

# ComputerEdge™ Online — 04/03/09



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## Digital Dave

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

A reader needs help changing the screen resolution to change the size of her viewing window; a reader's computer is suddenly unreliable on bootup; Dave sets a reader straight on the need for Wi-Fi security.

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Is there a way to change the size of the viewing window in a browser such as Internet Explorer or Firefox? I can't see displayed text without scrolling left to right half the time, and in Quicken's display windows, all the scroll bars are effectively "off the page."*

*I've tried using the monitor's front-panel controls, but when WinXP reboots, all changes are wiped out.*

*Any suggestions?*

*Helen  
Mountain View, Calif.*

Dear Helen,

The number-one way to change the size of windows on your computer is to change the screen resolution with the operating system. Any changes you make with the controls are temporary, since those controls do not interact with the operating system. When you restart the machine, the machine automatically sets the monitor to its default settings.

Generally, you can access the screen-resolution settings by right-clicking on the desktop—the desktop is the screen that is displayed when you first log on or boot up. In Windows XP, you select Properties from the bottom of the menu, then the Settings tab. Display Properties can also be found in the Control Panel by selecting Appearance and Themes, then "Change the screen resolution." In Classic View of the Control Panel, double-click Display.

In Windows Vista, you select Personalize from the menu that appears after the right-click on the desktop. You are looking for Display Settings. In the Control Panel, it can be found under the "Adjust screen resolution" link. You will get a window similar to Figure 1 in any version of Windows.

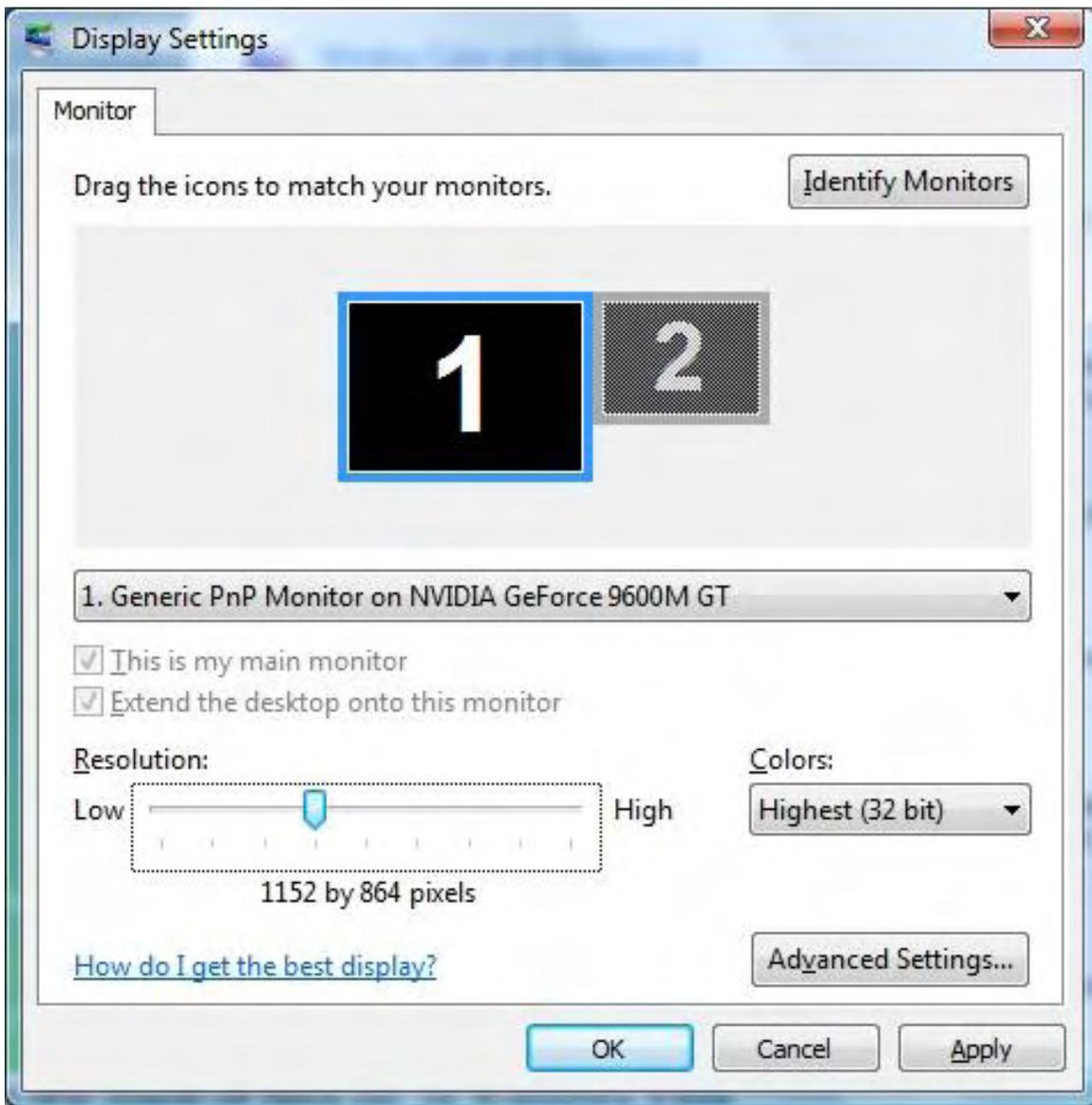


Figure 1. Display Settings in Windows Vista.

In both XP and Vista, to set the screen resolution, use the sliding scale by clicking on the bar; or click, hold and drag the pointer. You will see the various options change from the lowest resolution on the left end to the highest resolution on the right end. After you select a new resolution, click Apply.

The change will be put into effect temporarily. You will be able to see how the new screen looks. The lower the resolution, the more likely you will encounter scroll bars and non-fitting windows on your computer. You should set your computer to the highest-possible resolution that you find comfortable for reading and viewing. (There are other changes within the programs that you can make to font size, but they do not apply equally to all programs and windows.)

If you have an LCD monitor, you should set the resolution to the native resolution of the monitor. (LCD monitors are designed for one resolution. It should be listed on the box or in the specifications.) Otherwise, things will look blurry. Once this is set properly, you can change the amount of content on screen by changing the font size in the Display Properties window. This

won't help with images, but the images won't look very good at a non-native resolution anyway.

Although remote, it's also possible you may not realize how to change the size of the window, and you have your browser taking up only part of the screen. There is a window-resizing control in the upper right-hand corner of the window that looks like a box. When you click that box, the window will expand to full screen, and the tiny box control will turn into two tiny overlapping boxes for changing back to the previous size. You can also resize any window by dragging the side or corner of a non-max window.

The resolutions settings that you have available on your computer depend upon your monitor and the graphics card in your computer. Some older machines are limited in the screen resolutions that they offer. If you cannot get a high enough resolution to solve your problem, then the solution may be to get a new monitor and graphics card.

Digital Dave

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I've been reading your columns for about 20 years; your icon looks the same as it did 20 years ago. I guess this column is anti-aging!*

*Recently, my three-year-old desktop doesn't want to boot up reliably every time. The power/fan comes on, but no green start light or hard-drive activity red light. I have to power down and try several times. Could it be the power supply, hard drive, push button or something else?*

*I replaced the noisy power-supply fan a month ago.*

*Tom Waleska  
San Diego, Calif.*

Dear Tom,

It is difficult to say exactly what's happening, but before you start replacing parts, there is one simple check you should do. With the power off, open up the computer and make sure that all of the cables are tightly connected. It is not uncommon for cables to vibrate loose over time—especially if they were never seated properly in the first place. Sometimes all that is needed is a little pressure into the slot. I've seen many problems fixed by merely pulling out a cable and reseating it. (If you do this for someone else, they'll think you're a genius.)

The reason I'm stressing this is because some people have spent many hours and dollars replacing components in their systems, only to find that there was a loose or bad cable. If tightening cables doesn't help, then replace them with ones that you know are good before you buy a new part. This also applies to cables for printers, USB devices and anything else that requires a cable.

If the cables are not the problem, go to your parts bin and replace your suspect components one by one. Start with the parts with the blacked-out lights. Since you're getting no lights on

various parts, I'm guessing either it's the cables or the motherboard/CPU behaving intermittently and on their way to failure. The power supply is probably fine.

Digital Dave

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Thanks for your excellent advice over the years. You are a computer renaissance man!*

*We recently installed our own Wi-Fi router, with access through a cable modem. We can also detect four neighbors' Wi-Fi routers from our home, three of which are secured.*

*It is well known that simply being online incurs some risk of theft: data sent from my computer, or data stored on my computer, are both vulnerable. This theft can occur from the next cubicle, or from another continent.*

*Please set me straight once and for all: Why is it necessary to lock other people out from my home Wi-Fi system? Other than the case of a key-logger intercept, why would my data be at higher risk from a neighbor or a stranger using my home router, than from a thief accessing my data stream from a router halfway around the world?*

*Michael Donahue  
Boulder, Co.*

Dear Michael,

You're not necessarily more at risk from your neighbors than someone halfway around the world. That depends upon who your neighbors are. The risky foreign source will come from your Internet connection, not the Wi-Fi—although the Wi-Fi could become a source for another Internet connection. To properly answer your question, it's necessary to review the purpose and use of Wi-Fi—wireless network connections.

Technically, Wi-Fi is a wireless extension of your internal (home) network. It is an extension of the Internet only if you have a separate Internet connection coming into your home network. If your DSL or cable modem is not active, someone halfway around the world can't access your network or computers—unless someone nearby with a connection is connected to your Wi-Fi.

Prior to Wi-Fi, most home networks were hardwired with cables. There was no risk of neighbors getting into your network unless they snuck into your house with their own cable. Now that there is Wi-Fi (with a range of 300-500 feet), anyone in the vicinity can pick up the signal. If you do not secure the signal with WPA (not WEP) encryption, then anyone can get onto your network.

This is probably not a problem if each of your computers is properly firewalled and secured, but your neighbors would be able to use your Internet connection. If you have neighbors who like to pirate software, stream video (bandwidth hogs), or spam the world, then you could end up in a very uncomfortable position—not to mention the slowdown in your own Internet performance. These reasons alone are enough to cause you to secure your Wi-Fi. If you trust your neighbors, give them the encryption key.

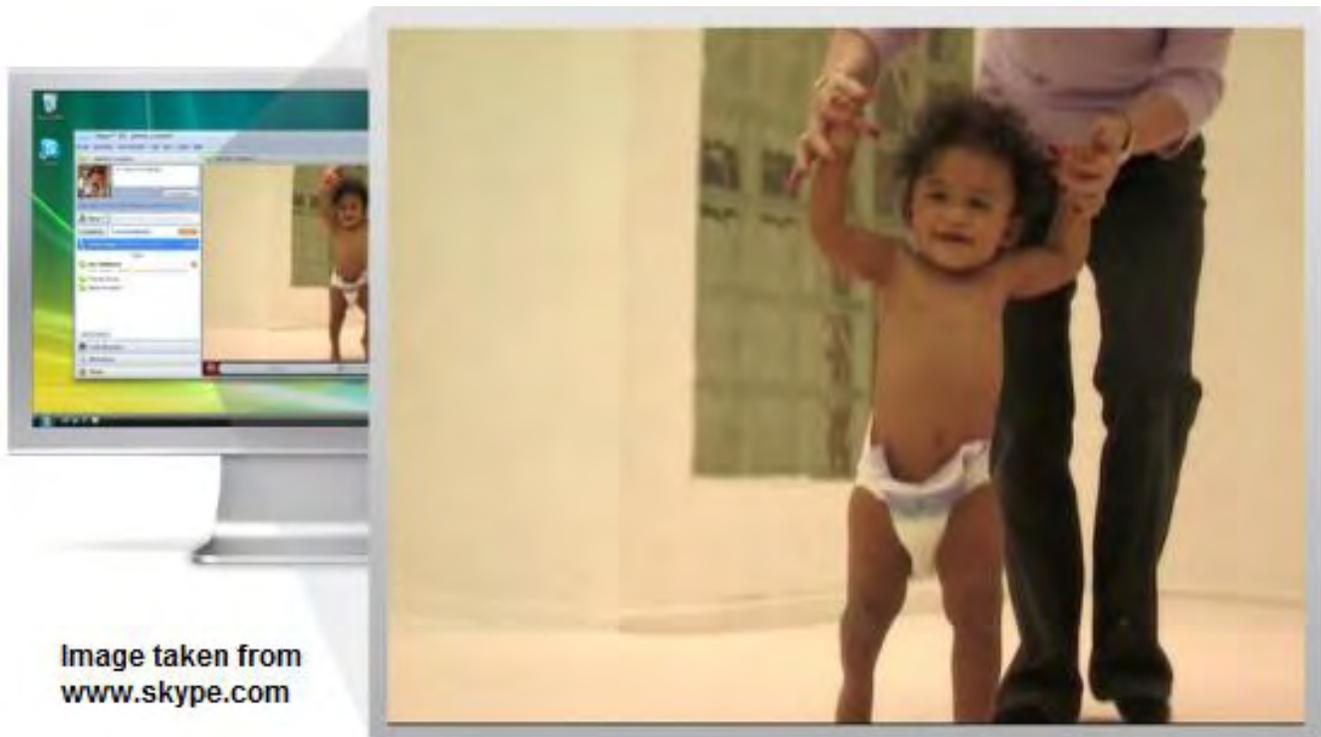
The Internet threat is primarily preprogrammed scripts looking for obvious vulnerabilities. A neighbor, or somebody who knows you, is more likely to specifically target your systems, making a more concerted effort than any scripts. Mainly, Wi-Fi security is about not letting people steal your bandwidth.

Digital Dave

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## Video Telephony, Then and Now

**“Fading fad or hot new technology?”** by Michael J. Ross

One day, we all may have our own Dick Tracy wrist videophones. But at our current rate of progress, it could be a long time before we see widespread adoption. In the meantime, see what your favorite VoIP service has to offer.

In most, if not all, realms of human endeavor, communication is a key to success. Human history is replete with examples that illustrate the truth of this principle, in all fields, including business, warfare and governance. Consider only three examples: Years before the competition, Wal-Mart implemented a sales data-distribution system whereby every single purchase at a cash register would be communicated to decision-makers managing inventory and orders, allowing Wal-Mart to outmaneuver Kmart with every shift in consumer trends.

During World War II, the Allies' ability to decrypt and read the encoded military communications of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan proved instrumental in winning pivotal battles and reducing our losses. Lincoln was the first American president to make extensive use of the telegraph to communicate with his distant subordinates, thereby projecting his power to an unprecedented extent.

But despite the importance of communication, technical innovations in this area are not always recognized for their potential, and more often than not are adopted at a slow pace—which can be incomprehensible to those of us in the modern era who cannot imagine life without forms of instant communication, such as telephone, radio, television and e-mail. This can be especially true for technologies that attempt to combine communication methods into something new. It is almost as if the resistance to adopting each individual technology is not overlaid or added together, but multiplied.

An excellent example of this is video telephony, which combines audio and video communication, i.e.,

telephony plus television, except the video stream is transmitted in two directions—hence the term "duplex transmission." (When the number of participants is greater than two, then it is referred to as videoconferencing.) As we shall see, adoption of video telephony in the marketplace was far slower and more faltering than that of telephones or televisions.

### **That Old-Time Telephony**

Given that the telephone first saw non-experimental use in the 1890s, and television first saw commercial use in the 1930s, you would think that by the late 1930s, the public would be clamoring for the ability to not only hear the voices of distant loved ones and business associates, but also to be able to see their faces—in addition to transmitting their own visages in conjunction with their voices. After all, we are frequently told by psychologists that body language comprises the bulk of communication among people, and facial expressions are the most significant part of body language. By that reasoning, the first half of "video telephony" should be the most important component. Clearly the potential for such a type of communication was not lost on the purveyors of popular culture, as evidenced by video phones making appearances in comic strips (Dick Tracy's "2-Way Wrist TV," from 1964), movies (*2001: A Space Odyssey*, from 1968), and cartoons (Plane Daffy, from 1944). Fritz Lang's 1927 silent movie *Metropolis*, which was groundbreaking in several respects, contains perhaps the first well-known cultural reference to a videophone.

Moreover, it is not as though there were unsurmountable technical hurdles. Even before World War II, two separate postal services, England's General Post Office and Germany's Reichspost, had made available public video telephony services. In Germany, anyone who wished to use the system could go to a special public telephone booth, although they did have to reside in one of the four major cities of the time: Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Nuremberg. The world war understandably interrupted this pioneering video telephony service, especially in Germany, whose major cities and other telecommunications infrastructure were devastated by aerial bombing.

Despite our technological leadership after the war, the United States did not see much progress or interest in video telephony until the early 1960s, when AT&T introduced the Picturephone, which was the name for the product and the service. The device was placed on top of a desk, and had a small oval cabinet, housing an even smaller cathode ray tube (CRT) display, above which was a video camera to capture the image of the user. The video quality itself was rather poor, with horizontal and vertical scan rates of 8kHz and 30 hertz, respectively. It offered approximately 250 scan lines, which was significantly less than the 440 achieved by the Germans more than a quarter-century earlier, most likely due to a desire to make the units small enough for desktop use, unlike the ones in the German phone booths.

By 1970, the Picturephone had installations in several large cities in the eastern United States, including the offices of some major corporations, such as Westinghouse, in Pittsburgh. Subscribers were charged about \$90 per month, which at that time was a nontrivial amount of money. Hundreds of students attended technical schools in order to learn how to install, operate, and troubleshoot the Picturephone's equipment. Apparently the total number of subscribers peaked at roughly 500, and began to decline, until it was terminated in 1974.

AT&T made a second go of it in 1992, offering its VideoPhone 2500. But at a starting price of \$1,500, it saw little adoption by the public. Another possible factor—far more applicable to prospective users in the home than the corporate environment—is that many people, perhaps subconsciously, would prefer being able to call other people and businesses without having to get gussied up beforehand. Undoubtedly, one

advantage to regular phones is that you can be busy in any part of the house (even the bathroom), make or receive a call, and not be concerned with whether you look your best or instead look like something the cat decided not to drag in.

In light of its less-than-stellar beginnings, video telephony appeared to be destined as a technological novelty that would never take hold, except in the movies and other forms of fictional entertainment. But as sometimes happens with ideas that get the front door slammed in their faces, video telephony quietly slipped in the back door. In this case, it came in riding on the coattails of two much younger communications ideas—mobile phones and VoIP.

### **Cell Me Your Picture**

A growing number of cell phones and other mobile voice-enabled devices have built-in video cameras. Many of these products are already part of the Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (also known as 3GSM), which is a third-generation (3G) mobile telecommunications technology, and will likely become the basis of the fourth generation (4G). This gives them the capability of being used as mobile video phones, and they are quite popular. The potential market is huge, and shows no sign of diminishing, with more than 130 million subscribers by mid-2007.

The year 2003 saw the introduction of several video cell phones, which were capable of capturing still and moving pictures, and, in turn, making possible two-way video calls. Samsung Electronics, frequently one of the first to roll out new technologies, began manufacturing and distributing several new versions of high-end video cell phones—though initially just in the South Korean market. The handsets, designated SCH-V310, had video sensors that recorded at 11 frames per second, which was a huge improvement over the two frames per second seen in even earlier video cell phones—but still about half the frame rate of camcorders at the time. Yet the quintupling of speed dramatically improved the user experience, and did away with much of the jerkiness of slower frame rates.

In terms of any financial barriers to market penetration, video cell phones have come way down in price, and this has undoubtedly boosted their proliferation. For instance, that Samsung handheld started out at around \$600, while street prices for even more capable products, six years later, have now dipped well below \$100.

But that is not to say that all cell phone service providers have joined the bandwagon. Even though more than 90 percent of American adults have some sort of cell phone service, the major carriers have made little progress in offering video as part of the package—citing a lack of cell phones that have built-in video sensors. Yet that may change rapidly, because 2008 saw a sizable increase in consumer demand for mobile video.

### **Telephoning Over the Tubes**

Inexpensive and easy-to-operate webcams have made it possible for people to do video telephony over the Internet. This is usually done as part of a dedicated webcam communications service, or as part of a VoIP service, such as Skype. Each party has a webcam and either a handheld microphone or headset, connected to their computer. While the webcam and the microphone are picking up and transmitting the video and audio feeds from a user, over the Internet, he is watching the video feed from the other person's webcam, and listening to her voice over computer speakers or in the speakers integrated into his headset.

The quality of the webcam picture is largely determined by the same factors that affect the voice quality

of VoIP services. The number-one factor is the Internet-connection speed of each participant's computer, since the audio and video data must be transmitted over the VoIP connection to the other person's computer. Consequently, broadband Internet connectivity (either DSL or cable) will yield far superior results than narrowband (usually dial-up), since the data upload and download speeds are so much faster for that first category.

If you would like to try video over the Internet without having to make any initial monetary outlay (aside from the cost of a webcam, if you don't already have one), try Skype's video feature ([www.skype.com/allfeatures/videocall/](http://www.skype.com/allfeatures/videocall/)). The picture quality and image size are quite good, and getting better with each iteration of its software and infrastructure. It currently offers free two-way voice and video between any two Skype users, each on their own computer. Also, you can use Skype's paid service to call someone's cell phone or landline. But being able to do two-way video to someone's cell phone is probably further down the road.

One day, we all may have our own Dick Tracy wrist videophones. But at our current rate of progress, it could be a long time before we see widespread adoption. In the meantime, see what your favorite VoIP service has to offer.

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Michael J. Ross is a Web developer ([www.ross.ws](http://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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## Making Video Phone Calls

**“Be prepared for video communications.”** by Jack Dunning

The future of video phone calls appears to lie with the computer and the Internet. But be prepared: Unlike voice calls and text messages, video phone calls are an event.

Unlike voice calls and text messages, video phone calls are an event. Just as with having someone come over to visit your home, you need to be ready for people to see you—and possibly your home, as well. Only close friends should routinely participate in this type of visual and vocal communication. A voice phone call always includes a wall of protection, leaving our imagination to create the shared chat room. The same is even truer for online chat. If we are to venture into video communications, we need to be prepared.

As pointed out by the article in this issue, "Video Telephony, Then and Now," by Michael Ross, video phone calls are a long time in coming. Different pieces of technology need to be in the same place at the same time for the application to emerge. I'm not convinced that cell phones are the future of video telephony. It's awkward to view a cell phone while talking; plus, the screen is too small.

The real explosion in video chatting seems to be emerging from the laptop computer. Just as a camera is standard on almost all cell phones, most laptops now sport a built-in webcam. We are also seeing many more desktop monitors with built-in webcams. The future of video phone calls appears to lie with the computer and the Internet. The come-into-my-living-room nature of video calls may leave the cell phone companies out in the cold. Both the online chat systems, such as AOL Instant Messenger, and the Internet phone call services, such Skype, seem to have the edge. Video phone calls are a hassle, not because they are difficult to set up, but because you need to comb your hair.

Since a video call is an event, you may not quite be ready to include video in your everyday communications. It's more for talking to close friends; it's not for casual contact between two or more people. Casual, or business, contact can be done with a voice phone call or a text message. Video chatting is too scary for an initial interaction with the unknown. Most of us need to be presentable when we go out in public. Therefore, it's likely that video chatting will supplement rather than replace the privacy of the old-fashioned voice phone call.

### Video Calls with Instant Messengers

Video chatting has slowly crept into my life. Some calls were made as a test; others were almost accidents. The first video call I had with my daughter was when we were text chatting with AOL Instant Messenger. At the bottom of the chat window, there is a Video button. Out of curiosity, I clicked the button. My daughter, half-surprised by the request, clicked OK. (We were both using laptops that came with built-in webcams.) We were left staring at each other. It was that easy. We were soon engaged in relaxed conversation. Rather than sending text messages that crossed in the mail, we were talking as if we were in the same room.

For anyone who wants to check out video calls, I would recommend using an IM (AOL Instant Messenger ([dashboard.aim.com/aim](http://dashboard.aim.com/aim)), Yahoo! Messenger ([messenger.yahoo.com/](http://messenger.yahoo.com/)), Windows Live Messenger ([download.live.com/messenger](http://download.live.com/messenger)), and many more can be found in a Google search). Virtually all of them

support video calls—and they are free. The only requirement is that both parties be on the same IM service. The quality is dependent upon computer power, Internet connections (on both ends), and the webcams. For the IMs, the webcams built into the laptops seem to be adequate. They are of the same type as the cell-phone cameras. While the pictures may not be the greatest, they are certainly better than nothing, plus you will get a good feeling for the potential of video calls.

### Going for a Little More

My primary use of video calls is for interacting with my grandchildren. It is a major event when we set up a video call. The time needs to be prearranged due to dinnertime, bedtime and the other chaotic routines involved with raising kids. However, it is something that both my wife and I look forward to. For these calls, we use Skype ([www.skype.com/](http://www.skype.com/)).



“Mom and Dad! Can you entertain the kids while I take a nap?!”

webcam.

As for the effect of Internet bandwidth, it is huge. Video calls require bandwidth in both the up and down direction. Typically, ISPs offer much faster download speeds than upload. While your cable company may be giving you great downstream speeds, the up speed could limit the quality of your connection. I've noticed that using a T-1 connection (same speed available in both directions) produced a much better call than a cable modem connection with comparable download speeds.

### Goodies for the Kids

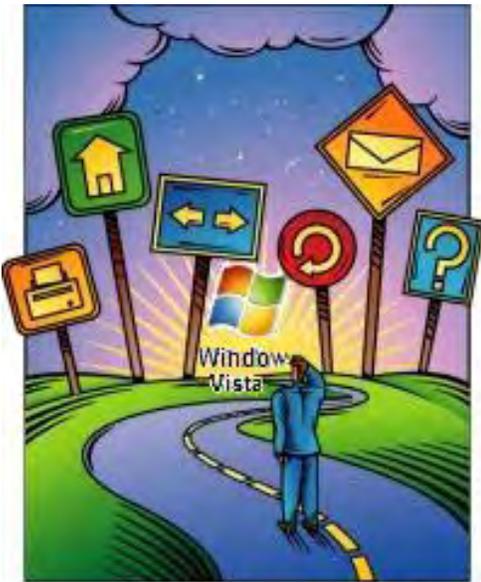
Kids quickly become bored with looking at their grandparents on the computer screen. In the beginning, it's a novelty, but soon SpongeBob Square Pants comes calling. To entertain the kids, it's a good idea to use some of the many video accessories available for adding spice to your calls. A software program called YouCam ([www.cyberlink.com/multi/products/main\\_125\\_en\\_US.html](http://www.cyberlink.com/multi/products/main_125_en_US.html)) came with my HP computer. I don't even remember activating it, but it appeared during one of our video calls with our grandkids. It's

Skype is an Internet phone-call service that offers free video calling. In many ways it is a high-powered instant messenger, but it has established a reputation as *the* place to make your video calls. To take advantage of the power of Skype, you need power on your end—in the form of computing muscle and Internet bandwidth. It is also helpful to have a higher-quality webcam.

As for webcams, there is one source of reviews, Cowboy Frank ([cowboyfrank.net/webcams/index.htm#reviews](http://cowboyfrank.net/webcams/index.htm#reviews)), that will tell you almost everything that you may want to know about selecting and setting up webcams. If you are launching your video calls on a dual processor—or better, a computer with lots of memory—plus cable-modem Internet (DSL at a minimum), then it may be worthwhile to get a higher-end



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# Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

Windows Vista Tips and Tricks  
**“More on Startup Programs: Enabling Disabling”** by Jack Dunning

Jack clears up some issues from a prior column on disabling startup programs in Windows, with more on Software Explorer—and its fate.

After last week's discussion of Software Explorer, I received the following comment from Larry:

*"I tried following the instructions you gave in ComputerEdge, and everything worked until I got to the Software Explorer screen. After selecting (highlighting) a program to disable, I found the Remove and Disable buttons were shadowed and nonfunctional. How does one enable the Disable button?"*

This was my oversight. There are some startup programs that are associated with all users. To enable the Disable button, it's necessary to take administrative control. To do this, you must click "Show for all users" at the bottom of the window (see Figure 1). Once you supply the appropriate credentials, the Disable button and Remove button will be enabled.



Figure 1. How to enable the Disable button.

Another question came from Frank:

*"Reading your article for Tips in Vista about disabling unnecessary startup programs, how do you do this in XP?"*

Fortunately, the method for disabling startup programs in Windows XP still works in Vista. Simply select Run from the Start Menu and enter "msconfig" to open the System Configuration program. Select the Startup tab, deselect programs to be disabled, and click Apply. Do the opposite to re-enable a startup program.

Much of the confusion comes from compatibility issues with different versions of Windows. Going back to Windows 95, the Startup folder used to include programs that needed to be launched at startup (see Figure 2). Simply dragging the program icon into the folder would create a shortcut for launch. The

Startup folder continues to be available in all versions of Windows, but it is not used by all applications. Many programs will create a startup Registry entry, so nothing will appear in the Startup folder. The best way to set programs for loading when you log on is via the program itself—if it has a startup option, and most do. Then the program will determine whether it makes a Registry entry or puts a shortcut in the Startup folder.

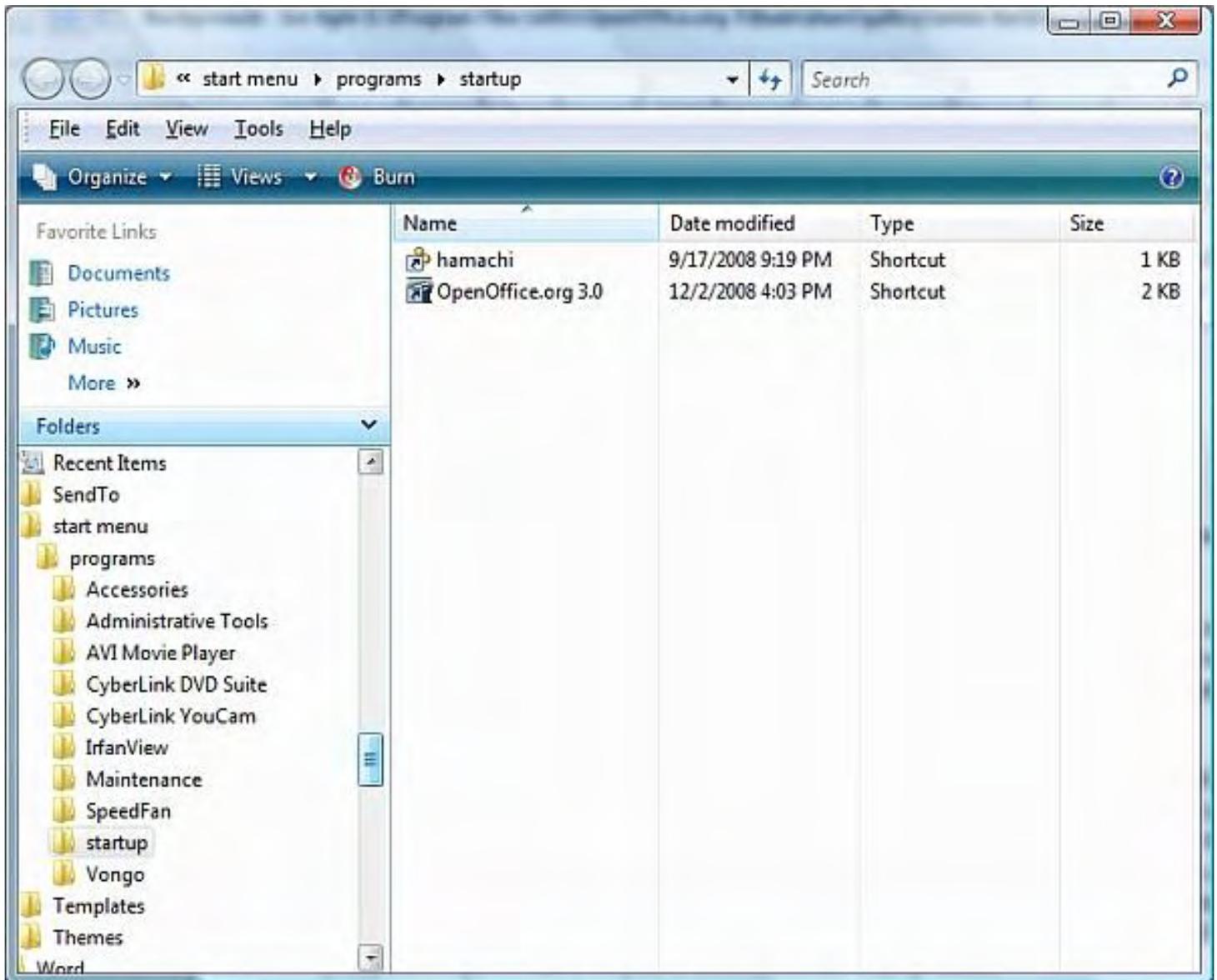


Figure 2. A Window Vista Startup folder.

If you do a search for "startup" (Vista or XP), you will locate two Startup folders. One is for the current user and the other is for all users. If you have a program that you want to launch on startup that does not have a startup option in its setup, then you should create a shortcut (drag program icon) in the appropriate Startup folder, depending upon whether it should start for one or all users.

In both Windows Vista and XP, the new entry in the Startup folder will also appear in the System Configuration/Startup window. Disabling it in System Configuration will remove it from the Startup folder while re-enabling it will put the shortcut back in the Startup folder. In Windows Vista, adding a shortcut into the Startup folder has the same effect upon Software Explorer Startup Programs.

Now for the bad(?) news. Windows 7 does not include Software Explorer. It has been removed from Windows Defender, which will be used primarily for malware protection. However, System Configuration and Startup folders will still be available. Plus, there is an Autorun program (downloadable) that has similar features for controlling startup. One of the ways to set applications for startup in Windows 7 will be by opening the program settings and selecting "Run at startup."

This brings us to how to approach managing startup programs. First, use the application's setup program itself to manage startup settings. If that fails, then use System Configuration (msconfig.exe). In Vista, feel free to use Software Explorer in Windows Defender, but if you move to Windows 7, you may be back to using System Configuration. In some cases, you may want to go directly to the appropriate Startup folder.

Microsoft has created some confusion by offering so many different ways to deal with launching programs at startup. This may be why Software Explorer is being dropped in Windows 7. It looks like System Configuration will probably continue to be the tool to use—at least for now.

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## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

### Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Video Chatting on the Mac” by Wally Wang

Video chatting may never become as common as the early science-fiction movies may have led us to believe, but it's another way to bring people closer together through communication. Also, rumors run rampant on a new MacBook mini, a tip on downloading college lecture podcasts via iTunes U, and a look at the Tee Times golf app.

Every Macintosh, except for the Mac Pro and Mac mini, comes with a built-in webcam and microphone along with a copy of iChat, an instant-messaging program that taps into the AIM (AOL Instant Messenger) network, which is free.

Using iChat, you have the option of chatting by text, audio, or video and audio. You can chat with anyone on the AIM network, whether they're using a Windows PC or a Macintosh.

What makes iChat fun is that you can substitute different backgrounds, so you appear to be standing in front of a beach or the Eiffel Tower. If you're doing a conference call, you could even display the background image of an office while you're actually video chatting from your kitchen or bedroom.



Figure 1. iChat lets you modify the background.

While video chatting may seem futuristic, it can actually get boring really fast. When you're talking to someone, you may start feeling self-conscious about how you look. Then again, you may simply get bored staring at someone's face, knowing that they can see every move you make as well, which takes away the anonymity of being able to talk on the phone while trimming your nails or twirling one finger near the side of your head to show somebody near you that you're talking to somebody who's crazy.

To avoid making your video chats too boring to look at, iChat also lets you chose different visual effects that can twist and distort your face. While this wouldn't be appropriate for a business video chat, it's fine for personal use.

If you have the bandwidth, you can even hold a video conference call where everyone's face appears on a different pane, allowing everyone to see and talk to each other.



Figure 2. Video conferencing can display multiple users.

The main drawback to iChat is that it relies on instant-messaging networks like AIM. If somebody doesn't join an instant-messaging network, you can't video chat with that person.

For another popular alternative to iChat, download a free copy of Skype ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) or OoVoo ([www.oovoo.com](http://www.oovoo.com)), which let you make free calls over the Internet from one computer to another.

As long as each person loads a copy of Skype or OoVoo on their computer and has a high-speed Internet connection, you'll be able to chat with them. If both parties have webcams, you can video chat through either program.

Most people are likely to use video chatting as just another way to communicate and make faces at each other, but video chatting can be crucial for anyone who relies on sign language to communicate. Now they'll be able to "chat" through a video screen.

Video chatting may never become as common as the early science-fiction movies may have led us to

believe, but it can be yet another way to bring people closer together through communication. Now all you need to do is figure out what you want to say and find somebody to say it to.

\* \* \*

The latest rumor claims that Apple will release a MacBook mini laptop with a 10-inch screen, Intel Atom processor, 2GB of RAM, and a 64GB solid state drive for around \$899. While still twice as much as a typical netbook running Windows XP or Linux, this rumored MacBook mini could still prove attractive for its small size, low weight and ability to run any software designed for Mac OS X.

With persistent rumors from multiple sources pointing to a new portable Macintosh with a 10-inch screen, this rumored MacBook mini is likely real, but its actual specifications may still be in doubt. Apple is supposedly readying this MacBook mini for release in June during its annual Apple Developers Conference, which is where Apple will also likely announce further details about Snow Leopard, the next version of Mac OS X.

The latest rumors about Snow Leopard include a new user interface design along with underlying support for multiple processors, which today's operating systems largely treat as a single processor, ignoring the potential of parallel processing.

Since the rumored MacBook mini will supposedly include the NVidia GeForce 9400M graphics chip, Apple might be holding back on the MacBook mini until Snow Leopard can arrive. Snow Leopard's ability to take advantage of a graphics processor would allow the MacBook mini, despite its puny Intel Atom processor, to run far faster than similar netbooks running Windows XP or Linux.

While nobody doubts that Apple is working on multiple projects that may never be released, the MacBook mini seems a likely product in one form or another. Whether Apple releases the MacBook mini this June or not, the sure bet is that Apple will definitely release new MacBook models this summer with faster processors and larger hard disks to go along with its aluminum unibody case. If you want an Apple laptop but can afford to wait, wait until June and you should be rewarded with newer models at today's prices.

\* \* \*

Whether you went to college or not, you can expand your mind by listening to podcasts of college lectures from all over the country. Just load iTunes (either on Windows or a Mac) and click iTunes U in the iTunes STORE panel. Now you'll see the Categories list, offering podcasts of college lectures from the Humanities, Social Science, Engineering, or Health & Medicine.



Figure 3. iTunes U provides free access to college lectures.

Some of the colleges offering free podcasts include Stanford, Duke, MIT and Cornell University. By taking advantage of these free college lecture podcasts, you can turn your iPod into an educational tool and further your learning at your own pace without the stress of final exams or tuition.

After you get your college degree, you'll hopefully be able to get a job (or start your own company) and have time to play golf. If so, grab a free copy of the iPhone app Tee Times, which lets you reserve a tee time at major golf courses around the country. Just pick a course, a time, and the number of players, and you can reserve your tee time from the convenience of your iPhone. Best of all, Tee Times is free, so if you like golf, grab a copy of the app today.



Figure 4. Tee Times lets you reserve a tee time at your favorite golf course.

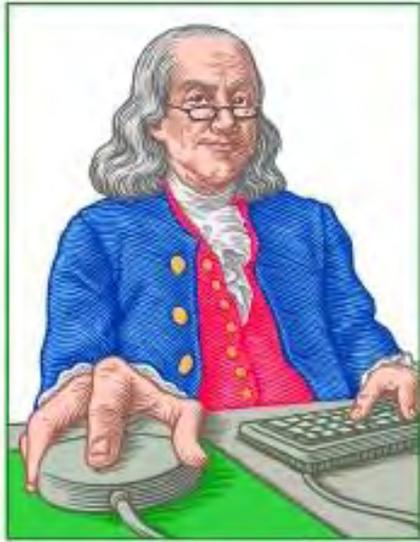
In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around *The Byte Buyer* dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

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](http://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](http://www.nostarch.com). He is also the co-author of *Strategic Entrepreneurism* from [www.selectbooks.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang)). Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com).

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## LITTLE LINUX LESSONS

**"AN INVESTMENT  
IN LINUX KNOWLEDGE  
PAYS THE BEST  
INTEREST."**

Little Linux  
Lessons: Tips  
and Tricks from  
Users

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

A reader offers advice about installing Linux from an external device; and a tip on doing all your commands on the same line using semicolons.

### More on Puppy Linux

This is in response to K.P's letter about problems with installing Puppy Linux with an external CD:

I use Grafpup 2.0, which is based on Puppy Linux. I have gotten it to boot off USB devices where they are not in the BIOS. When you go to build the OS on the USB device, you are given the option of creating a boot floppy, so that you boot from the floppy, which in turn finds the OS on a USB device (HD or Flash drive), or even your Windows drive, providing it's on a Fat32 partition rather than NTFS.

DSL does this too, but Grafpup includes gparted, which I use to recover data off hard drives whose computers have crashed.

Dan Castro  
San Diego, Calif.

### Doing More Linux Commands at Once

If you want to enter a number of commands at the same time—no problem. Just put a semicolon between each command (;). In the following example, the cd (change directory) command is used to change to the /var/log directory and ls (list) command is used to list the files—both on the same line.

```
[/]$ cd /var/log;ls
auth.log                messages.0.bz2
auth.log.0.bz2          messages.1.bz2
auth.log.1.bz2          messages.2.bz2
auth.log.2.bz2          messages.3.bz2
auth.log.3.bz2          messages.4.bz2
auth.log.4.bz2          messages.5.bz2
auth.log.5.bz2          mount.today
auth.log.6.bz2          mount.yesterday
```

```
auth.log.7.bz2      pf.today
cron                ppp.log
cron.0.bz2         samba
cron.1.bz2         security
cron.2.bz2         sendmail.st
cron.3.bz2         sendmail.st.0
lastlog            sendmail.st.9
lpd-errs           setuid.today
maillog            setuid.yesterday
maillog.7.bz2     xferlog
messages
[/var/log]$
```

Next time, do all your commands on the same line with semicolons.

### Give Us Your Linux Tips and/or 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](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com)).*

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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 *ComputerEdge* 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](mailto: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  
*ComputerEdge*

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*ComputerEdge* 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 "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com).

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## Rob, The Computer Tutor

### Rob, The ComputerTutor Does Visual Basic for Applications

“More Mailing List Database” by Rob Spahitz

Last week, we rebuilt our database and started exploring how to import data into our tables. This week, we continue learning about importing and transferring data between tables.

Last week, we rebuilt our database and started exploring how to import data into our tables. This week, we continue learning about importing and transferring data between tables.

To retrieve last week's database, proceed to my *ComputerEdge* Web page at [www.dogopoly.com/ce](http://www.dogopoly.com/ce).

As part of last week's efforts, we imported a list of state codes and area codes into a table called `tbl_Import_AreaCodeInfo` from an arbitrary Web site: [www.tollfree.att.net/area\\_codes.html](http://www.tollfree.att.net/area_codes.html).

Normally, I'd be careful about grabbing stuff from a Web site (since it could be copyrighted and the site might include spyware), but I think we're safe with the ATT.net site, and the information we are gathering is public information.

Looking in the table above, we see three columns of information: state codes, area codes and a collection of cities. Let's start by populating the states table with the states and then add the area codes. Pulling out cities will be a bit trickier, so we'll hold off on that.

Let's head over to the Query section to isolate the data that we want, and then we can push it into the proper table. Create a query in Design mode, select the above import table, and close the "add tables" window. Double-click on State to add it to the first column, and then view the selection in Datasheet view. It should appear something like Figure 1.

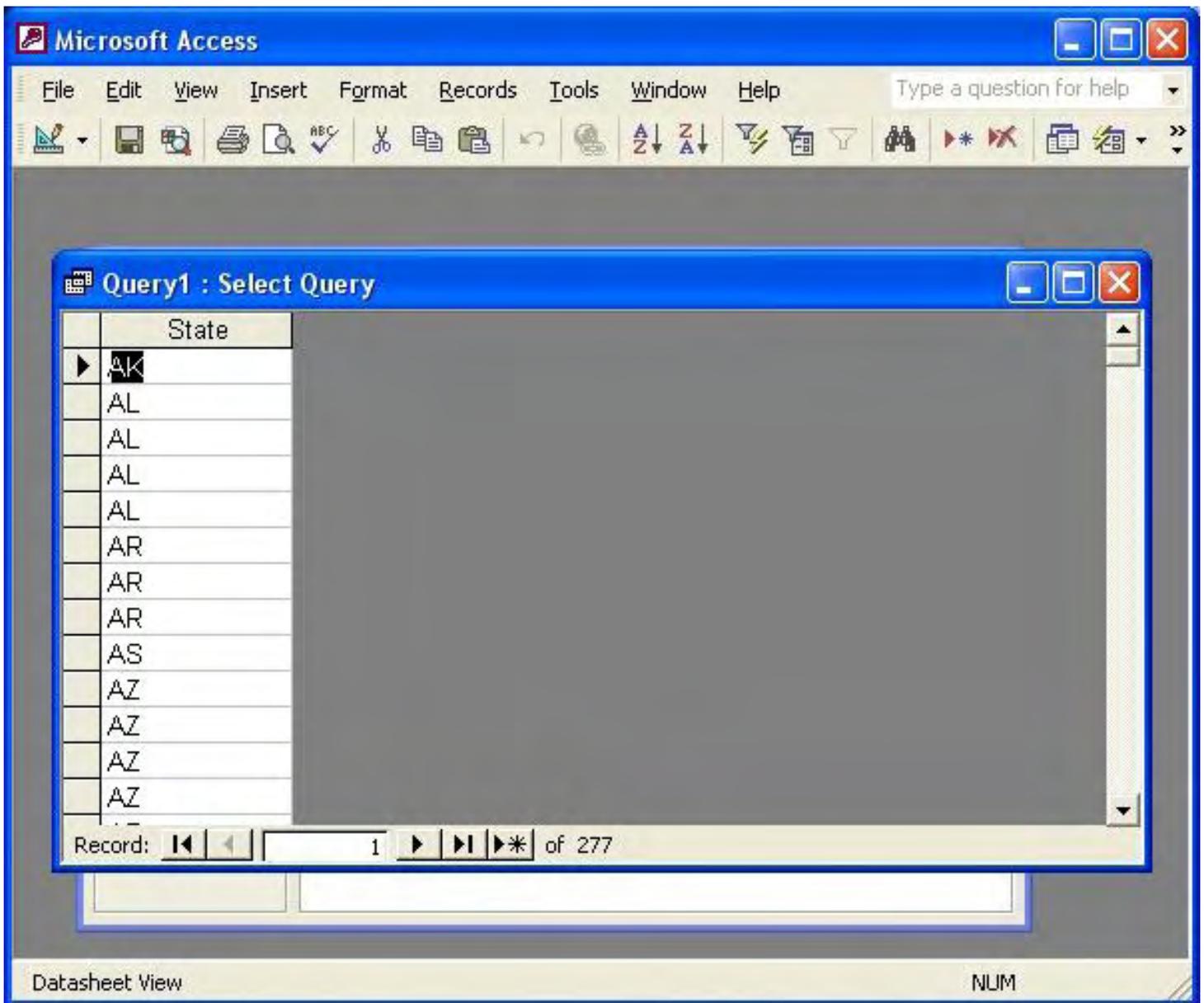


Figure 1. List of imported states.

This has several problems. One is that we have duplicate entries. We probably don't want more than one in your states table. And if you scrolled down the list, you'll find some entries that are not states and are not two characters long. We want to filter those out, too.

Let's tackle the duplicate problem first. There are several solutions, but the one I like is to use the DISTINCT keyword. Unfortunately, I haven't found a way for Access to directly use that, so I jump into SQL and add it. So use menu View/SQL View and add the word DISTINCT (upper or lower case is fine) just after the word SELECT, and it should look like this:

```
SELECT DISTINCT tbl_Import_AreaCodeInfo.State
FROM tbl_Import_AreaCodeInfo;
```

When you view the data again, you now get something like Figure 2.

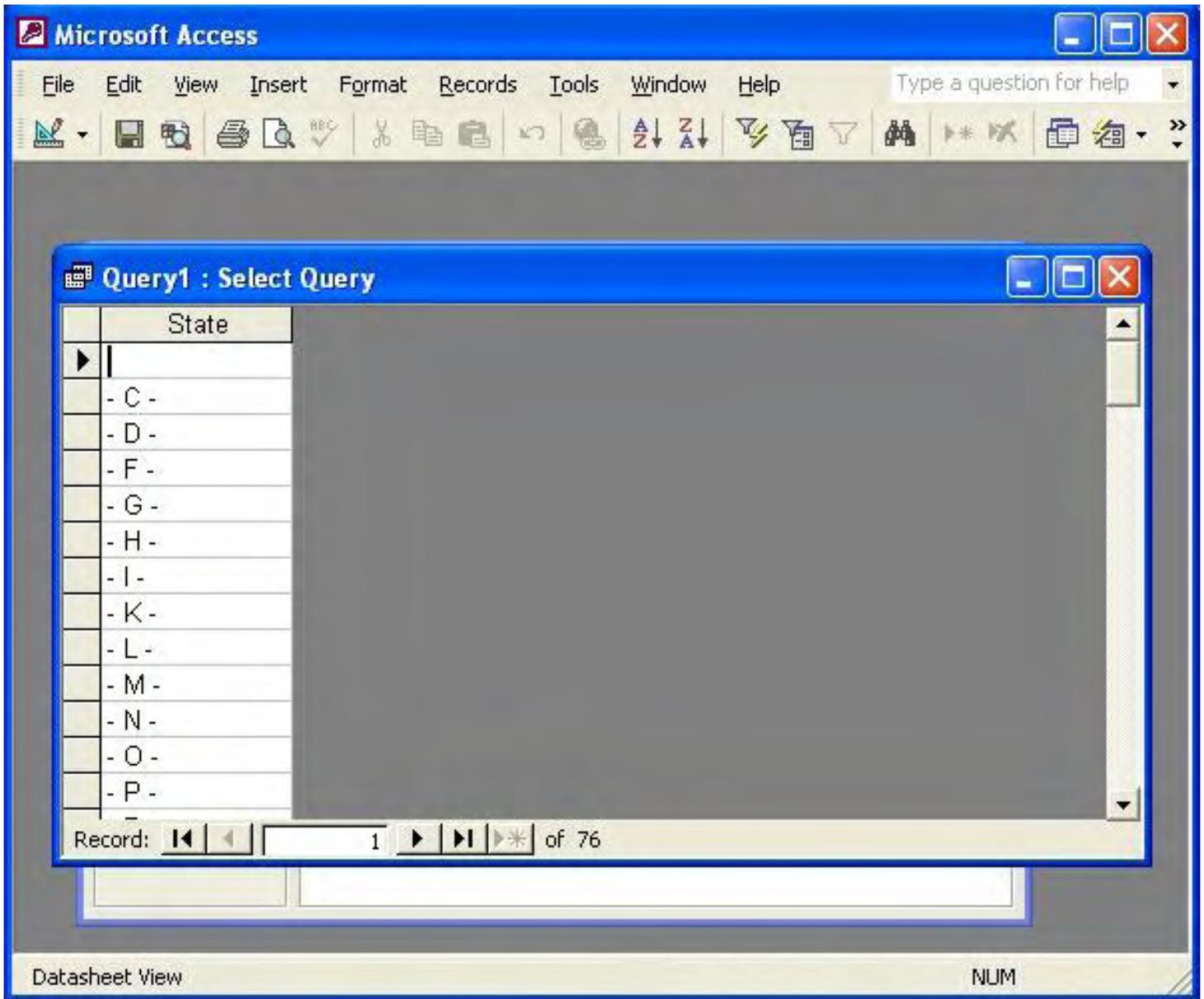


Figure 2. Distinct list of states.

Here we see some bizarre items that just happened to be in the original table from the Web page. There are several ways to filter these out, such as ignoring anything that starts with a dash, or our solution, skipping anything that is not two characters long.

Back in Design view, go to a new column, and in the Field row enter: `len(state)`. When you leave the field, it will add an arbitrary name. We really don't care about that for our temporary task. Next, in the Criteria row, enter the number 2. This will ask Access to show only those state records that have a length of two. At this point, it should look similar to Figure 3.

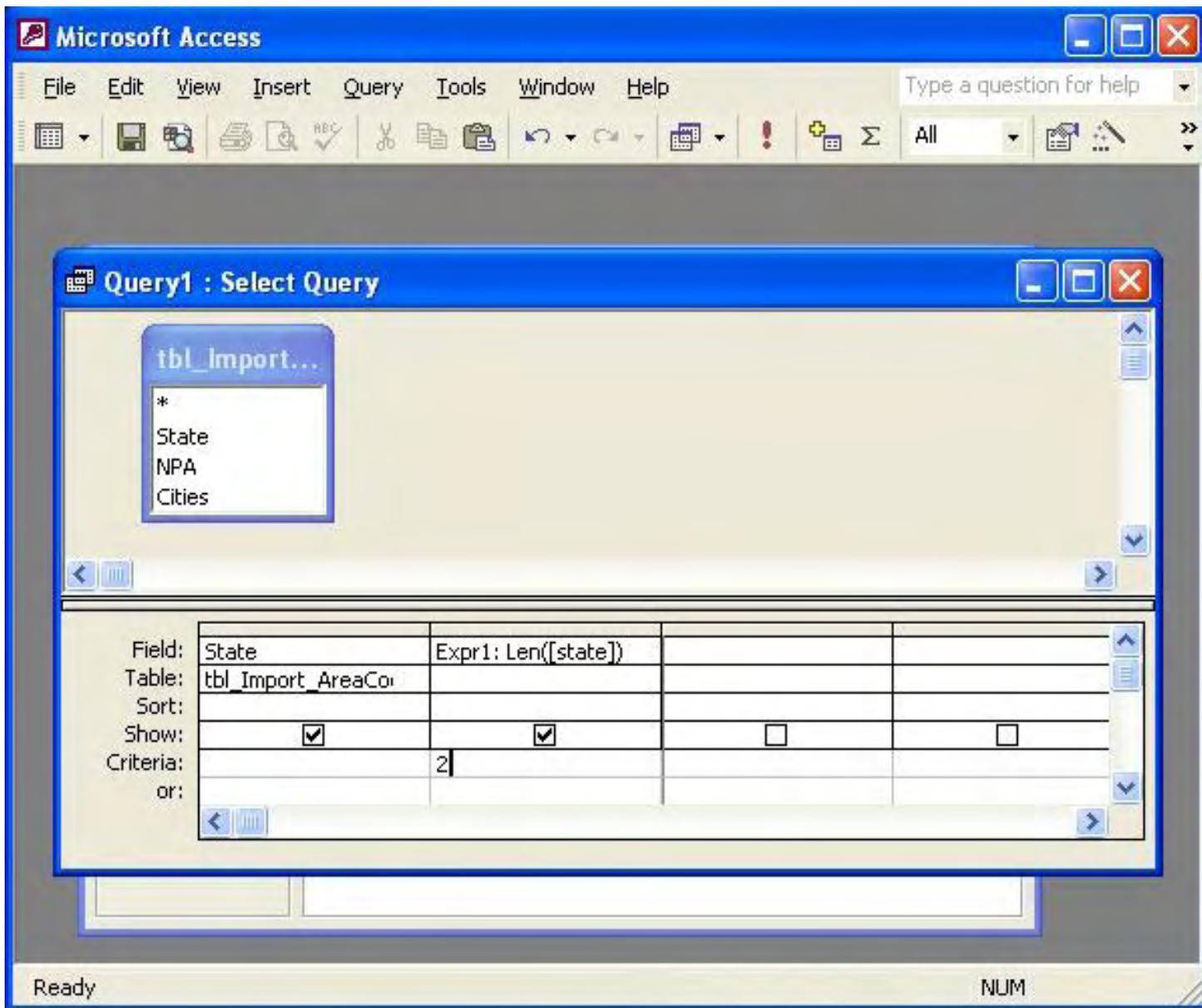


Figure 3. Selecting states with a length of 2.

When you preview, you see two columns: one with two-character states and one with the number 2. To complete the task, we will probably want to hide the "2" column, since that will not be helpful when inserting into our States table. However, there's one more consideration. If you look down the list, you may see that there are some codes that are not really state codes, like AS, DC, GU, MP, PR and VI. That's why your total count comes out to 56 (as seen in the bottom of the window).

So what are those codes? You probably recognize some, like DC for Washington, D.C., and PR for Puerto Rico. You may also recognize the others: AS for American Samoa, GU for Guam, MP for Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and VI for Virgin Islands. In this case, the Web site actually provided the answer in the City column. And if you go back to the original list, you'll see that we cast away CNMI, which is apparently another code for MP. Also note that on that same Web site, it lists the Canadian provinces, but for some reason, they do not put the traditional two-letter postal codes. Then again, this is a phone company, not a postal company.

OK, so back to those additional six items. Should we add them? Should we filter them? Should we keep

some of them? If you decide to filter one or more, you would want to add them into the criteria. In my case, I'm going to exclude the U.S. territories and PR and just keep DC. To do this, add list into the Criteria row of the first column with State in it. Since this might be too long to see, you may want to right-click on the box and select Zoom, then enter the following: not "AS" and not "GU" and not "MP" and not "PR" and not "VI."

Click on the OK button. When you preview, you should see your 50 states, plus DC. Note that we imported them alphabetically, but that was just luck. If you wanted to explicitly import alphabetically, you should sort the column. But it typically doesn't matter how your data is stored, since you can sort the data whenever you query it, either for another query, for a form or for a report.

Now that you have the list of items you want, the next step is to transfer them into the proper place: tblState.StateCode. The one thing that will be missing is the StateName, but we'll have to go elsewhere for that (like the U.S. Postal Service Web site), since the above site did not include that information.

To properly insert this data into tblState, let's change our "select" query to an "append" query. There's a toolbar entry for that, next to the red exclamation point, or you can go to menu Query and select "Append Query." You get the window shown in Figure 4.

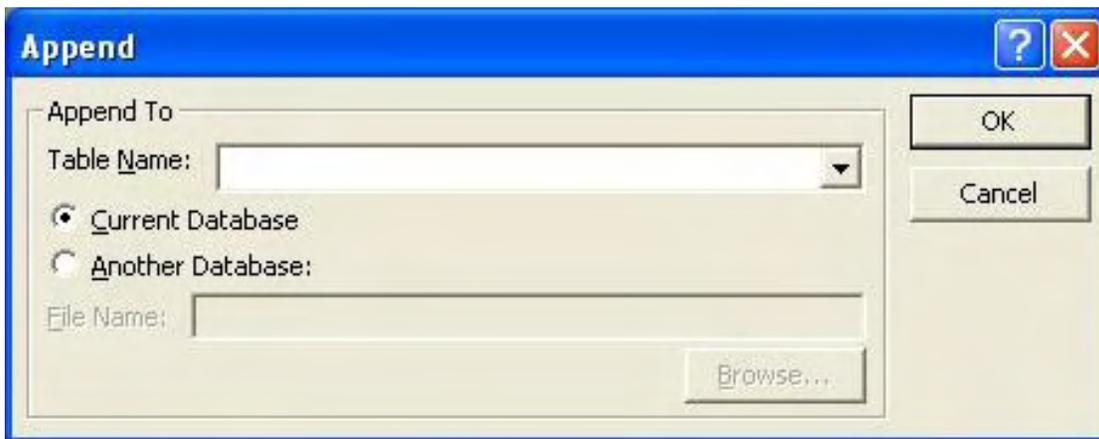


Figure 4. Append Query window.

From the drop-down list next to Table Name, select tblState and click the OK button. Your Query window now changes slightly. Instead of the Show row, you get an Append To row. The idea here is that when you run this query it will take the data that it selects and append (insert) it into the field that you specify in the other table that you just selected. In this case, we want to take the filtered set of states from the import table and insert them into the StateCode field of tblState, so select that from the drop-down list in the Append To row. And since we don't want the second column to be appended, we simply don't bother assigning it to anything. You should now see something like Figure 5.

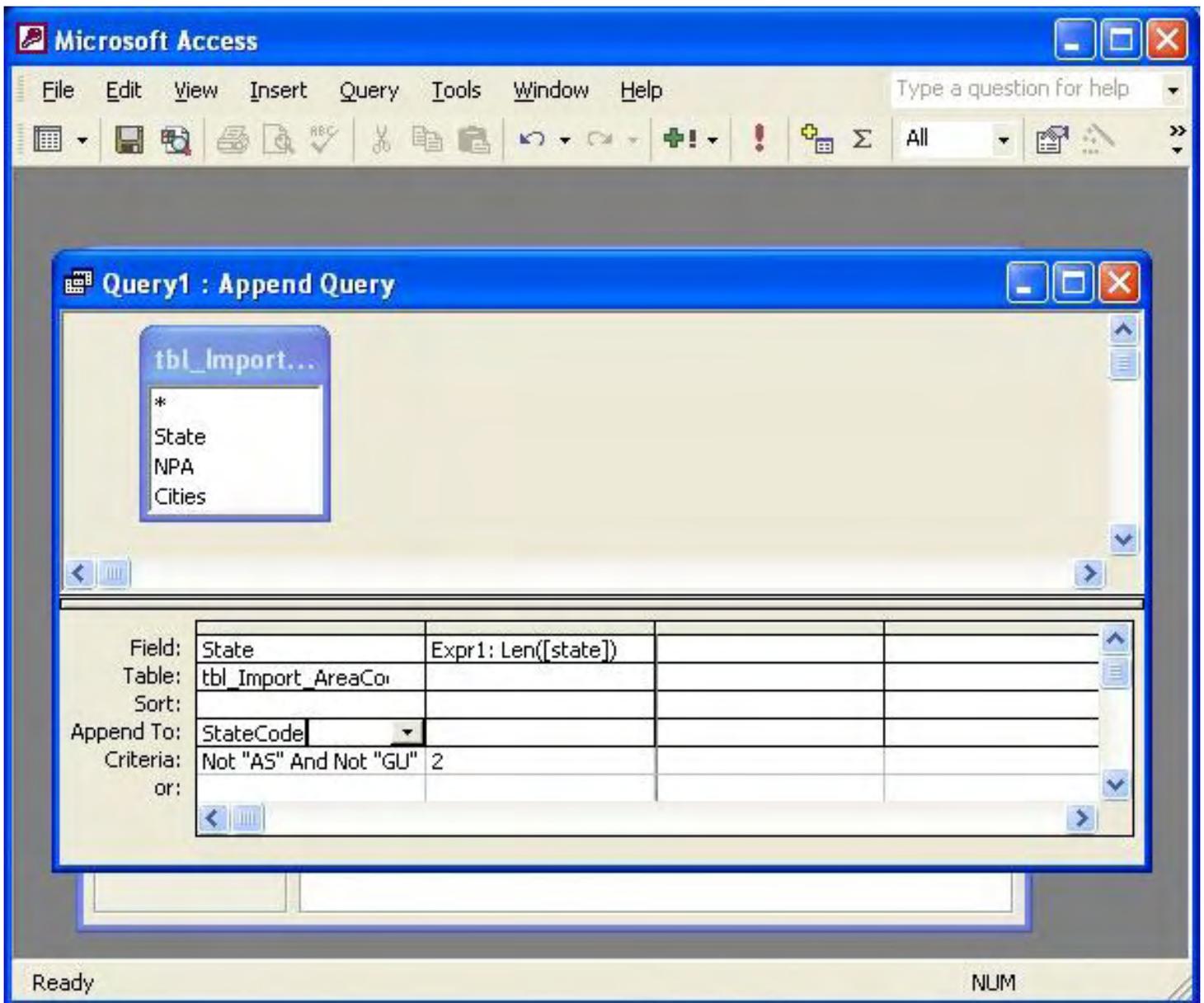


Figure 5. Data to append to StateCode.

You should now preview your data to ensure that you got it right. It should be correct, since we checked before changing it into an Append Query, but it never hurts. Switch to Datasheet view, and you should see the 51 items we selected. Now back to Design view. Click on the toolbar's red exclamation point, or choose menu Query/Run, and you should get a warning message, as seen in Figure 6.

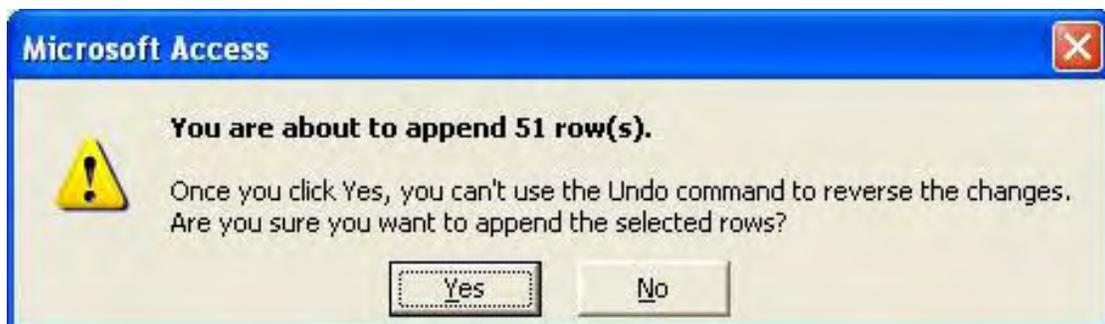


Figure 6. Insert warning.

This confirmation shows that it will insert the 51 records that we selected into the specified table. Click the Yes button to continue. Your States table should now have the 51 entries. Since we don't need this query anymore, you can close it and not save it (or save it as something like qryImportStates\_Old if you want to keep it for reference).

Well, we're out of space again. Next week, we'll import the area codes into tblAreaCode and also update the states to all have the proper country. Then we'll see if we can figure out how to grab the state names from somewhere and insert them next to the state codes.

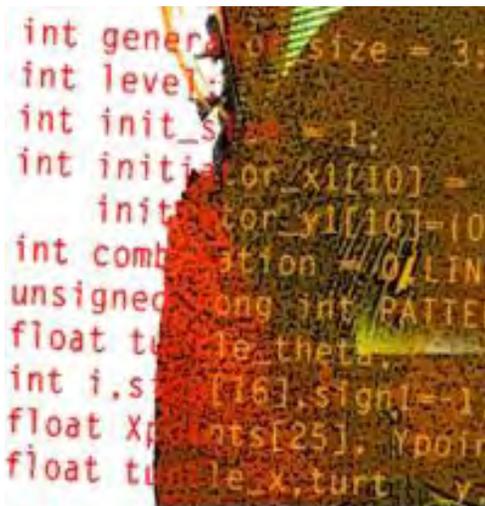
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Rob has been in the computer industry for over 25 years and is currently a part-time teacher, offering classes in Excel, Access, Visual Basic, and a variety of other technical tools. He has loved *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and can be contacted at *RSpahitz@Dogopoly.com*.

Looking for a great boardgame? Grab a copy from DOGOPOLY.com (*dogopoly.com*) and have a dog-gone great time.



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## Introduction to REALbasic

**“Part 1: The Roots of REALbasic”** by Wally Wang

If you're discovering REALbasic for the first time, get ready to experience a level of programming productivity that few other languages can match—whether you're using Windows, Linux or Mac OS X. (Part 1 of a four-part series.)

## Programmer's Corner

When Microsoft first introduced Windows, it was a real pain for developers. All the familiar tools that programmers used with MS-DOS wouldn't work to create Windows programs. If you wanted to write a Windows program, you had to learn C and learn all the intricacies of the Windows API (Application Programming Interface). This wasn't necessarily difficult, just time-consuming. If you didn't want to learn C and you wanted to write Windows programs, you were pretty much out of luck.

Then Microsoft introduced a revolutionary programming tool called Visual Basic, which made writing Windows programs easy in two ways. First, instead of learning the cryptic C programming language, you could use the much friendlier and easier BASIC programming language.

Second, writing Windows programs meant creating three parts of a program. First, you had to write commands to create all the user interface—all the windows, dialog boxes and buttons that you see in every program. Next, you had to write commands that made that user interface actually work when the user clicked, dragged, or tried to manipulate it. Finally, you had to write commands that actually made your program do something.

Creating these three parts of a program meant that programming was tedious, time-consuming and error-prone. If any of those three parts of your program didn't work, your program wouldn't work. Programming Windows with C meant writing, debugging and testing all three parts of your program.

In one swoop, Visual Basic eliminated these barriers to Windows programming. Instead of writing commands to create a user interface and then a second set of commands to make that user interface work, Visual Basic just let you draw your user interface without writing a single command at all. After you drew your user interface, it would work perfectly every time. With Visual Basic, you could create a working user interface in a fraction of the time required to create that same user interface using C.

After drawing your user interface in Visual Basic, you just had to write simple BASIC commands to make your program work. Where C made you write commands to create your user interface, commands to make your user interface work, and commands to make your program do something worthwhile, Visual Basic

just let you focus on writing commands to make your program work, essentially cutting your programming time by two-thirds.

This new programming paradigm, dubbed rapid-application development (RAD), made Visual Basic the best programming tool around. If you wanted to write Windows programs quickly with less code, the best choice was clearly Visual Basic.

Visual Basic took the programming world by storm and went through six different versions before Microsoft made a fatal mistake. First, Visual Basic was great for creating Windows programs, but it could never create cross-platform programs that ran on other operating systems. While C programmers could transplant their programming skills to program practically anything, Visual Basic programmers were stuck writing Windows programs. That in itself wasn't so bad while Windows remained the dominant operating system on the planet. The problem began when Windows began to slip with the growing popularity of both Linux and Mac OS X.

A second, more crucial mistake that Microsoft made was changing the Visual Basic language. Microsoft developed a new programming framework dubbed .NET. The idea behind .NET was to allow multiple programming languages to work seamlessly together. It worked, but the cost of making Visual Basic adapt to this new .NET framework meant that Microsoft had to change the Visual Basic language.

Suddenly, Visual Basic programs created with versions 1.0 through 6.0 wouldn't work at all with the latest version of Visual Basic dubbed VB.NET without extensive modification. Even worse, the changes Microsoft made to the new VB.NET language made it nearly as difficult to learn as C#, another language that Microsoft developed based on the C and C++ programming languages.

With the Visual Basic language fractured and mutated from a friendly, easy-to-learn language to a convoluted, difficult-to-learn language, Microsoft effectively killed every advantage Visual Basic held for writing programs quickly and easily.

Then REALbasic appeared. REALbasic essentially took the same RAD programming paradigm that made Visual Basic popular and brought this programming tool to the Macintosh. For the first time, programming the Macintosh was suddenly easy, quick and fun.

REALbasic then went one step further and created versions capable of running on Windows, Linux and Mac OS X. Unlike Visual Basic, which limited you to writing Windows programs, REALbasic allowed you to write a program once and create three different versions that could run on Windows, Linux and Mac OS X with minimal modifications.

More importantly, REALbasic was so close to the original Visual Basic language that many Visual Basic programmers found they could take their own Visual Basic programs, recompile them under REALbasic, and essentially turn their previous Windows-only program into a Windows, Linux and Mac OS X program, tripling their potential market in an instant.

While Visual Basic still remains popular, its popularity is nowhere near its previous high and programmers are defecting from Visual Basic every day. In contrast, REALbasic continues to get better, and with the ability to run on the three most popular operating systems in the world, REALbasic is only gaining a larger, loyal following. For many programmers, their secret weapon for creating programs quickly is REALbasic.

If you're discovering REALbasic for the first time, get ready to experience a level of programming productivity that few other languages can match. Whether you're using Windows, Linux, or Mac OS X, you can create programs for yourself, for your job, or for the general public. Whether you want to program for fun, for a job, or for a career, you'll find that REALbasic finally makes programming available for the rest of us.

To grab a trial version of REALbasic, visit REAL Software ([www.realsoftware.com](http://www.realsoftware.com)). REALbasic runs on Windows, Linux and Mac OS X, so grab a copy for your computer and you can start learning programming today.

*Next week, "Getting to Know REALbasic".*

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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.

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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](http://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](http://www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang)).

Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com).

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# Industry News . . .

## Industry News

### “IT Professional Nominations”

by Christine Carter

The Network Professional Association, in conjunction with Culminis, Interop and Cisco Press, announces that nominations are open for the 8th annual Awards for Professionalism program.

### **Nominations Are Now Open!**

Who do you remember? The architect of that great IT project? The sage IT mentor? The always-engaged IT volunteer? All IT professionals are invited to "sport their professionalism" and let the world know their choice for the best IT Pros. In addition, employers or coworkers: If you know an IT Pro who is outstanding, submit a nomination!

The Network Professional Association (NPA), in conjunction with Culminis, Interop and Cisco Press, is proud to announce that nominations are open for the 8th annual Awards for Professionalism program. Entry details and other information can be found at: [www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org](http://www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org). Join with us as we celebrate excellence of the Network Professional when we announce the winners at Interop Las Vegas ([www.interop.com/](http://www.interop.com/)), Mandalay Bay, in May 2009.

Without a doubt, being a network professional can be challenging. Keeping up with the wide spectrum of new technologies, maintaining certifications, continuing education, working within budget constraints and company policies while trying to influence the powers that be to see things the IT way are all issues that face the IT professional. As defined by the NPA, a network professional is someone who adheres to a code of ethics, continually demonstrates professional development and knowledge, and follows the latest best-practice standards.

Since 1991, the nonprofit NPA has served as an advocate for the international network computing professional with a focus on professionalism and ethics. The Association's directive is to support and promote the role of the network professional on a global basis. The awards program was designed to encourage and recognize the development of higher standards among its members and other network professionals.

The NPA is honored to be working with its sponsors on the award program. All Network Professionals should get to know Culminis. It is an international, not-for-profit organization devoted to the development and growth of the IT community. Interop is the leading global technology event with the most comprehensive IT conference and exhibition available. Cisco Press is the official publisher of Cisco

networking technology, Cisco certification self-study, and Cisco Networking Academy Program materials.

Looking around the world, the NPA is searching for examples of the consummate IT professional. In the past, we have found them in the United States, Russia, England, Germany, Dubai and Canada. Since 2001, more than 30 outstanding IT Pros have been recognized for their achievements and professionalism.

The first awards in 2002 included categories such as Best Rookie and Youngest Networking Person. After a few minor changes, the awards categories have basically remained the same, as have the requirements and judging guidelines. Last year's winners in the following categories were:

Best Networking Professional Career Achievement Award: Debra Rowe — Knowledge Management Lead for the Operations Group, Information Technology Directorate, Air Traffic Organization of the Federal Aviation Administration, West Columbia, South Carolina.

Best Mentor Award: Boris Jocoy — President, Tech Brainy Consulting, Aliso Viejo, California

Professional Excellence and Innovation Award: Corporate Fortune X: Michael Morris — Technical Team Lead and Network Architect — IT Communications Engineering, NetApp, RTP, North Carolina

Professional Excellence and Innovation Award: Government: James E. Atkinson — Budget Analyst, Special Operations Command Europe, Stuttgart, Germany

Professional Excellence and Innovation Award: Education: Bill Maynard — CIO/COO, NetCom America, Carlsbad, California.

Top of the Mark Volunteer Award: Adnan Rafik — Principal Consultant, IT Selekt Consulting and Solutions, United Arab Emirates (Dubai)

It is time again for you to join the search for this year's nominees who have demonstrated the best balance of professional responsibilities. These responsibilities include technical competency, proper professional ethics, industry credentials and current, relevant education, community and industry contributions, leadership and professional affiliations. Submit your nominations now! Nomination forms can be found at [www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org](http://www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org). The deadline for submission is April 13, 2009.

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Christine Carter is System Engineer with TechTeam ([www.techteam.com/](http://www.techteam.com/)) and a member of San Diego Network Professional Association which is hosting this international awards program ([www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org](http://www.AwardsForProfessionalism.org)).

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## EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“I'm in the Mood to . . . Upgrade” by Jack Dunning



Someday, people may say that the whole Vista debacle was perpetrated to make Windows 7 look better. Plus, will Windows Sideshow make it?

One rumor is that Windows 7 will be released by October 2009. Some believe that it may be out as early as this summer. The consensus is that XP owners will finally be in a mood to upgrade. It's a boost that the economy could certainly use, since most Windows 7 users will likely be getting new hardware. The older XP hardware is wearing out.

It's notable how much of Vista is being left out of Windows 7. Most people are saying good riddance. Every time I read a review of the most recent release of 7, it keeps getting better. The aura around the newest version of Windows is so powerful that users will expect it to be bug free. (That's never happened to a Microsoft product—and never will.) Someday people will say that the whole Vista debacle was perpetrated to make Windows 7 look better. Genius!

There is one aspect of Windows Vista that has never panned out—at least, not yet. Windows Vista machines come with a feature called Windows SideShow. (To view what you never knew you ever had, type "sideshow" into the Start Search field of the Start menu in Vista.) Windows SideShow is designed to work with peripheral devices (extra displays, Bluetooth clock radios, cell phones, etc.). The idea was that the computer would feed SideShow devices with software gadgets (e-mail, calendar, weather, etc.) that could be accessed without even turning on the computer. The problem is that very few SideShow-capable devices were ever built. There were a few laptops with SideShow displays on the outside of the case, but few of them were ever used. Many people are predicting the death of SideShow. Perhaps they're right, but Microsoft hasn't quite given up. SideShow is included in Windows 7.

Much of the innovation in the computer market involves building a product and throwing it against the wall (or out into the market) to see if it will stick. Windows SideShow is such a product. It seems like a good idea. Who wouldn't want to be able to access many of their Internet functions without turning on their computer? An uber-clock-radio could provide us with basic traffic, meteorological, calendar, and e-mail information when it wakes us up in the morning. It's the logical extension of computer/Internet technology. However, if you're one of the many who leaves their computer on all the time, it seems a bit redundant.

From Microsoft's perspective, why not leave SideShow in its latest operating system? It's already built, and no one knows who will come up with the clever application that will make SideShow the next iPod-type market penetrator. If Windows 7 turns out to be the hit that many analysts are predicting, then it will be a huge market for anyone who can figure out how to build something to use SideShow—and get people to want it.

There will be plenty of people looking at the possibilities. They are testing and throwing their ideas against the wall. Maybe some of them will stick.

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## Editor's Letters

**“Readers write in with letters to the editor.”** by  
ComputerEdge Staff

"Online Fraud and Telephone Fraud," "Digital Dave:  
Unexpected Shutdowns," "Running Antivirus from a USB  
Drive"

### **Online Fraud and Telephone Fraud**

[This letter is in regard to Wally Wang's March 20 article, "Online Fraud 101."]

Similar things have been happening over the phone, and they appear to be coming out of Indonesia (066 area code). You get a call that there is something urgent about your credit card or service warranty, and they have been trying to reach you, in a very urgent voice. When you get to speak to a person, they actually are not representing a bank or anything else. They are phishing for information, and I just let them know they are a fraud and they very quickly hung up.

-Suan McClure, San Diego, Calif.

### **Digital Dave: Unexpected Shutdowns**

[The following letters are in regard to Digital Dave's March 13 column, where Mike wrote in about his Vista PC randomly shutting down on him.]

Be sure to check that there is not an accumulation of dirt/dust/grit around the bases of the memory modules. Clean it out, and you will probably need to do the same with the metal CPU cooler fins.

-Bill Gilbert, Melaque, Mexico

Regarding [Dave's] advice regarding [Mike's PC] shutting down in the middle of working on the computer, I have recently seen a growing trend of some rootkit viruses that shut down some systems. I am a computer tech and do this every day. I recommend running SUPERAntiSpyware (freeware) before investing in a new power supply. It is very good at eradicating bugs—especially recently, with all their new updates.

-Raam Summers, Aiken, SC

When you clean the CPU (or video card) heatsink/fan with a vacuum *or* compressed air, do not spin up/over-rev the fan. The bearing can become damaged. Stick a toothpick or something non-static-causing into the fan to keep it from turning, then apply the air, whichever direction it is flowing.

-Chuck Farmer, Broomfield, Co.

Check the voltage in the wall outlet. I had the same problem, changed the fan, added a fan, nothing! Finally I had to install a voltage conditioner. Also check for dust accumulation on RAM modules.

-José Miguel, Tijuana, Mexico

### **Running Antivirus from a USB Drive**

[The following letters are in regard to Digital Dave's March 13 column, where Charlie wrote in about wanting to run antivirus software via a USB drive.]

Don't do it! Use a CD instead. I've seen some viruses and worms automatically infect executables and other files as soon as they're accessed. A safer alternative would be to use a CD. It's not as fast, but it can't be written to easily, unlike a flash drive that can be easily written to.

-David Eddleman, Vista, Calif.

The Web site *www.portablefreeware.com* has all kinds of programs that run from USB drives—games, office suites, utilities, etc.

-Thornton Stewart, Houston, Texas

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*ComputerEdge* 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 "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*.

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