ComputorEdge™ Online — 02/13/09

This issue:
Free Alternative E-Mail Applications

There is no need to be stuck with the e-mail program that comes with your Mac or PC. There are plenty of free options.

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then it can be done through the same Default Programs window.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm by Wally Wang

Follow the Developers

If you follow the developers, you'll find the dominant operating system—and today, thanks to lucrative iPhone apps, that happens to be the Mac OS. Also, a look at REALbasic, dubbed "VisualBasic for the Mac"; and a tip on turning on the junk-mail filter in the Mac's Mail program.

Web InSites by Dawn Clement

Some Simple Rules of E-mail Etiquette

If you want your e-mails to communicate for you, there are certain rules of etiquette that you should follow. Break enough rules often enough, and your e-mails will go straight into the Recycle Bin.

Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users by ComputorEdge Staff

Linux users share ideas and ask for help.

A tip to make using the command window easier is offered; Pete interjects another response to Scott, who had difficulty navigating the Linux world.

Rob, The ComputorTutor Does Access 2007 by Rob Spahitz

How Access 2007 Works

This week, we'll start looking into how Access 2007 works. Since many of the features are the same as previous versions, the focus is primarily on the changes.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.

SOA Strategies—A look at the "Zen of SOA;, Sorry, Guys. Bad News for Video Gamers—A new study shows that the more young adults play video games, the worse their relationships become; Emerging Cell Phone Issues in 2009—Trends to look out for; Xerox D103 Disc Duplicator—A review of the duplicator with the industry's first "Drag and Drop" file function.

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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher by Jack Dunning

An E-Mail Ideal

Jack wants e-mail programs that will sync across the Internet and his network with multiple e-mail accounts, so that they would look

identical no matter which computer is being used.

Editor's Letters by ComputorEdge Staff

Readers write in with letters to the editor.
"Baddies Out There?," "Won't Replace Paper," "Trial Software," "VoIP Column," "User Intervention"

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Digital Dave

“Digital Dave answers your tech questions.” by *Digital Dave*

What's the best way to hook up an LCD TV to a laptop? A reader takes issue with Dave's power-supply answer from last week; Is 4GB of RAM enough to run Office 2007 on a laptop? Can you buy a network drive that acts as its own server?

Dear Digital Dave,

I recently bought a new 47-inch LCD TV and want to hook it up to my laptop. I understand I have two options: Number one, I can go through my VGA connection on the back of my laptop, or number two, I can go through my laptop's S-video connection. Could you please tell me which to use for a higher-quality picture on the TV?

Also, I see there are four-pin and seven-pin S-video connectors. Could you please explain which is better and why?

Jerry Hughes
San Diego, Calif.

Dear Jerry,

VGA comes from the world of computers, whereas S-video was designed for older video systems. As long as your television has a VGA connection, use the VGA connector at 1,024x768 resolution and 60Hz refresh. The S-video will give you only 400x300, and it will be blurry.

Seven pin S-video is non-standard and varies between manufacturers. It has the standard four pins for S-video, then three others that might carry control or composite signals. There should be no real difference in picture quality between seven and four pin.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

In last issue's answer to Jay, you have a misplaced worry regarding 12-volt power in PC power supplies. What is it used *for? Running motors, fans and charging batteries! (Very little of the latter). I would expect that you couldn't overload the 12-volt with* everything *you could buy and install in a PC.*

Think before your deadlines!

And thanks for your usually reasonable observations.
Michael J. Viehman
Julian, Calif.

Dear Michael,

What you say was true in the past, but things have changed. A little more explanation is deserved.

All of the chips and electronic devices do run off a low voltage (+5, +3.3, etc.); however, over the years, as more and more has been crammed into each chip and CPU, it has been more efficient to use the +12-volt rail(s) from the power supply and convert it down to lower voltage on the motherboard and at the CPU. Today's motherboards are supplied +12 volts through both the main connector on the motherboard as well as a separate connector dedicated to the CPU. While the actual voltage used by the chips is low voltage, the demand for +12 volts from the power supply has increased dramatically—with the demand for +5 and +3.3 from the power supply decreasing.

The high-performance graphics cards discussed last week also have a separate connector for drawing +12 volts directly from the power supply. It is more efficient for the card to convert the +12 volts to the required lower voltage. It is not uncommon for one of these cards to add 100 watts to the power demands.

For this reason it could be a serious mistake to put an older power supply with a lower +12-volt current (amps) in a new computer, or a newer power supply with a lower +5 current in an older computer. While the total wattage of two power supplies (one old and one new) may be essentially the same, they are not necessarily interchangeable. When building a new computer, it is important to match the power requirements at the different rails (+5 volts, +12 volts) to the total requirements of the motherboard, CPU, all drives, fans, video cards and other devices added to the system.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am considering buying myself a Dell laptop that will have Windows Vista Home Premium in the 64-bit version. However, I am going to run Office 2007 and was wondering: Does Office 2007 utilize 4GB of RAM?

Carroll Ware
San Diego, Calif.

Dear Carroll,

If you're asking if 4GB is enough, have no fear. Your computer will easily handle Office 2007 and much more. The memory requirement for running Office 2007 is 256MB—one sixteenth of

the amount of memory in your computer—although, technically, there are probably only 2GB available for your programs after the operating system is loaded and the mandatory video card set aside. But it's still plenty.

The actual memory usage will vary depending upon how many copies you may be running simultaneously and the size of the documents, but even if you approached a limit, the computer would start off-loading the programs and data into virtual memory on your hard drive. These new computers are capable of running numerous large programs at the same time. 4GB in a Windows Vista Home Premium machine is plenty for most computing chores.

If your question was whether 4GB was too much for running Office 2007, then the answer is no. The amount of memory you need in a computer is based upon far more than the requirements of a standard software package. For Windows Vista, in my book 2GB is not enough. I would consider 4GB a minimum amount of RAM for a new Vista computer, regardless of what software you plan to run.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I would like to know if it is possible to share a USB external hard drive through my network (wireless) without connecting it to a computer. It is used to store my media files, pictures and music, and I would like to access it from my laptop without having to turn on the main computer or having to move it around.

Alfredo Giachino
Carmel Valley, Calif.

Dear Alfredo,

If you want to access a hard drive on a network, then it needs to be served in some manner. That is usually done by a network server or another computer. Yet, getting another computer just to access a drive is a bit of overkill. This has been recognized, and there are network drives available at a reasonable price that act as their own server.

There are quite a few on the market, and it would be worthwhile to read the reviews (*reviews.cnet.com/1770-3382_7-0.html?query=network+drives&searchtype=products*). One that immediately popped up as possibly being suitable for your needs is the My Book World Edition (*www.wdc.com/en/products/Products.asp?DriveID=347*). It has built-in Wi-Fi capabilities and is even accessible over the Internet. (Be sure to check the Wi-Fi security capabilities.) These types of drives should come with everything that you need to set up and install.

The My Book World is designed for Windows' networks. Another network drive for both PC and Mac systems is the Home Media Network Hard Drive (*store.iomega.com/section?secid=40639*). While it doesn't appear to include Wi-Fi, it does act as a print server—meaning that you can attach your share printer to operate over the network.

I haven't used either one of these network drives. If I were in the market, I would look at all of the available products (there are quite a few of them), then pick the one that best matches my

needs and reviews well.

I would be interested in hearing from others who have used network drives, plus anyone who has connected a standard external hard drive to a network without a computer.

Digital Dave

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The Advantages of Cross-Platform E-Mail Programs

"Save time--and possibly your information." by Wally Wang

> Every operating system comes with a default e-mail program. While these default programs may be handy, don't feel obligated to use them. Other solutions can save your data—and save you money.

Every operating system comes with a default e-mail program. In Windows XP, it's Outlook Express. In Vista, it's Windows Mail. In Mac OS X, it's a program simply called Mail. While these default programs may be handy, don't feel obligated to use them.

The main reason you might want to use another e-mail program is convenience. Just because the default program works doesn't mean you'll like using it. A second, and more important, reason not to use the default e-mail program is that other solutions minimize your chances of getting infected by a worm, especially if you're using Windows XP.

Protecting Your Computer

Many worms and viruses are programmed specifically to peek inside the address book of Outlook Express and e-mail copies of itself to all your stored contacts. After receiving an e-mail from you, these people are more prone to open the message, infecting their computer, and spreading the virus or worm to their lists of names and e-mail addresses stored in their address book.

However, if you don't open an infected message inside of Outlook Express, that virus or worm can't spread. Just by using a different e-mail program than what most people use you can protect yourself from infections. (Vista and Mac OS X have much less to fear in this regard, but it's still sound advice anyway. Any potential e-mail threat will likely target the most popular e-mail programs on each operating system, so by avoiding those popular programs, you'll add another layer of defense to your computer.)

When looking for an e-mail program, you can buy a commercial e-mail program such as WordPerfect MAIL (*www.corel.com/servlet/Satellite/us/en/Product/1152105038635#tabview=tab0*) or Microsoft

Outlook. Unless you absolutely need the features that a commercial e-mail program offers (such as connecting to a Microsoft Exchange server through Microsoft Outlook), you probably don't want to dump more money in another program that may only provide marginal benefits.

Instead, take a look at cross-platform e-mail programs like Thunderbird (*www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird*), Opera (*www.opera.com*), or SeaMonkey (*www.seamonkey-project.org*).

Easing the Transition Between Computers

These three cross-platform programs are also open source, which means you can use them for free and peek inside the source code to reprogram them if you like. More importantly, all three programs also run on the three most popular operating systems in the world: Windows, Mac OS X and Linux.

If you're a Windows user, you may not care that Thunderbird runs on Linux or the Macintosh, but what happens if you buy one of those low-cost netbooks for under $500 and find that it runs only on Linux? You could use Outlook Express on your Windows PC and Thunderbird on a netbook, but why not use the same e-mail program on every computer that you might use?

This can keep you from wasting time relearning a different e-mail program every time you switch computers. Even more important is that if you want to transfer your e-mail from one computer to another, it's a lot easier doing it between identical programs.

Try transferring e-mail from Microsoft Outlook into Thunderbird on a Linux netbook. Theoretically you can do it, but realistically, it either won't work or it will be harder than necessary. However, transferring e-mail from Thunderbird running on Windows to Thunderbird running on a Macintosh to Thunderbird running on Linux is far easier and more reliable.

If you're using Windows but later decide to switch to Linux or Mac OS X, you can minimize this transition by using the same e-mail program on your new computer. Changing operating systems is tough enough, so using the same e-mail program gives you one less program to learn all over again.

The Advantage of Opera and SeaMonkey

Since most malware threats target the most popular programs, switching away from a default e-mail program can give you a huge layer of protection—but why just stop at dumping your default e-mail program? Go one step further and dump Internet Explorer on Windows and Safari on the Macintosh.

Many malicious Web sites are booby-trapped with spyware programs that know how to exploit the holes in popular browsers like Internet Explorer. Just visiting a booby-trapped Web site with a default browser can infect your computer. Of course, if you dump your default browser, you'll still need another one, so choose Opera or SeaMonkey, which combines an e-mail program with a browser.

While most e-mail programs allow you to tag and sort messages into categories, Opera also provides a list of predefined labels (categories) such as Funny, Important, Call Back, or Valuable. By using these labels or creating your own, you can sort messages into appropriate categories so you can keep track of your e-mail.

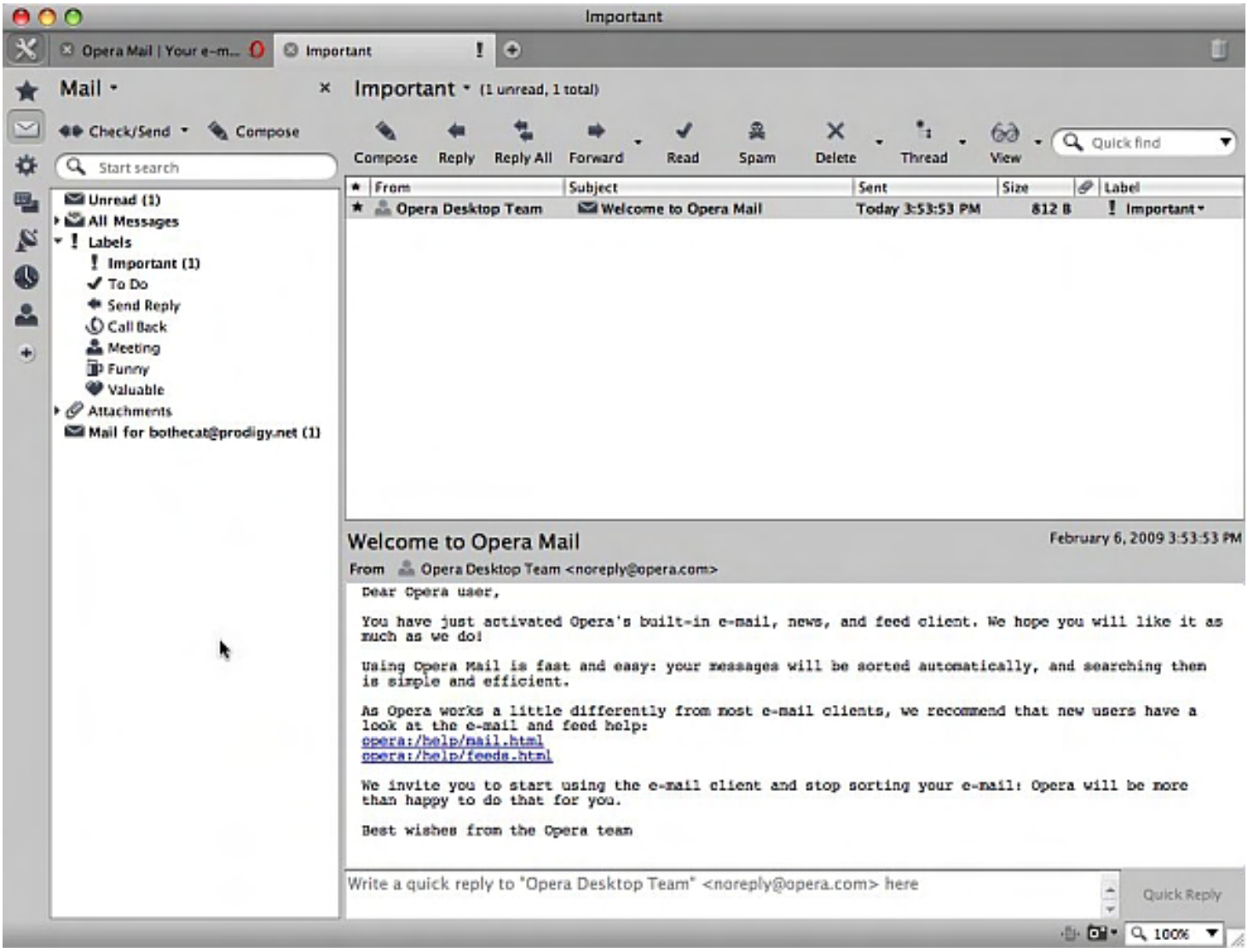

Figure 1. Opera makes it easy to tag and sort messages with labels.

Perhaps the most unique feature of Opera's built-in e-mail program is called "low-bandwidth mode," specially designed for laptop users. Instead of downloading entire messages, low-bandwidth mode downloads only the first 100 lines of a message and won't download any file attachments unless requested. This lets you retrieve your messages faster without wasting your time or dragging your Wi-Fi Internet connection to a standstill.

The Advantage of Thunderbird

If you already have a favorite browser, then you may not want to download Opera or SeaMonkey just to use a different e-mail program. In that case, you might be happier with Thunderbird.

One advantage of Thunderbird (or SeaMonkey) is its spam filter. Nearly every e-mail program offers spam filters, but Thunderbird's filters seem to work better than the default filters in Mail or Outlook Express.

Most spam filters work in two ways. First, you can "train" the e-mail program to recognize spam by tagging every spam message you receive. Eventually, the program learns the common characteristics of messages you tag as spam, so it can start filtering out similar messages automatically.

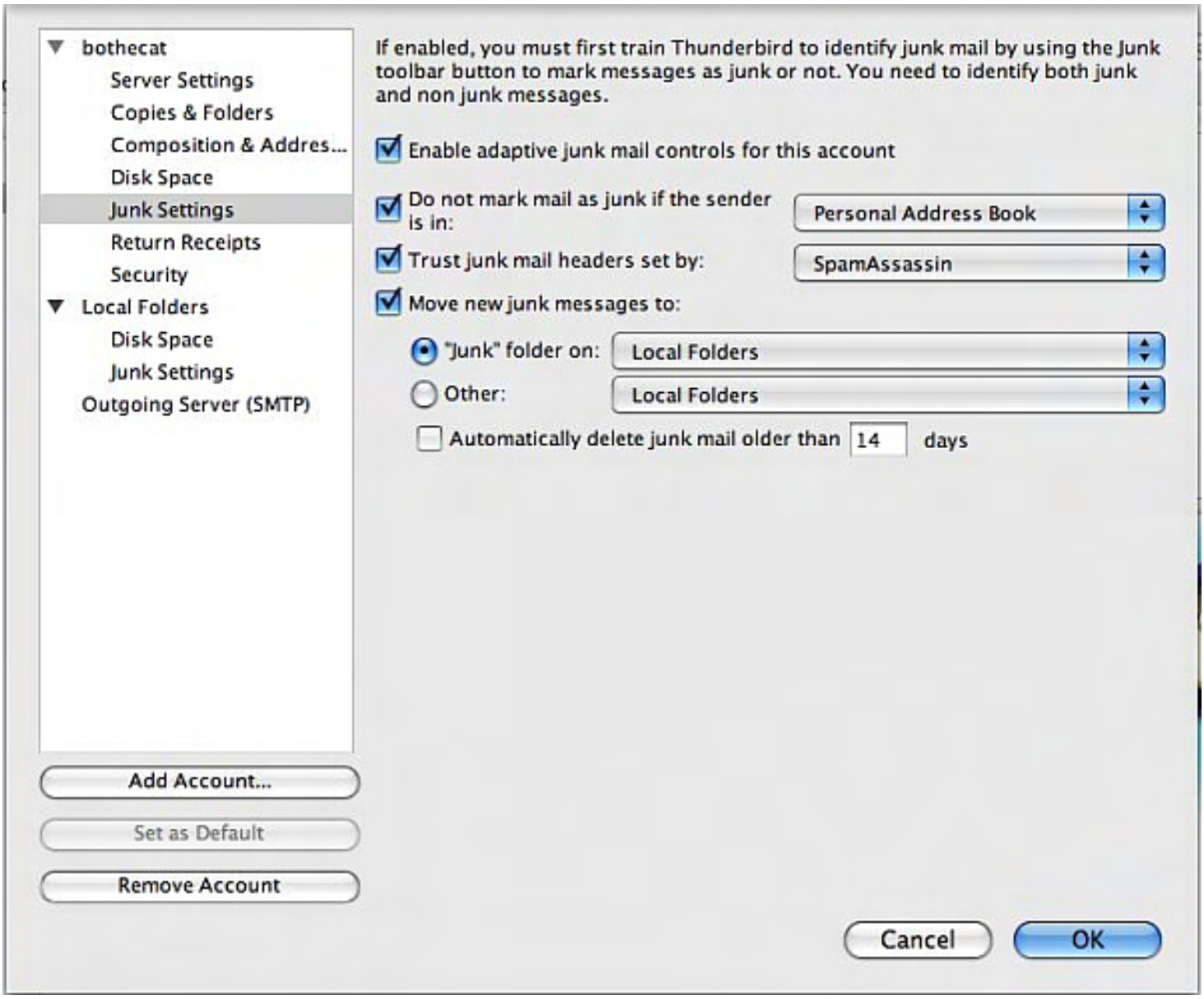

Figure 2. Nearly all e-mail programs offer spam filters.

Since training can take time, a second method is to define a set of rules for dealing with unwanted messages. Such rules let you scan messages for different criteria, such as for keywords ("Viagra") or message sizes (filters out messages that contain file attachments). With a good spam filter, you'll spend more time reading your messages and less time digging through garbage.

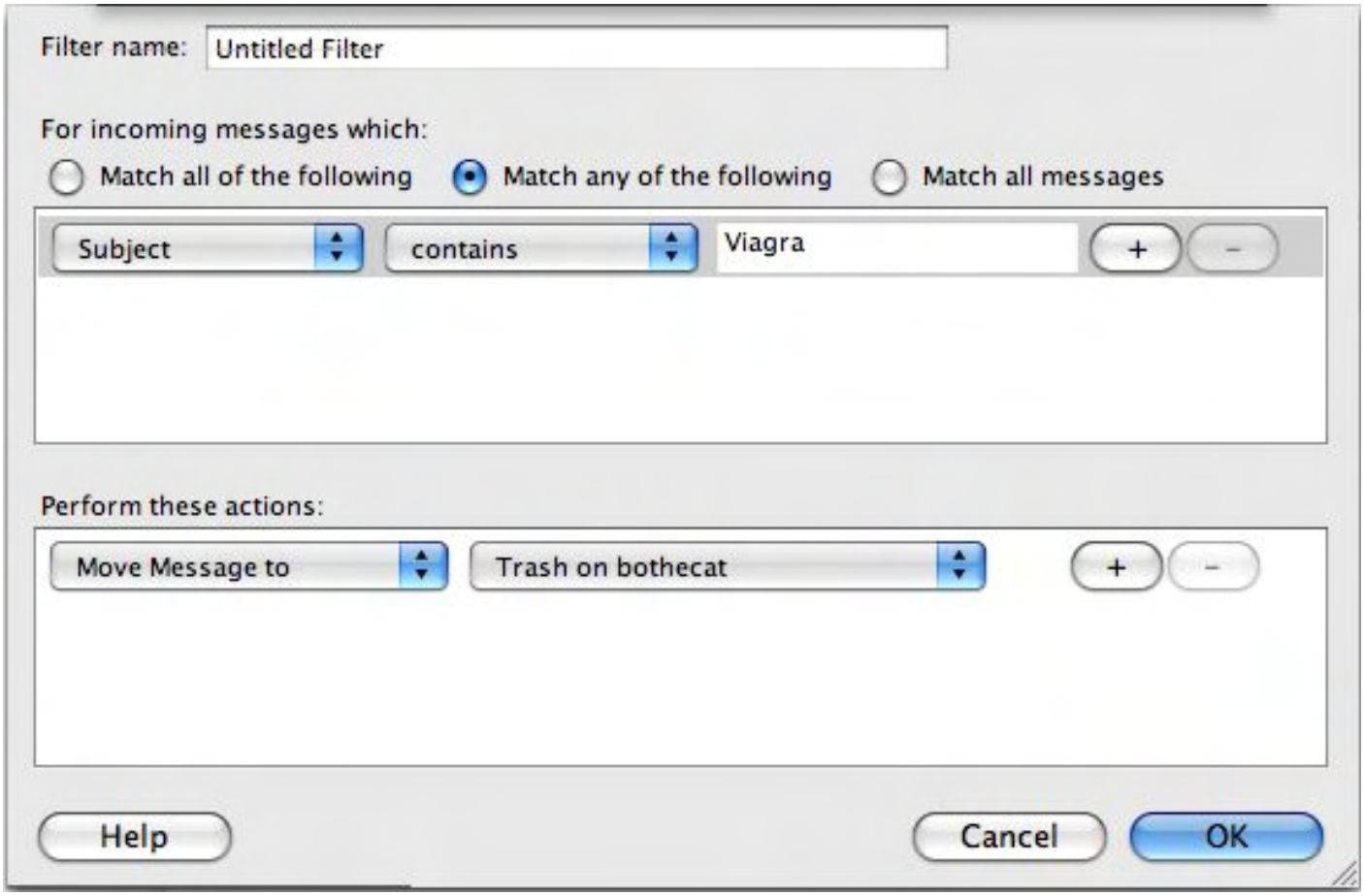

Figure 3. Defining rules can filter out unwanted spam.

Dump Your Current E-Mail Program Now

With so many free and capable options, there's no reason to stick with your default e-mail program any longer if you don't want to. Grab a copy of Opera, SeaMonkey or Thunderbird, and see which one is right for you. You may ultimately decide to stick with your default e-mail program, but until you look at alternatives, you may never know what you could be missing.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around *The Byte Buyer* dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for *Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies*, *Breaking Into Acting for Dummies*, *Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies*, and *Mac All-in-One Reference for Dummies* from *www.dummies.com*, as well as, *Steal This Computer Book 4.0*, *Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing*, and *My New Mac* from *www.nostarch.com*. He is also the co-author of *Strategic Entrepreneurism* from *www.selectbooks.com*.

Every Saturday morning from 9:00 am - 10:00 am in San Diego, you can hear Wally with fellow co-hosts Dane Henderson and Candace Lee, on the radio show CyberSports Today (*www.cybersportstoday.com*), which covers the video gaming industry on ESPN Radio 800 AM. Wally covers the military history side of the video game industry.

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (*www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang*).

Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

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Thunderbird for Desktop E-Mail

"Is it the best all-around e-mail client choice?" by Michael J. Ross

E-mail client programs come in all sizes and price tags, but perhaps the best all-around choice nowadays is Mozilla's Thunderbird.

Although there is a trend away from desktop e-mail programs (known as e-mail clients) and toward Web-based e-mail (such as Gmail and Yahoo Mail), there are still countless computer users who prefer reading and composing their e-mail messages within a desktop client.

There are a number advantages to this approach: You don't have to launch a Web browser to receive incoming messages, and you don't even have to be connected to the Internet to create new outbound messages. Secondly, filters have become a key feature within all e-mail programs, and are primarily used for automatic spam deletion and message management. While the filter capabilities of the Web-based programs are fairly strong, the better desktop programs generally have superior filters. On a related note, developers have had many more years for creating custom spam-blocking add-ons. Lastly, desktop e-mail programs are the clear choice for programmers who need to be able to automatically parse the contents of messages and use that data, such as submitting an online equity trade.

E-mail client programs come in all sizes and price tags, but perhaps the best all-around choice nowadays is Thunderbird (*www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/*), which was created by Mozilla, the organization that gave us the Firefox Web browser (*www.mozilla.com/products/firefox/*). Just like Firefox, Thunderbird is free, easy to install, easy to use, and packed with features not found in other programs—but without all of the bloat and adware. In addition, Thunderbird has a far better security track record than Microsoft's Outlook and Outlook Express, which are the most common culprits in security breaches on Windows PCs. Thunderbird is available for Windows, Linux and Mac OS X.

Fantastic Features

Thunderbird offers all of the capabilities that you would expect to find in any decent e-mail program, either desktop or online, as well as enhanced capabilities not found elsewhere. You can download incoming e-mail messages from any e-mail server, automatically or on-request. This includes integration with Gmail and .Mac accounts, which means you do not have to give up the advantages of those accounts in order to utilize Thunderbird. You simply provide your username and password, and Thunderbird takes it from there, using a secure connection to download and upload your messages.

As with any e-mail desktop client, all messages can be organized into folders (within the program itself—not to be confused with Windows folders, though they may be utilized by the client program). You can set up newsgroup and RSS folders specifically for those types of messages. Each folder has a pop-up that summarizes any new messages received in that folder.

"Mr. Snoggingrass believes in total immersion when teaching the Thunderbird e-mail program."

Similar to Gmail, you can create your own tags, add multiple tags to a message, and use those tags later for searching, which avoids the problem of not being able to find a message easily because you could place it into only one of several appropriate folders. Tags can be combined with saved searches and mail views, further easing any future searching. Saved searches, just as the name implies, are handy if you find yourself frequently searching using a specific term or set of terms.

A unique feature of Thunderbird is message history navigation, which allows you to move backward and forward, through messages that you have read—similar to a Web browser allowing you to view previously opened Web pages.

You can compose new messages, and send them out immediately or save them in draft form, in case you would like to make changes later before sending, or delete them entirely (very handy if you are composing an angry message). Message templates are a smart way to save time, if you find yourself creating similar messages often.

Thunderbird has built-in security and privacy measures that are second to none. It automatically detects potential phishing attempts, and it also warns you when the URL of a link in an e-mail message does not match the link text, which is the most common phishing technique. In addition, Thunderbird blocks the loading of remote images embedded in messages, which is the most common method that companies use for tracking e-mail messages and recipients.

The developers of Thunderbird undoubtedly detest spam just as much as the rest of us do, and they have built into their product junk-mail filters that are designed to prevent any spam messages from landing in your inbox. Even if some spam messages make it through the filter, every time that you designate one of them as spam, Thunderbird learns and thereby improves its spam-filtering prowess. The program can also utilize the spam filters provided by your own Internet service provider (ISP).

Additional Advantages

Thunderbird, like Firefox, is open source, which means that it is being continuously examined and improved by a small army of developers and security experts all over the world, each contributing in their areas of strength. This is proving to be a more robust software-development model than that of proprietary, closed-source software, whose code is viewed only by the relatively small number of programmers working for the given software vendor. Open-source products tend to have fewer security problems, and if any do escape the collective scrutiny of its developers, fixes are implemented and distributed much faster.

Another similarity with Firefox is that Thunderbird automatically checks to confirm that you are running the latest and greatest version of the product, and can automatically update itself if you are not. This greatly reduces the risks of online miscreants using a known security weakness to attack your system (had you not updated it manually).

Many people have the misconception that a free, open-source e-mail client would not be robust enough for corporate use, and that instead you must resort to licensing an enterprise messaging system from some

software vendor or reseller. But Thunderbird is quite able to scale nicely for use by multiple people within an organization.

The built-in Add-ons Manager makes it easy to enhance the functionality and user interface of your Thunderbird program, by supplementing it with extensions and themes. Extensions exist that allow you to: detect and delete duplicate messages, collapse quoted sections of messages, use keyboard shortcuts for moving messages around, search for messages using Gmail's operators, and much more. As if that is not enough, you can even listen to digital music from within Thunderbird, which saves you the hassle and extra system memory for a separate music-playing program.

First Flight

To get started using Thunderbird, visit the product's home page (*www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/*), and click the green button to download the latest version, which is 2.0.0.18, as of this writing.

Figure 1. Thunderbird home page.

When the installation file has finished downloading, open it. The installation wizard will pop up several dialog boxes—one of which asks for your acceptance of the license agreement, and the next allows you to choose either a standard or custom installation. Unless you want to specify an installation directory other

than the default, the standard option will probably suffice. When the program first runs, it will ask if you want it to import your Microsoft Outlook Express settings.

Figure 2. Import Outlook Express settings.

Then you will be prompted to set up an e-mail or newsgroup account, so you can begin sending and receiving messages.

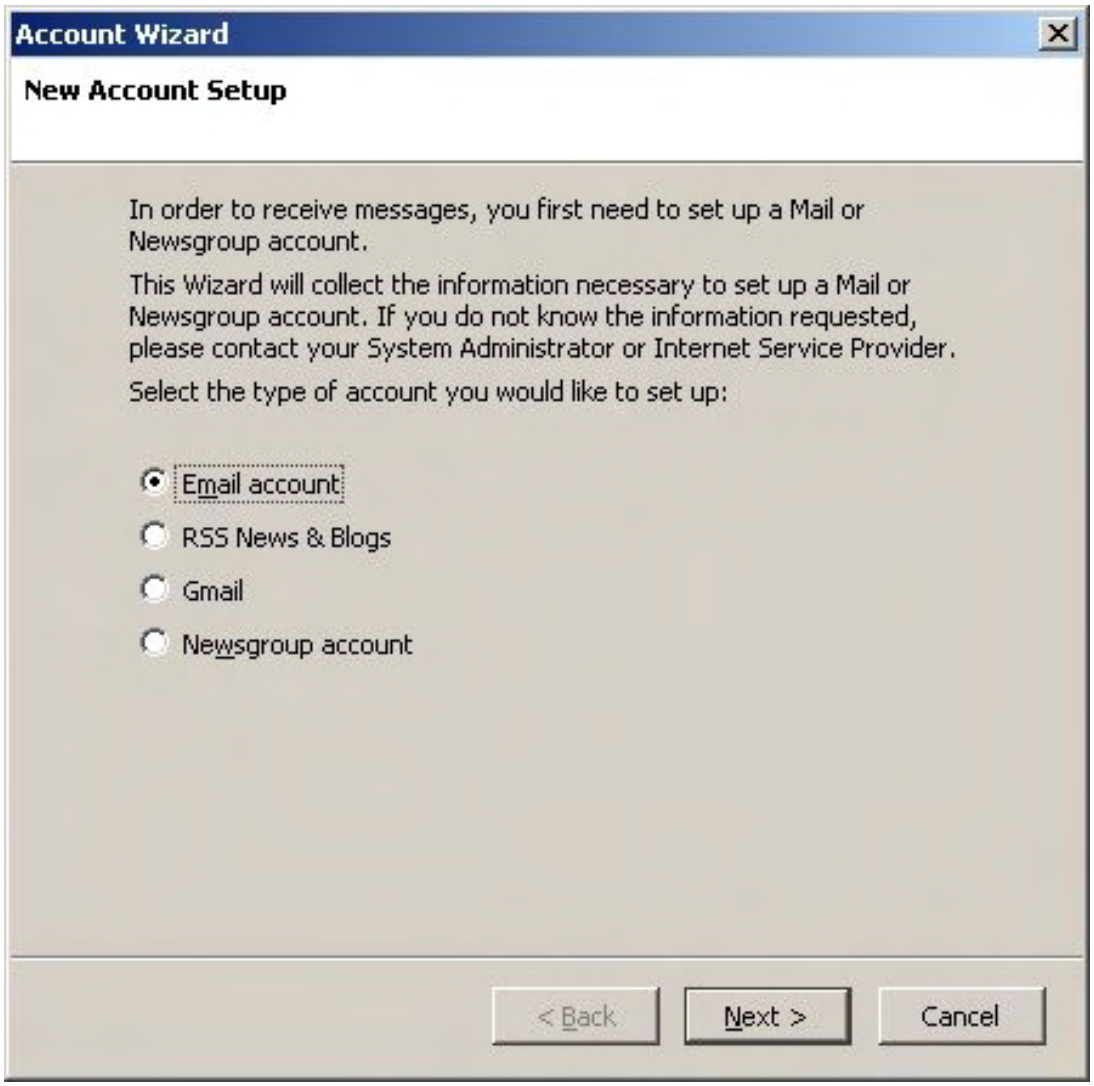

Figure 3. New account setup.

Continue working your way through the account setup wizard's dialog boxes, and then you will be ready to go. Afterward, you can begin making configuration changes, as needed and desired.

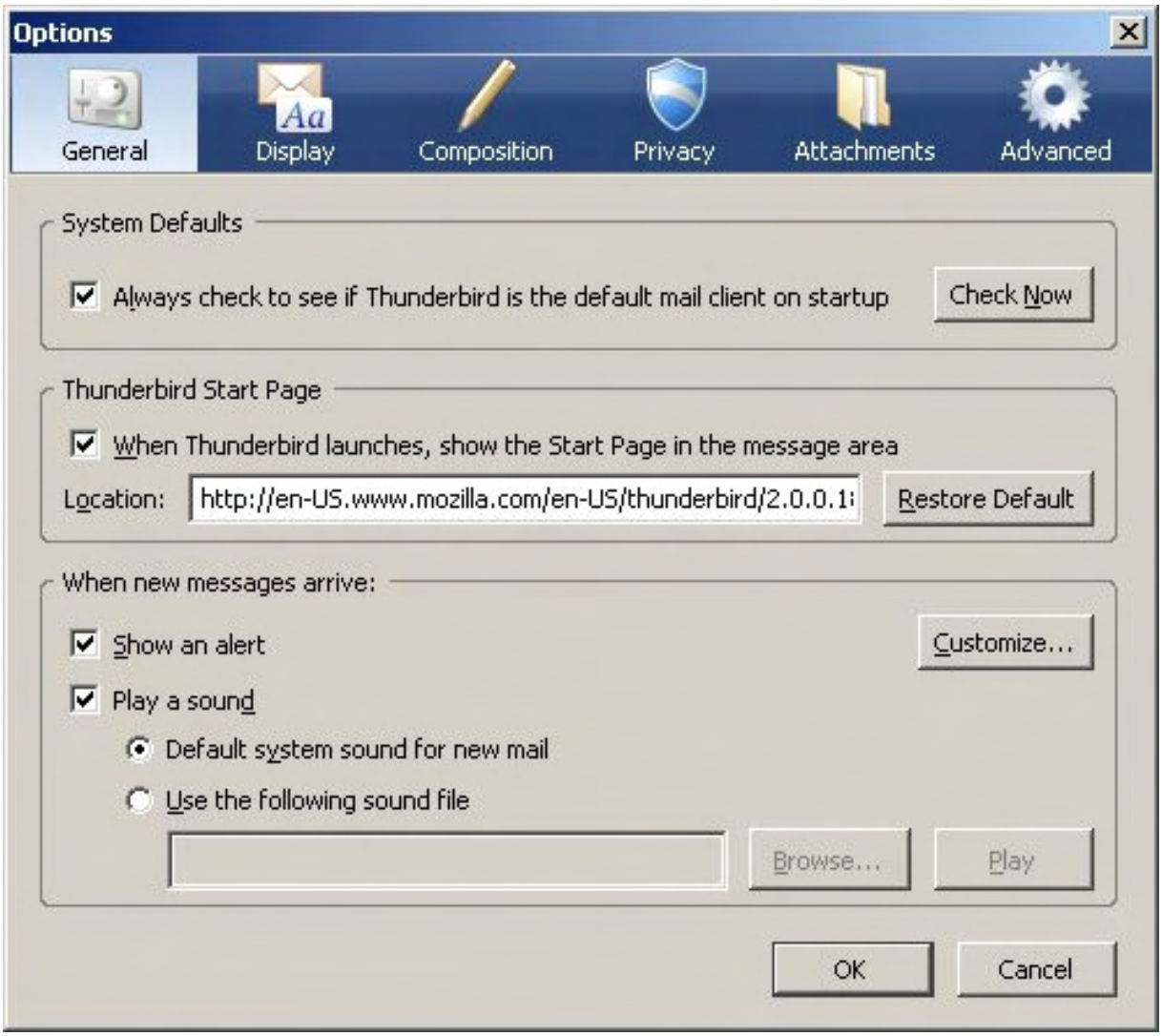

Figure 4. Program options.

Once you have had some time to become accustomed to using Thunderbird for your message management, you will more than likely find it a far better alternative to any of the e-mail clients that might come with your copy of Windows.

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer (*www.ross.ws*), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

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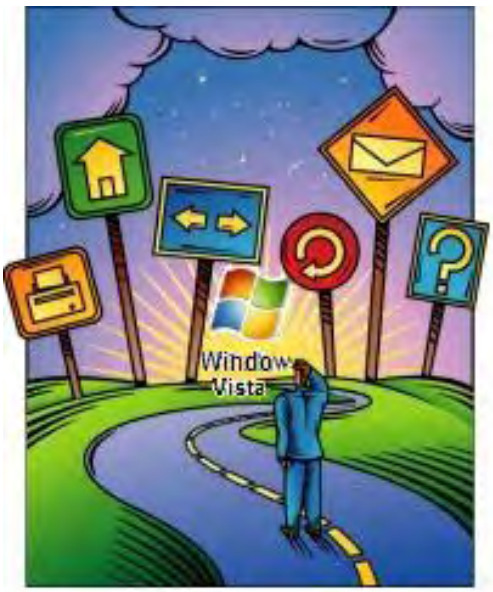

Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

"Defining CD/DVD and Other Disc-Insertion Actions" by Jack Dunning

Windows Vista defaults to a mode that not only tells us that we have inserted a CD/DVD disc, but asks us what we would like to do with it. If this feature stops working or if you want to change how it works, then it can be done through the same Default Programs window.

Last week, I talked about setting up default programs that would automatically open when a file that is used by that program is double-clicked. The bulk of these file associations are done through the first two selections in the Default Programs window. However, there are other actions that happen automatically, such as opening a view window when a CD or DVD is put into the optical drive.

If we saw no activity when we insert a disc into our DVD drive, we would be forced to use either Windows Explorer or another program to investigate what is actually on the disc. Fortunately, Windows Vista defaults to a mode that not only tells us that we have inserted a disc, but asks us what we would like to do with it. If this feature stops working or if you want to change how it works, then it can be done through the same Default Programs window.

The easiest way to open the Default Programs window in Windows Vista is to type "default" into the Start Search field in the Windows Start menu and select "Default Programs" from the top of the list. This window can also be opened directly from the Control Panel (Classic View) or under Programs in the Control Panel Home standard Vista view (see Figure 1).

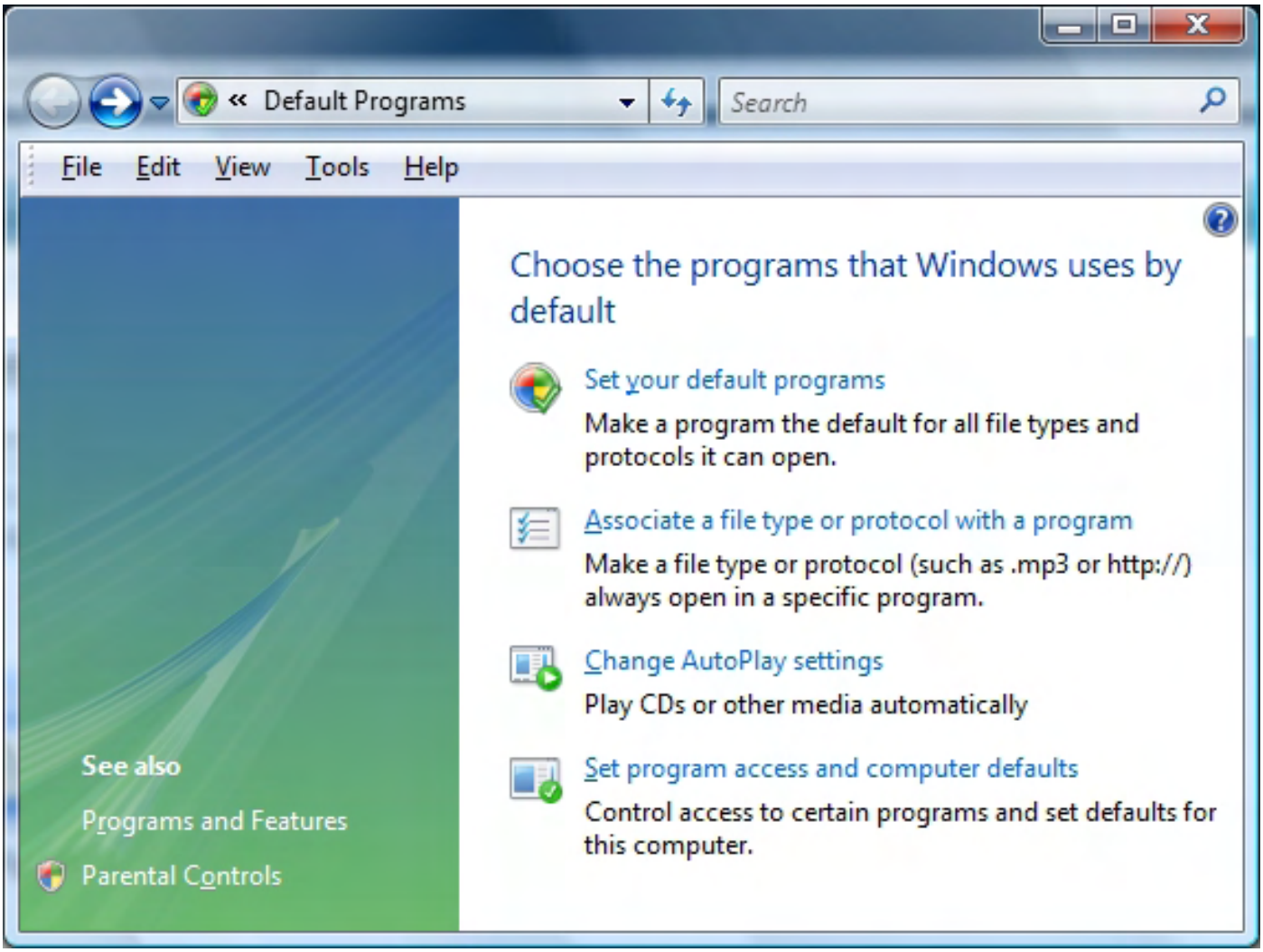

Figure 1. Windows Vista Default Programs windows.

The third item on the list is Change AutoPlay settings. This is where the options for setting the computer reaction to certain types of discs and common media files reside. The options range from immediately opening another default program to doing nothing at all (see Figure 2). (This window can also be found in the Control Panel under Hardware and Sound, or by typing "autoplay" into the Start Search field in the Windows Start menu.)

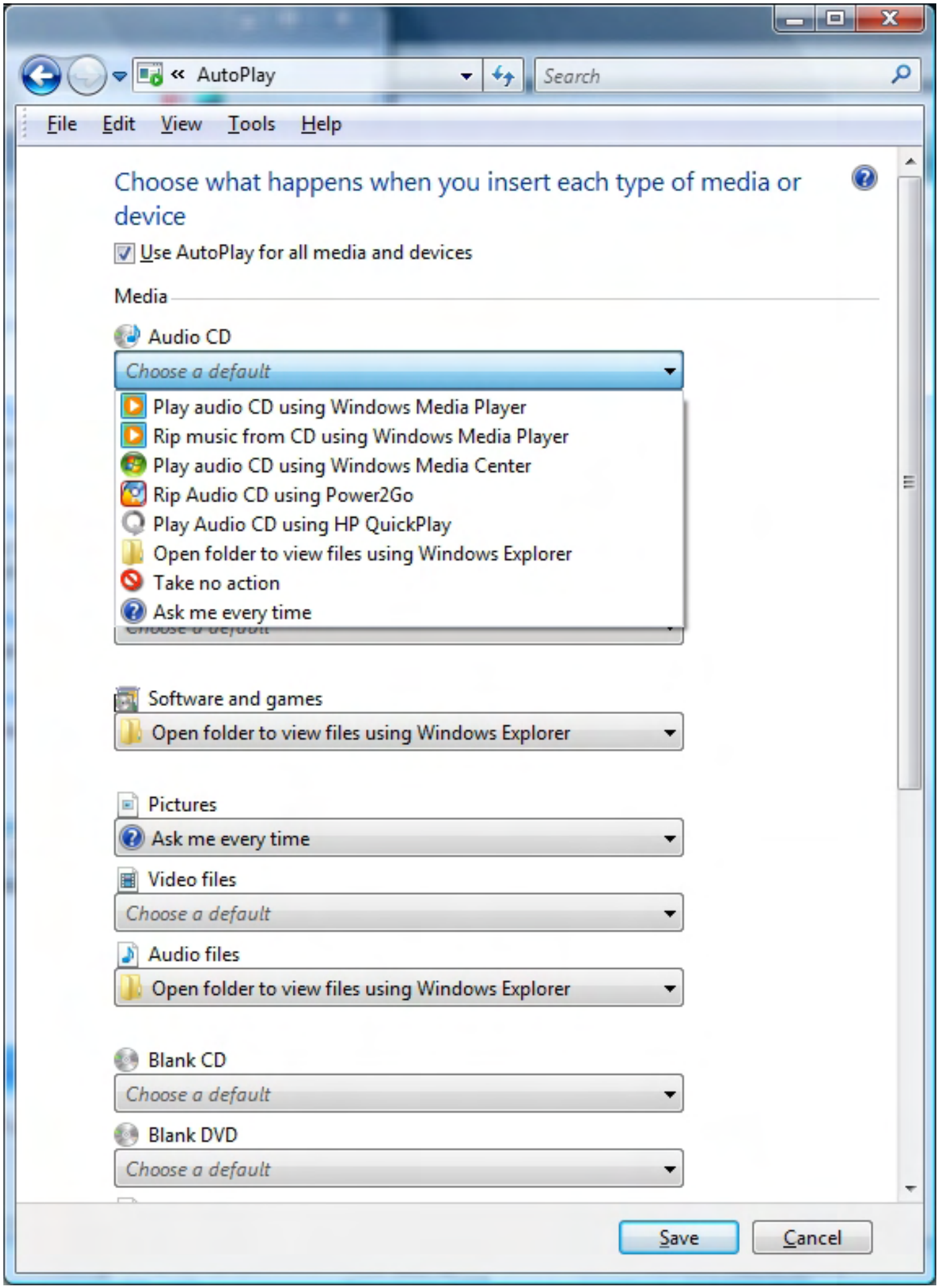
« AutoPlay
Search
File Edit View Tools Help
Choose what happens when you insert each type of media or device
Use AutoPlay for all media and devices
Media
Audio CD
Choose a default
Play audio CD using Windows Media Player
Rip music from CD using Windows Media Player
Play audio CD using Windows Media Center
Rip Audio CD using Power2Go
Play Audio CD using HP QuickPlay
Open folder to view files using Windows Explorer
Take no action
Ask me every time
Software and games
Open folder to view files using Windows Explorer
Pictures
Ask me every time
Video files
Choose a default
Audio files
Open folder to view files using Windows Explorer
Blank CD
Choose a default
Blank DVD
Choose a default
Save
Cancel

Figure 2. The Windows Vista AutoPlay settings window.

Note that there is a decent list of options. If no options have been selected for a particular type of disc or file type on the disc, then a window displaying the options will automatically open (see Figure 3). In this case, a blank DVD has been inserted into the drive. The system recognizes that it is a blank DVD and offers the associated options. Note that at the bottom of the screen there is a link that will open AutoPlay in the Control Panel.

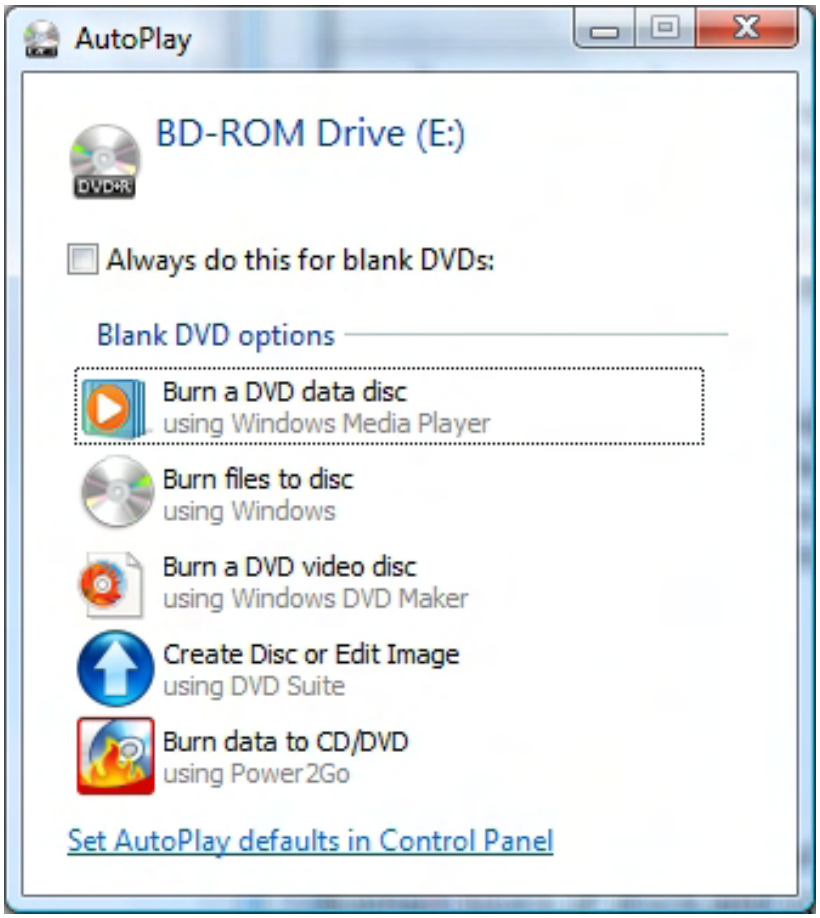

Figure 3. AutoPlay window after a blank DVD has been inserted into the optical drive.

In most cases, the default of opening and selecting options may be sufficient. However, if you're doing work that requires the swapping of discs or you are burning a number of CD/DVDs in a row, it can become annoying to have this selection window open every time a new disc is inserted. That's why the "Take no action" option exists. Or, it's even better if it takes the proper action on each new disc, such as "Burn data to CD/DVD."

AutoPlay is not to be confused with autorun, although they seem to act in a similar way. Autorun is what causes a program on a disc or flash drive to start running after the disc or device is inserted. This is a convenience when installing new software, but it can be a security risk if the disc or software is of unknown origin.

AutoPlay is what causes the autorun to work. If "Install or run program" is selected under "Games and software," then the computer will look for an autorun.inf file when the disc or device is inserted and start running the program. The autorun.inf file is a set of instructions that calls out the program, usually "setup.

exe," for installation. It is safer to keep software and games set to "Open folder to view files in Windows Explorer," although you will need to double-click "setup.exe" (or the appropriate filename) to start an install.

If AutoPlay is opening at inconvenient times, acting in a manner that annoys, or you need to speed up actions that require repetitive disc insertions, then you can easily change the response through the AutoPlay window.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is *www.computoredge.com*. He can be reached at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*

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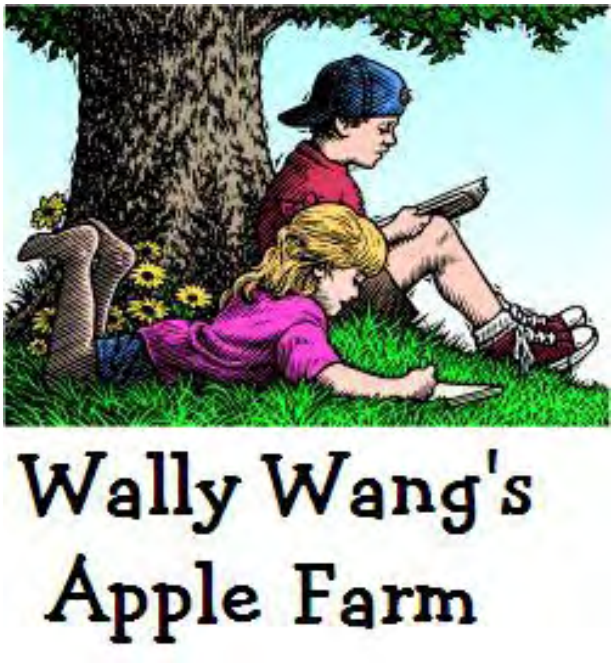

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Follow the Developers” by Wally Wang

If you follow the developers, you'll find the dominant operating system—and today, thanks to lucrative iPhone apps, that happens to be the Mac OS. Also, a look at REALbasic, dubbed "VisualBasic for the Mac"; and a tip on turning on the junk-mail filter in the Mac's Mail program.

Back in the '90s, there was a big difference between Microsoft and Apple. If you wanted to program the Macintosh, you had to buy an entire library of Apple books explaining how to create a program that fit Apple's human user-interface guidelines. After digesting several books, you could then create your own programs using a cryptic language like C. When Apple released a tool called HyperCard to make programming the Macintosh easy, the company promptly ignored it and let it die a lingering death.

In comparison, Microsoft made programming Windows easy. Initially, writing Windows programs required learning C or C++, two programming languages that even experienced programmers have trouble mastering. Then Microsoft introduced Visual Basic, a tool that made programming Windows nearly as easy as programming the Macintosh using HyperCard.

Visual Basic helped make Windows programming accessible to nearly everybody. Combined with Windows' popularity, all the developers flocked to Windows because that's where the money was. The more developers who used Windows, the more Windows programs they created, and the more people who would want to use Windows. Simple formula and it worked.

Suddenly, Microsoft and Apple have reversed roles. Where Apple once had an easy-to-use programming tool (HyperCard) and killed it, Microsoft had an easy-to-use programming tool (Visual Basic) and helped kill it too.

First, Microsoft decided to change the Visual Basic language to fit within its new programming framework called .NET. Changing Visual Basic wound up making it nearly as complicated as learning C#, Microsoft's new programming language for writing Windows programs. As a result, programmers abandoned Visual Basic and flocked to C# and other programming languages instead. Now if programmers wanted an easy tool for creating Windows programs, they no longer had one.

Second, Apple introduced the iPhone along with programming tools that ran only on the Macintosh. If you wanted to write an iPhone program, you had to buy a Macintosh. As soon as you learned to write an iPhone program, you could easily transfer those skills to writing Macintosh programs.

Then Apple introduced its App Store to promote iPhone programs while also examining each one to make sure it didn't contain any viruses. Since Apple has already screened all of its iPhone apps, there's little danger of infecting an iPhone with malware like Trojan horses or viruses.

Soon people started selling iPhone apps and making a bundle. The guy who wrote the iFart program (which makes a flatulence sound on your iPhone) sells 10,000 copies a day for 99 cents each. With so much money available, developers are now flocking to the iPhone and the Macintosh as well.

As more developers use the Macintosh to write iPhone apps, they'll likely write Macintosh apps as well. The secret to Microsoft's success with Windows, courting the developers, has now shifted to Apple and the Macintosh.

With just a minority of developers writing programs specifically for Vista, Microsoft's only hope is to convince more developers to write programs for Windows 7. Unfortunately, writing iPhone programs seems far more lucrative than writing Windows 7 applications, which means fewer Windows 7-specific programs and fewer reasons for people to buy Windows 7.

This has already happened with Vista. Despite being on the market for two years, few companies have written programs that take full advantage of Vista's features. Instead, most people have simply modified their old Windows XP programs to run under Vista.

The future is clear. If you follow the developers, you'll find the dominant operating system. Given the choice between earning up to $10,000 a day just to write a silly iFart program that runs on the iPhone, or earning far less to develop more complicated Vista/Windows 7 applications, can you guess which operating system developers will want to use?

* * *

What made HyperCard and Visual Basic great programming tools is that they allowed you to design your program visually by defining the user interface. After you created a user interface complete with pull-down menus, check boxes and dialog boxes, then you could write the actual commands to make your program work.

In comparison, older programming languages like C/C++ forced you to write one set of commands to display your user interface, a second set of commands to make your user interface work, and a third set of commands to make your program actually do something. Where HyperCard and Visual Basic let you write one set of commands to make your program work, that same effort required nearly three times as much work in other languages.

To duplicate the magic of Visual Basic, REAL Software (*www.realsoftware.com*) offers REALbasic, which has been dubbed "Visual Basic for the Mac," although REALbasic runs on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

The idea behind REALbasic is the same as Visual Basic. Design your user interface, write commands to make it do something, and you can create a useful program in a fraction of the time needed if you used C or C++.

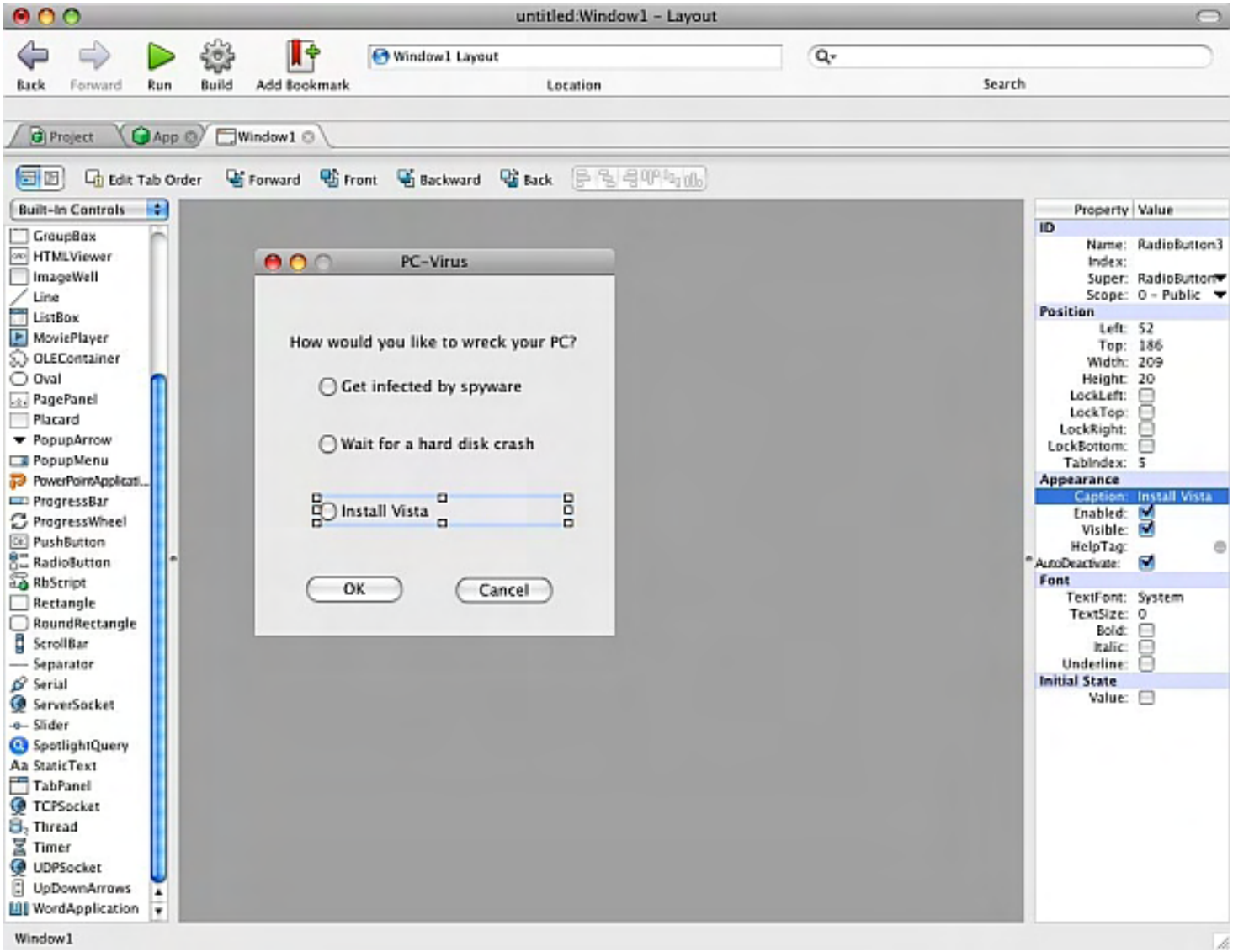

Figure 1. REALbasic lets you create a working user interface without writing any commands.

More remarkable is that REALbasic can run on the three most popular operating systems in the world. This lets you create a REALbasic program once, compile it for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux, and you've essentially created three different versions of your program while writing it only once.

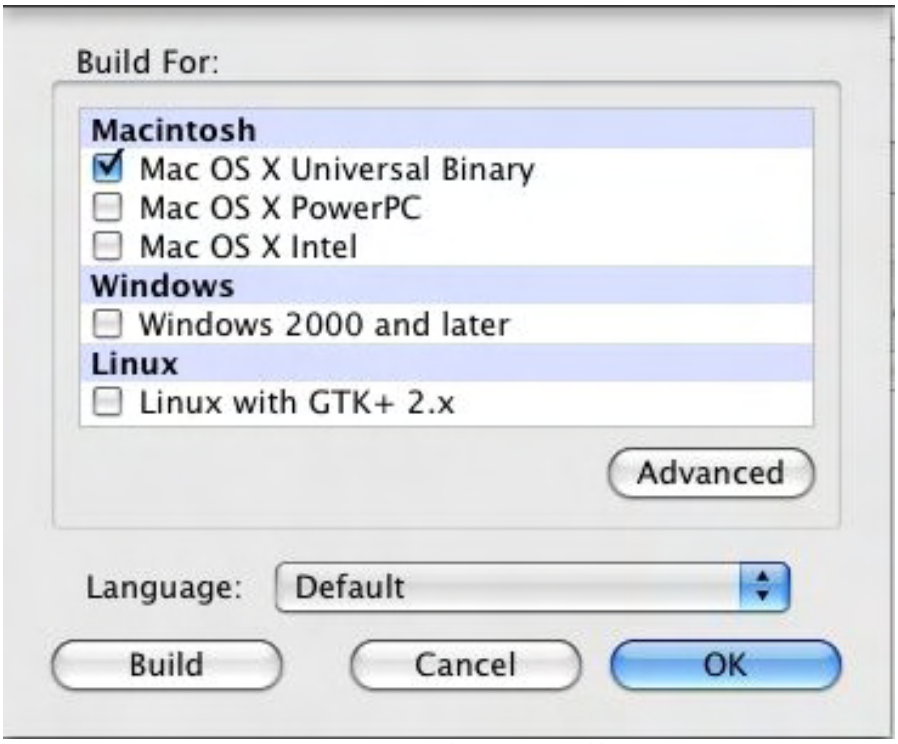

Figure 2. You can create a program for three different operating systems.

If you have any Visual Basic programs, you can actually translate them into REALbasic, and with minor modifications, turn your Visual Basic program into a full-fledged REALbasic program capable of running on Windows, Mac OS X, or Linux.

Grab a demo of REALbasic and see if it makes programming as easy as you hope it can be. Perhaps the only drawback of REALbasic is that it can't help you write iPhone applications, but otherwise it's a great tool that captures the spirit of Visual Basic and HyperCard, and makes programming fun again no matter which operating system you want to use.

* * *

To turn on the junk e-mail filter in Mail on the Macintosh, choose Mail/Preferences and then click the Junk icon. Now you'll see a list of options for tagging, moving, or deleting junk e-mail automatically.

Figure 3. Mail lets you turn on rules for dealing with spam.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around *The Byte Buyer* dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for *Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies*, *Breaking Into Acting for Dummies*, *Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies*, and *Mac All-in-One Reference for Dummies* from *www.dummies.com*, as well as, *Steal This Computer Book 4.0*, *Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing*, and *My New Mac* from *www.nostarch.com*. He is also the co-author of *Strategic Entrepreneurism* from *www.selectbooks.com*.

Every Saturday morning from 9:00 am - 10:00 am in San Diego, you can hear Wally with fellow co-hosts Dane Henderson and Candace Lee, on the radio show CyberSports Today (*www.cybersportstoday.com*), which covers the video gaming industry on ESPN Radio 800 AM. Wally covers the military history side of the video game industry.

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (*www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang*). Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

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Web InSites

"Some Simple Rules of E-mail Etiquette" by Dawn Clement

If you want your e-mails to communicate for you, there are certain rules of etiquette that you should follow. Break enough rules often enough, and your e-mails will go straight into the Recycle Bin.

E-mail is one of the more popular forms of modern communication. The important thing to remember here is that e-mail is, at its core, *communication*. If you want your e-mails to communicate for you, there are certain rules of etiquette that you should follow. Break enough rules often enough, and your e-mails will go straight into the Recycle Bin. Since this week's theme is e-mail, I thought it was an appropriate time to remind everyone of some simple rules of e-mail etiquette.

E-mail is not the forum for long, drawn-out prose. Reading text on a computer screen can be hard on the eyes. To get your message across, be concise and to the point. If the recipient has to scroll down, then your e-mail is probably too long. If you need to give that much detail, consider a phone call instead of e-mail. (By the same token, however, make sure you include enough detail so that your recipient knows what your message is regarding.) Also, never forget that e-mail is not private. Don't include information in an e-mail that you do not wish to share with strangers.

An ineffective use of the "Subject" line is one of the things that annoys a lot of people. Many people sort their mail by subject line, or have messages routed to specific folders based on the subject line. Writing an appropriate subject will ensure that your e-mail is received in a timely manner. Some people even set up their mail programs to automatically delete any e-mail they receive with a blank subject line. If you're going to go to the trouble to send someone an e-mail, make sure they receive it—use the subject line wisely!

By this point, most people know that you shouldn't write e-mails in all capital letters because it feels like shouting. But how many realize that writing in all lower-case letters is just as bad? When you write an e-mail in all lower-case letters, you come off as uneducated or just plain lazy. Use spell checker, and read your e-mail before you send it off to check for typos and grammatical errors. Avoid stylized fonts and colored backgrounds—they make reading an e-mail difficult, and you probably want your e-mails to actually be read.

You'll also want to avoid sending e-mails in HTML or Rich Text format. Not everyone can view these formats, and since most spammers use HTML format, a lot of people delete those e-mails without ever opening them. Lastly, resize any pictures you are sending. Large files take up memory in people's Inboxes, and many ISPs have e-mail size limits.

When you reply to an e-mail, try to address all issues raised. The recipient would like to know that you actually read their e-mail! If there are a lot of issues or topics covered, you can even quote the original e-mail (and edit out the full version) to carry the conversation along. This saves your reader from having to scroll up and down to find whatever you're referring to.

Speaking of replying to e-mail—do you ever really need to hit "reply all"? Take a few seconds to edit out any addresses that don't need to get your reply.

Did you ever stop to think that when you put multiple e-mail addresses in a message's "To" field, you could be violating the privacy of those people? Every address in the "To" field can inadvertently be exposed to strangers who may use those addresses for their own purposes (usually spam). Be nice and use the "BCC" field instead! Put your own e-mail address in the "To" field and everyone else in the "BCC" field.

Let's talk about forwards for a moment. I get a lot of forwarded e-mails—mostly jokes and chain letters. My least favorite type of forwarded e-mail are the chain letters that tell you to send it back to the person who sent it to you if you're a "true friend" or some other such nonsense. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about! Most often, the recipient has to scroll down through a bunch of junk to get to the forwarded message, only to find out that they're not interested anyway.

There are times when an e-mail really does need to be forwarded, but there are a few things to remember before you hit that "send" button. First, edit the forward; remove all other e-mail addresses, headers and commentary from any other forwarders. Next, add some sort of a personal message to the recipient telling them why you have forwarded the message. Let them know why they should bother reading the rest of the forward (especially if forwards are the majority of your communication with the recipient). Never forward an e-mail without verifying the contents first. Use a Web site such as *www.snopes.com* or *www.urbanlegends.com* to investigate any questionable e-mails you plan to send to someone else (don't forget to edit the forward and add a personal note!).

Lastly, can we all please agree to stop forwarding jokes and chain letters? These e-mails are a waste of time and do nothing except bog down the mail servers. Use an anonymous service like *www.stopforwarding.us* to let people know that their barrage of forwards isn't entirely welcome.

Dawn Clement is a freelance writer, domestic engineer, and mother of three with a Masters of Arts in Philosophy and over nine years experience in technical support.

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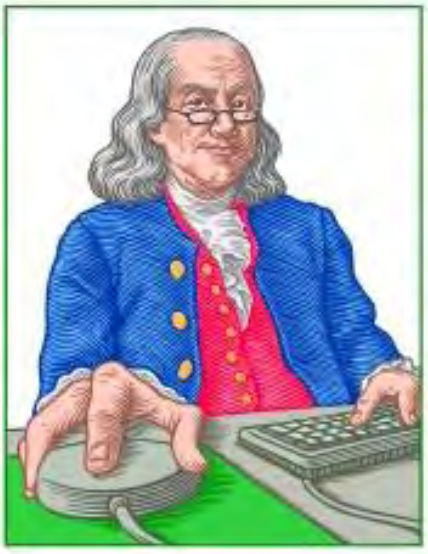

Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

"Linux users share ideas and ask for help." by ComputorEdge Staff

A tip to make using the command window easier is offered; Pete interjects another response to Scott, who had difficulty navigating the Linux world.

A Tip for Using the Command Prompt

One of the problems with using the command prompt in Linux is that often there is way too much typing to do. Every time you need to change directories, there is another long line of characters to key in. If you have a number of repetitive changes that come up in your Linux sessions, then there are steps you can take to make it easier. To streamline the process, create your own commands using an alias. If you use the Borne shell (/bin/sh, bash, ksh, and zsh), the format is:

```
alias cl="cd /var/log"
```

If you use the csh or tcsh shell, the format is:

```
alias cl cd /var/log
```

In this example, the command cd (change directories) with the desired target directory aliased as cl. Once aliased, every time cl is entered, the current directory will switch to /var/log. If you wanted to create a command that would list a particular directory with details, you could enter:

```
alias dl="ls -l /var/log"
```

If you want to do multiple commands in one swoop, put them all into a single text file and merely create a command to read the file:

```
alias mc="/home/jack/mailcheck"
```

"mailcheck" is a text file that uses the grep command to analyze the logs for the e-mail server as discussed in the November 7, 2008 column. Type mc and the work is done.

If you forget your new commands, type alias for a complete list.

```
$ alias
alias cl='cd /var/log'
alias dl='ls -l /var/log'
alias mc='/home/jack/mailcheck'
```

If you want to remove an alias, use unalias with the name of the assigned name of the command.

* * *

More for Scott

Two weeks age, Scott voiced his frustration with Linux:

"Thanks for the responses on my Ubuntu questions. I must admit defeat. I have installed Windows Home Server and couldn't be happier. Everything is working great. I have not resolved my Linux issues. In fact, that is why I am writing, because as a computer user and Microsoft victim, I have issues with Linux."

[Scott continues...]

Last week we had a couple of responses. This week, Pete puts in his two cents:

I am not a Linux guru, nor do I feel as though the Linux community is like a "good ol' boys" club. If it were, I would have been kicked out long ago.

I have made a comfortable conversion over to the Linux side. This is not to say that I have moved completely from Windows to Linux, but that I have found a balance between both worlds.

Scott expressed some frustrations regarding the experiences he has had trying to resolve some Linux issues. Believe me when I say I have been there and I have gone through the difficulties he is talking about. Linux is not easy. It is not built with check boxes and buttons that fix everything. Linux has a long history of computer and software development, and it is still growing, improving, and being shaped by the community that uses it. If you think Linux is difficult to work with today, try setting up an early version of Red Hat when it was free, say about version 6 or 7. In those days, we dealt with hardware compatibility issues that don't even compare today.

Linux was not originally designed to be a one-size-fits-all operating system, nor does it have the same goals and philosophies of business and customer service that commercial software has. This is my opinion, but in my view, the goal of the Linux community and the software that drives it is to provide the groundwork upon which users, developers, programmers and designers can build. Any Linux distribution "out of the box" has the potential not only to do amazing things, but also has the potential to fail, leaving it up to the owner of the hardware to have the choice of which kinds of tasks they wish their computer to perform. It is the complexity and the uniqueness of these tasks that dictate how much effort will go into the software.

Microsoft and similar commercial software developers have but one goal—make money. It would be a mistake to perceive them in any other way because they are businesses that exists for this reason alone. With that in mind, it is easier to understand why and how they develop their products, and where their focus and philosophies differ from the open-sSource community. One is not better or worse than another; they are just different.

It is, therefore, important to understand what our goals as end users and developers are so that we can take full advantage of the benefits of whatever tools we wish to use. It is no more beneficial to completely disregard commercial products than it is to give up entirely on open source. Both have great benefits, and both are here to stay. I have chosen to take the best of both worlds and try to use the best from each.

Scott stated that there are "not more user-friendly information outlets for Linux." Well, that depends on where you look, who and what you are asking, and how you ask the question. Granted, finding the right source for your answers can be a challenge, but I have found wonderful resources both in the world of Windows and Linux. It is also true that, in general, those who help themselves tend to find clearer and more precise answers because the struggle to find your own answers to technical questions will narrow down what you are asking. For example, the question, "Why does my video not function?" is a much broader question than, "Can anyone tell me where I can find drivers for my video adapter in kernel version such and such?" The second question indicates that some preliminary research was done before the question was asked. I am sure that Scott did do his own research. He describes his computer experience to be quite impressive. I can only say that my experience looking for help within both the Linux community and commercial software support has been that the more I have done for myself, the more willing help I have received. And conversely, the times I have obviously not done my homework were the times that I have been told I need to look further.

Scott is correct. The process of going from a novice understanding of Linux (or any operating system) to being able to solve your own problems can be a long and frustrating road. I have been at the beginning of that road and have gone through many frustrating hours of not finding answers, both in personal research and with the open-sSource community. And sometimes there is no answer. Some things simply do not work. But my experience has also been that finding the answers and fixing the problems has its own rewards. The truth is, no software developer, commercial or otherwise, can really know how to create a tool to work just for you. If that is the goal, then you, the user, will have to build it. To me, there is nothing like being able to customize a computer system to perform the tasks that I need in the way that works best for me. My personal experience is that open source provides the most options to allow you to do this, but it does take work and it can be frustrating at times.

Good luck with that Windows server, Scott ;)

Pete Choppin

* * *

Looking for Some More Questions

*If you have an opinion on these or other Linux topics, then please let us know. Also, if you have another Linux tip that works for you and would like to pass it along (or have a question), please drop us a line at Linux Lessons (*ceeditor@computoredge.com*).*

This is a column for Linux and Unix-like operating system users. The goal is to give Linux users an opportunity to share tips, tricks and ideas with both fellow users and the *ComputorEdge* Linux newbies. Each week in this column, we will highlight the thoughts you submit to us. This is your column. As long as a submission is dealing with the Linux/Unix-like world, we want to share it.

The tips and tricks may be short or long, and can include graphics. If there is a little technique or program that you use on a regular basis, then we want to hear about it. You may also pose questions for other Linux users to answer. E-mail your ideas or questions to Linux Lessons (*ceeditor@computoredge.com*). Be sure to put the word "Linux Lessons" in the subject line so it won't get lost in junk mail. We depend upon you to make this column a success.

Jack Dunning
ComputorEdge

ComputorEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

If you want to submit a short "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*.

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Rob, The Computor Tutor

Rob, The ComputorTutor Does Access 2007

"How Access 2007 Works" by Rob Spahitz

This week, we'll start looking into how Access 2007 works. Since many of the features are the same as previous versions, the focus is primarily on the changes.

This week, we'll start looking into how Access 2007 works. Since many of the features are the same as previous versions, I'll primarily focus on the changes.

With our limited space, we'll start by simply exploring the new environment. If you simply start up Access 2007 (rather than starting it from an existing database), you see something similar to Figure 1.

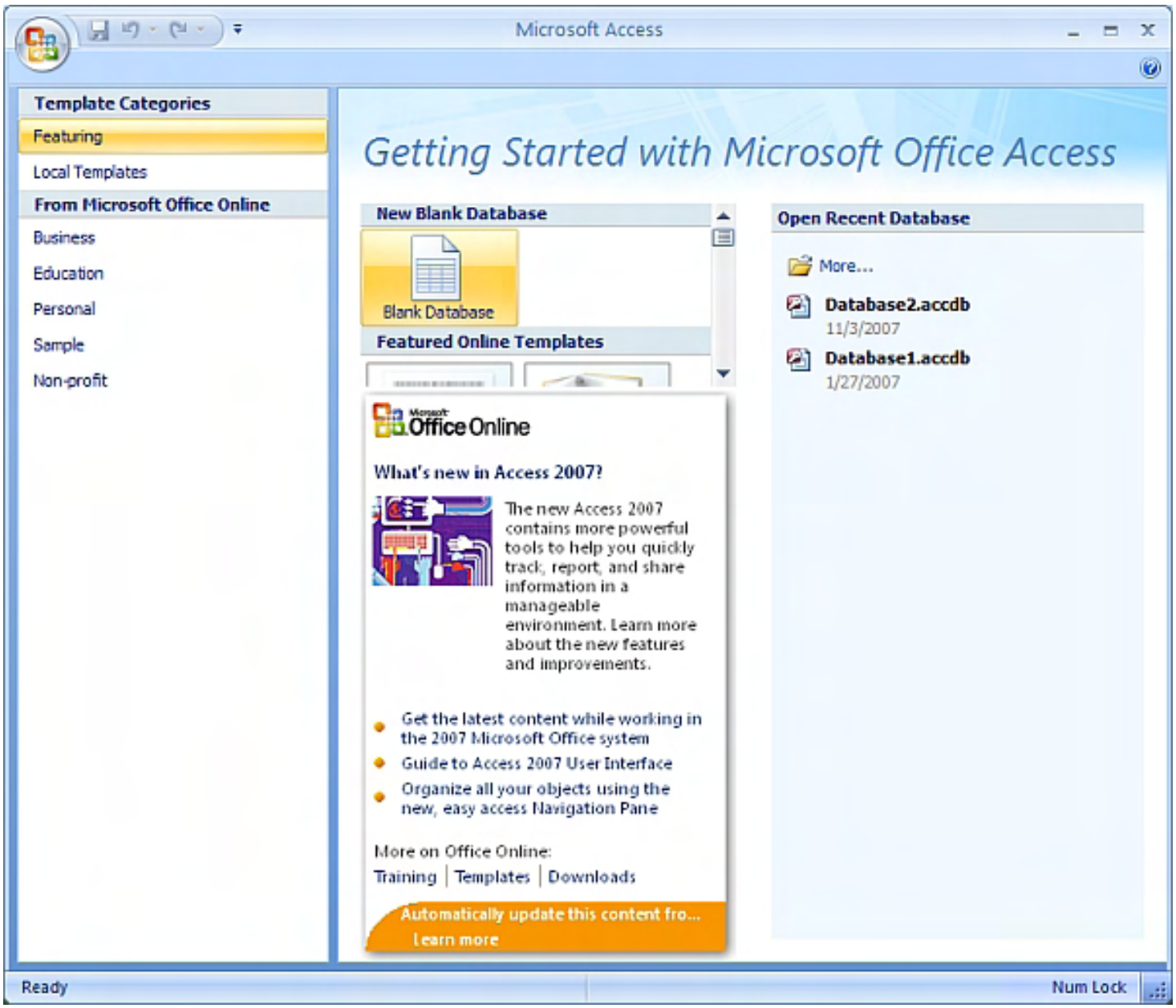

Figure 1. Access 2007 Open Database area.

Near the middle-top of the window, you can create a new, blank database. We'll explore that in a future column. For now, I suspect you're more likely to open an existing database, so let's continue. OK, suppose that you wanted to open the previous database we created in Access 2003 (available at *www.dogopoly.com/ce*). Sure, you can double-click the file and hope that it opens in Access 2007 (which it probably will if you installed it after Access 2003—oh, by the way, you can have both installed and working independently, in case you were wondering). Suppose that you wanted to open an existing database from Access. Oh my! There are no menus in Access 20007! Looking around, you'll see a picture of a floppy disk in the title bar, and you can select various templates, but where is the Open menu item?

The answer is a new concept in Office 2007. As seen in Figure 2, all Office 2007 products include what is called the Office Button, found as a large circle in the top-left corner of the application. When you click on it, it will present you with the items you typically see in the File menu of most applications, such as New, Open, Save, Print and Close.

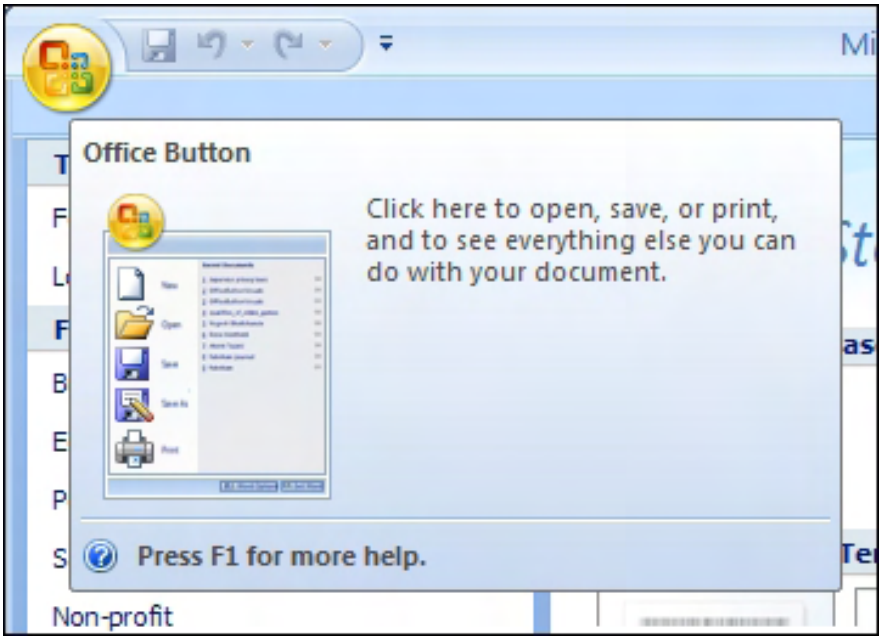

Figure 2. The Office Button.

Most likely, you'll find the database that you want within the Windows environment and double-click on it. When you do this with my recent database, you'll get something like Figure 3.

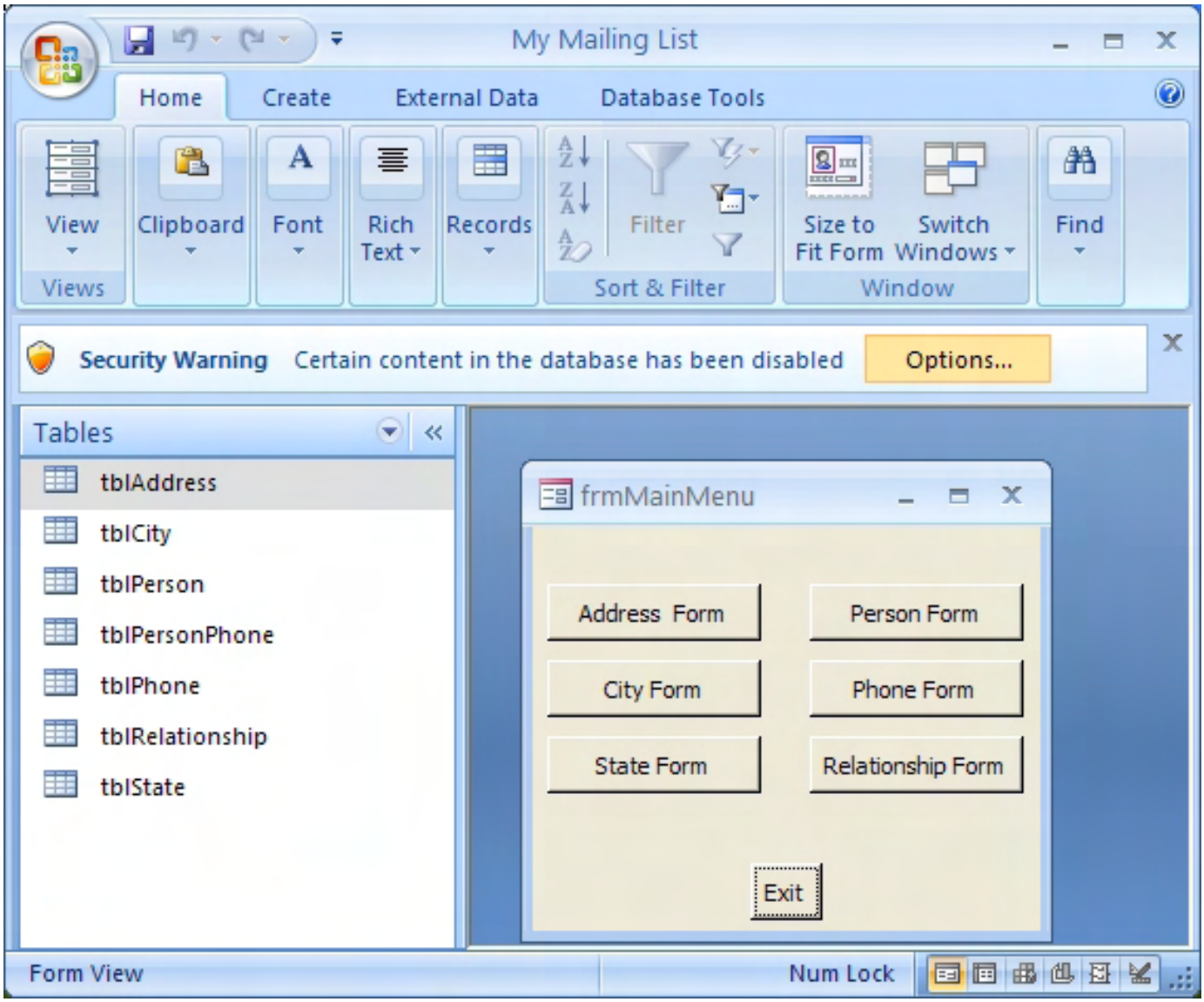

Figure 3. Newly opened database.

Aside from a different look from Access 2003, you have one more concern if this database contains any VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) code. Since most databases you create in Access will have this in forms, you'll need to address the Security Warning message that appears. You can continue to work while ignoring it, but your VBA code will not run unless you enable it. So click on the Options button that appears near the warning, and you'll see the window in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Managing Security Warnings.

If you did not create this database, you probably want to *not* allow the VBA code until you have a chance to explore it to determine if it's safe. If it's a trusted database, then choose the "Enable this content" option, then click the OK button.

Access 2007 Menu Tabs

Since this is a new world, let's quickly find out how to do things since there are no menus. Basically, Microsoft replaced the menus with what they call the Ribbon Bar. This consists of a series of tabs that act like menus. Each tab contains a collection of boxes that act like sub-menus; each box contains a collection of items (often pictures) that represent your action items. Note that depending on how much space the application has to show things, it will include more or less information in the Ribbon Bar. As such, my print-screens may look a bit different from yours.

Since all of the old menus were reorganized, rather than File, Edit, etc., you get Home, Create, External Data and Database Tools. Also, as certain items are selected, you may see additional menu tab items. Let's look at the main parts of each menu tab.

Home is where Microsoft thinks you'll do most of your work. It includes all of the things that you are probably going to use over and over as you work on your database. The first box, Views, allows you to

choose between different views of the current object, as seen in Figure 5.

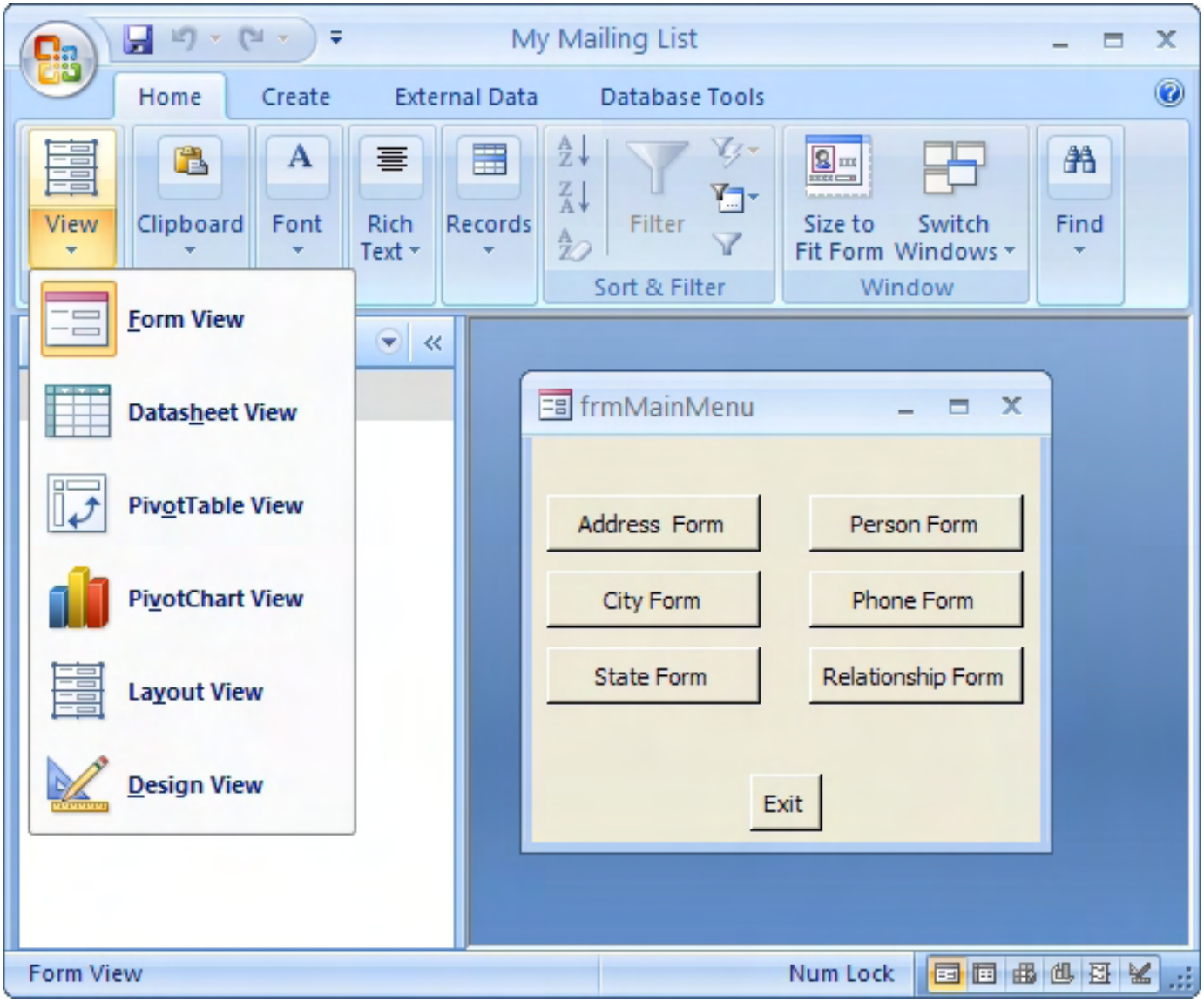

Figure 5. Home View options.

The next few things, Clipboard, Font and Rich Text are common text-formatting items that you can probably figure out. The Records box will let you handle things related to records in the current form, as seen in Figure 6.

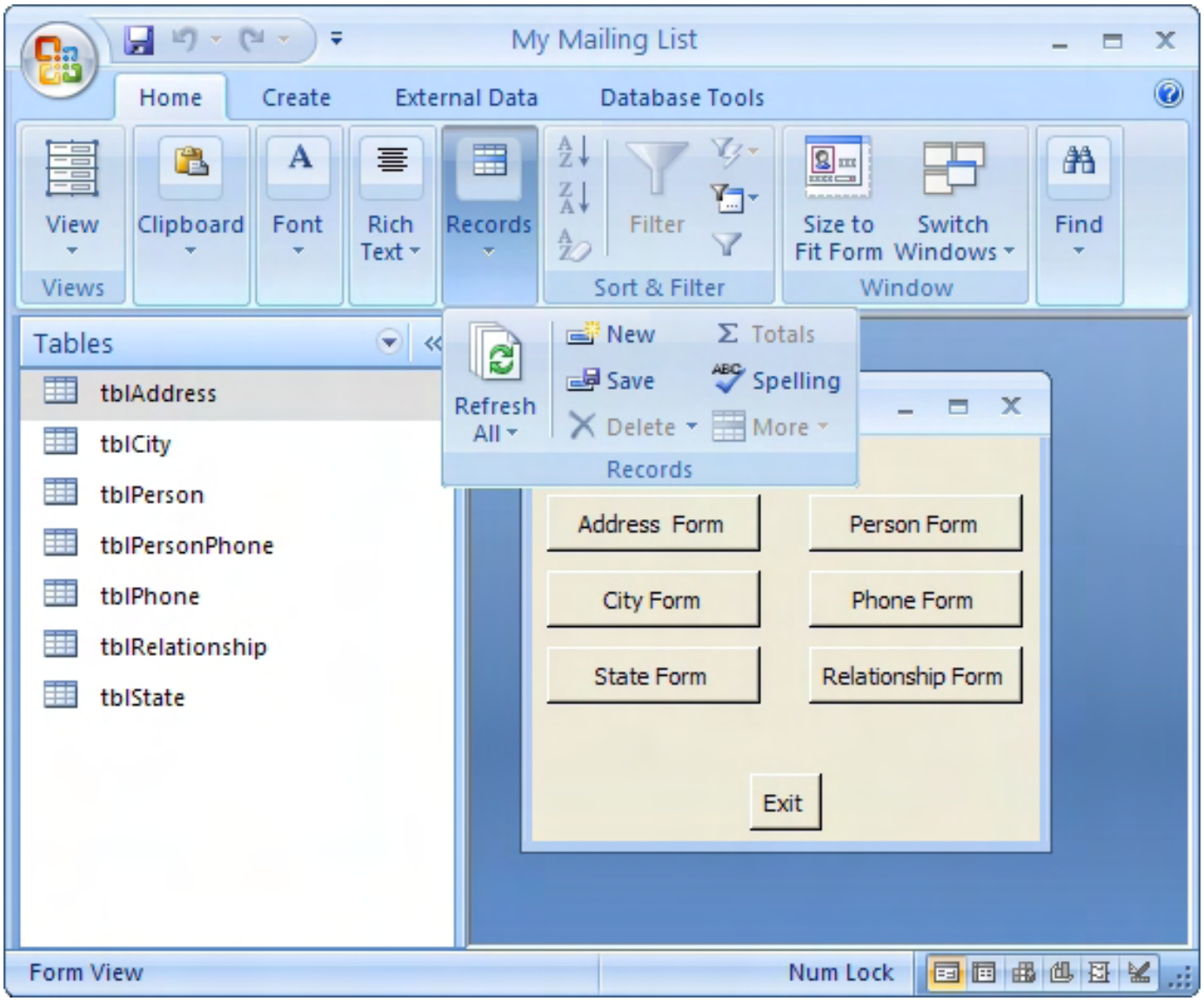

Figure 6. Home Records options.

The next menu tab is Create, as seen in Figure 7.

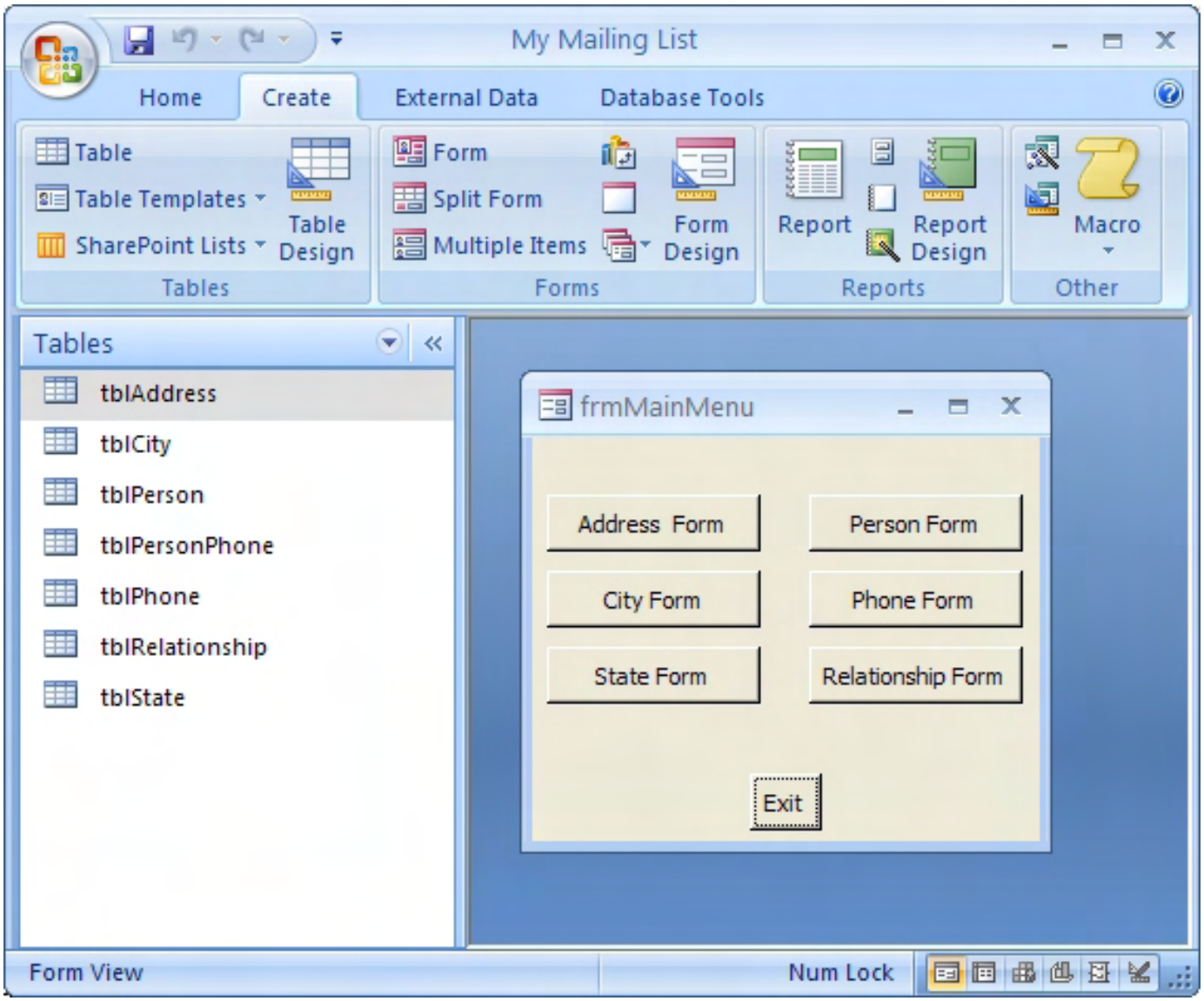

Figure 7. Create menu tab.

This tab lets you manage tables, forms, reports and VBA code (macros). We'll be spending a lot of time here in coming weeks.

Next, External Data, lets you import or export data and manage how you'd like to share your database.

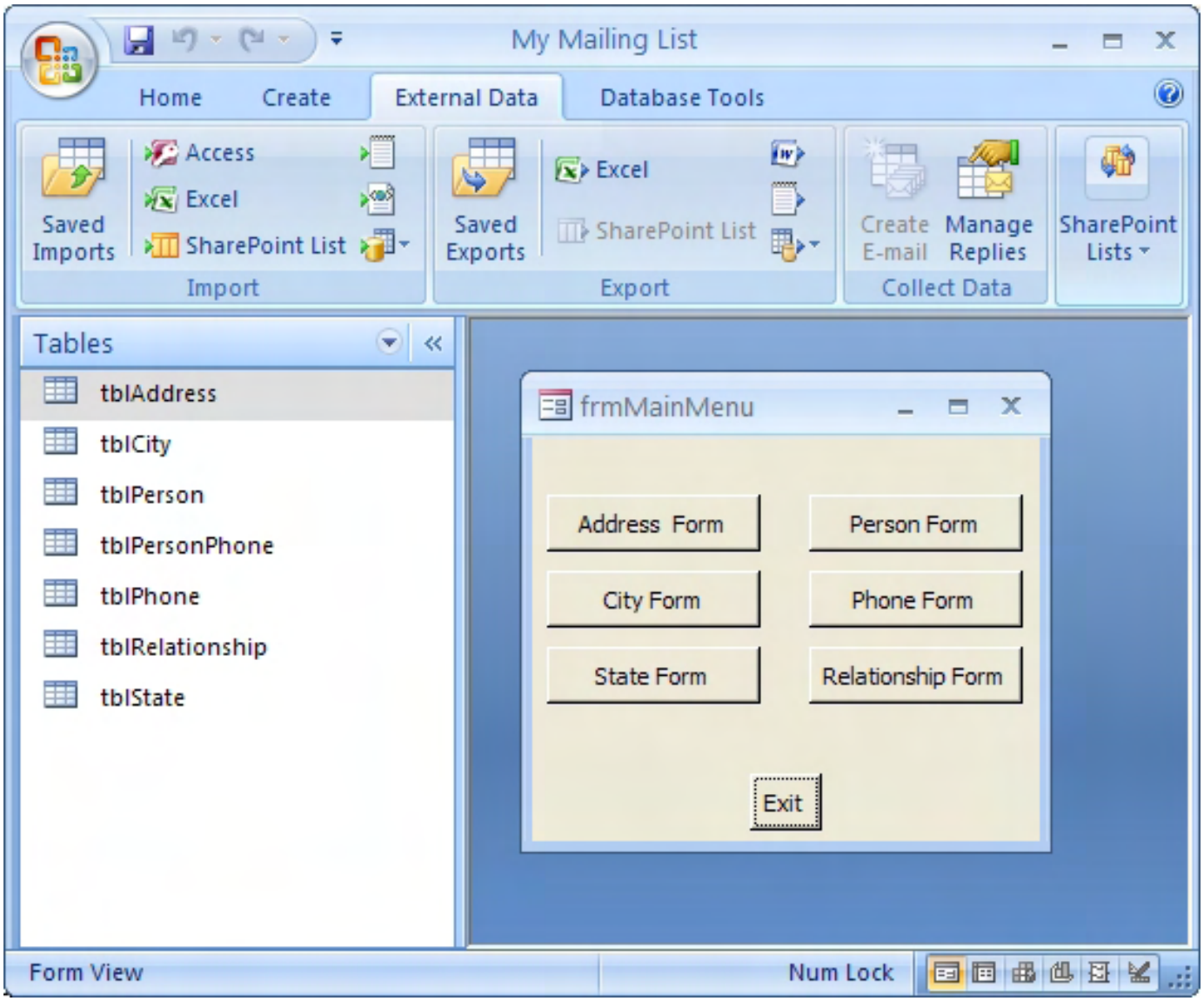

Figure 8. External Data menu tab.

Finally, Database Tools, as seen in Figure 9, lets you manage your VBA code and handle a few other administrative tasks, like defining users for a shared database.

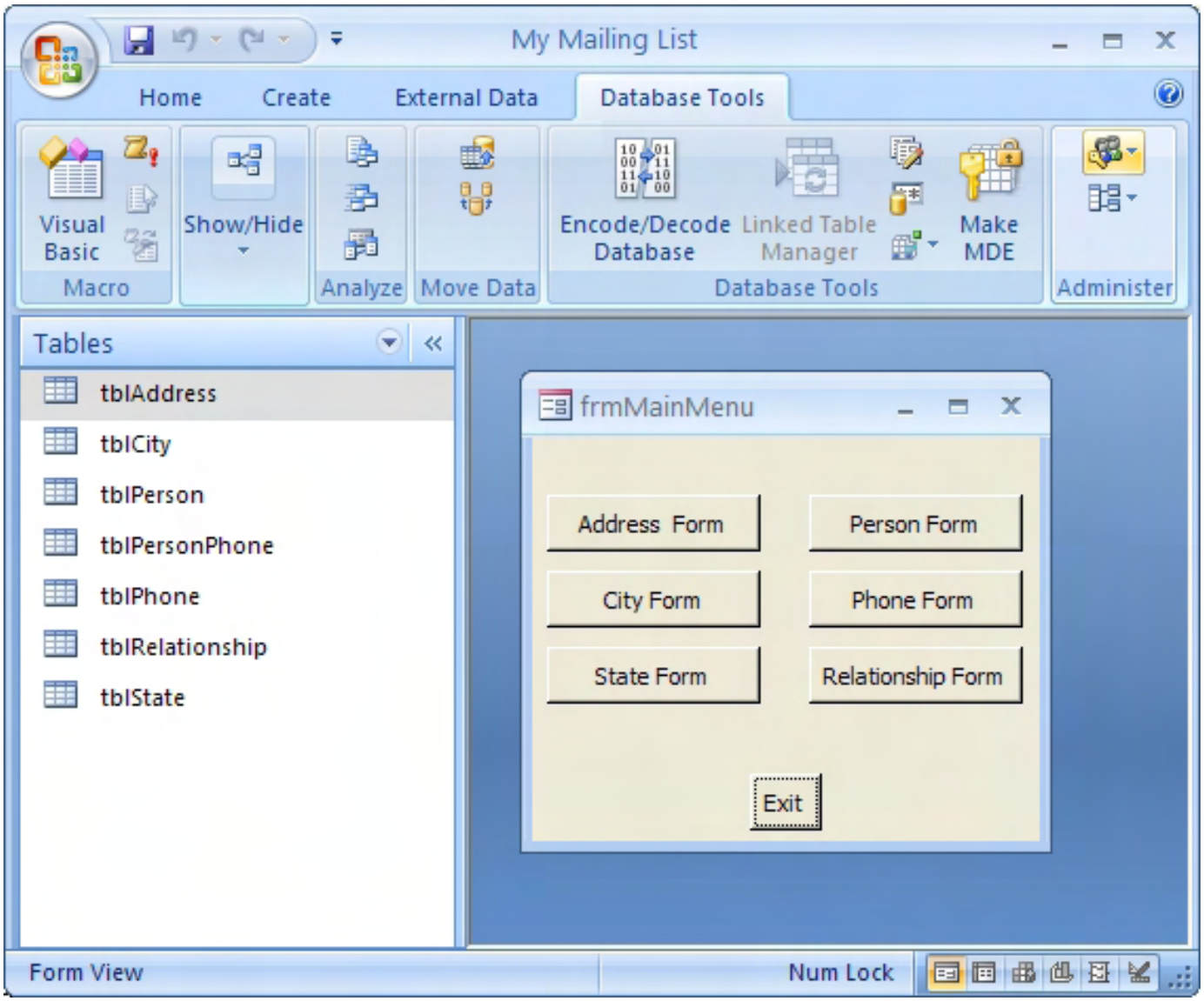

Figure 9. Database Tools menu tab.

OK, now that you've had a quick tour, next week we'll compare some of the differences between Access 2003 and Access 2007 table and form managements. Save this one for a reference, and stay tuned for more.

Rob has been in the computer industry for over 25 years and is currently a part-time teacher, offering classes in Excel, Access, Visual Basic, and a variety of other technical tools. He has loved *ComputorEdge* since 1990 and can be contacted at *RSpahitz@Dogopoly.com*.

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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

"The latest in tech news and hot product reviews." by Charles Carr

SOA Strategies—A look at the "Zen of SOA;, Sorry, Guys. Bad News for Video Gamers—A new study shows that the more young adults play video games, the worse their relationships become; Emerging Cell Phone Issues in 2009—Trends to look out for; Xerox D103 Disc Duplicator—A review of the duplicator with the industry's first "Drag and Drop" file function.

SOA Strategies

Tom Termini, author of "The Zen of SOA (*www.bluedog.net*)" (ISBN 978-0-615-24703-8), writes, "Adopting a services-oriented architecture (SOA) should be undertaken as a gradual process, working toward your vision of a new IT enterprise which is more responsive to business drivers. Complex concepts have emerged over the past few years regarding the potential productivity an organization can achieve with their Web site."

According to *Service-Architecture.com*, "A service-oriented architecture is essentially a collection of services. These services communicate with each other. The communication can involve either simple data passing or it could involve two or more services coordinating some activity ... A service is a function that is well-defined, self-contained, and does not depend on the context or state of other services."

In the article, "Service Oriented Architecture is your Ticket to Hell (*thewaronbullshit.com/2007/08/30/soa/*)," Kavan Wolfe further explains: "Suppose you are a programmer and you have to build a large, complicated application. You have to break up the code into pieces so you can keep everything straight and not get lost. For years, programmers have divided code into interconnected hierarchies of objects, a practice called object-oriented programming. Service Oriented Architecture is an alternative code organization, based on services. For example, you might have a weather service that returns weather conditions, given a city."

Termini describes how top management can look and move forward with clear goals, appropriate resources and confidence. "The key in this quest is to act as a mediator who understands the roles of the critical actors and players and to adopt a posture that is both flexible and resilient."

Among the ideas Termini recommends to successfully deploy an effective SOA:

1. Learn from others—study what worked for other organizations that may have had parallel processes, or similar objectives to yours. For example, at the Federal Trade Commission, we learned that commodity hardware and software promote the transition toward a fully realized SOA. From the detritus of a failed EAI effort, the fruits of a SOA success can be found with the creative application of an "agile" approach.

2. Maintain a "baby-steps" approach toward a fully-realized SOA—expectations are more realistic, costs are spread over a longer period, risk is deferred, and you have the opportunity to foster organizational

adoption. Cultural resistance is often the primary reason for failure in enterprise IT endeavors. If your adoption posture is incremental, you will lessen the impact on your organization, customers and partners so they can assimilate change gradually.

3. SOA is more about the business customer than about IT innovation. Service-Oriented Architecture, when rolled out successfully, can empower the people driving the business processes in your organization, free up limited information technology resources, and improve flexibility to meet change. While on task at the U.S. Department of Justice, we learned a portal is integral to Web-enabling the enterprise. Why? It provides the single, simple point-of-entry to the SOA-enabled systems for the less-technical business user. We found the portal was excellent at answering the question, where do I go to find what we already have? It also simplifies the human interface, since all Web applications share the look-and-feel or some derivative of the portal's cascading style sheet. Finally, the portal simplifies single-sign-on access and ease of access means greater acceptance by the user community.

4. ESB does not equal SOA. Providing an enterprise services bus (ESB) to your organization does not mean you have a SOA. Gaining a full grasp of this concept is key to embracing the Zen of SOA. Think commodity software as well as hardware—one of the keys to SOA success. While we've found the messaging layer to be critical, oftentimes success can be achieved by simplifying a few key business processes and SOA-enabling with a Web service. Example: customer record lookup, because so many systems touch on that process.

5. Manage the SOA as part of the whole enterprise. Think of the SOA approach as a layer to simplify complexity—as above, consider the customer lookup process. What vital information needs to be presented to a consuming service? This layer does not stand apart from the organization's larger enterprise; rather, it supports the business architecture. The underlying services orchestrate and communicate business processes—these components are part of the technical architecture. Internal developers, external consumers and others will require access to reuse SOA services.

6. Measure progress and communicate results. The successful implementation of any SOA must be driven from the top down. This means gaining early wins that engage senior management. Define three or four metrics and regularly communicate results.

7. Promote SOA as the Future. Implementation of a SOA blueprint may never fully end, because business processes change or new ones are required. Your target architecture inevitably will evolve to accommodate changes in the external environment and corresponding adjustments to organizational goals.

Sorry, Guys. Bad News for Video Gamers

In an article for Networkworld.com (*www.networkworld.com/community/node/37691*), Alpha Doggs writes, "A new study ... shows that the more young adults play video games, the worse their relationships become with family and friends."

In the study, conducted by Brigham Young University undergrad Alex Jensen and Jensen's faculty mentor, Laura Walker, 813 college students from around the U.S. were asked to share information about how often they play video games and how much time, trust and affection they share with family and friends. Their results are being published in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence (*www.springer.com/psychology/child+&+school+psychology/journal/10964*).

According to Alpha Doggs, "The study found that the more young adults played video games, the more

likely they were to engage in activities such as drinking and drug abuse. For young women, self-worth was inversely proportional to game use."

"It may be that young adults remove themselves from important social settings to play video games, or that people who already struggle with relationships are trying to find other ways to spend their time," Walker said in a statement. "My guess is that it's some of both and becomes circular. The most striking part is that everything we found clustered around video game use is negative."

Jensen said he is curious what effect the findings—which showed roughly three in four males play video games vs. fewer than one in five females—might have on couples.

"The gender imbalance begs the question of whether chasing a new high score beats spending quality time with a girlfriend or wife," Jensen said.

Emerging Cell Phone Issues in 2009

According to the national consumer group Consumer Action, "Recession-plagued consumers saddled with expensive contract-based cell phone service won't get much relief on prices in 2009 and may even get burned by little-understood and poorly disclosed fees and penalties."

Ken McEldowney, the group's executive director, said: "As more and more Americans shift their phone use to cell phones, the costs and pitfalls associated with contract-based cell phones become clearer and clearer. In this new year, consumers worried about recession-driven pressure on their jobs and pocketbooks need to be more careful than ever about avoiding paying more than is necessary for cell phone service."

Consumer Action outlines their top five emerging cell phone issues for 2009:

1. Continued early termination fees, with only minor relief for some consumers. Faced with growing consumer anger, scores of lawsuits, actual setbacks in the courtrooms and the risk of tougher federal regulation, America's largest cell phone companies have been forced to relent a bit on early termination fees (ETFs) that can range from $150-$200. Late last year, Sprint finally joined other major cell phone companies—including Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile—in pro-rating ETF penalties. (In July 2008, Sprint was ordered by a California court to pay $73 million for its early termination fee practices. A $1.2 billion class-action lawsuit seeking ETF refunds from Sprint was filed in November 2008.)

So how much relief can consumers actually expect on onerous ETF charges? In truth, most of the prorating plans provide very little relief in the first year of a contract. Under one plan, there is no reduction during the first six months of a contract and the ETF penalty goes down by only $10 a month thereafter. At another carrier, the ETF savings really start only during the last six months of the term of the contract. While that may help out some consumers who decide to bail on the very tail-end of a phone contract, many consumers will still face the full (or nearly full) ETF penalty … or be forced to stick with a carrier they can't afford to dump.

2. Little change on overage fees of up to 45 cents a minute. Bank ATMs have nothing on contract-based cell phones when it comes to poor disclosure. If you don't have an expensive "unlimited" cell phone plan, consider what you pay when you exceed the minute limit on your contract cell phone plan. One report finds that, for every minute you go over the ceiling in your plan, AT&T Cingular charges up to 45 cents a minute, Verizon charges 40 cents a minute and Sprint is also up to 40 cents a minute. You may be able

to avoid this problem by using the free service "Over My Minutes (*overmyminutes.com*)" to get warnings when you are near your monthly ceiling on cell phone minutes.

3. A jump in mandatory cell phone contract extensions as more young Americans use cell phones. Teen and "tweener" use of cell phones continues to rise and that inevitably means more lost and broken cell phones for parents to replace. Many consumers learn the hard way that there's a catch when you try to replace a lost or broken cell phone—your contract may start all over again from scratch on the phone—even if you've been paying faithfully each month for replacement insurance. (Some experts have suggested putting children on prepaid cell phones to avoid the risk of paying more as a result of lost and broken cell phones.) Another alternative is to buy a cheap, unlocked phone and switch the SIM card from your broken phone into it without reporting it to your cell phone company.

4. A backlash against out-of-control texting fees. This problem is now so bad that Wisconsin Senator Herb Kohl—a key member of the Senate Judiciary Committee—asked the nation's four largest wireless carriers in late 2008 to explain the "sharply rising rates" they charge customers to send and receive text messages. In letters to Verizon Wireless, AT&T Inc., Sprint Nextel Corp. and T-Mobile, Kohl noted that many consumers are paying more than 20 cents per message, up from 10 cents in 2005. This increase, he said, "does not appear to be justified by rising costs in delivering text messages," which are small data files that are inexpensive for carriers to transmit. Kohl said he is particularly concerned that all four of the companies adopted what appeared to be identical price increases at roughly the same point in time. "This conduct is hardly consistent with the vigorous price competition we hope to see in a competitive marketplace," he wrote.

5. A shift away from scandal-plagued international calling cards for immigrants. As the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee and others have documented, fraud and abuse is now epidemic among calling cards, particularly those aimed at newcomers to the U.S. If the calling card functions at all, it may work for only a fraction of the promised time. (The Senate Committee found that the average card delivers only 50 percent of the promised minutes.) One problem with the cards is that fees that are either not disclosed or are contained in very small print on the back of the card. In fact, some cards were advertised in Spanish, but the disclosure was in English. Another card worth only $2 dollars charged a junk 99-cent "hang up" fee. Other cards bill only in three- or four-minute increments, even when a call lasts only a few seconds. Given the extent of problems with calling cards, it is likely that many immigrants with little or no established credit will migrate to prepaid phones with arrangements for international minutes.

Read more at *www.consumer-action.org*.

Xerox D103 Disc Duplicator

Xerox boasts that its duplicators feature the industry's first "Drag and Drop" file function, allowing users to transfer DVD and CD image files directly from a PC to the duplicator's internal hard drive, dramatically reducing the time and effort usually required to produce master discs for each project. Even better, if you merely want to copy already completed CDs or DVDs, the unit can function entirely standalone with no connection to a PC.

Xerox D103 Disc Duplicator.

The Drag and Drop function works quite well. Simply connect the duplicator to a PC via a USB cable, load the software pack, and you are then able to "see" the Xerox Duplicator's internal hard drive just as if it's another drive on the PC or an external drive. Just highlight the image files you want to transfer to the duplicator's hard drive and drag them over.

A real time-saver, the "Load and Copy" feature transfers data from the master disc to the internal HDD, while at the same time copying its data disc-to-disc on the first run. After that, copies are made through the HDD.

The unit is able to duplicate all common DVD formats including single layer DVD±R/RW and double/ dual layer DVD±R. It also supports all common CD formats, including Video CD, CD-TEXT, ISRC and Over-Burned CD (90 min./99 min.). CD & DVD burning speeds are selectable to accommodate requirements of the recording media.

The text on the LCD screen (see picture) can be displayed in English, Spanish and French. Chinese and Arabic are available upon request. Account management (password protection) allows only specific user (s)
to operate the duplicator with their own preferred settings and numerous passwords can be assigned for multiple users.

The Xerox D103 is upgradeable for future drive technology and functions are upgradeable through firmware. The model we tested (one master, three slaves), which came with a 160GB internal hard drive and 128MB of buffer memory, sells for about $575 online. There are numerous other configurations of disc drives, hard drives and buffer memory available but, however you stack it, it's one sweet machine. More info at *www.xeroxduplicators.com/Xerox3.aspx*.

In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputorEdge* and *ComputerScene* Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's *North County Times* newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to *L.A. and San Diego Parent* magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, *What a World*, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

"An E-Mail Ideal" by Jack Dunning

Jack wants e-mail programs that will sync across the Internet and his network with multiple e-mail accounts, so that they would look identical no matter which computer is being used.

It's not easy to decipher what Microsoft is up to. In the release of Window 7, there will be no e-mail program included. Some may think that on the e-mail front Microsoft has given up in defeat, but it may be that a long-in-coming realization that not everything needs to be attached to the operating system has set in.

Windows Vista includes Windows Mail, which is an adequate program. Other than the file system (each message is its own file) and the spam filter, it doesn't have any particular features that make it any more useful than Outlook Express. The people who worked on Windows Mail are the same group that's working on Windows Live Mail. Windows Live Mail will be a free download from Windows Live Essentials to replace Windows Live in Windows 7. In the long run, Windows Live Mail is supposed to integrate with the calendar and chat programs, as well as a couple of other applications.

It seems that the natural place to base an e-mail system would be in cyberspace. This is what you have with Gmail and other Web-based systems. After all, you always need an Internet connection to check and send your e-mail. If you're using multiple computers, your e-mail will always be available regardless of which computer you're using—as long as you have an Internet connection.

I have only occasionally used Web mail. I set the e-mail accounts on different computers to leave the messages on the servers for a couple of days. That way I can be sure of retaining copies of everything on each machine—unfortunately, that includes spam. It's a lot of work to process e-mail on more than one computer, so I process it only on my primary machine. I use the other computer to occasionally review recent arrivals.

What I need are e-mail programs that will sync across the Internet and my network with multiple e-mail accounts, so that they would look identical no matter which computer I'm using—even when I don't have an Internet connection. In the long term, that would be my goal. Maybe there is a program out there that solves this problem, but I haven't seen it yet.

In the meantime, I like the idea of using a cross-platform program such as Thunderbird. Then, I would be operating-system independent and, hopefully, with the right syncing software, I could stay up-to-date on all my machines.

In the meantime, I will limp along reviewing my multiple accounts and occasional spam that slips through with whatever software is available. Installing and setting up new e-mail programs is way more work than installing multiple browsers. Getting all the folders and message filters set up is time-consuming. It seems that only one actively used e-mail program per machine is allowed. That's why once someone starts using a particular e-mail program (usually the one that came with the operating system), they are loath to switch to another—no matter how lame their current software may be.

I think that my next obligation is to install Windows Live Mail on one of my computers. It is inevitable that I take a look. At least if something terrible happens, I will be able to pass it on. I'll put it on my list.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is *www.computoredge.com*. He can be reached at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*

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Editor's Letters

"Readers write in with letters to the editor." by ComputorEdge Staff

"Baddies Out There?," "Won't Replace Paper," "Trial Software," "VoIP Column," "User Intervention"

Baddies Out There?

[This letter is in regard to Jack Dunning's January 23 Edgeword column, where Jack addressed downloading files via BitTorrent.]

[You wrote,] "Even after you have downloaded your file, the client software will continue to send blocks to other clients, unless you turn it off. For many people, the idea of strangers getting something from their computer will freak them out."

Are "baddies" out there attaching stuff that we don't want? Is malware infecting the BitTorrent system?

-Bob

Bob's question needs to be addressed. Yes, there is danger when using torrents. The first is that some client programs have been written that will hijack your browser and inundate you with pop-ups. They have even been advertised on popular sites. They change their names, so be sure to use only reputable BitTorrent clients, such as µTorrent.

Second, any downloaded files should be scanned with your antivirus software before you open them. If the original had a problem, the copy will as well.

-*Jack Dunning*,ComputorEdge

Won't Replace Paper

I miss the paper edition of CE. I can't take this Internet version with me to the bathroom, nor to bed, nor can I take it with me when I travel, since I rarely have an Internet connection when doing so. When I do have an Internet connection for my laptop, I don't have the time to sit there and read CE nor any other Web-zine. Also, I can't underline meaningful phrases, tear out articles, then file them away in a filing cabinet for future use. Those who think the Internet will replace paper, at least in my lifetime, are wrong!

Sincerely,

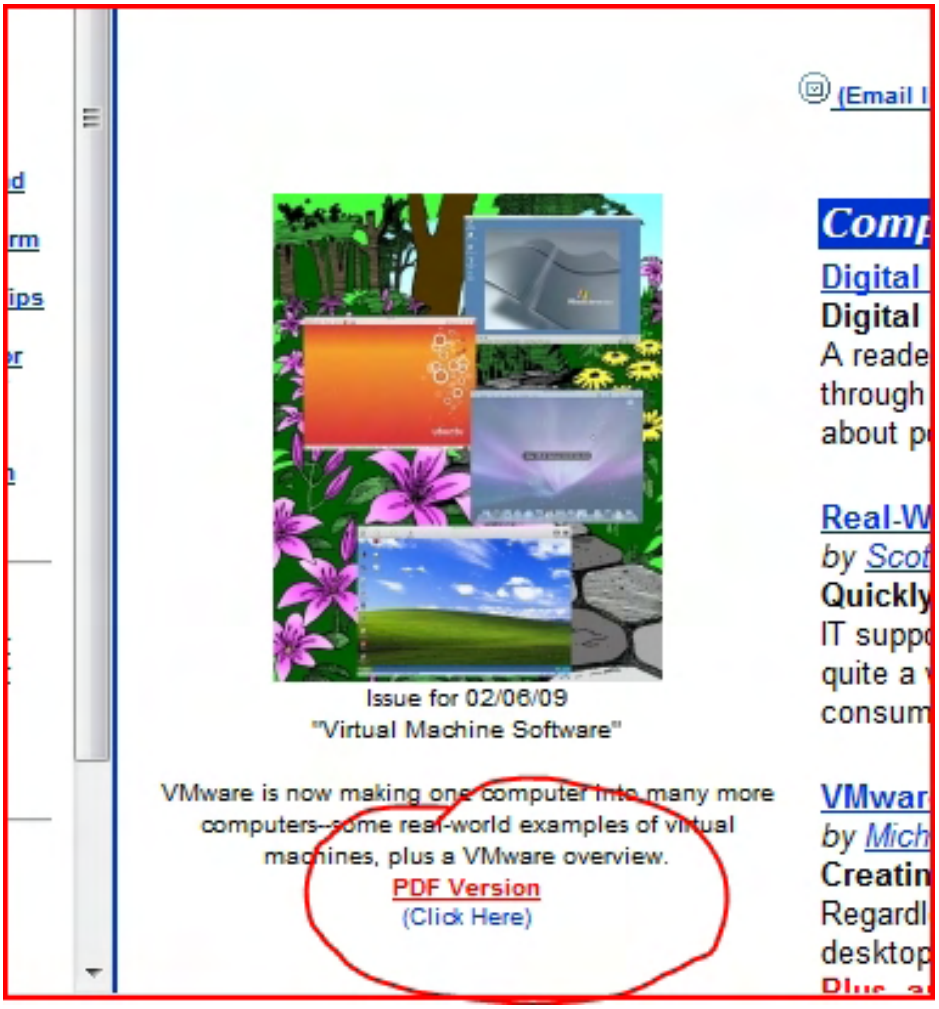
-Don Neilson, San Diego, Calif.

*[Don is right. That's why we offer a PDF version that people can download to take with them on their computer, or print key pages, if so desired. The PDF version link is below the artwork on the left side of the Table of Contents (*webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?article=toc*) page. —Jack Dunning]*

Jack Dunning says, "The PDF version link is below the artwork on the left side of the Table of Contents page." I found the Contents page under the "Articles and Columns," but I cannot find the PDF link. I also used the site search with "pdf version" and "pdf file," without results. I also tried several other links, but the PDF file is too well hidden for me. Please help.

Thank you.

-Richard Hardy, San Diego, Calif.



Link to the PDF version of ComputorEdge.

[This is what it should look like. I've also added links to the editorial calendars and the issue listings in the Site Map. —Jack]

Trial Software

[This letter is in regard to Jack Dunning's January 30 Windows Vista Tips and Tricks column, where Jack addressed file associations in Vista.]

I agree with all you said in "File Associations in Windows Vista," except for the example of using this to deal with Microsoft Office trial software. Regardless of whether or not you plan to use Microsoft Office, you probably don't want the trial version, which may include things you don't want and perhaps not

include things you do. Even if it does, you may be able to get a better price elsewhere. Instead, go straight to "Programs and Features" and delete it along with other software you either don't need or you know will be replaced by the version of MS Office you intend to buy. After rebooting, your computer will be ready for whatever Office Suite you really want at the best price you can get.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, Calif.

VoIP Column

[This letter is in regard to Wally Wang's January 16 Apple Farm column, "VoIP with a Macintosh."]

VoIP—great! I'll get goin' now.

Video capture—cool.

Icon shortcut displaying—bless Apple!

-Robert Broska, Vista

User Intervention

[This letter is in regard to Dawn Clement's January 30 Web InSites column, "Adventures in Malware."]

[She writes,} "after all, the computer can't get infected without user intervention"

That's not true at all. There are lots of worms that exploit open vulnerabilities in the OS that don't require user intervention at all. Look at worms like Sasser and Blaster, or the most recent Downanup/Conficker.

-David Eddleman, Vista, Calif.

ComputorEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

If you want to submit a short "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*.
