

ComputerEdge™ Online — 02/26/10



This issue: Selling Stuff on the Internet

It's easier than ever to be part of the Internet's virtual garage sale, with eBay, Craigslist and a host of other Web sites.

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One of the more important features in any computer operating system is the ability to quick launch programs and later find the windows of the opened programs. Windows 7 has enhanced this capability—but is it easier?

[Wally Wang's Apple Farm](#) by Wally Wang

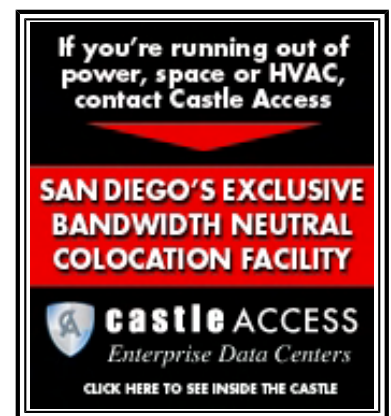
Selling stuff online can help you through the downturn.

If you've lost your job, consider some new tech avenues, such as earning spare cash utilizing Craigslist and eBay. Also, a unique portrait of the typical Apple hater; what the Dell Mini 5 gets wrong; and a tip on using the Reduce File Size option in the Save As sheet to compress your PDF file.

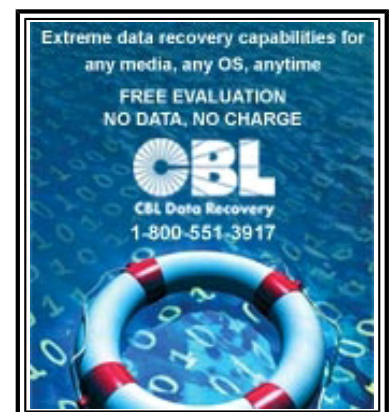
[Linux Lessons: Shell Scripting](#) by Pete Choppin

A Simple First Script

Last week, we introduced some basic concepts about shell scripting. We will now use what we have discussed to go to the next step: take a practical example of a script and build on it while we go through each part and explain how it all works.



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[Rob, The ComputerTutor: Programming Web Pages](#) by Rob Spahitz

Hyperlinks, Colors and Scripts

Last week we looked at HTML Web page tables and frames. This week we'll explore how to use hyperlinks, pictures and colors, and then start working in JavaScript.

[Worldwide News & Product Reviews](#) by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.

Spam ... A LOT—M86 Security issues a sobering cybercrime report; Tax Season Myths Empower Identity Thieves—The government takes your tax dollars on April 15. Don't let a thief take your identity too; Mobile Subwoofer for MacBook (Pro)—A review of the BassJump, a stylish and user-friendly audio enhancer that could appeal to MacBook (Pro) owners.

[Beyond Personal Computing: Twaddle about Twitter](#) by Keith Taylor

A Look at the Human Side of Computing

This is a collaborative piece written by three disparate, maybe desperate, people who are coming to understand the Twitter universe—or not.

[Spam of the Week: Bloggers Beware!](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

The latest in annoying and dangerous e-mail currently making the rounds.

This week has seen an attack on bloggers, with hackers phishing for innocent victims' account information. Bloggers beware!

DEPARTMENTS:

[EdgeWord: On Using Craigslist](#) by Jack Dunning

Craigslist offers the lesson, "Trust, but verify!"

While Craigslist can help you to quickly clean out a garage or office, or find you that unique item, there are precautions that you need to take—both as a buyer and a seller.

[Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

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

"Windows Live: Too Little Too Late," "Monitor Uses," "Thanks, Digital Dave!," "Word Wrap," "PDF-Reader Programs"



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Digital Dave

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

A reader wants to keep his e-mail address when he moves to a new provider; can an HP laptop be upgraded to Windows 7?; a reader wonders about a process running on his computer—is it a Trojan?

Dear Digital Dave,

I have an e-mail account with my current ISP, but I don't like the idea of losing that address when I move. Is there any way to keep an e-mail address when I go to a different Internet provider?

*Joe Davis
San Diego*

Dear Joe,

Unless you have your own e-mail server with your own domain name, the only way that you can ensure that you can keep the same e-mail address is to pick up an account with one of the big guys—Google Gmail, Microsoft Hotmail, etc. Even then you are dependent upon their business decisions. The problem with using the address of your local Internet provider is that they own the domain name. If you go to another service, then you will get a new e-mail address.

Unlike telephone numbers, which only contain digits with no intrinsic characteristics, e-mail addresses contain information about the service provider—the domain name. The only way that you could keep an e-mail address when you change providers would be if they agreed to forward your e-mail to your new address—not likely. This is why many people get an address with a third party as mentioned above. That way your e-mail address is the same regardless of your location and Internet service provider.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

My daughter has an HP laptop with Vista Home Premium installed. When she asked about a bigger hard drive, I started to look at upgrading to Win 7. The HP Web site shows that her model is/will not be supported for upgrading to Win 7. My understanding is that if the machine runs Vista, it will run Win 7. Fair assessment or not? What impact will HP's lack of support have if she upgrades?

Thank you.

*Bob Deschamps
Santee, CA*

Dear Bob,

My understanding is that the list of supported upgrades by HP referred to those computers that qualified for the free upgrade to Windows 7, not to whether the computer could be upgraded. In any case, you're right. If a computer will run Windows Vista, in most cases, it should be able to run Windows 7, although it may not be a snap to upgrade.

There are numerous utilities and drivers that are unique to HP laptops. If they have not been updated for your daughter's computer for Windows 7, then you may run into issues. HP does have a support site h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/document?

lc=en&dlc=en&cc=us&docname=c01778879 (s&docname=c01778879#N898) specifically for confronting these problems. The Web page appears to be pretty comprehensive. If you're serious about a Windows 7 upgrade it would be worthwhile to go through the page step-by-step.

Personally, I would probably stick with Vista on the computer. While I do prefer Windows 7, if everything is working properly on a Vista computer, I'm not compelled to upgrade to Win 7. I get Windows 7 when I purchase, build or rebuild a computer.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Recently I noticed a process running on my computer called "jucheck.exe." I looked it up online and saw multiple takes on this executable. Some people are treating it as a Trojan. Others are saying that it is a Java executable that checks for updates. There is another similiar file called "jusched.exe." What is your take on this?

*Calvin
La Mesa*

Dear Calvin,

These are legitimate programs associated with the Sun Microsystems Java Runtime Environment (JRE) which runs on most computers. The purpose of JRE running in Windows is to support both programs written in Java and Java applets or plug-ins that run in Web browsers. Without JRE installed on you computer many Java and Web applications would not work properly.

The purpose of the two files you mention is to schedule checks for updates (jusched.exe) and to actually do the check for updates (jucheck.exe) for JRE. They are both located in the "Program Files/Java" folder under each version that has been downloaded in the Bin folder.

The activity that you are seeing is the automatic checking for updates which defaults to monthly. You can disable this feature by opening the Java Control Panel in the main Windows Control Panel and unchecking "Check for Updates Automatically" in the Update tab.

Digital Dave

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Selling Things on the Internet

"Can you really make money selling things online?" by Dawn Clement

You don't have to wait for summer to clear out your unwanted goods. Hold a virtual yard sale via eBay, Craigslist and other sites, and you might be surprised at how easy it is to make some extra cash!

Can you really make money selling things online? The short answer is yes. However, unless you run a proper business, complete with Web site and marketing, you probably won't get rich this way. It makes more sense for most people to think of the Internet as their backyard, and when you sell items online, you're participating in the world's largest yard sale. The big difference is that, unlike a traditional yard sale, the seller doesn't need to go through the trouble of dragging all of their items out on a single day and hoping that it doesn't rain. Selling goods online is much easier than holding a traditional yard sale, and can end up being more profitable. The average yard sale brings in \$200-\$1,000, and you can make at least that much by selling those same items online.

What you're trying to sell affects which site you will want to use. eBay (www.ebay.com) is undoubtedly the leader in online auction sites, and is probably where you want to start. You can list almost anything on eBay (as long as it's legal). People routinely sell houses, cars and motorcycles online, as well as clothing and knickknacks. There's always someone out there who wants your "what's-it."

However, eBay is no longer the only game in town. If you have something to sell and it would be expensive or difficult to ship, try listing it on Craigslist (craigslist.com). Craigslist has been around for years and serves your local community. There is no charge to post an ad, and you don't have to worry about shipping, so any money you make is gravy. If you have just culled your book collection, try selling your unwanted titles on Amazon.

If you are trying to sell handmade items, then you'll want to try Etsy (www.etsy.com). Etsy charges a fee, and they specialize in handmade, vintage and craft supplies. In addition, there are numerous online classified ad Web sites that you can usually use for free. Check out: www.half.com (owned by eBay with focus on books and textbooks), www.sell.com, www.oodle.com, and www.bonanzle.com ("Find Everything but the Ordinary").

If you're an artist or craftsperson, trying to sell your handiwork, you might want to consider setting up an account with CafePress (www.cafepress.com) or Carttini (www.carttini.com). The major benefit of these sites for the entrepreneur is that they will handle the payments for you. You will still have to market yourself, but you will have a URL to give out to your potential customers.

Worth What People are Willing to Pay

When you price your items, don't forget the old adage that whatever you're trying to sell is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it. With that in mind, you will want to do a little research to find out what your items are worth. People are looking for bargains, and you want to price your items to sell. Most items can reasonably be priced 1/3 to 1/2 of what it would cost to purchase new. Some items,

such as antiques, art, or collectibles, will be worth more and require more research to find out their true value. You can use the Internet to determine how to price your items. There are many price guides available for free. For example, the Salvation Army (www.salvationarmysouth.org/valueguide.htm) maintains a list of the average prices of items it sells and this is a good place to start.

Comics Price Guide (www.comicspriceguide.com) and its sister site Music Price Guide (www.musicpriceguide.com) are also free to use, and can give you a good idea of what your old comics, albums and CDs are worth. If you are selling sports cards, you'll want to check out the price guide at Tuff Stuff (www.tuffstuff.com) to make sure you don't sell a \$1,000 baseball card for \$1. The free price guides can give you a basic ballpark figure, and if you want a more accurate guide, there are plenty of fee-based Web sites to provide this information. PriceMiner (www.priceminer.com), for example, uses data collected from online auction sites to determine the average selling price.

PayPal (www.paypal.com) is really your best option when it comes time to getting paid. It doesn't cost you anything to set up a PayPal account and there is no fee to accept payments (unless your buyer uses a credit card). Since PayPal is owned by eBay, it is also the most convenient method of payment when you sell on eBay. However, not everyone has a PayPal account, and it's ultimately up to you to determine which payment methods you feel comfortable accepting. I wouldn't recommend using any kind of direct deposit or money transfer, because you would expose your sensitive banking information to strangers. Customers can always send you a money order, or a personal check. Furthermore, if you're selling on Craigslist, your buyer can pay you in cash. One more word of caution: If you accept a personal check, make sure it clears before you send out the merchandise!

If you sell something online, and receive payment for it, there's still one thing left to do—send the item to the purchaser. Not only is it unethical to take payment for something you never send out, it's also illegal. Try to send the items out within a few business days of receiving payment. Package the items well (especially if they're breakable) and include a receipt.

Depending on which site you are using to sell your items, you may need to factor in fees, as well as the cost of shipping your items, into the price of the item itself. If you don't, you may actually end up paying someone else for the luxury of buying from you! Shipping charges are especially important for lower-value items because your profit margin is much smaller. You may have to pay more to ship something than the item is actually worth. Do a little homework first, and save yourself a headache later.

For example, the United States Postal Service is not always the cheapest option for heavier items. You will need to compare rates if you want to get the best deal—don't forget that shipping charges are coming out of your profit. You can check rates online for the U.S. Postal Service (postcalc.usps.gov), United Parcel Service (wwwapps.ups.com/ctc/request?loc=en_US) (UPS) and DHL (www.dhl-usa.com/ratecalculator/HandlerServlet?CLIENT=RATES_REQUEST_DISPLAY&nav=GetRates (DHL)).

You don't have to wait for summer to clear out your unwanted goods. Hold a virtual yard sale and you might be surprised at how easy it is to make some extra cash!

Dawn Clement is a freelance writer, domestic engineer, and mother of three with a Masters of Arts in Philosophy and over nine years experience in technical support.

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Craigslist for Buyers and Sellers

“How to turn your junk into their junk.” by Michael J. Ross

Craigslist can be a terrific resource for buyers and sellers—although auction sites and classified advertisers probably feel differently.

Online auction sites (such as eBay, the undisputed leader in that field) and classified advertisers (such as local newspapers) may seem very much at odds with one another, because the former group has been inexorably pulling business away from the latter group—to the extent that a number of newspapers are now going out of business or have already closed their doors, blaming the decline in advertising revenues as a major cause. Yet these competing groups do share a critical component of their respective business models: Each one is predicated on the idea of charging people who wish to connect with one another, primarily for the buying and selling of goods and, to a lesser degree, services.

These auction and advertising organizations may compete with one another on price, but what chance do they have against an online marketplace that, for the most part, charges nothing? Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) is arguably the most popular way for people to buy and sell items, find roommates, search for jobs, etc.—almost all for free. According to its Wikipedia entry (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craigslist), Craigslist caters to users located in roughly 700 cities, in 70 countries.

But to the major auction sites and classified advertisers, the global reach of Craigslist is the least of their worries. What likely keeps the head honchos of those companies awake at night is a combination of several factors: Craigslist is the 11th most popular Web site in the United States, is the number one job board in the country (hosting more than one million new job listings each month), is growing at a phenomenal rate, and is the leading classified ad platform in the world (hosting more than 80 million new ads each month)—surely the stuff of executive nightmares.

It is understandable that these management types, and the companies they run, did not anticipate that Craigslist would catch up with and surpass them so decidedly, in view of the Craigslist's humble origins. It started in 1995 as a simple mailing list limited to the San Francisco Bay area, founded by Craig Newmark, who apparently is the polar opposite of the stereotypically arrogant and profit-centric Web business leaders found in the technology hotbeds of California. Despite building his personal mailing list into a successful business that enjoys more than \$100 million in annual revenue, Mr. Newmark holds true to his original vision of helping people, rather than maximizing profit—much to the exasperation of stakeholders and industry pundits.

Anyone interested in learning more about Craigslist as an organization, and its history, should consult the aforementioned Wikipedia entry, which provides the reader with a fair and detailed overview of a phenomenon that has seen its share of drama—including tussles with one of its major shareholders, eBay (of all possibilities).

Liking the List

Craigslist has much to offer to both buyers and sellers. It costs nothing to sign up for an account, nor to browse the countless listings for your city of residence (or at least the nearest major city, for those people living in rural areas or small towns). Craigslist charges only for posting jobs in 10 U.S. cities, and for broker apartment ads in New York City. Aside from that, you are free to post just about any kind of advertisement, provided that it does not involve something illegal or too objectionable (even "adult services" are allowed . . . or so I've been told).

To get started, head over to the Craigslist Web site (www.craigslist.org). If you have never visited that site before and thus have not yet designated a city, then you should see the Craigslist generic homepage.

craigslist	us cities	united states		canada	asia	americas	europa	intl cities
help pages	atlanta	alabama	montana	alberta	bangladesh	argentina	austria	amsterdam
	austin	alaska	nebraska	brit columbia	china	bolivia	belgium	athens
login	boston	arizona	nevada	manitoba	india	brazil	bulgaria	bangalore
blog	chicago	arkansas	n hampshire	n brunswick	indonesia	caribbean	croatia	bangkok
	cleveland	california	new jersey	newf & lab	iran	chile	czech repub	beijing
factsheet	dallas	colorado	new mexico	nova scotia	iraq	colombia	denmark	barcelona
avoid scams	denver	connecticut	new york	ontario	israel	costa rica	finland	berlin
	detroit	delaware	n carolina	pei	japan	dominican	france	budapest
your safety	honolulu	dc	north dakota	quebec	korea	ecuador	germany	buenos aires
best-ofs	houston	florida	ohio	saskatchwn	kuwait	el salvador	great britain	delhi
	inland empire	georgia	oklahoma	territories	lebanon	guatemala	greece	dubai
job boards	kansas city	guam	oregon	ca cities	malaysia	mexico	hungary	dublin
movie	las vegas	hawaii	pennsylvania	abbotsford	pakistan	nicaragua	iceland	hong kong
	los angeles	idaho	puerto rico	calgary	philippines	panama	ireland	london
foundation	miami	illinois	rhode island	edmonton	singapore	peru	italy	madrid
system status	minneapolis	indiana	s carolina	halifax	taiwan	puerto rico	luxembourg	manila
	nashville	iowa	south dakota	hamilton	thailand	uruguay	netherlands	melbourne
terms of use	new york	kansas	tennessee	kelowna	turkey	venezuela	norway	mexico
privacy	orange co	kentucky	texas	montreal	UAE	africa	poland	moscow
	philadelphia	louisiana	utah	ottawa	vietnam	egypt	portugal	paris
about	phoenix	maine	vermont	quebec	west bank	ethiopia	romania	rio de janeiro
	portland	maryland	virgin islands	st john's	au/nz	ghana	ruddia	rome
feedback	raleigh	mass	virginia	toronto	australia	kenya	spain	seoul
	sacramento	michigan	washington	vancouver	micronesia	morocco	sweden	shanghai
	san diego	minnesota	west virginia	victoria	new zealand	south africa	switzerland	singapore
	seattle	mississippi	wisconsin	winnipeg		tunisia	turkey	sydney
© 1995-2009 craigslist, inc	sf bayarea	missouri	wyoming	more ..			ukraine	tel aviv
	st louis						UK	tokyo
	tampa bay							zunch
	wash dc							

Figure 1. Craigslist generic homepage.

The right-hand sidebar is organized into three columns, containing several sections: other cities, U.S. cities, Canada, U.S. states and countries. For U.S. citizens, the cities that comprise that first section are typically those closest to your current location—undoubtedly based on your computer's IP address, which can be used to detect your current city and even neighborhood. The second section includes all the major metropolitan areas in the United States.

Once you have clicked on the link of a particular city, Craigslist will remember that one, unless you later visit the main page for another city, or unless you have cookies disabled in your Web browser. For instance, if you are a resident of the greater San Diego area, your main page should look like the screenshot below.

craigslist

post to classifieds

my account

help, faq, abuse, legal

search craigslist

for sale

event calendar

S

M

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W

T

F

S

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

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6

avoid scams & fraud

personal safety tips

craigslist blog

craigslist factsheet

best-of-craigslist

job boards compared

craigslist movie & dvd

craigslist foundation

system status

terms of use

privacy

about

help

san diego

csd nsd esd ssd

community

activities

lost+found

artists

musicians

childcare

local news

general

politics

groups

rideshare

pets

volunteers

events

classes

personals

strictly platonic

women seek women

women seeking men

men seeking women

men seeking men

misc romance

casual encounters

missed connections

rants and raves

discussion forums

1099

gifts

pets

apple

haiku

philos

arts

health

politic

atheist

help

psych

autos

history

queer

beauty

housing

recover

bikes

jobs

religion

celebs

jokes

rofo

comp

kink

science

crafts

t.t.r.

shop

diet

legal

spirit

divorce

linux

sports

dying

loc pol

tv

eco

m4m

tax

educ

money

testing

etiquet

motocy

transg

feedback

music

travel

film

npo

vegan

fitness

open

w4w

fixit

outdoor

wed

food

over 50

wine

frugal

p.o.c.

women

gaming

parent

words

garden

pefo

writers

housing

apts / housing

rooms / shared

sublets / temporary

housing wanted

housing swap

vacation rentals

parking / storage

office / commercial

real estate for sale

for sale

appliances

arts+crafts

antiques

auto parts

barter

baby+kids

bikes

beauty+hlth

boats

cars+trucks

books

cds/dvd/vhs

business

cell phones

computer

clothes+acc

free

collectibles

furniture

electronics

general

farm+garden

jewelry

garage sale

materials

household

nvs

motorcycles

sporting

music instr

tickets

photo+video

tools

toys+games

wanted

video gaming

services

beauty

automotive

computer

farm+garden

creative

household

event

labor/move

financial

skill'd trade

legal

real estate

lessons

sm biz ads

pet

therapeutic

adult

travel/vac

write/ed/trs

jobs

accounting+finance

admin / office

arch / engineering

art / media / design

biotech / science

business / mgmt

customer service

education

food / bev / hosp

general labor

government

human resources

internet engineers

legal / paralegal

manufacturing

marketing / pr / ad

medical / health

nonprofit sector

real estate

retail / wholesale

sales / biz dev

salon / spa / fitness

security

skilled trade / craft

software / qa / dba

systems / network

technical support

transport

tv / film / video

web / info design

writing / editing

[ETC]

[part time]

gigs

computer

event

creative

labor

crew

writing

domestic

talent

adult

resumes

other cities

bakersfield

fresno

hanford

imperial co

inland empire

las vegas

los angeles

mobile co

orange co

palm springs

phoenix

prescott

san diego

san juis obispo

santa barbara

santa maria

tijuana

ventura

visalia-tulare

yuma

us cities

atlanta

austin

boston

chicago

dallas

denver

detroit

houston

las vegas

los angeles

miami

minneapolis

new york

orange co

philadelphia

portland

raleigh

sacramento

san diego

seattle

sf bayarea

wash dc

canada

calgary

edmonton

halifax

montreal

ottawa

saskatoon

toronto

vancouver

victoria

winnipeg

more ...

us states

alabama

alaska

arizona

arkansas

california

colorado

connecticut

dc

delaware

florida

georgia

guam

hawaii

idaho

illinois

indiana

iowa

kansas

kentucky

louisiana

maine

maryland

mass

michigan

minnesota

mississippi

missouri

montana

n carolina

n hampshire

nebraska

nevada

new jersey

new mexico

new york

north dakota

ohio

oklahoma

oregon

pennsylvania

puerto rico

rhode island

s carolina

south dakota

tennessee

texas

utah

vermont

virginia

washington

west virginia

wisconsin

wyoming

countries

argentina

australia

austria

bangladesh

belgium

brazil

canada

caribbean

chile

china

colombia

costa rica

croatia

czech repub

denmark

ecuador

egypt

finland

france

germany

great britain

greece

hong kong

hungary

india

indonesia

ireland

israel

italy

japan

korea

lebanon

luxembourg

malaysia

mexico

micronesia

netherlands

new zealand

norway

pakistan

panama

peru

philippines

poland

portugal

russia

singapore

south africa

spain

sweden

switzerland

taiwan

thailand

turkey

uae

uk

uruguay

us

venezuela

vietnam

Figure 2. Craigslist San Diego homepage.

To create your own account, click on the "my account" link in the upper portion of the left-hand sidebar.

craigslist: Account Log In

Log in to your craigslist account

NOTE: Not all prior posters have craigslist accounts.

If you are not sure, check for the existence of an account by having your password reset.

Email / Handle:

Password:

Log In

(Cookies must be enabled.)

[forgot password?](#)

Don't have an account? [Click here to sign up.](#)

need help? [Click here for additional information.](#)

Figure 3. Craigslist account login.

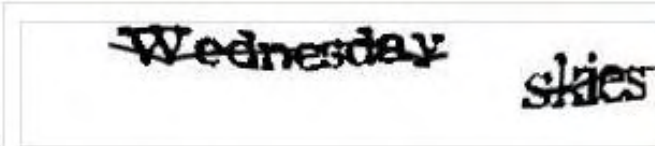
Then choose "Click here to sign up."

craigslist: account signup

Please enter your email address and the verification words shown below. [\(what's this?\)](#)

email address:

verification word:





stop spam.
read books.

create account

Figure 4. Craigslist account signup.

Opening a Craigslist account requires nothing more than a valid e-mail address—and there's no need to use a disposable address to avoid spam, because Craigslist does not spam its users. At the account sign-up page, simply type in your e-mail address as well as the verification words (i.e., CAPTCHA) displayed on your screen, and then follow the directions from there.

Posting your own ads is almost as painless as the account sign-up process. The most efficient way is to go straight to the login page (accounts.craigslist.org/login), enter in your e-mail address and password, and you will then gain access to your account page,

which lists all of your current advertisements, using five different colors to indicate the status of each one—active, pending, "removed by me," expired, and flagged/deleted. In the upper right-hand corner of the page, you will find a drop-down list of cities, which by default should be set to your current city. Just click the "go" button, which takes you to a page listing the 11 different types of postings. Probably the most commonly chosen one reads "for sale." If you choose that type, then you next must choose an ad category from a list of 38, ranging from antiques to video gaming.

As shown in the screenshot below, we have chosen to list an item in the "household goods" category.

The screenshot shows the Craigslist interface for creating a new posting in Las Vegas. At the top, the breadcrumb trail is "las vegas craigslist > household items > create posting". Below this, a message states: "Your posting will expire from the site in 30 days." The main navigation path is "las vegas craigslist > for sale / wanted > household items". The form includes three input fields: "Posting Title:" (highlighted with a green border), "Price:" (with a dollar sign and a minus sign), and "Specific Location:". Below these is the "Reply to:" section, which has radio buttons for "hide" and "anonymize (will show as: sale-xxxxxxxx@craigslist.org)". The "Posting Description:" is a large text area. At the bottom, there is an "Add / Edit Images" button and a "Continue" button.

Figure 5. Craigslist posting page.

For every ad that you post, you can provide a title, your location (since prospective buyers are generally expected to visit your residence to take a look at what you are selling), the price you're asking, a description of the item, and one or more images that you upload from your computer. For those who know how to format content using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), then be aware that you can use HTML within your ad's description, with limitations on the tags available, for security reasons. You can hide your real e-mail address on your posting by choosing to anonymize your address, which is the default choice. Should people reply to your ad by using the anonymous address, Craigslist will forward their messages to your real address.

Once you have finished listing all of your ads, you can sit back and wait to be contacted by eager buyers—thereby turning your junk into their junk.

Dissing the List

Over the years, marketplace Web sites of all sizes have generally improved their user interfaces and designs, in an attempt to make their sites as attractive as possible, and to keep up with the latest advancements in Web design. Ever the exception, Craigslist's appearance has remained largely unchanged—still looking much like it did at its inception. In fact, it's probably the only major Web site

that still looks like something from the 1990s. Some users don't mind the primitive look, and design pundits have even argued that the non-slick look is an advantage, because it gives the site a reassuring appearance of frugal authenticity. Other users argue that the site is in desperate need of a visual overhaul, to at least bring it into the 21st century.

Yet an archaic user interface is the most innocuous of the common complaints leveled against Craigslist. As a result of its low (or no) barriers to access, it is far too easy for online miscreants, located anywhere in the world, to try to trap unwary sellers into shipping advertised goods, never to be paid. Watch out for these scammers, who will try to trick you into sending an item, either with no intention of paying, or with some sly technique of retracting the payment once your item is in their hands. To learn more about these possible swindles—which have victimized a nontrivial number of Craigslist users—simply use your favorite search engine to locate and read the details online. For the benefit of sellers, Craigslist does provide warnings of potential fraud, with real-life examples, on their scams page (www.craigslist.org/about/scams).

Time is money, and you can certainly lose that as well. Craigslist is perhaps the most cost-effective way of selling items locally, provided that you don't count the time spent re-listing the ads after they have expired, and responding to inquiries. Even worse, as a seller you will encounter people who have little regard for your time, but who apparently have plenty of their own, to ask you questions answered in your ad, and to dash your hopes by canceling or simply failing to show up as promised, with no apologies. At that point, you can send messages asking why they didn't appear, and more often than not you will not receive any reply. Countless times, after yet another prospective buyer does not show up as promised, I have probably muttered under my breath "Craigslist—the fastest way to find the flakes in your town."

eBay and other auction sites have the advantage that when a bid has been placed on an item that you are selling, the odds are quite high that the sale will take place, and the winning bidder will not back out at the last minute. Not so with Craigslist, which at times can seem like a magnet for all sorts of characters—including no-shows, as well as penny pinchers who will try to get you to lower your already-bargain prices down to almost nothing.

In some cases, people have lost far more than time and money, and they didn't even choose to be part of the Craigslist marketplace. For instance, a Seattle Times article (seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003652872_webhouse05m.html) outlines the horrible experience of a woman in Tacoma, Washington who had evicted a tenant from her rental property, and later learned that someone (and we can guess who) posted a fake Craigslist ad announcing that everything in the house could be hauled away, no questions asked. Unfortunately, countless people did exactly that—stripping her property, and costing untold damage.

This sort of incident is of course more the exception than the rule, but buyers and sellers should nonetheless exercise caution and their best judgment when posting ads on Craigslist, or responding to the ads of others (or, for that matter, evicting deadbeat tenants from unsupervised rentals!). If you will be visiting someone's residence to look at an item that he or she is offering, or you have invited a prospective buyer to your home, consider bringing along a companion (or two)—the more the merrier, and the bigger the better.

On balance, however, Craigslist can be a terrific resource for buyers and sellers—although auction sites and classified advertisers probably feel differently.

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer (www.ross.ws), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks: Windows 7 Taskbar

“The quick-launch button has new functionality.” by Jack Dunning

One of the more important features in any computer operating system is the ability to quick launch programs and later find the windows of the opened programs. Windows 7 has enhanced this capability—but is it easier?

In the next few weeks I plan to take a closer look at Windows 7, highlighting those features that may be better than in earlier versions of Windows—or maybe not. There are certainly features in Windows 7 that make it easier to work with your computer, although some of them are a little hidden. As expected, Microsoft makes more features available if you're using another Microsoft product such as Internet Explorer.

One of the more important features in any computer operating system is the ability to quick launch programs and later find the windows of the opened programs. Windows 7 has enhanced this capability by combining the quick-launch buttons on the Taskbar with the open program tabs, also on the Taskbar. Initially, this may not seem that important (and may even be a little annoying), but over time a Windows 7 user will come to appreciate it. When a program is loaded with a quick-launch button, it turns into the program tab for that program (see Figure 1).

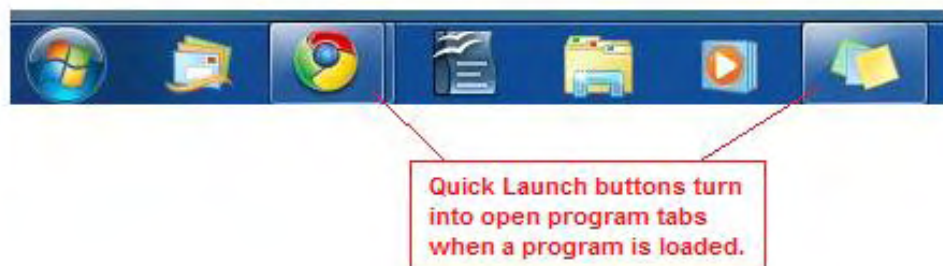


Figure 1. The quick-launch button becomes the program tab on the Taskbar in Windows 7.

Notice that the button—now a program tab—has a transparent box around it when there is an active program. If there are multiple windows open, a stacked box image (icon on the left in Figure 1) will surround the button. The program tabs remain in the same location on the Taskbar as the original quick-launch button held.

One of the new aspects of the new quick launch/program tab combination is a fixed location on the Taskbar. If you pin a launch button to the Taskbar, it will always stay in that location regardless of which programs are opened before or after that program. This means that when you're looking for your Web browser or word processor, whether loading the program or re-selecting an open window, it will always be in the same location regardless of whether it's opened or closed—as long as it was pinned to the Taskbar as a quick-launch button. The shortcuts for the programs that you use most should be dragged to the Taskbar and put in the order that suits you.

This is a huge advantage over other versions of Windows which always add windows to the Taskbar in the order they are opened. Additional windows of the same program may be grouped together in past versions of Windows, but if you have very many windows open, it can take some searching to find the right one. In Windows 7, if you take the time (less than one second to drag each program) to set up your quick-launch buttons, you will never need to search for those programs again.

The major disadvantage to this approach to program tabs is that the tab for the windows you want to select may not be in view or readily apparent. In order to see the opened program windows, it's necessary to hover over the program tab. (The following effects are available only if a Windows Aero theme is selected from Control Panel/Appearance and Personalization/Personalization. Otherwise, hovering over the tab will display only a list of open windows.) When hovering over an open program tab, thumbnails of all the loaded windows of the program are displayed, as shown in Figure 2. (For Internet Explorer, Windows 7 shows a thumbnail for each open tab. Other browsers display only the selected tab of each running program.)



Figure 2. When hovering the cursor over an open program tab, thumbnails of each window appear. When hovering over a thumbnail, the actual window will come into view.

If you move the cursor over one of the thumbnails, then that window will appear on the desktop with all other open windows becoming temporarily invisible. Clicking on the thumbnail will open that window on top of all others.

Once the program is loaded the first time, the quick-launch button can no longer be used as a quick launch because it has now changed into a program tab. This is inconvenient if you want to launch more copies of the program. In this case, right-click on the program tab to get more program-specific options and launch another copy of the program (see Figure 3). Select the program from the list to open multiple copies of the program (or use any other method to open the program—Start Menu, desktop, or another shortcut—all open copies will be combined in the same tab).



Figure 3. Right-click on the program tab to get more options.

Note that if you do not add a quick launch for a particular program, the open program tab will appear next to the other tabs in the order they are opened as they would in other versions of Windows.

Quick Tip: If you desire to keep a quick-launch button that does not deactivate when you launch a program, you can add a second quick-launch button for any program simply by dragging another shortcut to the Taskbar. The second button will continue to act as a quick launch while multiple copies of the same program will combine under the first tab.

This default layout of the Taskbar in Windows 7 may not suit you, or perhaps you would like something that functions a little more like other versions of Windows. Next week, we'll take a look at options for changing and tailoring how the quick launch/program tabs appear and work.

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

"Selling stuff online can help you through the downturn." by Wally Wang

If you've lost your job, consider some new tech avenues, such as earning spare cash utilizing Craigslist and eBay. Also, a unique portrait of the typical Apple hater; what the Dell Mini 5 gets wrong; and a tip on using the Reduce File Size option in the Save As sheet to compress your PDF file.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

In the newspapers, you can read plenty of stories of people who have lost their jobs and are teetering on the edge of homelessness. On the other hand, you can also read stories of teenagers who earned a million dollars before graduating from college (www.forbes.com/2009/03/03/teenage-millionaires-recession-entrepreneurs-technology_millionaire.html). So what's the truth?

While many people (usually older) are unfortunately stuck with obsolete skills and experience in dying industries, other people (usually younger) are finding plenty of opportunities to thrive and get rich while having fun. The truth is that as opportunities in one area fade away, opportunities always pop up somewhere else.

Even during the Great Depression while many people suffered, another group thrived to the point where more millionaires were made during the Depression (hubpages.com/hub/Great-Depression-Millionaires) than during any other time in American history.

In the book "Who Moved My Cheese?" (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0399144463?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0399144463), author Spencer Johnson uses the analogy of mice looking for cheese in a maze. The moment the cheese gets moved, some mice will move on and look for cheese in a new location while others will futilely keep looking for the cheese in the last place where they found it.

Continually looking for cheese in a place where it used to be only leads to anger and frustration. The better solution is to look for cheese (opportunities) in a new location, and right now, that new location involves computers and the Internet.

The simplest way for anyone to make money on the Internet is to sell stuff that they already have but no longer want or need. Two popular places to sell stuff are eBay and Craigslist.

Selling stuff on Craigslist is like placing an ad in your local newspaper and waiting for people to call and show up at your door to look over your item. Craigslist is great for selling heavy items, such as furniture or used cars. Since Craigslist offers ads for specific cities, your free Craigslist ad can attract people in your own area who can pick up your product and drive away with it if they want it.

Selling stuff on eBay allows you to sell items to the entire world. Place an item for sale, such as a toy or a rare book, and people from all over the planet can bid on your item. Oftentimes people will bid up the price of your item far higher than you might have originally asked. When your eBay auction ends, you'll need to send your product to the buyer, which is why eBay is better suited for small, light items rather than heavy items that cost too much to ship.

If you're not familiar with selling items on either eBay or Craigslist, you can find plenty of books to help you out such as "eBay For Dummies" (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470497416?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470497416) and "Selling Online 2.0" (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0789739747?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0789739747).

While most people use Craigslist and eBay to get rid of unwanted items, some people use Craigslist and eBay to make money. This is how my friend does it.

First, he scans Craigslist for items that he's familiar with, such as Apple products (iPods, Macintosh computers, etc.) and racing bicycles. When he finds someone on Craigslist selling such an item, he'll ask how much they want for it.

Once he finds the price, he'll scan the latest eBay listings to find out how much people have been willing to pay for that identical item. If the latest eBay price is much higher than the selling price of that same item on Craigslist, he'll buy it from Craigslist and turn around to sell it for an immediate profit on eBay.

Since he only buys and sells items that he's familiar with, he reduces his risk by only buying items that he already knows should sell for a certain price on the market. By focusing on buying items from Craigslist, he's only competing against other locals who may want to buy that same item. By selling that item on eBay, he reaches a global audience, increasing the chance that people will bid up the price of his item, insuring him a hefty profit for doing nothing more than buying on Craigslist and selling on eBay.

Such a simple strategy can work for anyone regardless of their knowledge of computers. As long as you learn the basics of setting up an eBay auction, there's plenty of opportunities for everyone. Some people may specialize in comic books, others may specialize in antique vending machines, and still others may specialize in collectible toys, so there's actually a lot less competition than you might think.

Although eBay provides templates for creating auctions, you can also buy special software to make it easier to create an eBay auction and make it visually more interesting, such as a program called GarageSale (www.iwascoding.com/GarageSale/).



Figure 1. GarageSale helps you make eBay auctions.

If you've lost your job, consider earning spare cash buying items on Craigslist and selling them on eBay. Like any money-making businesses, this requires work and time to learn how to do it, but anyone can learn to do it. All they have to do is stop looking for where the opportunities used to be and start looking for where the opportunities are right now. There are tremendous opportunities available to anyone. All you have to do is look for them.

An Unofficial Portrait of an Apple Hater

After receiving so many angry e-mail messages from people who hate Apple and nitpick for flaws to denigrate anything made by Apple, I've noticed a unique portrait of the typical Apple hater. From my own experience, it seems that the typical anti-Apple person tends to be an older man with a technical background.

My best guess for why this particular group dominates the anti-Apple group is that older men with a technical background have decades of experience with computers, most likely MS-DOS and Windows. As a result, they're probably used to the way Windows works and have no problems understanding cryptic ads promoting processor speeds or differences such as DDR2 or DDR3 RAM chips.

Deciphering confusing user manuals or taking the time to tweak a program setting to make it work is second-nature to this group of people. Where most people would find technical glitches frustrating, this group probably sees them as challenges to overcome, and they're probably very capable of handling any technical problems they may face.

However, throw an Apple product at this group of older, technically experienced men and rather than look for what's right, their first inclination is to look for what's not familiar. Anything not familiar is thus easy to categorize as not as good and unworthy of further examination, which explains why so many of these anti-Apple people have never bothered trying an Apple product to judge it through first-hand experience.

The reason I promote Apple products isn't because I necessarily care for Apple as a company, but because its products (right now) are pointing the way to the future.

Back in the early days of computers, programmers flocked to MS-DOS and Windows computers because that's where they knew the market would be. Today, programmers are flocking to the iPhone (and its related cousin, the iPad) because if some guy can write an iFart app and make \$10,000 a day selling it for 99 cents, there's obviously a hot market for iPhone/iPad programming.

In the old days, book publishers knew that any book on any Microsoft product would be a surefire hit. Today, book publishers know that any book on any Apple product is a surefire hit. Books on Microsoft products may still sell (although even Microsoft has given up on their J# programming language), but all the publishers know that the hot market for computer books either involves Apple or something that isn't directly tied to Microsoft, such as eBay or digital photography.

Change is inevitable. When Microsoft switched from MS-DOS to Windows, anyone who clung to the past (MS-DOS) got left behind as new opportunities opened up that they refused to see.

When confronted with change, the safest bet is to embrace change rather than fight it. If you fight change and you're wrong, you'll lose. If you fight change and you're right, you'll still get nothing.

However, if you embrace change and you're wrong, you'll get nothing, but if you embrace change and you're right, you'll win. The only way to win is to embrace change.

This is like the French philosopher Blaise Pascal's reasoning for believing in God. He reasoned that refusing to believe in God means if God doesn't exist, you'll get nothing, but if God does exist and you don't believe in Him, you'll go to hell.

However, if you believe in God and He doesn't exist, you'll get nothing, but if you believe in God and He does exist, you'll get heaven. Thus you have nothing to lose (and heaven to gain) by believing in God, according to Pascal.

Likewise, you can avoid Apple products and risk falling behind the rest of the world, or you can at least learn about Apple products, and open yourself up to new opportunities.

Younger people tend not to care as much about the Apple vs. Microsoft debate since they'll just readily switch from one to the other,

depending on which one offers them the best opportunities right now. Older people seem to have a greater tendency to resist change. Now guess which group of people (young vs. old) represents the future whether you like it or not?

What the Dell Mini 5 Gets Wrong

Dell is currently planning to release a five-inch tablet device dubbed the Dell Mini 5 to compete against Apple's iPad. Here are two strikes against Dell's Mini 5 right away.

First, Apple's iPad will benefit from its connection with iTunes, the App Store and the new iBookstore. These make it effortless to add new content to an iPad. Will the Dell Mini 5 make it just as easy to download music, video, e-books, and new apps? Maybe, but if they don't, that's a glaring flaw against it.

Second, the Dell Mini 5 plans to offer a virtual keyboard to make it easy to create content on the tablet device. Unfortunately, Dell's virtual keyboard simply mimics the limitations of a physical keyboard.



Figure 2. The Dell Mini 5 virtual keyboard.

By displaying both a typewriter keyboard and a numeric key at the same time, Dell's virtual keyboard makes the regular keyboard smaller and harder to type on while displaying a numeric keypad that most people don't need most of the time.

Apple's virtual keyboard solution displays the regular keyboard by itself to make it as large as possible for comfortable typing. For those times when you need a numeric keypad, Apple lets you display one when you need it, not at all times when you don't need it crowding out the limited space available.



Figure 3. Apple's iPad virtual keyboard.

It's these subtle details that can spell the difference between a device that's usable and one that just causes constant headaches and annoyances. Given the fact that the Dell Mini 5 is already small (five inches), crowding a numeric keypad to display at all times simply mimics the limitations of a physical keyboard without offering any advantages in return.

* * *

Not all PDF files are alike, even if they contain identical data. The problem is that if you save a PDF file using a program such as Adobe Illustrator or InDesign, the saved PDF file may contain lots of metadata that doesn't affect the appearance of the PDF file whatsoever.

Unfortunately, this metadata puffs up the size of a PDF file. To shrink these files down, just open the Preview program and load the PDF file you want to compress. Now choose File/Save As to display a Save As sheet.

In the Quartz Filter pop-up menu, choose Reduce File Size, type a new name for your PDF file, and click the Save button to save your file. Preview will now compress your PDF file as it saves it.

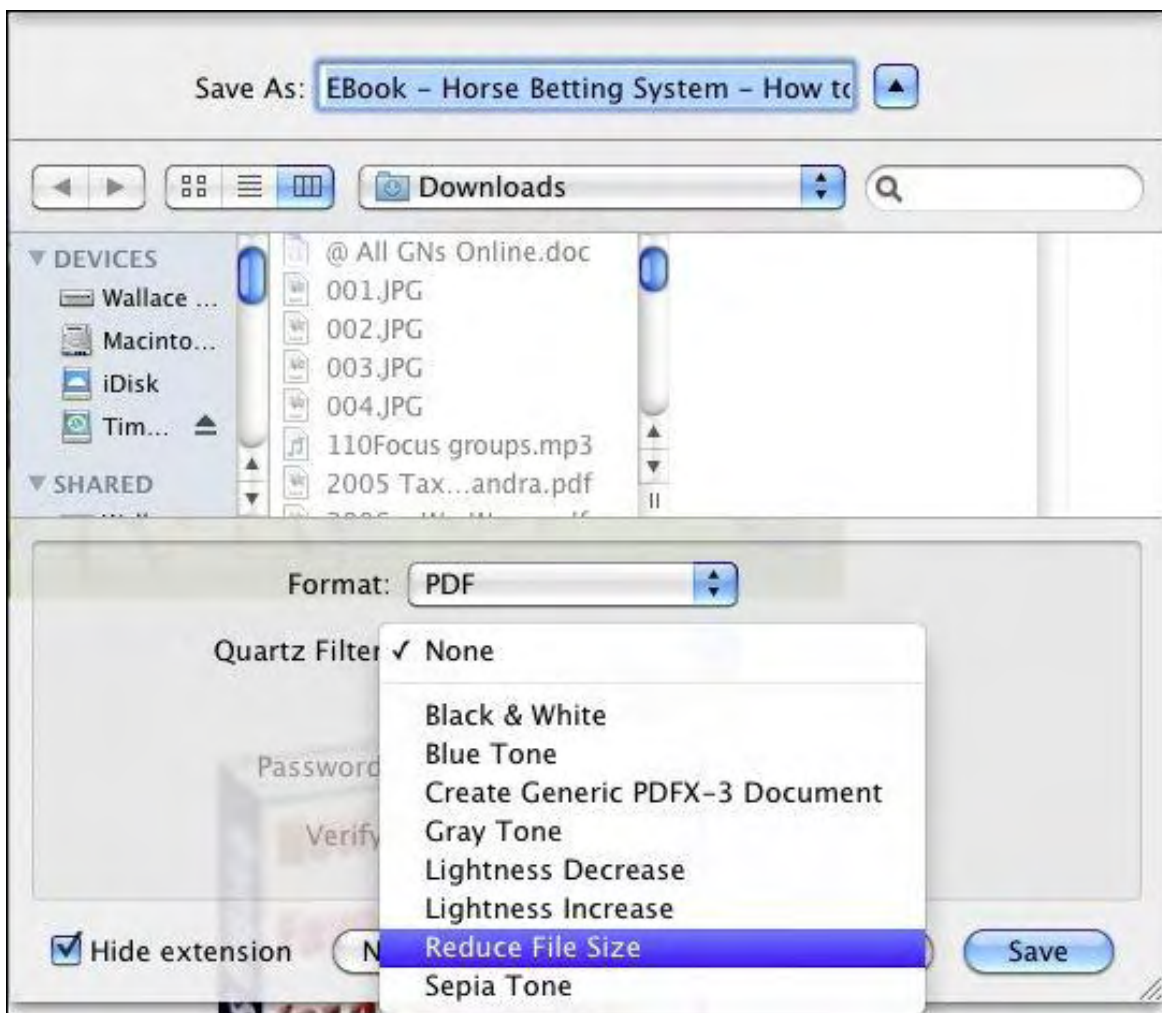


Figure 4. The Reduce File Size option in the Save As sheet.

The amount of file compression will vary depending on your PDF file, but as you can see in Figure 5, Preview managed to shrink a 3.4MB PDF file down to 1.2MB with no loss of visual quality.

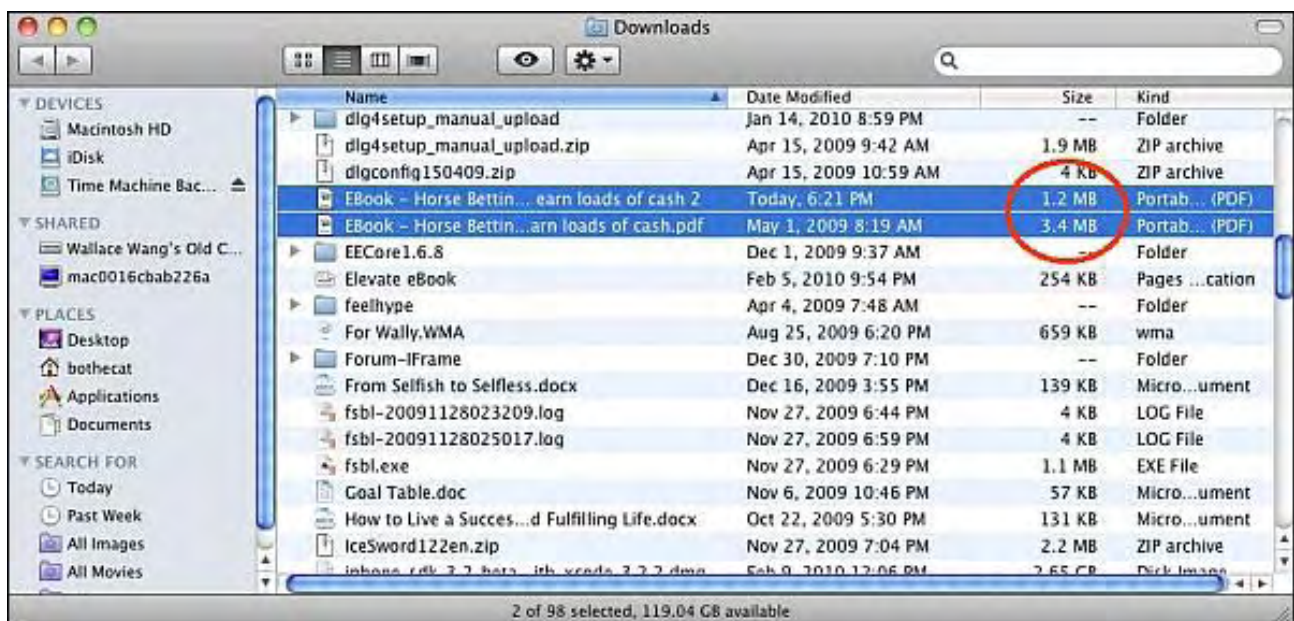


Figure 5. The results of shrinking a PDF file.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally

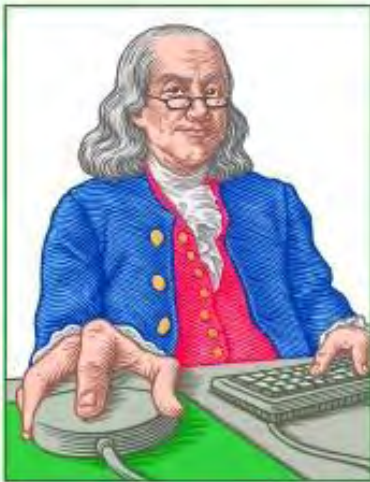
Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

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).

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.

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method." (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons: Shell Scripting "A Simple First Script" by Pete Choppin

Last week, we introduced some basic concepts about shell scripting. We will now use what we have discussed to go to the next step: take a practical example of a script and build on it while we go through each part and explain how it all works.

Last week, we introduced some basic concepts about shell scripting. We will now use what we have discussed to go to the next step, which is to take a practical example of a script and build on it while we go through each part and explain how it all works. When we're done, we will have a fully functioning script that we can use and understand. We will also be able to apply what we do on this script to future scripts.

Let's begin with a very simple task: send a report to a printer, e-mail the same report file to a recipient we will call "boss," copy the report to a floppy disk, then remove the report file from the hard drive.

Here are the commands in Linux to do this:

`lpr weekly.report`
(send the report to a printer)

`Mail boss < weekly.report`
(email the weekly.report file to boss)

`cp weekly.report /floppy/report.txt`
(copy weekly.report to a floppy disk)

`rm weekly.report`
(remove weekly.report from the hard drive)

If you needed to actually do this each week, it may get to be tedious and you could make mistakes too, so wouldn't it be nice to create a script that will do all these things automatically by only entering one command? You bet!

Let's create a new file called `wk_report`. Open a terminal and create a new file called `wk_report` by entering the following at the command line (the `$` is just indicating where your command prompt is, so you don't type that):

```
$ touch wk_report
```

The command "touch" simply creates an empty file and gives it the name you specify.

Now open the file by typing:

```
$ gedit wk_report
```

You should now have a blank file open. Go ahead and type all the commands for this script (above). Don't forget to add `#!/bin/sh` and a

description at the top of the script as discussed last week. You should now have something like this:

```
#!/bin/sh
#
# This script will print a report, email it to the boss, copy it to a floppy
# and delete the file from the hard drive.
lpr weekly.report
Mail boss < weekly.report
cp weekly.report /floppy/report.txt
rm weekly.report
```

Back at the command line, we can now mark the script as executable as discussed last week: `$ chmod +x wk_report`. Now we have a working script, but it isn't very robust at this point. What if we wanted to print, e-mail, copy and delete a file with a different name? We would have to create a different version of the script every time a different file name was used. I will demonstrate how this is done, but for now let's assume we will never use a different file name for the script. One problem we will inevitably face is that someone (or even you) may either not know or even forget that the file name used in the script must be "weekly.report." One way to check if the weekly.report file even exists is to display it to the screen:

```
$ cat weekly.report
```

This command redirects the contents of the file to the screen. If weekly.report did not exist, we would see an error. You can place this command in the script itself to check for the file name every time it is run:

```
#!/bin/sh
#
# This script will print a report, email it to the boss, copy it to a floppy
# and delete the file from the hard drive.
cat weekly.report
lpr weekly.report
Mail boss < weekly.report
cp weekly.report /floppy/report.txt
rm weekly.report
```

Checking for weekly.report works great, except that it will still attempt to perform the rest of the commands whether weekly.report exists or not, and if it doesn't exist we will get a bunch of errors. Instead of allowing all the commands to run and then generate the errors, what if we could test to see if weekly.report exists, and if it doesn't then simply end the script? This is done using the "if, then, else" construct.

```
#!/bin/sh
#
# This script will print a report, email it to the boss, copy it to a floppy
# and delete the file from the hard drive.
if
    cat weekly.report
then
    lpr weekly.report
    Mail boss < weekly.report
    cp weekly.report /floppy/report.txt
    rm weekly.report
else
    echo I see no weekly.report file here.
```


fi

Now our script is a little smarter. It can actually test for the existence of a file, and make a decision based on that result whether to continue with the remaining commands or to exit.

Also notice the fi at the end. This closes the if statement block. It is simply "if" spelled backward. This is common in shell scripting.

Let's stop here. You are welcome to experiment with different ways to handle this. Next week we will go into more details on how to test for something and better ways to control what our script is doing.

If you have questions or comments, I'd love to hear from you.

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Pete has been a devout reader of *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and contributes regularly to featured articles as well as the Linux Lessons section of *ComputerEdge*. He can be contacted at *pchoppin@comcast.net* but prefers to have comments on *ComputerEdge* articles submitted to the editor and posted for the benefit of all readers.

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor: Programming Web Pages

“Hyperlinks, Colors and Scripts” by Rob Spahitz

Last week we looked at HTML Web page tables and frames. This week we'll explore how to use hyperlinks, pictures and colors, and then start working in JavaScript.

Last week we looked at HTML Web page tables and frames. This week we'll explore how to use hyperlinks, pictures and colors, and then start working in JavaScript.

Hyperlinks

What is a hyperlink? Even if you've never heard the term, if you've used a Web page you've surely used a hyperlink. These are simply text links that jump to another place when you click on them. Typically, the link is used to jump to another page. However, these can also be used to jump to another part of the same page.

The odd part about these links is that the name is not obvious. Rather than the name "link," you tag your HTML with "a" for "anchor" (presumably because you will be directed to a fixed, or anchored, location on a page).

The anchor tag has several parts and variations. The most common part is the destination page, referred to as the "href" or hypertext reference name of the page you will visit. This can be specified as either an absolute location, such as <http://www.dogopoly.com/dog/about.htm>, or as a relative location, such as [about.htm](#), if you want to link to a page on the same server. So to create a very simple hyperlink, add this to your Web document's HTML:

```
<a href="about.htm">
```

Since this is a starting tag, you'll also need an ending tag:

```
</a>
```

In between these two, you can put some text to help viewers see where they're going. You typically either put the link name as the text:

```
<a href="about.htm">about.htm</a>
```

or you put some appropriate text to explain what the user will see:

```
<a href="about.htm">Click to see the About section</a>
```

When this is "rendered" (interpreted) by a browser, the text between the tags will appear with an underline:

Click to see the About section (www.computoredge.com/images/2809/about.html)

If the viewer clicks on this underlined text, the browser will attempt to locate the page specified in the anchor tag's href attribute's value.

So to test this, you could simply add this to a new document. However, it's good practice to add the expected header information so the browser properly recognizes it:

```
<html>
<body>
<p>
<a href="http://www.dogopoly.com/dog/about.htm">Click to see the About section</a>
</p>
</body>
</html>
```

Click to see the About section (www.dogopoly.com/dog/about.htm)

OK. So suppose you want to create a Web page that has a table of contents that jumps to other sections of the same document? Well, obviously, if you simply add an href to the current document, how will it know to jump to a specific location within the document? This concept in Microsoft Word is known as a bookmark. You define a bookmark, and then create a link to the bookmark. In Web pages, you create a named section, and then use a local href link to jump to it. First create a named section (by adding the name attribute to the anchor tag) and add any additional enhancements, such as bold text, as desired:

```
<a name="section1"><b>Section 1</b></a>
```

Now, in your table of contents, or pretty much anywhere you want within the document, add a link to the section by prefixing the name with "#":

```
<a href="#section1">Proceed to section 1</a>
```

Note that, depending on the size of the document and the size of the browser, the link may appear to not work. Most browsers try to shift the relative link to the top of the browser. If the document is not long enough, it will try to move it up as high as it can, which may leave it where it is if the entire page fits within the window. To really see this in action, you'll need to add much more text to your document or make your browser height much smaller. I leave that up to the reader to copy some arbitrary text (like this page) and paste it below section1. Oh, and don't forget to add the paragraph tags (<p>) so that you get nice section breaks.

One additional note: The hyperlink (underlined text) will typically appear as blue text when the page first appears. When the user clicks on it, it usually turns purple. However, depending on the browser, relative links may be considered "pre-viewed" and will therefore appear purple when the page first appears.

Also, if you decided that you want the links to appear in different colors, you can control that through some of the body tag's attributes as seen last week and below.

Colors

We previously touched on colors, but I'd like to go over this in more detail since this affects many other parts of Web pages besides links.

Web pages offer two ways to specify colors. They can be named or they can be specified by number. The named colors are easy. The basic ones actually come in six colors, 12 if you count light and dark versions, and four shades of gray. Specifically the names are:

Light colors: red, lime, yellow, blue, fuchsia, aqua

Dark colors: maroon, green, olive, navy, purple, teal

Gray colors: black, gray, silver, white

When you examine these colors, you find that they are really the basic parts of light that the human eyes can detect. If you're not color-blind, you have cones in the back of your eyes that can detect the red, green and blue frequencies of light. When they are combined in certain combinations and intensities, you see the colors of the rainbow and many colors in between.

To assist with human eyes, these colors are used in most computer monitors. If you use a large magnifying glass on your monitor, you'll see little boxes or dots with these colors. (WARNING: Magnifying some monitors may cause eye damage if the monitor is too bright, so just take my word for it.) Anyway, the computer industry decided to set each colored pixel on the monitor with the ability to show 256 intensities, arbitrarily called 0 (for off) to 255 (for maximum brightness).

When you use pure primary colors, the monitor will intensify only those pixels. For red, you'll see only the red pixels appear. If the number set for this is 255, it sets the pixel at maximum intensity and you see, amazingly, red. If set at half intensity (128) you see maroon. With only green you see lime (or light green) at 255 and standard green at 128. With only blue you see bright blue at 255 and what is called navy (navy blue) at 128.

The interesting part is when you combine these colors. Combine 255 blue and red and you get light purple, called fuchsia; combine 128 red and blue and you get purple. Where it gets strange is when you combine 255 green and red and get yellow. Unlike in school where you had red, yellow and blue as primary colors, it turns out that in the eyes, yellow is really green plus red. Half intensity is dark yellow, known as olive. For the remaining combinations, green and blue make turquoise, but it's called aqua and teal for the bright and dark versions.

That covers the colored pixels alone and with one other. The remaining version is with all three being used. If they're all off, you have no light so you get black. If they're all on 255, you get maximum brightness, which we see as white. If they're all at 128, you get basic gray. Altogether that covers 15 of the 16 cases. So what's silver? Well, it's basically light gray and is set at 3/4 intensity (192) in each color.

Great, Rob! Now what happened to orange, and pink and brown? How can the computer generate those colors? And the answer is using differing levels of different colors. For example, orange is normally thought of as red and yellow. In the world of monitors, it's really twice as much red as green (such as 255 red and 128 green.) Oddly enough, if you make that darker you get brown. As for pink, it's normally red and white. But if white is the maximum of all colors, how do you mix it with red since red is already maxed out? The answer is to do the opposite and tone down the green and blue, like 255 for red and 192 for green and blue.

So how do we get all of these other colors? Well, you can use the extended name set found here, which shows a list of other named colors; you can go to the W3 Schools Web site (www.w3schools.com/html/html_colornames.asp).

However, if you just can't remember names like BlanchedAlmond, CornflowerBlue and Gainsboro, you might want to try the alternate version. Instead of named colors you can use numbered colors. In HTML, numbered colors are defined with the red component first, then the green component and the blue component. But if you tried to put in white (all 255) then you might get 255255255. But what if you wanted to put in black? Is it 000000000?

Here's where you need to learn the language of computers. If you ever wondered why the number 255 (or 256) shows up a lot in the computer world rather than 250 or something nicer, here's your answer. Since computers technically deal only with electrical current, they have been set up to do one thing if there's a current flowing in a certain area and another thing if there's no current flowing in that area. We have arbitrarily decided to call those conditions 1 and 0, respectively, and then call that a bit. Years ago, the computer people decided that 8 bits was a convenient collection and called that a byte. Well, it turns out that with 8 bits you can represent 256 different items.

You can have all zeroes, all ones, a one only in the first position, or the second position or in both the first and the second, or just the third, or first and third, second and third, etc. If you check you find that 1 bit gives you two choices (0 or 1) while 2 bits gives you twice as many since the second bit (usually shown at the front of the numbers) can be zero for each of the previous choices (00, 01) or one for one of the previous choices (10, 11). Likewise, add a third bit and you double again with this bit zero and any of the previous four combinations or the third bit 1 and the same four combinations, giving a total of eight. Add a fourth and you double again to 16; 5 bits gives 32; 6 bits for 64; 7 bits for 128 and 8 bits for 256.

The computer world often starts with zero. So 256 combinations starting with zero will end at 255. That's why the colors go from 0 to 255.

Continuing with this thinking, if you take one byte for red, one byte for green and one byte for blue, you get 24 bits to represent any color. In the Windows world, this is shown with the blue on the left, green in the middle and red on the right. In the Web page world, it's the opposite.

Continuing on, that still doesn't explain how HTML uses numbers for colors. So let's back up a tiny bit. Let's look at the color red. If it's on full brightness, that means you have the number 255, which turns out to be all 1's in the bits, or 11111111. If red is off, you get all 0's as 00000000. If red is halfway on, how do you get it? You might think 00001111. You'd be wrong. If you recall, 7 bits gives you 128 combinations. If you follow the "zero" rule, that gives you the numbers 0 to 127, where 127 is seven 1-bits. To get to 128 (which is 1/2 of 255, well, rounded) you would do like you do in our decimal numbering system. After you max out all the digits, like 999, to get to the next number, you zero out all of those and then add a 1 to the front to get 1000. Same in the bit world (binary), but the positions get maxed out at 1 before you have to reset. So from 1111111 (127), if you add 1, each position gets zeroed out and the 1 carries to the next position, which is already maxed out. so it gets zeroed out and carry the 1, etc., all the way to the end and you get seven zeroes preceded by a 1: 10000000.

Well, these blocks of 8 bits are a bit hard to read. To solve that, the computer people settled on the idea of breaking it into 2 blocks of 4 bits, each of which can hold (hmmm...go check the numbers above...4 bits gives...) 16 choices, numbered 0 to 15. Note: Prior to this, computer people used a system called octal, with 1 group of 2 bits and 2 groups of 3 bits. That gives groups of up to 3 (0-3) and 8 (0-7). This got clumsy so they went with this 16-block. Now there was a dilemma. When we count, we can count up to 8 with no problem (good for octal), but we can't count up to 16 without exceeding the number 9 and wrapping into the tens column.

To solve that, the computer whizzes came up with the idea of a new numbering system called hexadecimal, which is based on 16 combinations of symbols rather than our common decimal system based on 10 symbols (0-9). And rather than create 16 new symbols, they chose to use the common 10 symbols that we already know from decimals and fill the rest with letters: 0-9, A, B, C, D, E, F. That gives you 16 symbols. When you add one to 9, rather than zeroing it out and carrying the one, you just keep going on to A, then B up to F. If you add one to F, NOW you zero it out and carry the one. Just watch out because that "10" looks like what we think of as the number after 9. It's really the number after "F."

OK. With that out of the way, we can take any color such as bright red (255) and represent it as 1111 1111 (all bits on) and group with 4 bits each. Since each group is maxed out, you get "F" in each group, or FF. Oddly enough if you take half of that (128) you get 1000 0000 which is 8 for the first group (one more than 111 which is 7: 3 bits maxed out) followed by 0 (all bits of zero gives you zero). So 1/2 red is "80" (or, if you decide to round down, you could have used 7F but it's common to use 80).

Whew! Too much information? Well, this is where it helps. To show white in HTML, you max out all of the Red (R), Green (G) and Blue (B) to get 1111 1111 - 1111 1111 - 1111 1111 or, in hexadecimal, FF FF FF. To get gray (all 128) you get 1000 0000 – 1000 0000 – 1000 0000, or 80 80 80. In HTML you combine these together and precede them with the "#" symbol. So white is the same as #FFFFFF, gray is the same as #808080 and black is #00000000. For bright red you get #FF0000 because the red is maxed out and the green and blue portions are off. Yellow? #FFFF00. Fuchsia is #FF00FF, etc. What about green, which is 1/2 of the green component? #008000.

Now that you have this under your belt, you can create any of the possible colors that your monitor can show. This comes out to 24-bit color, or 16,777,216 different combinations. Since most of the combinations below half-brightness are too dark, if you avoid those combinations you only get about 4,000 visible colors, which is still plenty to choose from. Well, even that is too many for most people, so the HTML standards team decided to offer only 216 "standard" colors that can be used by browsers. These often appear in groups of threes, like #000000, #333333, #666666, #999999, #CCCCC and #FFFFFF plus the variations like #336699 or #FF33CC. You can see a chart of these here, in the colored hexagon: www.w3schools.com/tags/ref_colormixer.asp?colorbottom=000000&colortop=FFFFFF//.

Knowing this, you can develop Web pages that offer all of the colors you need in one of two ways. You can use named colors like this:

```
<table border="1">
<tr>
<td bgcolor="red">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="lime">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="yellow">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="blue">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="fuchsia">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="aqua">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
```

```
<tr>
<td bgcolor="maroon">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="green">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="olive">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="navy">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="purple">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="teal">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td bgcolor="black">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="gray">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="silver">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="white">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

Or you can use numbered colors like this:

```
<table border="1">
<tr>
<td bgcolor="#FF0000">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#00FF00">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#FFFF00">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#0000FF">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#FF00FF">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#00FFFF">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td bgcolor="#800000">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#008000">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#808000">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#000080">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#800080">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#008080">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td bgcolor="#000000">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#808080">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#C0C0C0">&nbsp;</td>
<td bgcolor="#FFFFFF">&nbsp;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

Here's the result, seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Colored table cells.

Scripts

Well, we're running out of space this week. Let me throw in a quick tutorial on scripts and we'll continue it next week.

Web scripts are ways to tell the browser to program the Web page. The most common Web-scripting language is JavaScript (loosely based on the application-development language called Java). A less common language is VBScript, based on Microsoft's Visual Basic language. Since JavaScript should work everywhere, and VBScript may not, my focus in the next few weeks will be only on JavaScript.

Add the following to your Web page's Head section and when you load the page in a Web browser, you should see a message (if the browser has JavaScript enabled):

```
<script language="JavaScript">
alert("I'm writing JavaScript")
</script>
```

Next week, we'll learn about events and functions.

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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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

"The latest in tech news and hot product reviews." by Charles Carr



Spam ... A LOT—M86 Security issues a sobering cybercrime report; Tax Season Myths Empower Identity Thieves—The government takes your tax dollars on April 15. Don't let a thief take your identity too; Mobile Subwoofer for MacBook (Pro)—A review of the BassJump, a stylish and user-friendly audio enhancer that could appeal to MacBook (Pro) owners.

Spam ... A LOT!

M86 Security, a provider of Web and messaging security products, has unveiled its latest Security Labs Report, noting that there has been a "massive increase in spam volumes and recent vulnerabilities in applications including Adobe products and attacks via social networking sites such as Twitter."

According to the company, "The Report highlights a surge in attacks through social networking sites such as Twitter because of the increased use of shortened URLs. Shortened URLs have become a favorite tool of attackers because not only do they make it easier to obscure malicious links, but they also exploit end users' trust through social engineering. The majority of malicious links observed by the M86 team on services such as Twitter and Facebook abuse shortened URLs, and similar malicious links have also been observed in spam messages.

"Zero-Day application vulnerabilities such as those within the Internet Explorer and Adobe products are becoming just as prevalent as those seen in the operating systems themselves as hackers take advantage of such application vulnerabilities. Recent examples from the Security Labs Report include an increase in the use of malicious PDF files targeting Adobe products.

"Spam remains a significant threat to businesses and government organizations: Not only does spam consume valuable network resources, it remains a popular conduit for the distribution of malware, phishing and other scams by cybercriminals. The new Security Labs Report notes that the volume of malicious spam has dramatically increased; reaching three billion messages per day, compared to 600 million messages per day in the first half of 2009.

"The vast majority of spam is sent via botnets of infected computers. These networks of compromised computers, sometimes known as zombies, are revenue-generating businesses for organized, professional criminals. The M86 Security Labs Report names the major spam botnets and reveals that 78 percent of all spam during the last six months of 2009 originates from just five of the botnets.

"It is important to identify the major contributors to the volume of spam so that the industry can take action against them, and our latest Security Labs Report provides a detailed percentage of spam by botnet origin," said Bradley Anstis, VP Technical Strategy, M86 Security. "Users are more likely to click on links shared with them by senders they believe are their friends. To combat this, we suggest using browser extensions that display shortened URLs in their full form and take a range of other precautions outlined in our latest Security Labs Report."

Tax Season Myths Empower Identity Thieves

Todd Feinman, CEO of the identity theft prevention software Identity Finder (www.identityfinder.com), outlines common misconceptions about security at tax time filing and provides some valuable tips for keeping your identity out of the wrong hands.

"The continued popularity of electronic tax filing has made this annual burden incredibly simple for many taxpayers. As a result, these individuals mistakenly equate ease-of-use with safety. This assumption too often leads to the #1 most-committed crime in the world—identity theft.

"The opportunities for your personal information to unwittingly fall into the hands of thieves wanting to commit fraud has grown exponentially along with the explosion of online tax return submissions. Don't falsely presume that your identity is protected."

Feinman continues by outlining what he believes to be the three most popular security myths.

Myth 1:

Documents, PDFs and personal information used in the creation of your tax returns are safe just sitting on your computer. Truth: Hackers may access your computer in various ways at *any* time via viruses, Trojans and botnets. Confidential information on PDFs is *not* safe.

Password-protect all tax returns that you print to PDF from your tax software so that Social Security numbers are secure. Permanently shred unsecured documents on your computer that contain personal information used to prepare your tax return.

Configure all peer-to-peer file-sharing programs to disable the sharing of your personal folders so identity thieves can't download your tax return.

Install the latest updates to your operating system to prevent known Windows or Mac vulnerabilities from being exploited by hackers.

Don't save your password in your Web browser when accessing payroll services, employers, banks and other institutions that keep your personal information because it could easily be stolen.

Myth 2:

It's safe to electronically transmit confidential data to an accountant, employer, or the IRS. Truth: Your personal information is at the greatest risk when it is en route from one location to another. Hackers and thieves have the ability to eavesdrop or spy on it when it is unprotected.

Encrypt supporting tax documents you plan to e-mail to your accountant to prevent anyone from snooping on your network and gaining access to your financial information.

Create strong passwords when registering to download your IRS W2 forms, 1099s and other personal tax documents from your employer so that they are not easily guessed by strangers.

Myth 3:

Paper copies of your important tax documentation are always safe since they are in your control and are not accessible to electronic hackers. Truth: Identity thieves are incredibly creative and will attempt to access your confidential information for their own personal gain however and wherever possible, especially when you least expect it.

When you postal mail your tax return to the IRS, send it from a secured location, like the post office or an official USPS collection box; do not let it sit in a box overnight as it could be stolen. For added security use certified mail.

If making copies of your financial documents, make sure the photocopier does not store images of them in memory.

Using a traditional paper shredder, destroy the printed documents used during tax preparation that you no longer need.

The government takes your tax dollars on April 15. Don't let a thief take your identity too. Employ a multi-step approach in the prevention of identity theft that includes awareness, changes in behavior and security tools. Doing so will secure your personal information this tax season and allow you to rest easier on April 16 and after.

Mobile Subwoofer for MacBook (Pro)

MacBook and MacBook Pro review articles typically complain that these computers have "tinny sounding" speakers. One potential workaround would be to add headphones, in-ear-canal phones, or desktop speakers. However, such additions could have their own weaknesses—tangled cables, cramped desktop space, price and so on. Among desktop speakers, a relative newcomer is Twelve South's BassJump (twelvesouth.com/products/bassjump/), which deftly sidesteps some of these weak points.

BassJump is a USB-powered 77 mm sub-woofer speaker cone housed in an aluminum enclosure reminiscent of Apple's Mac mini (Figure 1). It totally complies with Steve Jobs' design aesthetic—100 percent buttonless. Only a single USB port (for which a 30-inch

cable is included) interrupts the enclosure. Its form factor is compact and portable, measuring 2.25 x 5 x 5 inches, while adding 1.4 pounds to an owner's gadget bag. Official specs include a frequency range of -6dB at 50Hz–20kHz and signal-to-noise ratio of 80dB.



Figure 1. BassJump is a USB-powered sub-woofer in an aluminum enclosure that resembles a Mac mini and complements a MacBook Pro's aesthetic.

In addition to physically resembling the Mac mini, BassJump mirrors Apple products' elegance. Everything about the BassJump is graceful, including its packaging, black carrying pouch, and tri-fold single sheet user guide that walks new owners through this product's essentials—getting started, tips and tricks, what's in the box, and system software.

BassJump's elegance extends to its mandatory software that runs as a System Preference pane (Figure 2) under Mac OS X Leopard.8 or Snow Leopard. This software is efficient and pain free; simply click the off-on toggle icon and you're good to go. Customization features include a BassJump Setting pop-up menu that lists music genres, a slider for BassJump's volume, and a slider for "crossover frequency" (Figure 2, left) which the user guide defines as the setting "where BassJump will add mid- and low-frequencies to the MacBook Speakers [sic]." Analog-style meters function as volume-level indicators, and a checkbox (Figure 2, middle) enables a menu bar extra for conveniently activating BassJump without opening System Preferences (Figure 2, right).



Figure 2. BassJump's user-friendly software contains an on-off toggle switch, BassJump Setting pop-up menu, volume and crossover frequency sliders (left), volume-level indicators, and a checkbox (middle) to enable a menu bar pop-up (right) for systemwide access to BassJump's on-off toggle.

Getting BassJump up and running is a snap. To quote from the user guide, "Step 1, Download and Install BassJump Software. Step 2, Plug BassJump into your MacBook [Pro] via USB. Step 3...there is no Step 3." Could it be any easier?

Elegance aside, how does BassJump sound? Twelve South says that, with BassJump, the computer's speakers become the tweeters of a 2.1 stereo system. To my ears, this product definitely makes a noticeable difference—it replaces tinniness with clean treble and enriched bass, but without introducing muddiness. The difference could be sufficient to prevent audio detractor from an otherwise professional slide presentation. To get an idea of the difference, click the two links below that play audio snippets recorded on my unibody 15.4-inch MacBook Pro (Note: These are amateur recordings that should be heard with something better than "tinny" MacBook (Pro) speakers).

Sound sample without BassJump (www.computoredge.com/images/2809/Loop_w_o_BassJump.mp3).

Sound sample with BassJump (www.computoredge.com/images/2809/Loop_w_BassJump.mp3).

In addition to its elegance and audio enhancement, BassJump has the following pluses. It draws electricity from the computer's USB port rather than a power brick that would compromise this product's footprint and heft. Twelve South requires newbies to download the

1.4MB software installer (which ensures they will get the latest and greatest version) rather than wasting the majority of available space on a CD that inevitably becomes a landfill resident. Lastly, the package includes a sheet entitled "12 ways to re-purpose your BassJump package," the first of which is "send a care package to a student or soldier." What a thoughtful and unique touch!

What are the minuses? BassJump essentially is a one-trick pony that delivers only OK (rather than knock-your-socks-off) audio quality, and it has a price tag—MSRP \$79.99—that could be too high for frugal readers. A Web search at the time of this writing turned up zero discount prices.

Wait a minute, this is sounding familiar. iPod v.1.0 was generally panned as a one-trick pony that delivered only OK capacity, and it had a high price tag. Given time to evolve, however, the iPod gained functionalities and its price tag became more affordable for the masses. My hunch is that BassJump could follow in the iPod's footsteps, with the less-than-perfect inaugural incarnation maturing into one that knocks-your-socks-off at a sweeter price point. That's why I've reduced these minuses' impact on the rating below.

The only remaining minuses are rather trivial. BassJump's dimensions and weight make it portable in a gadget bag, but not really usable while on the go. A USB hub could become an additional expense because the MacBook (Pro) has only two USB ports and BassJump requires one of them.

In sum, BassJump is a stylish and user-friendly audio enhancer that could appeal to MacBook (Pro) owners who tire of their computers' tinny sound. This product does leave some room for improvement; otherwise, what would we have to look forward to in BassJump v.2.0?



reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputerEdge* and *ComputerScene* Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's *North County Times* newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to *L.A. and San Diego Parent* magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, *What a World*, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Beyond Personal Computing: Twaddle about Twitter

“A Look at the Human Side of Computing” by Keith Taylor

This is a collaborative piece written by three disparate, maybe desperate, people who are coming to understand the Twitter universe—or not.

This is a collaborative piece written by three disparate, maybe desperate, people. One is a former Navy officer who is on the lam because the Navy is still looking for him because he lost a ship and her crew in the Bermuda Triangle. Another is an Arizona lawyer who crammed for his bar exam by studying books he wrote himself. Last week he sprung a herd of cattle arrested by Joe Arpaio, the infamous sheriff of Maricopa County. The cows were admittedly loitering and looking udderly foreign. The third author is a tweeter who runs everything important in South Bend Indiana. She graduated from Purdue where she learned to milk cows, slop hogs and developed formidable thumbs for twittering. As for us old-timers, we agree: Unless otherwise noted the paragraphs are the opinions of Keith or Ed, sometimes both. The others are notated "Neika" because nobody would forget that name.

*This man could not get into heaven, even if that stop were next.
 Couldn't twitter ahead to save a place, dumb SOB couldn't even Text!
 He was doomed to leave his phone behind, it caused a bit of a row—
 As he went into the box he yelled, "Dammit can you hear me now!"*
 (Ed Fitzgerald)

"I do not want to twitter, nor do I even want to know who came up with such a word because it might be someone I respect. Who could respect a person who has wreaked such havoc on simple straightforward communications? I just hope it was not George Washington. He has already been misquoted as having invented the Internet. Please tell me it was Leonardo da Vinci because he always annoyed me with his silly drawings."

"And who can keep up with the inane abbreviations?"

(Neika) LMAO, there is a hole DXNRY 4 tht.

"Twitter sounds much like one of the nasty words I used in the third grade back in 1939. And is it a noun or verb or some unrelated but nonetheless infectious disease? Twitter, twittering, twittered and, one supposes, in the past pluperfect, 'twuttered.' Where is a 'delete all in advance' button when we need it?"

(Neika) Twitter is a noun and Tweeting is a verb but ur missing so much more. Tweeps are friends you have on twitter(n), to twead is to read a tweet(v), a tweetsult is an insult on twitter(v), a tweetard(n) is just what you think it is, a twitterholic is an insatiable twitterer. And it's not any nastier than a grouchy DOM.

"Okay, we all know our language isn't perfect and that it is constantly changing but for old-timers who have tried to take the time to use it correctly, we ought not be tempted to revert to baby talk with deliberately aborted words."

"Personally, although I can actually laugh out loud, I have yet to use LOL the infamous three-letter acronym for that activity. I won't use

it as long as I can still bend my brain around the actual words. I did once drop "GFY" at the end of an email, but that was to a talk show host so it shouldn't count."

(Neika) WTF is GFY? Did u mean BFN, OOH, CUL, SC or BOL?

"Nobody is spared this infectious, nefarious plague. Even the Congressional House chamber was filled with nabobs of government trying to get a leg up on the news during the State of the Union address. These newly anointed cybernerds were firing off opinion and comment as fast as their dysfunctional minds and thumbs could spasm in unison. If our great institutions are to survive, shouldn't our elected reps give some polite and thoughtful attention to what the leader of the free world is actually saying before trying to offer critiques or alternative opinions? For those who populate our monitor screens like ants on the picnic potato salad, isn't it a gross and ostentatious display of bad manners to twitter away while the leader of the free world still holds the floor?"

"The answer is yes, but with nascent twitterers, however, speed of reply tops thoughtful discourse."

(Neika) That's why b-ing a "fan" of the White House on FB is so gr8! I heard that we will get all of our news this way in the near future. Watching the evening news or reading the paper will become a thing of the past.

"And what is it about twitterers and the small micro-media screen of a cellphone or blackberry that unerringly invites the kind of personal disclosures that one used to share only with a physician or spouse? If a young woman needs to tell me, and the rest of the world, about her menstrual period—or lack of it—does that mean I get to describe in excruciating detail my latest geriatric bowel movement?"

(Neika) But don't u want 2 know every movement I'm making 2day, aren't I the most important thing in ur life at the moment? After all, ur rdng all my tweets, u know so much about me.

"Sigh! When it comes to twittering, where do us two old codgers go to surrender?"

Keith Taylor lives in Chula Vista, Ca. He is retired after 23 years as an enlisted man and officer. He can be reached at *DipsyDmstr@aol.com*

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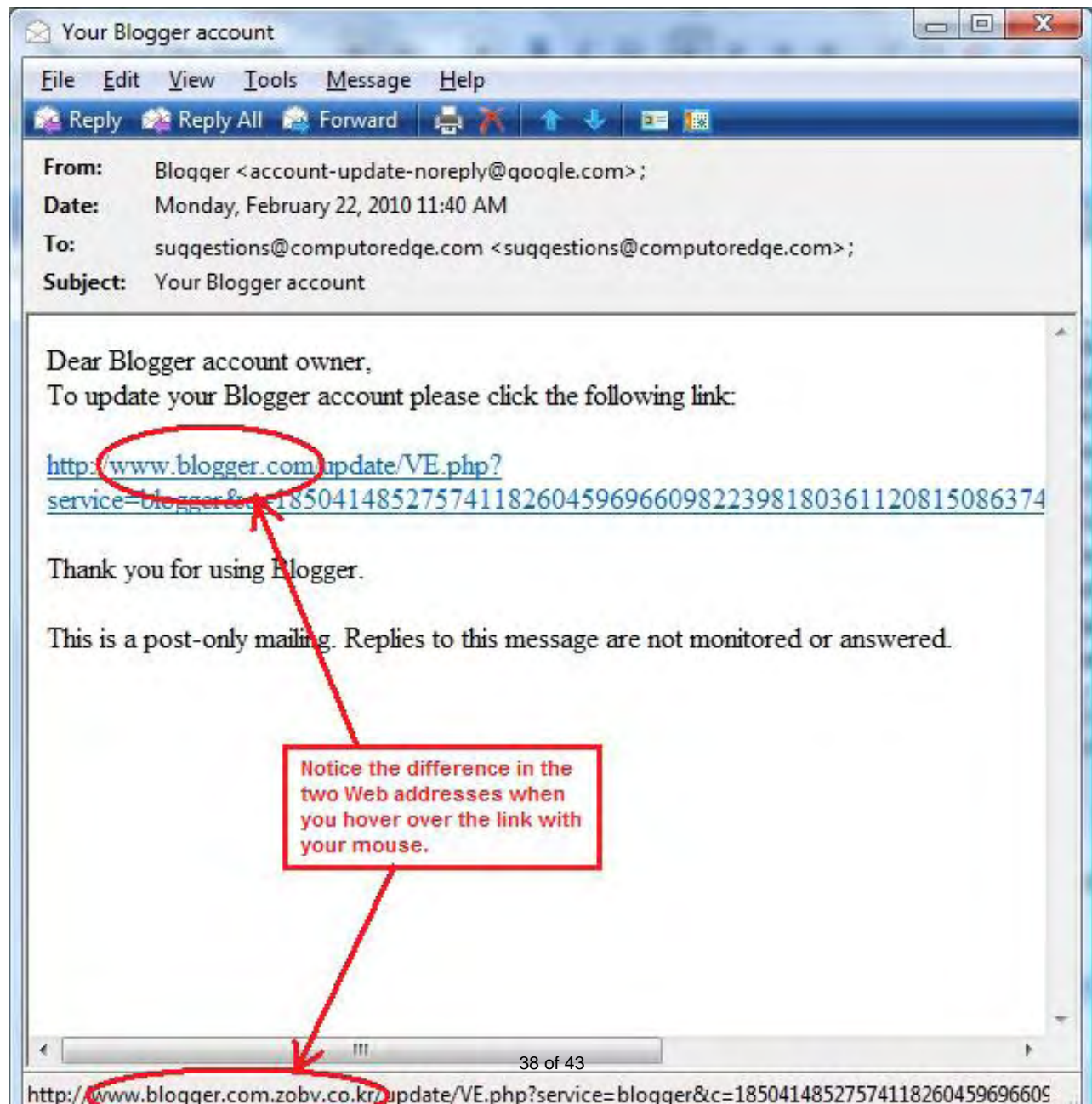
Spam of the Week

Spam of the Week: Bloggers Beware!

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

This week has seen an attack on bloggers, with hackers phishing for innocent victims' account information. Bloggers beware!

This week has seen an attack on bloggers. They are phishing for your account information (see Figure 1). You should not follow the bogus link, as shown. You should just delete this e-mail.



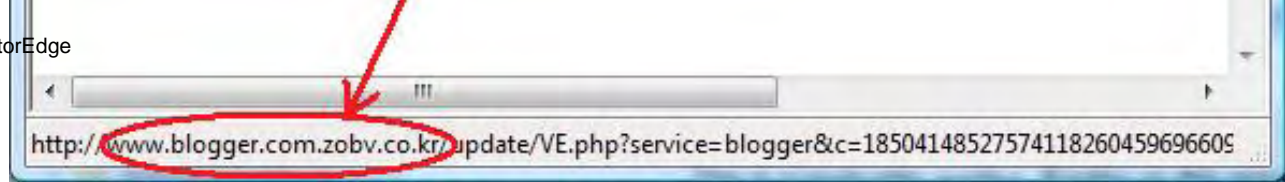


Figure 1. The blogger phishing spam.

If you did follow the link, it would take you to an official looking login page which will steal your login information. (That's if they haven't already taken the page down.) Bloggers beware!

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: On Using Craigslist

"Craigslist offers the lesson, 'Trust, but verify!'" by Jack Dunning

edge **WORD**

While Craigslist can help you to quickly clean out a garage or office, or find you that unique item, there are precautions that you need to take—both as a buyer and a seller.

Craigslist has certainly become a dominant feature of the Internet. In many cases, it has been so effective that it leaves the debris of other businesses in its wake. While the death of classified ads in newspapers is not the only reason that the dailies are on the ropes, Craigslist has certainly made a significant dent in local print revenues.

Craigslist and the Internet have forever changed the way that we do business and interact as individuals. It is not a matter of good or bad, it just is. The environment has changed and we need to deal with it. Craigslist is a tool and nothing more. It can be used for good or evil—and it is used for both. The Internet is like the weather—there is no controlling it. The best you can hope for is the proper use of sunscreen and raincoats to protect you from sunburn and the pouring rain.



**Unhappy with his brand of dog food,
Rex sells his master on Craigslist.**

While Craigslist can help you to quickly clean out a garage or office, or find you that unique item, there are precautions that you need to take—both as a buyer and a seller. Anytime there is a free, easy-to-use service, while no one is looking, the nefarious and ethically weak will take advantage. As a user of Craigslist, it is your personal responsibility to protect yourself and your property. Use Craigslist, but proceed with caution.

Over two years ago, Rich, a *ComputerEdge* reader, offered "Tips for avoiding the flakes on Craigslist." I just reviewed Rich's words and find that they say much of what I would emphasize in this column. If anything, these words of wisdom are even more important today.

That same year, I highlighted a housing/phishing scam that involves Craigslist. This is only one example of many scams that can be perpetrated on the Internet. The lesson is only believe what you see in person with your own eyes. Trust, but verify!

To achieve a goal with Craigslist, you need a system and it may take a little time. Do not reveal any identity information (address, telephone, etc.) until you are reasonably certain you are dealing with an authentic buyer or seller. (To be fair, you will never know for sure until after a deal is completed to both parties' satisfaction.) Honest people will appreciate your efforts. Do not create a free-for-all by announcing a specific date and location (unless it's an actual event). The best buyers will not show up because they don't want to participate in chaos. The people who do arrive will want everything to be free

Two years ago, when we moved to a virtual office, I chronicled some experiences when using Craigslist to clean out the brick-and-mortar office. First, I explained my rationale for using Craigslist, then I offered learning points when using Craigslist.

I have used Craigslist effectively a number of different ways and plan to use it again. I have some stuff that I need to dispose of. I could haul it off the to dump and pay a fee to add it to their pile, or I can put it on Craigslist and offer it for a price. I've found that it is much easier to unload stuff with a price tag on it, even if it's trash in your own eyes.

My plan is to advertise the items for a low price—they do have some value, although I really just want to clear space in the garage. I will use the e-mail address generated by Craigslist, which will protect my address until I decide to reveal it. (I may set up an e-mail address to use just with Craigslist.)

When I get a response, I will wait a day or two before I reply. Most responses will happen in the first day (or hour), but some of the best will come a little later because those people are not continually watching the list. The best buyers are looking when they have a need. I

will gauge this according to the content of the response.

I will deal with one person at a time—no cattle calls at a specific time and place. Who goes first will depend upon the connection we make through e-mails and the phone. I will ask how much they want and what size. I like Rich's idea for not giving out the address until they are leaving.

If it doesn't all go well with the first Craigslist listing, I'll keep putting it in until I'm done. This is not a race, plus, over time, more new people who need my old stuff will be checking the list. Maybe it will go to someone who can really use it and not someone who's just going to sell it to someone else.

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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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Windows Live: Too Little Too Late," "Monitor Uses," "Thanks, Digital Dave!," "Word Wrap," "PDF-Reader Programs"

Windows Live: Too Little Too Late

[Regarding James Hartnett's February 5 article, "Windows Live: Too Little, Too Late":]

Great article, very informative, thanks!

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

While I agree with you about Bing, I disagree about Google Apps versus Office Live. I tried to set up a Google Apps area for myself and a few associates. While I could add and open the files posted there, the others could not. When I tried the same on Office Live, it works fine and still does. Google does many things right and well, but Google Apps isn't one of them.

By the way, Microsoft no longer offers free Web sites except as a subdomain of Office Live.

-Mike, Denver, CO

Well-researched, written and informative.

-Lynn Manning Ross, San Diego, CA

This article is right on! I have been reading *ComputerEdge* Magazine for many years, even back when the mag was in print. The articles have always been right on track, and I have learned a vast amount about what's happening in the world of computers.

Keep up the great job!

-Steve K., Cheyenne, WY

Haven't read the article yet. I just clicked to see the cartoon. The first thing I noticed was the subheadline: "Sometimes Microsoft comes out with software that changes the way we look at computers. But sometimes it just steals someone else's ideas. Windows Live, its latest offering, is one such time."

Which such time? It's ambiguous.

Now I'll read the article.

-Jim Rue, Laguna Beach, CA

What a service you have provided, James! Now I need not feel slouchy about failing up to this point to gain even the most rudimentary idea of what "Windows Live" comprises. I felt I was biting the bullet when I pushed myself into the first paragraph of your article, only to shortly realize that you were bolstering my confidence in my own intuition. Oh! I still use Hotmail. What can you do for me there?

-Cicero, Colorado Springs, CO

Monitor Uses

[Regarding the February 5 Digital Dave column:]

Before my last move, I had two CRT monitors. I recycled them and got a 21-inch 16 x 9. I reconcile my bank account by displaying the Quicken screen on the left, and my credit union's account display on the right. I go down the account display, and check that transaction on the reconcile screen. Quicker and easier then dealing with downloaded and unmatched transactions in Quicken.

-Don Bishop, Lakewood CO

Thanks, Digital Dave!

[Regarding the January 29 Digital Dave column:]

I would like to thank Digital Dave for his advice on a question about saving Web pages on my computer. We don't have enough people like Dave to give advice on technical questions out in the wired world.

Thanks again.

-Larry Siwka, St. Clair Shores, MI

Word Wrap

[Regarding the January 29 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

Yes, many Web pages and PDFs do not allow for word wrapping *and* they insist on specifying font sizes as well. I use the accessibility option in Internet Explorer to "ignore font sizes specified on Web pages" combined with "Largest Font" and "Printer Friendly." But it's still not always perfect since some Web sites insist on specifying the spacing between lines as well, which tends to make the largest fonts overlap each other from line to line. It would be great if all "printer-friendly" sites worked like *ComputerEdge* or if there were a GoodReader plug-in for IE.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

E-Book Readers

[Regarding Dawn Clement's January 8 article, "E-Book Resources on the Web":]

There is a new e-book reader on the market! It is Barnes & Nobel's Nook, and you can read PDF files on it and play music on it while you read. It is cheaper than Sony's or the Kindle, and they have books as low as \$2.79. The reader is \$239. Not a bad deal. While it is not perfect, it is the best buy in town. I love that I can use it to ready patterns that I download in PDF format. Plus it is about the size of a paperback. I plan to give them as gifts for birthdays this year.

-Starmagic, Denver Colorado

PDF-Reader Programs

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's January 29 article, "PDF-Reader Programs":]

Now I know the answers to some "reader" questions I never asked, but really should have. Your article has resolved a couple of notions I had that would have eventually caused me some consternation that I now will avoid.

Thanks!

-Cicero, Colorado Springs, CO

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.