ComputorEdge™ Online — 03/06/09

This issue:
Really Simple Syndication (RSS) Web News Feeds

Although popular with a small group of users, RSS feeds have yet to hit their stride. What's the future of RSS? Also, how to add them to your Web page and how to use them.

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Readers write in with letters to the editor.
"Limited Internet Connection," "Clouds All About Us," "New to Linux," "Virtual Machines"

Send mail to *ceeditor@computoredge.com* with questions about editorial content.
Send mail to *cewebmaster@computoredge.com* with questions or comments about this Web site.

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Digital Dave

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

A reader's Wi-Fi network is so secure, he cannot log on!; a reader is dealing with a pesky malware problem; a reader needs help publishing a Web site built with FrontPage.

Dear Digital Dave,

OK, this is the typical kind of mess you can get into when you don't know how these machines work. I have a Windows XP computer, a Windows Vista laptop and also an iMac and iPhone. I'm hooked up by wire to one machine and have a wireless connection to the others. My wireless system is through Cox, and I have a Linksys 2.4GHz broadband router and cable modem.

Everything went well until one of our friend's boyfriends—a computer geek—decided to help me secure my system. We were in a hurry—typical—so he just typed in a bunch of stuff that I couldn't possibly follow and—boom—I now had a password. It seems, however, that the password he created used 26 alpha-numeric entries. While this is a bother, it was no big deal until I got to the Apple stuff.

When I try to log onto my network, I get asked for a password. The Apple system will not accept 26 entries, so it rejects my attempts. I'm stuck using a neighbor's unsecured system right now. My past attempts at getting help from my broadband provider have been as helpful as a heart attack. The "former" boyfriend is no longer a possible source of help. Any suggestions?

Jay Coffman
San Diego, Calif.

Dear Jay,

I'm going to assume that it was the wireless system (Wi-Fi) that the "boyfriend" made secure, although you didn't specify, it makes the most sense. What the "geek" did was access your router and put in a long passphrase for logging on to your Wi-Fi network. This prevents outsiders from using your network without supplying a passphrase—as you are now doing with your unsecured neighbor. Long passphrases are more secure. The problem and solution are in the wireless configuration of your Linksys router or the Mac.

Most likely he set the router to WPA or WPA2 type encryption. I think the Mac isn't accepting 26 characters because it is probably set up for WEP, which often has a fixed-length key and may not allow for a 26-character key. Try switching to WPA or WPA2 on the Mac—if there is an option to do so. If that's not the problem, then you may need to change the passphrase to

something shorter in the router.

The first thing you need to do is access your router. You should do this with the computer that's plugged directly (hard wired) into the router. Open any Web browser (Firefox, Opera, Internet Explorer, etc.) to access the router. Enter http://192.168.1.1 (the usual default address for Linksys routers) into the address line of the browser. You should get a logon screen. The usual login is "admin" or blank, with the password "admin."

I'm guessing the "boyfriend" may have also changed the password to the router. If you don't have the new password, then you will need to start all over again with a factory reset. There is usually a recessed button (it can be pushed only with a pen or small screwdriver) that will restore all the factory-default settings. If you can't get logged onto the router, then a reset should allow access with the mentioned logon and password.

Once you are into the administration program for the router, then you will be able reset the name (SSID) seen by Wi-Fi-capable devices, the type of security (use WPA, not WEP—it is crackable in three minutes using readily available tools), and the passphrase. Use a code for the passphrase that the Apple computer will accept. You will probably need to change the code in all of the other devices using Wi-Fi. Ultimately, the type of security and the passphrase need to match on all devices and the router.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

How do I get rid of the malware "ad.yieldmanager"? Ad-Aware and SpyBot won't do it. Everything else I tried doesn't work, either. SpyHunter says it can get rid of it, but it looks like a come-on to me.

Ralph Nebiker
San Diego, Calif.

Dear Ralph,

It appears that ad.yieldmanager is a particularly nasty spyware program. Once it gets into your system, it's extremely difficult to remove. I've located a couple of sites that may help.

The first link (*www.associatedcontent.com/article/1360506/how_to_remove_the_adyieldmanager_tracking.html?cat=15*) suggests a software program called Trend Micro HijackThis 2.0.2, which will clean up your system. It looks like a good product because first, it gets a high rating from CNET editors; second, it can be downloaded directly from CNET Download.com (*www.download.com/Trend-Micro-HijackThis/3000-8022_4-10227353.html*), one of the preferred download sites; and third, it's free. HijackThis works with your Registry, which is where the nefarious often hide instructions for restarting deleted programs. SpyHunter is a paid program with middling reviews.

If following the instructions in the above link doesn't work, you can find a more tedious, brute-force method at Answers.Yahoo.com (*answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081103003933AAftamQ*).

Some of the suggestions at the last link include turning off third-party cookies. Cookies are tiny files that a site will put on your computer so you will be recognized the next time you arrive. They are used by spyware for tracking, but they are also used for *your* convenience for legitimate reasons by many sites. For example, Jack tells me that the selected regional edition of *ComputorEdge* is stored in a cookie on your computer. Whenever you visit the site, the cookie is checked and loads the correct region automatically. If you turn off your cookies, you'll be forced to reselect the *ComputorEdge* region on each visit. Without cookies, you will lose your automatically displayed preferences at most of the sites that you regularly visit.

Follow all the cautions given in the examples and create a restore point (or at a minimum, a backup).

The best way to get spyware off your computer is to never let it on your computer in the first place. Avoid suspicious links, or too-good-to-be-true offers. Never click through the download warning (see Figure 1) without knowing what you are putting on your machine.

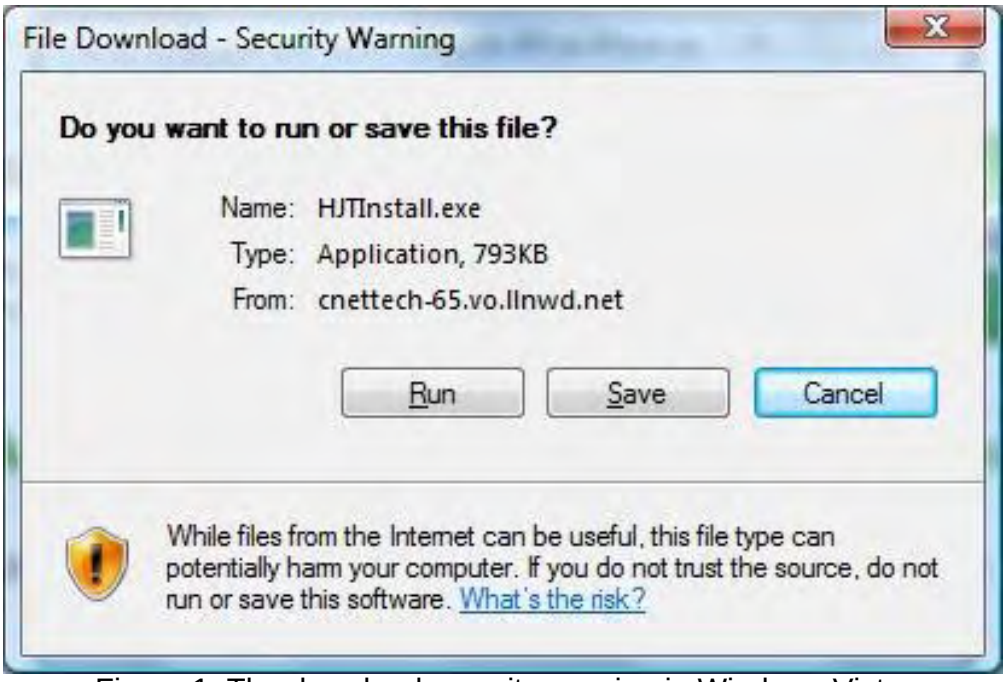

Figure 1. The download security warning in Windows Vista.

Most Web sites will be safe to visit until you allow something to be downloaded. Know who you can trust. If you're not sure, don't do it.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I used MS FrontPage to build my Web site on my PC, then published it to Roadrunner's Member Home Pages. Roadrunner is now implementing a new server to host its Member Home Pages, and members must move their home pages to the new server by the end of the year.

The problem is that FrontPage extensions will not be accepted on the new server. I tried their migration tool, but it scrambles my data and links. Another option is to rebuild my entire site

from scratch with any program but FrontPage. Of course, I'd rather not have to do that. I do have FTP access to the new server.

Is there a way to remove FrontPage extensions and publish my site?

Thanks Dave!

Phil Martin
San Diego, CA

Dear Phil,

While probably there are programs available specifically for converting your FrontPage coding, I'll give you a quick(?) and dirty method for exporting your Web pages to a new system. It's been many years since I've used FrontPage; I gave it up because of problems similar to yours.

FrontPage is more than just a Web page editor. It embeds bots in the code that can be read only by the FrontPage extensions loaded upon the Web server. While these bots can make it easier to design and post your Web pages, if you need to move to a server without the extension installed, you have a problem. The bots won't do their job.

Fortunately, all Web servers are required to deliver pure HTML and/or JavaScript to the standard Web browser. That means that all the extras, such as the FrontPage bots, have been converted and scripted out. This code (called source code), if copied into a new HTML file, saved as a text file with a .htm or .html extension, and uploaded to a new server, should display an exact replica of the original FrontPage work. You should also be able to load it into another program such as Adobe Dreamweaver and continue working on it.

When you have a Web page open in a browser, open either View/Source (or Page Source), or right-click on the page (not on an image) and select View Source. A text editor will open showing you the HTML code that's producing the page. Save this as the Web page file. Be sure to use the same filenames and extensions (.htm, .html) as are used by the links on your site. You can usually see these by hovering over a link.

You will need to methodically browse through each Web page (and frames, if there are any) to copy the source code, but ultimately you will have saved your entire site. I hope your site doesn't have too many pages. Once completed, you should be able to upload these files to your new server and have them run accurately, as long as you weren't using features of FrontPage that depend upon changing data at run-time.

I'm sure that there are readers who have done this before and probably have an easier method for converting from FrontPage. I would like to hear it.

If someone is just starting in Web design, I would advise avoiding FrontPage. There are many good Web design products that do not lock you into Microsoft and won't force you to learn HTML, CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), and JavaScript—although I think every good Web designer should be comfortable with all three in case you need to tweak the code.

Digital Dave

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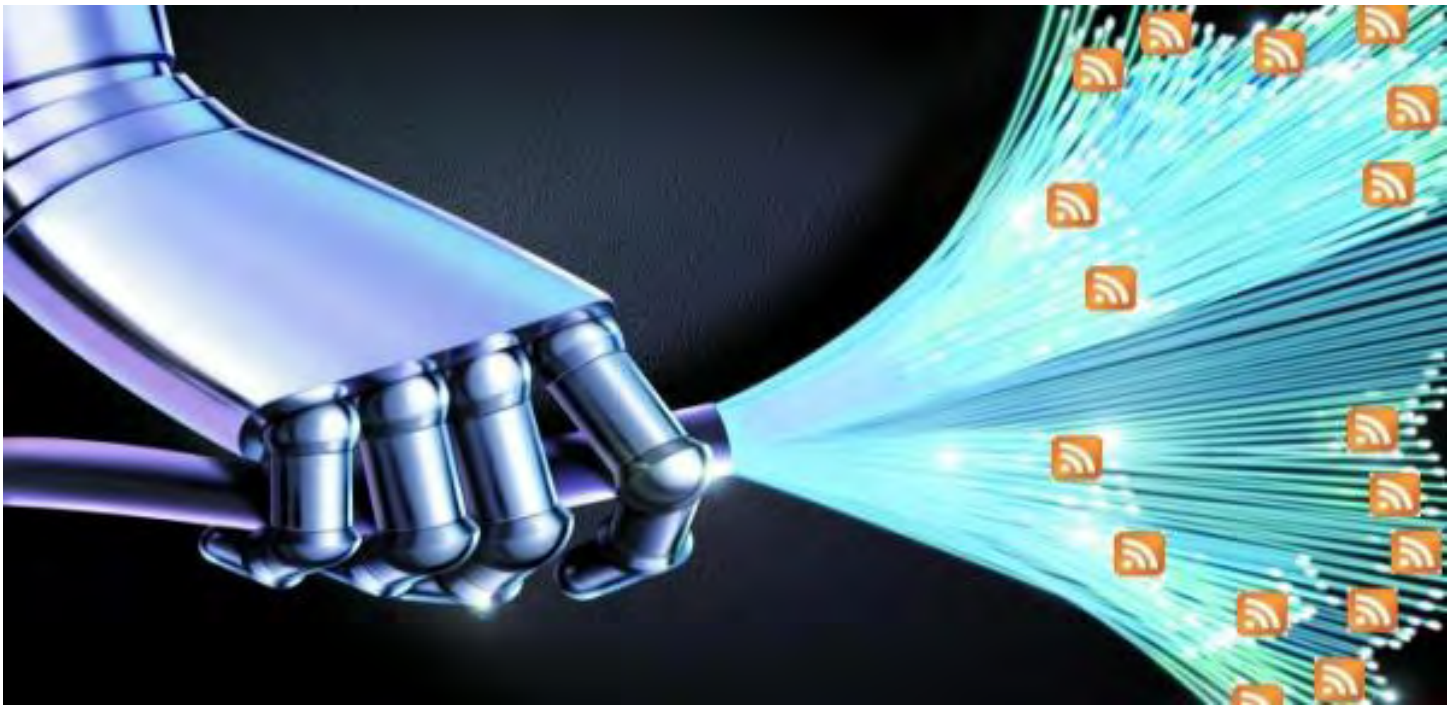

RSS on Your Web Site

“Share your site's updates quickly and painlessly.” by Michael J. Ross

> Web news junkies must sometimes wonder, "If only my computer could do this for me." Well, it can, if those sites offer up their content in RSS format. And you can do the same for your own site.

Some people use the Internet simply for checking their e-mail messages or visiting one or two favorite Web sites. But for the majority of "Netizens" out there, visiting dozens of sites every day is the norm. Admittedly, some of these sites are visited not because they offer fresh content updated daily, but rather because they offer a frequently used service, such as online banking. But these utility sites are certainly outnumbered by "discretionary" sites that serve up the latest news from the worlds of finance, politics, sports and more.

For all of us who hop from one well-worn site to another, it can easily become tedious and time-consuming to have to visit each one of these sites, determine what content we have not seen before, and filter out content on topics that are of no interest to us. Most if not all of these news junkies must sometimes wonder, "If only my computer could do this for me." Well, it can, if those favorite sites of yours are packaging up their content in RSS format and not just as Web pages. More of them are doing so all the time, and in this article we will discuss some ways that you can do the same for your own site.

But first, for the benefit of those readers who may be unfamiliar with RSS, let's consider what it is and how it can be spotted in the wild. When it first emerged on the scene in 1999, and during the following few years, RSS was an acronym for a couple of different names. But nowadays, just about everyone has agreed that it stands for "Really Simple Syndication." In basic terms, it is a standard and highly structured format for publishing online content, designed to be read by computer programs.

Just as a newswire service will distribute its journalists' contributions as "syndication," any Web site can syndicate its own news. This stream of content is known as an RSS feed. As a result of using a standardized form of organizing the content, each RSS feed is thereby made easily readable by Web-based and desktop applications, known as RSS readers or aggregators. Google Reader (*www.google.com/reader*) and BlogBridge (*www.blogbridge.com/*) are examples of each category, respectively. All newsreaders, including these two, allow you to specify all the sites whose RSS feeds you would like to subscribe to, and how you can filter and combine the content to suit your needs.

To determine if any one of your favorite sites is offered in RSS format, go to the site's home page and look for the standard RSS feed icon. It usually is located at the bottom of the home page or up in the right-hand corner, oftentimes close to the entry fields for searching the site or logging in.

Figure 1. RSS feed icon.

All of the major Web browsers—including Firefox (*www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/*), Opera (*www.opera.com/*), and Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7—will display the RSS icon in or near their address bars.

Major news sites, probably without exception, make their content available globally to all RSS users. You may be wondering if you could do the same, and what methods would be available for doing so. It depends upon the source of the content that you want to share with the world.

Borrowing and Blending

If you would like to leverage RSS feeds that already exist, you can use an application that mashes up the news feeds provided by other Web sites, thereby creating your own feed, which you can then syndicate from your own site. This approach offers several advantages: You do not have to invest the time and energy in developing brand-new content for your feed, and you also do not have to even learn the RSS format, for it to work in the RSS aggregators used by the people who subscribe to your feed. But this approach also has some drawbacks: You are completely dependent upon other sites for your feed's content, and there is the possibility that you might violate national or international copyright law if you inadvertently fail to credit sources appropriately.

Should you choose to take this approach, there are several available applications that you can use, including CaRP (*www.geckotribe.com/rss/carp/*), Feed Mix (*www.extralabs.net/*), Feed Combiner (*www.feedroll.com/feedcombiner/*), and Jawfish (*www.geckotribe.com/rss/jawfish/*). The prices and capabilities of these applications vary, and if none of them meet your needs, some online research should turn up alternatives.

If you wish to have an outside news feed displayed directly on your Web site, and you do not mind

limiting yourself to just a single feed (instead of a combination of feeds, as discussed above), then take a look at Feed to JavaScript (*feed2js.org/*) (Feed2JS). As the name implies, it is a JavaScript-based tool that displays the chosen feed's content anywhere on your Web pages, updates itself automatically, and allows you to customize the appearance of the feed's headlines.

Handcrafted with Care

If you would like to create your own content for your RSS feed, then you have a number of options. You can manually create the RSS file, or you can have the computer do the work for you—either using a desktop program or a Web-based service.

Assuming that you choose to build your news feed by hand, you will first want to learn the RSS format. It is based upon Extensible Markup Language (XML), which is also the basis for HyperText Markup Language (HTML), the format used by Web pages. To see an example of this format, go to the RSS feed for Slashdot (*rss.slashdot.org/Slashdot/slashdot*)—a top technical news site—and view the source within your browser (to do so, go to the View menu of your browser). At first glance, this particular news feed may appear quite complex and intimidating—especially to anyone unfamiliar with XML or HTML. Fortunately, the minimum required elements in a valid RSS feed are far less than what you will see in that Slashdot file, or in the RSS files of other major Web sites.

Consider a much simpler example:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1"?>
<rss version="2.0" xmlns:atom="http://www.w3.org/2005/Atom">
    <channel>
        <title>Sample Feed</title>
        <description>Your sample RSS feed</description>
        <link>http://www.example.com/</link>
        <webMaster>you@example.com (Your Name)</webMaster>
        <copyright>Copyright © 2009 you</copyright>
        <language>en-us</language>
        <lastBuildDate>Wed, 11 Feb 2009 09:35:00 PST</lastBuildDate>
        <managingEditor>you@example.com (Your Name)</managingEditor>
        <ttl>720</ttl>
        <atom:link href="http://www.example.com/RSS.
xml" rel="self" type="application/rss+xml" />
        <item>
            <title>First RSS Item</title>
            <description>
                Some text...
            </description>
            <guid>http://www.example.com/item_1.html</guid>
            <pubDate>Wed, 4 Feb 2009 00:00:00 PST</pubDate>
        </item>
    </channel>
</rss>
```

(Note that even though the format of this sample code is valid, the e-mail address you@example.com and the URL http://www.example.com/RSS.xml, are not valid, and are only used for illustrative purposes.)

An RSS file such as this sample one can be created using any plain text editor. You can even use a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, as long as you save the file as text, and not as a Word document.

If you create a feed file by hand, be sure to run it through an RSS validator, just to confirm that the file does not contain any formatting errors. One such online program is Feed Validator (*www.feedvalidator.org/*), which can handle feeds in RSS, Atom, and KML formats.

Delegate It to a Computer

But why go to the trouble of building an RSS file by hand, when a computer can do it all for you, faster and with less risk of introducing one or more errors in the XML code? As before, you have some options. If the content that you wish to syndicate is already located in files on your local computer, and you have the programming skills and the interest in automating the process of generating your RSS file, then you can always write a computer program to do that—just as I have done, using the programming language Perl (*www.perl.org/*), to create the RSS feed (*www.ross.ws/RSS/RSS.xml*) for my own site.

Most people, however, do not have the time or interest to automate the process themselves, and so for them it would be more appropriate to use a third-party program for creating the feed file. There are many such programs available, including RSS Editor (*www.rsseditor.net/*), RSSeditor/Win (*www.rss-info.com/en_rsseditor.html*), and Mozilla's RSS Editor (*rsseditor.mozdev.org/*). Speaking of Mozilla, its flagship Web browser, Firefox, can be turned into an RSS editor through the use of an add-on (*addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/344*).

No matter which approach you want to take in creating an RSS feed for your own Web site, after you have uploaded the file to whatever remote server is hosting your site, be sure to include a link to it on your home page—otherwise the online world may never discover your personal news feed.

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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RSS with Internet Explorer Is Worth Exploring

"Microsoft has done something right." by Jack Dunning

> RSS has not yet been widely adopted by users, although there is extensive support for it on many Web sites, and IE makes it easy. Perhaps it's waiting for a "killer app."

The purpose of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is to provide an active method for viewing the latest news from selected Web sites. It is active because the user's feed-reading program reaches out on a regular schedule collecting the latest news from the subscribed sites. Some of the reading programs, as they query the site, pop up little windows on the screen showing the feed topics and summaries. Each topic will include a link to the subject Web article. This can be a great way to collect a list of articles in particular areas of interest.

While RSS has been around quite a while (it was a number of years ago when *ComputorEdge* added its RSS feed), it has yet to become wildly popular. One of the reasons is that, when first introduced another piece of software, the RSS feed reader, needed to be added to the computer system. Many people just didn't bother. Other people found the news item pop-ups annoying. They appeared on the screen at random times and rarely stayed up long enough to actually read them. Although *ComputorEdge* has had its RSS feed for many years, only a very small percentage of our readers use it.

On our Web site, generating the feed is no extra work. It is automatically built with each issue, using the same data as the Table of Contents and the weekly e-mails. Therefore, even if only one person were subscribing to the feed, we would continue to offer it.

Firefox and Internet Explorer RSS Support

One of the changes in the last few years is that many of the browsers have added support for RSS feeds. You no longer need to install a separate software program to view and subscribe to a feed. In most browsers, if you surf to a page that includes RSS feeds, you will see the RSS logo (see image at the left) somewhere is the task bar. If it doesn't appear in your browser (at least for Firefox or Internet Explorer), then it can generally be added through your task bar tailoring options for adding/ removing icons. In Firefox, it will appear at the end of the address window (see Figure 1). In Internet Explorer, it appears as a separate icon in the task bar (see Figure 2). (Google Chrome does not support RSS and I haven't checked Opera, Safari or any of the other browsers—although they probably do support feeds. I would be interested to hear from anyone using their favorite browser for RSS feeds.)

Figure 1. The RSS icon appears at the end of the address window in Firefox.

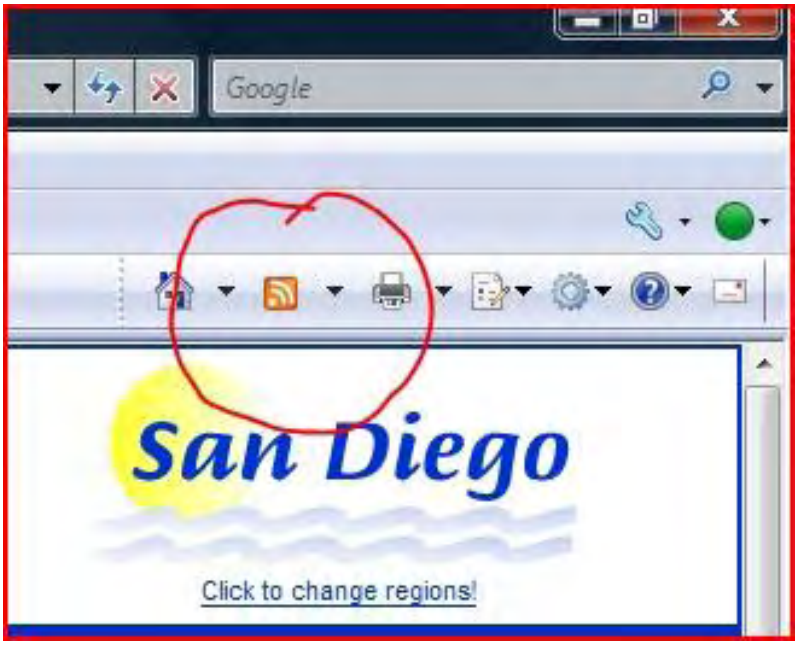

Figure 2. The RSS icon is a separate icon on the Internet Explorer task bar.

If you don't see the icon in Firefox, or it is dimmed in Internet Explorer, that means the Web page is not actively offering a feed. In order for the page to signal the browser that there is a feed, special code needs to be added to the Web page.

Note for Web Developers: To signal the browser that you have an RSS feed and activate the icon, you need to embed code similar to the following line in the <HEAD> section of the Web page:

```
<link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml" title="RSS"
     href="http://webserver.computoredge.com/rss/rss.mvc?zone=SD">
```

Of course the address for href would be the location of your RSS file.

For RSS Reading, Internet Explorer Excels

I'm not a huge fan of Internet Explorer, but every once in a while there is a feature that makes you believe that Microsoft is doing something right. For viewing and saving RSS feeds, Internet Explorer wipes Firefox off the map.

In Firefox, you can read and subscribe to the RSS feeds by clicking on the icon. The feed will open with all of the provided information. If you subscribe to the feed, a bookmark will be added to the Bookmarks menu (or task bar if selected). However, when you open the feed, you will get only the information in the current feed. Whether there are past articles to review will depend upon whether they still appear in the feed. The *ComputorEdge* RSS feed lists only the current Table of Contents. Once Friday arrives, the past articles are no longer available via RSS, unless your RSS reader saves the past listings. Firefox is great for reading the current RSS feed, but not much else.

The RSS subscription service in Internet Explorer is meant for capturing and saving the news summaries for future reference—at least, for a reasonable period of time. IE has sorting and search capabilities that

make it much easier to find a particular article. When you open the RSS feed in IE by clicking the active logo, you will see a screen similar to Figure 3. If you have not yet subscribed to the feed, you will be given the option at the top of the page and, since it is new, you will see only the latest feed entries. However, if you've previously subscribed to a feed, you may have numerous expired articles to peruse.

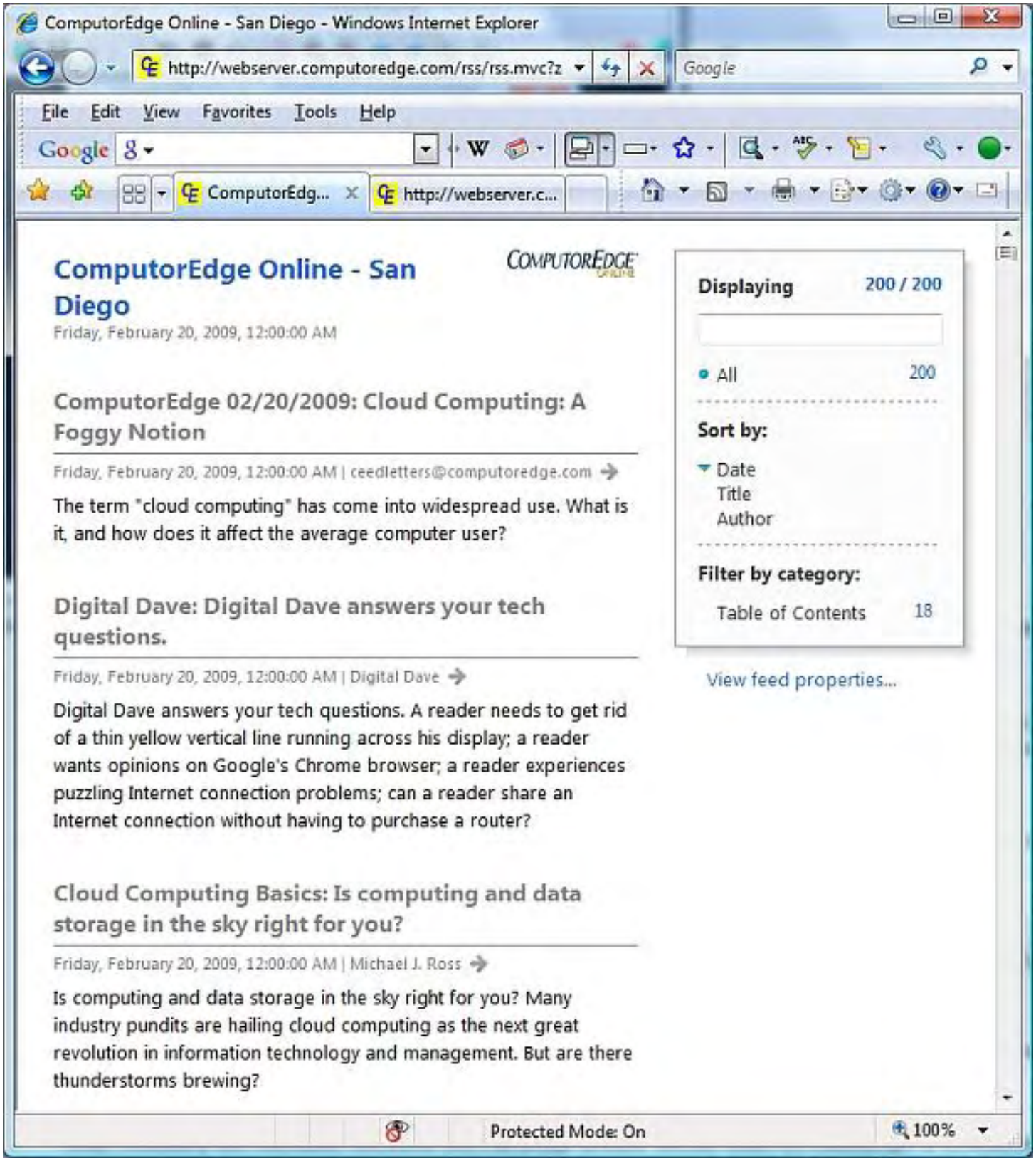

Figure 3. RSS feed window in Internet Explorer.

In the case of Figure 3, the box on the right shows that it's holding 200 items from the **ComputorEdge** feed. That particular listing of articles goes back for months. That alone would be useful—if you don't mind scrolling down a long list—but that could be tedious if you're looking for a specific issue topic. In this case the Table of Contents for each issue has been been marked with a category called "Table of Contents," as shown in the bottom of the box at the right. By clicking the Table of Contents link, the list is filtered and only those items linking to the Table on Contents pages with the accompanying issue summary information will appear (see Figure 4).

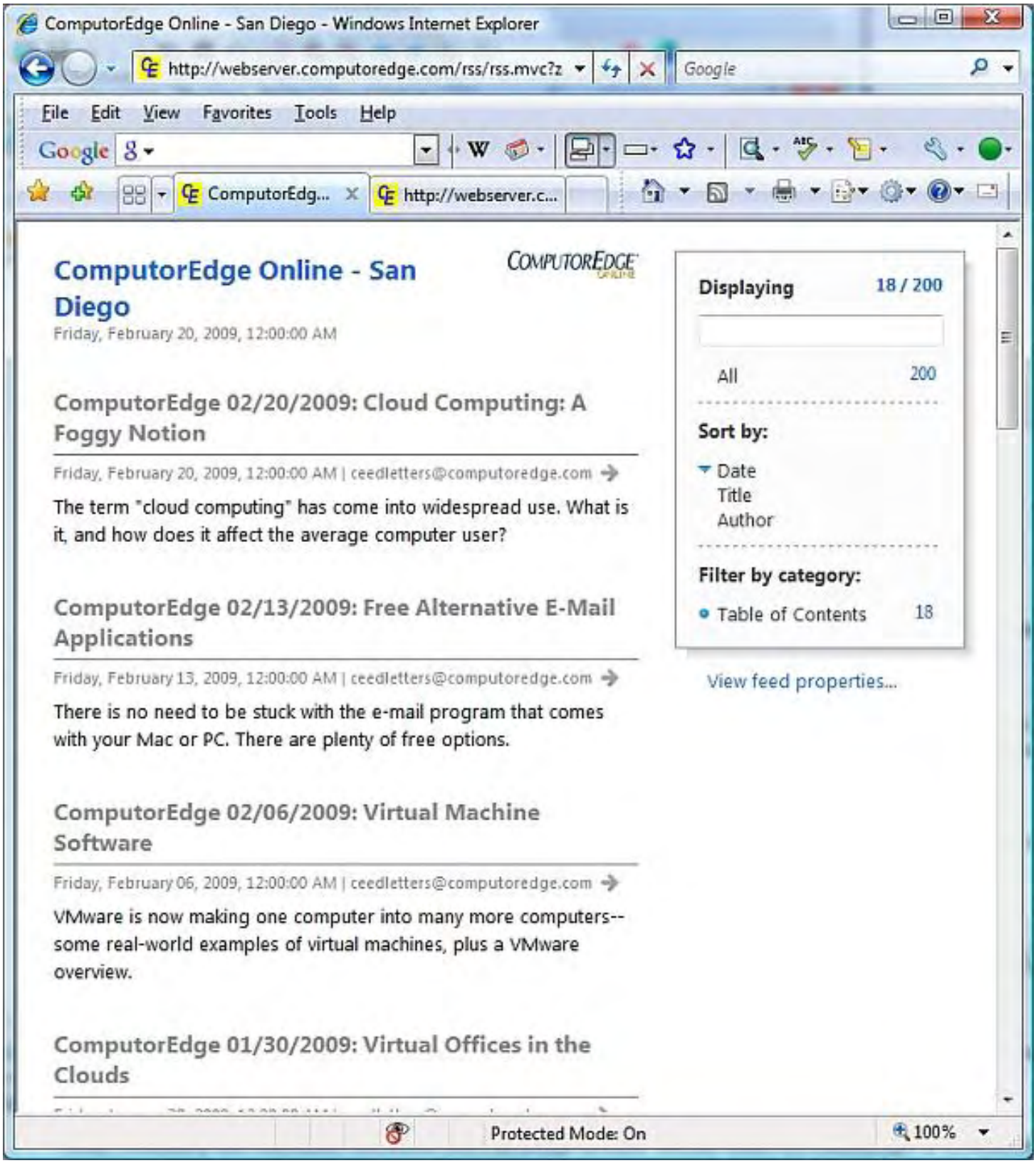

Figure 4. The Table of Contents page listings in Internet Explorer's RSS feed feature.

You can modify the Feed Properties by clicking the "View Feed Properties..." link below the navigation box on the right (see Figure 6). (Or you can go directly to the little gold star on the left side of the task bar, click for the menu, right-click on the selected feed, and pick properties from the pop-up menu.)

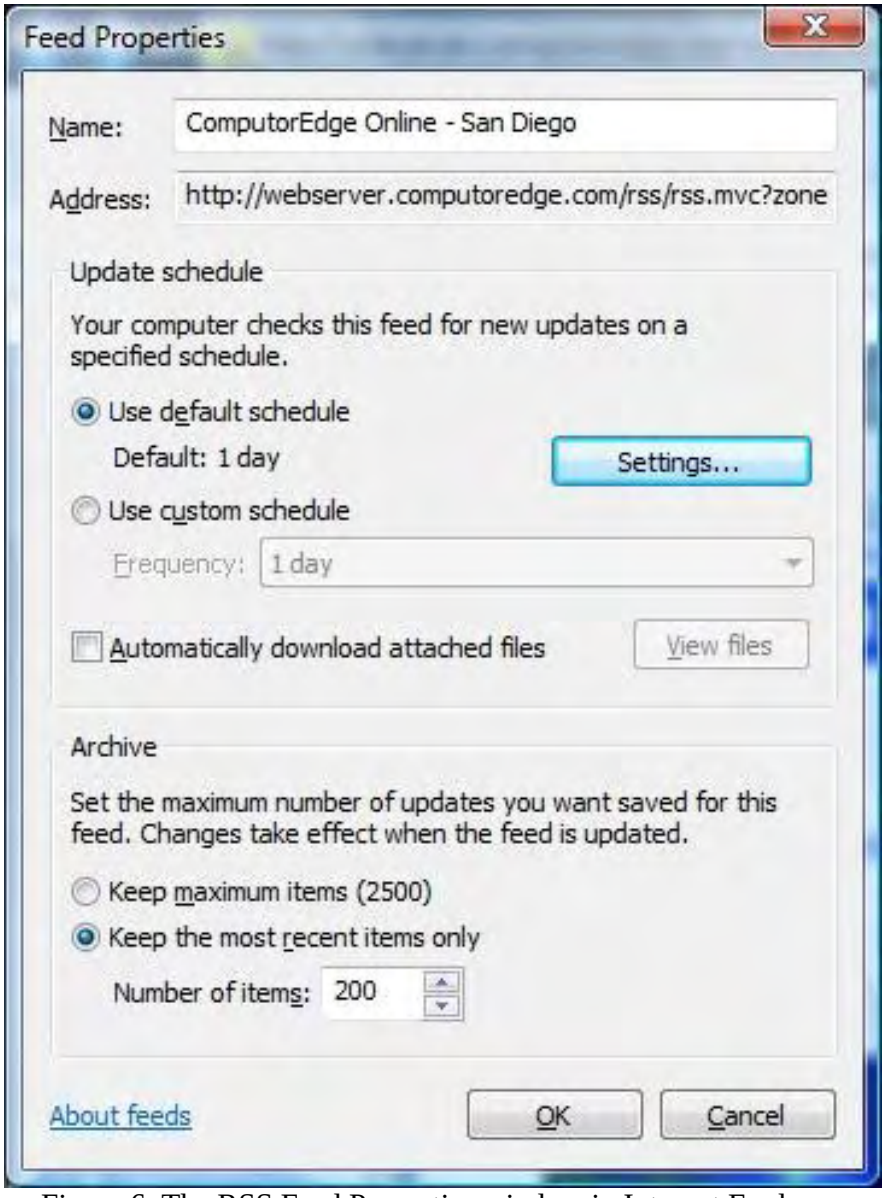

Figure 6. The RSS Feed Properties window in Internet Explorer.

From the Feed Properties window, you can tell Internet Explorer how often you want the feed to be checked for updates by clicking the "Setting..." button. The frequency should be greater than the rate at which the feed changes. In the case of *ComputorEdge* that could be weekly—or less. I'm assuming that Internet Explorer needs to be running for this to work. Also, you can designate how many listings will be saved by Internet Explorer. If you designated the maximum (2,500), that would be years of *ComputorEdge* issues.

The Future of RSS

If you use Internet Explorer as your Web browser, then the RSS feed feature could be a compelling reason to stick with it. If there is a site that offers regular news via RSS, then you will be able to collect the articles and sort through them at a later date. If you're a Firefox user, then I would suggest that you use a

third-party reader such as Google, Yahoo, or one of the many free RSS reader programs available. Firefox will connect directly to any of those applications—as will Internet Explorer—when you initially subscribe to the feed.

Whether the use of RSS feeds will grow over time is an open question. RSS has not yet been widely adopted by users, although there is extensive support for it on many Web sites. Perhaps it's just a matter of time until people add it to their own bag of Web tools. Its availability won't go away because, for most Web sites, it's not much extra work—if any. Maybe all that's needed is the killer application that uses RSS as its medium.

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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Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

"Shortcuts and Junctions" by Jack Dunning

A reader's frustration with permissions and file access in Windows Vista leads to a discussion of how shortcuts and junctions work in Vista.

I've been a reader of ComputorEdge for a number of years. Several months ago, I upgraded to Windows Vista Business edition from XP, SP 3. Your column on Vista Tips and Tricks has been extremely helpful.

Now to get to the point, I'm tired of Vista not letting me have access to all, and I mean all *files on my computer. I'm the only person who uses this computer, and I want access to everything at all times without going through some sort of guessing game on which permissions I have to give to the three "users": Everyone, System and John. Tonight, for instance, I was transferring some files to my BlackBerry and somehow stumbled onto a folder called Temp located deep in C:*bckslsh*John*bckslsh*Documents and Settings. I can't get there. I've tried to change permissions, etc., but that doesn't work.*

How can I get access to all my files without this aggravation?

Thanks again for your column and your help.

John W. Smith III
Englewood, CO

One of the reason that Windows Vista can be confusing is because a few things needed to be done to keep it compatible with Windows XP. There are many Windows programs that were written for XP with the file structure hard-coded into them. The Documents and Settings folder is standard on XP systems, but does not exist in Vista. However, if you are running one of those programs or working with a device that is looking for a Documents and Settings folder, then Vista needs a way to deal with it.

Windows Vista has solved this problem with pointers called junctions. While a junction may appear to be a folder, as in Documents and Settings, it is actually a shortcut aimed at another Vista folder—in this case the Users folder. Anytime a program needs something in the Documents and Settings folder, Vista will look in the Users folder.

You don't want to delete or remove anything that you may stumble across via a junction. That is why Vista doesn't allow you to get access by changing permissions. There are numerous junctions in Vista that are used for a variety of purposes. Most commonly they act as a type of shortcut allowing you to find certain

files without extensive searches.

If you want to view junctions, open the Command Prompt in administrator's mode. (Type "command" in the Start Search field of the Start menu, right-click Command Prompt, and select "Run as administrator.") Once you have opened the command window, change to the root directory with the "cd *bckslsh*" command. Enter "dir /a" as shown in Figure 1.

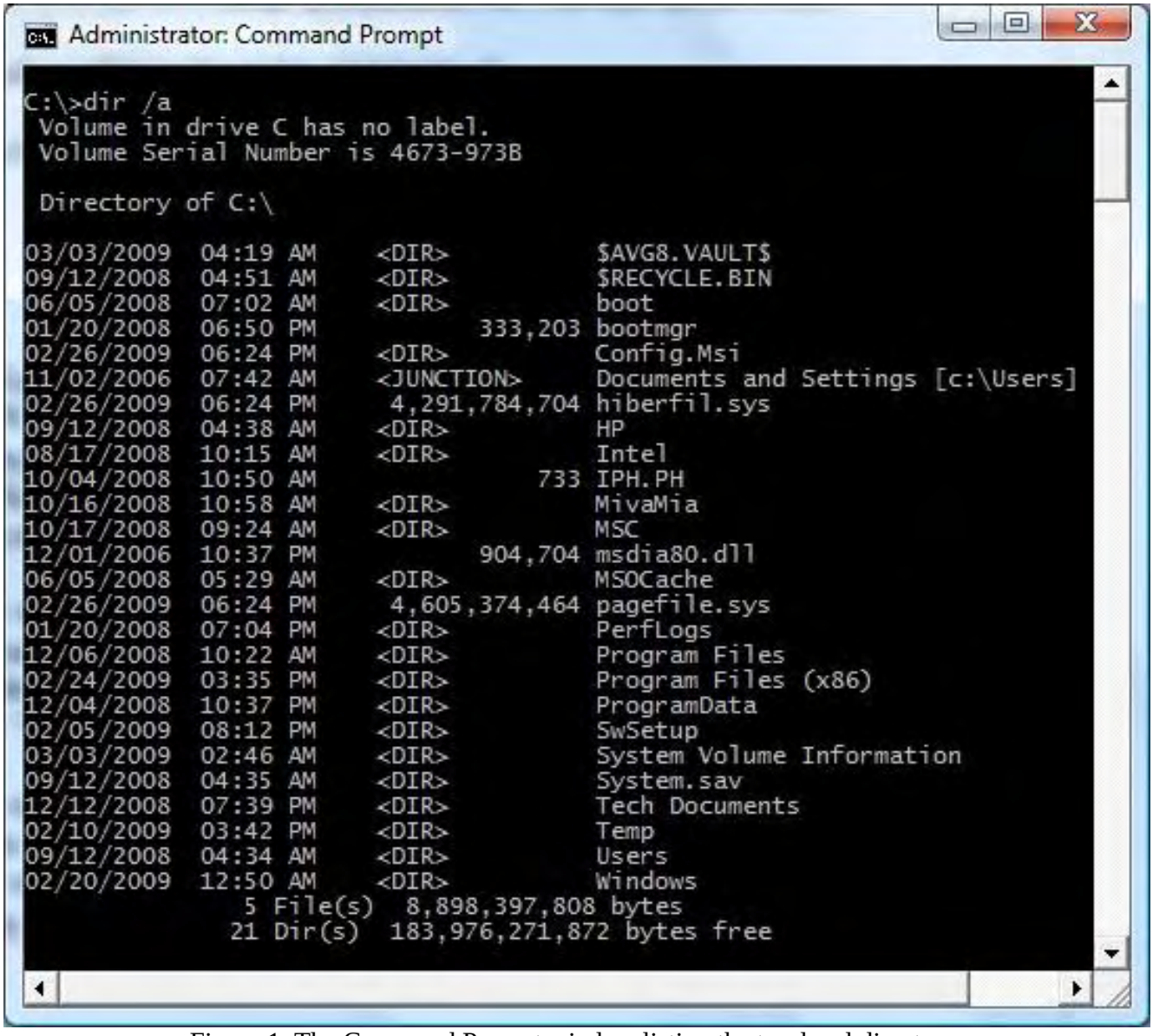

Figure 1. The Command Prompt window listing the top-level directory.

You will note the Documents and Settings folder is called a <JUNCTION> and shows that it is pointed at [c:*bckslsh*Users]. This is how you can identify junctions and which folder is the true destination. To see more junctions, enter "cd users*bckslsh*default" and "dir /al" to list only the junctions, as shown in Figure 2. You may substitute your user name for "default" to see the junctions associated with your login name. Use "cd *bckslsh*" to move to the top level and "cd .." to move up one level. The command prompt will also accept the slash (/) in place of the backslash (*bckslsh*) as is done in Linux.

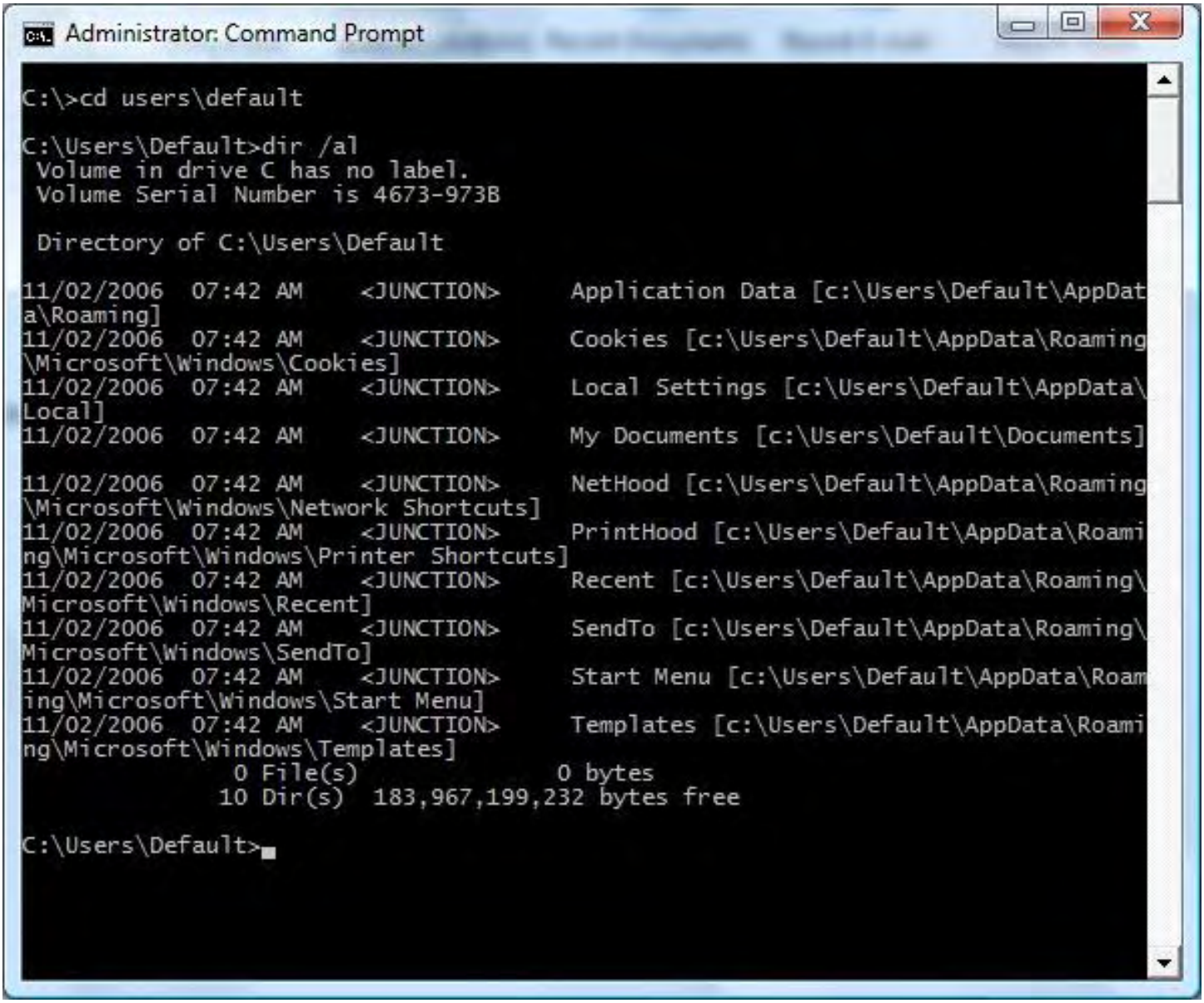

Figure 2. The Command Prompt window listing junctions in the "c:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*Default*bckslsh*" folder.

The names of these junctions are familiar and commonly used throughout Vista. If you want to see the files related to the junction, you will need to access the target directory (folder) path listed at the right. In many of those directories, there may be more familiar junctions—with new paths to the file locations.

The concept of using pointing techniques is fundamental to navigating Vista. Whether it is hidden in junctions or is done openly with shortcuts, there always seems to be multiple ways to get to files. Usually, once they are loaded onto the computer, files and programs stay in one place. If they need to be used by another program, then a pointer is created to their location. With some programs it may be difficult to find a file, even though you can use it through a program.

For example, if you use iTunes to play music from your iPod, there may only be a link to where the music is located on the iPod. Even though you're playing the iPod music on your computer, the music file may remain on the iPod. If you unplug the iPod, the music will not be accessible. iTunes is merely pointing to the external device. If you want to keep the music available, it needs to be copied to the computer hard drive—usually with an import command. Using a mouse drag to copy may only create shortcuts on the

computer.

Since the concept of the shortcuts and junctions are so commonly used in Vista, you may be fooled into thinking that you have duplicate copies of files in different folders. However, deleting a file in one folder may delete it in both because both views are actually pointing to the same file in the same folder. Always test and check both folder views with a disposable file before you do a mass deletion. Otherwise you may be deleting your only originals.

While this may seem convoluted, the techniques used in Windows Vista are common to programming computers. In Linux it is commonly called a link when one directory points to another directory where the files are located. This resolves the problems with different directory names being used on different systems, plus it allows files to reside in the appropriate common directory without duplication.

Windows Vista makes extensive use of shortcuts for navigating the file system, even adding shortcuts called "Favorite Links" to Windows Explorer. While many people are annoyed by this type of modification to Windows Explorer, they can be a great help once you know what they are and how to use them. I'll dig into that a little more next week.

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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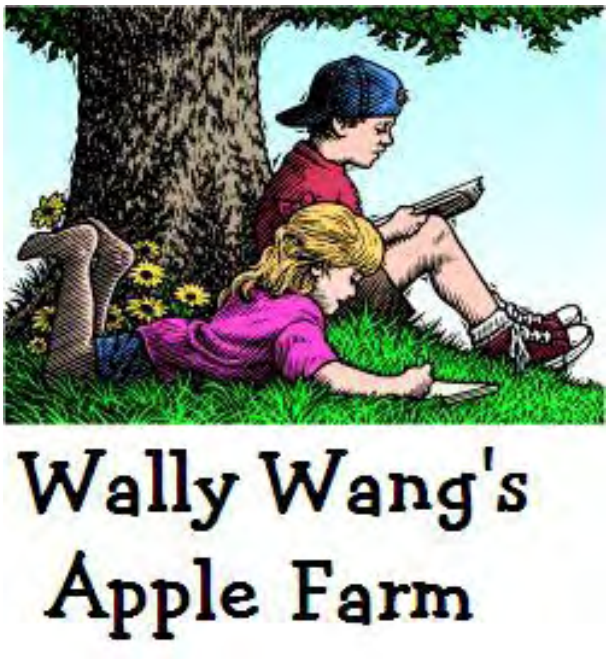

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“RSS Feeds and the Mac” by Wally Wang

Wally looks at retrieving RSS feeds through Safari or Mail. Also, a look at HexWar's war game, and a tip on starting up your favorite programs automatically.

If you like reading the latest news, you may not want to keep visiting your favorite Web site over and over again. As a more convenient alternative, sign up for a Web site's RSS (Really Simple Syndication, one of many definitions for this acronym) feeds. An RSS feed simply provides you with a list of the latest articles from a Web site. Now instead of visiting that site, you can just skim through your RSS feeds on your computer to catch up with the latest news.

There are two common ways to retrieve RSS feeds: through Safari or Mail. With Safari, you're essentially bookmarking a page of RSS feeds. Whenever an RSS feed gets new articles, Safari's bookmark displays a number identifying all the new articles available.

To find the RSS feed of a Web site, just search in your favorite search engine (such as Google) and look for "CNN RSS Feeds" (substituting "CNN" for the name of your favorite Web site). Remember, not all Web sites offer RSS feeds.

Click on the link to display the Web page containing the RSS feeds, and then bookmark that page. Now whenever you want to check if your favorite Web site has something new to read, view your bookmark and you'll see the number of new articles appearing in parentheses.

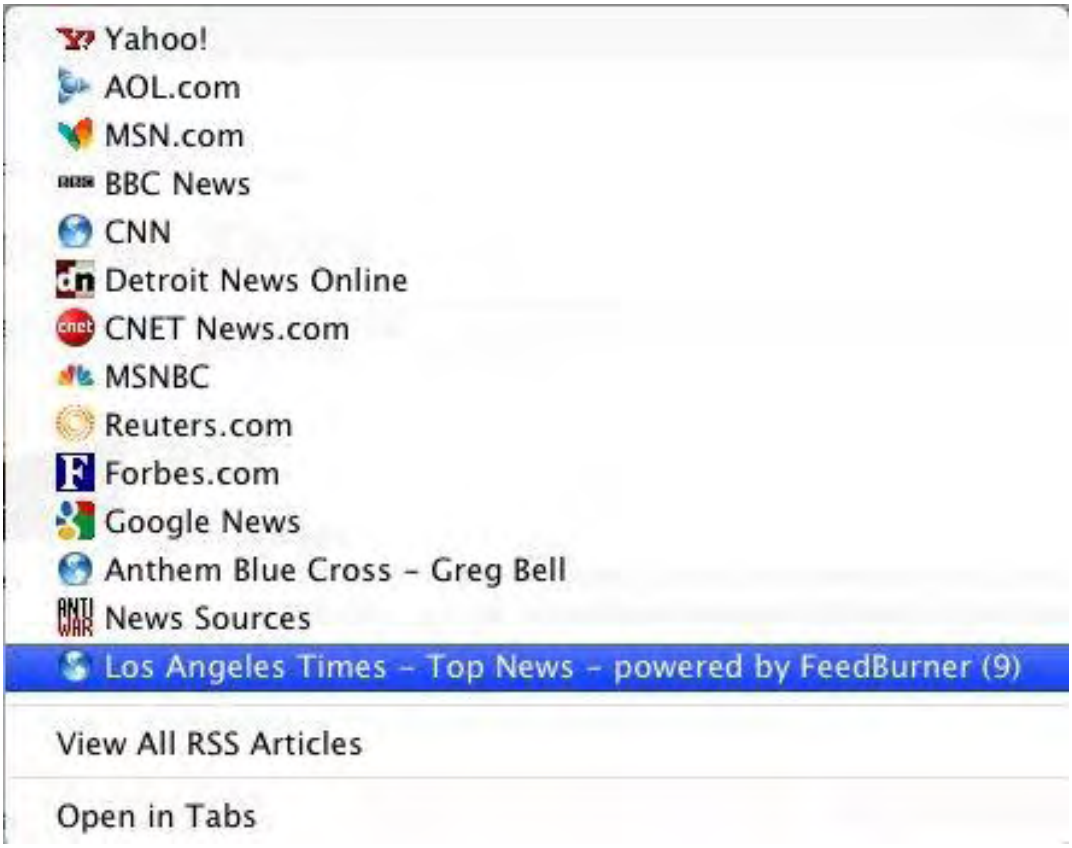

Figure 1. The number of new articles appears in a bookmark of an RSS feed.

A second way to retrieve RSS feeds is through the Mail program. Just load Mail and from the File menu choose Add RSS Feeds. This displays a dialog where you can select the RSS feeds you want to retrieve. Selecting one or more feeds now displays those feeds as separate messages in the Mail window.

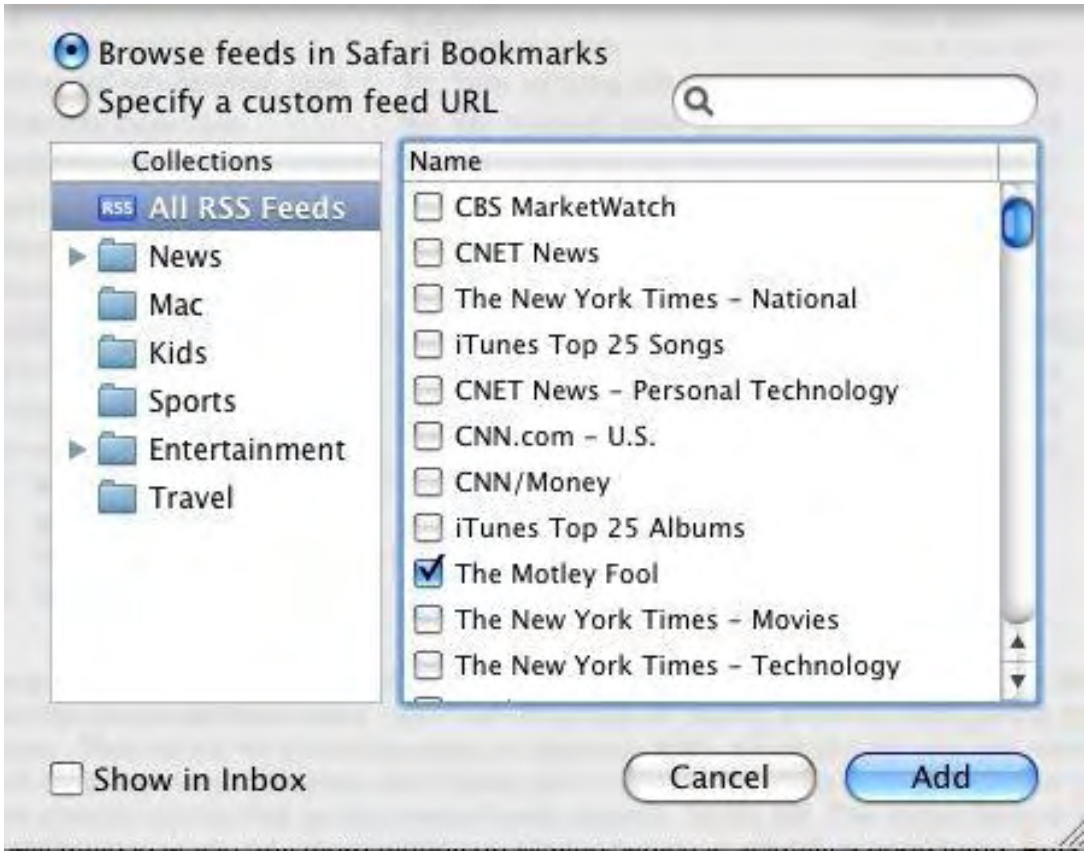

Figure 2. Retrieving RSS feeds in Mail.

* * *

Back before the days of video games, many people enjoyed playing paper war games that involved a printed map overlaid with hexagons, and cardboard counters that represented anything from infantry divisions and airplanes to battleships or dragons.

Although today's video games allow real-time action against computer-controlled opponents, many people still enjoy the old-fashioned paper wargames, since their turn-based play forces you to think rather than merely react with the best eye-hand coordination.

Such paper war games still exist from Decision Games (*www.decisiongames.com*), but buying these games typically means trying to find an opponent to play against. To solve this problem, a company called HexWar (*www.hexwar.com*) has come to the rescue.

Figure 3. HexWar lets you play war games online against multiple human opponents.

HexWar lets you choose from a variety of war games, from the Civil War to World War II. Instead of pushing cardboard counters around on a paper map, you get to push counters on a computer map. Even better, with so many people subscribing to HexWar, you're sure to find an opponent to play against, whether in the next state or in another country.

One unique feature of HexWar is that if you play multiple games, you may soon lose track of which pieces your opponent has moved. To refresh your memory, each game lets you play back the past moves so you can see what your opponent has done. By playing against human opponents, you'll always be challenged by the different playing styles that a computer opponent can never match.

Playing a game in HexWar is like playing a chess game by mail. You don't have to be playing in real-time. Instead, you can make a move, wait until your opponent logs in and makes his move, and then you can take your time making your next move.

Originally, HexWar created its war games using Visual Basic 6.0, which meant that only Windows users could play their games. As Keith Martin-Smith, the gamemaster of HexWar says, "We started with Visual

Basic 6.0 as it seemed a very good idea at the time. It could do almost everything we wanted it to do and [we] could buy off-the-shelf controls for things it could not. It gave us rapid development and low costs, and for a small business that was a winner."

The problem with Visual Basic 6.0 was that Microsoft stopped developing it and switched to VB.Net, which dramatically changed the Visual Basic language. Another problem with Visual Basic 6.0 was that it created only Windows programs.

Keith says, "We moved to REALbasic (*www.realsoftware.com*) for a number of reasons. I always knew that VB 6.0 was a dead duck and did not have a long-term future. I was tired of Microsoft DLL hell whenever [a] user's installation hit problems."

(DLL hell is a term coined by programmers, which occurs when every program installs a different version of a DLL file on a computer. Programs that rely on one version of a DLL file often refuse to work with a newer version of that same DLL file, which is one reason why Windows programs can be so fragile and crash-prone.)

To keep HexWar up to date, Keith and his team of programmers had a choice. They could update their Visual Basic 6.0 program to the latest VB.Net. Or they could update their program to REALbasic.

After testing, they realized that not only was it easier to switch to REALbasic than VB.Net, but REALbasic also gave them the chance to create both a Macintosh and Windows version of their programs without any additional work.

"The last point was decisive," Keith said. "As a small business, if we can get 10 percent extra customers for 1 percent extra effort, that's a major improvement in cash flow and profitability."

Despite starting as a Windows-only program, HexWar now expects that Macintosh users will make up 15 percent of its customer base by 2009, and that number will likely continue to grow.

When asked about his company's recent change from Visual Basic 6.0 to REALbasic, Keith gave these highlights:

• Creating Macintosh versions of their programs takes almost zero extra effort.
• The IDE (Integrated Development Editor) and debugger are excellent.
• The graphics capability (2-D) is excellent for the strategy type of games. We can do so much more than we ever could with Visual Basic.
• We use Monkey Bread Software Plug-Ins (*www.monkeybreadsoftware.de*), and so far they have filled every gap in our needs.
• I love the fact that I can work on a PC (Windows Vista), and run, test and build a Macintosh application.

To learn more about HexWar and its online war-game community, drop by the Web site and play a trial game. After seeing the games in action on your computer (Windows or Macintosh), you'll see the power of REALbasic. Now imagine what your good idea could look like running as a Windows and Macintosh program that you could sell to others.

* * *

If the first thing you do every time you turn on your Macintosh is check your e-mail or run any other

program, here's a shortcut. Rather than turn on your Macintosh and then load your favorite program, why not make your favorite program start up automatically?

Here's what you need to do. Click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences. When a Preferences dialog appears, click the Accounts icon under the System group.

Click on your account in the left panel and then click the Login Items tab. This displays a list of programs that start up automatically every time you turn on your Macintosh.

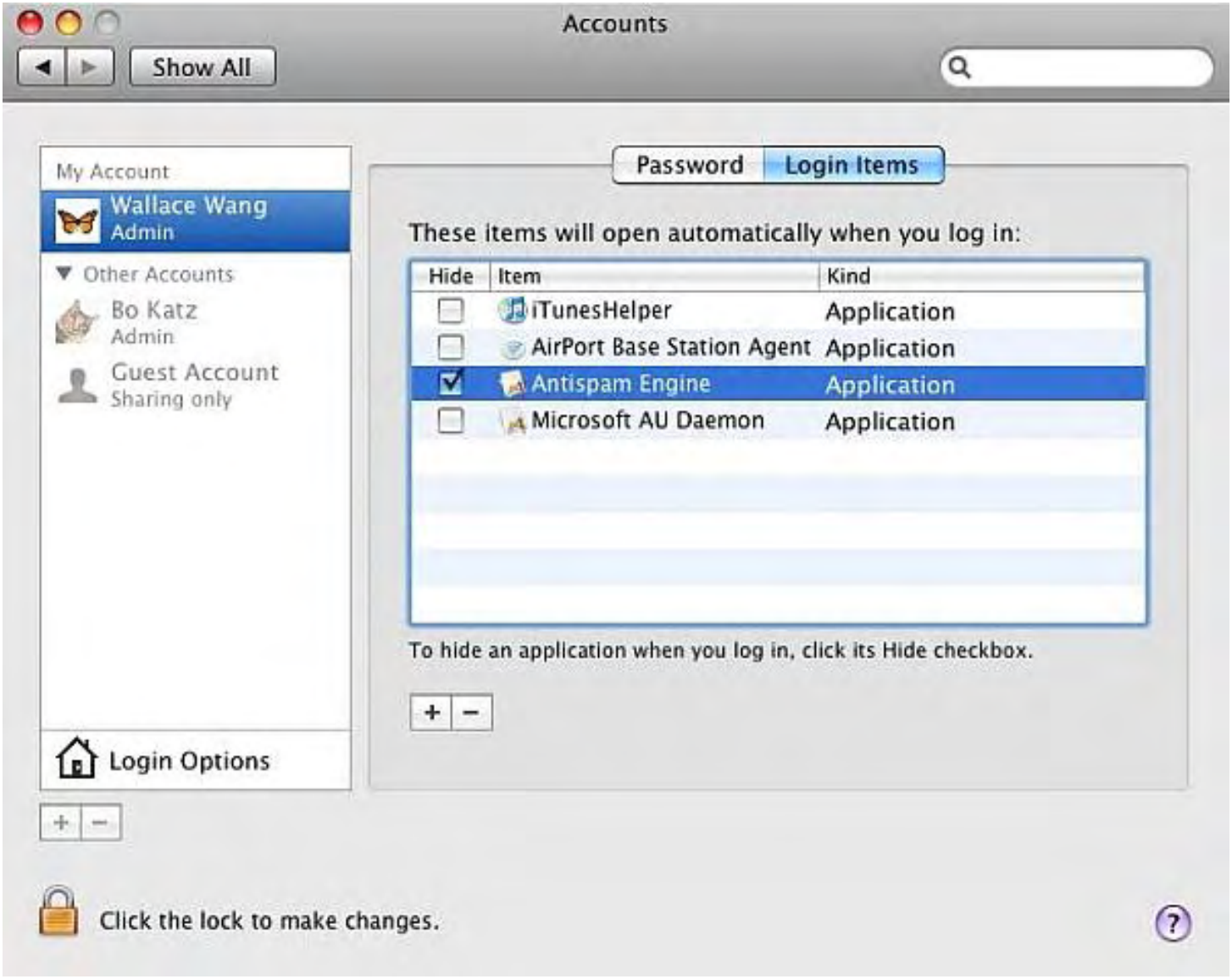

Figure 4. The Login Items tab lists all startup programs for your chosen account.

Click on a program in this list and click the minus sign icon to keep that program from starting automatically. Or click the plus sign icon and when a dialog sheet drops down, and dig through your folders until you can find and click on the program you want to load automatically.

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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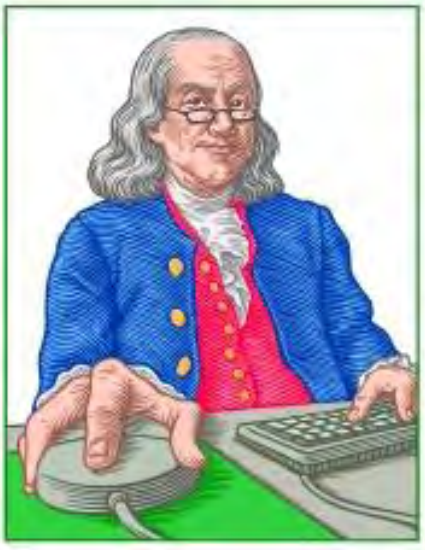

Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

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

A tip on key combinations that will help you move, edit and delete quickly on the command line.

Keys for Speed at the Command Prompt

Most of us, when we first started using the Linux command prompt, tended to use the cursor keys to move back and forth along the lines we typed, or backspace (delete) to change/erase our commands/errors. We learned about the history by accidentally hitting the up arrow. However, there are key combinations that will help us move, edit and delete quickly on the command line. (These commands are for the bash shell by default, same as Emacs. If they differ from other shells, please let us know.)

• Beginning to End of the Line—and Back

To jump to the beginning of the line, hold down the Ctrl key and hit "a" (Ctrl-a). Want to go back to the end? Use Ctrl-e.

• One Word at a Time

Want to move back one word? Use Esc-b. (On some systems, it may be the Alt key.) To reverse course, Esc-f.

To delete the last word before the cursor, Ctrl-w. (This is really a cut, which copies the word into memory. If the cursor is in the middle of a word, the command cuts all the letters up to the next space on the left.) If you continue, each word is added to the memory string—as long as you don't move the cursor in between. Use Ctrl-y to bring the string back.

• Take a Chunk

Move the cursor to the cutting point on the line and use Ctrl-u to remove everything before the cursor. Use Ctrl-y to bring it back. Use Ctrl-k to remove everything after the cursor.

• Keystroke History

If you make a mistake or merely want to go back and admire the keystrokes, use Ctrl-_. (That's the key with the hyphen "-" and the underline mark "_". It's not necessary to hold down the Shift key. The result is the same.)

If you will be doing much command prompt work, you will want to learn these key combinations. These are the same commands that are used in Emacs. If they don't work, try:

```
$ set -o emacs
```

If you prefer to use the vi commands:

```
$ set -o vi
```

* * *

Looking for More Linux 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 ComputorTutor Does Visual Basic for Applications (VBA)

"A Look at VBA's Toolbox" by Rob Spahitz

This week we'll focus on each of the items in VBA's toolbox and see how to use them. This will help us as we move forward toward the full VB tool for creating custom applications.

Well, this is not really a new topic. We've done Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) before. This week we'll focus on each of the items in the toolbox and see how to use them. This will help us as we move forward toward the full VB tool for creating custom applications rather than trying to use something such as Access to create an application.

Although I'm going to explore this through Access 2003, most of the tools will be the same in Excel, Word, Access 2007 and even Outlook!

So open up Access and create a blank database called ToolTest. Proceed to the Forms area so we have a place to use our tools, and add a new form in Design View and save it with the name frmTestTools. (If you're using Excel or another VBA-supported application, press Alt-F11, then Insert/UserForm.) You should see something similar to Figure 1.

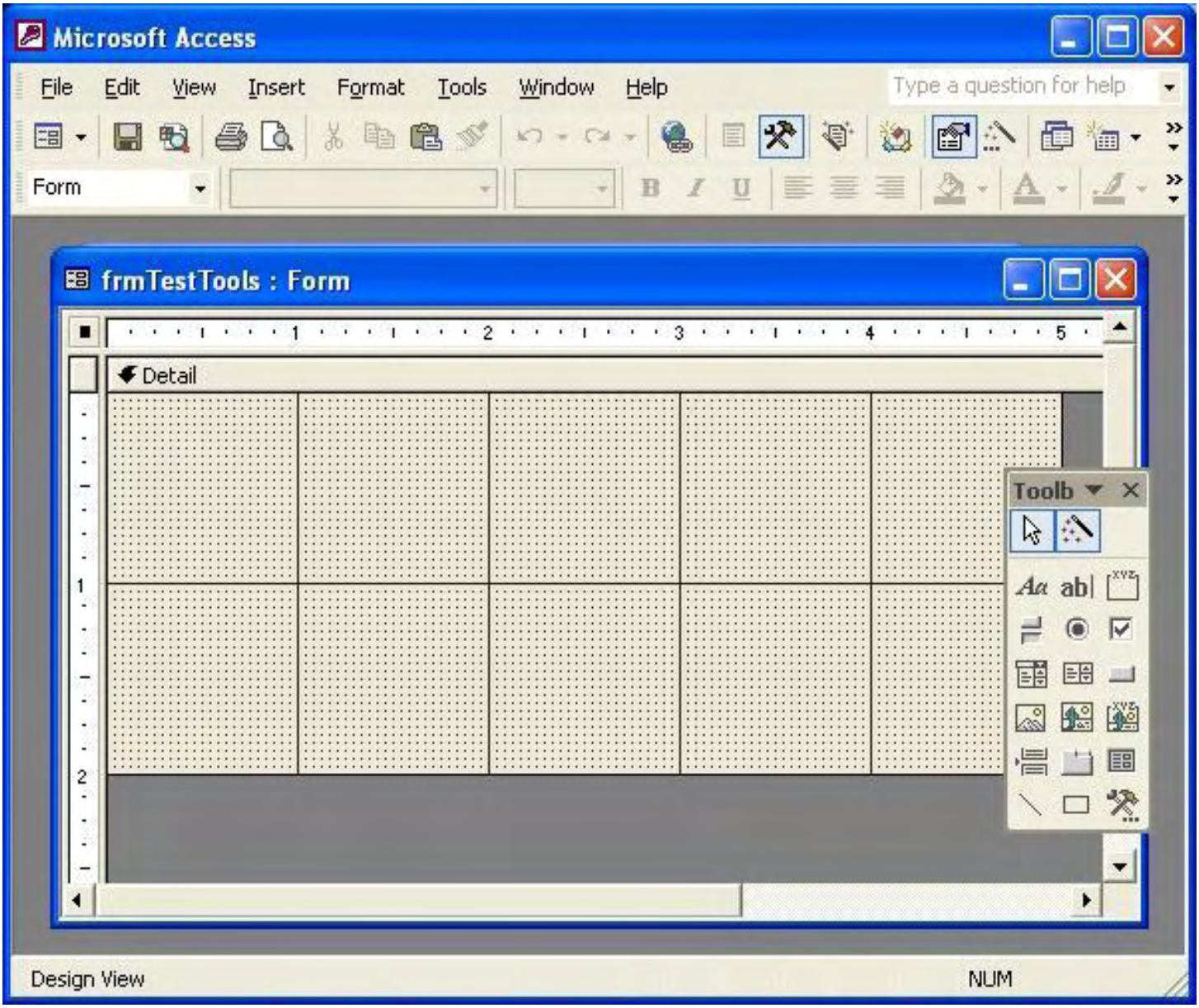

Figure 1. Forms and Tools.

Since our focus is VBA, we'll start adding tools and seeing how VBA can use them.

As seen several columns back, the Access toolbox looks like Figure 2.

Figure 2. Access Toolbox.

Labels

Click on the first item below the arrow, the Aa, then click near the top-left corner of the form to add a label. With Access, when you add a label, you should also add some text or Access assumes you did not really want the label. So add something like "test."

So how is that useful? In Access, there's not much you can do with it, but in VBA you can make it do lots of things, like maybe launch the Windows calculator if you click. Let's try it.

With the label selected, open your Properties window (F4), click on the Event tab, then double-click on the On-Click box and the corresponding "..." button. Add the following code inside the Sub area: Start "calc"

It should look something like this (assuming the label is named label0):

```
Private Sub Label0_Click()
    Shell "calc"
End Sub
```

Now if you switch to Form view and click on the label, the Windows calculator should appear.

Back in the form's Design view, you see that other events you can intercept include double-click, the mouse button being pressed down, the mouse moving around the label, or the mouse button coming back up. We'll explore these types of things later. For now, we'll work with the main events for the various controls.

Text Boxes

Now take the next control, the textbox ("ab"), and add it next to the label in the same way as before (click on it, then click on the form).

With textboxes, you'll notice that there are many more events. You can do something before the corresponding database field is updated, or after it is updated; you can identify when the data changed from what's in the database (dirty), or when it simply changes, or a variety of other things.

Let's make it so that the user must enter a valid number or an error appears. Double-click on the On Change event, then the "..." button. I'll refer to this process from now on as "programming the Change event" or something similar. So let's program the textbox's Change event in the VB area. You should see that Access created the structure for you to program it:

```
Private Sub Text1_Change()
End Sub
```

Your job is to decide what to do when this occurs. For now, we'll throw in a simple message if the text is not a number. So enter this:

```
If Not IsNumeric(Text1. Text) Then
        MsgBox "You should enter a number in this box."
End If
```

(Note that capitalization in non-quoted text is normally not important in VB.)

Back to access and switch to Form view. The textbox should have a blinking cursor in it, so it has the "focus." Type a number, and everything is fine. However, type a letter and you get the message "You should enter a number in this box" inside a Windows dialog box, as seen in Figure 3.

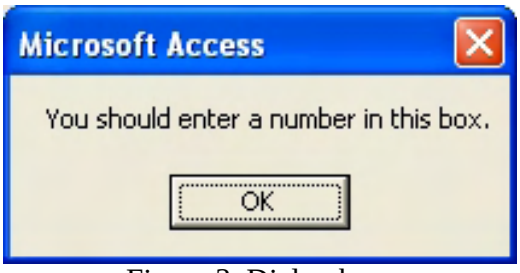

Figure 3. Dialog box.

This can get annoying quickly if you start typing other things, since the message will appear with every keystroke until you fix the problem.

For this reason, you should also understand that although you *can* program something, it doesn't mean that you *should* program it. There are many ways to solve a problem, and some are much more pleasant than others.

Let's improve this by programming the Lost Focus event with the same thing. So back to Design view, program Lost Focus, and select the MsgBox line and move it to the new location. You should now see something like this:

```
Private Sub Text1_Change()
End Sub
Private Sub Text1_LostFocus()
    If Not IsNumeric(Text1.Text) Then
        MsgBox "You should enter a number in this box."
    End If
End Sub
```

The block for Text_Change can remain there (since it will do nothing), or you can take it out (if you're careful and remove the entire Sub line AND the End Sub line.)

Now if you view the form and enter a letter, you don't get an error. But if you tab out of the field, the message appears. That's much better and still lets the user know that there's a problem that needs to be fixed.

By the way, using things like the Key Press Event, you could also prevent letters and symbols from being

entered through the keyboard, which is nice, but users can be very resourceful and might try pasting letters using the mouse's right-click menu! To intercept bad data properly on entry can be tricky and is probably best managed with a different kind of text box designed to do that for you. We'll see one in the latest version of VB, but not this version (or even Access 2007).

Option Groups

Now add an Option Group below the label. Typically, Access will start a wizard, as seen in Figure 4, since you often want to add several items into this frame.

Figure 4. Option Group Wizard.

Just to learn a little about this, enter a few items in the "Label Names" box, like California, Colorado and New Mexico, then click on the Next button. In the next window, select "No, I don't want a default" and click on the Next button.

The next window wants to know what values should be saved when these items are selected. By default, it will be a sequence of numbers. Let's accept the defaults as seen in Figure 5 and just click the Next button.

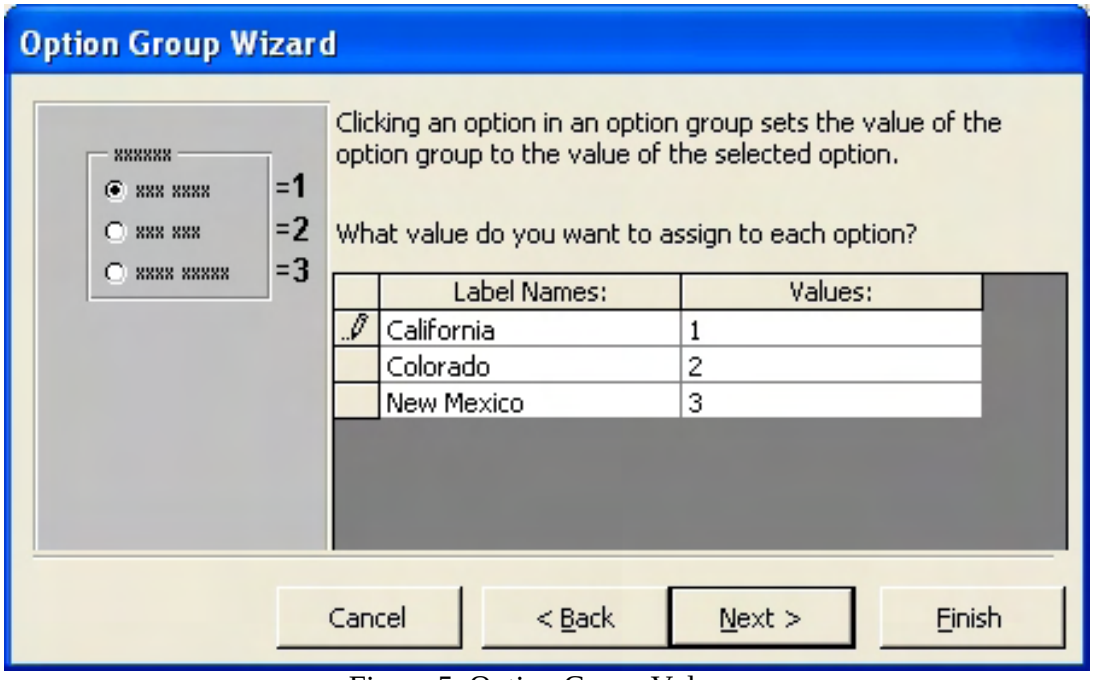

Figure 5. Option Group Values.

Next you can decide what types of controls will display your labels. Pick the defaults, as seen in Figure 6, and click on the Next button.

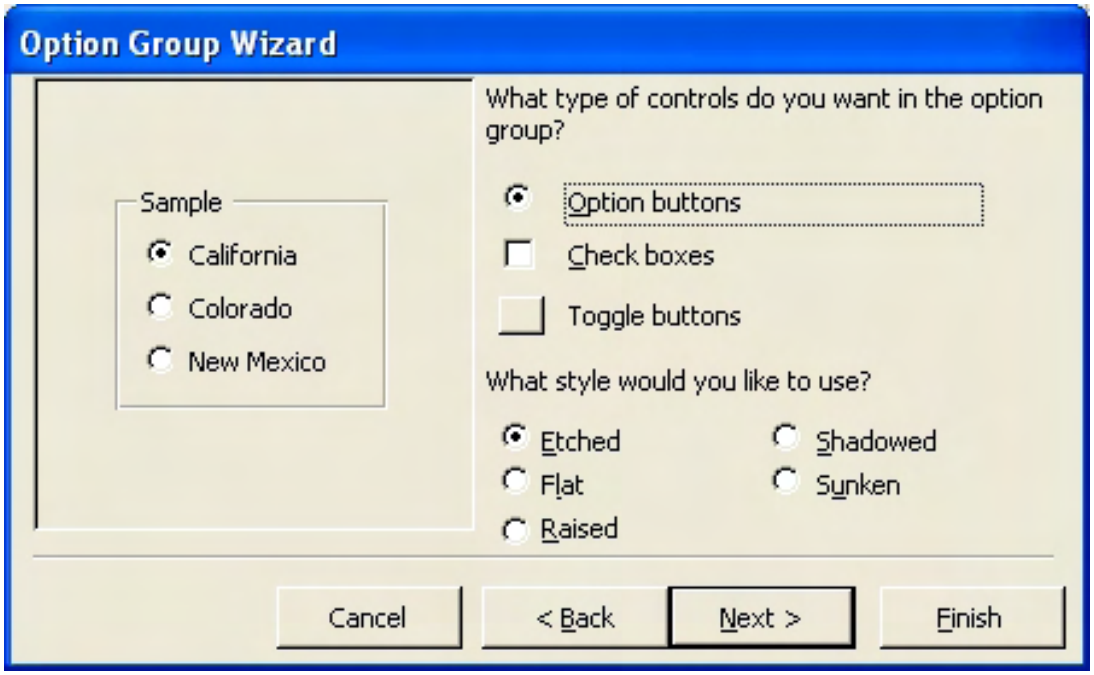

Figure 6. Option Group Control Style.

Finally, enter an appropriate name for the frame's label, like States, and click on the Finish button. You'll now see a frame with a label and three option buttons (also known as radio buttons) with labels inside it, as seen in figure 7.

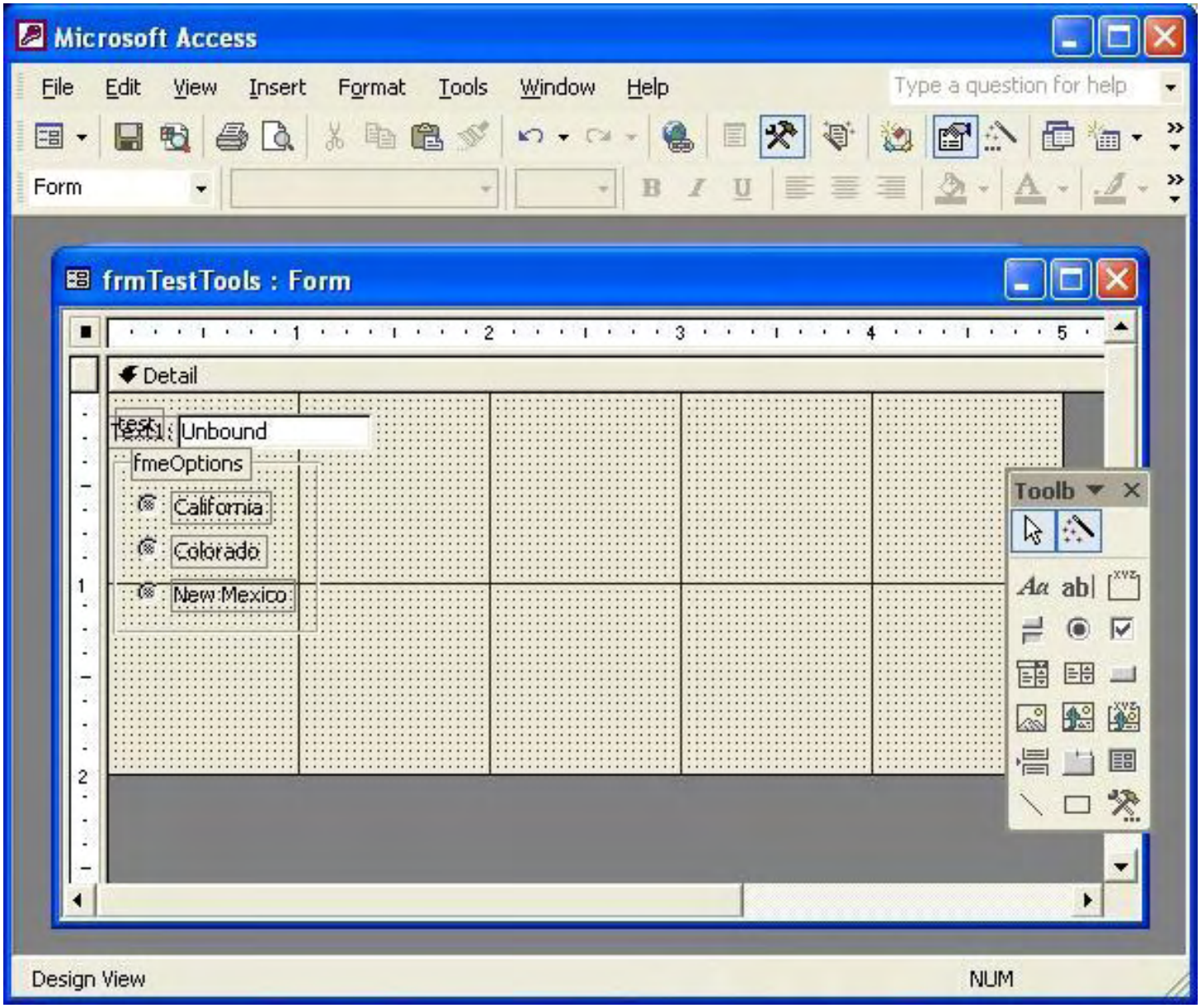

Figure 7. Option Group.

Click on the option group frame and notice the events that are available. They are similar to the text box, but do not have the Focus events. That's because you don't normally interact directly with the frame. Just for fun, program the Click event with the code: MsgBox "I'm a frame!"

When you run the form and click on the frame border, you should see the message.

Since we've added some option buttons, let's program them to put the selection into the text box. In other words, if you click on the option button with the California label, a "1" should appear in the text box.

Back in Design mode, look at the events for the option buttons. Notice how there is nothing to identify when they are selected. This is one of those bizarre things where the options in the frame are actually controlled from the frame. So what we need to do is to update the frame's Click event. Replace it with this:

```
Private Sub Frame3_Click()
    'MsgBox "I'm a frame!"
```

```
    Me.Text1.Value = Me.Frame3.Value
End Sub
```

Note that your frame may have a different number in the name; likewise with the textbox. However if you get the parts right and run the form, clicking on an option should put that number's option into the textbox.

Let's learn how and why, then call it a wrap for this week.

When you click on an option button, Access lets the surrounding frame identify which one was clicked and runs the code for the frame's click event. That means that it will run the code in the subroutine called by the name of the frame (Frame3) followed by the event name (Click) separated by an underscore; so it runs Frame3_Click in my case.

Running a procedure means that it begins at the top and starts proceeding one line at a time until it completes or is otherwise forced to stop.

In our case, it looks at this line: 'MsgBox "I'm a frame!"
It notices that this is a comment line because it begins with an apostrophe.

Since VB ignores comment lines (since they're just for us humans), it moves on to the next line: Me.Text1. Value = Me.Frame3.Value

It examines the line and tries to decipher the parts. It looks for special keywords (internal VB words that are part of the core VB language). Keywords appear in VB in blue letters. There are none in this line, so it checks to see how else it can identify the parts. Eventually it sees the word "Me" and knows that this refers to the current "parent" object (in this case the form). So it asks the form if it knows the next part, "Text1." Since the form has something called Text1, VB continues and asks Text1 if it knows something called "Value." Again, it does, so the first part is completed as it says something like, "OK...hold on! I'll be right back."

VB continues on and sees the equal sign, so it knows it will be collecting a value or calculation to be given to Value in Text1 located in Me.

Now it looks past the equal sign and continues investigating. Again it recognizes Me, which knows Frame3, which knows Value. So VB asks for the value and hands a copy to the one on the left of the equal sign.

In other words, it calculates the value of the right side of the equal sign and assigns it to the thing on the left of the equal sign. This is typically called assigning a value to a variable or property. In this case it's a property of the text box.

With that out of the way, it continues and sees End Sub and completes its processing and lets Access show the form. Access now refreshes the screen, which shows the option button's selection in the textbox. Access now waits for more instructions while VB sits idle waiting for Access to ask it to do something else.

At this point, hopefully you're starting to gain an understanding of how Access and VB interact. Access waits for certain events, then asks VB to process some computer code. When the code completes, VB lets Access take control back.

Next week, we'll continue exploring more controls in the toolbox.

Keep sending in your questions, and we'll keep moving forward toward programming Windows, then maybe programming Web sites and maybe even things like iPods. Oh, and if Wally Wang is reading this, after going through my series, you'll see that VB.Net programming is really not that much different from programming in the earlier versions; you just have to get used to a few minor changes, as with any new application. (For those who missed it, Wally indicated in a recent column that VB was great until they changed things with VB.Net. I agree it's a bit different, but I'm finding it's actually much better in most areas.)

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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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

"Technology and Communication" by Jack Dunning

In a transient world where personal contact had been dropping off, technology has brought us closer together—maybe too close.

When we communicate with our grandchildren, we use a Skype video connection. We get a reasonably good connection, and the fact that it's rare that anything intelligible comes out of their little mouths (one is 1.95 years old and the other is four months) is unimportant as long as we can see them. We set up a video call only every few weeks—we don't want to wear out the cable modem. After the last call, I left Skype running.

A couple of days later, I received an instant message over Skype from Jim Whiting about the cartoon he was working on. I didn't even know that Skype had instant messaging. I'm not sure how he found me. (It may be due to the fact that I used my real name.) Since I recognized his name I accepted the message. (Usually I'm being called by girls from Russia or the Ukraine, but since I don't speak the language, I never activate the IM.) I'm never looking to be found on Skype (I usually have it turned off), yet I was suddenly located.

There is a continual evolution in how people can use computers to communicate. It all started with modems and e-mail, then enhanced in real-time with instant messaging over the Internet. Higher bandwidths have enabled video chatting. In a transient world where personal contact had been dropping off, technology has brought us closer together—maybe too close.

On the Web, blogging has become the thing to do. A blog (short for Web log) is written and posted by anyone who has a thought, plus a casual acquaintance with a computer keyboard, for the world to see. Now anyone can be a reporter, and we can learn everything the blogger thinks or feels. It's turning into too much information.

Text messaging on cell phones is the rage (addiction) among the young people. I don't really understand it, since it costs so much more than merely making a voice call and talking with someone directly. I guess that it's good for those times when you're sitting bored in class and don't want to make too much noise. Plus, most kids don't care that a service that should be cheaper than voice calls is so expensive. The cell phone companies make a fortune off text messaging. This business has spawned the Internet service Twitter.

Twitter is generating huge revenues for the cell companies. Being based upon text messaging, a Twitter message (a Tweet) is limited to 140 characters of text. The Tweets from individuals are shared over the Internet to computers and cell phones. If you subscribe to someone's Twitter, you'll be able to stay in contact with their doings all day long. It's like a mini-blog designed for cell phones. You can imagine the type of deep communications that can be delivered in a 140-character message. "What? I can't decide whether to put mustard or mayonnaise on my sandwich. It's decisions like these that drive me crazy! Sometimes I think t" Naturally, space is saved by the use of the standard text message abbreviations, making the actual message space seem like a dissertation on War and Peace.

I wouldn't know anything about Twitter, but all the journalism majors hosting the evening news seem to be

doing it for their fans—except Brian Williams—and telling us to listen in. I think they use writers to compose their Tweets. Again, I don't want to know that much.

Technology is a great thing. It is hard to know what's going to be the next phenomenon. Twitter started only a few years ago. It's also impossible to tell what people will consider a useful (or fun) innovation or merely a waste of time. I've been looking at the television ads for the Verizon Hub, a phone with VoIP service (see Figure 1). It certainly looks interesting, but will anyone use it?

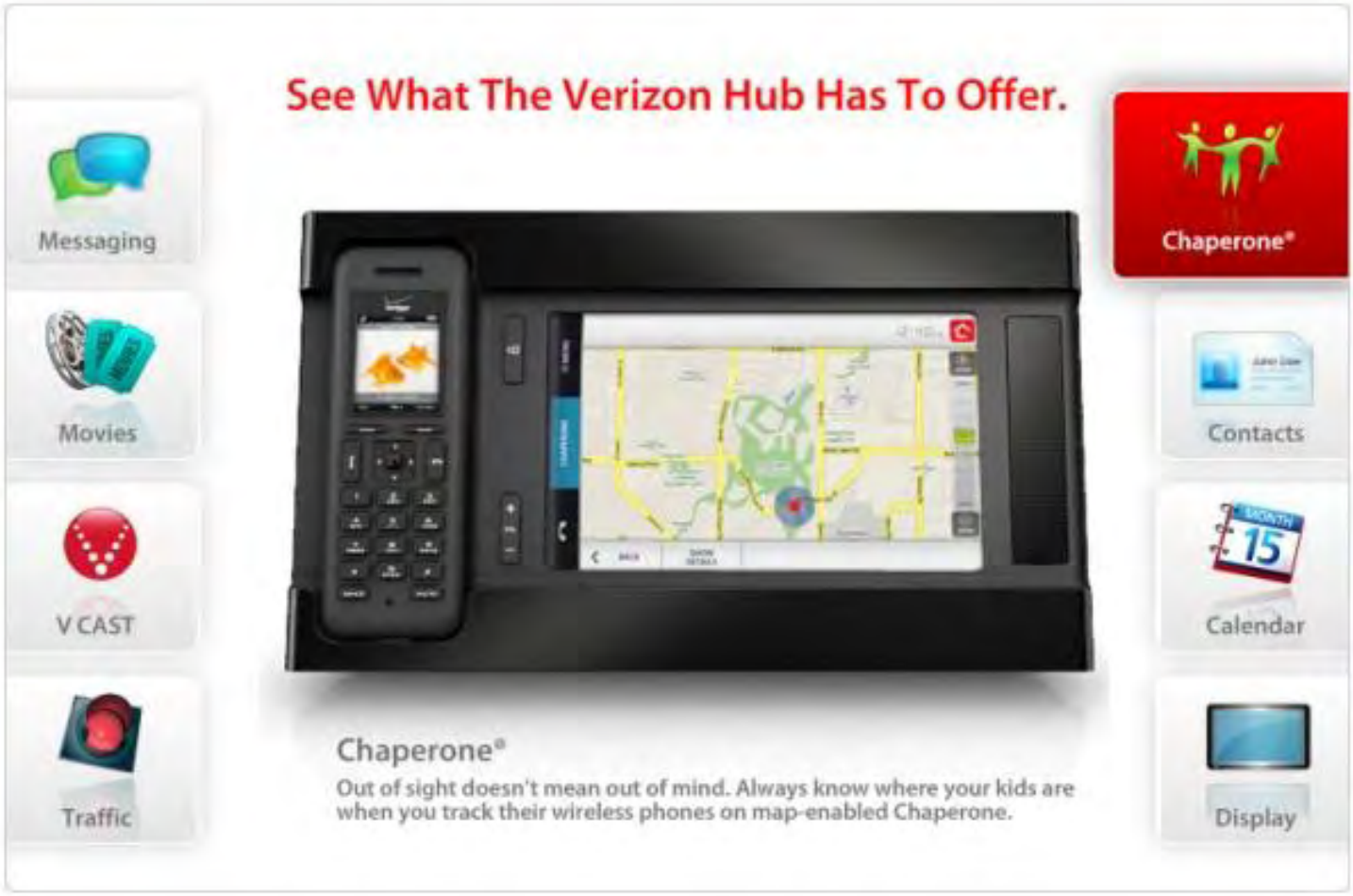

Figure 1. Verizon Hub.

I don't know how it's going to work out for the Verizon Hub. I wonder if families really want to have that much contact all of the time. Hmmm . . ..

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

"Limited Internet Connection," "Clouds All About Us," "New to Linux," "Virtual Machines"

Limited Internet Connection

[The following two letters are in regard to Digital Dave's February 20 column, where Don wrote in about his limited connectivity issues.]

Don wants to connect to his cable ISP without a router, using multiple computers. If he has a Motorola series 5100 cable modem (I have a 5120, very common in 2007), there is a DHCP server built in to the modem. According to the manual (SB5120_User_Guide.pdf (*broadband.motorola.com/consumers/support/default.asp?supportSection=CableModems*), 1.7MB, click link, then select Discontinued Products), there is no need for a router. This modem "supports up to 32 users," via the Ethernet. It has internal DHCP, and the manual shows that connection to a LAN needs only a network hub or switch. For setup, a user simply selects "Obtain an IP address automatically" and "Obtain DNS server address automatically."

I have not tried this, because I already had a slow router. The only disadvantage to this technique is that the modem does not contain a hardware firewall, whereas most routers do.

The modem local address is 192.168.100.1 for the SB5120. Although the SB5120 is discontinued, the manual applies to the entire SB5100 series. I verified in current manuals for the SB5101 and SB6200 that this method is still documented.

-Larry S., Poway, Calif.

This is due to most ISPs using DHCP (Dynamic Host Control Protocol) when assigning IPs to their clients. The reason you are getting very little connectivity is because your ISP has registered that cable modem with the PC's MAC address (you are plugging in straight to the cable modem, right?). Since you are using a computer with a different MAC address, it's going to cause an issue until you power-cycle the modem and request a new refresh on your cable modem. You might want to consider not paying for the second IP address and just get a router for your home. Extra security and no more of this issue.

-David Eddleman, Vista, Calif.

Clouds All About Us

[This letter is in regard to Jack Dunning's February 20 article, "Clouds All Around Us."]

Although I consider myself a fairly savvy Internet junkie, I have to admit that I have been somewhat confused by the term "cloud computing." This article really cleared up my confusion! Thank you for publishing it.

-Jessica Bell, National City, Calif.

New to Linux

[This letter is in regard to the February 20 Little Linux Lessons column.]

I would not recommend Ubuntu at all. It's a heavily modified version of Linux. I've used it before, and trying to make sense of it (from a Linux professional's POV) was a challenge. It would have the same result in reverse, I would imagine. A new distro came out recently called Debian Lenny; this is supposed to be a very user-friendly version that lets you use a GUI (Graphical User Interface, like Windows) or a CLI (Command Line Interface, like DOS).

-David Eddleman, Vista, Calif.

Virtual Machines

[This letter is in regard to the February 6 Wally Wang's Apple Farm column.]

My first computer was a Commodore 64 in the mid-1980s. Then an Everex, a few Dells and an eMachine. I'm a Basic-DOS-Windows kinda guy. Then I got a digital back for my camera, and the software was designed for the Mac, and grudgingly for the PC. I wound up getting a MacBook Pro a couple of years ago to use only when I was shooting on location.

All of my image-production software is specifically for the PC, along with the usual Windows office assemblage that I use several times a week. I bought VMware's Fusion, and it's been running Windows on the Mac beautifully.

EVERY day, I presume that at least one thing will not work as it did the day before, or not work at all, on the Windows machines. For 20 years, that's been a mildly entertaining challenge that usually took a few minutes to fix or adjust to, for that day. Other people do daily crossword puzzles.

Now, I am divesting myself of as many "daily challenges" as possible, because old age comes with its own set and they're inescapable. Windows surprises are no longer fun. I absolutely agree with your statement: "... think of both virtual machine programs as training wheels to get you comfortable using Mac OS X until you're ready to break away from Windows for good."

-Ken Schuster

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*.
