ComputorEdge™ Online — 09/18/09

This issue:
Facebook: The Giant of Social Networks

The Internet's latest craze is social networking. Here's a look at Facebook, the leading communal site, from a personal and business perspective.

Table of Contents:

Wally Wang's Apple Farm by Wally Wang

Social Networking—Apple Style

Social networks may be fun, but there's nothing like the built-in social network of being a happy Apple customer, which is the envy of every company in the world. Also, look at oddball iPhone apps; the latest Snow Leopard news; a discussion of open standards; and a tip on rearranging your iPhone app icons.

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users by ComputorEdge Staff

Linux users share ideas and ask for help.

A few tips for new Ubuntu users, as well as some online resources for help and information. Also, a call for tips and advice on the Debian distro.

Rob, The ComputorTutor Does VB.Net 2010 by Rob Spahitz

More on VB.Net 2010 Applications: Colors, Fonts and Files

Last week, we continued work on our "Sticky Notes" application. We wanted to allow the user to change colors and fonts and also to be able to save a message or load one. This week, we'll explore one way to store information that an application needs for future use.

ComputorQuick Reviews: Who Needs Facebook? by ComputorEdge Staff

Computer Product Opinions from ComputorEdge Readers and Staff

A survey of of the Colorado Springs Senior Computer Club shows an emphatic dislike for social networking. Also, a call for comments and experiences regarding firewalls.

DEPARTMENTS:

EdgeWord: Translating the Spanish Web by Jack Dunning

Another cool feature of the Google Toolbar.

When searching for information from Web sites in other languages, the Google Toolbar language-translation tool is a pretty nifty feature.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers by ComputorEdge Staff

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

"Great Computerese Article," "How to Appear Techno-Savvy," "Late Suggestion on the Linux Column," "Skype Problem?," "Debugging Network Connection Problems," "More on Desktops from Windows Sysinternals Tools"

Digital Dave

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

A reader wants to play video clips with a dial-up Internet service; why won't pictures open automatically in a reader's IE 8 laptop running Vista?; a reader's e-mail service is randomly locking her out of her account.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have Juno dial-up Internet service. Is there any way I can play YouTube videos and other video clips?

Carol Eckhart
Chula Vista, CA

Dear Carol,

Yes, you can. It's just going to take a little patience.

The problem with playing videos from the Internet is that you need to download at least part of them before you can start playing them. Internet video files are quite large and already compressed for Web distribution. Even if you are using a broadband connection, there will be a short delay before a video will play properly. If you have a dial-up connection, then it can take quite a few minutes before enough of the video is downloaded to allow a smooth playing.

If you want to get the best performance with a dial-up connection, you will need to wait until the file is downloaded before playing it. On YouTube there is a faded download process meter that appears to the right of the play/pause button and the time-selection button. As the video is downloaded into your computer, the faded progress bar will move to the right until it completely fills the scale. This will take a while on dial-up, depending upon the length of the video.

To prevent the video for playing prematurely (dial-up won't be able to keep up with the computer's video decoding), click the pause button until the file is downloaded, then play. Once the video is on your computer, the slow Internet connection will no longer impact playing the video. Make sure that you have plenty of other things to do while the video is downloading.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

On my tower desktop I am running XP Pro with the IE 5 browser. Images open automatically.

I also have a new Toshiba laptop with Vista Home Edition running IE 8. When I try to open the same Web sites with the same pictures, they do not open, and have that little red x in a box.

In order to view the photograph, I must place the cursor on the red x, right-click for the drop-down menu, find Open Picture, select that and left-click on it, and then wait for it to open—sometimes

repeating the process several times. This becomes frustrating and takes a great deal of waiting.

Is there some way to get the pictures to appear automatically in Vista like XP?

Gilbert
La Mesa,CA

Dear Gilbert,

Most likely all you need to do is change a setting in Internet Explorer 8. Access the Tools menu in the menu bar at the top of the screen. (If you don't see the menu bar, press the ALT key. The menu bar should appear.) Select Internet Options from the bottom of the Tools menu. Select the Advanced tab at the top of the Internet Options window. Scroll down the list until you reach the Multimedia category (see Figure 1). Check Show Pictures, and Apply.
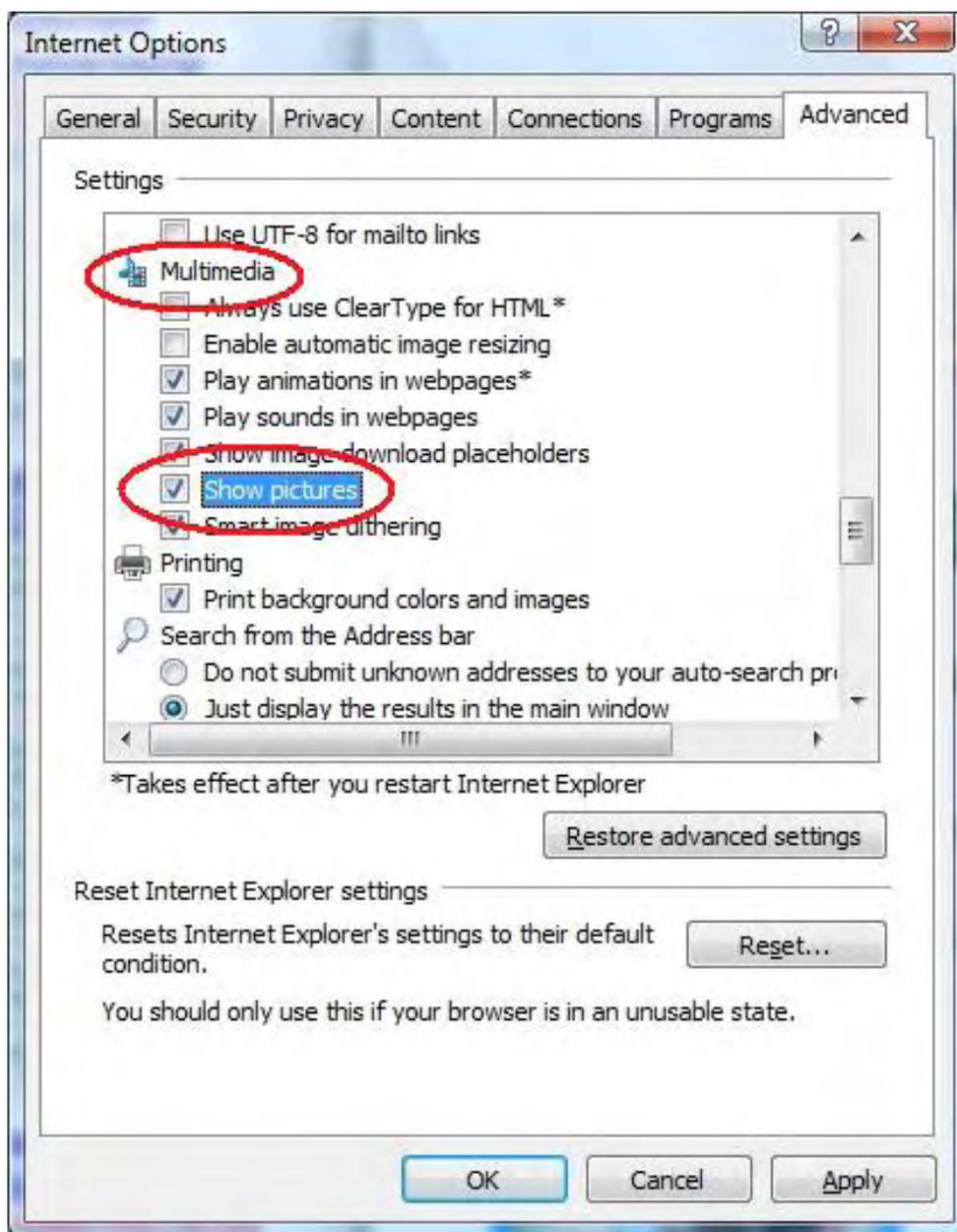
Advanced tab in the Internet Options window of Internet Explorer 8.

It could be worth your time to explore all the settings in Internet Options—regardless of which browser you use. There are

many features that can make your browsing much more convenient.

One of my favorite features in some of today's browsers is the ability to create multiple home pages that open in new tabs whenever the browser is loaded. Then, if you have certain pages you use all the time, you won't need to load them individually. In IE8, this feature can found in the General tab.

I prefer the way Google's Chrome browser handles opening multiple tabs. There is a separate home page, plus a set of startup pages. Although all the startup pages are tabbed when Chrome is loaded, only the home page opens when the home page button is clicked thereafter. In IE8, if you have multiple home pages, they all open every time you click the home page button—very annoying.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have an HP computer running Windows Vista, and therefore Windows Mail. I have Cox cable broadband as my e-mail service.

Even though I have set up my e-mail to "remember" my login and password, every once in a while (seemingly randomly) the pop-up box for entering your logon and password pops up and I have to remember what it is before being able to download my e-mail.

I do have the box checked to remember my password, but I guess Windows Mail has a problem with short-term memory loss. It's an annoying issue that I'd like to have go away. Cox was absolutely no *help what-so-ever.*

Ivy Stein
San Diego, CA

Dear Ivy,

I've seen a similar problem with almost every e-mail program that I've ever used, and I have my own theory about what's going on. It's caused by file locking.

I've noticed that whenever the login window pops up, I have multiple e-mail client programs running, usually on different machines (at work, upstairs computer, downstairs computer, laptop, etc.). The reason I have all these programs running is because I want all my crucial e-mail to be picked up at all locations. (For this to work, you need to set up the program to leave the e-mail on the server for some period of time.) What is happening is two e-mail programs—at random times—are trying to access the same account at the same time. The first computer will get in; the second will be locked out and display the login window.

Next time this happens, rather than logging in again, cancel the e-mail pickup and start over again. I think that you will find that the pickup will succeed based upon the saved login info. The only reason the pop-up would occur again is if the computer locking the account is downloading a particularly long e-mail.

If you don't have multiple computers picking up e-mail, then my theory would not apply, but every time I've had it happen to me, this was the situation. Perhaps someone else has another theory.

Digital Dave

Face the Facts: Facebook Is Here to Stay

"Delving into social media from a personal and business perspective." by Marie Loggia-Kee

Social media networks like Facebook have changed the way people communicate. Are we losing our personal connection with others, or is it bringing us closer together?

Sometimes I think the world is divided into two types of people: those who are on Facebook, and those who are not … yet.

Most everyone "connected" has heard the statistics. With an estimated more than 240 million users worldwide and growing, the Web site Inside Facebook reported that: "If Facebook were a country, it would now have the 4th largest population in the world." In an August 2009 study, iStrategyLabs found that current Facebook users within the United States were at more than 71 million. The numbers are staggering, and the potential for use, and misuse, even more so.

Can't wait to get home and get on Facebook with each other.

At its basic level, Facebook allows users to connect virtually with their network of friends. On the home page of the site runs a news feed of user updates, and each person can customize the information they receive. So, I can update my status to say that I'm headed to New York for a conference, and all my contacts—especially those in New York—receive the alert (if they're looking).

The social media network—and similar sites, such as MySpace and LinkedIn—has changed the way that people communicate. Recently, I took my daughters to a local play center. Rather than calling around to see if anyone was interested in coming with us, that morning I

Can't wait to get home and get on Facebook with each other.

posted a status update with our plans. One mom met us there with her son, and another asked to be notified the next time we go.

Beverly Macy, managing partner for the strategic advisory firm Y&M Partners LLC in Beverly Hills, foresaw the potential and popularity of social networking sites.

"We are social animals," explained Macy. "That's why we love our cell phones. We want to know what's happening with the people we care about, and the people that we do business with."

In August 2007, Macy taught the first installment of her UCLA Extension course on "Social Media Marketing" to a sold-out standing-room-only audience. That one-day Saturday course soon turned into a six-week class, and on September 23, a newly expanded 12-week class starts.

The Web has gone through several stages. Macy explained that we've progressed through 1.0 and 2.0, and now we're in what's called the "real-time Web."

Getting Started

For those just signing up, Facebook and other social networking sites are fairly intuitive, said Macy. The user signs up, creates a profile, uploads an image and starts looking for friends. As a quick-step, users can access their personal e-mail accounts or phone book and look for contacts who are already on the network. (In a basic search, users compare a person's name or e-mail account.) One thing to keep in mind, however, is the end goal: Are you using it to search for friends and family, or as a business tool?

Basic user profile page. The user uploads an image, fills out a profile form, and can update their "status" report. The middle of the page is called the "wall," and features updates on activities, images posted or friends comments. The user can filter what's shown, and can opt to not allow other users to post on their wall.

As previously stated, on the personal side, Facebook allows users to connect and—in many cases—reconnect with family and friends. Looking for that first kiss from high school? Odds are, you can find them. And, those online simultaneously can interact live via a chat function.

An informal poll of my Facebook friends on the positives and negatives of the site offered a wealth of responses. Angela, who lives in the Inland Empire, uses Facebook as a diversion. "My reason for loving FB is simple. When I'm having a really horrible day, I can go on FB and see all the smiles and hugs and whatever everyone has sent that day, and it just makes me feel better," she said. "If I'm having a great day I can post it and spread the joy. Basically it's nice to just chat with everyone, whether I've known them forever or recently reconnected. It's a small, easy way to just take a break."

Privacy remains a vital issue for many. Let's be honest: I don't want any-old predator to be able to leer at photos of my children. There have even been cases of unsavory types using photos of other people's kids in ads on Craigslist. To combat such fears, users have the option of keeping their profile "private" from everyone, except for friends, and a person must "accept" each friend request. Likewise, every photo that's uploaded needs to have privacy settings done. Usually, I allow "friends of friends" to view my photos. So if I upload images of my friend Barbra's wedding, which took place in Vegas, and I "tag" her (an electronic way of identifying a person), her other friends who are not in my network get to view them.

One safety-savvy user stressed that people need to watch the nature of the material that they place on their personal profile.

"It's a mixed blessing," he said, "obviously good for keeping in touch with folks, but in terms of business-use, you basically need another, separate account. Even then, you need to make sure your personal account is *seriously* locked down so someone doesn't go looking for your business account and find your personal one and wonder which Disney character you most resemble."

And companies are looking. Not only do employers peruse social networking sites to see what their employees are up to, many also monitor use at work. And, recruiters and potential employers use the sites to "vet" candidates.

Karen from Los Angeles said that her company has run into some issues with users.

"From an office manager/IT person perspective, it seems that the workers who have logged the most FB and/or other social networking site time (as tracked by our firewall monitor) consistently show a lower productivity level than those who do not," Karen said. "Also, I have been reading articles about employees out on sick leave who were busted for posting status messages that were to the contrary.

"Making your FB account private does keep your personal and business life separate. We had a former employee a few years back who posted a few not-so-nice pictures of herself and other coworkers having fun in Vegas that our client did not find so amusing."

In addition to the status updates, the site boasts a wealth of apps, third-party applications that allow the user to play various interactive games such as Scramble, to send virtual garden plants and positive karma to friends, or to set up a farm.

Want to do more than chat up friends? Delve into all of the applications. You can start your own Mafia War, or grow a little Green Patch of eco-friendly plants. Be warned, though, some may use your personal information for other purposes.

Sharyn Obsatz, a former reporter who teaches college classes in journalism, warned about the various quizzes on topics such as '80s movies, Beatles songs and which *Twilight* star best resembles the user.

"There are privacy issues—so many people take the quizzes and fail to realize all the info they are giving away about themselves and their friends," Obsatz explained. "The ACLU sent out an e-mailed press release with a link to a quiz showing people how much info a quiz application can access from your profile and all your friends' profiles."

Overwhelmed with the requests for quizzes, or worried about privacy? Then simply block those apps. It's all about customization, and choices.

The Business Model

While there are personal user profiles, there also are "fan" pages. Jamba Juice often dishes out coupons via their Facebook fan page, and The Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach offers discounts on admission.

Nancy Luna, author of the Fast Food Maven blog (*fastfood.freedomblogging.com/*) at Orange County Register, uses the social media sites Twitter and Facebook to research and market her work, and to personally interact with friends and family. Luna first started her blog in the spring 2007 via MySpace.

"I considered it a beta test. I asked myself these questions: Can I do it? Do I have enough content to feed readers daily, which is critical for a blog? Is it a lot of work?" Luna explained. "The answer ended being '*yes*' to all of the above. I had fun, and my editors eventually approved the official Fast Food Maven blog, which launched in August 2007 on ocregister.com."

The blog recently won 2009 Best Blog by the Orange County Press Club and Best Food Blog by the 2009 Just Spotted O.C. Blog awards. Over the last several months, Luna has ramped up networking through Twitter and Facebook; she uses outside applications to streamline the process.

"I use an application called Twitter Feed (*twitterfeed.com*) to stream my blog post automatically to Twitter," she explained. "Then, I use a simple application on Facebook to auto-stream my Tweets to my Fast Food Maven Facebook page. I also use TweetDeck to manage who I follow. It allows you to create 'favorite' groups to follow."

From a marketing standpoint, Macy said that businesses are still working on how to "crack the code" to reach the 100 million to 200 million built-in users of social media.

"Think of your own behavior as a consumer; most of us are average. Have you ever printed a coupon [from a social media site] and gone?" she asked.

Recently, Luna wrote an article about how restaurants and businesses are using Twitter and Facebook to launch special promotions. For instance, Sprinkles Cupcakes often releases a secret word that customers have to whisper in order to receive a free delectable.

"It works to generate brand buzz, which is critical right now during the recession. Restaurants are struggling right now, so social networking is a cheap tool to promote their image," Luna said. "The beauty of Twitter and Facebook is that the people that follow you—are indeed loyal fans of your brand. So, you have their ear. The trick is to feed them virtual content constantly and keep them engaged. Contests, and freebies work well."

On the Horizon

While some users may groan at the thought of their parents now being on Facebook, iStrategyLabs (*www. istrategylabs.com/facebook-demographics-and-statistics-august-2009-55-grows-25-in-one-month/*) reported that the fastest growing population on the network is those 55 and older. In fact, my mother-in-law is one of my friends, so there are no jokes about evil MILs happening on my updates (Hi Mom Kee!).

"When Grandma could open and upload a picture of her grandson, you know it's ubiquitous; it's reached its tipping point," Macy said.

For those who shy away from having sheep, pillows and kisses thrown at them, and don't want to join anyone's cyber mafia, Facebook recently launched a Lite version (*lite.facebook.com/*), which does not support the apps. Users get the connection without all the potentially distracting bells and whistles.
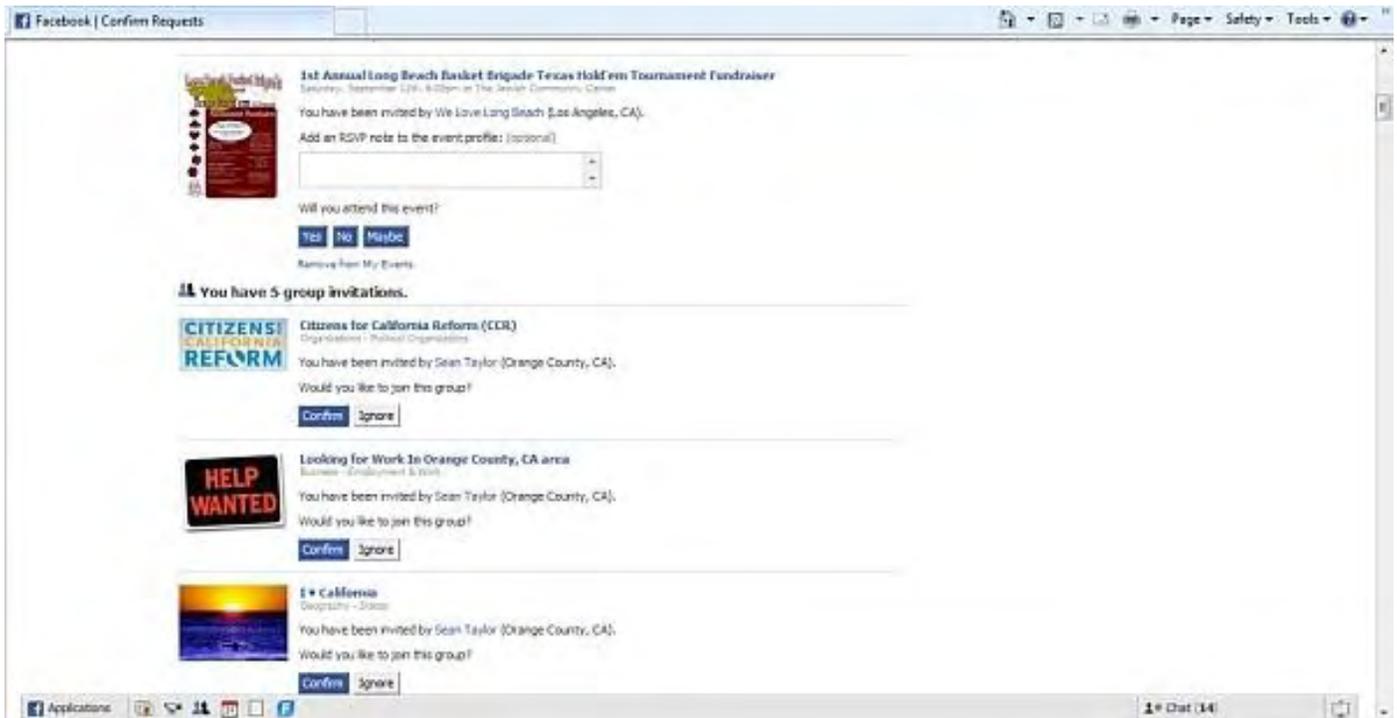
Requests to join various virtual organizations, and a local Long Beach fundraiser. Users can choose to "Confirm" membership of these groups, or "Ignore" the request.

The interactivity and connectivity of the network continues to grow. In December 2008, the company launched APIs, application programming interface, for developers with Facebook Connect (*developers.facebook.com/ connect.php*). With the APIs, other sites can integrate Facebook features directly on their page. In a recent promotion "Mars Real Chocolate Relief Act (*www.blogsrealchocolate.com//*)," the candy bar company, used Facebook Connect to fuel several chats and questions.

Long Beach resident Genelle Palacio is no stranger to the online world. She recently finished a master's in education through the University of Phoenix's Online program.

"I see FB becoming even more successful because they are constantly adding features to make this site better," she said. "I saw a news segment from the guy who owns FB [Mark Zuckerberg] and he said their ultimate goal is to make this a one-stop shop (so to say) for everyone. The site will soon incorporate a YouTube-type section and an e-commerce section."

For me, it's wonderful to know sometimes that I'm not alone. After giving in to insomnia recently, I went online at 4 a.m. and saw that a mere nine minutes earlier, a local friend, and fellow mom, had posted a book review to her Facebook profile. Although it was in the middle of the night, and I couldn't sleep, I felt less lonely knowing that there were others out there, awake and surfing the Web, too.

As naysayers argue: Are we losing our personal connection with others? I'd say that in many ways, social media has brought us closer together.

In addition to writing and being a mom, Marie teaches at Cal State Fullerton, the University of Phoenix and National University. A former chapter leader for Webgrrls Orange County and Los Angeles, Marie continues to keep her technical edge. She can be reached at *info@marieloggiakee.com*.

Four Faces on Facebook

"Facebook is a democratic world where everyone has a say." by Keith Taylor

> One nice thing about cyberspace, and Facebook in particular, is that friendship is not age or gender specific. Here's a story about relatives connecting via Facebook.

I'm too old to be considered a child of cyberspace, but you can find me in front of the 'puter about as much as other septuagenarians are in front of the other boob tube—the one you can't talk back to. This is in spite of my promise to myself that I will not become a slave to computers or their cousins: the Twitters, iPods, digital cameras, or GPS devices that intone: "Drive two-tenths of a mile and turn right on Otay (prounounced 'ottie') Lakes Road. Then turn right."

Alas! Time and again, and despite my firmest resolve, I find myself coveting some new whiz-bang program, or another electronic gadget so neat it just has to be sinful. Perhaps the only thing that saves me from perdition is my wife. Like a good Luddite, she points out that I've found my way back and forth to the barber shop for nigh unto 40 years without the GPS. "After all, it's only a quarter mile from here, and you made it without a problem so far."

My computer is now the center of my life, and I continue to be amazed by what comes out of the thing. "Click click" and I have the best brains in the world at my fingertips. Another click and I'm reading things by the dumbest clucks in the universe. Best of all, I get to decide who's brainy and who's clucky. Thus it came as a shock to learn that a person can become smart before he gets gray hair, and age doesn't give one a special pass when it comes to arguing online.

Someone invited me to be his friend on Facebook. I clicked and ended up in a world so democratic the young, the old, the learned, the whimsical, the pretentious, and the deadly serious all have equal say. And that's a good thing I say! Those in my generation can rest a bit easier knowing when we log off the last time, we will leave behind some folks who not only think, but aren't afraid to share their thoughts. Indeed, we need more of them.

And I know where we can find four! Two granddaughters and two grandnieces are on Facebook. All are about the same age, between 24 and 33. Of the four, only my granddaughters have seen each other. The grandnieces haven't met even though they grew up 50 miles apart. Their grandmothers, my sisters, had a fight back in the early part of the last century and never got over it. Somehow their kids and their kids' kids grew up without associating.

Still, cooling down a feud that boiled for more than 70 years wasn't my intention. I'm a gregarious person and it just seemed a shame that four effervescent young ladies with so much in common didn't know each other. I sent an e-mail introducing them to each other, and a short vignette about something I'd done with each. Then I figured that was that.

It wasn't. Melody (or Brooke when she's in a "Brooke" mood) wrote me a note saying "What a cool idea puppy [her pet name for me]. It brought tears to my eyes." Then she wrote, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all actually get together sometime." Yes, that would be, but it's unlikely given that the four of them were scattered among cities as much as 4,790 miles apart. In Hawaii, Melody's main means of transportation are bodyboards and bicycles. I had a lot to do with her learning to ride both.

Livvy (Olivia Beth) is Melody's sister. She's also a regular whiz-bang on computer stuff, although communication technology once almost got the best of her. When she was about six, my wife and I took her and her big sister on a trip to the London Bridge, some cliff dwellings, and the Grand Canyon—all in Arizona.

She had made a promise to her mom that she'd write every day. She did, and my daughter attested that about half the postcards were legible enough to be delivered. It must have been a terrific challenge for the workers. In at least one case she didn't get the stamp on straight. It extended over the top of the card. She simply folded it over the top and sent it off.

Now she's my consultant on things computer. I couldn't even post my picture on Facebook until she showed me how.

According to "How far," Raleigh, N.C. and San Diego are separated by 2,196 miles and may be a good thing. The distance keeps Andris and me from trying to kill one another. We exchange caustic e-mails on things political, philosophical, and theological, and agree on few. Fortunately, one thing we agree on is that each thinks the other is neat —so neat the septuagenarian has started using that word, and is working up to "cool."

And we both have that Hoosier compulsion to foist our opinions off on an unsuspecting public. We write. I have been a freelance columnist with credits in dozens of magazines and papers. I even recently got my name on a book as a ghost writer. Andris just finished her first book, a fantasy about other-world people, good and evil mixed—all with hints of sex in amongst the brimstone. It isn't as explicit as literotica.com but it's better written.

How good is her book? So good I read it, and you can't even count the fantasy books I haven't read. I'm not interested in fiction, let alone fantasy, but I can recognize humor and good writing, and she has both. I joined Andris in celebrating when an agent was interested enough in her proposal to ask her to send the whole book. She was on her way!

Then I joined her in suffering through her first rejection. The commiseration was real. I have rejections from the best publishers and agents in the country. But there will be more, and one of these days it'll happen—I'm pretty sure.

I think I'll stop arguing politics with her. She's simply too nice to get mad and I'm too stubborn to change easily —or to want to.

I didn't teach Neika to do anything. By the time I met her she had graduated from Purdue, but we had more in common than being related and being Hoosiers. We were both long-distance runners and we both do it for fun. I could teach her how to run slow, but she has that down pat. In a recent celebratory note on Facebook, she told the world that she came within a couple minutes of two hours of a half-marathon.

I visited Indiana last summer. Neika sat in on something not infrequent in our family, a heated family discussion. This was between my sister, her mom, and me. I cut loose with long dissertation reflecting my corrupted "left coast" ideas. When it became apparent that I was hitting too many sore spots I stumbled toward a conclusion.

Then everybody was quiet, everybody but one. Neika clapped her hands together and said, "At last, someone in the family who thinks like I do." That assured our undying friendship no matter if she was one of the 95 percent of runners who run 13 miles faster than I. She's neat too.

One nice thing about cyberspace, and Facebook in particular, is that friendship is not age or gender specific, and it would be wonderful if the four relatives got together. Maybe the old guy too.

Keith Taylor is a retired navy officer living in San Diego. He can be reached at *KRTaylorxyz@aol.com*. He also did standup comedy, but gave it up because he was funnier than the audience realized—about as funny as Wally Wang.
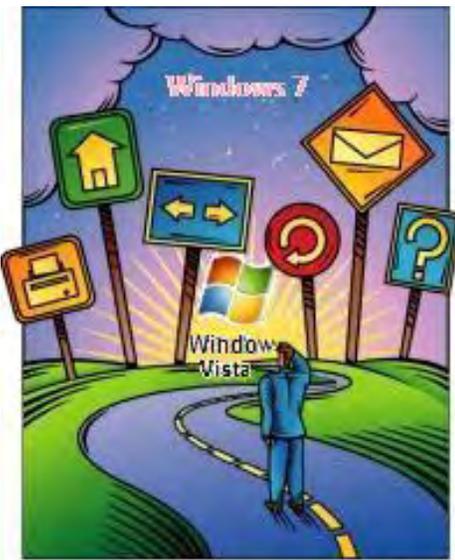
Windows Tips and Tricks: Windows 7, October 22

"Microsoft Learned from Vista's Mistakes" by Jack Dunning

The big day for Microsoft is coming up next month—October 22. Windows 7 will be officially released, and I suspect that almost immediately all the Windows computers on the shelf will become Windows 7 machines.

Hi Jack,

Thanks for your article on Windows 7. I'm hoping to see if my copy can be converted to a paid version without a reinstall. Have you written anything on this?

Thanks again!

Jeffrey Hoover
New Hope, MN

The big day for Microsoft is coming up next month—October 22. Windows 7 will be officially released, and I suspect that almost immediately all the computers on the shelf will become Windows 7 machines. They are already demonstrating the new line of Windows 7 computers, some with touchscreens. In the meantime, Windows Vista machines are sold with a free Windows 7 upgrade.

Once Windows 7 hits the market, only computers with Windows Vista installed will accept an in-place upgrade. All other machines will require a new installation. Of course, even on Vista computers, you should back up all your programs and files, but the upgrade shouldn't tamper with anything on the Vista machines being upgraded.

If you participated in the Windows 7 RC (Release Candidate) program, you have a copy of Windows 7 that you are currently using. Technically, a clean install is required, although you can upgrade without reinstalling another version of Windows first. There is some question as to whether a clean install is actually required. There is a hack floating around that is supposed to make the upgrade from Windows 7 RC easy. One problem with RC is that you will need the Ultimate Edition of Windows 7, since all RC versions were Ultimate. You can only upgrade to the same or higher version of Windows 7. If you have a Business or Ultimate version, you can't downgrade to the Home Premium version. Personally, I'll wait until I get another computer—after October 22.

If you're buying a netbook computer with Windows XP, don't expect to get a free upgrade to Windows 7—there isn't one. Even if you do purchase an upgrade, you will need to backup all of your programs and files, then do a clean install—all files get wiped. For that reason, if you're interested in Windows 7 on a netbook, it may be better to wait until after they start shipping netbooks with Windows 7—probably October 22.

My guess is the drop-off retailers are seeing in computer sales is primarily due to Windows 7. How many people want to mess with a free upgrade when, by waiting another month, they can avoid the entire issue? Most people have an upgrade horror story or two, and they aren't looking for more. A little waiting will resolve the Vista-versus-XP decision.

With regard to Windows 7, I've never seen so many good reviews of a Microsoft product before it's been released. I was impressed with my own testing of the Windows 7 RC version, which I put on an old XP laptop. Its capabilities were limited by the old hardware, but if I were to continue with that computer, I would prefer Windows 7 over going back to XP.

If you have an older computer with XP, you may not want to install Windows 7 on it. For one, it might not work on less-capable hardware. To find out if your computer is a suitable candidate for a Windows 7 upgrade, review the section on Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor in Windows Tips and Tricks dated May 15. The Advisor will tell you if your computer is a suitable candidate for Windows 7. This could save you a lot of heartache and a few dollars.

While more streamlined, Windows 7 is essentially a new, improved Vista—or what Vista was supposed to be. There are many improvements over Vista, but anyone moving from Vista won't take long to acclimate to Windows 7. It may be a little more confusing for XP users, although everything that's in XP is essentially in the same place in Windows 7. The main difference is how the program menus work, but I think that most people will find the Start Search field in the Start Menu a big plus. The information returned by the search in Windows 7 is even better than in Vista.

If you decide to upgrade a group of home computers, a three-pack of the Home Premium version will be available for about $149. All the machines will need to be Home versions of the older Windows (XP or Vista).

Buying a new computer is on hold for many people, although I wouldn't be surprised if there is a surge come November and December. Windows 7 eliminates the need for the downgrade from Vista to XP. I expect that Vista will quickly become a non-issue for new computer buyers. That doesn't mean that Vista will go away. There are millions of Vista computers that are doing a decent job for people right now. There is no compelling reason to immediately upgrade those machines until it's time to replace the hardware. Yet, after all the Vista problems over the last couple years, I see don't very many new Vista computers—if any—being sold. By the end of the year, people will stop talking about Vista, other than to seek support for their current computers.

It looks like Microsoft has learned from its Vista mistakes.

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*

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
"Social Networking--Apple Style" by Wally Wang

Social networks may be fun, but there's nothing like the built-in social network of being a happy Apple customer, which is the envy of every company in the world. Also, look at oddball iPhone apps; the latest Snow Leopard news; a discussion of open standards; and a tip on rearranging your iPhone app icons.

Everyone's joining social networks like MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and a dozen others to network with people in the same field or who have the same interests. While most people probably don't care about sending a message through Twitter informing their friends of such earth-shattering messages as "I'm back at work right now" or "Just finished lunch. Ate a ham sandwich," people still enjoy connecting with like-minded people.

For the interactivity of a social network without the nuisance of signing up to join a Web site that you may lose interest in within a few days, just go down and visit your local Apple store. That's where you'll find hordes of Apple enthusiasts who will be happy to show you the benefits and features of various Apple products including the Macintosh, iPhone and iPod product lines.

If you buy a Macintosh at an Apple Store, Apple will even transfer all your data from your old PC to your new Macintosh free of charge. You can also sign up (and pay) for one-on-one training or group classes so you can learn how to use your Macintosh more efficiently.

Nearly every Apple Store has mobs of people rushing in and out at all times of the day, and the workers there tend to be Apple enthusiasts, so it's nice to chat with a knowledgeable salesperson for a change.

Since Apple still commands less than 10 percent of the computer market, Apple enthusiasts tend to enjoy the camaraderie of visiting an Apple Store. In fact, I'm sure if you strolled into an Apple Store in another city or even another country, you could make friends with a local in a hurry, who might then be able to tell you the best places to eat, stay and visit.

While Apple enjoys a fiercely loyal customer base, it's hard to imagine owners of other computers feeling the same camaraderie with their machines as Apple users do. When was the last time a bunch of Vista users or Motorola cell phone users swapped tips in a store?

Social networks may be fun, but there's nothing like the built-in social network of being a happy Apple customer, which is the envy of every company in the world.

Oddball Apps on the iPhone

The guy who came up with the iFart app for the iPhone makes $10,000 a day. With such a lucrative market, it's

no wonder so many programmers are rushing to develop iPhone apps. While the first batch of iPhone developers were individuals, corporations and organizations are quickly realizing the importance of having their own iPhone app.

In case you're worried about the swine flu and other outbreaks, download the free HealthMap app, which tracks the latest flu news and displays a map and accompanying news article so you can see where flu outbreaks are occurring near you.
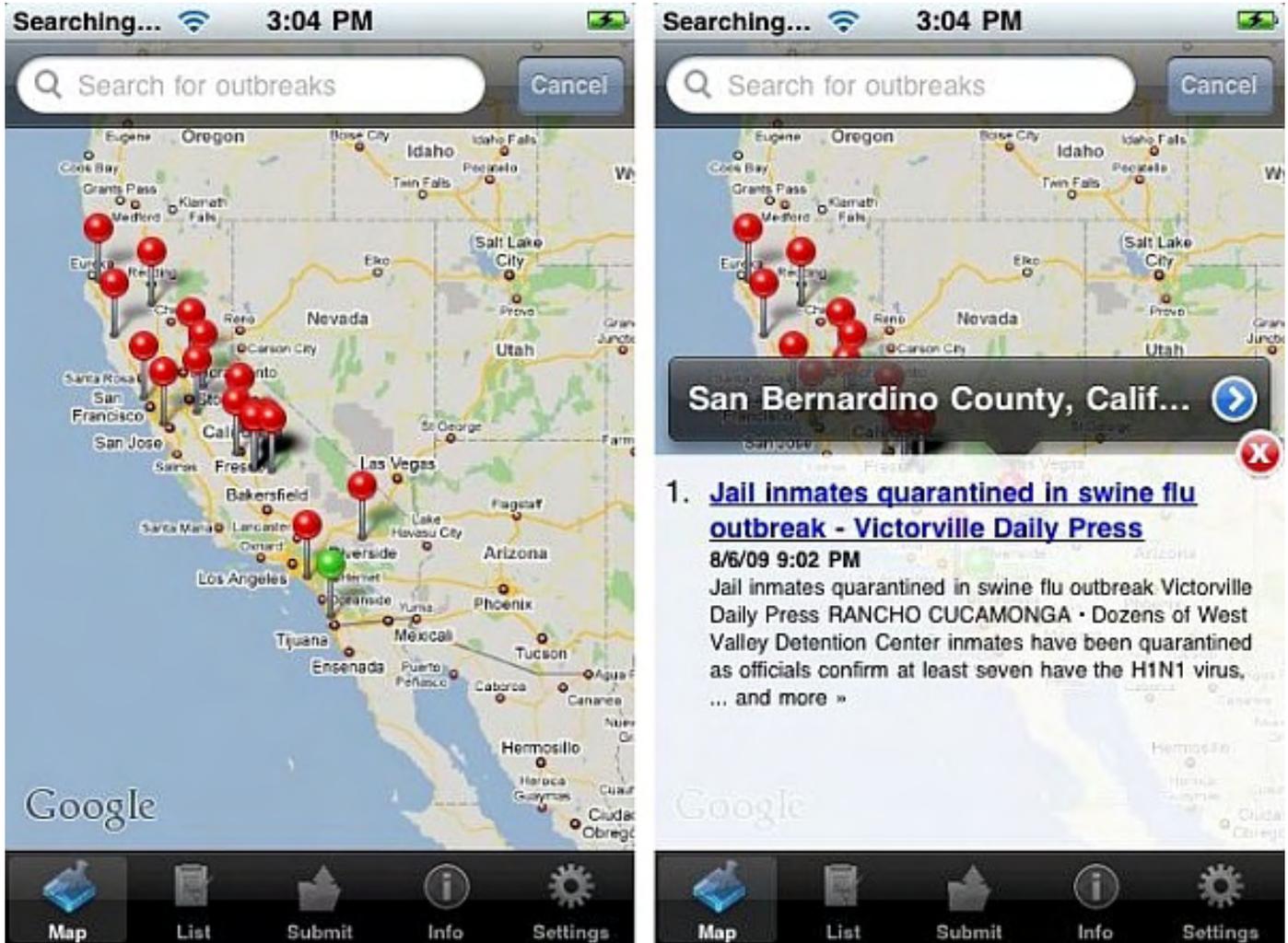

Figure 1. HealthMap displays a map of flu outbreaks.

Ralph Lauren has even introduced its own app, which lets you design and purchase your own shirts. While this might seem frivolous in one sense, this gives customers one more reason to buy a shirt from Ralph Lauren compared to any of their competitors.

Figure 2. The Ralph Lauren app lets you design your own shirts.

The more companies and organization that release free apps, the more useful the iPhone becomes and the more people will want an iPhone (or iPod Touch) so they can access and run these unique apps.

In the early days, everyone bought a PC because so many people were developing unique programs for the PC. The more programs available, the more people wanted a PC, and the more incentive programmers had to create more PC programs. The same thing is now happening with the iPhone. Palm and Windows Mobile might have their own app stores, but given Apple's huge head start, it's hard to imagine anyone wanting to buy a Palm Pre or a Windows Mobile phone just because of all the cool apps they can run on their mobile phones.

Mac OS X 10.6.1 Arrives

Just a few weeks after Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard arrived, Apple has released the first patch dubbed 10.6.1. Along with fixing a handful of bugs, this patch provides more printer drivers to ensure that Snow Leopard works with a wider range of printers, including Hewlett-Packard and Canon printers.

If you haven't installed Snow Leopard yet, now is a safe time to do so with the first bug fix released. The entire installation takes about an hour, and when you install Snow Leopard on a Macintosh with existing files, Snow Leopard leaves your data alone. Although you should back up your data before upgrading any operating system, Snow Leopard won't wipe out any data already stored on your hard disk.

Snow Leopard seems to bring moderate speed increases along with longer battery life for laptops. Best of all, Snow Leopard costs only $29, so it's an inexpensive way to speed up your Macintosh and reclaim additional storage space on your hard disk at the same time.

Apple Defining the Latest Standards

In the video game industry, Microsoft's Xbox (after years of billion-dollar losses), has finally overtaken Sony's PlayStation as the most popular and leading game console. Of course, just as Sony stumbled, Nintendo's Wii also took off, but for first-person shooter games, the Xbox is still the number one choice. Despite reliability problems, Microsoft's Xbox still beats Sony's PlayStation, partly because Sony fumbled during the transition from the PlayStation 2 to the PlayStation 3, which costs more and doesn't offer anything different from the Xbox.

Video game developers unanimously say that programming the Xbox is easier because it relies on the same graphics engine (DirectX) that Windows does. In contrast, Sony's PlayStation and Nintendo's Wii use their own graphics engine, which means having to learn an entirely new system to program.

While DirectX works only for Windows and the Xbox as a Microsoft tool, Apple has embraced OpenGL, a rival (and open source) graphics standard that's challenging DirectX. Given a choice between learning DirectX and being locked into writing games only for Windows and the Xbox, or learning OpenGL and being able to write games for any platform (Mac OS X, PlayStation, iPhone, and even Windows), it's easy to see what programmers might do. Choose the locked-in path of Windows using DirectX, or choose the open path of OpenGL and write programs for every operating system.

Another example of Apple's use of open standards to attack Microsoft is the announcement that Grand Central, its parallel-processing technology, is now open-source. Since Grand Central is based on the Unix foundation of Mac OS X, Grand Central will likely be embraced by the Linux community, which in turn will make Linux more efficient and faster.

As more programmers become familiar and rely on Grand Central to write parallel-processing programs that maximize the efficiency of multicore-processor computers, that leaves Microsoft all alone trying to create similar technology for Windows.

As Apple reaps the benefits of the open-source technology of Grand Central with programmers all over the world learning and improving it, Microsoft's team of programmers must work and improve their own parallel-processing technology in isolation.

Assuming Microsoft's parallel-processing technology works roughly the same as Grand Central, the open-source nature of Grand Central insures that hordes of programmers will learn and get familiar with using it. Of course, any programmer who relies on Grand Central will only be able to use this technology on UNIX (including Linux) or Mac OS X, which gives both Mac OS X and Linux another advantage against Windows.

Microsoft could embrace Grand Central by adapting it for Windows, but supporting open standards means Windows programmers could easily defect to rival systems. Microsoft tried to define its own Web page standards with Internet Explorer and lost market share to Firefox, which embraced open standards.

With more programmers and systems using open-source standards like OpenGL and Grand Central, that leaves Microsoft as a solitary island of proprietary technology. Microsoft can survive this assault simply because it has already captured such a large market share, but for the future, Microsoft's dilemma of relying on proprietary technology means that it could fall further behind as the rest of the world adapts competing

technologies. Like a bear, Microsoft's dominance might look imposing, but it can actually be less of a threat than an angry pack of chihuahuas (Apple, Sony, Linux, Firefox, OpenGL, OpenOffice, Nintendo, Android, Google, etc.).

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

One problem with storing apps on the iPhone is that you must drag each program icon on the screen to rearrange its position. While this is tolerable for a handful of apps, most people collect dozens or more apps, which makes rearranging so many apps tedious.

Fortunately, if you download and install the latest (free) version of iTunes 9.0, you'll gain the feature to move app icons on your iPhone using your computer and mouse. Just point to an app, drag the mouse, and drop the icon in its new location on your iPhone.

Figure 3. The latest iTunes 9.0 lets you rearrange apps on the screen with a mouse.

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/*).
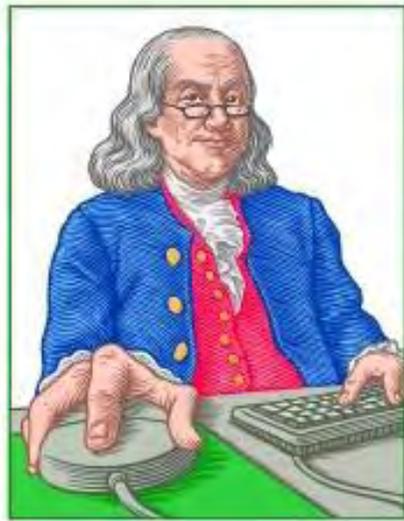
Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

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

A few tips for new Ubuntu users, as well as some online resources for help and information. Also, a call for tips and advice on the Debian distro.

Ubuntu Tips

Last week, ComputorEdge *asked for reviews, tips and tricks related to the Ubuntu distribution of Linux. What follows are responses from Jim and Jerry.*

I have a few tips for new Ubuntu users.

1. *Use the forums!* The Ubuntu community forums have a lot of great people that can help you and they help newbies all the time.

1a. Post something if you cannot find what you are looking for. I help maintain my company's support forums as part of my job duties, and this is one of the biggest things I see. I will get phone calls from users telling me that they couldn't find anything in our forums that will help them, but they didn't bother to post a new thread. You can't get your question answered if you never ask it.

2. Do not be afraid of the command line. Most of the time you can get away without using it, but you might run into a tip that involves using it.

3. Do not be afraid of reinstalling if you mess something up or realize you should have done something a little different. Not only does it give you a little more experience with the operating system, but you will have a better-running machine when you're done.

Jim
Ubuntu 9.04 user

Some Good Links for Ubuntu

There are a lot more, but these are some areas that people frequently ask for help with:

• Ubuntu Forums: Tutorials & Tips (*ubuntuforums.org/forumdisplay.php?f=100*)

• Linux.com Forums (*www.linux.com/archive/feature/128105*)

• Bitbucket (*bitbucket.org/rg3/youtube-dl/wiki/Home*)

• Lubi, the Linux-based Ubuntu Installer (*lubi.sourceforge.net/lubi.html*)

• UNetbootin (*unetbootin.sourceforge.net/*) allows you to create bootable Live USB drives.

• Full Circle (*fullcirclemagazine.org/*) is a free, independent, magazine dedicated to the Ubuntu family of Linux operating systems.

• Binary Driver Howto: Nvidia (*help.ubuntu.com/community/BinaryDriverHowto/Nvidia*)

• All My Apps—Ubuntu (*allmyapps.com/ubuntu-9.04/*)

Anything I can do to help Linux.

Jerry Turba

Give Us Tips for Debian

This week, *ComputorEdge* is asking for reviews, tips and tricks related to the Debian distribution of Linux. What are Debian's strengths and weaknesses? Which Web sites offer the best Debian information? What are the secrets that everyone should know, but might not know how or where to find? Send your comments to Debian Linux Comments, Tips, and Tricks (*ceeditor@computoredge.com*). They will appear in a future column dedicated to Debian. Each week we will highlight a different distribution until the supply is exhausted.

<center>*   *   *</center>

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, or a favorite Linux software application, 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.

Rob, The ComputorTutor Does VB.Net 2010

"More on VB.Net 2010 Applications: Colors, Fonts and Files" by Rob Spahitz

Last week, we continued work on our "Sticky Notes" application. We wanted to allow the user to change colors and fonts and also to be able to save a message or load one. This week, we'll explore one way to store information that an application needs for future use.

Last week, we continued work on our "Sticky Notes" application. We wanted to allow the user to change colors and fonts and also to be able to save a message or load one.

Note: These columns are written using VB.Net 2010. However, most of the features will work just fine with VB.Net 2008 or even earlier versions. To see how to install VB.Net2010, check my July 31, 2009 column, and to retrieve project files, check my server at *www.dogopoly.com/ce*.

Before we begin this week, let's throw out another challenge. The idea behind these is to allow you to offer your opinion of computer technology (good, bad or otherwise). Why not shoot a quick message so I can get a good sense of what you, my readers, would like to see in this department? We can improve your productivity or fun by learning new ways to do things, building new custom applications, or even designing fun games. Let me know where I should take these columns to make it worth your time.

CHALLENGE (due 9/25/2009):

Do you use the computer to talk to friends? Maybe just for personal business? How about to help with office work?

SOLUTIONS:

Previously, I asked how you might save computer data. There are many solutions to this. When you create a simple text file in Notepad, you have a data file. When you create a spreadsheet, you have a data file. Have you created a PowerPoint presentation? It probably doesn't really look like it, but it's a file full of data. Of course, the more traditional concept of a data file is something like an Access database file. But even a picture is a data file. And for that matter, when you install a new Windows application, some information about that is probably put into the Windows Registry, which is, of course, a database.

So if you need to store data in the computer, how would you do that? Lots of applications can help you do the job. However, as with many things in life, some things are better than others, so use the right tool for the job. This week, we'll explore one way to store information that an application needs for future use.

VB.Net Common Dialogs

As previously mentioned, VB.Net comes with many features to help you program Windows applications very quickly. Applications typically do three things: get information (input), process it, and put it somewhere (output). Although there are many ways for an application to gather information, there are usually only a few types of information that you need to get. For example, you can get text from a user by offering a textbox.

However, you can also get text from a drop-down list box or a numeric up-down. You can get a date from a textbox or a calendar. How would you get a picture? How about a large block of text or a color or a font choice with various parts?

VB handles this in a variety of ways for the developer. When you look in the Properties window of many controls, you'll see these different features. For example, a Form has a Text property that simply accepts text to appear in the title. This is done through a variation of a textbox. However, the WindowsState property gives you a drop-down list of three choices. Those are nice ways for you, as a user of the VB.Net application, to be able to enter data. But how would you enter background color information or font features? And when you want to save the application you're building, how do you supply the name and the location?

VB.Net offers helpful features so you can develop applications with minimal effort. As such, similar "common" features are offered to you so you can make your applications more user-friendly too. Even better, if you can think of a better way to get information from your user, you can build your own control (something we'll handle in a future column).

Meanwhile, let's learn how to use VB.Net to help us get a color, font and file name from a user. We'll use some of the controls VB.Net offers for common types of user input that would be quite difficult without them.

Color Common Dialog

Here's the first challenge. How do you ask a user to specify a color? You want your Sticky Notes application to let the user pick a custom text color. Aside from a button or menu item to launch a request, what would the request be? Do you simply show a textbox and ask the user to type a color name? That could work, but that becomes a huge challenge for you to determine what was typed.

A simple user-entry could be "red." You'd need some code to check a database of words to see what that means. And what if the user typed "Red" or "RED"? You could force the input to either upper or lower case to assist with that. What if the user accidentally types "rred"? Do you simply respond that this is an invalid color? Maybe you could try to find the closest match and hope you got it right.

So rather than a textbox, maybe another control is better. You might add a drop-down list of choices. That's better since the user could not choose an invalid choice. However, for more complicated colors like fuchsia or mauve, the user might not really know what to expect. Further, if your user is a child or does not speak English, even the simple colors might mean nothing.

OK, so you could build your own custom drop-down list control with not only words, but that also shows the color next to the word. Great idea! But lots of work. Good luck with that.

Instead we get a common control tool to show a user a collection of colors. The user will actually have a variety of ways to select the color, including picking a predefined color, clicking on a color chart, adjusting a color slider bar, or entering a red-green-blue combination that represents a color in the computer world. And what do you have to do? Mainly add the control and launch it at the right time, then ask the control what was picked. Let's make it happen and see how hard it is.

If you haven't already done so, load our Sticky Notes project from last week (or just a new project if you want to test this feature).

Go to your toolbox and open the Dialogs section. In VB.Net 2010 you have the choices of ColorDialog, FolderBrowserDialog, FontDialog, OpenFileDialog and SaveFileDialog. Hmm, which one should we pick? OK, go ahead and drag a ColorDialog control to the middle of your form. As noted in a previous week, this

will add an entry to the Objects tray below the form. This does NOT put an item onto the form because the form will not show the color dialog information; that will appear in a separate dialog window.

Let's rename it. One of the standards for a dialog control is a "dlg" prefix; rename this to dlgColor by selecting it and changing the Name property in the properties window. While you're there, notice that the default Color property is Black and shows a Black box next to it—nice touch similar to the custom control we considered making. There are also a few other interesting properties, such as AnyColor and FullOpen that I'll let you explore by clicking on them and looking at the help at the bottom of the property window. You can also try changing them when we're done to see what they do. And, of course, you can pick one and press the F1 key for standard VB help.

Now let's get our application to open the control. Under our Options menu, double-click on the item we added called Background Color. If you just created a new application, add a simple button instead and call it something like btnColor; double-click on it to get to the VB code area. Enter the following code to get it to launch the ColorDialog control:

```
Me.dlgColor.ShowDialog()
```

Now run your application (press F5). Select the menu item Option/Background Color (or click the Color button) and you should see the dialog seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Color Dialog.

"Um, sure thing, Rob. Where are all the options you mentioned? I just see predefined colors." Well, just go ahead and click on the Define Custom Color button and you'll see the rest. Anywhere an application lets you select a color, you're likely to see this control, which is part of Windows and offered to you as a developer to share with your users.

Pick a color, like red, and click the OK button. Darn! Nothing happened. Well, I guess we need to program it a

bit more. Close this application and return to the VB code area and add this after your other line:

```
Me.txtNote.BackColor = Me.dlgColor.Color
```

Or (for the blank form option)

```
Me.btnColor.BackColor = Me.dlgColor.Color
```

Run again. This time when you select a color and click the OK button, you should see the color appear. Success!

Close our app so we can move on to the next part.

Font Common Dialog

Similar to the Color Dialog, you can also request a Font. We'll use the item from menu Options/Font (or you can create a new button called btnFont for this).

Switch to form design (double-click frmSticky in the Solution Explorer window). Add a FontDialog control from the toolbox onto the form (and it will appear in the Objects tray). Rename it as dlgFont.

Double-click on the menu Font (or font button) to get to VB code. As before, enter similar code to launch the dialog then apply it to the form:

```
        Me.dlgFont.ShowDialog()
        Me.txtNote.Font = Me.dlgFont.Font
```

Or (for the blank form):

```
        Me.dlgFont.ShowDialog()
        Me.btnFont.Font = Me.dlgFont.Font
```

Run the application, enter some text in the Sticky text area (like "Testing the font") and select menu Options/Font. Pick a real fancy font and size, like Impact Bold/Italic size 12, as seen in Figure 2.
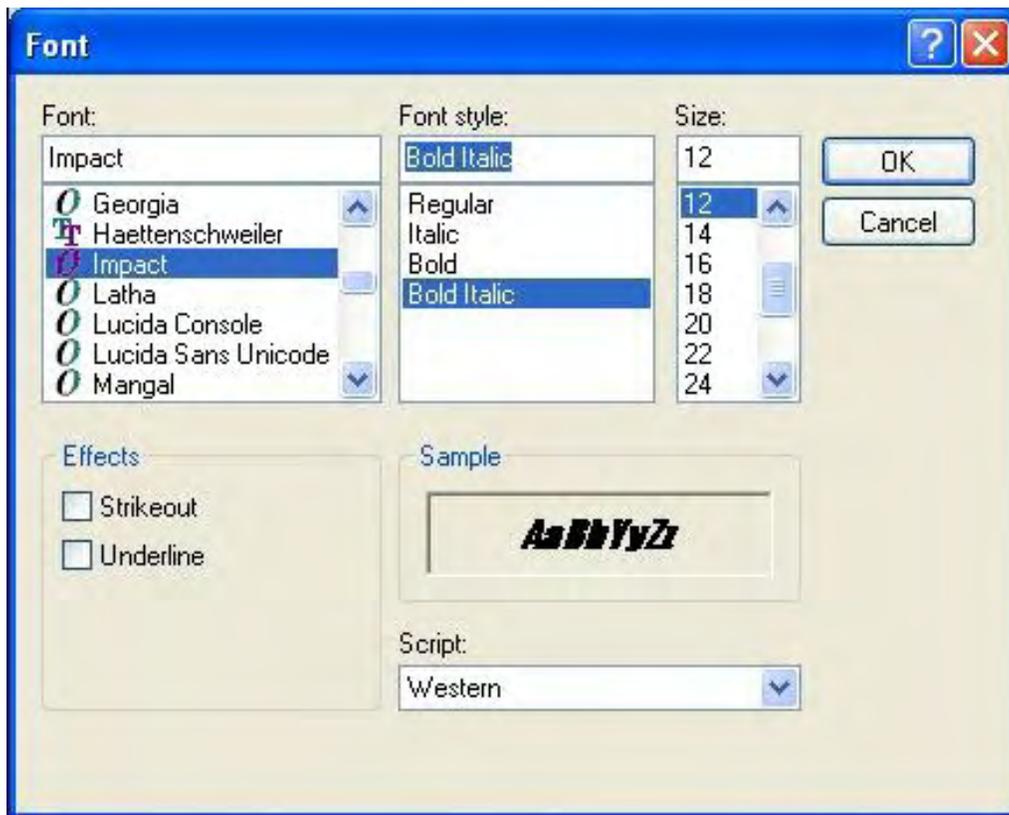
Figure 2. Font Dialog.

When you click the OK button, you should now have a new font on your text as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Font Test.

Cool! That was pretty easy! You may have noticed that this also offers underlining and strikethrough (Strikeout) text. Imagine trying to ask the user for all that through a textbox!

Open and Save Dialog Control

Now for the tough one. How do we save and load text? Why, of course, a file dialog box. You've certainly seen these a thousand times. Every time you go to an application and try to save a file, you probably see the Common Dialog Save control. And when you go to open the file, you'll probably see the Open Dialog control. Let's add them.

Close our application and go back to the form. Add both the OpenFileDialog and SaveFileDialog controls and name them dlgOpen and dlgSave respectively. Using our File/Save menu item (or a Save button), let's add some code to load the SaveDialog window:

```
Me.dlgSave.ShowDialog()
```

That's the easy part. How do we get it to save data? The problem is that we are not dealing with a single value as with color, or a simple collection like font. We are dealing with potentially an unlimited amount of text. There are a variety of ways to handle this. For a large amount of data, you may need to handle this through something called a buffer, which acts like a funnel, feeding data at a steady rate to the hard drive. VB.Net gives you access to an IO (Input/Output) library which includes a File Class that manages things related to files. The 2010 version (actually, the DotNet Framework version 3.5) offers something called WriteAllText that lets you specify a file name and the text you want to write. It looks like that may work for us. Add this:

```
IO.File.WriteAllText(Me.dlgSave.FileName, Me.txtNote.Text)
```

Note that this will overwrite existing data, so be careful when you specify where you want to save the data from the textbox.

Run this. Enter some text like "Please save me!" then select menu File/Save. You should see something like Figure 4.
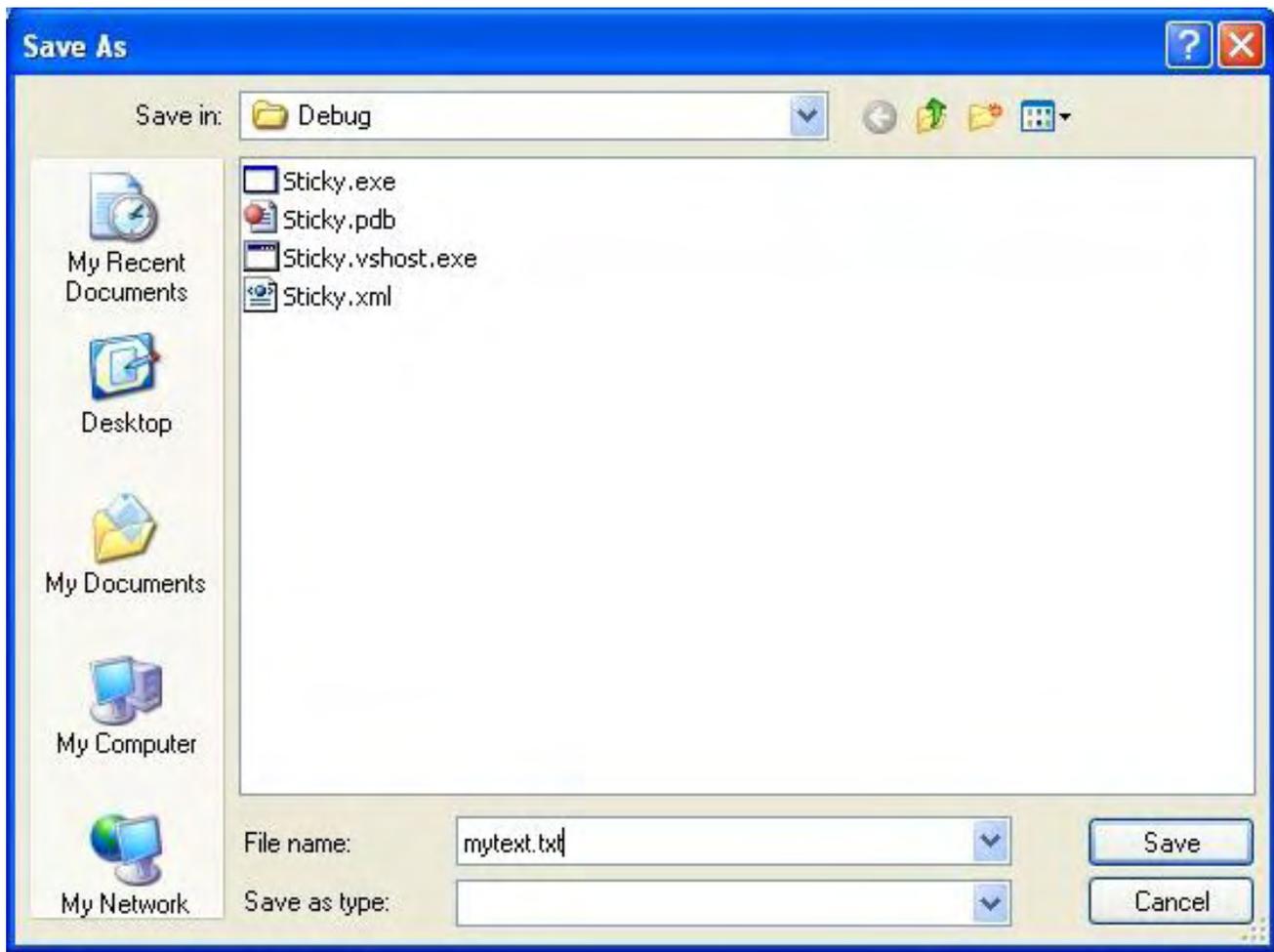
Figure 4. Save Dialog.

Locate a nice folder and enter a file name, then click on the Save button to save the text. If you proceed to Windows and locate the file, you can open it in something like Notepad and you'll see the text you specified.

Now let's program the Open portion. Close our app and double-click on the File/Open menu item, then add this code:

```
Me.dlgOpen.ShowDialog()
Me.txtNote.Text = IO.File.ReadAllText(Me.dlgOpen.FileName)
```

Run this. Leave the textbox blank. Select menu File/Open and select from the Open Dialog box the file you just save. If you typed everything correctly, the text should load.

There are many other features we can add to these. However, at this point you can save and load text, change the background color of the Sticky Notes application, and change the font. I leave it to the reader to figure out how to change the foreground. When done, you should have new code that looks similar to this:

```
Private Sub mnuBackgroundColor_Click(ByVal sender As System.
Object, ByVal e As System.EventArgs) Handles mnuBackgroundColor.Click
Me.dlgColor.ShowDialog()
Me.txtNote.BackColor = Me.dlgColor.Color
End Sub
```

```
Private Sub mnuFont_Click(ByVal sender As System.Object, ByVal e As System.
EventArgs) Handles mnuFont.Click
Me.dlgFont.ShowDialog()
Me.txtNote.Font = Me.dlgFont.Font
End Sub
Private Sub mnuSave_Click(ByVal sender As System.Object, ByVal e As System.
EventArgs) Handles mnuSave.Click
Me.dlgSave.ShowDialog()
IO.File.WriteAllText(Me.dlgSave.FileName, Me.txtNote.Text)
End Sub
Private Sub mnuOpen_Click(ByVal sender As System.Object, ByVal e As System.
EventArgs) Handles mnuOpen.Click
Me.dlgOpen.ShowDialog()
Me.txtNote.Text = IO.File.ReadAllText(Me.dlgOpen.FileName)
End Sub
```

Send along your comments. Next week, we'll try to wrap up this Sticky Notes application so we can move on to another one.

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: Who Needs Facebook?

"Computer Product Opinions from ComputorEdge Readers and Staff" by ComputorEdge Staff

A survey of of the Colorado Springs Senior Computer Club shows an emphatic dislike for social networking. Also, a call for comments and experiences regarding firewalls.

Not High on Social Networking

Following is an article on a survey on Social Networking that I wrote for our CoSNUG September newsletter, which won't be published until the week of September 21. I thought it might furnish a nugget or two for your upcoming issue on social networking. It was taken at our August general meeting:

"This survey told us one thing, loud and clear—our members want nothing to do with social networking! Only six of the 55 members who responded claimed Facebook affiliation, and only two said they were on Twitter. Nobody mentioned any others. Of those few claiming affiliation, six said they use it 'only occasionally.'

"Over a third (36 percent) said they don't want to share any personal information over these sites. A solid 29 percent said they didn't understand how social networking sites work, and a healthy 18 percent said they didn't belong to any because, 'I have better things to do with my time.'

"Several said it's great for finding old friends. Another wrote that 'I'm concerned about security and obscene sites.' One member wrote, 'I use it only for Reunion information—if there was no reunion, I would not use Facebook at all.'

"Another said, 'I enjoy my e-mail, otherwise I don't care much about being online.' But standing out from the crowd was this member who penned, 'Very interested in learning more, i.e., equipment and how to.'

"One response was very emphatic, saying 'I can't say anything in 140 words or letters or whatever. Nobody cares what I'm doing every minute anyhow. Even if I had nothing better to do, I still would not social network —*ever!*'

"So what did this survey tell us? That most of the members of the Colorado Springs Senior Computer Club (CoSNUG) don't want to get involved in any Social Networking program because (1) They don't want to post any personal information online (2) They don't really understand how they work, and (3) They have better things to do with their time."

Larry O'Neill
CoSNUG

Next Week: Firewalls!

Next week, ComputorEdge *will be talking about firewalls. Tell us about your favorite firewall programs or the problems you've encountered. Which do you use and what are your concerns? Your comments will appear right here in ComputorQuick reviews.*

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: Translating the Spanish Web

"Another cool feature of the Google Toolbar." by Jack Dunning

> When searching for information from Web sites in other languages, the Google Toolbar language-translation tool is a pretty nifty feature.

I had another pleasant computer surprise the other day. This happens when I attempt to accomplish something and discover that not only can I do it, but it's surprisingly easy. In this case, it involved getting Web information with a search engine—from a foreign country.

In this situation, a friend of ours had a family member who was involved in an incident in Mexico. It was pretty far south, so it was unlikely that the situation would hit the newspapers in the United States. That means that any information found on the Web would most likely be in Spanish from a local newspaper.

I know just enough Spanish to order two beers, plus say thank you and goodbye. I can generally scan an article written in Spanish and pick out five or six word that I recognize. This isn't much help when searching for information with Google when all the resources are in that foreign language.

I remembered that I had installed the Google Toolbar (See "Exploring Google Toolbar" dated March 27) into a couple of my browsers (Firefox and IE8). I knew that it had a language-translation feature in it because I would accidentally get the Spanish word for English words on a Web page when I hovered one with the cursor. I loaded up Firefox and took a look.

The first step was to locate a Web page that I could hopefully recognize as pertaining to the topic. As an example, see Figure 1.

Figure 1. A Web news item in Spanish.

I then selected "Translate Page into English" from Google Toolbar (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Select "Translate Page into English" from Google Toolbar.

The resulting translation appears in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Spanish Web page translated into English.

While the translations were not perfect, although much better than the English seen in most computer forums, I could understand the gist of the article—which is all I do with newspapers written in English. As it turns out, I could have translated the Web page into almost any language (see Figure 4). As long as the translation window is open when following links, all Web pages will be translated. I could also take English Web pages and reverse the translation, although that seems a pretty dangerous thing to do.
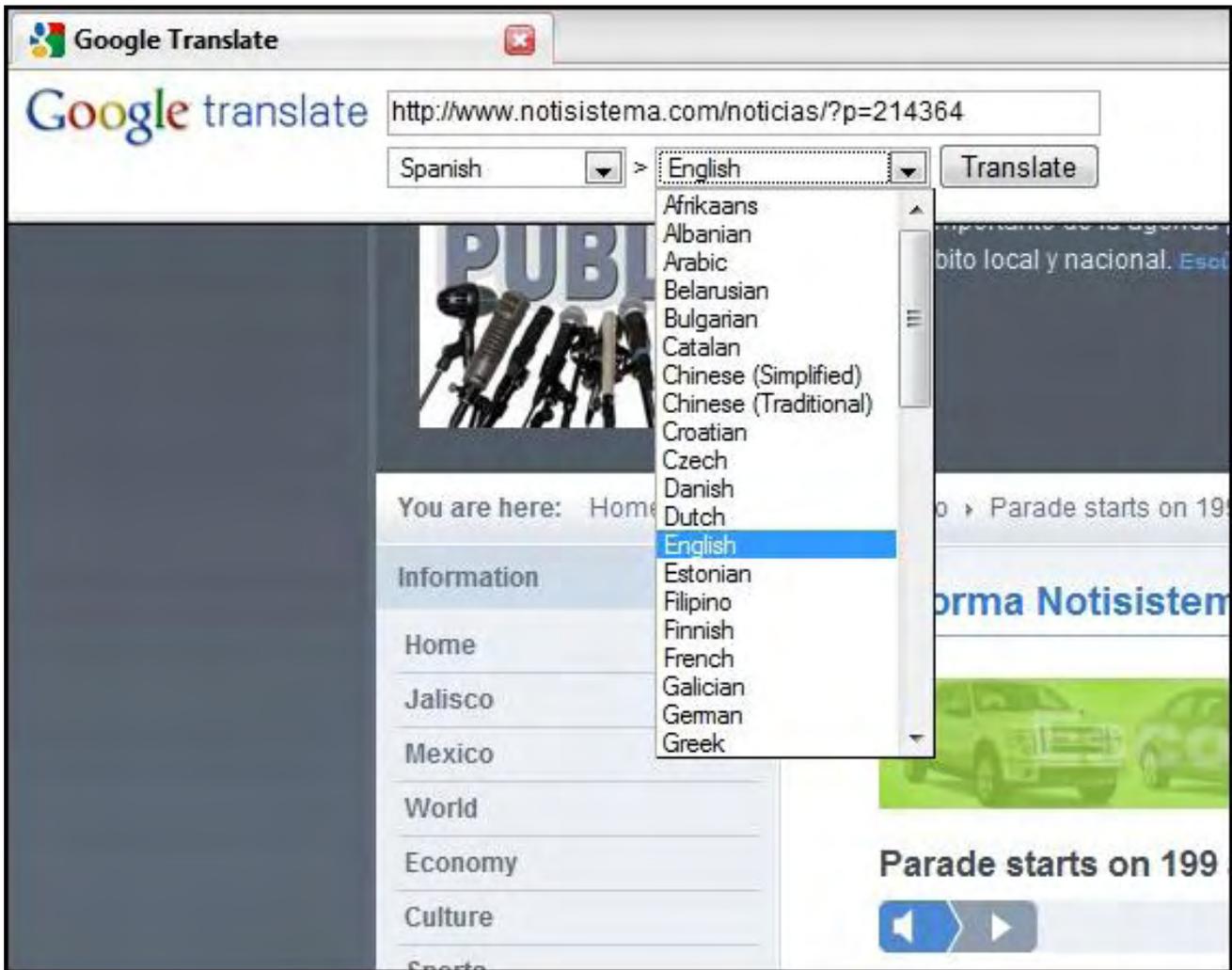
Figure 4. There are many options for translating to and from other languages.

Just for fun I translated the same text into Chinese (see Figure 5). As I hovered over the Chinese text, a balloon with the original Spanish text would pop up.

Figure 5. Spanish translated to Chinese with Google Toolbar.

Pretty cool, huh?

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*

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Great Computerese Article," "How to Appear Techno-Savvy," "Late Suggestion on the Linux Column," "Skype Problem?," "Debugging Network Connection Problems," "More on Desktops from Windows Sysinternals Tools"

Great Computerese Article

[The following letters are in regard to Dawn Clement's September 4 article, "A Computerese Glossary."]

Fun and informative. After scanning the glossary, I almost feel like an Alpha-Geek myself. JK, LOL!

-Ken Hultman, San Diego, CA

ComputorEdge is an excellent read come Friday morning, and I particularly liked "A Computerese Glossary." The writer, Dawn Clement, mentioned several other resources, and I'd like to add mine: LAME BRAIN 2009: A Dictionary for the Technically Challenged (*www.smartsite.com/lamebrain.html*). Updated annually, it's *free* for the download with about 1,000 tech terms and almost 500 text-messaging definitions.

Keep the good stuff coming.

-Lynn Manning Ross

How to Appear Techno-Savvy

[Regarding Jack Dunning's September 4 article, "How To Appear Techno-Savvy at a Party":] I found it informative. I will be putting it on my blog with a link to *ComputorEdge*.

Thanks!

-Rio Guzman, San Diego, CA

I think you left out at least one [techno-term]: petabytes.

Next time you go to a computer store with a friend, ask the sales clerk what's the price on a 1-petabyte drive. Not only will you impress your friend, but you'll probably force the sales clerk to go look up the term. Gigabytes are so last year, terabytes are so last week, but petabytes are the up-and-coming.

Of course that will wear out soon, so maybe we need zigabytes. "Hey, do you know where I can find the best price on a zigabyte drive?" I hope it doesn't cost me a zillion dollars to buy.

-Rob S., San Diego, CA

Late Suggestion on the Linux column

[Regarding the September 4 Linux Lessons column:] One of the easiest things for Linux users to write, I would

think, are documents of their own experiences with a certain aspect of Linux. This could be remarks on the various distributions they have used, what applications they are most familiar with, etc. I personally never get tired of reading user testimonials on Linux issues. Many of them in the past have caused me to try out something I otherwise would not have.

Of course, I'll get to work on one of these myself!

-Richard, Longmont, CO

This may seem a silly suggestion, but perhaps you could get distros from creators, review them, and produce a set of tips on that distro and put both the distro and tips up together. Actually, this is the tip I provide to every "nooby" who asks me about Linux. I always tell them to buy one of the magazines that come with a disc and use that. It allows the user to get the most up-to-date version that is being referred to in the articles.

-David Lyle, Thornton, CO

Skype Problem?

[Regarding the September 4 ComputorQuick Reviews column,which mentioned calls via Skype, I have a Skype problem:] When I Skype friends, I get their video perfectly on my screen (all facial movements), but my photo on their screens is frozen from start to finish. Is my camera defective or what? It's a Logitech, and has previously worked perfectly on both ends.

-Larry O'Neill

You should be able to test the camera through the Logitech tools without Skype being loaded. Plus, if you have more than one program running that uses the camera, it could be causing a conflict.

-Jack Dunning

Debugging Network Connection Problems

[Regarding Jack Dunning's September 4 Windows Tips and Tricks column:] I don't have a home network (having only one computer), but I find that when I have Internet connection problems, sometimes using "tracert" rather than "ping" works better. "Ping" is an all-or-nothing indicator. If you can connect to the Internet at all, "tracert" generally gives you a good indication of where the problem is. If the problem is confined to a certain Web site or group of sites, using this, plus WHOIS, can sometimes even give you the approximate physical location of the problem.

-Daniel, Colorado Springs

More on Desktops from Windows Sysinternals Tools

[Regarding the August 28 Windows Tips and Tricks column:] I was intrigued by the Desktops tool, so I decided to try it out at work on my Windows XP machine. Heeding your warning about it hanging, I saved everything first.

When I ran it from the zip file I downloaded, it never started up, but seemed to hijack my Excel application. I locked and went to a meeting. When I came back, I tried to access a few different applications, and they each started locking until my machine locked entirely and required a hard-reboot by powering off. I couldn't use the Windows-L option or Ctrl-Alt-Del.

After rebooting, I started up the Desktops tool before loading all of my other things (since I wanted them to start in different windows.) This time it started fine. I switched to desktop 2 and loaded a few things. I switched to desktop 3 and loaded a few things. I switched to desktop 1 and everything was intact.

So far everything is great, and I look forward to trying it at home too.

Thanks for the tip.

-Rob Spahitz, San Diego, CA

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