ComputorEdge™ Online — 07/30/10

This issue:
Easy Web Page Design

You don't have to be a programmer to create functional Web sites for business or personal use. Here's a look at software for Web site creation and entering the world of blogging.

Table of Contents:

Wally Wang's Apple Farm by Wally Wang

Easy Web Page Design

With programs like iWeb, you won't have to spend a lot of time wrestling with the details of creating and managing your own Web site. Also, the iPhone 4 Case Program app lets you pick a free bumper case; new product announcements from Apple; free educational materials are available on the Web; and a tip on right-clicking on the title bar of a window to display the hierarchy of folders.

Rob, The ComputorTutor: Tech Solutions with Microsoft Word by Rob Spahitz

Mail Merge

With Mail Merge, Word can create multiple copies of a document, each customized according to the incoming data.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.

iPad! Look Out Behind You!—Velocity Micro has announced a surprisingly affordable lineup of Android-powered mobile devices; Windows Phone 7 Starts at Square One— The Windows Phone 7 is a fresh start for Microsoft; HP LaserJet PRO P1102w—A new model replaces a venerable old workhorse; The Magical iPad Tour— Convenience, efficiency and versatility define the iPad.

DEPARTMENTS:

EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher by Jack Dunning

The Evolution of Home Entertainment

A good bit of the future of home-entertainment convergence is here, and the rest— live Internet programming similar to cable TV—is not far behind.

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

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

"Antivirus Slowdown," "Cleaning Up the Desktop," "Uninstalling the HP Docking Bar," "Multiple Servers for Web Pages"
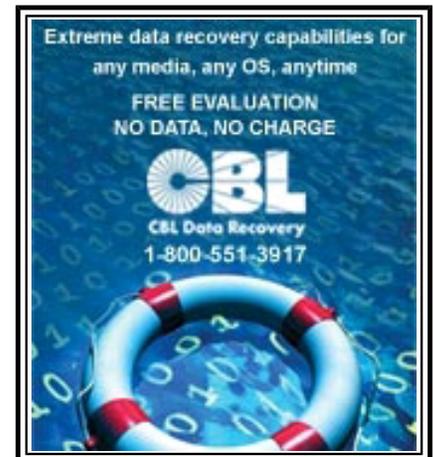
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Digital Dave

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

A reader is having trouble updating to a new version of Adobe Flash Player via Mozilla; a company's power-saving policy is interfering with a reader's laptop productivity; Dave tries to clear up some misleading information about the iPhone 4 antenna problem.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have Windows XP Home SP3. I use Mozilla's Firefox. Every time I try to update to Adobe Flash Player version 10.1.53.64 on Firefox I get this error message: getPlus+(R)Error (16263.201.355-42072312.80040154.FFFFFFFF.80040154).

What am I doing wrong? How do I successfully update to version 10.1.53.64, which Mozilla says I need because of a security problem with the current version of Adobe Flash Player that I have installed?

Joanne McGrath
Vista, CA

Dear Joanne,

A little research tells me that your best bet is to uninstall Adobe Flash Player before your upgrade, then install the latest version. To do that you need to open Add or Remove Programs in the Control Panel and Remove the Adobe Flash Player Plugin. Then try reinstalling. That has worked for other people with a similar problem. When you have trouble installing a software upgrade of almost any type, uninstalling will often make it possible to continue with the latest version.

Also, make sure Firefox is up to date.

Digital Dave

Dear Dave,

I have an HP laptop with XP SP3. My company has set up a power policy that overrides whatever setting I enter. So, even when I change the power settings, it will change them back periodically without my knowledge, and next thing you know the thing shuts down after 20 minutes, or five minutes if not powered. This happens at least once a day and sometimes more than once.

It's very frustrating to keep your productivity up when you have to bring the computer out of standby and wait for all your servers to reconnect, etc. It doesn't lend itself to anything

productive. For instance, if you take it to a meeting, it's very likely you'll listen to someone for five minutes, and then need to type notes, and that makes things very awkward when everyone waits on you and your PC.

I can't seem to get this large company to change its power policy, but I think I can do it through the Registry or through some other tool. Do you know of any way other than resetting the visible policy over and over?

Tom
Denver, co

Dear Tom,

Your best bet is to buddy up to one of the IT people. It's not likely that you will be able to make the changes you want without an administrative password. If you get to know the right people, you may get some sympathy and special consideration.

As an alternative, if you wiggle your mouse every couple of minutes, your computer should keep going. Maybe you could get someone to help when you are away from your desk—or possibly invent a mouse wiggler.

Registry changes won't help. They'll just be changed back by the company's software. You need to either get an exception from the company's IT group, stop logging into the company network (that's when the settings get refreshed), or invent a mouse wiggler. Tapping the spacebar is also effective. These restrictions sound pretty Draconian to me. Especially on battery power, where it will run out of juice before long anyway. Perhaps another device for taking notes in meetings? Paper and pen?

Digital Dave

Digital Dave's Tip

There's been a lot of commotion about the antenna problem on the iPhone 4 and the dropping of calls, so I thought that I would take a look at the problem. Decades ago, I worked at a company that specialized in making antennas for the military. One thing that was obvious is that designing, building and tuning antennas is as much art as science. There are many factors that affect performance. As I perused the Web I noticed that there is a good deal of misinformation (or more appropriately, slightly misleading information) about the problem with the iPhone 4 antenna.

The first misleading statement is that the dropped calls are being caused by signal attenuation from the radio frequency wave being blocked by the placement of the user's hand. There is little doubt that the hand placement is a major factor in the problem, but attenuation of the wave is not likely the problem.

Attenuation is the loss of signal strength caused by the natural spreading of the wave over distance, absorption of the wave in a medium, or scattering cause by a medium. In this situation many claim that the human hand is the medium causing attenuation through the absorption of the signal when held in a certain position. I don't think so. While there will be some RF absorption in the hand, it will not be significant enough to affect the signal strength. Rather, the problem caused by the human hand placement is one of tuning.

Antennas are built and tuned to be optimized for certain ranges of frequencies. There is a direct relationship between

the size of the antenna and the optimal frequencies it will receive and transmit. When the antenna is designed, the length of an antenna is a major consideration. Yet any antenna can be very sensitive to variation.

For example, anyone who has ever used an old rabbit-ears antenna for their television has experienced the problem of positioning the device for best reception. It is not unusual for the reception to actually improve while it is being held by hand while making adjustments. The second it is released, the picture may get worse. This is because the human body was actually changing the properties of the antenna reception. In some cases it will improve; in others it will get worse. This is the same thing that can happen with any cell phone, but with the iPhone 4 there is a unique problem.

To make the iPhone sleeker, multiple antennas for specific purposes have been wrapped along the edge of the phone inside a stainless steel band. Where the ends of two antennas approach each other, there is an insulator to limit interaction between the antennas. Since the human body is a relatively good conductor of electricity, when the hand comes in close proximity to the insulting point, the gap between the antennas tends to be bridged effectively, making the two into one longer antenna. This changes the optimal frequencies for reception and causes dropped signals. The stainless steel covering actually makes the problem worse since it aids in the shorting when touched. (This is why adding an insulated cover to the iPhone 4 can ameliorate the problem.)

The effect will vary from person to person and from iPhone to iPhone because body chemistry varies and no two antennas are absolutely identical. To some degree, the same effect can be seen on other cell phone models by covering the antenna with a hand, but they are not likely to be so pronounced. The critical element in the iPhone 4 is the point on the left side toward the bottom where the two antennas meet. It could be considered a design flaw from a radio frequency reception point of view.

Also not helping Apple's perception problem is that until recently the reception was being misreported as better than it actually was in many cases. Apple had a press release where it admitted it was calculating it completely wrong. This has been corrected.

Squarespace for Building a Web Site

"Makes online entrepreneurship easier than ever." by Michael J. Ross

Of the modern online site-building services, the one that is currently garnering the most buzz in the Web design community is Squarespace, which also hosts your site on its servers.

There are countless reasons for creating a Web site for yourself, for a commercial enterprise, or for a nonprofit organization. Regardless of the site's purpose and target audience, you have a number of technical options for building the site, or having someone build it for you. One of your earliest decisions should be whether to try to design and create the site yourself, or instead outsource it to a design agency or freelance Web developer. (This assumes that you do not have in-house Web talent to whom you could assign the task—"in-house," in the sense of one or more employees working in your company, or in the sense of a family member who could be put to work.)

"He's our Web site designer! What's it to va?"

The decision as to whether you should try to tackle the project on your own, naturally, hinges upon your expertise and experience in creating Web sites, as well as the functional requirements of the site. For instance, if you are not a programmer, but you need only a single static page to advertise your booth at the local farmer's market, then you most likely could get by using one of the many available Web page editors that can be downloaded from shareware sites and used free of charge. On the other hand, even if you have some experience creating static Web pages, but you need a robust business site that encompasses multiple pages, navigation menus, user login, a database, and e-commerce capabilities,

"He's our Web site designer! What's it to ya?"

then trying to do it yourself would probably lead to far too much frustration and wasted time. In that scenario, you are much better off turning over the task completely to a freelancer or an agency.

In between these two extremes—between dead-simple pages and complex sites requiring considerable customization—lays a wide spectrum of different kinds of sites, with a range of capabilities. Many such Web sites need the online business basics, such as the ability to: add and edit content (text, images, audio and video), solicit and save input from visitors using forms, style the site with attractive templates, and monitor and fine-tune the site findability for better search engine results.

Over the years, numerous online site-building services have been offered. The pioneers in the late 1990s, such as the now-defunct GeoCities, were usually offered for free, because their dot-com parent companies were willing to give away just about anything in the quest for market share ("eyeballs"). Nowadays, after the tech bubble has burst and business owners have rediscovered the concept of profit, the site-building services typically require a reasonable fee. But this does not mean that they are short on features; if anything, Web site tools are better than ever, with greater ease of use and integration of accessibility best practices, social media and more.

A Square Deal

Of the modern online site-building services, the one that is currently garnering the most buzz in the Web design community is Squarespace (*www.squarespace.com/*), which was founded in 2003 by software developer Anthony Casalena, with its office in the SoHo district of downtown Manhattan. It currently enjoys tens of thousands of customers, and is likely increasing that number all the time.

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SQUARESPACE
SMARTER PUBLISHING

TOUR   EXAMPLES   PRICING   SIGN UP

The secret behind exceptional websites.

Blog. Build. Host. Design. Impress. From $8 a month.

TRY IT FOR FREE
NO CREDIT CARD REQUIRED

or LEARN MORE   TAKE THE TOUR

What is it?
A fully hosted, completely managed environment for creating and maintaining a website, blog or portfolio.

Who is it for?
Bloggers. Businesses large and small. Authors. Teachers. Lawyers. Doctors. Squarespace's flexible platform can power sites of all sizes.

Why use it?
We give you full control over your content and site customization. You can build it 10X faster on our comprehensive platform. Seriously.

Used by the Best

You're looking at a Squarespace site right now. We run our entire business using our own tools, using the same servers and same product we sell to our tens of thousands of customers.

Squarespace iPhone App

The Squarespace iPhone application is completely hand-built. Use it to check your site, post to your blog, manage your blog posts, and see your traffic while on the go.

Seamless Blog Importing

We'll move over your images, copy your posts, and make sure your links work. Similarly, Squarespace provides compatible export files for many popular systems if you need to move on.
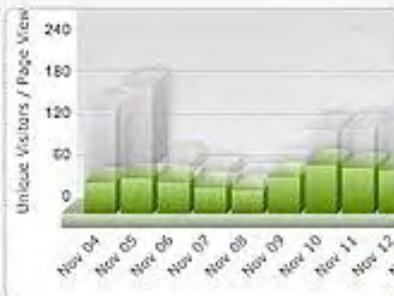
Know Your Visitors

Learn where they're coming from, and what keywords they're using to find you. Our powerful analytics tools help you view the traffic and behavior of your visitors in real time.

Templates That Aren't Templated

Dozens of professionally designed style variants from name-brand designers. All Squarespace styles allow point and click control over every design element.

Social Integration

Squarespace's social widgets let you aggregate data from across your various social networks completely within the Squarespace environment — all without needing 3rd party scripts.

Intuitive Editing

Want to add content? Perhaps edit something you already wrote? Want to trash something all together? No problem. Our rapid on-site content editing tool will assist you every step of the way. All elements of your text can be manipulated here.

Form Building & Data Collection

Squarespace Business packages come equipped with an industrial strength visual form builder. Our form builder contains over 14 field types, and can collect data concurrently via email and a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Beautiful Photo Galleries

Customizable photo galleries let you choose how you want to present your work. Lightbox integration, hover effects, and automatic image resizing are just a few of the perks.

Figure 1. Squarespace home page.

The company's home page displays numerous links to pages describing the service, including its features and pricing plans. One way to quickly get a good idea as to how Squarespace works is by viewing its video tour (*www. squarespace.com/tour/*), which illustrates how you can quickly set the overall layout of your Web site by specifying the number of columns, the width of each column, the location of the horizontal navigation bar, the site's banner image, and other settings. Using an interactive WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor, you can change the appearance of your site and see the results immediately. You can bypass the process of designing your site by selecting from one of numerous predefined templates developed by professionals. In addition, you can easily add various types of pages to your site, such as picture galleries, discussions, user logins, registration pages, FAQs and blogs, as well as more generic ones, such as HTML pages and forms. Lastly, you can add JavaScript and Flash components to any page.

Unlike CMSs, which generally require you to provide your own Web hosting space, Squarespace hosts your site on its servers. These Web servers are clustered, redundant and backed up regularly. As a consequence, your Web site should always be up and running, and the code, images, and other resources that you've used to create your site should never be lost to hard disk failure. Squarespace is not supported by advertiser revenue, but instead charges a monthly fee, depending upon which of the five plans (*www.squarespace.com/pricing/*) you choose: Basic ($8, intended for personal sites), Pro ($14, for small businesses that want their own domain names), Advanced ($20, for more complex sites with multiple content editors), Business ($30, for larger enterprises needing data collection, etc.) and Community ($50, for large-scale community sites).

Your Space on the Web

To learn more about Squarespace firsthand, and whether it would be a workable approach for building your own site, you can take it for a test drive. Squarespace offers a 14-day free trial period, without having to provide credit card information or make any long-term commitments. To get started, click on any of the green buttons on the home page, and on the sign-up page (*www.squarespace.com/signup/*), provide a username, a password, an e-mail address and a CAPTCHA value. If the sign-up process completes without error, you will receive a welcome e-mail message, with the title "[Squarespace] Welcome to Squarespace," at the address you provided.

The username can contain only lowercase letters, numbers and hyphens, because it will be part of your server name. For instance, if you were to name your Web site "test-site-99," then your site's address would be http://test-site-99. squarespace.com/. The initial version of your site, prior to your making any changes, is fairly bare-bones, as you would expect. When you are logged in, at the very top of the page is a black control bar, containing links that allow you to manage your site, change your displayed name and logout, on the left side. On the right side are links for changing the site's content (which is the default mode), structure and style, as well as previewing the site as it would appear to visitors—none of whom would see the content control elements, because they are not logged in as you.
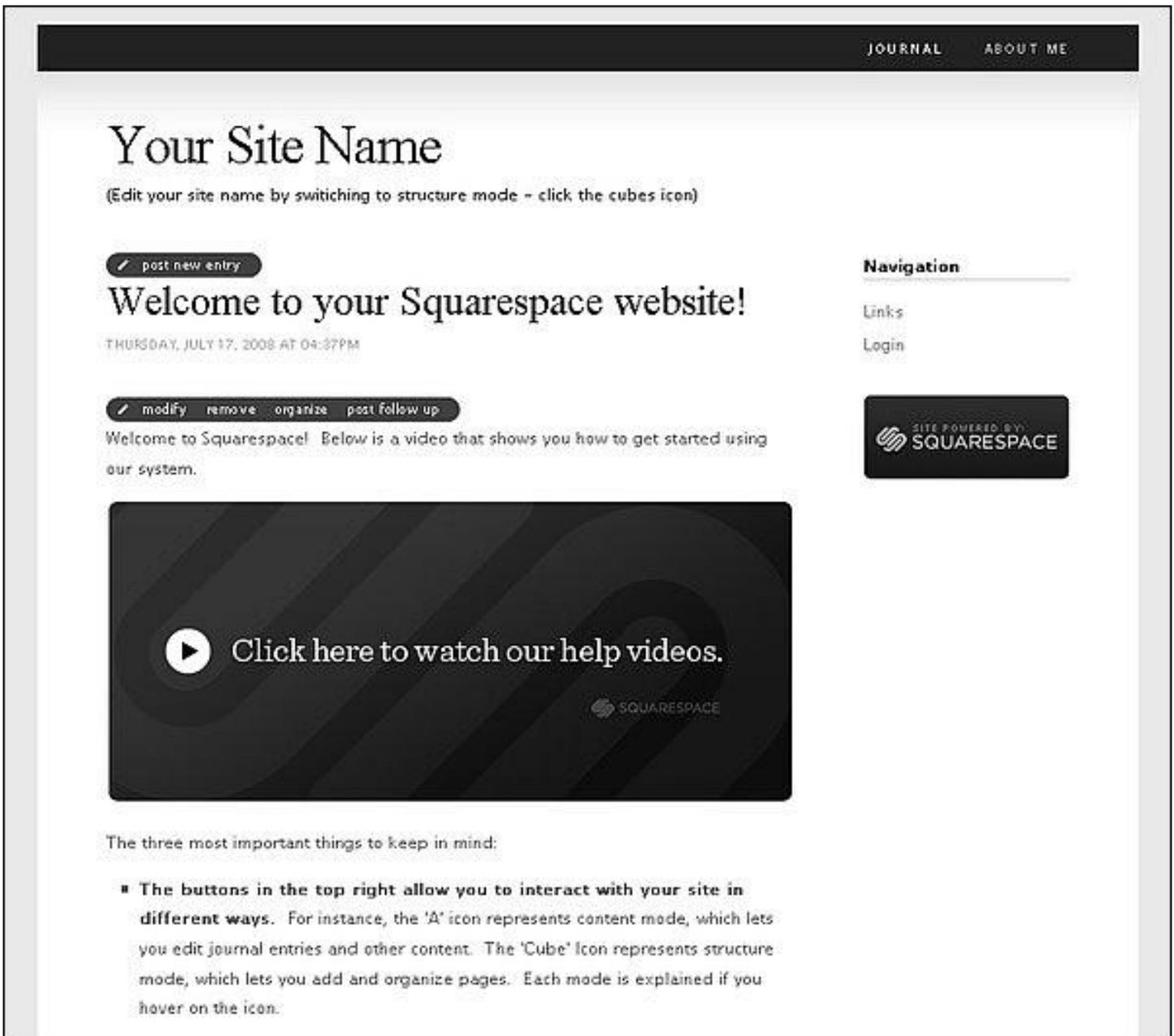
Figure 2. Initial Web site.

The content control elements consist of small black ovals with links for posting a new entry to the current page, and managing any existing entries.

Figure 3. Content control elements.

All of the control elements are links that, when clicked, execute code written in JavaScript, which is a Web scripting language that powers the Squarespace interface. Up to this point in the process, there has been no warning that JavaScript is required, but it needs to be enabled in your browser in order to use the interface and make changes to your site. Also note that the initial page is what's known as a Journal page, consisting of entries—much like blog posts.

Let's use those control elements to remove the existing entry, and replace it with a new one. For the existing entry, click the Remove link. Then click Post New Entry, and populate the content form with whatever text you want. In our case, we will add some sample text, as well as a small gray image (250 pixels wide by 100 pixels), positioned to the right of the text.
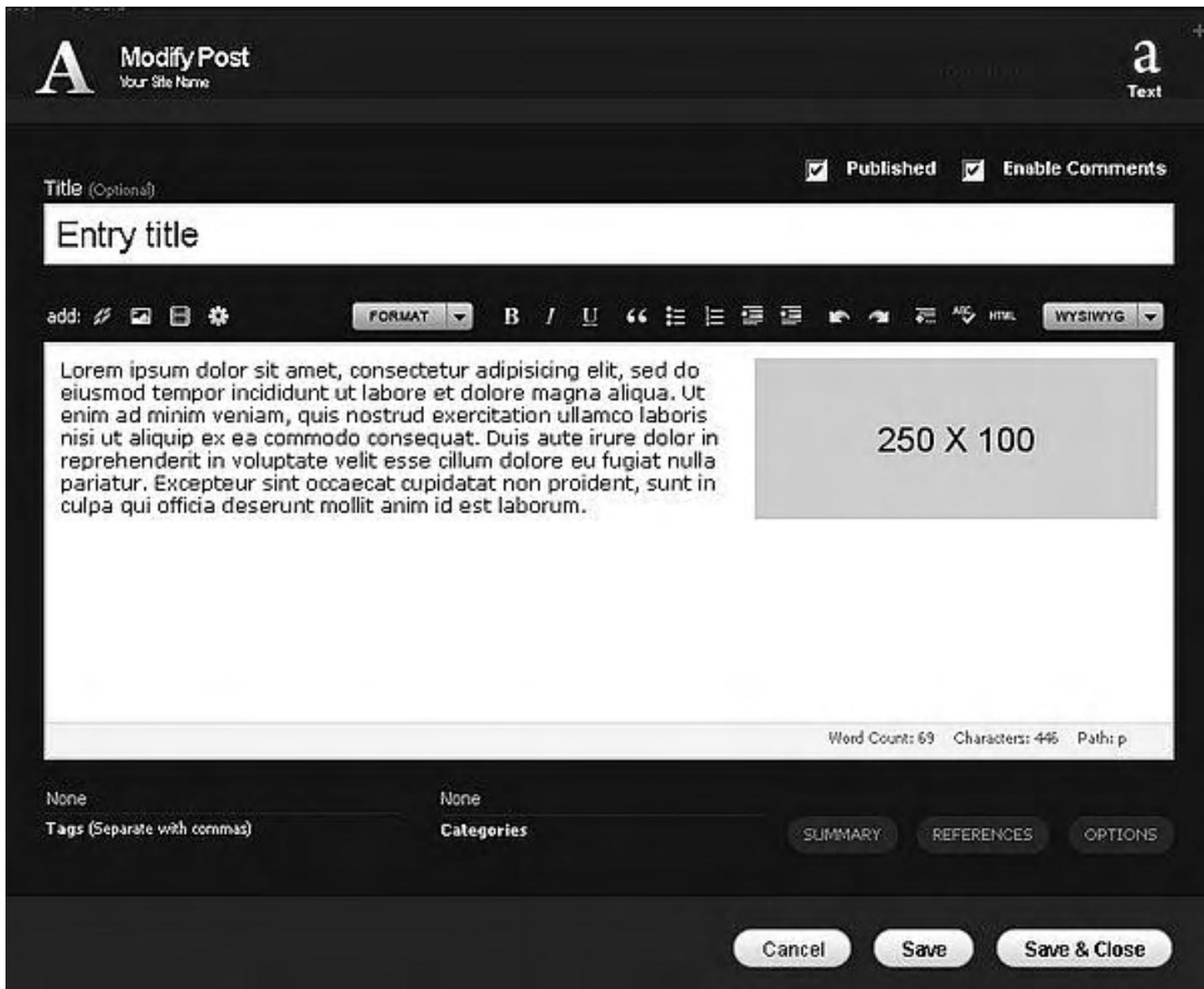

Figure 4. Modify Post screen.

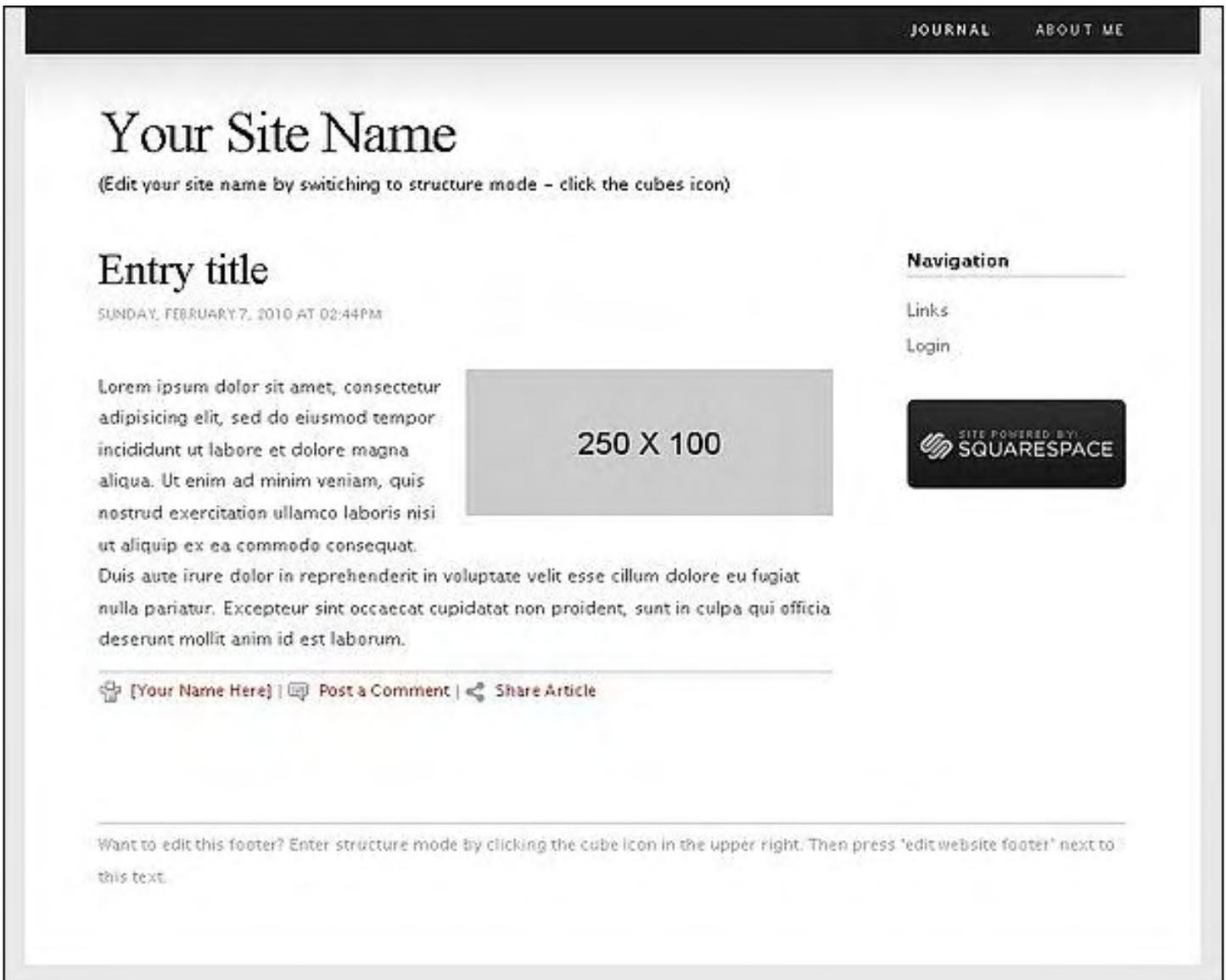This results in a different entry on the home page.

Figure 5. Modified Web site.

Next we will alter the structure of the page. Switch to structure editing by clicking the icon in the upper right-hand corner that looks like four squares. Delete the "site powered by Squarespace" block by clicking the Remove link. We will add search capabilities to our new site, using two different approaches, so you can see the difference between links to stand-alone pages, versus widgets. Click Insert New Section, and provide a title, such as "Search page section." The section is initially empty, so click its Add Page link, and add a search page, which we will title "Search page link," because clicking on the link takes you to a new search page.

Journal
Presents a dynamic web log.

Allows you to present users with browsable picture galleries.

HTML
Presents a basic HTML page.

Amazon Item List
Allows you to present a list of books or music.

Journal Index
Adds an index to your page representing an archived view of a particular journal.

Search
Allows users to search your web site.

File Storage
Allows users to download files.

Change Tracker
Allows for automatic tracking of website changes.

Links
Allows you to present users with a list of favorite links.

Single Link
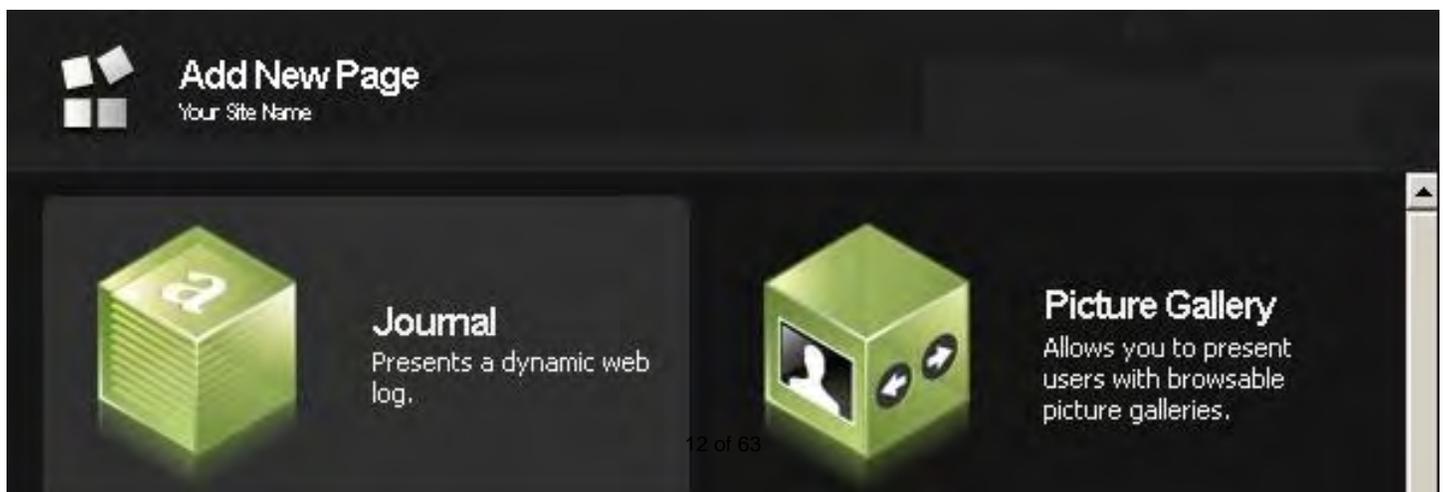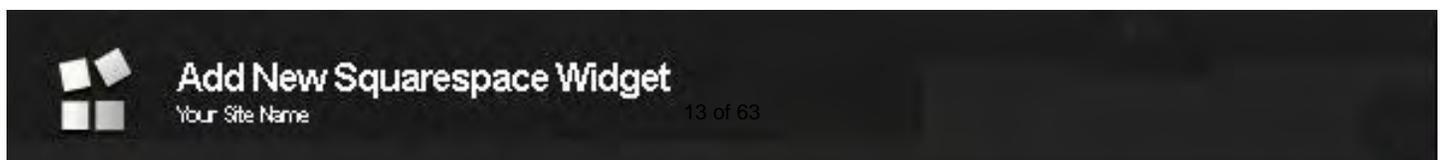Adds a direct page link to your navigation area.

Cancel   Select & Configure

Figure 6. Add New Page screen.

Again click Insert New Section; add a title (such as "Search page widget"); click Widget; and select and configure a search widget.

Add New Squarespace Widget
Your Site Name

Add New Squarespace Widget
Your Site Name

Text/HTML
A block of text or HTML code.

Search
Allows users to search your web site.

Links
Allows you to present users with a list of favorite links.

Change Tracker
Allows for automatic tracking of website changes.

Amazon Item List
Allows you to present a list of books or music.

Journal Index
Adds an index to your page representing an archived view of a particular journal.

Syndicate RSS
Presents your RSS feeds so readers can subscribe to your site content.

Powered By Squarespace
Adds a small link to promote Squarespace on your site.

Send Email
Places a secure contact form on your site.

Form
Allows you to construct a form for collecting data from users.

Cancel   Select & Configure

Figure 7. Add New Widget screen.

Finally, let's choose a more colorful and attractive template for the site. Switch to style editing by clicking the icon that looks like a paintbrush, and then click on Switch Templates. Unfortunately, all of the templates are displayed in a single horizontal row, which of course goes way off the screen, requiring you to use a horizontal scroll bar. In the screenshot below, we see the final site using the Moss style, which is part of the "Subtlymade" template family. In addition, the title and subtitle for the site have been set, in the header section of the structure editing mode.
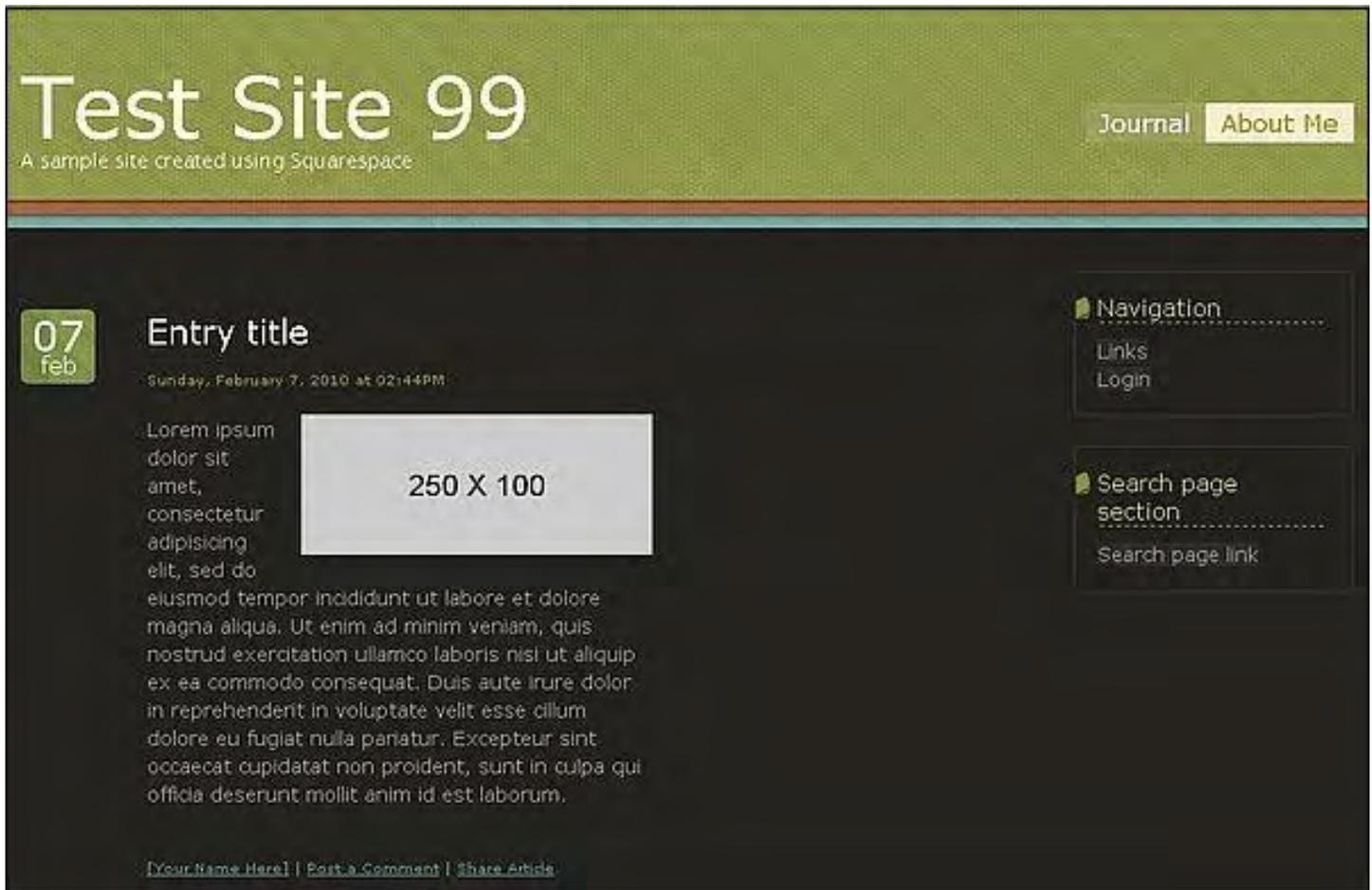

Figure 8. Styled Web site.

The sample text in our entry is not filling the horizontal space available, which suggests that there is something wrong with the chosen style, or perhaps more tweaking of the column layouts is needed. We won't do any further modifications to the site, but bear in mind that there is much more that can be added. Furthermore, the search widget section has disappeared, suggesting that the chosen template contains some bugs.

Speaking of styling, there is an obvious improvement that could be made to the Squarespace home page. In the headers and footer of the pages, the use of gray text on a black background makes most of that text quite difficult to read. This is especially true for the text that is set to a small font size, and even more so for visited links, when the gray is made even darker and thus even more unreadable. In the screenshot below, there are actually two links below the COMPANY header, but they are practically invisible.

Figure 9. Text with poor contrast.

Where to Go from Here

It is quite possible that Squarespace provides enough functionality and ease of use for you to create your own Web site. Note that if you already have a blog site currently hosted by one of the major blogging services—including Blogger, Movable Type, WordPress.com and TypePad—you can apparently transfer it over to Squarespace with ease.

Should you decide not to continue with Squarespace past the trial period, you do not need to specifically cancel the account, because it will be closed automatically, and any site deleted. But if you would like to extend your account past the initial 14 days, and you want to learn more about how to use the system, be sure to consult the online help, including the manual (*manual.squarespace.com/*). If the manual does not answer your questions, you can open a support ticket.

Regardless of how you decide to build your site or have it done for you, know that there are innumerable types of online businesses that you could create to supplement or replace a conventional salary. The Web has made entrepreneurship easier than ever before!

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.

WordPress.com for Your Blog

"An easy way to create and manage your blogging presence on the Web." by
Michael J. Ross

> If you believe in the wisdom of crowds, then consider choosing the world's most popular blogging platform, WordPress, which lets you create fully customizable sites, limited only by your technical skills and imagination.

By now, just about every human on the planet—or at least, everyone in the world's industrialized countries—should be familiar with blogs and blogging. Anyone in need of a refresher would do well to read the Wikipedia entry (*en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog*), which provides the following concise definition: "A blog (a contraction of the term 'web log') is a type of Web site, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video."

As is typically the case, a blog can serve as a public and online diary that offers the individual a venue for telling the world about the day-to-day events in the life of the blogger. At the other end of the spectrum, a blog can be impersonal, and instead focus on a particular subject area, such as financial or political commentary. Most blogs are created and maintained only for self-expression and fun, but there is a growing segment of bloggers who have made a livelihood from it, primarily deriving their income from advertising revenue, generated when some of the millions of visitors every year click on paid ads.

Despite the time and effort required in keeping a blog alive, the popularity of blogging has experienced exponential growth. The phenomenon began in 1994, and has seen continual expansion since then. According to the blog search engine Technorati (*technorati.com/*), as of November 2006, there were almost 60 million blogs in existence—at least, those being tracked by Technorati. As of December 2007, that number had exceeded 112,000,000. This means that it took 10 years to go from zero blogs to 60 million, and then only 13 months to add more than 50 million more. Yet detractors will quickly point out that these numbers do not indicate that there are tens of millions of active blogs, because far too many people have started blogging with the best of intentions, only to give up after a couple years, months, or even days. (The parallels to gym membership are obvious.)

Regardless of what other bloggers are doing, and how well, perhaps you too have considered doing some of your own blogging, if you haven't already begun to do so. As we shall see in this article, it is not difficult at all to dive in and start swimming.

Decisions, Decisions

If and when you elect to begin blogging, there are a number of ways you can go about it. Assuming that you are proficient at developing Web pages using HTML and CSS—and perhaps some Web scripting language to make the pages dynamic—then you could build your blog by hand. This approach would give you complete control over the content and appearance, and could also prove a valuable learning experience, as you gain new technical skills and solidify existing ones. But crafting Web pages by hand is usually quite time-consuming, particularly if you want your blog site to also support dynamic functionality, such as allowing visitors to leave comments in response to your blog posts.

This is the driving force behind the evolution of content management systems (CMSs) and other blog-capable software. A CMS provides the framework for a Web site, thereby making it much faster and easier to get a blog site up and running. According to The CMS Matrix (*www.cmsmatrix.org/*), there are currently more than 1,100 CMSs from which you could choose, and presumably most of them would be sufficient for developing a blog site. So how can you

choose the most promising one for your own blog? If you believe in the wisdom of crowds, then consider choosing the world's most popular blogging platform, WordPress (*wordpress.org/*).

Figure 1. WordPress.org home page.

There are many reasons why WordPress gained the lead position years ago, and it shows no signs of relinquishing it. Like all open-source software, WordPress is free to use. It has been under continual development and improvement—including usability, security and styling enhancements—since 2001. Bolstered by a large and vibrant community of developers and users, WordPress benefits from their countless contributions, including plug-ins, widgets and themes. A WordPress-based site is fully customizable, limited only by your technical skills and imagination (or your budget for hiring somebody else with those qualities!).

If you have access to a Web hosting account that supports fairly up-to-date versions of PHP and MySQL, then you can download the WordPress software, install it in your hosting account, and in little time have a WordPress site just waiting for your blogging brilliance. But not everyone is comfortable installing and configuring Web applications and databases.

Hospitable Blog Hosting

To avoid the cost and hassle of using your own Web host, you could use WordPress.com (*wordpress.com/*), which lets anyone create his own blog, at no charge. According to WordPress's own Matt Mullenweg, in an article titled "A Smaller Number" (*en.blog.wordpress.com/2009/01/09/a-smaller-number/*), in January 2009 there were 163,702 bloggers already taken advantage of this free service.

Figure 2. WordPress.com home page.

As with any technology choice, there are advantages and disadvantages to using WordPress.com as your blogging platform. Probably the most significant downside is that you will have less flexibility in creating your blog site, because you will be limited to the plug-ins, widgets and themes allowed by the administrators of WordPress.com. As you might imagine, the people running this service cannot allow just anyone to install unvetted code on their servers, because this would quickly lead to online miscreants attempting to infiltrate the WordPress.com blogs with malware designed to attack and compromise the computers of visitors to those blogs.

A critical need for flexibility and control over a blog site's capabilities is the main reason why businesses, nonprofit organizations, and even some individual bloggers typically eschew hosted solutions such as WordPress.com, and

instead invest the money, effort and time into developing their own WordPress-based sites on the servers of third-party Web hosting companies, or instead on servers maintained in-house. This is usually the best option for anyone planning on making money from their site and also planning on integrating plug-ins, widgets, and themes as needed. Such efforts will require the knowledge and skills of Web designers and developers, but are well worth it to achieve those goals.

Sampling the Blog Buffet

The best way to determine whether or not WordPress.com offers all of the capabilities you will need for your own blog is to give it a try. After all, it's free, and it takes but minutes to get started with the basics. To do so, visit the WordPress. com home page, and click on the orange "Sign up now" button. This takes you to a page with a registration form, which requires you to choose a username, password and e-mail address. If you are the type of Internet user who prefers tabbing from one field to the next—instead of clicking your mouse pointer on each one—note that every time you tab to a new field, the edit cursor disappears; perhaps WordPress.com will fix this design flaw in the future.

Given the large number of bloggers using this service, there is a good chance that your preferred username has already been taken, and you will need to come up with a different name. In fact, it can be a bit frustrating when you discover that your top choices have already been snagged. I tried at least three quite unconventional names, and was astonished to find that all of them were unavailable. Assuming you eventually pass this first gauntlet, on the next screen you will be shown your new blog's host name (incorrectly identified as a "domain name"). On this screen, you will probably want to modify the title of your blog, so it can include spaces, which are not allowed in the username (the default value). You can also change the language from the default, English, if desired.

After you click the "Sign-up" button, you will arrive on a Web page instructing you to "Check Your Email to Complete Registration." Before doing so, you can optionally update your profile by entering your name and a brief description of yourself, and saving your changes. But your blog does not yet exist. Log in to the e-mail account you specified earlier, find the message titled "[WordPress.com] Activate..." and click the link in the message to activate your new WordPress. com account. This should pop up a new Web page, where you can log in to your account's Dashboard page.
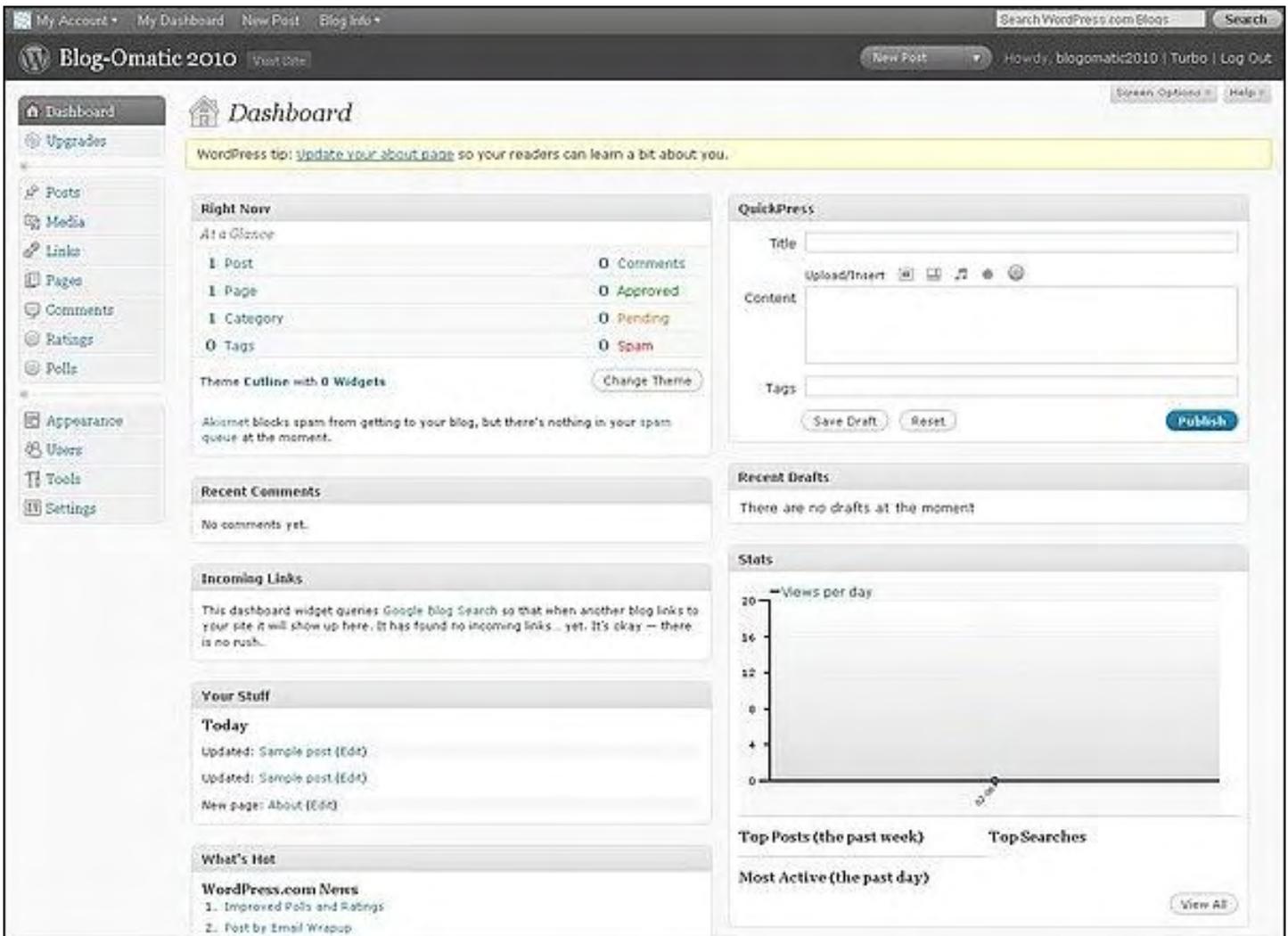
Figure 3. WordPress.com Dashboard.

The Dashboard page can be thought of as a summary of the numerous other pages within your account. It encompasses a great many controls, and we will briefly discuss the ones you will likely be using most frequently.

Figure 4. WordPress.com Dashboard upper left.

At the very top of the page is a gray navigation bar, containing four menus on the left: My Account, My Dashboard, New Post and Blog Info. The first of those has 10 links to various functions, many of which are confusingly repeated further down the page. For instance, My Account/Edit Profile—which duplicates Users/Your Profile in the left sidebar— is where you can change such settings as the color scheme of your administrative theme, whether you want to use the visual editor and keyboard shortcuts, your contact information, proofreading options and more.

Other account settings can be found via the Settings menu, located at the bottom of that left sidebar. On the General Settings page, you can alter your blog's title, tagline and other configuration values. Also in the left sidebar is a menu for Appearance, where you can modify some of the approved WordPress components mentioned earlier—themes and widgets.

Just below the gray navigation bar is a black bar containing, on the left, the name of your blog and a link to it. The Web address of your new blog includes your chosen username. For instance, the username "BlogOmatic2010" resulted in a hostname of blogomatic2010.wordpress.com, and thus a URL of http://blogomatic2010.wordpress.com/.

Figure 5. Initial blog.

Rather than starting you off with a completely empty blog, WordPress.com populates your new site with a single blog post, titled "Hello world!", with one associated comment. Let's delete the initial post and comment, and then add a new post. Back on the Dashboard page, in the left-hand sidebar, click Posts, then hover over the post's title, and click the Trash link that appears below it. There are at least three ways to start a new post, including the Add New button just to the right of the Edit Posts page title.
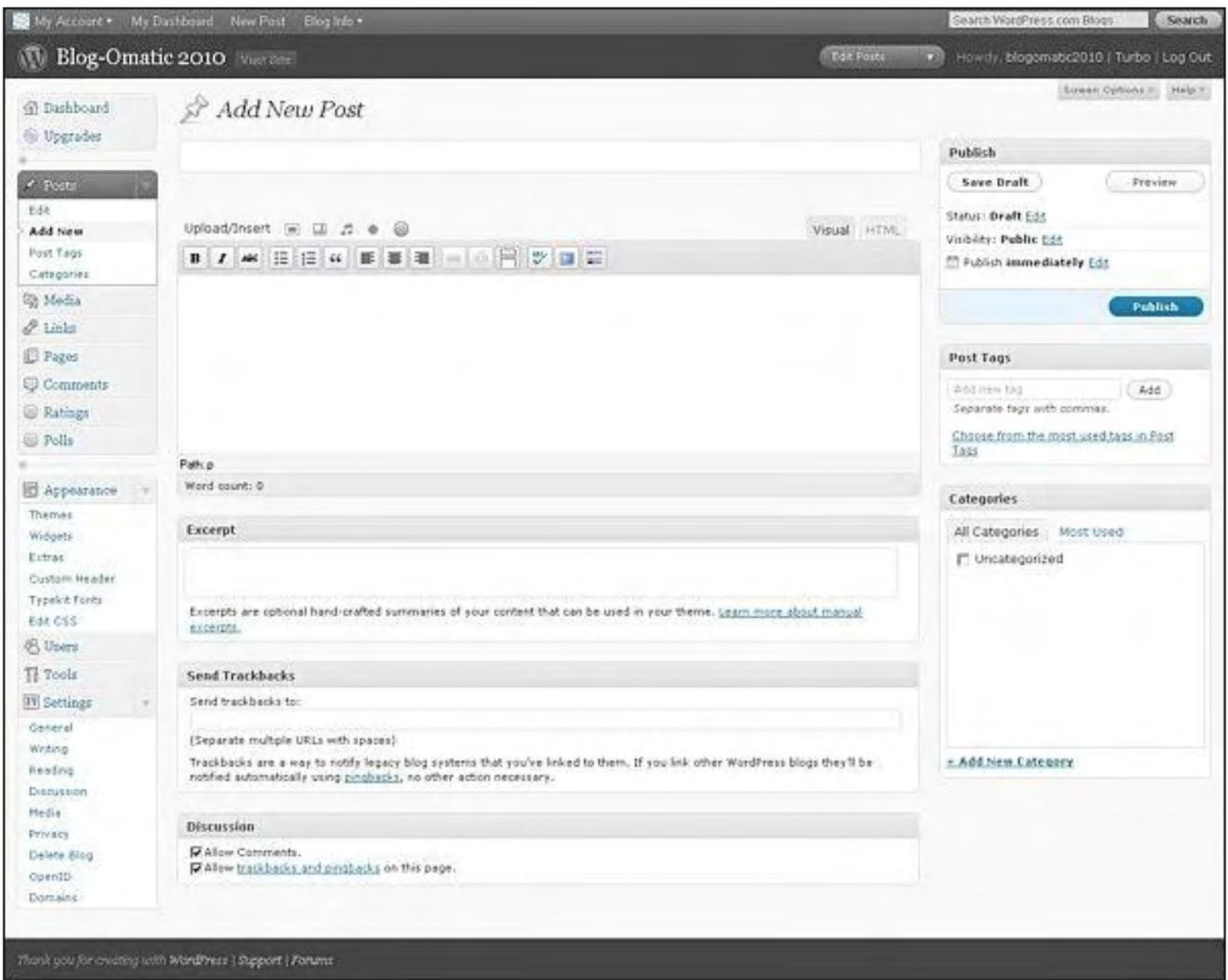
Figure 6. WordPress.com add new post.

In adding a new post to your blog, you must enter a title and some content. The latter can be styled using the WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) controls just above the large content field. In our sample post, some of the words have been bolded, italicized and struck through with a horizontal line, to illustrate some of the WYSIWYG basics. Other words have been converted into unordered and ordered lists. You can include an excerpt, trackbacks, tags (i.e., keywords) and categories. You can also specify whether visitors to your site may comment on your post, or contribute trackbacks and pingbacks.

Let's also change the blog's theme. But first save the new post you created, by clicking the blue Publish button. Be warned that the process of saving a new or modified post can be extremely time-consuming—far longer than should be needed given the relatively small amount of information being saved to the WordPress.com database. This would be one more reason for choosing your own WordPress installation in your own hosting account.

To change your blog's theme, go to the Appearance section of the sidebar, and choose Themes. By default, your blog's theme is set to Kubrick, and can be changed to any one of dozens of available themes (79, as of this writing). In our case, we will choose a theme called Cutline. Again, the process of changing your site's theme can take a long time.

Figure 7. Modified blog.

In this article, we have just scratched the surface of what is possible using WordPress as a CMS for your blog, and WordPress.com as the blogging service. Even though there are other CMSs and hosted blogging services available, this combination may prove more than adequate for your own blogging presence on the Web.

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.
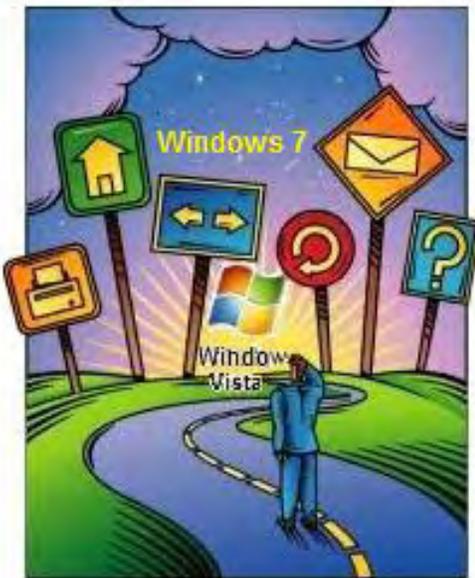
Windows Tips and Tricks

"Review: The LG Wi-Fi Network Blu-ray Disc Player" by Jack Dunning

LG's Wi-Fi Network Blu-ray Disc Player can instantly turn your television into an Internet-connected screen without the complications of attaching a computer.

This column is actually a review of a home media device rather than a specific Windows tip or trick. I'm doing this not just because the subject equipment works and brings a new level of entertainment integration into the home theater system, but it also represents a direction in home entertainment that is unsettling the industry.

Many companies have tried to bring the Internet to the television, but in unneeded forms. It is much easier to browse the Web with a computer than on a TV. The television is foremost an entertainment device. The current Internet-connected devices—whether a game console such as the Xbox or a Wi-Fi-enabled DVD player—seem to suggest that the Internet can now become the new center for home entertainment. I talk more about the implications of Internet-connected entertainment devices in this week's Edgeword. While Windows can certainly be part of the new networked home entertainment systems, it seems likely that the computer may be relegated to the role of server. Specialized equipment such as Blu-ray DVD players with networking capability may become the new entertainment controller, since when compared to a computer they are relatively easy to set up and use and relatively inexpensive.

After a good bit of research, I picked up the LG Wi-Fi Network Blu-ray Disc Player Model BD570 (*lg.com/us/tv-audio-video/video/LG-blu-ray-dvd-player-BD570.jsp*). The fact that it is a Blu-ray drive is almost incidental since I don't own any Blu-ray videos, but if I'm to have any DVD capability, there is no point in (or possibility of) not getting Blu-ray. (While there are Internet-connection devices without a DVD player, there are times when the capability may come in handy.)

I picked the LG BD570 player for a number of reasons. First, the Wi-Fi for the network connection was built-in. Although it's not a hard-and-fast rule, I've found that built-in Wi-Fi is generally more reliable than add-ons such as a dongle. Second, it immediately supports a number of Internet services such as Netflix. Third, it supports DLNA, which means that I would be able to access the media on my networked Windows computers. Fourth, it was one of the most affordable network DVD players at under $200. (One of the big pushes in more expensive Blu-ray models is a 3-D capability—which I consider a joke, or a novelty at best.)

This Blu-ray player was easy to set up and quickly connected to my wireless network. The player can also be connected directly to any Ethernet port or router. It will work with virtually any computer network as long as there are shared DLNA (the media standard) compatible computers attached. (Windows computers support DLNA.) My television was instantly turned into an Internet-connected screen without the complications of attaching a computer. The player has five basic modes of operation: Movie, Photo, Music, Home Link and Netcast. The first three categories

can play from a disc or USB drive inserted into the front of the player—your choice. The Home Link is for accessing other DLNA devices or servers on your home network. Netcast is for receiving content over the Internet such as Netflix video, Vudu HD video rental, Cinema Now video rental, YouTube Web video, Pandora Internet radio, Picasa photo albums and even the local weather.

The first step was to connect to the network and the Internet via Wi-Fi. This was easy to do through the Setup option and very similar to connecting a laptop at any Wi-Fi hotspot. Once I entered the router's code, the device connected without problem. (If you have the player in the same room as your network router, then you can make a direct connection, which would offer more network speed.)

The LG Blu-ray player almost immediately installed a firmware update—plus there has been one more update since I've started using it. My guess is that these updates will be how more Internet entertainment services will be offered in the future. Obviously, when connected to the Internet, the device automatically checks for the latest version of the software.

The Netcast option is dedicated to accessing Internet services (see Figure 1). Netflix was of particular interest since my kids had given me a subscription. It was easy to follow the on-screen instructions and get Netflix working. Once I dug into what Netflix offers for Internet streaming I was suitably impressed, although it was only a small percentage of what Netflix offers on DVD by mail. I expect that as time goes on, Internet streaming will crowd out direct DVD rental as quicker, easier and less costly to deal with.

Figure 1. The LG BD570 Blu-ray Player offers a number of Internet services on an easy-to-select screen.

I wasn't expecting some of the other features, such as YouTube and Picasa photo viewing. I mostly use YouTube for that informal game "remember that song," when we need to hear the original version of the tune. Doing the YouTube search on the player was awkward since there is no keyboard for touch typing, but it did work with the cursor and letter

select. I did keep a history so you can pre-load favorite videos and quickly get back to them for later viewing.

Note: While you can do almost everything on various Internet services with only the player, it is much easier to do many functions, such as searching and setup, on your computer. They work well together. Anything that you do on an Internet account on the computer will show up on the player's Netcast.

My brother had uploaded some pictures of his first grandchild to Picasa and sent me a link. Once I attached my account to his, I was able to log on to Picasa with the Blu-ray player and view his photos on the television. If you need to view photos in a digital form, it much easier to share them over a television rather than huddled around a computer.

The Home Link option is for accessing your local home network. When I opened the feature, the computers on the network appeared, plus the Windows DLNA media servers (with logo) for each Windows computer. If the media servers are sharing, then they can be accessed. I was able to run playlists of music off one of the Windows computers that could be connected to the stereo speaker system. The same can be done with photos and videos in MP4 format.

The LG player comes with Nero MediaHome 4 Essentials, which, when installed on a networked computer, will set up a DLNA media server automatically including and indexing all of your current playlists on your Windows computer. You can also log into each shared computer as you might with any other computer on the network and directly access folders and files. Of course, you will only be able to view or hear compatible graphic, sound, or video files. A network hard drive would be the ideal media server for this player.

Without the Home Link feature for accessing your home computers and the Netcast feature for Internet services, the LG Wi-Fi Network Blu-ray Disc Player Model BD57 is merely a DVD player. However, with the addition of those two features, your entertainment options are greatly enhanced. At some point, I would expect that live television programming will be offered via this type of device. Then the only other requirement would be a hard drive for recording programming. The BD590 (*www.lg.com/us/tv-audio-video/video/LG-blu-ray-dvd-player-BD590.jsp*) has a 250GB hard drive that can act as a media server and record videos purchased from Vudu. You could connect the BD570 player to a receiver in your computer and use the computer as a DVR (Digital Video Recorder), but unless you have live programming, there are few reasons to record. The Internet services are always there.

If you have a decent Internet connection (probably at least DSL speed), then this type of Internet-connected DVD drive will provide more entertainment than you can possibly consume—there's not enough time to do everything you would like to do. You will probably completely give up on any reruns on broadcast television—you can get them on Netflix without the commercials.

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

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
"Easy Web Page Design" by Wally Wang

With programs like iWeb, you won't have to spend a lot of time wrestling with the details of creating and managing your own Web site. Also, the iPhone 4 Case Program app lets you pick a free bumper case; new product announcements from Apple; free educational materials are available on the Web; and a tip on right-clicking on the title bar of a window to display the hierarchy of folders.

Every Macintosh comes with a free copy of iLife, which includes iPhoto (for managing digital photographs), GarageBand (for creating or editing music), iMovie (for editing digital video), and iWeb (for creating and editing Web pages).

The main appeal of iWeb is that it's free and provides plenty of templates for helping you create appealing Web pages quickly without knowing much about Web page design or graphic skills. The drawback is that if you later want to dig into the finer details of modifying or creating Web pages, you can't within iWeb. If you just want to create Web sites quickly and easily, iWeb might work for you. If you plan on doing more than just type text or drag and drop graphics to create a Web page, then you'll probably want to use a more powerful Web page editor such as Adobe's Dreamweaver (*www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver/whatisdreamweaver*).

The idea behind iWeb is that you focus on the content (text and graphics) and let the program worry about making it all look pretty. First, you choose a template that provides pre-designed Web pages for displaying different types of content such as blogs, videos, or photo albums. After you pick a template to use, then you can choose the specific type of Web page you want to create, such as a welcoming Web page that briefly describes your company or a Web page listing available podcasts for someone to download.
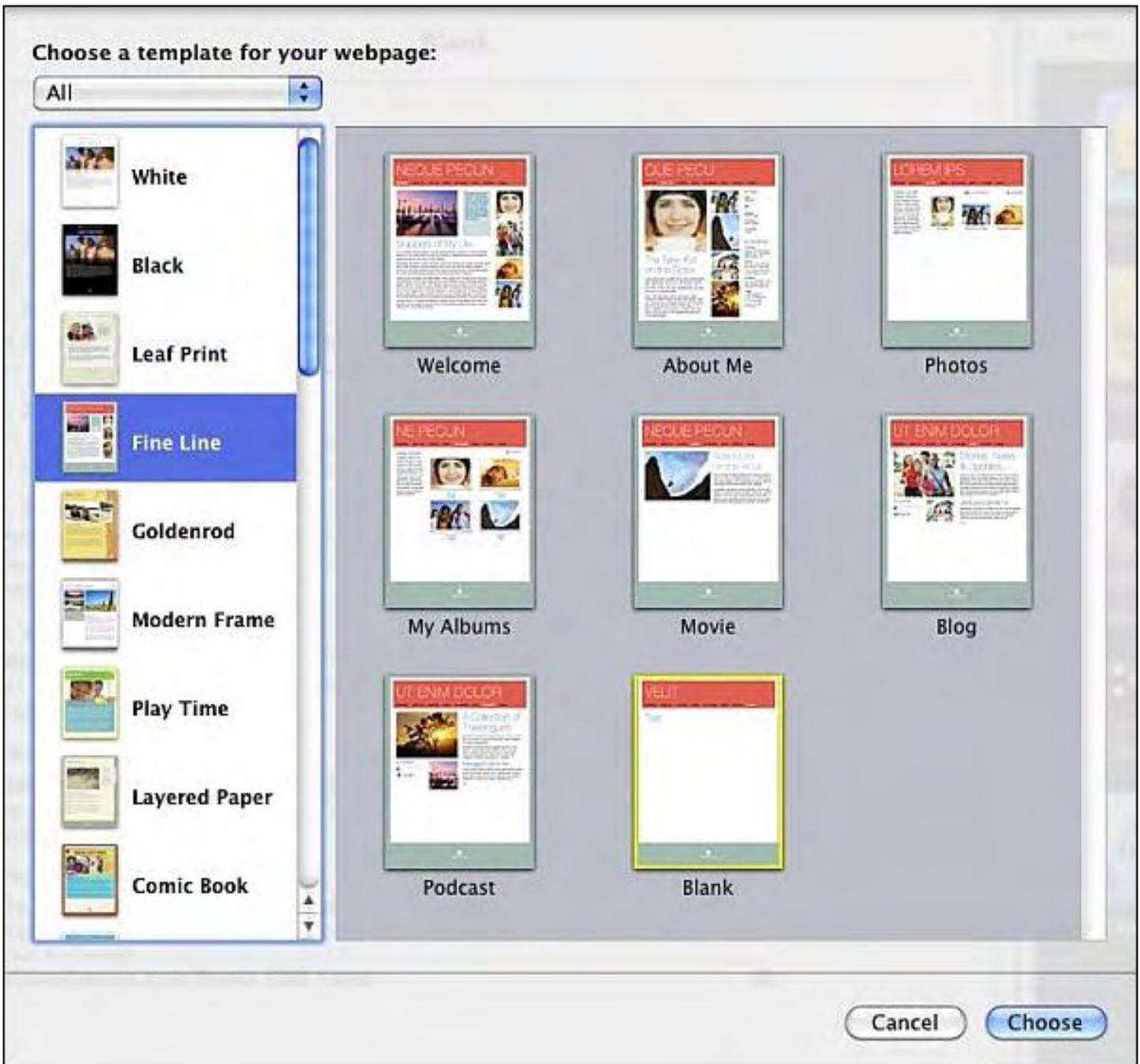
Figure 1. iWeb lets you choose a template for designing a Web page.

To help make creating Web pages easier, iWeb offers a handful of widgets that you can drag and drop on a Web page. Widgets provide different functions so you don't have to worry about writing HTML or JavaScript code to do something beyond displaying text or graphics. For example, one widget might let you display a YouTube video on your Web page, while another widget lets you display Google AdSense advertisements.
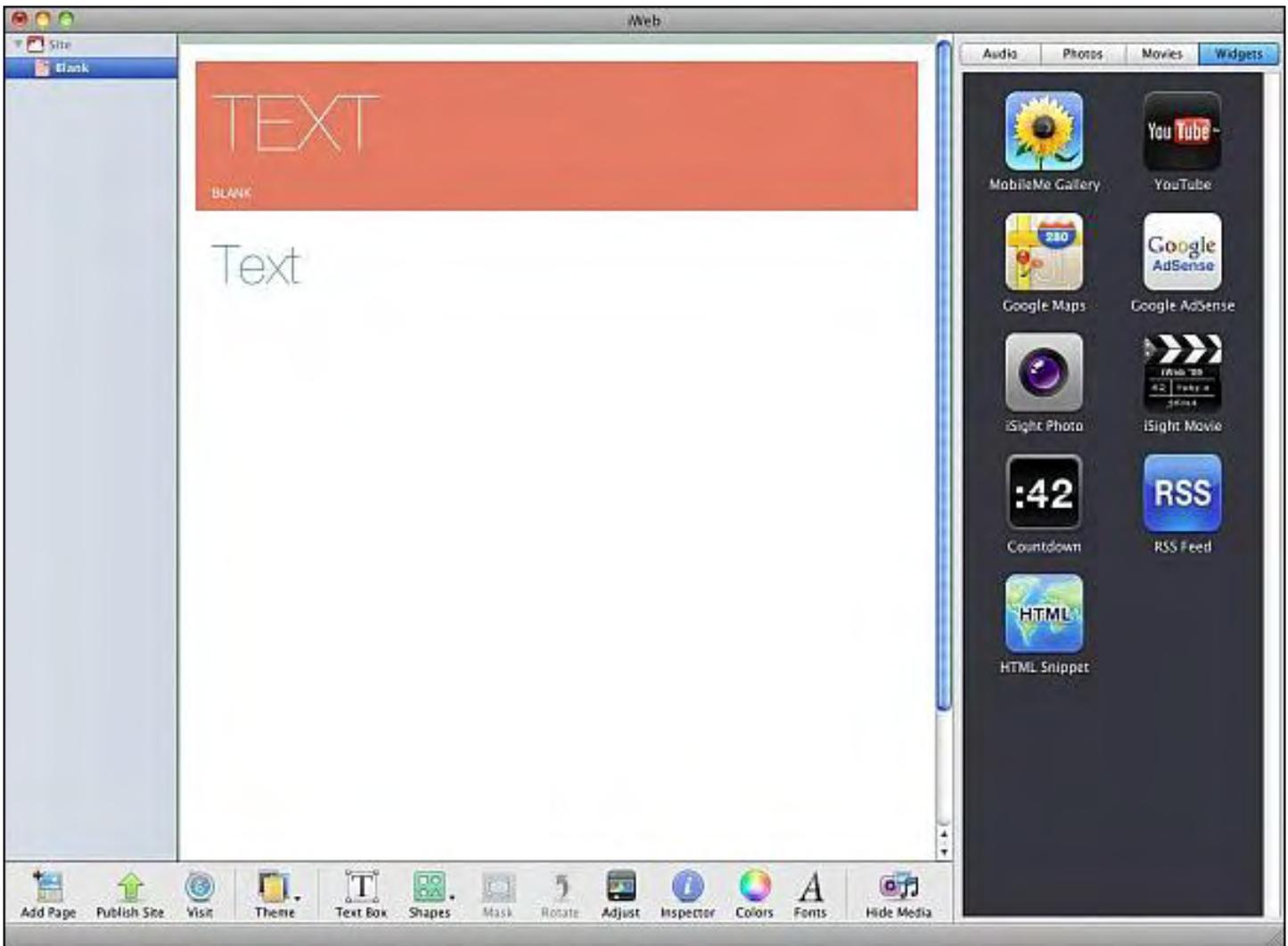
Figure 2. Widgets let you add sophisticated functionality to a Web page without any coding.

Once you're done creating your Web pages, you can upload them to a MobileMe account or any FTP server, which allows you to create and update sites hosted by companies such as GoDaddy.

Figure 3. iWeb can upload your Web pages to MobileMe or any FTP server.

Since iWeb comes free with every Macintosh, you have nothing to lose by trying it out and seeing if it will meet your needs. If you like the idea behind iWeb but find it may be too limited, consider moving up to similar, but more advanced, Web page designing programs such as RapidWeaver (*www.realmacsoftware.com/rapidweaver*) or Sandvox (*www.karelia.com*).

The big question is whether you need to create a Web site at all. With social networking sites like Facebook attracting millions of people, you can start a Web site that nobody will know about, or create a Facebook site that can instantly

attract an audience right away. Then again, you could always do both, and with programs like iWeb, you won't have to spend a lot of time wrestling with the details of creating and managing your own Web site.

Free Bumper Cases for the iPhone

If you're one of those with reception problems using the iPhone 4, just visit the App Store and search for the "iPhone 4 Case Program" app. After you install and run this app on your iPhone 4, it verifies that you are indeed using an iPhone 4, and then it gives you a list of bumper case options to choose from.

By signing in you agree to the
Terms and Conditions
of the iPhone 4 Case Program.

Figure 4. The iPhone 4 Case Program app lets you pick a free bumper case.

After you select a bumper case, the app submits your order. Within 3-5 weeks, your free bumper case should arrive at your door, so you can wrap it around your iPhone 4 and eliminate the problem of lost reception.

While all the other mobile phone manufacturers jumped all over this antenna reception problem, Apple has released information explaining how all mobile phones suffer reception problems (*www.apple.com/antenna*) when held incorrectly.

The facts are that every mobile phone has antenna reception problems because the antenna always risks getting blocked by a hand wrapped around it. Nokia's own user manual even cautions about this problem (*www. businessinsider.com/nokias-instruction-manual-2010-6*).

Figure 5. Nokia's user manual warns that reception can suffer if you cover the antenna with your hand.

What needs further investigation is how many iPhone 4 users have problems with this issue compared to users of other mobile phones. Do other mobile phones have less of a problem with antenna reception because their designs are superior, or because fewer people use them so there are fewer people to notice and complain about this problem?

This antenna problem sounds strangely familiar to the complaint about the iPhone's lack of Flash support. For years, many mobile phones offered Web browsers, yet nobody complained about the lack of Flash support on those phones. Only after the iPhone appeared did everyone complain about how the iPhone lacked Flash support, as if the problem was unique solely to the iPhone.

Most likely, the antenna problem isn't affecting every iPhone 4 or else all those millions of users would be clamoring for their money back. Nobody is arguing that there isn't a problem, but that problem is neither specific to the iPhone 4 nor a flaw affecting every iPhone 4 in the same way that poor placement of the gas tank made every Ford Pinto likely to burst into flames if hit from behind.

For those unhappy with the iPhone 4, return it for a full refund or get a free bumper case to prevent this problem altogether. Then sit back and wait for everyone to blame Apple for a new problem that has actually been around for years.

New Products From Apple

Apple recently announced new iMac and Mac Pro models. The new iMacs start at $1,199 and come with either a 21.5 or 27-inch built-in display. The low-end iMac comes with a 3.06GHz Intel Core i3 processor, while the high-end iMac uses a 3.6GHz Intel Core i5 processor. The Mac Pro starts at $2,499 and offers up to 12 processing cores, for those who need absolute speed and power.

Included with every iMac and Mac Pro is Apple's Magic Mouse, which lets you scroll vertically or horizontally by using the touch-sensitive surface on top of the Magic Mouse. In case you prefer a real trackpad, similar to those found in laptop Macintosh models, you can buy an optional $69 Magic TrackPad (*www.engadget.com/2010/06/07/ apples-magic-trackpad-revealed*).

This wireless Magic Trackpad lets you use finger gestures such as pinch and rotate to control items on the screen, essentially duplicating the trackpad found on MacBook Pros for use with desktop Macintoshes. If you get a Mac Pro, you can also buy Apple's new 27-inch Cinema Display for $999 (although for that price, you could almost get an entire iMac instead).

Coming soon in August, Apple plans to release a new version of iLife, which will update all the iLife programs including iPhoto, iMovie, GarageBand and iWeb. All iLife programs will be 64-bit programs, with iWeb going through the most drastic makeover of all the iLife programs. The new iWeb will create Web pages that follow the HTML 5 standard, which is the standard that Apple is promoting instead of Flash for displaying video and animated graphics on Web pages. There's also a rumored additional program that will be included in the new iLife. Perhaps this new program will help people create e-books using the epub standard? Maybe it's a program for letting you run iPhone/iPad apps on a Macintosh? Then again, it could be a new tool for helping people create Macintosh/iPhone/iPad programs quickly and easily without wading through Objective-C programming?

Although nobody knows the actual dates when Apple will announce the new iLife suite, chances are good that it will arrive by August to catch the back-to-school buying frenzy. Then you can expect even more students to start using the Macintosh, which will gradually filter into the corporate world as students graduate and bring their Macintosh skills into the working world.

Learning on a Computer

Load iTunes, connect to the Internet, and you can visit Apple's iTunes University to access free college lectures on a variety of topics from history and computer programming to philosophy and foreign language lessons. The best part

about iTunes University is that every course is free.

In case you want access to more free educational materials, visit the Khan Academy (*www.khanacademy.org*), which consists of more than 1,400 videos explaining everything from accounting and physics to algebra and biology. More amazingly, all of these courses were created by one man, Salman Khan.

Salman Khan's goal is to provide information to everyone for free. If you're struggling with a particular topic at school, view one of Salman Kahn's videos to provide a new perspective on the topic. If you're just curious about complex topics like differential equations, DNA, or the causes of the current financial crisis, watch one of Khan's lessons on your computer, iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch.

Figure 6. The Kahn Academy provides free lessons in a variety of topics.

By learning different topics, you can expand your mind. By reviewing familiar topics, you can refresh your memory and keep your current skills sharp. With free access to educational courses, there's no reason why anyone can't start learning something new at no cost, courtesy of the Khan Academy, a computer, and the Internet.

*   *   *

One of the most confusing parts of using any computer is storing and finding files again. With so many folders tucked inside other folders, it's easy to save a file and never know where you put it.

To help you remember where you saved a file, Mac OS X offers a way to view the hierarchy of folders that hold a particular file. Just open a file within any program, such as Pages or Microsoft Word, and right-click on the title bar of the window displaying the contents of that file.
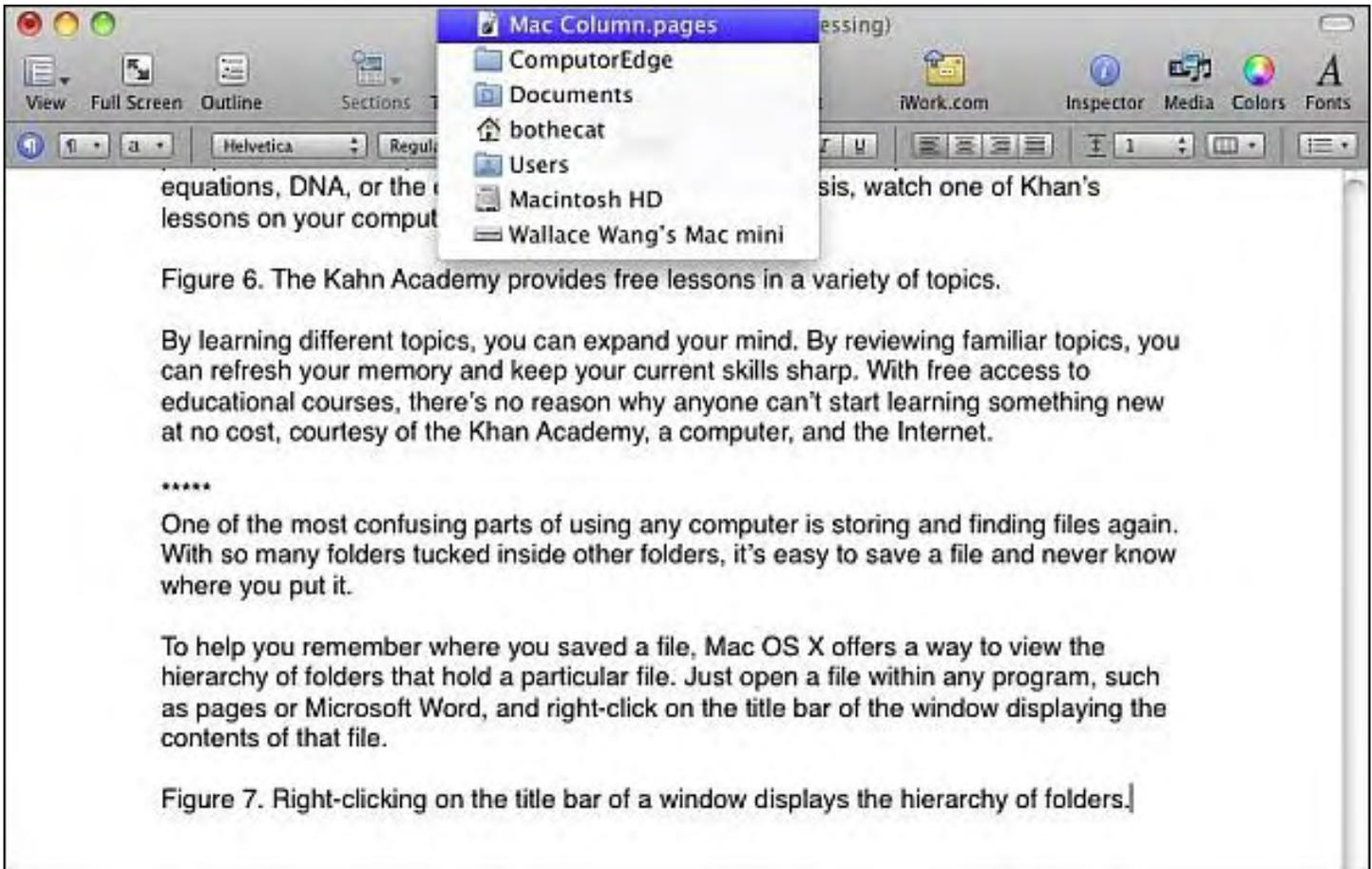
Figure 7. Right-clicking on the title bar of a window displays the hierarchy of folders.

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 2010 for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987*),
Beginning Programming for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702*),
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*),

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*), 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*), 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*), My New iPad (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme- 20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758*), 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*), How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (*www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896*).

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*.

Rob, The ComputorTutor: Tech Solutions with Microsoft Word

"Mail Merge" by Rob Spahitz

With Mail Merge, Word can create multiple copies of a document, each customized according to the incoming data.

Now that we've completed exploring ways to make business cards, printed envelopes and mailing labels, a good topic is the Mail Merge. With Mail Merge, Word can take information from a file and insert the collection of pieces into some place-holders into a document and create, basically, form letters—it can create multiple copies of a document, each customized according to the incoming data.

Notes and Tidbits

In the last few weeks, we went through the process of taking an envelope and label template and creating our own page from it. Word 2010 also offers a wizard process to help you build these. If you go to the Mailings menu tab, the Create group box has separate options for each of these. When you pick either one, it opens a dialog box and selects the tab for the piece you selected, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.
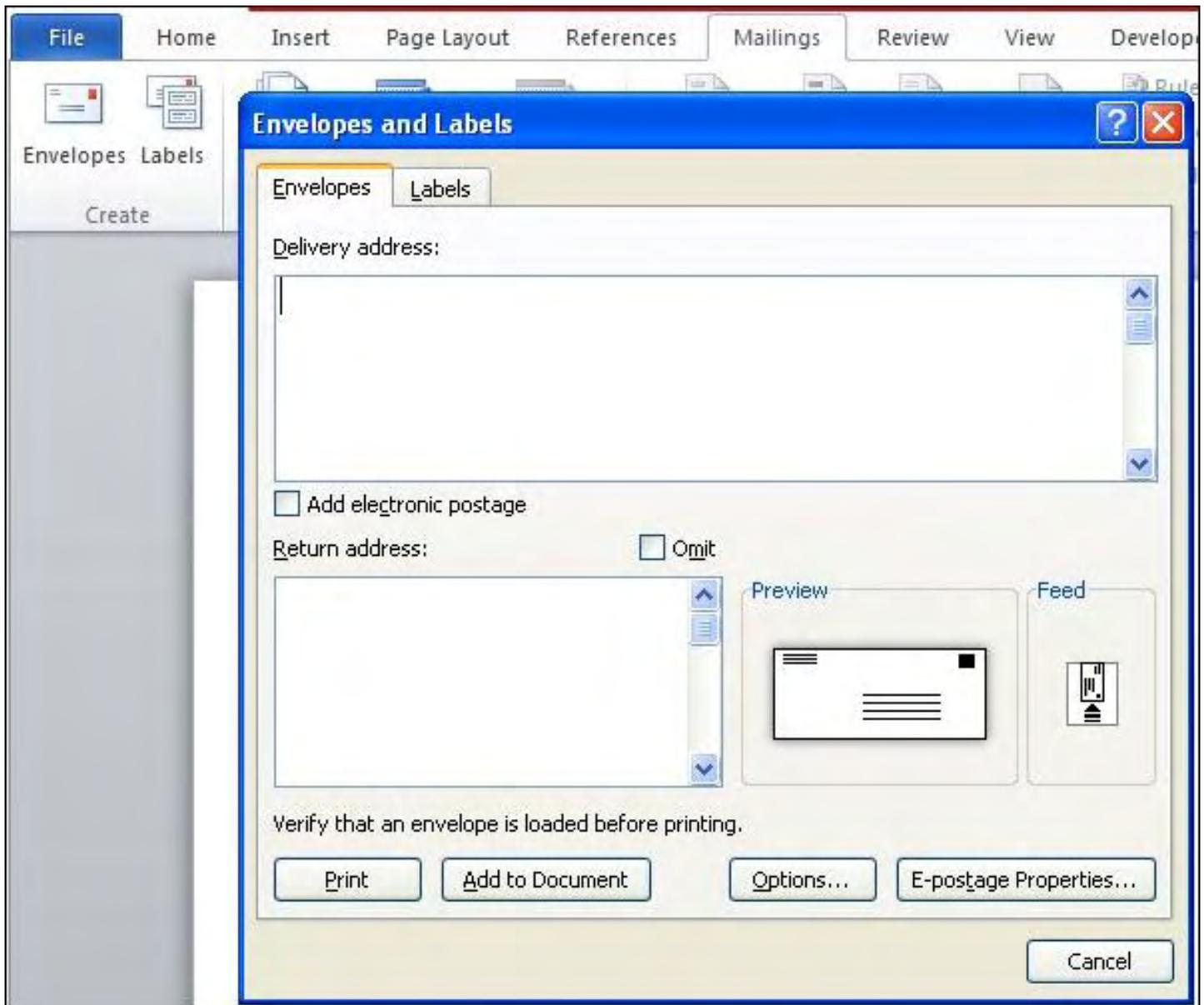
Figure 1. Word 2010 Envelope Wizard.
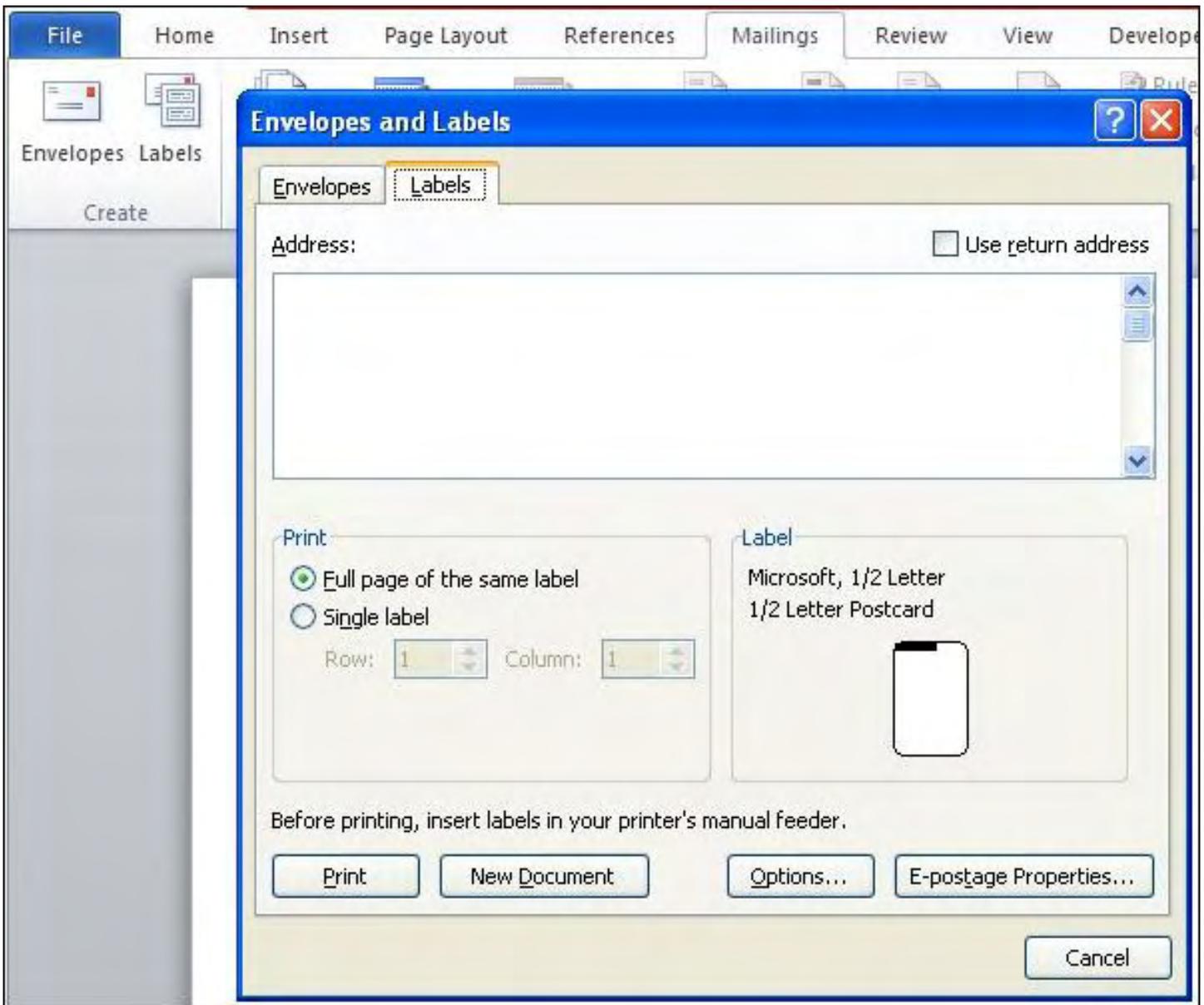
Figure 2. Word 2010 Label Wizard.

By using these choices, you can quickly print envelopes or labels. I leave it up to the reader to explore these options further.

Data Files

First, in order to start this process, you will need a data file and a plan for how you want to use the data. One common file that can be used to hold data is the CSV file. This is simply a text file with pieces of information separated by commas. CSV is an acronym for Comma Separated Values. In essence, a CSV file is a mini-database. These files often contain one row to identify the pieces of data, in the order they will appear, and then a collection of additional rows with values that match that order.

For example, you might have information about your friends and you'd like to send out formal letters about an awesome party you are planning. Although the information can be stored in many ways, a typical CSV file might look like this:

First Name, Last Name, Address, City, State, Zip Code, Phone #

Rob, Spahitz, 101 Broadway, San Diego, CA, 92101, 619-555-1212
Jack, Dunning, 1234 Las Vegas Blvd, Reno, NV, 87654, 505-555-1212
Wally, Wang, 16 Apple Drive, Silicon Valley, CA, 95001, 807-555-1212
Charles, Carr, 2130 Balloon Drive, Albuquerque, NM, 88213, 715-555-1212
Roy, Davis, 12975 Pikes Peak Place, Aspen, CO, 75311, 409-555-1212

If you were to load this into Excel, it would appear similar to Figure 3.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	First Name	Last Name	Address	City	State	Zip Code	Phone #
2	Rob	Spahitz	101 Broadway	San Diego	CA	92101	619-555-1212
3	Jack	Dunning	1234 Las Vegas Blvd	Reno	NV	87654	505-555-1212
4	Wally	Wang	16 Apple Drive	Silicon Valley	CA	95001	807-555-1212
5	Charles	Carr	2130 Balloon Drive	Albuquerque	NM	88213	715-555-1212
6	Roy	Davis	12975 Pikes Peak Place	Aspen	CO	75311	409-555-1212
7							

Figure 3. Excel view of CSV file data.

Notice how Excel recognized this and treats the commas and separators between cell values. By looking at this, it should be pretty clear, for example, what ZIP code matched Wally, and what information and address is associated with the city of Reno. In the database world, the top row contains field names and each subsequent row is a data record. Also, any particular column contains information for the field name listed at the top.

So how does this help with Mail Merge? Well, if you have data that is in a very organized format such as a CSV file, a tab-separated file (with tabs rather than commas), an Excel spreadsheet, a "real" database, or any of a variety of other sources of data, you are ready to merge each record into a separate page in your Word document, where the data can match up specific fields on a template-like page.

Merging Data

Using Mail Merge in Word 2010 requires two parts. One part is the document template, which is your form letter. The other part is the data that will be fed into the template. Go to the Mailings tab and in the Start Mail Merge group box, you'll see two items. The first one, Start Mail Merge, lets you select the type of document you want to work with and also launch the wizard, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Mail Merge Settings.

The top settings, Letters, E-mail Messages, Envelopes, etc. will reset the document to match the category and may, as with Envelopes, ask for additional information. At the bottom you can begin the wizard by selecting "Step by Step Mail Merge Wizard." If you select that, the document will shift to the left and on the right side you will see a panel showing options, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Mail Merge Wizard.

We'll be choosing Letters, which was the default. Near the bottom, click on the blue text "Next: Starting document" to get to step two, and initially select the default option for "Use the current document," click on the Next link at the bottom and you will be at step three, ready to locate your list, as shown in Figure 6.
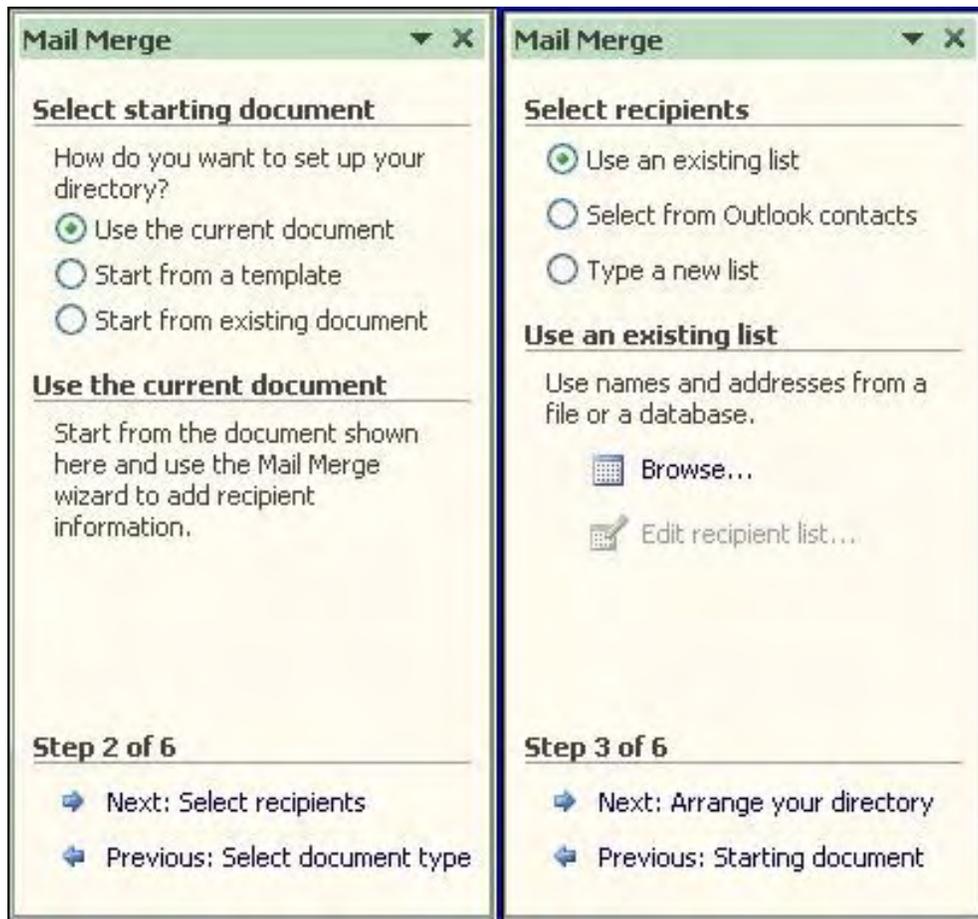
Figure 6. Mail Merge Steps two and three.

If you had previously created that CSV file (which is as simple as taking a text file in CSV format and renaming it with a CSV extension), then this will be your source for the data. As seen in the wizard, you can also select people from Outlook or create a new list. I'll use my CSV list.

In the middle of the wizard, it has a Browse link under the label "Use names and addresses from a file or database." You could also use, for example, a query from Access, a sheet from Excel, a Web page, or data passed in from another source. Click on the Browse link. By default, Word will send you to a folder named My Data Sources. If you created a CSV file it will probably NOT be located there. Navigate to the place where you saved it and open it. Note that you could also filter the list using the File Types drop-down list at the bottom of that window to show just text files if you'd like to see the CSV files (and a few others).

After selecting it, you will be shown the data that it found, as seen in Figure 7.
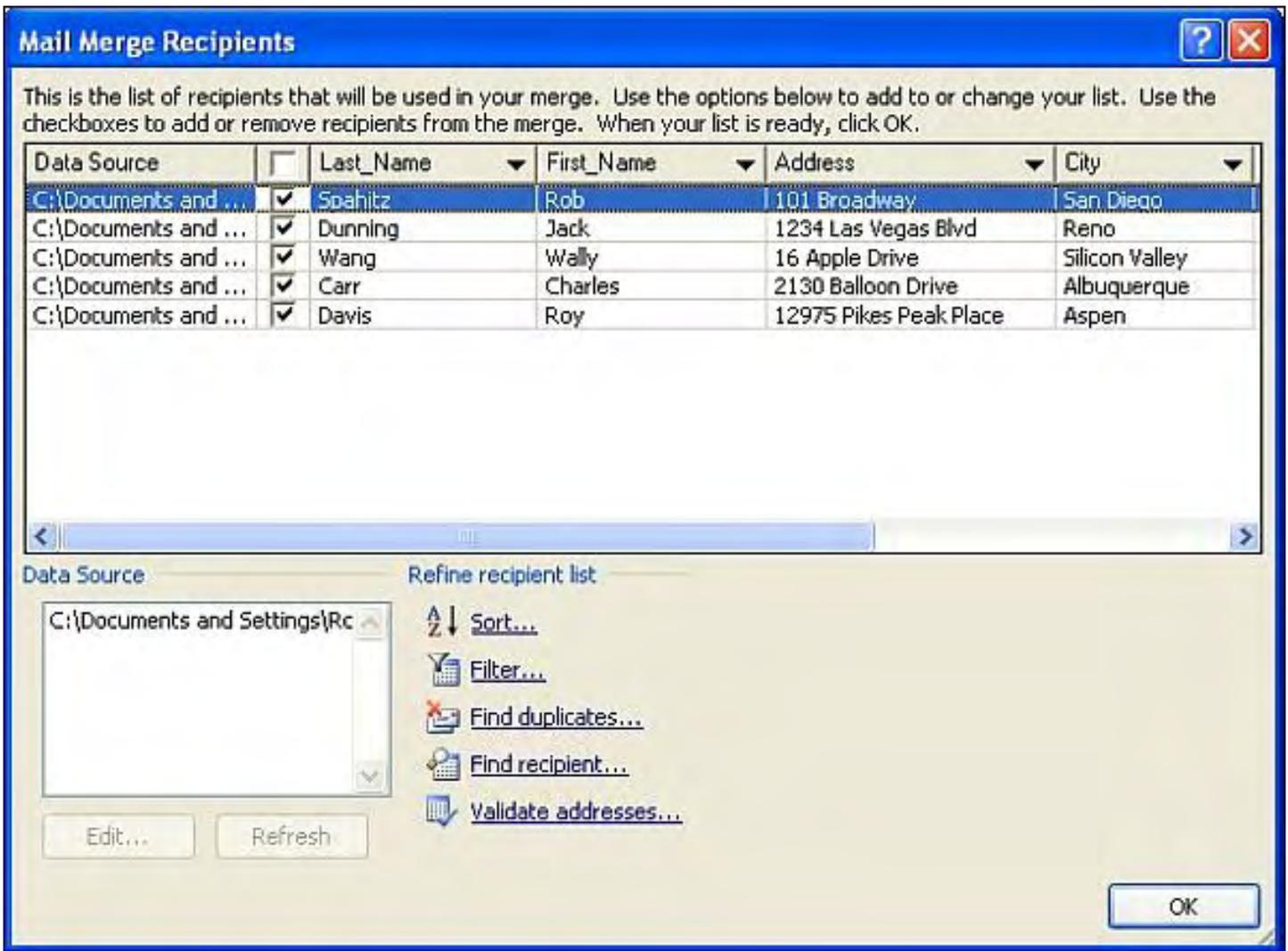
Figure 7. Loaded Mail Merge data.

Feel free to uncheck any entries that you do not want to include or otherwise adjust, then click the OK button. The updated list will be noted where you previously saw the Browse link.

Click Next to get to Step 4. In this step, as seen in Figure 8, you should link all of the pieces of data to the fields that you will be using in your document. If you used names like mine as a heading, Word actually recognizes all of them; if it doesn't, clicking on the various links will let you connect your fields with pieces that will be used in your document later.
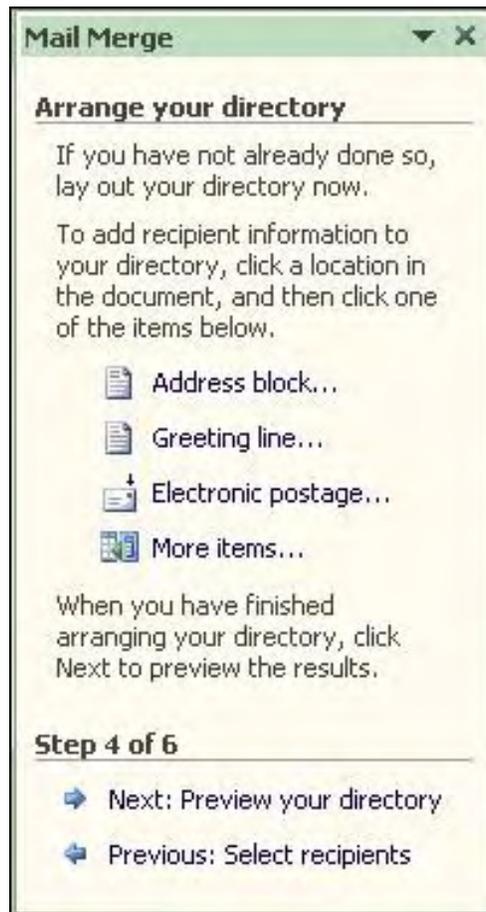
Figure 8. Data Link from Data Source to Word.

For example, to connect the pieces for the address in your form letter, click on the Address block link. A window like Figure 9 appears.
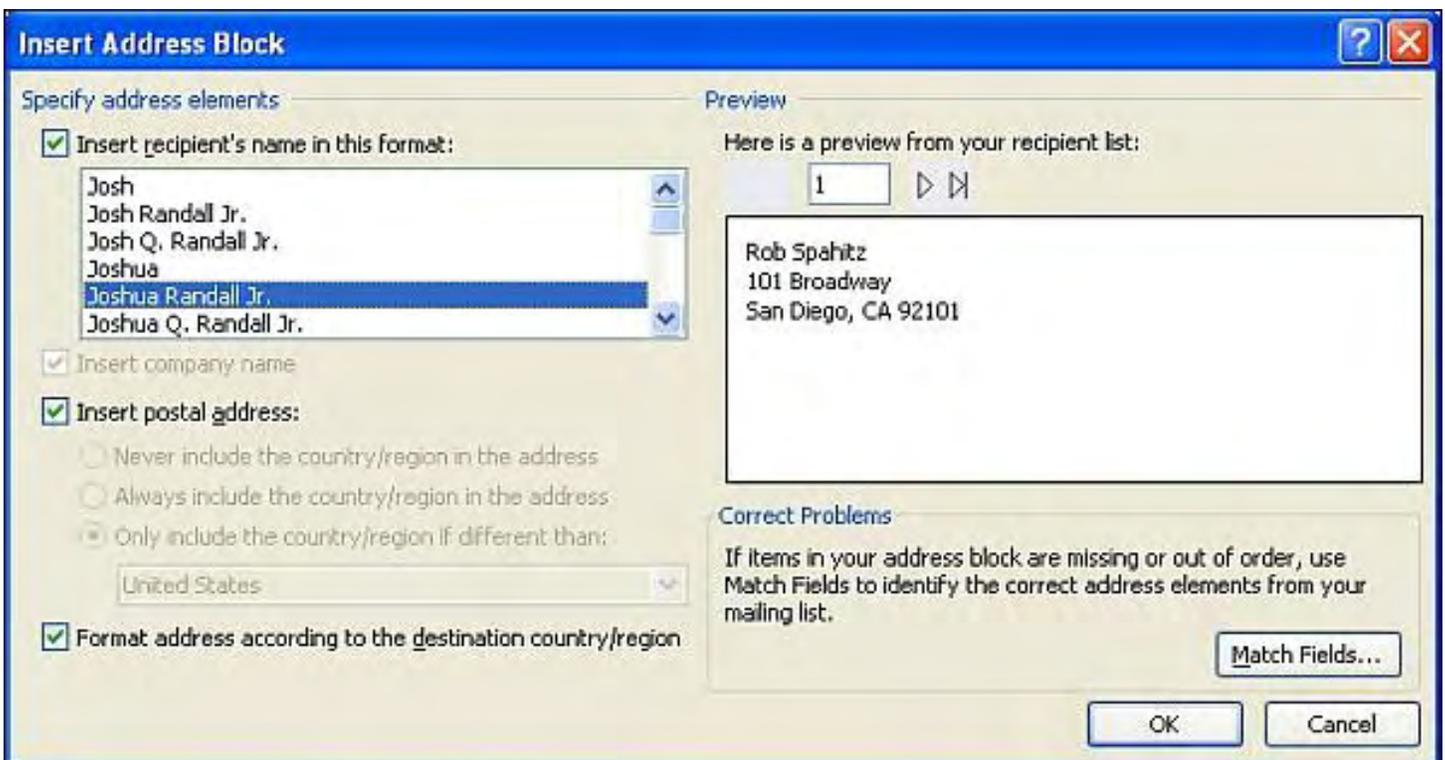
Figure 9. Linking Address Information.

Based on the information you supplied in the source data file, such as first name, middle initial and last name, the pieces will be assembled according to the format chosen on the left, and displayed as a sample on the right. Now you'll want to connect the fields, so click on the Match Field button to see something like Figure 10.
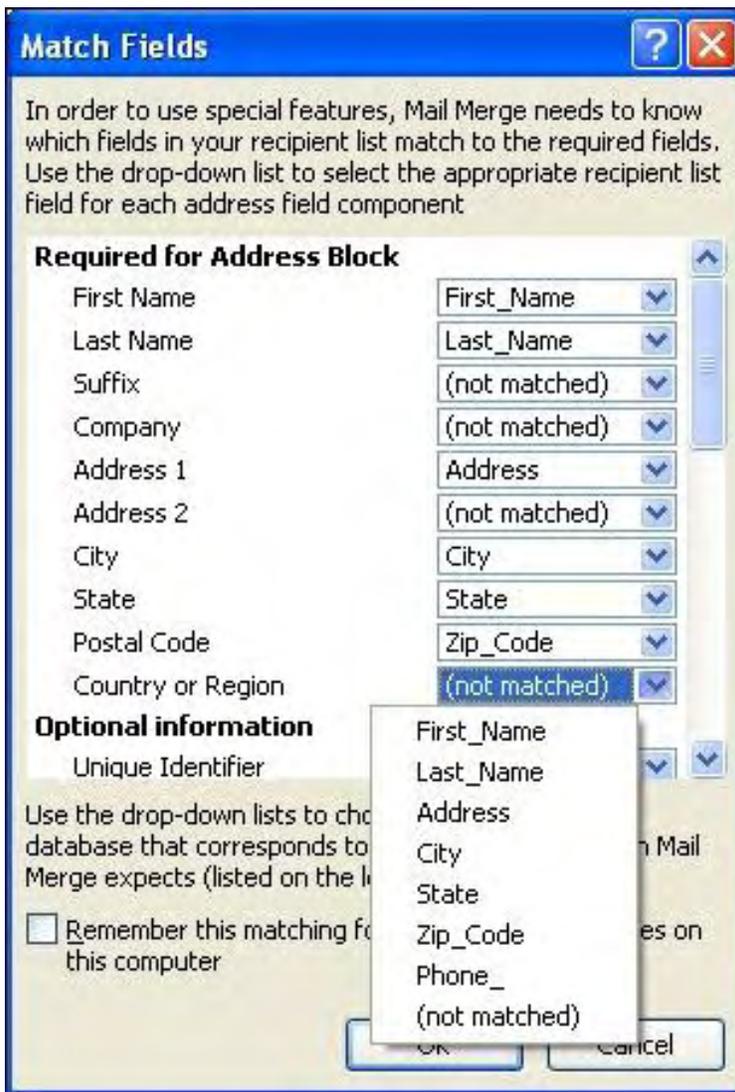
Figure 10. Matching Fields.

As seen, the left column shows things that Word would like to use for various parts related to an address. Your job is to go to the drop-down lists on the right and specify which parts match. When you click, you'll see the fields that Word found from your source data file, as seen next to the Country item. If you used a CSV file like I did, the list should closely match your CSV headings (not including certain special symbols like the "#" from the "Phone #" column). After matching all the pieces that you care about, click the OK button on this form and the previous one.

When you complete this, your document will contain a marker indicating that the AddressBlock will appear. When you click on the Next link in the wizard panel, the Address block is expanded to show the first data record, similar to the example in Figure 9. In step 5, you can preview your data and see what other records will show. When you're happy with these, click on the Next link for the final step, as shown in Figure 11.
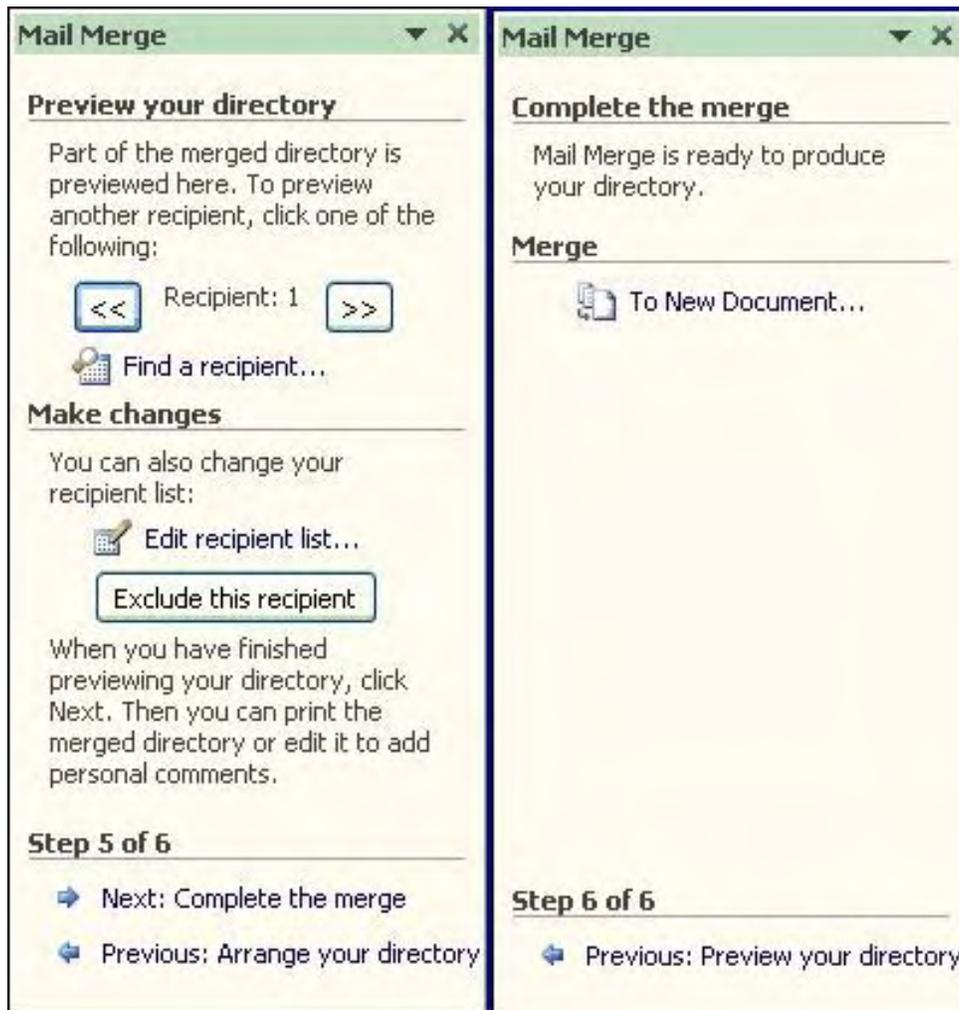
Figure 11. Mail Merge Data Preview and Wrap-up.

The final step is to build the document. In Step 6, click on To New Document, and a prompt appears asking which record(s) to use to create the pages. By default you will get All. Click on the OK button and the pages will be built according to the placement of the fields.

Next time, we'll explore more of this since we did not have a good starting document and therefore the final product was simply a block of addresses.

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

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

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

iPad! Look Out Behind You!—Velocity Micro has announced a surprisingly affordable lineup of Android-powered mobile devices; Windows Phone 7 Starts at Square One—The Windows Phone 7 is a fresh start for Microsoft; HP LaserJet PRO P1102w—A new model replaces a venerable old workhorse; The Magical iPad Tour—Convenience, efficiency and versatility define the iPad.

iPad! Look Out Behind You!

Velocity Micro has announced a surprisingly affordable lineup of Android-powered mobile devices. Company PR guy Josh Covington elaborates:

Taking e-readers light-years past e-ink, the Cruz Reader features a sleek design, touchscreen display and tons of multimedia features. The Cruz Tablet offers the same multimedia capabilities as the Cruz Reader with more storage and a multitouch screen. Perfect for kids, the Cruz StoryPad offers a touchscreen, interactive content and intuitive interface. Best of all, the Cruz line starts at just $149.

"Since 1992, Velocity Micro has been dedicated to building remarkable consumer electronics," said Randy Copeland, president and CEO of Velocity Micro. "With the development of the Cruz line, we were able to take those enthusiast sensibilities and package them for the mainstream consumer to create a product that's not only amazing, but affordable as well."

At less than one pound and about a half-inch thick, the $199, 7-inch Cruz Reader goes everywhere you do, making it perfect for students, avid readers, frequent flyers and techies. Additional features such as video playback and Web browsing provide a much richer experience than traditional e-ink readers at a more reasonable price than a tablet.

At $299, the Cruz Tablet offers a truly mobile experience at an affordable price, finally giving consumers an Android-based tablet alternative.

Cruz Reader key specs and features:

• 4:3 aspect ratio, 800x600 full color touch screen display—ideal for viewing e-books and magazines, plus Web pages and movies

• Google Android Operating System

• 802.11b/g Wi-Fi and full Web browser support

• High-res video and high quality audio playback with no proprietary content restrictions

• Built-in Dictionary, Notepad, Calendar, Alarm Clock, Contacts, Games and other useful apps

• Built-in accelerometer, tilt activated

• Enough built-in storage for hundreds of books

• USB and SD card slot for upgradable storage, including a 2GB SD card

• Up to 10 hours of use and more than 24 hours of standby time, with a replaceable battery

• Access to more than two million e-books via included Borders E-book library portal application

• Access to the Cruz Market, an open content portal for downloading apps, magazines and videos from a broad array of content providers.

Cruz Tablet key specs and features:

• 7-inch 16:9 ratio, 800x480 capacitive display—great for viewing widescreen video

• 802.11n Wi-Fi for faster wireless connectivity

• Integrated microphone for voice recording

• 4GB of built in storage with an 8GB SD card in the box for additional storage of high res photos, video and music

Rounding out the Cruz line, the $149 Cruz StoryPad packs tons of multimedia features into a kid-friendly, drop resistant package, letting children read, learn and interact using a simple and intuitive touch interface. **Features include:**

• 7-inch 4:3 800x600 full color touch screen display

• Simplistic and intuitive navigation

• High-res video and high quality audio playback

• Pre-installed audio book content—reads classic stories as the child follows along

• SD card for additional storage

• Available in pink, blue and green

The Cruz Reader and Cruz StoryPad will be available from most major retailers and direct from Velocity Micro in August with the Cruz Tablet following on September 1. For more information or to sign up for e-newsletter updates, visit *www.CruzReader.com*.

Windows Phone 7 Starts at Square One

CRC Public Relations sent us this superb article from Gizmodo.com's Matt Buchanan about Microsoft's latest foray into the smartphone market (and perhaps last chance before the boarding ramp is pulled up for good). Even though the new phone won't make its debut until the fall, some critics who have already seen betas are liking what they see. Some of Buchanan's observations:

"What's this?" a girl at a party asked, as I handed her my phone. She touched a square, and everything flipped away. "It's Microsoft's brand-new phone. Kind of like a fresh start," I explained. "Oh. It's... neat."

That's the most apt way to describe Windows Phone 7, really. It's a fresh start, and it's neat. It's a clean slate that Microsoft can use as a foundation to build something entirely new, and it's not like any other phone you've used. It manages to do something that's sadly rare for Microsoft, which is to leverage all of these different Microsoft products and services—Bing, Xbox Live, Zune to name a few—and seamlessly bring them together in a single, polished product. Which is exactly what Windows Phone 7 needs to be.

Windows Phone 7 is coming out this year, in the next few months—October, possibly—and the basic rundown of

"What is Windows Phone 7?" can be found here and there. The version that I've been using for the last few days on prototype hardware (a Samsung phone that will never be sold) has been variously described to me by Microsoft as "beta 2," a "close-to-release-candidate build" and a "technical preview." Developers will be getting phones loaded with it shortly in order to have apps ready for launch. It's representative of what the final Windows Phone 7 interface and experience will be like, though two critical parts were missing, because they're still under heavy construction: Xbox Live and the Apps Marketplace.

The phrase "authentically digital" makes me want to barf rainbow pixels, but Microsoft's description of the Windows Phone 7 interface is truth: It doesn't try to feel like anything but a flat, digital interface. There is no attempt to depict three dimensionality or any kind of real-world mimesis. No gradients, shadows, gloss or shading. Everything is crisp and flat. Everything pops, bright primary colors and white text on a black landscape. Touch a tile on the main screen, and the interface flies away like exploding puzzle pieces, revealing the app you wanted to see. Oversized text is the order of the day. (Yes, it still runs off the screen in lots of place.) It feels gloriously modern. I love it. I wonder how gracefully it'll age.

Microsoft doesn't treat the main components of the phone—like Music+Video, People, Pictures, Xbox Live—as apps. They're "hubs." Which means they're panoramas with two or three or even four screens that you swipe left or right to move from one screen to another. For instance: In the People hub, one screen is all of my contacts. Flick to the right, and it's recent contacts. Flick again, and it's "what's new," which is a newsfeed of my friends' updates from Facebook and Windows Live. (Well, it would have Windows Live friend updates, if I had any friends that used Windows Live, or the Twitter service was turned on yet—but more on that later.) You can get a sense of how developers will be able to expand on hubs in a way that's more integrated than separate apps you install. Overall, the concept works really well, once you get it.

Live Tiles are what make the start screen good, and mostly eliminate the need for widgets. They're the giant squares of, um, stuff that make up the home page. The tile for every application is dynamic, so one for my account mail will show me how many messages I have, while the tile for a person I have pinned to the start screen will show me their latest photo. Unfortunately, weather isn't a built-in app, so you can't see what's up at a glance—at least not with the early app that Microsoft made available in the Marketplace. But there's a lot of potential in this concept, ridding the need to go through the motions of opening an app when all that's needed is a shot of info.

There are three buttons that'll be on the front of every Windows Phone 7 phone: Start, Back and Search. Start works just like the home button on the iPhone—it takes you back to the start page. Back is much like Android—it shoots you back a screen. Search is contextual, which means sometimes you don't know what it'll bring up. In Maps, it looks up where you want to go; in People, it looks through contacts; from the start screen, it's Bing search, which is comprised of a general Web search, local listings and news.

I didn't think to use the search button as often as I should have. Like the Zune HD, WP7 is a very list-oriented interface when it comes to displaying a lot of information or options (versus, say, a grid). The main contacts page in the people is a very long list, since it brings in all of your Facebook contacts, without a way to filter them by network. The right side of the start screen is a long list of installed apps—you get the idea. Microsoft wants you to search for things or use voice commands to quickly get to them, but the most natural reaction would be to scroll for a long time.

Notifications, like for text messages, unobtrusively show up at the top of the screen, where you can ignore them or act on them. It's how notifications should be. Pressing the volume key neatly brings up Zune player controls at the top of the screen as well. There are a few other quirks to Windows Phone 7's deliberately window-less interface. The cell signal typically isn't visible; you have to tap the top of the screen to make it pop up. The indication that it's syncing or updating is subtle, a series of dots running across the top of the screen.

The app bar is exemplary of Windows Phone 7's most aggressively iconographic tendencies. It's a small menu bar that runs alongside the bottom of many, if not most apps; it's where the buttons to do things are often located, like composing a new message in Outlook. The buttons have no labels, just hieroglyphs. There's an ellipsis in the top right hand corner of the bar—it's supposed to indicate "press here, or drag up," which will reveal the app bar in its full glory, with text labels for the buttons, along with a list of other things you can do, like access settings. While the app bar's behavior will be consistent across every app—kind of like a more obvious, onscreen version of Android's menu button —it's something people will definitely have to learn to use. The major issue is that it doesn't eliminate the need for long presses—pressing and holding down, like on a picture in the gallery app, is still the only way to trigger certain things, and you can never quite tell when to use it.

The touch keyboard looks stark, almost advertising that it's a crappy experience. Tiny little letters set against unforgivingly pointy little rectangles. It's deceptive, since in terms of typability, it's second to the iPhone. It's a wonderful keyboard: fast, smooth, intuitive and totally natural, even on this phone's narrowish screen.

Text selection is weird, but workable—pressing and holding over editable text brings up a fat green text cursor that you can slide between the letters, sticking it wherever you need it.

Given that it's a beta OS running on prototype hardware, the interface's speed was impressive. It's exactly like a Zune HD. No stuttering or slowdown, just zoomy flips and swoops, back and forth between apps and the start screen. Of course, it needs this kind of speed, since it like's a return to iPhone pre-iOS4—there's no multitasking for third-party apps. (No, not even Pandora will run in the background.) It seems appropriate to mention now that there's no copy and paste. A throwback to the halcyon days of 2009, Windows Phone 7 is the only modern smartphone that will be left in this position. It's clearly going to be painful. Maybe agonizing.

The price of Windows Phone 7's modernity, its difference, is something of a learning curve—or at least, that impression was more solidified after I handed the phone to a half dozen or so people over the weekend. All of them were lost, at least for a few minutes. Then I explained things. Then most of them said some variation of, "It's cool, I guess."

But, day to day, Windows Phone 7's interface does work. Well. It's quick, fluid, clean, modern. It's not perfect. It'll take a day to get used to. But I think most people will like it, if not love it. I do. The question is what it'll be like in a year, or two years, when it's more complete and filled out, less of a clean slate.

Read Matt Buchanan's entire review at Gizmodo (*gizmodo.com/5590327/windows-phone-7-in-depth-a-fresh-start*).

HP LaserJet PRO P1102w

Well, my old HP LaserJet IIIp finally gave up the ghost. One morning it came up with a 50 error and a "needs service" message.

I took it over to Rapid Refill and the tech there said the fuser had failed. Between parts and labor it would be more than $200 to fix. The manufacture date on the laser was 1991. I had bought it new, so it had served me well for 18 years or better.

To replace it, I picked up an HP LaserJet PRO P1102w at Best Buy on sale for $99.95. I thought it was a good buy as the list price at *www.shopping.hp.com* was $149.99. A Google search brought up prices ranging from $119 to $162.

Moving on, I decided not to use the wireless feature and connected by USB cable to my desktop. The interesting thing about this printer was that you did not load the drivers before connecting it to the computer as I have had to do on previous units. You plugged this one in, turned it on and plugged the USB cable in. Turns out the software drivers and programs are stored in the printer. You just follow the instructions and it sets itself up. It did come with a CD in case the self-install didn't work.

I turned on printer sharing and installed the printer on my other computers on the network. It was really a painless operation. Another nice feature is that you can leave it turned on and it will "turn off" when not being used. You can set the turn off time in the printer's properties. When I need to print a document from any of my computers, I just send it to the 1102w and it prints it and then turns off again. Congrats to HP!

It's amazing how far printer technology has come in the last two decades. The new unit prints a page in a fraction of the time that it took the old IIIp. One feels that the 1102w isn't paying as much attention to what it is doing as the venerable old IIIp did (a little humor).

Continuing on, I checked the price of toner cartridges for my new printer and they run $60 plus. While checking out the price online, I came across the site *www.tonerkits.com* and found that I could get a refill kit for as low as $12.99. For another $8 you can get a refill chip. You don't really need this, but if you don't replace it during the refill process, your printer will continue to report a "toner low" message after the refill.

Additionally, one would be wise to make a one-time purchase of the Universal Hole Tool for $11. If you use a drill to make the refill hole, you could get plastic shavings in the cartridge. This tool heats up and melts a nice clean hole for the refill. In any event, I ordered the kit, refill chip and tool. The cartridge that came with the printer only has enough toner for 700 pages. The normal cartridge will print 1,600.

I have not yet had to refill the cartridge, but I am looking forward to it. It will be a first for me. I hope I can do better than my attempts to refill ink cartridges on my inkjet printer. It used to take me days to get the ink off my fingers. We shall see.

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Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

The Magical iPad Tour

Exactly what is Apple's iPad (*www.apple.com/ipad*)? A bigger version of the iPod touch, or a cell phone substitute? A netbook for Web surfing on the road, or a scaled-down laptop computer for productivity out in the field? A new platform for gamers, or a color e-reader for bookworms (as suggested by a recent study of how owners use their iPads (*mashable.com/2010/07/08/ipad-usage-report/*))?

Is this device really "magical," to quote Steve Jobs, or is he just full of hype?

Figure 1. Apple's iPad, like the Macintosh before it, is elegant.

The iPad could be all of the above—iPod touch on steroids, mobile phone, netbook, laptop mini, portable game device, digital textbook/novel/magazine, and "magical." However, this reviewer has a somewhat different impression of what the iPad is. After about three months' usage, my impression is that convenience, efficiency and versatility are the key features that define the iPad. These features are the ones that will matter most to consumer and corporate users

rather than whether the iPad looks like an iPod touch; whether it can or cannot do everything a cell phone, netbook, laptop computer, game console, or dedicated e-book reader does. And here's why.

Convenience begins with the iPad's form factor. It weighs in at about 1.5 pounds—roughly the equivalent of six medium-sized bananas (*wiki.answers.com/Q/How_much_does_the_average_medium-sized_banana_weigh*), 0.7 liter of your favorite beverage, or one adult guinea pig (*wiki.answers.com/Q/How_much_does_a_guinea_pig_weigh*)—and measures about 9.5 inches tall, 7.5 inches wide, and 0.5-inch thick—just shy of a paper pad's dimensions. In my testing during a trip to Los Angeles, the iPad was much more convenient to pack and use while playing tourist than a notebook computer would have been. Compared to the conveniently sized iPad, today's laptop computers are akin to yesteryear's luggables. Consider putting a laptop computer in your biggest pocket or purse, or try using a laptop to watch a video while prone or supine on a bed or sofa. The Goldilocks iPad is just the right size, while the papa bear laptop is too heavy, too big, too inconvenient.

Convenience continues with the iPad's screen. It's a 9.7-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit glossy widescreen display with 1024 by 768 pixels (i.e., 4:3 aspect ratio) resolution at 132 pixels per inch. That's a much more convenient size for reading documents, Web pages, or e-books (less scrolling) than on a cell phone's or music player's dainty screen (eye strain). Additional conveniences of the iPad's screen include support for Apple's multitouch gesturing (taps, swipes, pinches, etc.) and in-plane switching (for clear viewing at an angle) technologies. To prevent inconvenient buildups and smudging of the user's oily fingerprints, the screen comes standard with a resistant oleophobic coating and is surrounded by a three-quarter-inch black bezel where thumbs can conveniently grab and hold the unit.

The iPad's ultimate convenience factor, however, is its immediate readiness for use. Just press the home button (located at the bottom of the screen) or the sleep-wake button (at the top of the aluminum frame), swipe the slider that displays, and boom—you're in business. No waiting for a cold bootup by a relatively pokey hard drive. I get more reading accomplished on the iPad during my restricted discretionary time each morning before work than I could ever hope to achieve on a laptop computer. Since time is priceless to me, the Wi-Fi iPad's cost ($499 for 16GB capacity, $599 for 32GB, or $699 for 64GB; tack on $130 plus monthly fees for contract-free access to AT&T's 3G services) is a reasonable setback.

Figure 2. The iPad's built-in apps are conveniently and efficiently launched from its home screen.

Which brings us to the iPad's efficiency. If time is money, the iPad's efficiency will save both. Swiping the aforementioned graphical slider brings you to the iPad's home screen where all of the iPad's pre-installed apps (Calendar, Contacts, iPod, Mail, Maps, Notes, Photos, Safari, Videos and more) are immediately accessible; no opening or drilling down through folders is required to reach the program you want to use. In fact, instead of launching programs by moving and double-clicking an attached pointing device, you simply use your own anatomical pointing device—a finger—to tap the app's icon on the iPad's home screen. These apps are efficient, too; they're lean (built with essential features that users actually will use) rather than bloatware (stuffed with feature creep that has little, if any, utility).

One more thing—the iPad's operating system is essentially transparent to the user. No file system to maintain or navigate, no desktop to clutter up with icons or keep tidy, no accidental trashing or deleting valuable documents (there is no Trash or Recycle Bin), and no worries about backing up (your computer's iTunes automatically handles that chore each time the iPad is connected to it). The iPad efficiently sidesteps all the time-consuming housekeeping drudgery inherent to the operating system installed on netbook and notebook computers.

What about versatility? The iPad is anything but a one-trick pony. Here's my list of devices and items (besides music player, cell phone, e-book reader, or game console) that the iPad readily replaces (some might require additional software): day planner, calendar, clipboard, looseleaf or spiral-bound notebook, picture frame, CD or DVD player, small-screen TV, alarm clock, radio, Thomas guide, voice recorder, public speaking/presentation aid/teleprompter. Third-party developers are inventing myriad additional ways for putting the iPad to good use.

Does this mean that the iPad is a flawless product? Phttt. One downside is that holding the iPad without support by your thighs or a third-party stand for more than 10–15 minutes will fatigue your hands and wrists. The built-in speaker sounds OK, but is monophonic and a far cry from an audiophile's standard of excellence. Recharging requires a different unit than an iPod's or iPhone's. Typing on the virtual keyboard is less accurate and slower than on a physical keyboard. No USB or multimedia card ports for access to additional flash RAM storage capacity, and no support for multitasking. These downsides are minor quibbles, however, which could be remedied in future iPad versions.

So there you have it. The iPad looks like another "insanely great" Apple product because it's convenient, efficient, and versatile rather than just an overgrown iPod touch or substitute for a cell phone, netbook, notebook, e-book reader, or game console. It has the immediacy, proper size and multifunctionality to meet society's current demands for instant gratification. And more than 10K third-party apps optimized for the iPad's screen are available in Apple's App Store, many of which are free or cost only 99 cents. Good luck to competitors who are presently developing tablet devices.

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reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputorEdge* 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*.

EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher
"The Evolution of Home Entertainment" by
Jack Dunning

A good bit of the future of home-entertainment convergence is here, and the rest—live Internet programming similar to cable TV—is not far behind.

Getting that networked LG Blu-ray player has been a real eye-opener for me. I used to think that the general-purpose computer, whether in the form of a PC, Mac or Linux box, would eventually overrun dedicated-purpose machines—which it did with the old word processing-only boxes. In fact, the trend seemed to be inescapable with the exception of the game console. Games played on computers were in many cases more sophisticated than the dedicated game console versions. However, rather than overwhelming the smaller, cheaper entertainment devices, people who played games on computers also went out and bought game machines to plug into their televisions. Even the Internet didn't break the trend, since network capabilities have been added to all the consoles. It seems that the entertainment industry has been playing by a different set of rules.

In the past couple of months, I've taken a close look at how computers are being integrated with our home entertainment. In June, Marc Bacon wrote a couple of articles on HTPCs (Home Theater Personal Computers). He outlined how to make your computer the center of your entertainment system. I could envision him sitting on his couch next to his computer working away while he watch television controlled by the same computer. All I could think was that my wife would never allow me to put a computer in the family room—no aesthetic appeal. In spite of that, it was not difficult to see the convergence of technologies.

As was pointed out by one *ComputorEdge* reader, putting together an HTPC today is a bit of a kludge. You can make all the parts work, but it takes some attention to detail. It is not a process to be undertaken by the average person—just the average nerd. For people such as me who enjoy putting together puzzles, it sounds like an excellent diversion. Little did I know that I will probably never need to proceed down that road—at least if I'm a little patient.

The reviewed LG Blu-ray player has taught me that a good bit of the future is here and the rest—live Internet programming similar to cable TV—is not far behind. Plus, it will likely come in a dedicated entertainment box rather than the general-purpose computer. All you need is an Internet connection.

As has happened so many times in the past decade, the Internet connection is causing chaos in the old-line businesses. Internet delivery of entertainment is a direct threat to cable and satellite television companies. Their on-demand services have been seriously impacted by companies such as Netflix, and premium stations such as HBO and Showtime are directly threatened by Internet services, which stream recently released movies. When the time comes that people can subscribe to live programming over the Internet, the current station of cable and satellite television will be relegated to that of merely an Internet provider. If they are smart, they will start modifying their services so that they will be able to compete with the new realities by offering more of a programming menu and *lowering their prices*. The new competition, which can come from anywhere in the world, will offer customer-tailored programming selection and *lower prices*. It's inevitable.

There will be road blocks thrown up by the current establishment. That's always the first reaction of companies trying to protect their traditional cash cow. However, it won't work. The only choice they will have is to join the fray. (Are there any brokerages left that don't now offer online stock trading at a low price?) While it will hurt the bottom line of these

former monopolies, it will be good for the consumer.

Chalk up another irony for the Internet. Those companies who first brought broadband high-speed Internet into our homes are about to be cannibalized by that very same service.

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

Return to Table of Contents

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Antivirus Slowdown," "Cleaning Up the Desktop," "Uninstalling the HP Docking Bar," "Multiple Servers for Web Pages"

Antivirus Slowdown

[Regarding the July 16 Digital Dave column:]

I also suffer from antivirus slowdown. I use Norton Internet Security, which includes the antivirus [application]. It seems like it uses an immense amount of memory and generates a lot of processes that slow the computer down. Not a problem in my newer large-capacity, high-memory desktop, but it really makes my [older] laptop crawl. It would be very useful if you could tell us for sure if Microsoft Security Essentials does not have these drawbacks or if there is another effective antivirus that doesn't use so much resources.

-Oscar Gonzales, San Diego, CA

I use Microsoft Security Essentials and have not noticed many of the problems found with Norton.

-DD

Norton has a specific setting for "Microsoft Office Automatic Scan"—and in my experience, yes, it even scans an initial blank document (perhaps because, as you note, Word documents are often a target for infection). Setting this to "Off" could solve [the] issue, so long as the user maintains proper scanning of downloads and any thumb drive before using any of the software on it.

-Patrick Long, Junction City, Ohio

Cleaning Up the Desktop

[Regarding the July 9 Digital Dave column:]

Dear Dave,

Thank you so much for help getting rid of factory clutter on my new desktop.

Sincerely,

-Doug Sylvester, La Jolla, CA

Uninstalling the HP Docking Bar

[Regarding the July 9 Digital Dave column:]

Re: Jill Scott's problem with the HP docking bar. I had the same problem and it won't show up in MSCONFIG with the name "dock" in it, nor does it appear in the Add or Remove Programs. In MSCONFIG it is listed as HP Advisor. I removed the check mark from that feature, and after a restart the docking bar no longer appeared. It has little or no functional purpose for the PC's operation and to me was a constant irritant. If it were an e-mail, it would be diverted to the junk folder.

-Eugene Hora

Multiple Servers for Web Pages

[Regarding the July 9 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

I'm interested in Web page design and found the comments on placing graphics on a different server interesting. Any chance one of the *ComputorEdge* contributors could do an article on placing material from different servers into the same Web page? Or could any of the readers point me [toward] a good source for learning about the ins and outs of doing this?

-Bill Schieb, Fort Collins, CO

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

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