

ComputerEdge™ Online — 10/30/09



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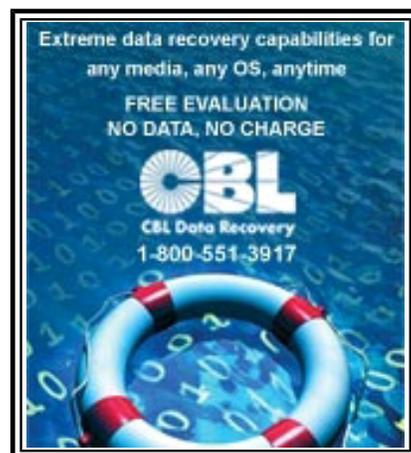
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Digital Dave

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

A reader wonders why some e-commerce sites don't have a "logout" button—and if this is a concern; a reader wants to get back Windows 7's missing Movie Maker program; a reader wonders if her computer's power button is failing.

Dear Digital Dave,

I've noticed that some popular online shopping sites don't have a Logout button. Is this something to worry about?

*Poz
San Diego, CA*

Dear Poz,

Whether a logout button on a Web site is necessary is dependent upon both the Web site and how you deal with it. Generally, when you log into a site, there is key information about you stored in a file called a cookie on your computer. This is where login information is saved. Generally, this information does not include passwords, but has a more cryptic caller identification number that tells the Web site that it's you. This is how sites such as Amazon identify you when you go to the site. Logging out may make your computer unrecognizable to the site, depending on how the site has been set up.

The only way to ensure that the site will not recognize you and display your logged-in page is to delete both the cookie and any temporary copies of the Web page in your browser cache (history). This can generally be done through Tools or Options in your browser. (You will need to look for cookies and pages with the same domain name as the site.)

Some Web sites have a timer on your login. If it expires (through inactivity), it requires you to log in again. Otherwise, you can continue with transactions without re-logging in. The logout button will finish the timer and lock out your access until you log in again. Even if it still recognizes you from a cookie, you will have to log in again. On a site with no timeout feature, the logout button will likely not do much.

If I were visiting a questionable site, I would certainly clear the cookies and temporary files. If I were using a public computer (more than one person accesses the computer), then regardless of what sites I visited, I would be sure to clear all temporary files and cookies when I was done. Merely closing the browser windows is not enough.

The best-designed sites require you to log in every time you either access the site, or whenever you start a transaction. But it is still up to you to decide if even a logout is enough.

There are numerous advantages to not deleting these files. Generally, your Web experience will be better, since the sites you visit most often will recognize you when you come back. If you are the only one using your computer system for Web browsing, then it may be safe to merely close the browser when you're done without further deleting. That is a

determination for you to make.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

One thing I really love about Microsoft's Vista is its Movie Maker program! I understand that Microsoft's new Windows 7 operating system will no longer include this program. Is there any way I can simply load this program onto a memory stick and then install the whole thing onto Microsoft's new operating system?

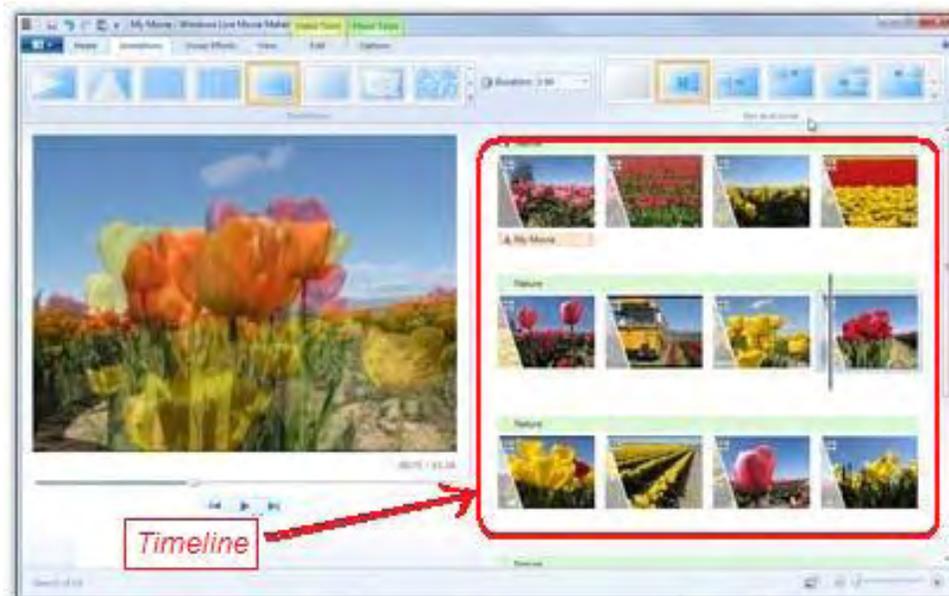
I have also heard that Movie Maker will be offered separately, through Microsoft's home page. Do you know if that download will be free, and if it will be as good as the one that is now included with Vista? Thanks, and I really enjoy your magazine.

*Jerry Hughes
San Diego*

Dear Jerry,

It's said that you can run any version of Windows Movie Maker in Windows 7. All you need to do is copy all of the files to the new Win 7 computer and register the DLL files. I don't have specific information on which files need to be registered or exactly where to put them (it can get a bit tricky), but I'm sure the info is available somewhere on the Web.

I took a glance at Windows Live Movie Maker (free download (download.live.com/moviemaker)). This version of Movie Maker runs only in Windows 7 and Vista and uses a different layout and editing approach from the original Windows Movie Maker. That means there will be a bit of a learning curve for anyone switching from the older version. I'm not in a position to evaluate which is better. Maybe someone who has used both programs can clue us in.



Windows Live Movie Maker places the timeline on the right rather than the bottom as in the Vista version.

Microsoft produced another version of the Vista movie-editing program called Windows Movie Maker 2.6 (www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=D6BA5972-328E-4DF7-8F9D-068FC0F80CFC&displaylang=en) to deal with some video card compatibility problems—also a free download. I understand that it includes most of what is in the Vista version, uses the same layout and editing approach, and will run

in Windows 7.

If you can't get your original Vista Movie Maker program working, then one of the other options should work for you. I'm very interested to hear what people have to say about the Windows Live version.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a 2002 Dell Dimension 8250 computer. Recently, the computer's On button takes at least a few tries before the computer will start. Should I be worried? I don't mind pushing the button a few times to get it started, but I'm wondering if at some point it will refuse to start.

Do I need to take the computer to a repair place, or is there something I can do on my own?

*Annie Henning
San Diego, CA*

Dear Annie,

Yes, as with any mechanical device, over time power buttons do fail. It does sound like yours is starting to go. The button can be replaced by any repair facility. If you want to do it yourself, the difficulty will depend upon how easy it is to get to the button (most likely you will need to take the case apart) and the availability of a replacement. Sometimes a task that appears to be simple can turn into a real bag of worms. However, I would unplug the computer and open the case, taking a look at the back side of the power button. It could be just a loose wire.

If you don't want to deal with either of these two approaches, a repair person or do-it-yourself, then there is a workaround. Your computer is capable of detecting when AC power is available. When there is a power loss, the system can be set up to automatically restart. You can use this capability to circumvent the power button in case the button stops working.

First, when starting the computer, enter the BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) setup by holding down the key designated for your computer (usually F2 or DEL for Dell Dimensions). In the setup program, find the feature called something similar to "AC Power Restored State." If activated, or set to "On," the computer will power up whenever it senses a restoration of lost power. Then, if your computer refuses to start, all you need to do is turn off your surge protector (the power bar that connects the computer with power from the wall), then turn it back on. The change in the power state sensed by the computer should cause the computer to turn on.

The purpose of this AC power-restore feature is to ensure that your computer will immediately boot up again after some type of power failure. This is especially important for computers acting as always-on servers. You will still be able to shut down your computer in the normal manner. This feature will respond only when you cycle the switch (off, then on) on the power bar—or if there is an actual power outage.

Digital Dave

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From the Cloud: Google Apps Takes on Microsoft Office

“The future of software is online.” by Dawn Clement

Google Apps does more than Microsoft Office, and costs much less. It seems the future of software is online, and the future is here.

Google has recently reported a third quarter revenue of \$5.94 billion, and as of September 30, Google had \$22 billion in cash and 19,665 full-time employees. This is despite the fact that Google provides the entire town of Mountain View, CA (where its headquarters is located) with free Wi-Fi as well as providing more than 146 million people worldwide with free e-mail service (as of July 2009). Not bad for a company started in 1998 as a search engine! Google makes the bulk of its money through advertising, but it also has some services available for a fee. The most intriguing of these is Google Apps.

Google Apps (www.google.com/apps/) is a Web-based service—which means that users are able to access certain applications from any Internet connection. Businesses that use Google Apps do not have to maintain any infrastructure, which lowers the overhead costs for those businesses. There are several flavors of Google Apps (Premier, Standard, Education, Non-Profit and Government), but we're really only going to be comparing the Premier and Standard editions, as these are the most likely to affect our readers. Both editions include Gmail, Google Calender, Google Docs and Google Sites. The Premier edition also includes Postini (an e-mail company that was founded in 1999 and bought out by Google in 2007), which provides e-mail filtering and archiving, in addition to a certain level of protection from malware.

The free Standard Edition Google Apps is probably just fine for most readers. Home users and small businesses with under 50 employees will find that the Standard Edition meets their needs. Where the Premier Edition becomes useful is when your business grows to more than 50 employees, or when you regularly send e-mails larger than 25MB (for example, if





The new app, Google Ego, makes Charlie feel really good about himself.

you are a freelance graphic artist or photographer). The free version of Gmail is currently limited to 9GB of storage, and will only accept attachments up to 25MB in size. The Premier Edition of Gmail gives each user 25GB of storage and will accept larger attachments. In addition, the Premier Edition comes with a service-level agreement (Google guarantees 99.9 percent e-mail uptime) and integrates Postini into the Gmail service.

Google Apps is Web-based. Why does this matter? Well, what this basically means is that all of the actual data is stored on Google servers and can be accessed by you from any Internet connection. If your document is stored on a Google Docs server, you can get to it from any Web connection, rather than having to go home or to the office just so that you can access your hard drive. That's pretty darn convenient! For employers, this means that their employees can be productive from just about any place. Of course, Google isn't the only game in town. There's always open-source software, which, while not Web-based, is free to use. Open Office.org (www.openoffice.org) is a downloadable, free production suite for home or business use and, believe it or not, Microsoft is planning to launch a "free" online version of Office 2010 (www.microsoft.com/office/2010/) (it will be free for home use, but not for business use).

Google Apps is definitely intended to be competition for Microsoft Office, and it appears to be winning. (The Los Angeles City Council just approved a \$7.25 million five-year deal in which the city will adopt Gmail and other Google Apps, leaving Microsoft behind. In 2006, the city had won a \$1.5 million payout from a class action lawsuit against Microsoft for overcharging.) Anything you can do with an Office program, you can do with a Google Apps program (and more!). For example, you can use Google Docs to create documents, spreadsheets and presentations; this one program replaces three Microsoft programs—Word, Excel and PowerPoint, which are all included in Microsoft's Office package. In addition, Google Docs works with most popular file formats (i.e., DOC, XLS, ODT, ODS, RTF, CSV, PPT). Microsoft Word, on the other hand, cannot open documents in ODT/ODF (OpenOffice.org) format without a plugin.

If you have a domain name, you can set up Gmail with multiple users—without having to set up a mail server. This is a nice little feature that is not available with Outlook. In addition, Google Apps offers a bulk upload option so that you can set up all your domain users at the same time. Microsoft Office includes Web mail, but the rest of its apps are stored locally only.

Microsoft is planning to launch a "free" online version of Office 2010; however, businesses will need to buy and maintain a Sharepoint server with licenses. This could easily run \$40,000 or more. Google Apps does more than Microsoft Office, and costs much less. For home use, Office 2007 will set you back \$149, and businesses have to pay \$499, plus hefty per-user license fees! The software for Google Apps is free. Even for businesses with up to 50 users, and after that is only \$50 a year per user for licensing. Businesses will have to fork out tens of thousands of dollars for a Sharepoint server if they want to use Office 2010, Google Apps doesn't require any servers on the user's end. That's a astronomical cost difference!

Google is not alone in taking on Microsoft on the Web. Other products such as Zoho (www.zoho.com/) and ThinkFree Office (www.thinkfree.com) are offering Web-based productivity suites. It seems the future of software is online, and the future is here.

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Free Web-Based Word Processing

“Another poke in the eye for Microsoft.” by Jack Dunning

Google Apps and other easily accessible free, Web-based business programs are cutting into the revenues of the old mainstay Microsoft Word.

The idea of using a Web-based word processor is foreign to most people. We are accustomed to doing our writing on our computer with an installed program such as Microsoft Word or even Notepad, and then printing the document, e-mailing it, or possibly cutting and pasting the words into an editing field on the Web. This has been our way of doing things since the first desktop computer was introduced.

One of the best things about an installed program is that you don't need an Internet connection to use it, just your computer. Until recently, the biggest problem with word processing programs has been the price. However, today there is a plethora of free programs, such as OpenOffice.org. It's no longer necessary to buy your basic business software. This abundance of free business software is certainly hurting the old mainstay and revenue generator Microsoft Office.

Now, starting with Google Apps, we are looking at a number of free Web-based business programs. These applications are another finger in the eye of Microsoft. They are easily accessible as long as you have an Internet connection and most perform pretty well.

Why Web-Based Programs?

The first reason for using Web-based programs is because most of them are computer-system independent. As long as you have a functional Web browser, you can use the programs with any computer, whether Windows, Mac or Linux. The browser does all of the work. There usually isn't anything to be installed on the computer as long as your basic browser components are activated—in particular JavaScript. (As an engine, Adobe BuzzWord requires Adobe Flash installed in the browser.)

Most Web-based programs take advantage of the built-in JavaScript capability of the browser through a technique called AJAX (asynchronous JavaScript and XML) programming. AJAX makes it possible for the browser to work in the background, updating and modifying the Web page without reloading the entire Web page each time there is a change. This asynchronous updating allows the programs to offer the features, plus the look and feel, of the programs installed on your computer—even though they only use your browser.

Since a Web-based program can be used on any computer, you can work with it from anywhere in the world. You can get on any computer, log in to the account, and start working immediately. This is why a primary requirement for Web-based programs is online file storage. What good is a word processing program if you don't have your files? Included with all of the Web-based programs is online file storage.

For example, suppose you're at the library and you have the desire to take some notes for a term paper, but you didn't bring your computer. You could write them all down by hand—which means later keying them into the computer. A better option is to use one of the library's computers, log into your Web-based account, and compile your notes directly into a new online document. (If you don't happen to have an online Web-based software account, you can create one in a few seconds.) When you get home (or wherever you're going), you can log in again and your notes will be there, waiting.

Another aspect of Web-based programs is sharing. Rather than e-mailing the document to everyone on the

list, it is possible to share the original file with the people you choose. In most of the services, you can add your contacts list from your e-mail program (export to a CSV file and import to the online service). Then you designate a file to be shared with another. If that person also has an account, then the shared document will appear in their system. You can designate the file to be read-only (no changes) or read and write (allows editing).

For most people, it will take a while to become comfortable with this type of Web-based computing. Thinking about your files being in the "cloud" rather than on your computer is a major change. We stop thinking in terms of where the file is located—it's virtually everywhere—or which computer we are using. We are no longer tied to one computer or one location—as long as we have an Internet connection. If we need to work without the Internet, we can use the export feature of the program to create a backup copy on our computer.

Free Web-Based Word Processors

I focused upon word processing software because that is the type of program that I—and the majority of people—use most. I could quickly set up an account and access the word processing capabilities of each Web service without getting bogged down in long learning curves. After testing these word processors, I can now see myself away from home—maybe at a friend's house—without my computer, yet needing to get some work done. I wouldn't want to install any software on their computer, yet as long as they had an Internet connection, I would be able to go right to work, knowing that I will have all my efforts waiting for me when I get home—no thumb drive needed.

A word processing program is basic in all of the Web-based office programs. Spreadsheet and presentation software are also considered standard in most of these Web services, but a word processor is mandatory.

Google Docs

Google Docs is the business suite of Google Apps. It includes word processing, presentation, spreadsheet and a form-building software. If you have any type of Google account (Gmail, etc.), then you already have access to Google Docs. All you need to do is log into your account. (You can set up an account at Google Apps (www.google.com/apps/). Be sure to select the personal account on the left side. Business accounts are \$50 per user.) You will quickly be producing a written document.

The Google Docs word processor has a simpler look than the other online word processing programs. While it is just as intuitive as any, it has the bare minimum number of features (see Figure 1). You can quickly determine the included features of a program based upon the menu bars across the top of the editing screen. As a word processor, it would be fine for me since I rarely use any of those extras. However, some of the other Web-based word processors may offer more.

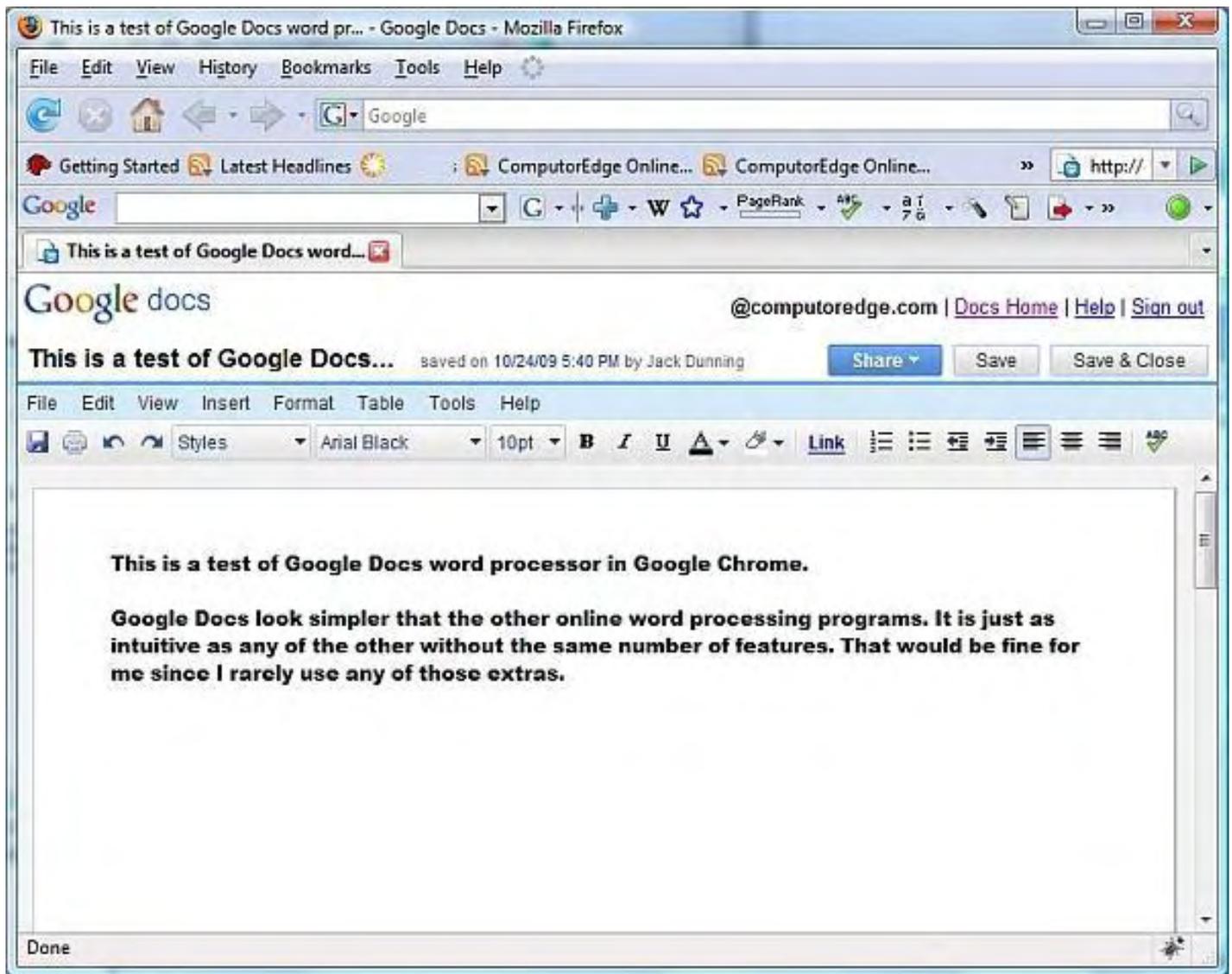


Figure 1. The word processor in Google Docs.

One of the more interesting features of Google Docs was the ability to translate your documents to another language. Just select Language from the Tools menu. I have no idea how accurate it is, but it will probably give someone the gist of the meaning.

In these Web programs if you want to save the file to your computer you need to download it or, in some programs, export the file to another format. In Google Docs, the export feature worked well and quickly

Zoho Writer

Zoho (www.zoho.com/) has an extensive set of Web-based tools similar to Google Apps. As with Google Apps, the tools are free to individuals, but there is a fee for organizations. Zoho Writer appears to be a full-featured word processor using tabs in place of the older standard "File, Edit, View..." menus (see Figure 2). Once I set up the account, it was extremely intuitive. The reaction time of these Web programs was quick enough that I could easily forget that I was working in a browser. It was fast and responded as well as any other word processor that I've used. Even though I was warned that Google Chrome was not supported by Zoho Writer, it seemed to work fine in Chrome. I also ran it simultaneously in Firefox.

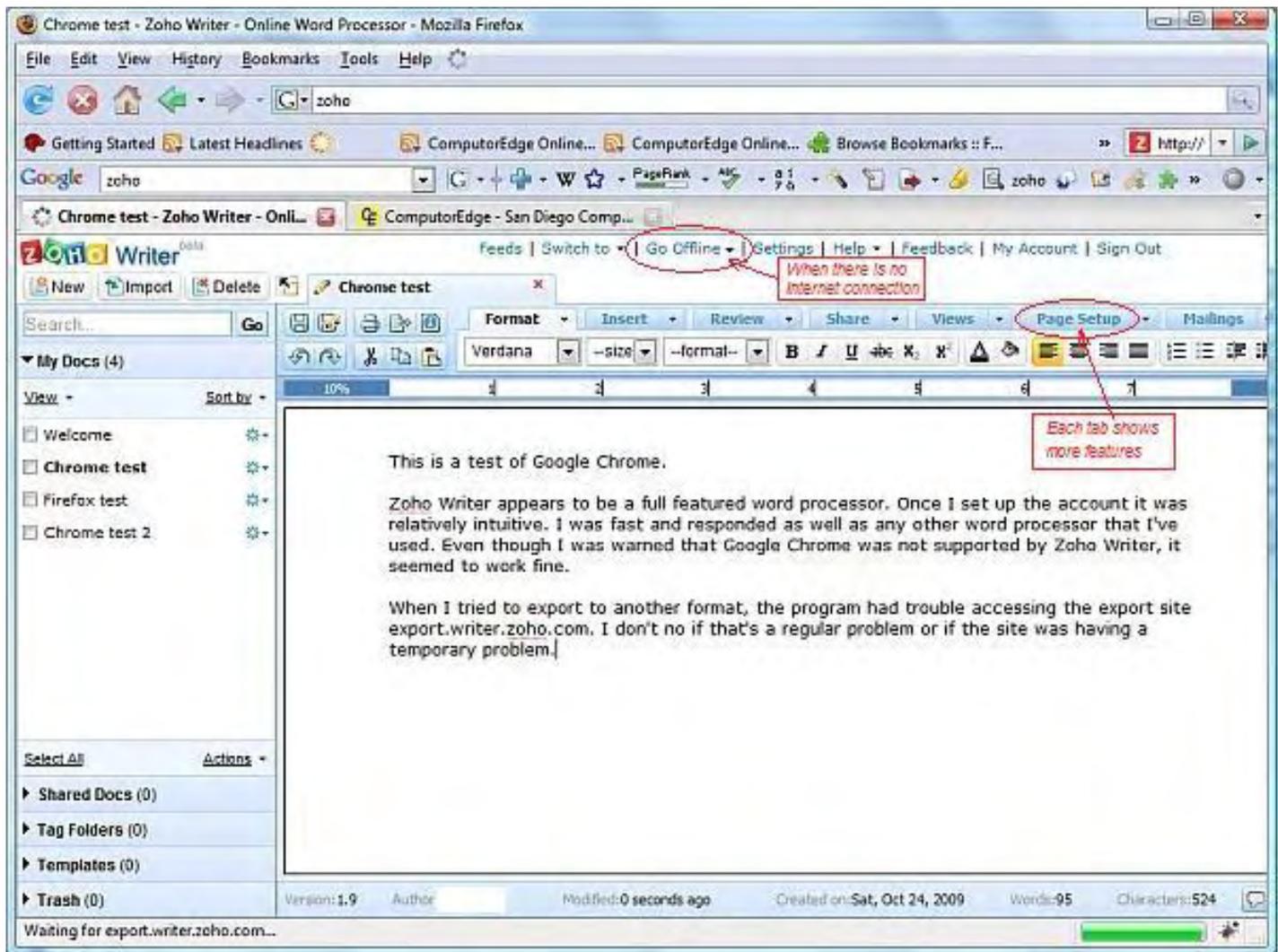


Figure 2. Zoho Writer word processor.

When I tried to export a file to another format for saving to the computer, the program had trouble accessing the export site (export.writer.zoho.com). I don't know if that's a regular problem or if the site was having a temporary problem. (Eventually the program did export the file to a format that I could save in My Documents—but it took an unusually long time.)

Zoho has a Go Offline feature that uses Google Gears to copy the files to your computer. This will enable you to continue to work with your files when you don't have an Internet connection. When you go back online, the files are synchronized.

As I mentioned, for test purposes I did open two copies of a test file—one in Chrome and one in Firefox. As I updated the file in one browser, the other version would update when I returned to it. This could be a dangerous situation if two people are working on the same file at the same time.

Zoho seemed to have all of the functionality of most word processors. It was certainly easy to use.

ThinkFree Writer

ThinkFree Office (www.thinkfree.com) is a suite of the standard three business software programs: word processing, spreadsheet and presentation. Upon arrival, the site was a little more cryptic, but once I set up an account, it offered what looks like a standard word processor with the classic menu bar (see Figure 3).

ThinkFree Writer opens a separate window when the word processor is loaded with a file. It was easy to use and appears to maintain the documents in the Microsoft DOC format. If you've ever used older versions of Microsoft Word, it should be very comfortable.

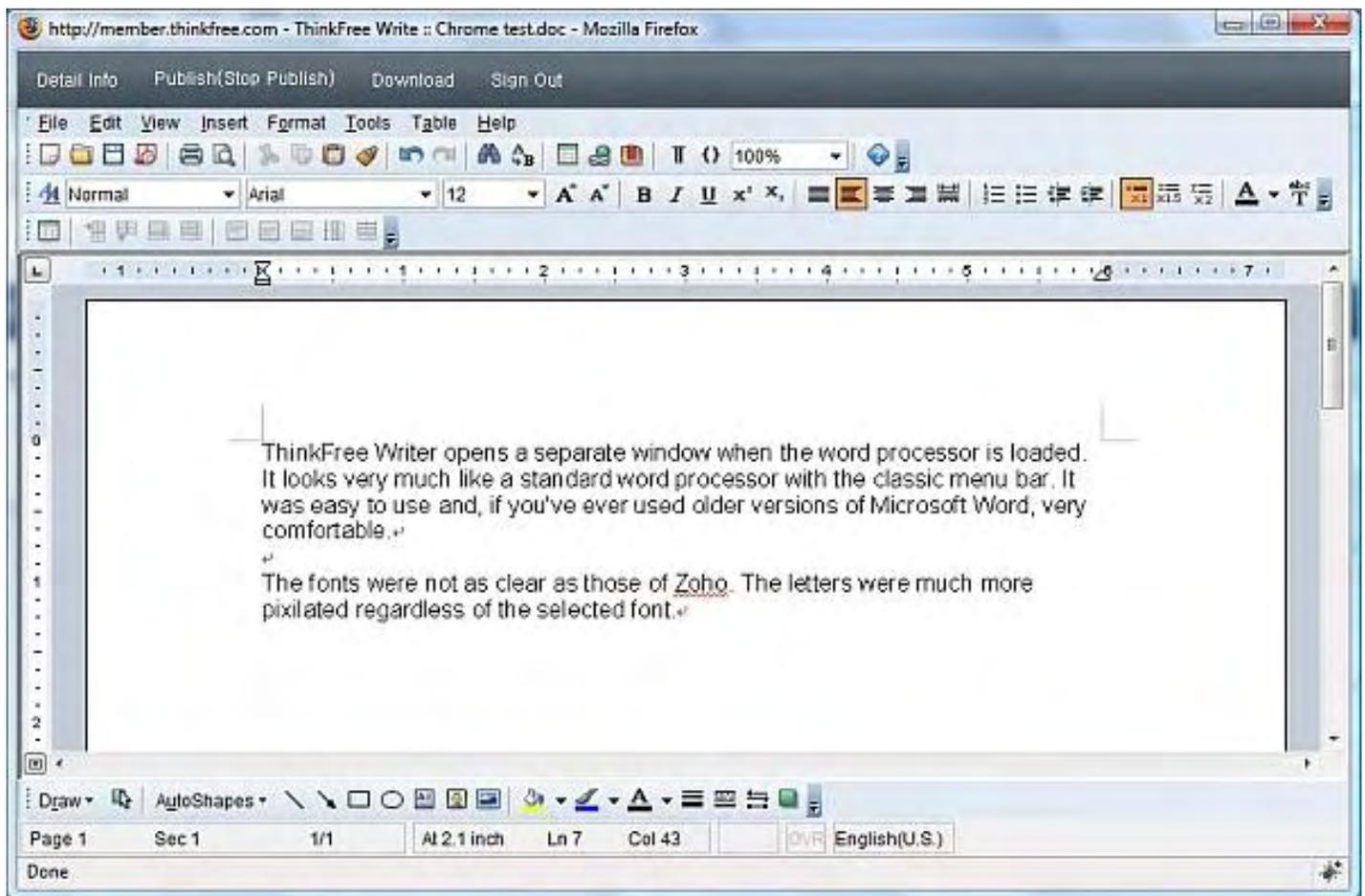


Figure 3. ThinkFree Writer Web-based word processor.

The screen fonts were not as clear as those of Zoho and the other programs. The letters were much more pixilated regardless of the selected font. I did note that the program would save directly to your computer and you could continue working in that mode without saving back to the Web file. Most of the other programs supported saving and/or exporting in the OpenOffice.org ODT format. ThinkFree did not.

BuzzWord

BuzzWord (buzzword.adobe.com/) from Adobe is one Web-based program that is only a word processor. Unlike the other word processors, it has a different look and feel (see Figure 4). This appears to be an attempt to *not* be like Microsoft. Buttons that expand while sliding across the bar turn into feature icons.

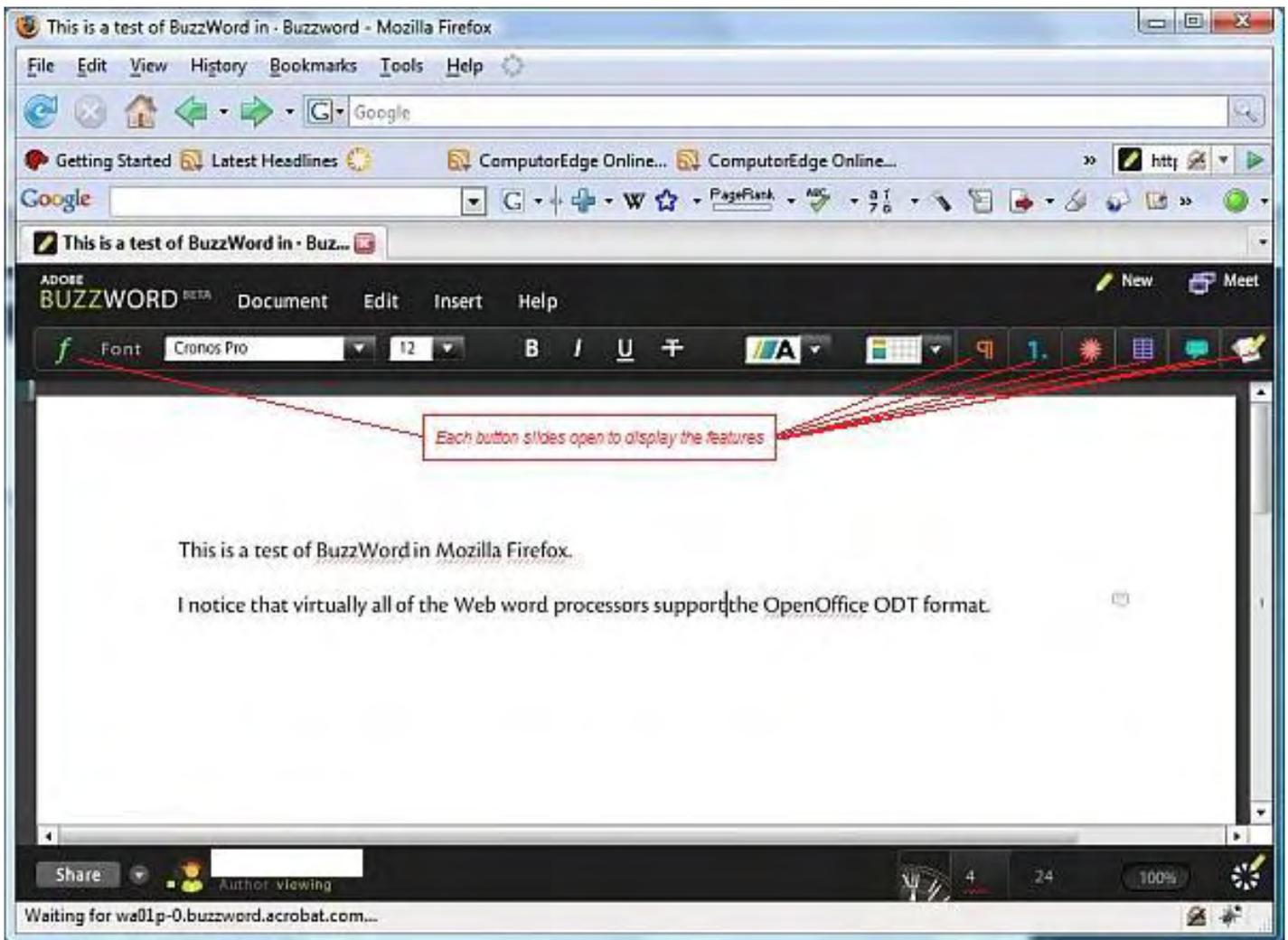


Figure 4. BuzzWord Web-based word processor from Adobe.

All of the Web-based office programs have upgrade plans where you can pay for more services. They vary widely and are aimed at the business market. It takes some time to determine how much you get for free before you need to start paying. The obvious goal is to get people hooked, then add on a subscription fee.

Office Live Workspace

The problem that confronts Microsoft is that anything it does on the Web in the way of productivity programs, especially if it's free, directly competes with Office. The Office Live Workspace tries to compete with other Web-based apps, but the reality is that you need to own Microsoft Office to take advantage of it.

As far as free word processing, there is a WordPad-like notes program that will do a minimal amount (see Figure 5). I doubt that you will ever see the functionality of a full word processor on the Web from Microsoft unless there is some sort of a fee structure in place. For now, if you want to do free Web-based word processing, then any of the others will do the job.

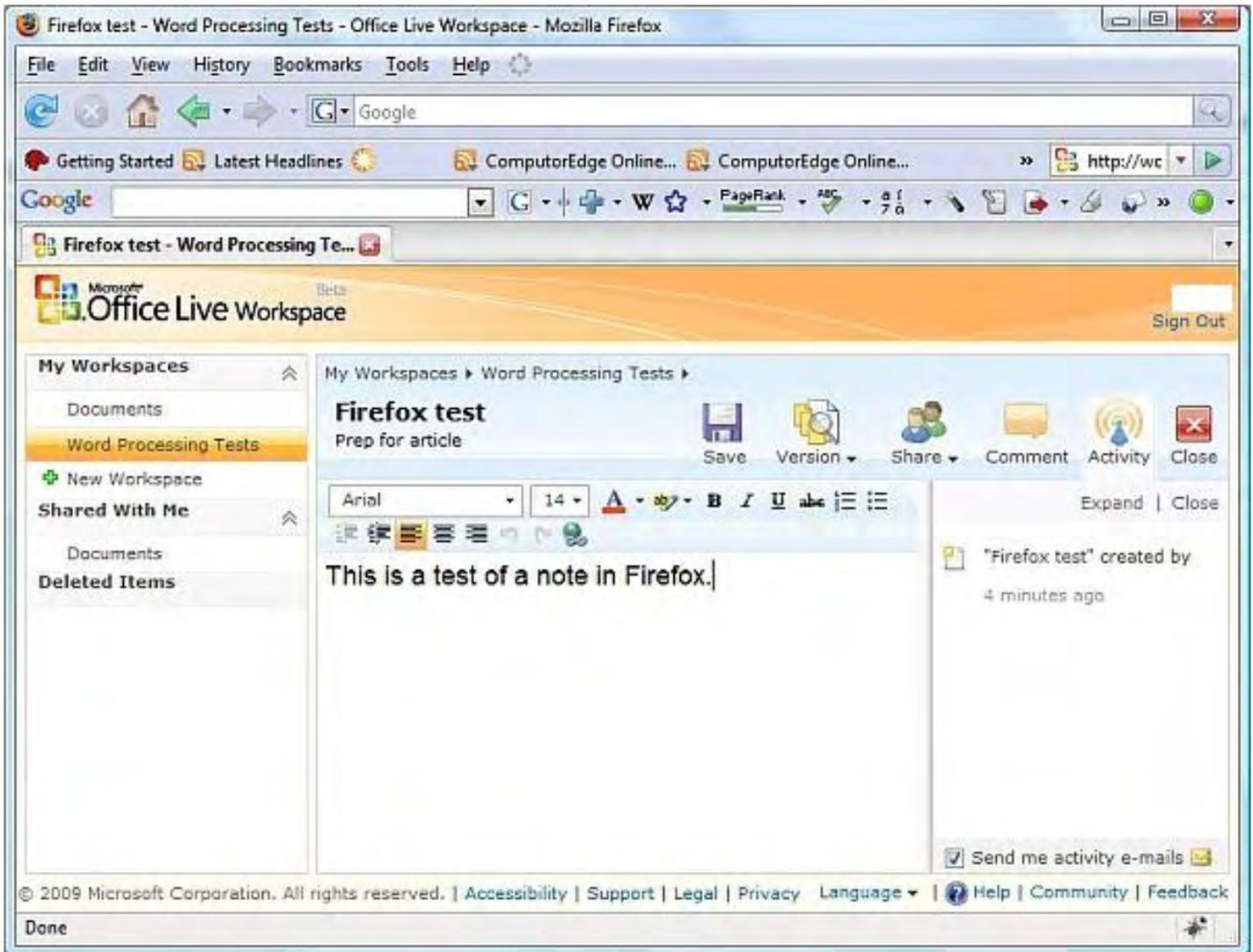


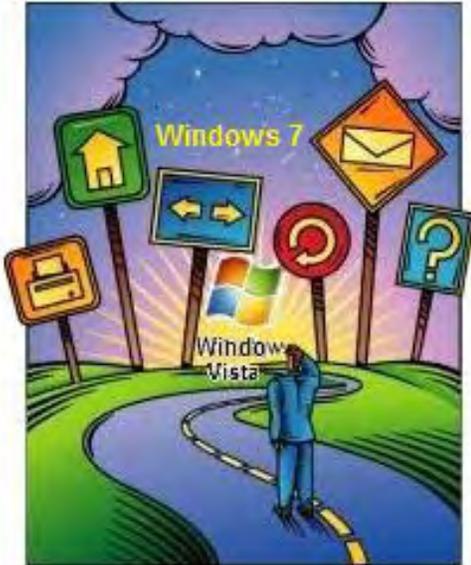
Figure 5. Office Live Workspace offers only a WordPad-like editor, since word processing requires Microsoft Word on your computer.

You may not ever need to use Web-based programs, but it's nice to know that there are free alternatives available. The day may come when using one of these services will solve a problem for you.

If you use Web-based word processing programs, we would like to hear about your experiences. When do you use them and how do they help you?

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

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks: Give Windows Live Mail a Try

“Windows Live Non-Essentials for Windows 7 (except for the e-mail program)” by Jack Dunning

There are a few programs found in Vista that are no longer bundled with Windows 7, including Windows Mail, Windows Movie Maker and Windows Photo Gallery. To get them, visit Windows Live Essentials.

Now that Windows 7 is on the market and people are bringing home either a new Win 7 computer or the software to upgrade the operating system, people need to ask themselves, "What do I do after I turn on the computer?" The first step is to deal with what's missing from Windows 7. Rather than doing a fruitless search for key programs, it's just as well to note that Windows 7 doesn't include everything that has been in previous versions of Windows. There are a few programs found in Vista that are no longer bundled with Windows 7, including Windows Mail, Windows Movie Maker and Windows Photo Gallery.

To get the missing programs, we need to download them from Windows Live Essentials (*download.live.com*) (see Figure 1.) These programs will also run in Vista. Most of the programs in Live Essentials are non-essential. I would definitely get Photo Gallery and Movie Maker as nice-to-have programs, but the only program that is absolutely necessary is the Windows Live Mail e-mail program—even then it's needed only if you're not using an alternative e-mail program.

One download, lots of great stuff

Now in one installation, Windows Live Essentials gives you instant messaging, e-mail, blogging, photos, and more.

IM and e-mail
Stay in touch. With Messenger, you can chat, swap photos, and see what's new with friends. Mail brings together your Hotmail, Gmail, and other accounts, along with multiple calendars.
Messenger
Mail

Blogging
With Windows Live Writer, blogging is a breeze. You can add photos and videos, format everything just so, and publish to most blogging services.
Writer

Photos and movies
Use Photo Gallery and Movie Maker to edit and organize your photos and movies, and then post them online or send them to friends.
Photo Gallery
Movie Maker

Web browsing
With Toolbar, you can customize your browser and find what you need, fast. Family Safety helps you keep your kids safer online.
Toolbar
Family Safety

Get all these programs, or just a few—they're free!

Choose your language:
English (English)

Clicking "Download" means you agree to the Microsoft service agreement and privacy statement. The download may include updates to Windows Live programs you already have. You'll get future updates to these and other Microsoft programs from Microsoft Update. [Learn more](#)

Download

System requirements

Programs you can download include:

- Messenger
- Mail
- Writer
- Photo Gallery
- Movie Maker
- Family Safety
- Toolbar

Additional programs:

- Microsoft Office Outlook® Connector
- Office Live Add-in
- Microsoft Silverlight

Upgrading to Windows 7? [Click Here.](#)

Figure 1. Windows Live Essentials.

When you click the Download button, a special installer is downloaded. Once it's initialized, a list of the programs is presented (see Figure 2). If you don't want all of the programs on the list, simply uncheck the unwanted items.

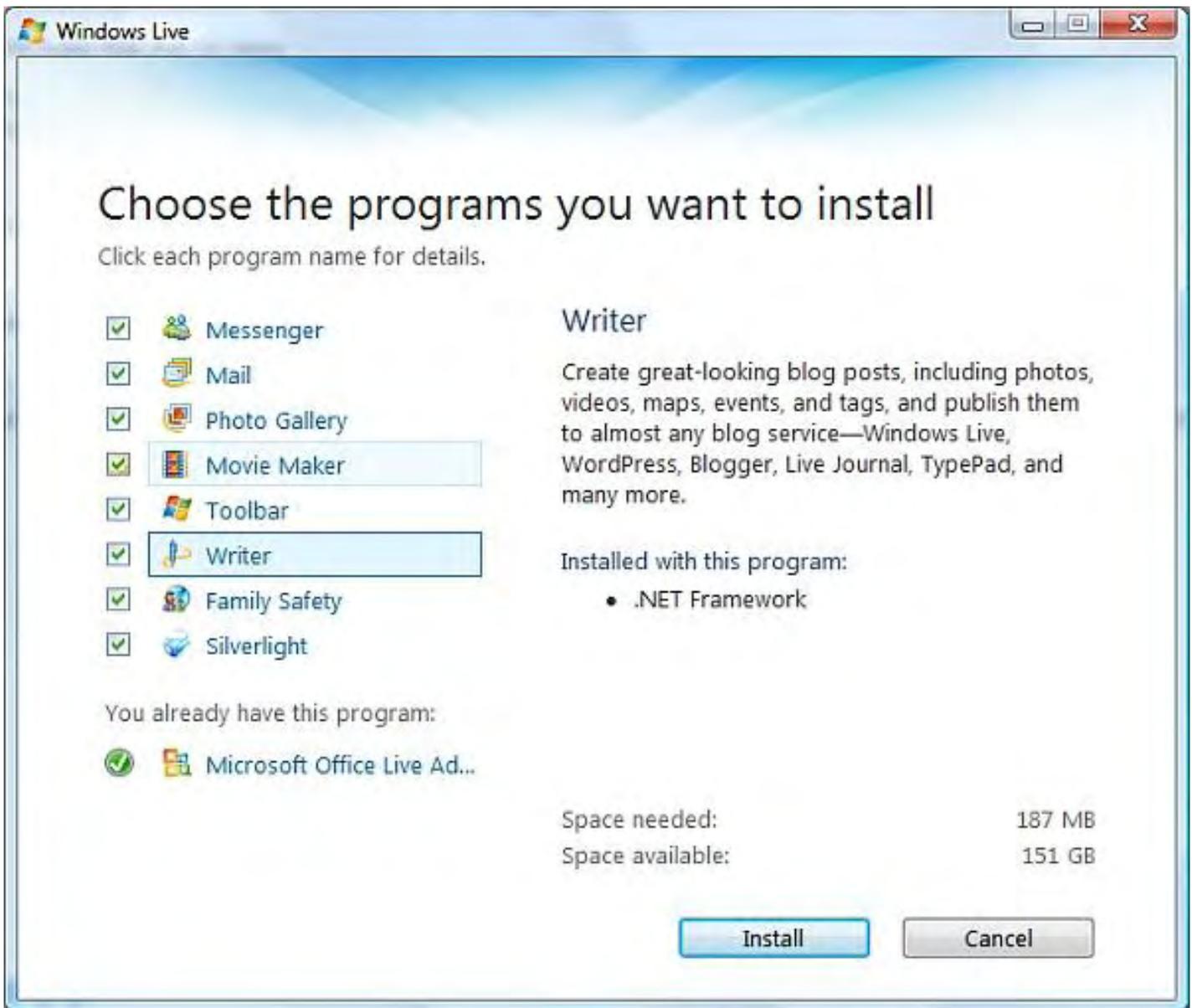


Figure 2. Windows Live Essentials download options.

In most cases you may want to download all of the options, but the only one that will be compelling is the Live Mail program, since you won't be able to do any e-mail until you have e-mail software installed. If you choose to limit the number of downloads, then you can always go back later to get more. Watch carefully as Microsoft tries to become your default everything (see Figure 3).

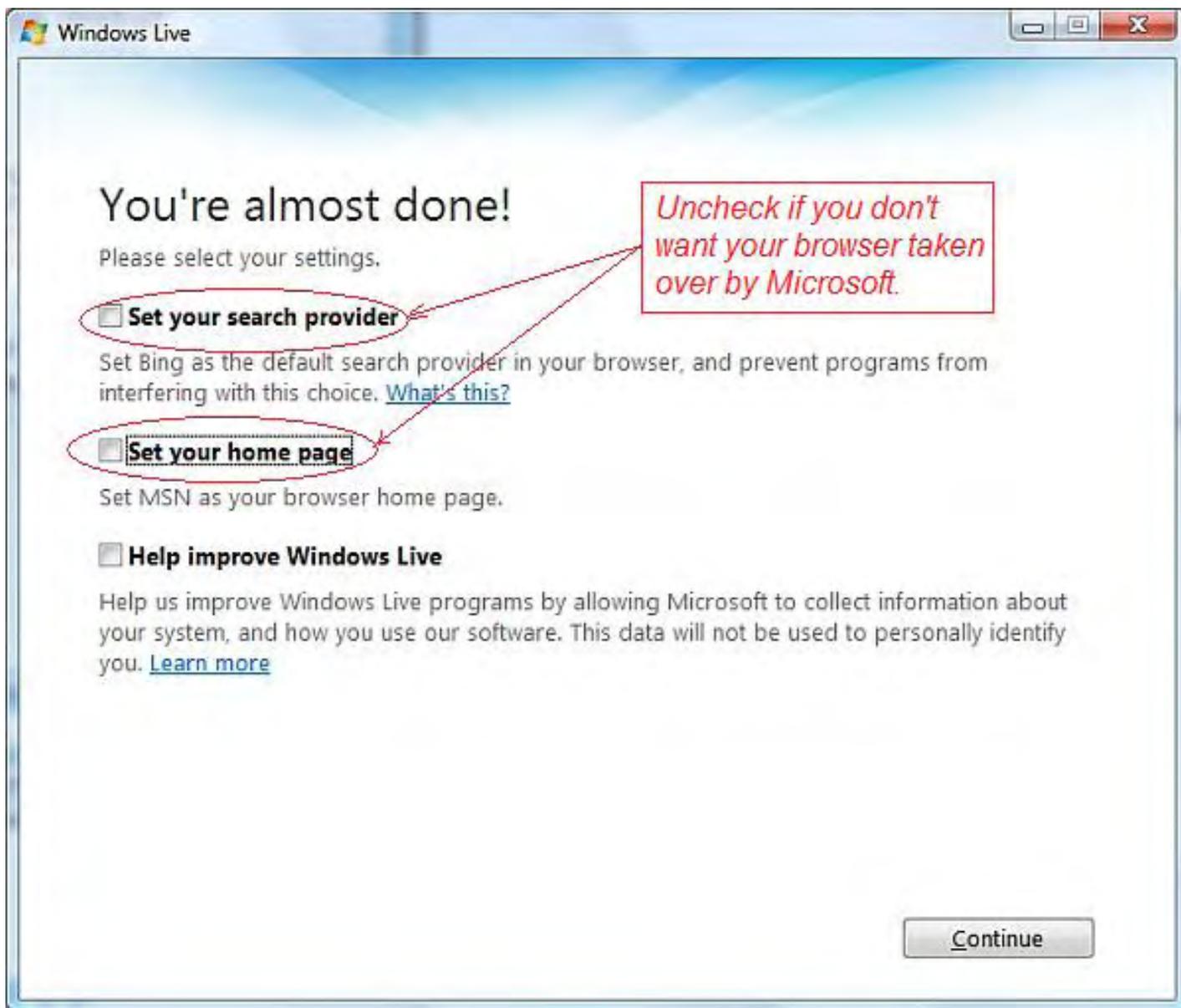


Figure 3. Do you want to default to Microsoft?

Pick Your E-Mail Program

The look and feel of Window Live Mail is significantly different from the previous Microsoft e-mail programs Outlook, Outlook Express and Windows Mail in Vista. The major change is that Live Mail is e-mail-account oriented rather than inbox/folder oriented. This has been done to facilitate multiple e-mail accounts. For more details about Windows Live Mail, see Window Tips and Tricks "For Windows 7, It Will Be Windows Live Mail. Try it now!" and "Windows Live Mail Has More Benefits".

There are few people who don't need an e-mail program. Previously we had Outlook Express, which last came with Internet Explorer 6 and Microsoft Outlook, which is a paid piece of Microsoft Office. If you have Outlook you can continue to use that, but you will be hard pressed to find a way to get Outlook Express running. The only way to obtain Outlook Express is to find and install a download of IE 6. Who wants to hassle with that?

If you don't want to deal with Microsoft, then there are viable, free alternatives in e-mail programs. The first is the popular Thunderbird (www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird/) e-mail program from Mozilla.

I would guess that people who are freaked out by the new style of Windows Live Mail will be more comfortable with Thunderbird.

Another e-mail option is Eudora (www.eudora.com/email/features/windows/) from Qualcomm. It's free and it's worth taking a look at. Also with a more traditional look is Opera Mail (www.opera.com/mail/). Want more? Wikipedia has an extensive comparison of e-mail clients (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_e-mail_clients). Most are free.

Since you will need an e-mail client, you might as well give Windows Live Mail a shot. (Windows Live Mail can also be loaded onto Vista.) It has a number of features for handling calendars and contacts while syncing with multiple computers over the Internet. The primary problem I see with Live Mail is the learning curve involved with its different concept as an e-mail client. It does take a little time to grow accustomed to its new way of doing things. (Check out the Windows Tips and Tricks columns referenced above to get a little taste of Windows Live Mail.) Many people will give up and return to a simpler time and program. Windows Live Mail will not be for everyone, but for those who adopt it, it will be excellent.

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

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Online Apps” by Wally Wang

If you get cut off from the Internet, online apps like Google Docs are absolutely useless. Apple offers a hybrid solution called iWork.com, but mind-mapping programs may be a better idea. Also, a look at Photoshop Elements 8; do computers ever actually "wear out"?; and a tip on using the Migration Assistant program, which can clone a Time Machine backup to a new Mac.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

When most people think of online apps, they immediately think of Google Docs. However, Microsoft is coming out with its own online version of Microsoft Office that offers limited versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint online. Since more people are familiar with Microsoft Office, more people will likely feel more comfortable using Office on the Web rather than Google Docs.

The biggest advantage of online apps like Google Docs is that you can create and share files among multiple people anywhere around the world. Instead of passing files to people (and hoping that everyone works on the latest version of the file), Google Docs lets everyone work on a single file through any browser.

That's the promise, but the reality is that if you get cut off from the Internet, online apps like Google Docs are absolutely useless. Recognizing this, Apple offers a hybrid solution called iWork.com.

The idea behind iWork.com is that you use all the iWork programs (Pages, Numbers and Keynote) stored on your computer. Then you can share your files online through iWork.com, where other people can view, add comments and download your files.

Unlike Google Docs, which allows you to create and edit files online, iWork.com simply lets you view documents and add comments. If you want to modify the file contents, you'll need to download the file, edit it using an iWork program, and then upload it back to the iWork.com site again.

While Apple's solution lets you work and edit files without relying on an Internet connection, it does force you to edit those files in iWork, which means anyone using Windows or Linux can't modify your files. Even Mac users can't take full advantage of iWork.com unless they choose to create and edit documents using the iWork suite.

Since the number of Mac users who rely on iWork is rather small, the number of people who can take advantage of iWork.com is just as small. However, if you fit in that minority and like the idea of being able to share files online, but edit and create them on your own computer without relying on an Internet connection, then iWork.com may be a better choice than Google Docs.

Two unique online apps are Mind42 (www.mind42.com) and Bubbl.us (www.bubbl.us). These free apps let

you create, edit and collaborate on creating a mind map for organizing ideas. By using these mind-mapping tools online, people can toss in their ideas at their convenience and then you'll capture the thoughts of the group.

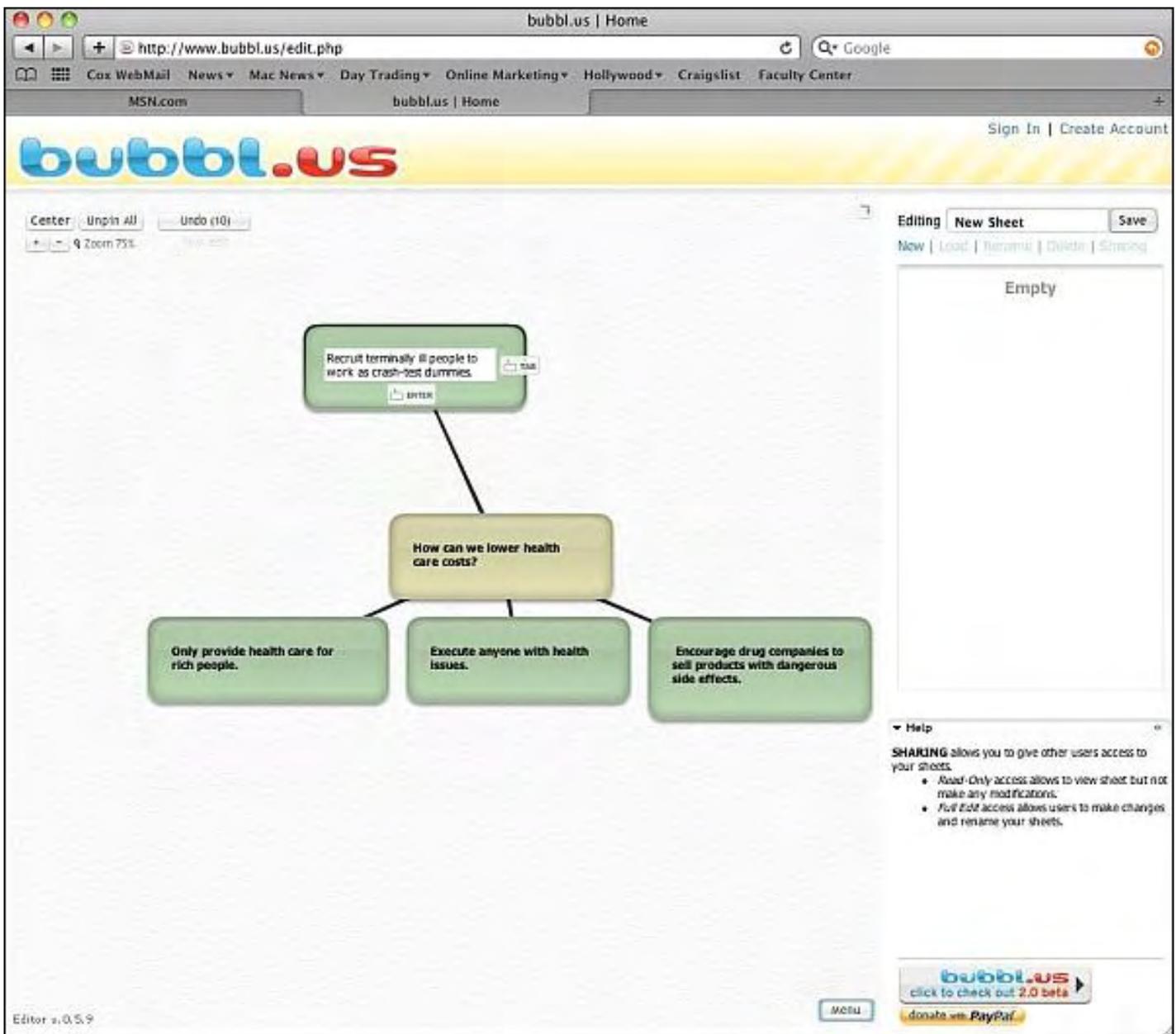


Figure 1. An online mind-mapping program lets everyone add and share ideas.

Since mind mapping is inherently a group activity compared to using a word processor or spreadsheet, online mind-mapping apps seem far more useful than something like iWork.com or Google Docs.

Photoshop Elements 8

Many people use iPhoto for organizing digital photographs, but if you capture pictures that are almost perfect with some flaws, you can do minor corrections within iPhoto itself, such as straightening out a crooked picture or removing red-eye caused by the flash.

However, for heftier photo editing, you'll need a program like Adobe's Photoshop. Since Photoshop is a tool for graphic designers, it's usually far too complicated for casual users to tackle. As an alternative, consider

Adobe's Photoshop Elements 8 instead.

Not only is the price far cheaper (\$99 vs. \$699 for Photoshop), but Photoshop Elements provides tools specifically designed to help you modify and correct digital images without going through multiple steps or becoming a Photoshop expert to do it.

Almost every consumer photo-editing program offers red-eye correction, but Photoshop Elements offers a smart-brush feature that lets you modify colors in a picture, such as changing the yellow stains of someone's teeth to a more appealing whiter color.



Figure 2. Photoshop Elements can whiten teeth.

More useful is the ability to recompose images. Suppose you captured an image of several people, but they're standing too far apart? Photoshop Elements lets you smash an image together, eliminating the space between people, and create a new image that makes objects appear closer to each other than they really were.





Figure 3. The Recompose tool can smash pictures together.

Such a tool can be handy to focus on the subject of your picture, or it can be a handy way to eliminate someone in a picture and make them appear as if they never were there in the first place, which can be perfect for propaganda purposes in government or corporate offices.

An even more useful tool is Photomerge, which lets you take the best parts of nearly identical pictures and combine them into a single perfect image. Photomerge is smart enough to work on pictures with different exposures or faces. If you have two pictures with different exposures, Photomerge will combine them into a single good image.



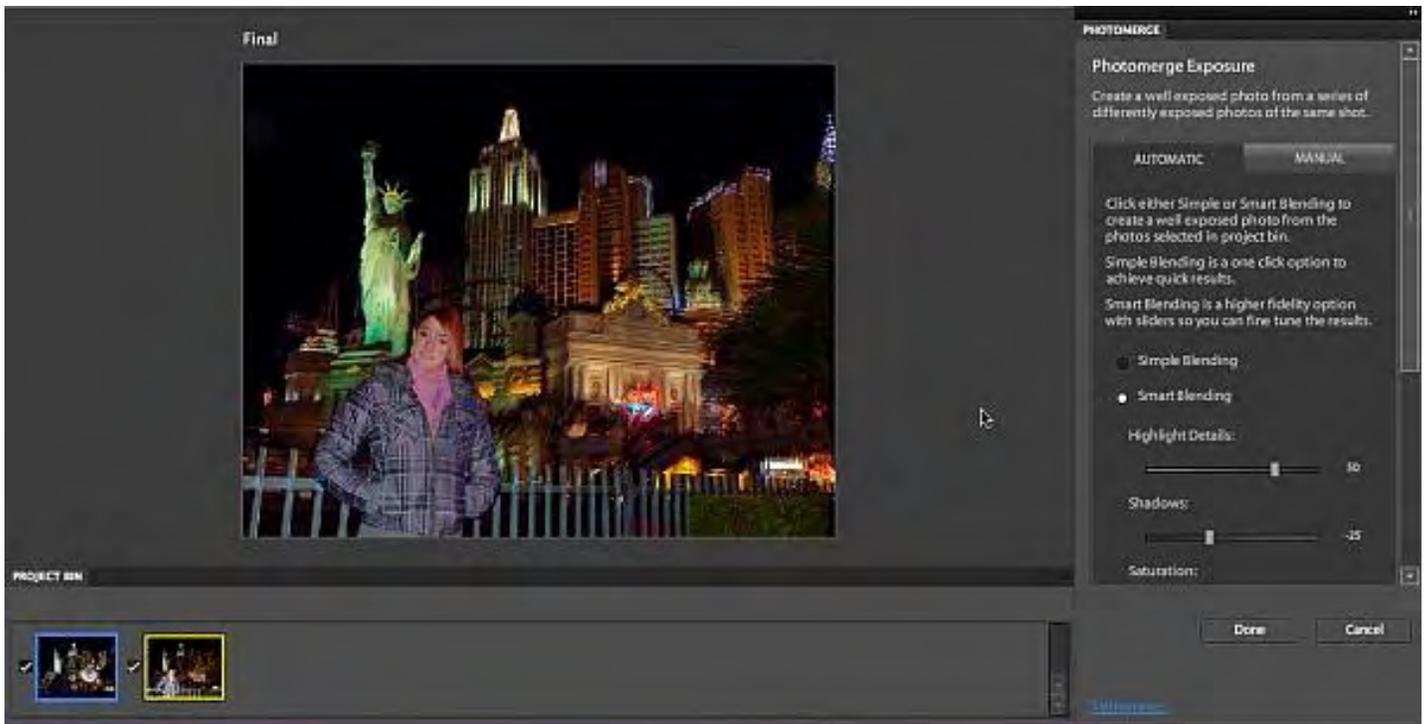


Figure 4. Photomerge can combine multiple pictures to create one good image.

In the past, photo editing required a lot of patience and skill, but with Photoshop Elements, you can let the program do most of the work automatically. If you're more interested in creating images from scratch, then you might prefer the full-blown Photoshop or a similar program such as Corel Painter.

However, if you just want to fix digital images as quickly as possible with the least amount of pain and effort, then you'll probably want to use Photoshop Elements 8. Its low cost and multiple features make it a bargain, especially for anyone who can't afford the time or money to edit digital photographs on their own.

Do Computers Ever Wear Out?

A friend of mine called me for help with her four-year-old Windows XP PC, which had been progressively running slower and slower to a crawl. I cleaned out and optimized the Registry, removed some spyware, and updated her operating system to SP 2. Suddenly, her computer ran blazingly fast.

That got me to thinking: Do computers ever really wear out? While individual parts may eventually fail, computers aren't like cars with mechanical parts that gradually wear out, such as brake linings or tires. Her four-year old Windows XP PC is now as good as new until it starts slowing to a crawl once more through junk clogging its Registry and spyware slipping through its defenses. The problem is really just software and not hardware.

If a four-year-old PC can still run effectively with an eight-year-old operating system, why bother getting a new computer at all? Just as car manufacturers hope you'll keep replacing your car every few years, so do computer companies hope you'll keep buying new computers every few years for no real good reason.

Logically, the only real reason to upgrade to a new computer is when your old one dies and it costs too much to repair it. Otherwise, computers are mostly reliable and should last at least four or five years with regular maintenance. If the Air Force can keep 50-year-old B-52 bombers flying, then it's certainly possible to keep five-year-old computers running just as well. If you bought a computer to serve a specific purpose today and your needs don't change five years later, you probably don't need a new computer five years later either.

Of course, that's the last thing computer companies want you to hear. Every time they parade out a new model, they hope everyone will ooh and aah over it, and dish out their cash to get it. The truth is that the average person can probably stick with what they have and be perfectly content for half a decade or more.

Computers and software typically offer relatively minor new features with each successive version. Before upgrading your computer or software, ask yourself if this upgrade will make your life easier. If you can't point to a specific feature that will help you, then you can save your money and wait for the next round of upgrades.

Eventually there will come a time when you can take advantage of a dramatic new feature, and that's the time to upgrade and get a new computer. Until then, your old computer may not be as sexy as a new one, but it will still get the job done, and that's all that really matters.

* * *

The Time Machine backup program, which comes with every Macintosh, can be handy for retrieving deleted files. However, if your Macintosh should completely die, or if you want to clone your backed-up Time Machine files to a new Mac, you can use the Migration Assistant program.



Figure 5. The Migration Assistant can clone a Time Machine backup to a new Mac.

This program lies buried in the Utilities folder inside the Applications folder. Just hook up your Time Machine external hard disk to another Mac, run the Migration Assistant, and you'll essentially clone the backed-up Macintosh to the new Macintosh.

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 participle 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)

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

• Steal This Computer Book 4.0 ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

• Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593)

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593)

• My New Mac ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646\)](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956\)](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

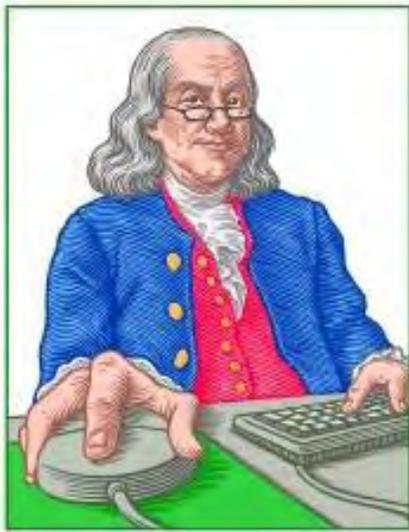
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

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/).

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LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons:
Tips and Tricks
from Users
"A Call for Contributions"
by ComputerEdge Staff

We are looking for Linux user input on a variety of topics, including Linux scripting/programming, data manipulation, distros and more.

This week our Linux users are taking a breather, so we are looking for tips and/or questions for future issues of *ComputerEdge*. To help inspire you, we've included the topic outline contributed a few months back by Jack Hamilton. Look it over. If something sparks an idea about an insight that you would like to share, then please share it with us. If you would like to contribute on one of these items or any other Linux topic, send your input to Linux Lessons (ceeditor@computoreedge.com).

Suggested topics:

Basics of data manipulation with:

- grep
- advanced "find" searching (especially using "-exec {}*bckslsh*;", files of a specific or greater size with "size")
- awk
- sed
- use of regular expressions

Copying/replicating data with:

- basics of cp
- basics of scp
- dd (advanced)
- rsync (advanced)

The cool networky stuff:

- SSH tunneling (OMG, so useful!)
- iptables firewall basics
- under the TCP/IP hood with netstat
- nmap
- network troubleshooting basics with: ping, traceroute, ifconfig

Common Linux scripting/programming:

- shell scripting (korn, bourne/bash, csh, etc.)
- Perl
- Python
- C, C++: gcc,gxx
- Java and the Eclipse IDE

Text editors:

- vi/vim
- pico
- emacs (yes, must cover emacs!!!)

Mail readers:

- pine
- mutt
- mailx

Admin basics:

- chmod/chown/chattr/lsattr
- fsck
- fdisk
- formatting with mkfs
- formatting a floppy and USB stick

Distributions comparisons:

- (k)Ubuntu
- Debian
- Red Hat
- SUSE
- Gentoo
- etc.

Window Managers:

- the basics, old-school and classics: twm, fvwm fvwm95, afterstep, etc.
- the mainstream flavors: KDE, Gnome
- the non-mainstream/advanced: blackbox, enlightenment, etc.

If you would like to contribute to this or any other Linux topic, send your input to Linux Lessons (ceeditor@computoredge.com).

* * *

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 *ComputerEdge* Linux newbies. Each week in this column, we will highlight the thoughts you submit to us. This is your column. As long as a submission is dealing with the Linux/Unix-like world, we want to share it.

The tips and tricks may be short or long, and can include graphics. If there is a little technique or program that you use on a regular basis, then we want to hear about it. You may also pose questions for other Linux users to answer. E-mail your ideas or questions to Linux Lessons (ceeditor@computoredge.com). 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
ComputerEdge

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

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

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor Does VB.Net 2010

“Using Visual Basic with Databases” by Rob Spahitz

Last time, we quickly built a database with one table and connected it to a new VB project. This week, we'll complete the connections.

Last time, we quickly built a database with one table and connected it to a new VB project. This week, we'll complete the connections.

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.Net 2010, check my July 31, 2009 column, and to retrieve project files, check my server at www.dogopoly.com/ce.

Review

Let's rebuild last week's project. For more details, look back to that column.

Create an Access database named VBDB with one table, tblPerson, with fields PersonID (primary key, autonumber), FirstName and LastName.

Create a new VB Windows Form Application project called DBApp2.

Go to menu Project and select Add Existing Item. In the window that appears, locate the VBDB database (you may need to change the bottom dropdown to show all files to see this), and then add it. VB asks what Database Model to use; there's only one choice of Dataset, so select that. Next, expand the Tables view and select all of tblPerson by clicking on the checkbox next to it, and then change the name at the bottom of the window to dsPerson, as seen in Figure 1; click the Finish button.

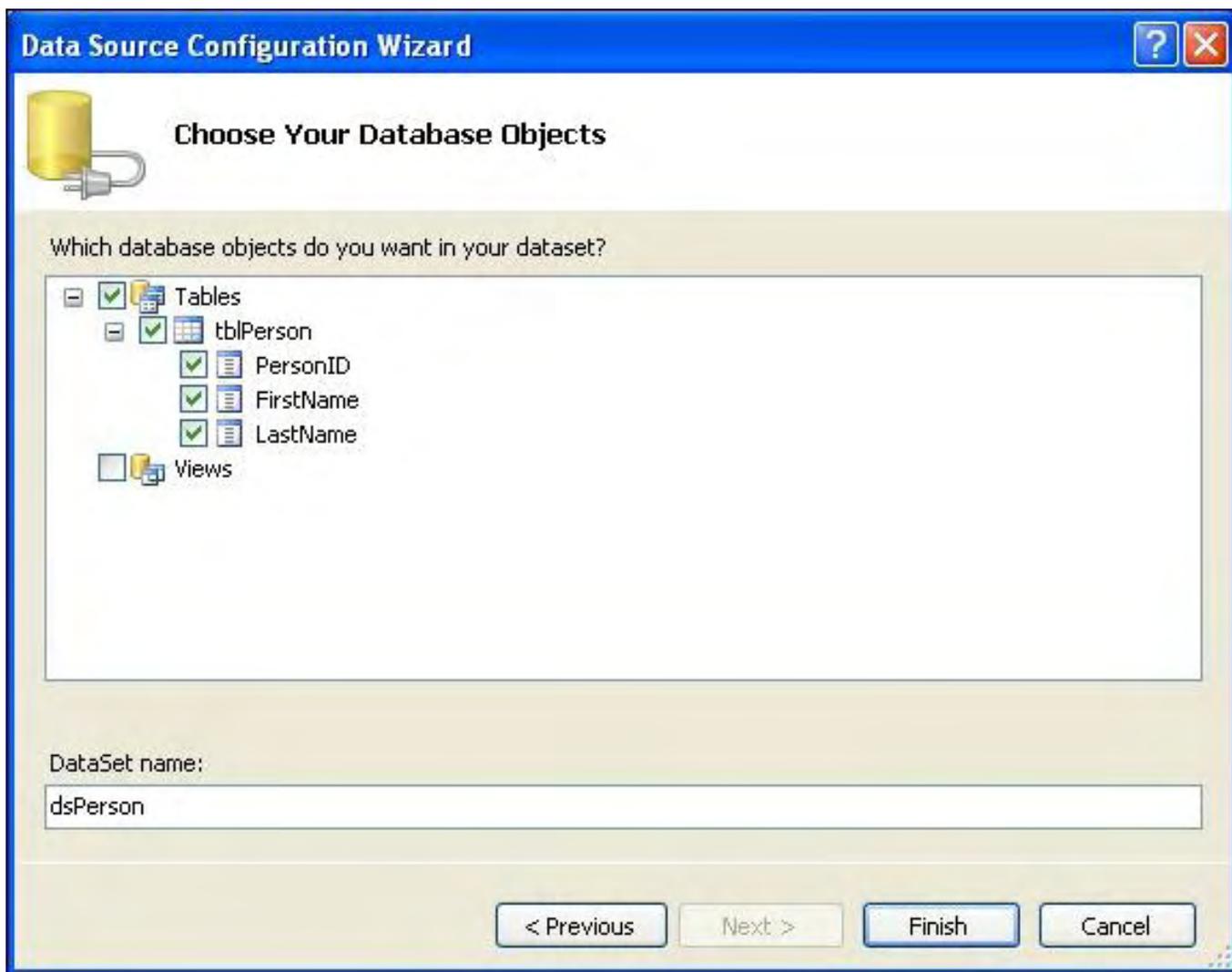


Figure 1. Defining a Data Set.

With a database available, and a dataset defined, add a container to hold the data. In the Toolbox, drag a DataGridView onto the form (top left). In the resulting flyout window for DataGridView Tasks, open the Choose Data Source dropdown list, expand Other Data Sources and Project Data Sources and dsPerson, and then select tblPerson.

Run the form, and you should be able to see the form with the grid that holds person data. You can enter a first and last name, but it doesn't save at this point. Note that you can also enter a PersonID, but that's an autonumber field, so you'll be fighting Access if you try to enter a number there and store it.

Close the form and let's fix it to allow the data to save.

DB Interaction

When you look at the DataGridView control, you see that it looks like a box that holds lots of data information. This data comes from a dataset that is defined as a separate object, in this case DsPerson, located in the Objects tray located below the form and above the Error List (if there) in the VB environment. Also in this tray you see an Adapter and some Binding sources, as seen in Figure 2.

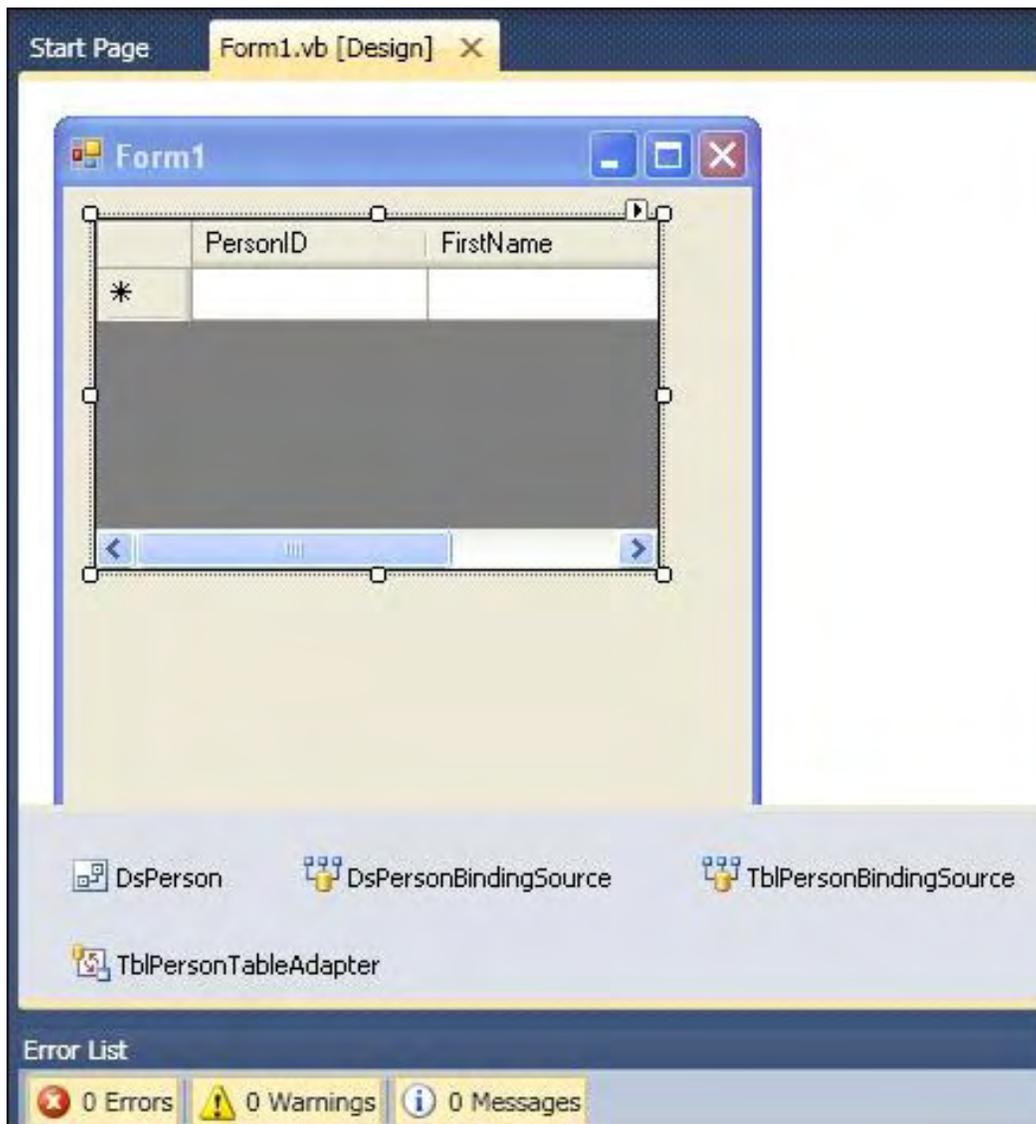


Figure 2. VB Data Components.

First, let's see what code is out there to help us. Looking at the code in the form, we see this:

```
Private Sub Form1_Load(ByVal sender As System.Object, _
    ByVal e As System.EventArgs) Handles MyBase.Load
    'TODO: This line of code loads data into the _
    'DsPerson.tblPerson' table. You can move, or remove it, as needed.
    Me.TblPersonTableAdapter.Fill(Me.DsPerson.tblPerson)
End Sub
```

The key to this is the "Fill" method before the End Sub. This is a procedure that fills something with data. In this case, it fills the TblPersonTableAdapter with the data from our dataset. Since it happens in the Load procedure for the form, the data shows up when the form appears. If there is a large amount of data, it may make sense to move this code into a button's event procedure, as the TODO comment implies.

Data Adapters are controls that allow you to translate data from one component (like a database) into another (such as a grid.) The parameter used by the Fill method will take the source (tblPerson) and convert each piece of data from the source so it can be used by another component. In this case, the DataGridView is

trying to grab that data. If you look at its properties, you'll see that it has a DataSource of TblPersonBindingSource, which we defined earlier.

Now, select the TblPersonBindingSource object in the Objects Tray. You'll see that its DataSource is DsPerson and its DataMember is tblPerson. The code is requesting that the adapter fill the data from DsPerson.tblPerson so when it is retrieved, it is put into the corresponding DsPerson object seen in the tray, which is used by the BindingSource, which feeds its data to the Grid.

If this sounds overly complex, it is. So why do it? Well, the main reason is that you could directly connect the data to the grid. However, if the data is not compatible you'll get a lot of errors. Also, if the data source needs to be changed, you would have to manually update all of the links in the grid, including any pieces to insert, delete or update records. By directing that work to the dataset (DsPerson), that object is responsible for acting as a placeholder for the data. To use it, you need a binding source to connect (bind) the dataset to the grid. As for the Adapter, it's not really needed if the data from the database are compatible with VB, as is typically the case with Access databases. However, if you later decided to upgrade the database to Oracle or SQL Server or MySQL, some of the data types might not be compatible. For example, the storage size for an integer may be different or a text value might be fixed versus variable-length (varchar). By using the adapter, you can have it automatically translate data into a format that will appear correctly in the grid.

OK, so now what? Well, you could manually add buttons to perform the Update function. However, there's something in the Toolbox's Data section called BindingNavigator. This is a tool that lets you more easily navigate through and manage the data in the dataset. It also shows the current record being viewed. This is useful if you make separate controls (typically textboxes) for connecting to the various fields. Drag one from the toolbox and add it to the form. It should look something like the control shown in Figure 3.

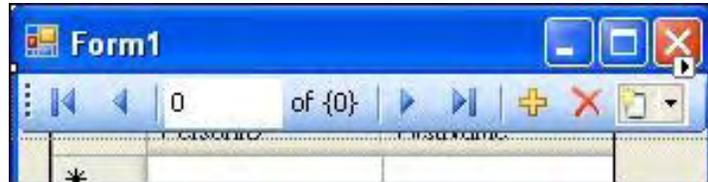


Figure 3. Navigation control.

One minor adjustment may be needed. The navigation control goes at the top of the form. If you have other things at the top, it simply overlays them, as seen above. Simply find the control(s) underneath the navigator and bring that down a bit.

Now back to the navigator. It doesn't know where to get its data. In the Properties window, select BindingSource and change it to TblPersonBindingSource, which we know will use the adapter to load the data into a control. This connection will cause that data to go to two separate places: the Grid and the Navigator.

Run again to see how things are doing. You should see the form with the navigator and the grid. If you enter records in the grid, the navigator should reflect these changes, as seen in Figure 4, and let you navigate through the records that way if you like.

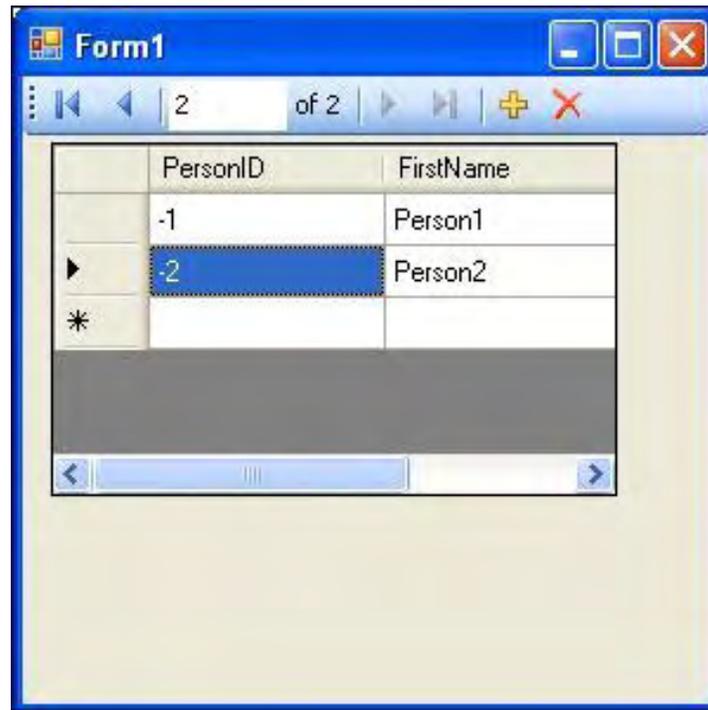


Figure 4. Navigator and Grid.

Notice that the PersonID values appear as negative numbers if you leave them out. This is the grid's way to track the items that will be added to the database through the autonumber field. Enter a few values and notice that the navigator also shows the record number and record count. Also notice that there is a "+" and "X" button on the navigator. These will automatically manage adding and deleting new records into the navigator, which puts them into the binding source, which puts them into the adapter, which puts them into the database. It also doubles back and puts this into the grid since they are all bound to the same things.

So close the form and re-open it to see how it works. Uh oh! The data is not there. Let's fix that.

First, save the project to ensure that all the pieces will be in the right place when we look for them, then let's fix the form. Change the grid so it fills most of the form, and then change the Anchor property to connect on all four sides. Next, widen the form so you can see all three fields. Next, you may have noticed that the navigator did not have a button to perform any updates. Let's fix that.

Select the navigator. In the top-right corner, click on the little box with a triangle pointing to the right to expose a Task window as seen in Figure 5.

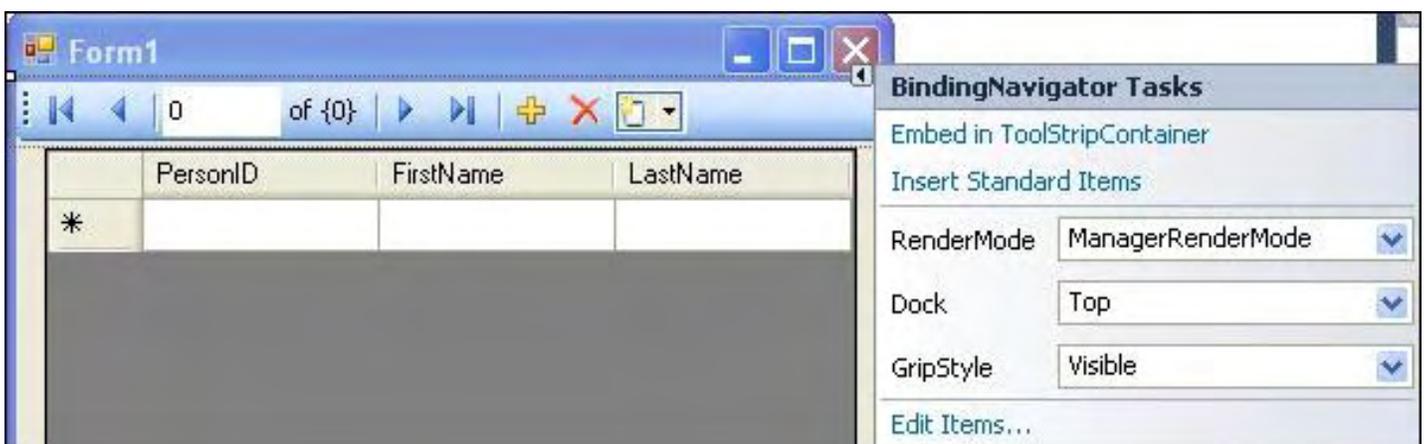


Figure 5. BindingNavigator Tasks.

Near the top, click on the link called Insert Standard Items. This will add a few things commonly seen in the standard toolbars, including a floppy disk picture that can be used to save the data. If you don't like all the new features, you can use the Edit Items link to remove items from the navigator control. I leave this to the reader to explore.

Let's program the Save option. Double-click on the Floppy disk image, as seen in Figure 6, so that we can add code needed to force the data to save.



Figure 6. Save Data icon.

Enter the code seen below:

```
Private Sub SaveToolStripButton_Click(ByVal sender As System.Object, _
ByVal e As System.EventArgs) Handles SaveToolStripButton.Click
Me.Validate()
Me.TblPersonBindingSource.EndEdit()
Me.TblPersonTableAdapter.Update(Me.DsPerson)
End Sub
```

Run the application and enter data. Then click on the floppy disk to save the data. Close the form and run it again. *Where's the data???*

It turns out there's one more setting we need to change. Normally when you create a database application, you have some test data that you want to use. Every time you run, you'd like to use the same data. However, in our case, we want to see the changes every time. VB keeps two copies of the database in your project. One is a "source" (original) database. This is the one you imported. It also has a test database. This is the one you use when you test your application.

To fix the problem, we need to ask VB *not* to use the original data each time. In Solution Explorer, click on the VBDB database. In the Properties window, change the property named "Copy to Output Directory" from "Copy always" to "Copy if newer." This will let you keep your updates unless someone updates the original, which might include some new tables or fields. Just be careful about this setting since you may lose any test data you included unless you manually copy the test database back to the original. FYI the test database is normally copied to the Debug directory where the executable file is created.

Now when you run, the test data is retained and will show up again after you close and re-run.

Next week, we'll explore an easier way to handle data and also look at how we can create an Access-like data-entry form with individual fields rather than a grid.

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

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



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ComputerQuick Reviews

News and Reviews from Readers and Staff

ComputerQuick Reviews

“Computer Product
Opinions from
ComputerEdge
Readers and Staff” by
ComputerEdge Staff

Most of us think of Google as an amazing search engine. However, serving up search results is just the tip of the iceberg with how far Google's reach extends throughout the Web. Also, a call for reader experiences with input devices.

Anyone can make a search engine, and Google is exceptional. But Google is going far beyond its search capabilities, redefining the way the world uses the Web.

If you go to the Google Products page (www.google.com/intl/en/options/), you will see a large list of applications. Here are my five favorite apps.

1. *Gmail*—One of the most versatile Web based e-mail applications I have used. Spam is automatically diverted to a spam folder and can be easily removed; Gmail can be accessed on mobile devices; and you get a ton of storage space—all for free.
2. *Google Talk*—Google Talk is Google's Instant Messenger. It can be accessed in the Web browser or a desktop version can be downloaded and installed on your computer.
3. *Google Calendar*—Google Calendar is an easy-to-use online calendar. Add events and set reminders. Share your calendar with people you know.
4. *Google Docs*—Upload your documents any time and access them from anywhere. Give others access to your documents. All secure. All Free.
5. *Google Groups*—Create a Google Group to organize a group or organization. Stay in touch and keep updated with news, announcements, or other important information for your group.

Most of us think of Google as an amazing search engine. However, serving up search results is just the tip of the iceberg with how far Google's reach extends throughout the Web. You will be astounded when you see how many applications are available on Google.com.

Pete Choppin (webserver.computoredge.com/editorial/prg/authorbio.mvc?contribid=CHOP)

* * *

Next Week: Nuts and Bolts—Mice, Trackballs, Pads and Keyboards?

Next week, ComputerEdge will be talking about all kinds of input devices. If you have a favorite mouse, trackball, touch pad, or keyboard, tell us about it. Your comments will appear right here in ComputerQuick Reviews. Send your thoughts to ComputerQuick Input Devices (ceeditor@computoredge.com).

We Want Your Opinions About Hardware, Software and Web Sites

Over the years, *ComputerEdge* 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). ComputerQuick 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 ComputerQuick Reviews (webserver.computoredge.com/sitemap.mvc?feature=Columns&columnedcode=persrev&column=ComputerQuick%20Reviews) in the *ComputerEdge* 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 ComputerQuick 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.

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

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

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Spam of the Week

Spam of the Week: "New Login System" for Facebook

"The latest in annoying and dangerous e-mail currently making the rounds." by ComputerEdge Staff

Someone either wants to get into your account or is trying to plant a Trojan horse on your computer—we don't know which. Whatever it is, someone is up to no good.

This one caught our attention because Facebook is so popular. Someone either wants to get into your account or is trying to plant a Trojan horse on your computer—we don't know which. These spams that appear to be from Facebook with the subject lines "New login system," "Facebook Update Tool," or "Facebook Account Update," are obvious fakes—even though they try to look official. To the uninitiated or the careless, they are a trap.

The following text will be found in the e-mail:

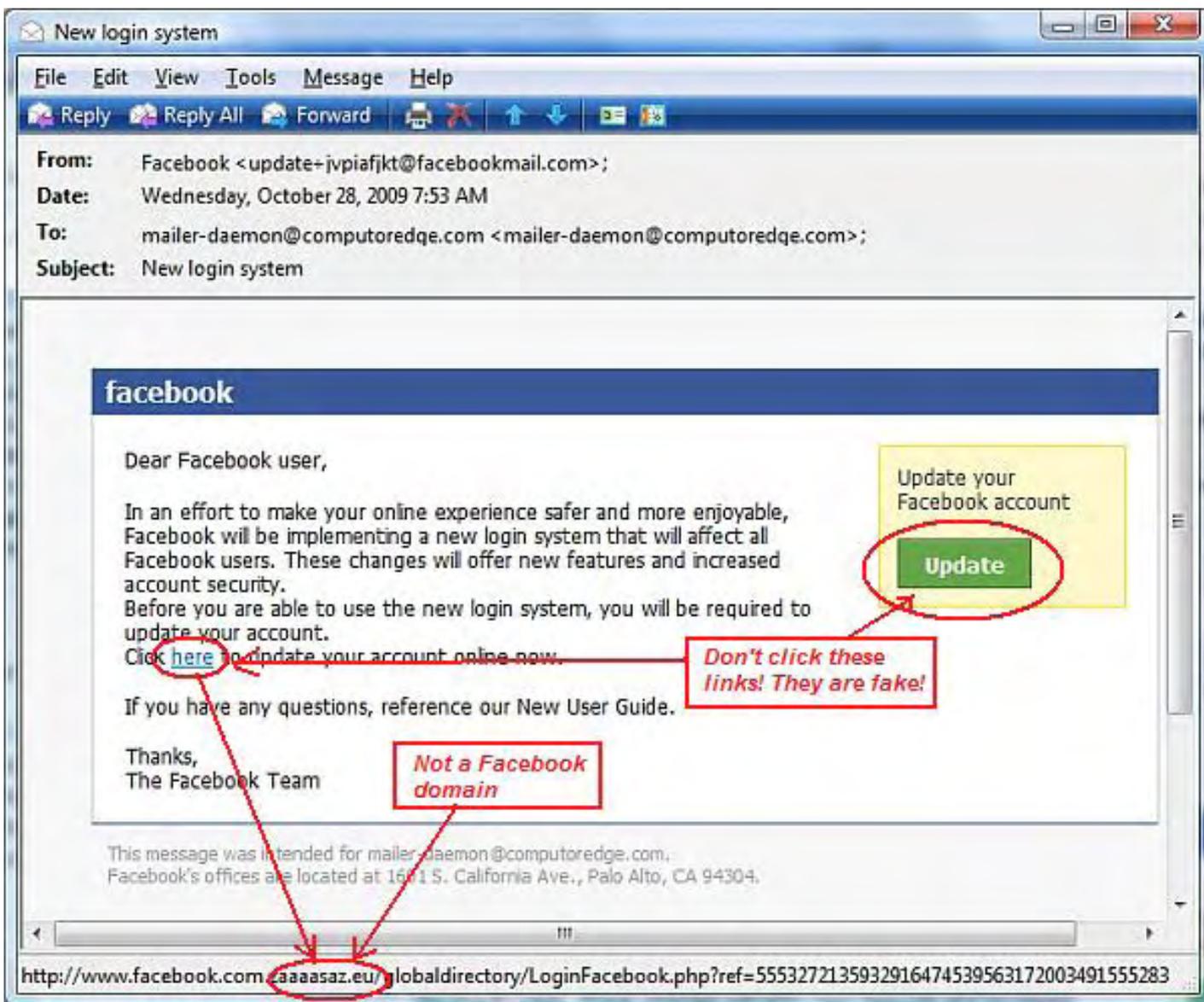
Dear Facebook user,

In an effort to make your online experience safer and more enjoyable, Facebook will be implementing a new login system that will affect all Facebook users. These changes will offer new features and increased account security. Before you are able to use the new login system, you will be required to update your account. [Click here to update your account online now.](#)

If you have any questions, reference our [New User Guide](#).

Thanks,
The Facebook Team

*If you look at the entire entry from the subject line "Facebook <update+jvpiafjkt@facebookmail.com>", you'll note that the e-mail is identified as from facebookmail.com, not facebook.com. When you hover over the "here" in the "Click **here** to update your account online now", the link at the bottom of the page shows that it will not direct you to Facebook, but another site with an "eu" extension. There is another button on the right titled "Update" which may give a different domain, such as "uk." Regardless, they are designed to direct you to somewhere other than Facebook.*



The fake Facebook "New login system" spam.

Although we're not sure what the scam is (we suspect that it is the Zeus bank Trojan designed to steal financial and personal data), don't click the link! Just delete the e-mail. Someone is up to no good.

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

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

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EdgeWord: An Approach to Building Web-Based Applications

“The cloud can complement--not replace--our computers.” by ComputerEdge Staff



The future of the Internet cloud is not a replacement for the computer, but rather an expansion of the boxes we place on our desks and carry onto planes.

Scott runs a small company that has written and supports a niche software program in the construction industry. The program is an estimating program for glass installation in commercial buildings. It's called fenestration software—who knew? The program accesses catalogs from the major glass companies and produces cost estimates, AutoCAD drawings, and parts lists for both the bidding process and the final work. Right now, Scott's software runs on Windows computers, but over the past year he has been wondering if he should jump into the Web-based software world and produce a Web version of his software. We have bantered about this issue for quite a while.

Taking a software package to the Web is not an easy process. Creating a Web service rather than a stand-alone software program offers an entirely new set of problems. When working with one program in one operating system, the environment is relatively controlled and isolated. There will be problems caused by installation programs, device drivers, and unusual computer configurations, but they can usually be isolated and contained. If you have a Windows program, then you will be working with Windows problems.

Making a Web-based program would have the advantage of no longer being computer-system dependent. Any computer would be able to run the software as long as it ran a compatible Web browser. As long as there is an Internet connection, the program would be available from anywhere. The attraction to the concept is immediate, but is it really worth doing?

There is tremendous expense in taking an application to the Web. The starting point is Web server hardware to support the clients. Without the hardware attached to the Internet, no Web-based application is possible.

The next issue is converting the software for Web operations. There is no such thing as porting software to the Web, as there is between computers and operating systems. Web-based programming is by its very nature multiprocessor computing. The question is how much work will be done on the client computer via the browser, and how much will be done with the Web server's processors. Even to get a program to run within a browser, the handling between HTML, JavaScript (AJAX), possibly Flash, or another tailored browser extension can be incredibly complicated. In Scott's situation, the addition of third-party tools, such as the AutoCAD drawing routine, greatly increases the complications. To take on this Web project would require a significant capital investment in human resources—especially if the entire project is taken on in one piece.

Another huge area of risk is acceptance of Web-based applications by users. The jury is still out on how much the gambles on Web-based applications will pan out for Google and other companies who have money to burn. Just because they are built doesn't mean that they will be widely used—or that they will eventually make a profit. Computer users can be extremely fickle when it's an easy switch to another free service.

Laptop computers have become the platform of choice for many computer users, easily outselling desktop

computers. This is because today's laptops can do everything that the desktops can do—plus they are relatively easy to tote anywhere. When you can take your computer with you, why would you need an Internet-based application? Plus, the laptop doesn't need an Internet connection to do its job. People are developing a love affair with their convenient portable computers. Switching to a Web app that probably runs slower and has less features is not necessarily a step up for users. In many situations, a Web-based program may not be met with wide acceptance.

Based upon the risks involved and the potential rejection of Web-based applications, there is an approach to exploring the concept, without betting the house. First there must be a need that could be Web-based that will integrate into the original program. In Scott's case, the data (or framing dimensions that are used to produce the drawings) could be made available on the Web. Once a bid from a subcontractor is accepted, the construction site must be visited to confirm the actual dimensions of the project. Currently, these are either written down by hand and later entered into the program, or the supplier takes a laptop with Scott's program installed to the site. Many people will do the latter, but a Web app could be a little more convenient.

By offering a Web service for storing the basic data files, simple apps could be developed for iPhone, Android, and other phone computers that then will access those files over the Internet connection in the phone. The subcontractor would run the app at the site to confirm or change the actual dimensions from the original bid data. Later the drawings could be reproduced using the installed program and the Web data files. This approach would solve an immediate problem for the users—dragging their laptop to construction sites—and introduce the concept of using the Internet with the program. It would be a relatively low-cost test that doubles as the beginning of the process of moving toward a Web-based application.

The next step may be to add more features to the Web-based applications. Possibly a Web-based drawing tool that would allow users to view AutoCAD drawings directly on the Web that are created from the output of the data files. While not a simple task, this step would certainly be easier than adding the complexity of the entire computer-based program (catalogs, optimization engine, etc.) to the Web.

During the journey it may be discovered that there is very little demand for the entire Web solution. The process can be stopped anywhere along the way. The product then becomes a hybrid of computer-based and Web-based solutions and an example to the most likely future of Web-based software—a complementary extension of the computer.

The future of the Internet cloud is not a replacement for the computer, but rather an expansion of the boxes we place on our desks and carry onto planes. We will not see Web-based applications completely displacing the machines that we love. The Internet is merely an important convenience that will supplement our computing experience. This is how Web-based applications should be viewed.

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

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.” by ComputerEdge Staff

"Traveling Wi-Fi," "Maybe It's the Power Cord," "Moving to Windows 7"

Traveling Wi-Fi

[Regarding Dawn Clement's October 16 article, "Finding Free Public Wi-Fi":]

The Crucero (crossing) bus from Tijuana to Los Angeles has Wi-Fi on board.

-Fred Conwell

Starbucks had long offered Wi-Fi at most locations, but at \$9.95 per day it was no bargain.

Now, anyone who has a registered Starbucks card that has been used or reloaded within the past 30 days can get two hours per day of Wi-Fi access absolutely free at just about any Starbucks.

Smart marketing—it has made a regular Starbucks customer out of me.

-R. Stickney, San Diego

Maybe It's the Power Cord

[Regarding the October 16 Digital Dave column:]

Does Noe leave the power cord (with transformer) plugged into the wall when not attached to the computer? I had to send a computer in for service and left the power cord plugged in while it was gone. When it came back, nothing happened. I called customer service and they sent a new power cord, and I was back in business.

I told this story to a friend with a dead laptop. She took it to Best Buy, where they said she needed a new laptop. She insisted they try it with a new power cord, and sure enough it came back to life.

-Bill Schieb, Ft. Collins, CO

Moving to Windows 7

[Regarding the October 16 Windows Tips and Tricks: Windows 7 Versus Windows XP column:]

I wanted to comment on your Win 7 article with my own anecdote. I have been telling family members for several months now about 7 and its capabilities. I downloaded the beta in the spring and am currently running Win 7 RC on several of our desktops, and we love it. While speaking to people, it came as no surprise that my father was vehemently opposed to a new OS. He is retired and has no need or desire to buy new machines, and doesn't want or need a new operating system. Sound familiar?

Over the summer, the folks came out for a visit. I realized that they would be interested in Internet access for e-mail and such, so I pulled out my laptop the first day they were here. I handed it to him so he could do his thing. His response was a low key, "This is Win 7? Huh."

After the third day, I knew I had a convert on my hands. He asked me to download a copy of the release candidate for him. He tried to hide his smile while surfing, but I could tell he was surprised and impressed.

So the moral of the story is that even if you have no desire to switch or try to learn something new, you will still enjoy Win 7. Could I be wrong? Certainly, but the overwhelming positive responses I've seen indicate that almost anyone will have a great experience and easy transition. All the stuff you are used to is still there, just better.

There are a few reasons not to switch. Unless you are tech savvy, you will probably have some problems with older hardware, especially peripherals like printers, scanners and the like. 64-bit will be more problematic than 32-bit, at this point. It's not quite ready for prime time. I use this version myself, but my wife uses the 32-bit.

Also, the new operating system is bigger and more feature-rich than XP. As such, it has steeper system requirements than XP, which will cause problems with folks on a limited budget. If you have 512MB of RAM, for instance, I wouldn't recommend the move. If you have 1GB of memory, you would be better off with 2 or 3 gigs. However, it looks like the 7 starter edition could address many of those issues and provide a great experience for modest hardware. I wouldn't look at Pro or Ultimate unless you're willing to perform some system upgrades.

Finally, the permissions are bound to throw people off. Running programs as administrator is clunky and annoying; this is not an improvement and it's the number one complaint I hear about 7. I understand that it is a security measure; however, as one user pointed out, "Didn't I already give permission for the program to run when I double-clicked it?" Not sure what MS was thinking there.

For folks afraid to make the move, I have a piece of advice, for any operating system: Wait until Service Pack 1 comes out. For enthusiasts and tech guys, early adoption makes sense, but for the average user I say wait for the first Service Pack.

Thanks for the great and timely article!

Sincerely,

-Scott Hill, Westminster, CO

In our shop we run Oracle on Windows. Our database servers are currently Windows 2008, but we are wanting to upgrade to Windows 7 for our client machines. Problem is there are no versions of the Oracle Client currently available for Windows 7, and the projection from Oracle is three to six months before Oracle 11G Release 2 will be available for Windows 7. We cannot move to 7 until we have a certified Oracle client.

-Marcus, Alabama

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ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315