ComputorEdge™ Online — 07/24/09

This issue:
The Evolution of the Home Network

We started out only wanting to share the Internet or a printer. Now, we can do so much more with a home network.

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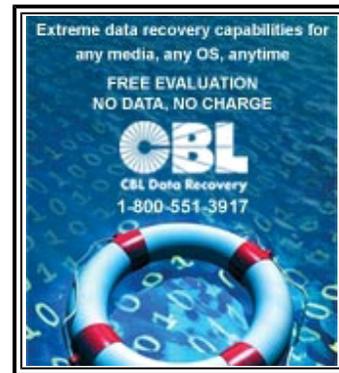
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Digital Dave

"Digital Dave answers your tech questions." by *Digital Dave*

How can you prevent Microsoft's Service Pack 3 from installing—and would you want to?; A reader wants to install Linux on a laptop that already has Vista; a reader needs help setting up a wireless printer.

Dear Digital Dave,

I download and install all Microsoft updates; therefore, I did not want to download and install Service Pack 3. I installed an SP-blocking tool, and it worked for over a year.

Suddenly, the files were downloaded, and they remain. Every day when I start the computer, the yellow shield reminds me, and I click cancel.

Is there any way I can get this download off my computer? I learn so much from you.

Sally (age 72)
Albert Lea, MN

Dear Sally,

There is a surefire way to get rid of that pesky download—install it! There are a number of reasons why you should. (I would guess that most of the problems with SP3 have been addressed in the last year.)

• First, there are often updates included in a Service Pack that may not have been in an earlier update.

• Second, if there is another Service Pack, SP4, you won't be able to install it until you upgrade to SP3.

• Third, about this time next year, Microsoft is dropping support for SP2. Therefore, you won't be able to get any updates without SP3 being installed.

Outside of installing SP3, I would guess that you will want to keep your "cancel" finger healthy.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I went back to school get my Associates Degree in computer programming. One of my computer teachers told me that I should start learning Linux, because programmers use Linux more than other operating systems. He suggested that we should install it in an old desktop.

I'm in my third semester of school and I use my laptop 24/7. Could I install Linux on my laptop with Vista on it?

Conrad Saul
Chula Vista, CA

Dear Conrad,

While I don't necessarily agree that programmers use Linux more than any other operating system, I do agree that it is worthwhile to be comfortable with Linux. The command interface in Linux appears in some form in virtually every other type of computer. The Mac is based upon FreeBSD, another Unix-like operating system, and Windows offers the Command Window, which is similar to working on the old MS-DOS systems.

Having an understanding of how to work from a prompt is useful to any programmer. However, the "real" programming tends to be operating-system independent, unless you're working in something like .Net from Microsoft.

There are a number of ways that you can use Linux on your Vista computer. I will start with the least desirable way and work my way up to how you should do it—especially since you are a student.

First, you could repartition your hard drive and make your computer dual bootable—either Vista or Linux. When a hard drive is partitioned, parts of the drive are set aside as if they were separate drives. I know that many people do this, but I would recommend it only if it were to be a semi-permanent solution, where you would be using both partitions on a regular basis.

A less permanent and easier solution is setting up a virtual machine with VMware. VMware has a free version (*www.vmware. com/products/esxi/*) that may do the job for you. The VMware will actually set up another computer on your computer so that you can install another OS. While a virtual machine will use space on your hard drive, it is a better solution than partitioning the hard drive, which is more or less permanent.

In your situation, where you want Linux primarily as a learning tool, it might be better to use a solution that doesn't involve using your hard drive. Linux—being a light, small operating system—can be booted from either a CD-ROM or a flash drive. This would make your Linux completely portable—you could boot it up on any computer.

Being a regular reader of *ComputorEdge*, I took note of "Linux on a Flash Drive" by Michael Ross in the March 13 issue. If you have your Linux on a flash drive, then you can carry it in your pocket—just in case you need to prove something to a fellow student.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a five-year-old desktop computer running XP Home Edition and using a DSL Internet connection. I just purchased a wireless printer. Is there equipment I can purchase/install to print from the desktop to a wireless printer?

I don't have a wireless network; however, a sales clerk advised a Netgear Wireless-G USB Adapter would do the trick. Searching MS help and support, I can't find any reference to wireless networks on this PC, and Add Printer does not give me a wireless option. Your help and advice is appreciated.

Martha Rosegay
San Diego, CA

Dear Martha,

I can only assume that you purchased a wireless printer so you could put the printer in another room. Otherwise, you would connect directly through the USB port or a network cable.

In order to use a wireless printer, you will need to establish a wireless network. The product mentioned by the salesman would give your computer wireless capability via the USB port on your computer. To connect to the computer with that device, you would need to set up an ad hoc wireless network. (An ad hoc network is a direct connection, usually temporary, between two computers or other network devices.) This type of Wi-Fi network is not as reliable as most wireless networks, and has a range usually limited to about 30 feet. However, if your printer will be close enough, then it is a viable option.

You will need to first install the wireless adapter, set up the ad hoc network (*www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/ networking/setup/adhoc.mspx*), then set up the printer per the printer manual. When setting up the network, you will create a network name and an encryption key (use WPA). Write them down when you set it up. You will need to enter this information during the printer setup.

If you want a more reliable, longer-range Wi-Fi network, then you can spend only a little more and get a Wi-Fi router. Routers are built for this type of networking work. Plus, if you get a router, you don't actually need the wireless adapter for your computer, since you will be able to plug your computer directly into the router, rather than using the wireless adapter suggested by the salesman. Another advantage to using a router is that when you have friends visiting, you can allow them to connect their laptop to your Wi-Fi. It's better than letting them use your computer.

Wireless routers come with direct-computer-connect capabilities. They're needed for setup. You will connect the router between your computer and the DSL modem. (Most router setups are automatic, but following the manual will make any changes easier.) There are a few steps involved in setting up a wireless router—as there are in ad hoc networks (i.e., security WPA, not WEP). Once you have established a wireless network, you will be able to add the printer to the network. If you don't feel nerdy enough to do it yourself, get the geek next door to set up your Wi-Fi network.

Digital Dave

Cool Things to Do With Your Home Network
"Control your own internal network." by Jack Dunning

> Although Internet access has become essential in today's computing environment, it will not negate the importance of the individual computer or the growing relevancy of home networks.

Considering the massive size of the Internet and new Internet-based endeavors such as Google Apps and Windows Live, it's easy to start thinking that in the future all we will need for all of our computing needs is Internet access. The primary purpose of our home network has been a way to get onto the Web. It's commonly predicted that the next generation of computers will be stripped down, requiring only a network card—probably Wi-Fi—to hook up to the Internet.

While the Internet is important, it is only one piece of the computing puzzle. People will never totally abandon their computer programs, flocking only to outside sources for all of their computing needs. Whether it is computer-based programs, locally stored backup or a home media center, many people will want control of their home systems using the Internet for only a few Web applications that suit them—if any. For those people, their internal network will be *their* home system—and all parts of that system will work together.

Although Internet access has become essential in today's computing environment, it will not negate the importance of the individual computer or the growing relevancy of home networks. In the next few years, the home network will become increasingly important to our computing. We are starting to see personal networks come together in an ad hoc fashion as people realize how they can connect the equipment inside the home for better use. The devices making it all possible are now available and, as time goes on, they will drop in price. Rather than merely considering the type and price of a new computer (or printer, external hard drive, webcam, etc.), we will need to ask how each piece of equipment will fit into our total home system—this includes every component in the house.

Pieces to Add to Your the Home Network

It takes only one piece of equipment, a router, to set up a home network, but to see the future of the home systems, we need to look at many of the possible components and how they will affect our computing. The reason we wire our equipment together is because we want our computers and peripherals to be more than isolated machines. We want to create a synergistic system in which the Internet is merely a tool for connecting with the outside world.

Today, the primary motivation for building a network is usually sharing an Internet connection with more than one computer —or possibly sharing a printer. The building of a home network was not the object; rather, feeding the e-mail and the Web to multiple machines is enough of a reason to invest in a router.

The Network Router

Once a router is installed, the network is brought to life. The network router is the focal point for most networks not because it splits access to the Internet, but because it can act as a hub for all other network activity. Prior to using routers to share the Internet, we needed network hubs and/or switches to connect our internal computers. Until the Internet came along, in most cases, it just wasn't worth the effort to connect the machines. (We may have wanted to share a printer, but we

could always take a copy of a file to the machine with the printer.) The router installation gave us a network without even trying.

Routers are multi-purpose in that they will act as an Internet access point as well as provide the ports for computers to connect together. We soon started seeing the other household computers appear in our directory windows. Why not just use the network created by the router to move files around and share printers? The router isn't merely a device on your network, it *creates* the network. (For more information on routers and selecting one for your home network, see the companion article "Setting up the Network of the Future" in this issue.)

The Printer/Scanner

Probably the first reason for wanting a network in the home was to share a printer. This was well before the Internet became popular. Printing was often an ordeal because printers were not built to be shared—no network interface was built into the printer. Usually the printer would be attached to one of the computers. If a person needed to print something from a different computer, he or she would put their work on a diskette and move to the computer with the printer attached. Special devices called print servers were needed to attach a printer to a network.

Today it is common to put a printer on a network for all to use. Printers have at least a USB connection built-in, while many of them offer Ethernet network connectors, or Wi-Fi. If you put a network drive into your home network, it may have a USB port that can support a printer. If you're looking at making the most of your home network, you should make sure that any printer has more than just a USB port for hookup. Network connections, both Wi-Fi and direct, will give you maximum flexibility. For older printers, you can get a device called a network print server for about $50, which will connect any standard printer to your network.

The Network Drive

The device most likely to make you start viewing your home network as a system is a network hard drive. A network hard drive is a hard disk storage system that is specifically designed to be used on a network. The computer-independent network drive allows users to share and back up files and data. (For more information on network drives, see the "Network Hard Drives for Your Home" article.) While most computers have their own dedicated hard drive, the network drive becomes a community device. It can act as file-backup storage while holding libraries of music and videos.

Rather than files being spread between a multitude of drives on various computers, a central network drive helps make the home network the nerve center of all computing. There is no need to depend upon the cloud of the Internet when you can build your own mini-cloud at home offering backup, applications and library sharing. Who needs Google Apps or Windows Live? Many of the network drives have features that allow remote access over the Internet, as well as USB ports for network printers. The network hard drive in its various forms will become the center of activity for the home network.

Home Entertainment Media Center

The Digital Video Recorder (DVR) has become the center of entertainment for people with cable or satellite television services. The DVR is essentially a hard drive with software that will record and replay television shows and movies. Its place has been as a link between the service and the television. It is standard for cable and satellite companies to offer DVRs as part of a package. Generally, there is an extra fee for a service such as TiVo, which provides the programming information.

As the sources for entertainment expand, especially through the Internet, there is more demand for breaking away from the bonds of the cable and satellite companies. People want to add DVRs to their home networks, feeding entertainment, including music and video, to any television or computer in their house.

The growth of the DVR home media center will be one of the primary forces bringing about a more mature home network. People take nothing more seriously than their entertainment.

Voice Over IP Telephone Service

As the quality of Voice over IP (VoIP) improves, the low cost and network convenience of VoIP telephone service will become an integral part of the home network. Rather than tying up a computer with the VoIP devices, they will plug directly into the home network.

Home Security (Webcams)

There are currently DVRs on the market designed for security. They connect webcams to the network while recording

video activity. Since the network is Internet accessible, it's possible to monitor on video the activity at home while on vacation.

Digital Picture Frames

Digital picture frames may seem like a trivial application for a home network, but for many people it is the best possible way to view and place thousands of digital photos around the house. Many of the frames support Wi-Fi access, making them ideal for sharing from a central network hard drive. Once the price of OLED screens comes down, digital picture frames will be just one more reason to pay attention to our home network.

Many More Network Devices to Come

The network devices that I've mentioned only scratch the surface of what will be possible in the future. There are already many people who are making excellent and unique uses of their home networks, although most of them had to fit the pieces together themselves. If you or anyone you know has dabbled in any of these or other network devices for home use, we would like to hear about it. I invite you to leave a short comment or send a description to *ceeditior@computoredge. com*. We would like to share your experiences with our readers.

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*

Setting Up Your Home Network

"Design your network for optimum speed and performance." by Jack Dunning

With a little bit of planning, you can be ready for most of the network demands coming in the near future.

While home networks in the form of Internet sharing are commonplace, they will be even more important in coming years. They will become part of our computing life a piece at a time. As people want to do more with their networks, many will find that theirs may not be up to the task. With a little bit of planning, you can be ready for most of the network demands coming in the near future.

Driving the demand for better home networks will be the network hard drive—either in the form of a home entertainment DVR or a hard drive shared by everyone. Once people become accustomed to the idea that the system involves every computer and peripheral in the house, then thinking about the whole will be natural. While looking at building a network, there are a few concepts that need to be considered.

Only as Fast as the Slowest Link

Often, people will complain about equipment being slow, especially network hard drives, because the network is slow. It's important to understand that everything will throttle to the speed of the slowest interface in the system, Therefore, a hard drive plugged into a 2.0 USB port may appear to be faster than a drive being read over a 100-megabit network, because it is. The USB 2.0 port is capable of speeds up to 480 megabits per second (mbps). The network hard drive offers much greater transfer speeds than either of these connections, but it is limited by either the network or the USB port. If you truly wanted to take advantage of the network hard drive's capabilities, then you will need a faster network—one gigabit.

"I told Henry to stick with Wi-Fi, but no, he wanted to install Cat-6 cable for our computer network."

One-gigabit-per-second networks are the next step in wired network computing. Gigabit network cards and routers are dropping in price and are becoming the new standard. However, in order to take advantage, each card, router and device in the round trip needs to have the gigabit capability. If two computers are communicating over the network (transferring files, running program, etc.), then both network cards, the router, and the network cable all must have gigabit specifications. If a network is upgrading, each piece in that network will meet the higher requirements.

Many new computers are sold ready for faster networks, both wired and wireless. To determine if yours is one of them, in Windows check the name of the card in the Device Manager. The Ethernet card should either say gigabit or 1000baseT. A wireless card should specify 802.11n. If you can't find an indication in the Properties window of the device, then do a Google search on the product name and model.

The procedure for checking out your router is the same. There is one caution, as many routers support both the hard-wired Ethernet and Wi-Fi. You will be looking for both the 802.11n Wi-Fi and the 1000baseT Ethernet. Just because a router advertises one of those features does not mean that the other is supported. The term "gigabit" is thrown around pretty loosely. I recommend that you get both of the higher speeds—even if you think you will be using only Wi-Fi for now.

Is Wi-Fi the Future?

Since it is so easy to set up a Wi-Fi network (no cabling is needed), people tend to think that wireless is all they will ever need. There is no doubt that Wi-Fi has become the major player in home networks. It is difficult to imagine a network without some sort of wireless. Wireless networks are easy to set up—no Cat-5 or 6 cabling required. It is easy to connect when traveling. It is so easy that we tend to think that soon everything will be wireless.

However, wireless also has a downside. It is less reliable and more susceptible to interference. Wireless connections drop signals much more often than their wired Ethernet counterparts. Wi-Fi specifications are slightly slower than the

current Ethernet standard. (This is based upon comparing 1000baseT, one gigabit, with 802.11n Wi-Fi, 600 megabits. Both of these are maximum rates that will vary based upon numerous factors. It's estimated that the average Wi-Fi throughput could be as little as 100mbps.) Wireless by its nature is less secure—anyone can pick up the signal.

802.11n Wi-Fi is just now in the market on a wide scale. You will see that they are often marked "(draft 2.0)." This means that they have been certified to the 802.11n standard, even though the standard itself will not be ratified until January of 2010. The Draft 2.0 Certified products are the devices that will work with the specification in the future. It is a little sketchier with products that just say 802.11n.

In most cases, Wi-Fi will be the future of the home network. Even though there is greater capacity with the one-gigabit Ethernet, the hassle of running cables may not be worth the increased performance. However, at least in small pieces, the Ethernet will compliment the Wi-Fi. For example, when connecting a network hard drive, using a 1000baseT Ethernet port on a 802.11n Wi-Fi router would optimize the speed of the network drive. A Wi-Fi router with only 100baseT Ethernet ports or attached to a 100baseT network (hub or switches), would never let the network drive take advantage of the 802.11n speeds.

Gigabit Ethernet

There will always be reasons to use hard-wired networks, although those reasons may not be compelling for many people. If you decide that you want to keep the Ethernet option open, then you will need to investigate wiring your house. It's all about the cable.

Ten years ago, Cat-5 cable was the primary type of network cabling put into businesses and homes. It's rated for 100-megabit networks and has served its purpose well. However, as gigabit networks became more prominent, Cat-5e (enhanced) and Cat-6 cable became the new standard in wiring. It's not that Cat-5 cable won't deliver greater throughputs than 100 megabits, but pushing it to the next level of one gigabit is a bit iffy. The newer cable specifications are rated for higher speeds, with Cat-6 cable expected to perform at speeds up to five gigabits.

The problem with Ethernet cables in homes is that it is more or less a permanent solution. The cable you install today may not be the cable of the future. For that reason, much more attention is being paid to the Wi-Fi specification. There is currently work being done on a 10-gigabit Ethernet, but it would be a few years before the price and availability would optimize it for use in the home.

If you have a one-gigabit Ethernet network with Cat-5e or Cat-6 cable, it should easily outperform 802.11n Wi-Fi by a factor of at least two to one. (This can vary greatly depending on distances involved, sources of interference, and environmental conditions.)

It is difficult to say how home networking will evolve or whether hardwiring homes for Ethernet (at least partially) will come back into favor. Some people expect that there will be more interference problems between the 802.11n Wi-Fi networks once every house on the block has one. At this point, when planning your home network, if it's easy to run cable, do it; otherwise, design your network for optimum speed at every point.

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*
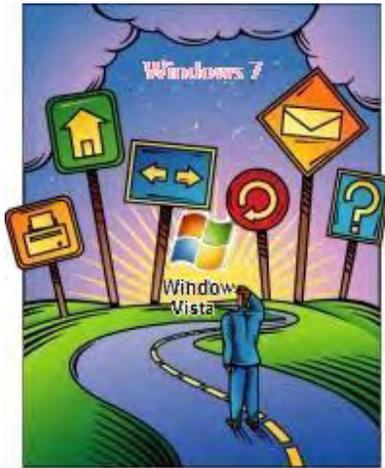
Windows Vista and Windows 7 Tips and Tricks

"Search and Ye Shall Find" by Jack Dunning

If you don't remember the name of a file or program, Windows Vista's excellent search function loses most of its usefulness. But there are alternative ways to locate the file you want.

One of the best features of Windows Vista is the search function, especially from the Start menu. If used regularly, it saves a great deal of the time which, in Windows XP, would be used to navigate folder trees. (The search feature in Windows 7 seems to work even better and faster than in Vista.) However, if you don't remember the name of a file or program, the search loses most of its usefulness. Alternatives need to be found for locating the file you want.

You can always resort to opening Windows Explorer, clicking and double-clicking your way through the folder structure. Sometimes, if you know where you left things, this may be the quickest way. Yet, if you have recently changed or opened a file, there are a couple of other techniques for locating your work.

The Recently Changed Search Folder

The first is the Recently Changed search folder. This search folder has a link in the Favorite Links portion of Windows Explorer (Flag-E). (Search folders are a specialized type of folder-like container that can save the results of any type of search. See Vista Tips and Tricks dated March 20, 2009.) The criteria for files to be included in this Recently Changed default search folder is that the file was created, downloaded, or modified in the near past. The maximum period of time that files are kept in the Recently Changed search folder appears to be 30 days. Therefore, if you are looking for a file that was changed more than 30 days ago, or a file that was merely opened and not modified (these files do not appear in Recently Changed), it will not be found in this search folder. (One caution about search folders: They do not contain links, or shortcuts, to the files listed. Rather the label, or icon, is a pointer targeted directly at the file itself. Therefore, if you delete the label, you will also delete the file from its original location.)

The Recent Items Menu

Possibly of more use for finding recently used files is the Recent Items link on the right side of the Start Menu. When you mouse over the Recent Items link, a menu of shortcuts to those files that you most recently opened will appear. However, the list of shortcuts is relatively short, limiting how far back in time you can go to find a filename. To make better use of this feature, right-click on the link and select Open or Explore (see Figure 1). This will open the Recent Items Folder.
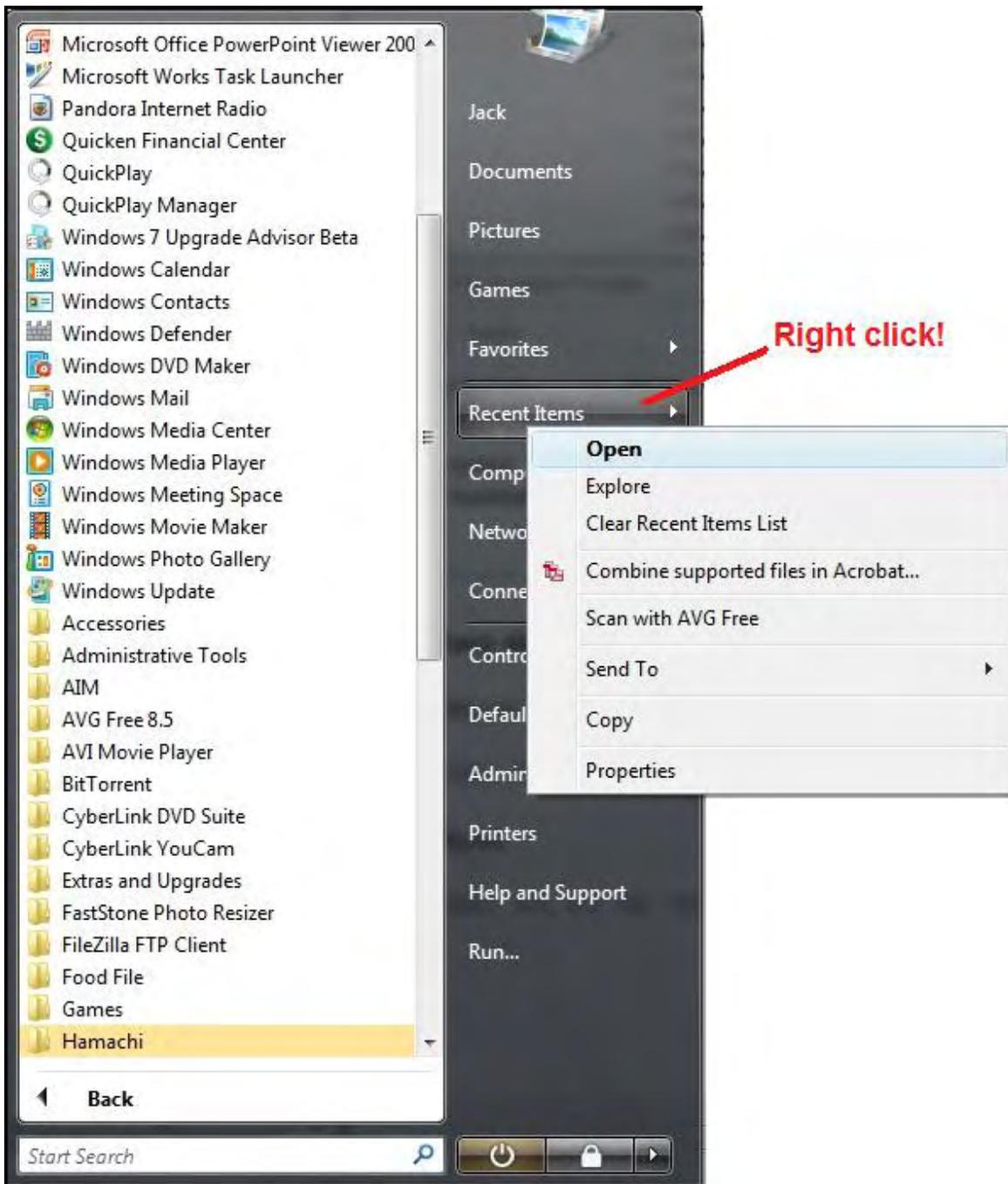
Figure 1. Right-click on Recent Items to select Open or Explore.

The Recent Items folder contains nothing but shortcuts to those files and the folders in which those same files reside. Double-click any file or folder and the target will open. Sometimes a file may no longer be listed, but the folder might still appear, thus making a manual search a little easier. Since only shortcuts are listed, there is no danger when deleting any of the labels. It will not affect the original files. If you delete them all, Windows will merely start collecting the list again. (The appearance of the Recent Items link is controlled via the Start menu tab of the Start menu's Properties window—right-click on the Microsoft flag.) Hint: If you want to remove one or two items from the Recent Items menu, merely delete those items by right-clicking on the menu item and selecting Delete. Only the shortcut—not the file itself—will be deleted.

Screen Capturing a Menu with the Snipping Tool

Sometimes, when capturing a screen shot, it is desirable to include open menus. The problem is that if you're using a program such as the Snipping Tool, every time you select the tool, all the temporary menus close. With the Snipping Tool, the way to get around disappearing menus is, after selecting New from the top menu, hit the Escape (ESC) key. Then, open any menus as you normally would, then push Control (CTRL)+Print Screen (PRT-SC) simultaneously. The screen will fade, offering crosshairs for selecting a section of the screen (drag left-mouse-down, then release). This is how the image for Figure 1 above was captured.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Creating a Simple Network" by Wally Wang

The Macintosh offers several quick ways to network multiple Macs together and avoid the "SneakerNet." Also, version 8.2.1 of iTunes blocks all synchronization between a computer and your Palm Pre; will Apple reveal a netbook-like device to usurp the Win7 rollout?; and a tip on remotely accessing another Mac by sharing screens over iChat.

The most primitive type of network you can create is whimsically dubbed SneakerNet. This is where you copy files on a flash drive, unplug it, then walk over and plug that flash drive into another computer. While the SneakerNet is reliable (depending on the person) and easy to implement, it's not always convenient. Trying to transfer large files is cumbersome and inconvenient, so the Macintosh offers several quick ways to network multiple Macs together.

The simplest way to share files between two Macs is through Bluetooth, which can be especially convenient when you want to share files between two laptops or between your laptop and someone else's desktop Mac.

Setting up a quick-and-easy Bluetooth network requires a two-step process. First, you must make each Mac Bluetooth discoverable. After you make each Mac Bluetooth discoverable, you can choose a file to send and where you want to send that file.

To make a Mac Bluetooth discoverable, click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences. When the System Preferences dialog appears, click the Bluetooth icon under the Hardware category. This displays the Bluetooth dialog.

Figure 1. The Bluetooth dialog lets you turn Bluetooth on and make your Mac discoverable.

Select the On and Discoverable check boxes. Now your Mac will be able to use Bluetooth and allow other Bluetooth Macs to find and connect to it.

To actually send a file through Bluetooth, right-click on any file displayed in the Finder window, choose the More command, and then choose the Send to Bluetooth command. This displays a Bluetooth dialog where you can select the Macintosh where you want to send your files.

Figure 2. Selecting a Bluetooth-discoverable Macintosh to receive your file.

If your have a bunch of Macs connected through a router or Wi-Fi network, you can define one or more folders to share with other Macs on that network. To do this, just click the Apple menu, and choose System Preferences to open the System Preferences dialog.

Click the Sharing icon under the Internet & Network category to open the Sharing dialog.

Figure 3. The Sharing dialog lets you turn on File Sharing for your Macintosh.

Click the File Sharing check box to make your Mac's Public folder visible to the network. If you click the Plus sign icon under the Shared Folders group, you can define additional folders to share.

Any folders you choose to share will then be treated as just another folder that any Mac on the network can access. This lets you easily copy, delete and move files from one Macintosh to another.

The Windows Minefield of 64-bit vs. 32-bit

If you have a Macintosh, you're using Mac OS X, which is a 64-bit operating system. Without getting bogged down in the technical details, 64-bit operating systems can handle more data and memory than 32-bit operating systems. A 32-bit version of Windows can access only 3GB of RAM, while Mac OS X (which is a 64-bit operating system) can access up to 16TB of RAM.

Microsoft sells two versions of Windows, the 32-bit version and the 64-bit version. If you get the 64-bit version, you can run both 64-bit and 32-bit programs and access more than 3GB of RAM. But if you get the 32-bit version of Windows, you'll be stuck running only 32-bit programs and able to use up to 3GB of RAM.

Now here's where the confusion comes in. Since Microsoft comes in two versions of Windows, you really want the 64-bit version, which can access more RAM and be compatible with both 64-bit and 32-bit programs. However, to keep costs down, many computer manufacturers still sell low-priced PCs with the 32-bit version of Windows.

As a Windows user, you'll have to know not only which version of Windows you have (XP, Vista, or Windows 7), but you'll also need to know whether you have the 64-bit version or the 32-bit version. If you get the 32-bit version that comes on cheaper PCs, you won't be able to run the more powerful 64-bit programs. The main advantage of the 32-bit version of Windows is that all currently available drivers to make your printer, scanner and other equipment work will be compatible under the 32-bit version of Windows. Get the 64-bit version of Windows, and you may need to wait for new 64-bit drivers for your equipment.

Sound confusing? It is. By confusing consumers with a 64-bit and 32-bit version of Windows, Microsoft puts just one

more obstacle to keep the average person from using a computer without problems. Use Windows and you need to be a computer expert. Use a Macintosh, and you can just focus on getting work done without knowing about its technical details at all.

The Cheerful Insanity of Palm

Apple recently released version 8.2.1 of iTunes. If you download and install this version, watch out if you have a Palm Pre. Version 8.2.1 of iTunes blocks all synchronization between a computer and your Palm Pre.

Of course, this shouldn't surprise anyone. When Palm first introduced the Palm Pre, they advertised that it would let you sync with your computer through iTunes without Apple's permission. Essentially Palm was telling its customers, "By illegally using another company's product, you can have synchronization features on your Palm Pre just like an iPhone!"

Palm had to know that Apple would eventually break this iTunes connection. After all, why should any company expect to support a competitor's product for free? What was Palm thinking? This would be like Burger King telling its customers to dump their trash in the McDonald's trash bins, steal McDonald's straws and napkins, park in the McDonald's parking lot, and use the McDonald's restrooms.

The Palm Pre is actually a decent smartphone, although not quite as slick as the iPhone, but far better than most other smartphones out there (think anything running Windows Mobile). Like other competitors, the Palm Pre bills itself as an iPhone killer, which is like saying, "We couldn't come up with anything innovative on our own, so we just copied the iPhone."

What's amazing is that so many companies think like Palm and not enough think like Apple. Whether you like Apple or not, no one can deny that Apple products redefine the market. Everyone else seems to copy what Apple does and tries to make a cheaper version. If this is the mentality of most Fortune 500 companies in the world, there's a serious lack of imagination with the management of most corporations these days.

A Wild Prediction

The latest rumors hint that Apple will release its long-awaited version of a netbook this October. If so, there might be a good reason to do it at that time because on October 22, Microsoft plans to release the official version of Windows 7.

What better way to steal Microsoft's thunder than by releasing an innovative table/netbook device that instantly makes all Windows 7 netbooks look as quaint as rotary phones and slide rulers?

A month earlier in September, Apple plans to officially release Snow Leopard, but if it can release its netbook device in October, it could seriously blunt Microsoft's announcement of Windows 7. After all, what do you think everyone will want to talk about? A new innovative device that captures the public's imagination like the iPhone, or another version of Windows that's just a polished version of Vista?

*   *   *

If you need to fix another person's Macintosh, you have two choices. First, you can drive over to the other person's place and fix the computer in person. Second, you can use a unique feature buried in the iChat program called Share A Screen.

Figure 4. You can remotely access another Mac by sharing screens over iChat.

Like its name implies, the Share A Screen feature lets you remotely take over another person's Macintosh. Now you can move the mouse pointer and click on buttons or menu commands just as if you were physically sitting in front of that computer. Barring any physical problems (such as a dead hard disk or broken keyboard), you'll be able to troubleshoot this other Macintosh through the Internet while the other person watches exactly what you do.

At the same time that you're manipulating the other person's Macintosh, you can talk to each other so you can make sure the other person knows why you're doing anything. This simple Share A Screen feature probably isn't going to be something you'll use all the time, but it can be a fun way to fix another Macintosh without having to leave your chair to do it.

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 the following books:

 • Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470009233?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470009233)
 • Beginning Programming for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)
 • Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (*www.amazon.com/gp/*
product/0764554468?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
 • Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/*
product/0470108541?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
 • Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)
 • Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593)
 • My New Mac (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?*

ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646)
  • My New iPhone (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956)
  • Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (*www.amazon.com/gp/
product/1590791894?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

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 (*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*), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com* and at his personal web site (*www.wallacewang.com/*).
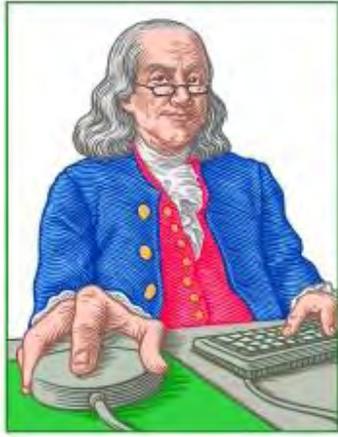
Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

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

Linux users must be on vacation, but one quick tip!

On Vacation

All the Linux people appear to be on vacation this week. Come back next week for questions, answers and tips.

Oh, OK, here's a quick tip:

Two exclamation points (!!) entered at the command prompt will repeat the last command. But don't freak out if, when you log on to test it, it logs you back out. The "exit" or "logout" command was the last command you entered before you logged back on. Enter another command such as "ls" and then use the "!!" command.

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*).*

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 words "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*.

Rob, The ComputorTutor Does Microsoft Access

"Wrapping Up the Access Series" by Rob Spahitz

Last week, we continued our address book by creating an input-parsing procedure to accept an address and split the pieces into their correct places. Now, we wrap up the Access tutorials.

Last week, we continued our address book by creating an input-parsing procedure to accept an address and split the pieces into their correct places. The only piece we had a problem with was the City field, since it was expecting an ID and all we had was the name. So today we wrap up the Access tutorials.

As usual, if you'd like to see previous version of the database, look for them at *www.dogopoly.com/ce*.

Before we continue, here are a few things from readers:

This from Ralph B from Colorado Springs:

I recently started reading your column in ComputorEdge on Access, but wanted to start from the beginning, so I found and downloaded the articles since last July. However, I only have Access 97 and am following along with it. I ran into a problem that I thought other readers might collide with, so here goes:

I am using Access 97 (actually Office 97) with Service Release 2 installed on Windows XP SP3. What I had been able to find up until now was that SR2 was the last thing for Office 97, and it is no longer supported.

*At the end of your 09/10 column, you mentioned using a question mark in criteria in queries to allow for user input. When I tried it, Access crashed with a 0xc0000005 error code. After much time and anguish (I am on dial-up), I finally found this Microsoft article: KB 239106 (*support.microsoft.com/kb/239106/*). It says the solution to this problem is Jet v3.51 Service Pack 3, which is detailed in KB172733 (*support.microsoft.com/kb/172733/EN-US/*). Down in the middle of that page is a link to the executable for installing Jet v3.51 Service Pack 3 (*download.microsoft.com/download/office97pro/sp/1/ win98/en-us/jet35sp3.exe*). It seems that Office 97 Service Release 2 only contained Jet v3.51 Service Pack 2.*

This may help other users of earlier versions of Access that are getting this error. I don't know, but it may also fix some other problems that I have not seen.

Thanks Ralph!

And a question from Paul B. of Littleton:

Is Access a newer version of the old FoxPro database program?

Well, I first played with Access 2.0 back in 1993, and FoxPro was around before and well after that, so I guess the simple answer is no. However, Microsoft had its fingers in both pies over the years, so that would certainly account for why the programs may look and act very similar. I also found this on eweek.com, dated 2007-03-13: "Microsoft says Visual FoxPro 9.0 will be its last version of the development software, though support for the product will extend through 2015."

Thanks Paul!

Name to ID

Back to business. Last week we left the City field of the subform on our form (frmContact) blank because we needed to translate the name from the input box into the corresponding code.

One problem was that we had no cities in our City table. So you might think that you can simply add some text into the field and let it create a new entry. Try it and you get the message in Figure 1 indicating that the text is not in the list:

Figure 1. Name not allowed.

Well, there's a setting for that. Clear the field and go to the CityID Properties window's Data tab. The field "Limit To List" was designed to allow the data to be restricted to only items in the list. That's fine for the state field, but probably not the city field. So try to change that to No, and you get the message in Figure 2 indicating that you can't do that right now.

Figure 2. Can't change data-entry setting.

By reading the message, you see that it references the ColumnWidth property. Switching to the All tab of the Properties window, you see the value as 0";1" indicating that the first field is hidden. Since the first field is the ID, that's where our problem comes in. We could change that zero to something else, but then it will show the CityID number in the combobox rather than the city name.

We need another solution.

Since we're already using some VBA, it makes sense to use more VBA to solve this. I see several solutions, so let me offer all of them.

The problem occurs related to clicking on the AddInfo field, which calls a procedure we created called AddAddress. It mainly looked like this:

```
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.Street1.Value = AddressInfo(0)
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.Street2.Value = AddressInfo(1)
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.CityID.Value = "" ' AddressInfo(2)
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.StateCode.Value = AddressInfo(3)
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.PostalCode.Value = AddressInfo(4)
```

The third line is the one that needs to be updated. Let's look at some ideas for solving this.

Solution 1:

First, let's just explore the direct approach described above. But we'll try it manually before using VBA. Simply change the properties, apply the value and then change them back. If that works, we can code it to do these steps. In this case, we need to first change the Column Width so that the 0 is set to 1 (or something greater than 0) so we can change the Limit To List property. Next, change the Limit To List property to No. Now if you enter a city, you get the error seen in Figure 3 indicating that you have the wrong data type.

Figure 3. Invalid data-type error.

The problem is that it is looking to enter an ID from the City table, not a name. If you enter a number, it accepts it, but there's no way to get the city name in there. Furthermore, since we're not adding a record, the data is ultimately useless.

Although we could change this from a Bound field to Unbound, then work out the details to force this into the database with the proper ID, we might just as well go do that directly. Consider this solution inadequate.

Solution 2:

Another Access-like approach would be to create a subform for the city field. This approach would probably use a very simple subform that has just the city name showing and the CityID and State "hidden" to the right somewhere, but accessible from our VBA code. The form, frmCity2, might look like Figure 4.

Figure 4. City SubForm.

When you strip away the form pieces (ScrollBars=Neither, RecordSelectors=No, NavigationButtons=No, DividingLines=No) and embed it into the address subform, and resize it just right, it might look like Figure 5 (shown to the right of the existing CityID field).

Form View   NUM
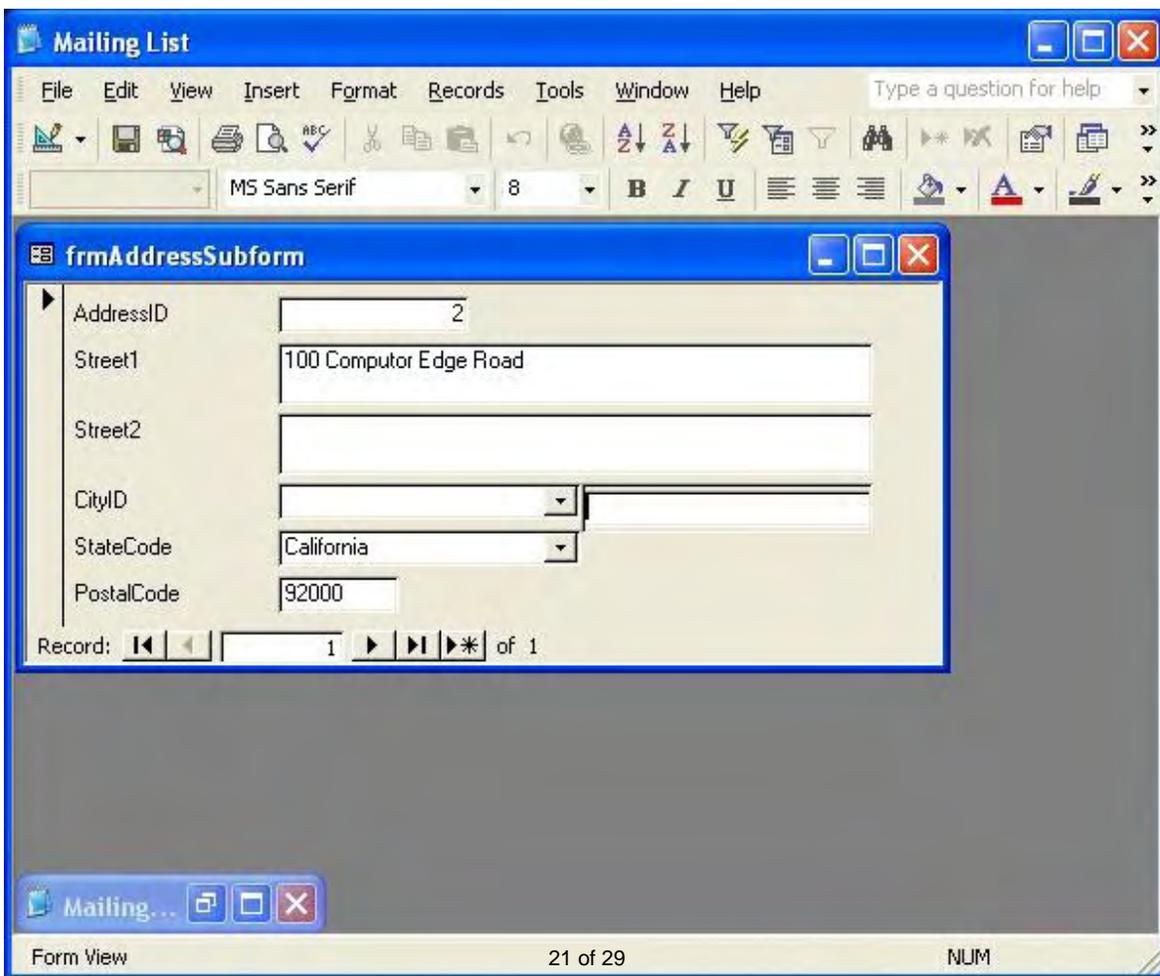
Figure 5. Address Subform with City Subform.

Using this method, and some additional minor adjustments (remove the border, further adjust the size), you'd barely be able to tell that this is a subform rather than just a standard Text Box.

In some cases this might be fine, but you'd still need some VBA code. Somehow you'd have to get the information from the City subform into the Address subform so that it saves properly. Also, the City subform should really have the state as part of the record, and there is nothing to help with that. Again, VBA code could handle that, but let's move onto another solution. I'm going to make that subform invisible for our purposes (so readers who download the database can see where I had it), but normally I'd delete it since we are abandoning that solution.

Solution 3:

The last solution I will offer is mostly a VB solution. What we really want to do can be described in a logical fashion: Check to see if the City name exists and, if so, place the corresponding CityID into the field so that it shows the proper city name. If the city name does not exist, add it (along with the state code), refresh the field and put this new ID into the field to show the new city.

Let's begin. Jump over to the VBA code mentioned above. Now change this line:

```
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.CityID.Value = "" ' AddressInfo(2)
```

Into this:

```
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.CityID.Value = GetCityID(AddressInfo(2), AddressInfo(3))
```

In concept, that's all we want. Create a new function called GetCityID that will do everything described above. (Note how I am sending both the city and state to the function to get the information.) If it does its job correctly, we're done.

So create a new function as follows:

```
Private Function GetCityID(CityName As String, StateName As String) As Variant
    Dim vCityID As Variant
    Dim strSQL As String
    Dim rstCityInfo As Object
    Dim strSqlInsert As String

    vCityID = Null

    If CityName <> "" Then
        strSQL = "SELECT CityID" & vbNewLine
        strSQL = strSQL & "FROM tblCity" & vbNewLine
        strSQL = strSQL & "WHERE CityName = '" & CityName & "'" & vbNewLine
        strSQL = strSQL & "AND StateCode = '" & StateName & "'"

        Set rstCityInfo = CurrentDb.OpenRecordset(strSQL)
        If rstCityInfo.RecordCount > 0 Then
            vCityID = rstCityInfo.Fields("CityID").Value
        Else
            strSqlInsert = "INSERT INTO tblCity" & vbNewLine
            strSqlInsert = strSqlInsert & "(CityName, StateCode)" & vbNewLine
            strSqlInsert = strSqlInsert & "Values ('" & CityName & "','" & StateName & "')"
            CurrentDb.Execute strSqlInsert

            Set rstCityInfo = CurrentDb.OpenRecordset(strSQL)
            If rstCityInfo.RecordCount > 0 Then
```

```
                vCityID = rstCityInfo.Fields("CityID").Value
            End If
        End If
        rstCityInfo.Close
        Set rstCityInfo = Nothing
    End If

    GetCityID = vCityID
End Function
```

Very simply, this code will accept the city name and state code, and try to find the CityID.

I created a few variables to hold the parts:

```
    Dim vCityID As Variant
    Dim strSQL As String
    Dim rstCityInfo As Object
    Dim strSqlInsert As String
```

The first variable, vCityID is the place-holder for the value to be returned. It's a variant because it could be null if the City was never supplied or we have other problems trying to retrieve the value.

Next is strSQL. This variable will hold the SQL statement that will be sent to the processor to try to locate the ID. Since it will hold a standard SQL command, it's common to create a query to test your command so you can just paste it into this variable later, knowing that it will work.

Next is rstCityInfo. This is the place-holder for the record that will be returned, holding the CityID. It is defined as an Object rather than a Recordset because some versions of Access get confused about which type of recordset is being used (DAO, ROD, ADO and maybe some others). As long as it contains a recordset that lets us count it and grab a value, setting it as an Object works.

Finally, in case we can't find the city, another SQL variable is set up to allow us to insert it.

Then we initialize the return value, so that if nothing is found it returns a null to put into the database:

```
vCityID = Null
```

Then we check to see if the CityName exists. If not, no sense in trying to find it. We could probably do the same with the StateCode, but I chose to ignore that part. If, for some reason, the city is supplied without the state, the first city in the table will be located and returned.

Next I build the SQL command to run:

```
SELECT CityID
FROM tblCity
WHERE CityName = 'San Diego'
AND StateCode = 'CA'
```

I split it across multiple lines (using the vbNewLine constant) so that I can check it in the Immediate window while stepping through code if it does not work as expected.

Then I apply it to retrieve the ID:

```
        Set rstCityInfo = CurrentDb.OpenRecordset(strSQL)
```

VB requires the Set keyword when working with objects (like recordsets, as compared to elementary data elements

like numbers and strings). CurrentDb is a way to talk to Access to perform an action on the current database; OpenRecordset will attempt to create a recordset from the SQL command. If successful, it will contain a recordset; if not, it will generate an error that will get trapped by a previous procedure.

In our case, the first time, the recordset is created with no records found. So the next line checks the rstCityInfo. RecordCount to see if any records were returned by the SDL. There should usually be only 0 or 1. If found, we grab the CityID field and save it in our variable:

```
vCityID = rstCityInfo.Fields("CityID").Value
```

If there were no records, use the Execute method of CurrentDb to insert the record, and then re-apply the step to get the CityID.

To wrap things up, close the query then clear the recordset variable and return the result.

At this point, you will now have the City Name stored in the database. You will also have the CityID applied to the Combo Box in the Address subform. The last step is to apply this address to the Person name subform and we're done.

To wrap things up, at the end of the AddPerson and AddAddress procedures, respectively, add some code to force a refresh to show the latest information:

```
Me.frmPersonSubform.Form.Refresh
Me.frmAddressSubform.Form.Refresh
```

Thanks for reading the Access articles. I realize that there's tons more to be learned, but you should now have most of what you need to create an awesome Access database.

Next week, we'll start learning about using the "real" VB, VB.Net, to do just about anything you want with windows, including manipulating a database, but using the latest and greatest tools.

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*.

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

ComputorQuick Reviews
"Tell Us Which Registry Editor We Should Use!" by ComputorEdge Staff

A reader is looking for recommendations on Registry-cleaning programs.

Anyone Know a Good Registry Cleaner?

Dear ComputorEdge,

I have downloaded and tried a couple of Registry-cleaner programs highly recommended (by whom?) on their Web sites, only to need to do restores to undo monumental screwups. Would you consider providing a list of programs that your readers have found satisfactory? I realize that you could be inundated with recommendation pitches from sales departments. I am concerned that the recommendations I found in computer magazines are "selling" the program recommended for their advertisers.

Burt G.

I took a quick look at CNET for free registry cleaners (*download.cnet.com/1770-20_4-0.html? query=registry +cleaner&searchtype=downloads&filter=licenseName=Free| platform=Windows&filterName=licenseName=Free/platform=Windows&tag=ltcol*). These include both editors' and readers' ratings. I've never used one myself, but we would sure like to hear from readers about their experiences with Registry-cleaning software.

Jack Dunning

We Want Your Opinions About Hardware, Software and Web Sites

Over the years, *ComputorEdge* has had great input from our readers. In particular, people have submitted short reviews of equipment, software and Web sites that they really like. In some cases readers have offered tips (such as avoiding flakes on Craigslist). ComputorQuick Reviews is our column dedicated to highlighting those things that you most like and want to recommend to others. The problem is that if this column doesn't appear, it becomes forgotten and less likely to receive input from you.

We have decided to include this feature in every issue as a reminder that this is your magazine—even if we don't have any new reader reviews. If you would like to see the type of reviews that we have run in the past, then check out ComputorQuick Reviews (*webserver.computoredge.com/sitemap. mvc?feature=Columns&columnedcode=persrev&column=ComputorQuick%20Reviews*) in the *ComputorEdge* Site Map. You will find that they are quite varied. We would like to see more. Consider this column a gentle prod saying that we would like to hear from you.

You can send us an e-mail at ComputorQuick Reviews Submissions (*ceeditor@computoredge.com*).

The purpose of this column is to give our readers an opportunity to express their opinions about products and services that they have found particularly useful. If you have had experience with hardware, software or a Web site that made you say, "This is really great! I want to tell everyone about it," then this is a good place to do it. While we do want to post warnings, we are not interested in slamming the obscure bad products, because there are too many of them. We would like to hear about those things that you would recommend to your best friend. The only caution is to please use

proper capitalization (do not use all caps) and complete sentences. If it takes us too long to edit the piece, it may be a long time before it's published on this site.

*Please send your personal reviews to ComputorQuick Reviews Submissions (*ceeditor@computoredge.com*).*

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*.

EdgeWord: Searching the ComputorEdge Site
"A New ComputorEdge Site Search Feature Is Coming" by Jack Dunning

Now that our Google site-search engine subscription is expiring, we're about to implement our own site-search function. The key to making this site more useful to our readers is making it easier for people to find their way around.

On Sunday, July 26, the *ComputorEdge* subscription for a Google site search engine ends. I started it one year ago to test its effectiveness and usefulness. Overall, I can say that it's not bad. I've often used the search to find an older article for referencing in a new column. However, it's time to renew, and I'm not thrilled enough with how Google does things that I would pay a renewal fee—which has gone up this year from $100 to $250. (I guess Google needs more money.) It seemed like a reasonable deal at $100 per year, but a 150 percent increase seems a little excessive.

I do have some numbers on how much the Google search was used by *ComputorEdge* readers. There were more than 5,000 searches in the last year. The search feature can be found at the top of the ComputorEdge Site Map (*webserver.computoredge.com/sitemap.mvc*) page. The purpose of both the Site Map and the Google search is to make it easier for readers to find relevant articles from past issues. While new content is added every Friday, most of the prior information on the site continues to be relevant—and available. Often people will remember reading something, but they can't remember when or where it appeared.

The reason I signed up with the Google search in the first place was because it had become too difficult to keep our old search database up-to-date—plus, the updating process itself had become unwieldy. Google already had indexed the entire site, so it seemed to make sense to enroll. I soon came to realize that using a system such as Google would force *ComputorEdge* to conform to some occasionally awkward guidelines. (I was getting a great deal of redundancy in the results.) I worked around most of those inconveniences, but the Google search has never fit like a glove.

The *ComputorEdge* Site Map, which uses a tree structure, goes a long way toward helping people find specific articles or columns. The issues can be viewed chronologically by each year as well as by column, or author. After loading a list of articles, if you use Control-F in your browser, you can search for keywords that may appear in the title or the article summary information. However, this approach is a little tedious and requires a certain amount of digging. Some type of keyword search will always be needed.

I do like the fact that the Site Map displays the entire title and summary—unlike Google, which displays only portions of pages. In any new search engine, I would like to use the same type of display as appears in the Site Map. I've been wrestling with whether I should implement my own search feature or look for another alternative. I've decided to do it myself.

All of the editorial content is already in a database, which makes implementing a search capability fairly easy. Ensuring that it will be fast and useful takes a little more time. The ideal way to do a fast search is to index all of the keywords in a database to another database, which links back to each article. This is essentially what the big search engines do with the pages found on the Web. The trick is knowing which keywords are most relevant for indexing and how to deliver the results to the users.

There will be two basic searches available in the new *ComputorEdge* search. (It should be available within the week.) The faster method first will be a title and summary search, which will work as long as the keywords appear in either the title or the summary. The second will be a little more time-consuming, allowing you to search for specific keywords in the articles themselves. I also plan to allow filtering by author and column—which will help narrow the process—if you happen to know that the article was something written by Digital Dave or another columnist.

In the beginning, I expect that the search feature will be fairly basic. My primary goal is for you to be able to find specific articles without sifting through too much chaff. If you use a word such as "Windows," you will be inundated with results—even Wally talks about Windows. While it won't be perfect, I can guarantee that it will not give you redundant results. The listing will show you the most recent articles first. The new search will not be implemented before this Sunday, the day the Google search expires.

Whenever, possible we try to link to past articles that may be relevant to the current ones. We know that our readers want more information, and many of the questions that arise have been addressed by *ComputorEdge* at one time or another. The key to making this site more useful to our readers is making it easier for people to find their way around it.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

"Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns." by ComputorEdge Staff

"Another Free Alternative Office Suite," "Thanks Dave," "Malware Tip," "Hubris and the Linux Installation," "The IE8 Experience"

Another Free Alternative Office Suite

[This letter is in regard to Michael J. Ross' July 10 article, "The Basics of OpenOffice.org."]

You should also try SSuite Office for a free office suite. They have a whole range of office suites that are free for download.

Their software also doesn't need to run on Java or .NET, so it makes the software very small and efficient.

You can try these links:

www.ssuitesoft.com/index.htm or *ssuite5element.webs.com/thefifthelement.htm*

-BeBob Esq., N.Y.

Thanks, Dave

Hi, my name is Conrad Saul. I'm 48 years old. I'm just writing to thank you for the great job you are doing. Because of you I went back to school and am trying to fulfill my dream for a better job. My major is in computer programming. I know it's not an easy career to learn, but if I don't try, I won't know if I can do it or not. I have been reading your magazine for about five years now. Your magazine gave me all of the input to go for it. Again, thank you and don't stop, because "we need your info."

-Conrad Saul, Chula Vista, CA

Malware Tip

[Regarding Jack Dunning's June 26 Edgeword column, "Another Malware Tip:"] Thank you for the continuing help to identify criminal e-mail activity.

-A. Squires, Bonita, CA

Hubris and the Linux Installation

[This is an update from author Dawn Clement regarding her ongoing saga of installing Linux, as reported in her June 12 article, "Hubris and the Linux Installation."]

The nice people at Canonical will send you a free CD with a copy of Ubuntu on it. I got mine in the mail, stuck it in my non-working Dell, and guess what happened? It installed beautifully! I now have a running Linux box and a greater appreciation for the OS.

-Dawn, Fresno, CA

The IE8 Experience

[The following letters are in regard to Jack Dunning's July 3 Windows Tips and Tricks column, "Issues with Windows and IE8."]

I have been using IE8 on a Lenovo 3000 N500 laptop running Vista Business with a 32-bit operating system. I have had no problems with IE8. However, I installed IE8 on my Dell desktop 32-bit operating system running XP and got the same issues as you—hangups and crashes, especially with "secure" Web sites like my banks and financial-type Web sites. However, after rolling back to IE7 on my desktop, these issues went away. Just thought I would send you a quick note to help you.

-Jim

You're right about IE8. I went through the hassle of downloading it (on a dial-up connection), used it for 10 minutes, found out it was working like a slow, klunky elephant, and hastily removed it and reinstalled IE7. Then I fired up Firefox, which *was* more stable. Then the new Firefox 3.5 came in, and I've had many crashes. Both Firefox and Chrome refuse to play background sounds embedded in Web pages. Chrome seems to be stable, though.

-Allen,Tome, NM

KompoZer Not NVU

[This letter is in regard to Wally Wang's July 10 Wally's Apple Farm column, "The Best Software Is Often Free."]

I wanted to let you know I enjoyed your recent article on free Mac software. I find tons more open-source and free software for the Mac every day. One thing that struck me in the article was that you recommended NVU as a Web editor. NVU is outdated. It hasn't been updated in years. There is a spin-off called KompoZer that has been regularly updated. KompoZer can be found here: *kompozer.net/*. I find KompoZer to be more stable, too.

Keep up the good work, and let's spread the word: Mac is still here and ever better than clunky/vulnerable Windows.

-Patrick Berg, Fallbrook, CA

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