news stories in five minutes, but then I discovered that I can't always find five news stories that I think would interest my audience when I want them. Instead, I'm just going to say it's five items in five minutes. So in addition to news stories, some of the items could be tips or opinions or questions or shopping deals or recommendations, or pretty much anything at all that I think might be worth mentioning.

With that in mind, I'm going to get started. You can find show notes with related links at ludditelounge.com/episode3.

Number one: Apparently huge corporations aren't immune to the kind of rollercoaster days that happen to us regular people. Last Sunday, September the 20th, Amazon experienced a major outage in its Cloud services that brought a significant portion of their site, as well as many others that use Amazon Web Services, to a complete halt. Given that it lasted several hours, and a BuzzFeed story from 2013 reported that outages like this cost Amazon \$1,100 a second, that would've been the down part of the day for the company.

But at the Emmys that night, the original Amazon TV show, *Transparent*, took home five statues, including one for Best Actor and Best Director. That would count as the up part of the day. As a result, many other people will be having an up day this coming Friday, September 25th. To celebrate their wins, Amazon is going to be offering new Amazon Prime memberships for just \$67. That's a third off their normal price. Unfortunately, existing members can't take advantage of the deal to extend their own memberships, but if it's something you were thinking of giving as a gift to someone, that would be the day to do it as well.

Amazon Prime memberships provide a long list of benefits, including free two-day shipping, a large library of free streaming movies and TV shows, and over a million streaming songs for free. Recently, they've also announced two new benefits. The first is the ability to download Prime videos to IOS and Android mobile devices for offline viewing. Previously, that benefit was only available to people with Kindle Fire tablets. The second new benefit is six months of free access to the online version of the Washington Post.

Number two: Speaking of the Washington Post, they have just announced that they're going to start publishing all of their articles using Facebook's new Instant Articles feature. This is a feature that has only been rolled out to a small number of users and I am not yet one of them so I haven't actually seen it yet. But the theory is that it's supposed to load stories really quickly within Facebook so you don't actually have to leave the site to read interesting stories that people are sharing.

The traditional media industry has really suffered over the last decade as they've been trying to find new ways to stay solvent in this age of unlimited, free online content. So I'm definitely interested in seeing how this is all going to shake out.

Number three: Speaking of Facebook, I just published a new blog post about a change they've made recently that I'm not a fan of, which isn't necessarily all that surprising because a lot of their changes I'm not a fan of. This particular one is now preventing people from being able to hide updates on their Timeline that announce when they become friends with someone new. So if you've just friended somebody, you used to have the ability to hide that from your Timeline. That's no longer there. There are some other less ideal options and I've explained those in the post and, again, I will link to that in the show notes.

Number four: Speaking of new blog posts on T4L, I also recently posted one about another change Google has made to its maps. It actually isn't as bad as it might seem at first glance. If you've been using one of the sites that still uses Classic Maps as its foundation, the controls on the maps have changed so now they look like the new maps. For example, the slider zoom control on the left is no more. Instead, you just get the plus and minus zoom controls at the bottom right. Mostly, this is cosmetic and doesn't fundamentally change the features of the maps, so that's the good news. Now if you haven't followed all the posts I wrote earlier this year about Google's horrible maps ugh-grade as I call it, you can find them at techforluddites.com/maps, along with a list of alternative mapping sites that you can try out.

Finally...

Number five: Speaking of Google, rumors are now circulating that a new version of the Chromecast streaming media player is coming soon. The company will be holding an event on September 29th where a number of product announcements are expected, including the Chromecast. This will be the third time this month that streaming media players are in the news, with earlier announcements of new releases for the Apple TV and Amazon Fire TV devices. There's also a lot of buzz about a new Roku 4 going around.

With that in mind, I'm very excited to announce that the next episode of The Luddite Lounge will include an interview with Ryan Downey, who runs The Streaming Advisor website. He has a lot more in-depth knowledge of all these players and all the news surrounding them. So I'm really looking forward to getting some additional insights into what all these announcements mean. If this is a topic you're interested in, you might want to make sure you subscribe to The Lounge so you get notified when the episode gets posted.

And that's it for this episode of Five Five Tech. Thanks for listening! Until next time...