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This issue: A Flash Drive for Every Pocket

With flash drives, you can store more information in your pocket than used to fit in your local library. What's available, and how are they being used?

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Digital Dave

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

A reader wants to network two computers via a crossover Ethernet cable, but they can't "see" each other; why does the Windows Registry require a computer reboot after the installation of new software?; a reader wants to view a Web site's cached information in offline mode.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have two computers sharing an Internet connection via a DSL router. I want to network the two computers, but not via the router. I have a crossover Ethernet cable connecting the two computers (each has two Ethernet ports), but I can't seem to get them to see each other. Is it not possible to run both kinds of connections simultaneously? Or is the problem with WinXP SP3?

All four ports are good, and I've tried every possible configuration of the two cables (normal Ethernet and crossover), and the Internet connection always works fine on both machines simultaneously, but they can never see each other. I've fiddled endlessly with all of the multitudinous options in Windows, and no luck, except for the very first day, when they could see each other fine and then never again.

That first time, I had them set up so I'd have to physically switch between the Web connection and the crossover connection, always having to shut down and reboot both machines in order to make the switch, and that seemed to work. But I sure don't want to have to keep doing that. Is there a solution?

*Pete Maurer
Rosarito, Baja California*

Dear Pete,

Yes, there is a solution. Now it's just a matter of figuring out what it is. The fact that in the beginning you were able to do both the Internet connections and the direct connections independently indicates that you had the direct connection set up properly with a crossover cable. (A crossover cable matches the "transmit" from one computer with the "receive" of the other. In many networks this is done with a network hub, but using today's routers usually eliminates the need for hubs or crossover cables since most routers are auto-sensing and will adjust to the setup.) I'm assuming that since that time you added a second network card to each computer in order to run both connections simultaneously.

Most likely you are experiencing a conflict between the two network cards in one or both of the

computers. There are a number of ways that this can come about, but probably it relates to the IP address assigned to the network card. You want to make sure that each card has its own unique IP.

Internal IP addresses take the form 192.168.XXX.XXX. The first set of XXX identifies the internal network (0 to 255) and the second set of XXX identifies individual computers on the network. If two cards have the same address (i.e. 192.168.1.6), then they will conflict with each other, with one or both cards not working. Most likely the router is automatically assigning an IP to the network card for the Internet, but since it is not connected to the second network card, that card will either have no IP assigned or default to the last assigned IP, which could be identical to that of the first card.

The best solution that I can see is to change the setting for the computer-to-computer network cards to fixed IPs, which will not interfere with the router-assigned IPs for the other cards. This is done by opening Network Connections in the Control Panel. Right-click on the Local Area Connect that is assigned to the computer-to-computer connection network card and select Properties. (You should see the manufacturer and model in the text label.)

Select Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) and click the Properties button. Select the "Use the following IP address" radio button. Enter the fixed IP address that you would like to use, such as 192.168.5.15. Do the same for the other computer using an IP address such as 192.168.5.20. (The subnet mask should be 255.255.255.0. No Default Gateway should be needed.)

The reason for using the number 5 is to put the connection of a separate internal network from the router, which usually defaults to 0 or 1 as a value for the third set of numbers in the address. The numbers 15 and 20 in the fourth set of numbers merely differentiate the two computers. They could be any numbers between 0 and 255 as long as they don't match.

In effect, this will create two separate networks (non-communicating between networks) for each computer. One is for the Internet via the router; the other is between the two computers.

It's not actually necessary to use a separate network by changing the third set of digits, but if you keep the IPs on the same network with the router, then you will need to ensure that the last set of digits does not conflict.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have enjoyed your column over the years—thanks a lot!

Why do only some programs, when installed, require you to restart your computer for them to take effect? Surely the Registry entries are made at the time of installation, and the Registry is a dynamic file, anyway.

Is this also true on Macs?

*MP Donahue
Boulder, Co*

Dear MP,

Whether a Windows computer needs to be restarted upon installation of a new program often depends upon whether there are already files needed by the new program that are in use during installation. These may be operating system files or shared files used by other programs. (This is why installations often ask that all other running programs be closed prior to the install.) When the computer is restarted, the Registry is read and all the new dependencies can be put into effect without the interference of either the operating system or other programs. Another reason for restarting the system is to allow some install programs to clean up temporary files used during installation.

Sometimes software requires a restart just as a matter of policy—even if there is no reason. It might cut down on the number of support calls to the software company. It doesn't cost them anything—only our time. Although, I think this is less often the case these days.

Many programs are self-contained—especially Windows utilities—and make few or no Registry entries. They will run immediately without restart.

This is not a problem with the Mac because, being based upon a Unix-like operating system, FreeBSD, each program installs and runs independently.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I've been your fan since I picked up my very first issue of ComputerEdge back in 2002-03. You've helped me endlessly since, and I don't know any word that could express my gratitude.

I have a problem that I just can't solve on my own and hope you can help. I'm using the latest version of Firefox. Yesterday, I was viewing a text page that uses Java. I was wondering if I could view the text files I saw yesterday again in offline mode.

I've tried Mozilla Cache Viewer and the Firefox add-on Cache Viewer, but those are not displaying the text that I want to see. I've also tried typing "about:cache" in the address bar, but it just gave me some gibberish that I can hardly read.

Thank you!

*Adam Li
San Diego*

Dear Adam,

The problem with trying to use the temporary cache for viewing pages offline is that the cache will not always contain everything that you may want to see. The purpose of the cache is to speed up your viewing experience when you are online.

The first time you load a Web page, the browser will write copies of the page and its objects to a temporary directory on your hard drive. (This capability is enabled by default, but depends

upon the settings of your browser.) This way, when you go back to a previously visited Web site the browser can load the components of the page from your drive rather than downloading each piece again. This saves a great deal of download time—especially if the page is loaded with graphics.

The first problem with viewing the cache offline is that you will be looking at bits and pieces. Each component will actually be saved in a separate file. The second problem is that, instead of being static pages with text and graphics, many of today's Web pages are generated on the fly by special programs. That means even if the original files are in the cache, they cannot generate much of the content that must come directly from the host Web server over the Internet.

If you want to view the Web page offline, there is a much better solution. In Firefox (and other browsers) you can use "Save Page As..." in the File menu to make a copy of the current Web page. Be sure to select "Web page, complete" as the Save As type. This way all of the content that you are viewing online will be saved in an HTML file that you can later load into your browser by double-clicking on the filename in the folder. You will see the page in the same form as the original, although it will be read from your hard drive.

If you have the proper software, you can also save a Web page as a PDF that you can later review or share.

Digital Dave

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USB Flash Drive FAQ

“The flash drive has taken over the portable storage medium” by Pete Choppin

With an ever-expanding storage capacity, near universal compatibility and enhanced durability, USB flash drives were finally able to kill the abomination known as the floppy drive.

Remember when we used to take a disk that measured 3.5 inches and had the data capacity of just 1.44MB and inserted it into a slow, clunky disk drive? Floppy disks, they were called, and they were as common as DVD discs are today. They're still in use. However, like the DVD, their days are numbered.

Enter the USB flash drive—the next replacement portable storage medium for the floppy disk. Launched almost 10 years ago, USB flash drives have revolutionized the way we transfer files between computers. With an ever-expanding storage capacity, near universal compatibility and enhanced durability, it's this wonderful plug-and-play technology that was finally able to kill the abomination known as the floppy drive.

Even though the flash drive has taken over the portable storage medium, there are questions about some of the technology, usage, and what is in store for the future.

In this FAQ, we answer a few of the most common questions and concerns about flash drives and attempt to explore the vast number of hardware solutions currently available.

What Is a Flash Drive?

Rather than give a beginner's lesson on flash drive technology, I thought I'd discuss the purpose, uses and advantages of flash drives.

With the availability of broadband Internet, Web-based e-mail and online



“Although his body was lost at sea, today we bury the sum total of his life, which is stored before us on this tiny eight gigabyte flash drive.”

file-storage solutions, file transfer and storage is often handled without using any physical device. So why are flash drives still so widely used? There's something about being able to take a file from a computer and physically carry it with you. Even though I am very familiar with Internet storage services and I have no problem working with computer networks, I still use flash drives. They're easy to use, fast and reliable. Or perhaps it's simply an old habit from the days of floppy disks.

The "flash" in flash drives refers to flash memory, a solid-state storage medium that's both inexpensive and durable. In fact, it is similar in technology and performance to the cache RAM built

into most CPUs. This type of RAM has historically been quite expensive, relative to the less expensive SDRAM, which is commonly known as computer memory. Flash-type memory is slower than cache speed due to the limitations of USB 2.0; however, this does not seem to be a significant performance hit, as the mechanical hard drive is much slower than USB.

It should be noted that while newer solid state drives (SSDs) share the flash memory medium with traditional USB flash drives and sometimes come equipped with a USB interface, it is common to keep the two terms distinct from one another due to the large differences in physical size, speed and price.

What Types of Flash Drives Are Available?

There are many types of flash drives available to suit all different kinds of use, but to keep things simple we'll break things down into five different categories: Generic, High Performance, Ultra Durable, Secure and Novelty. Of course, these categories are not all mutually exclusive. For example, a secure flash drive with hardware encryption may also be durable enough to withstand the crushing forces of a Honda Accord.

What we like to think of as "generic" flash drives are the most common type sold, built for economy and raw capacity but not necessarily speed, and almost always encased in plastic. With the exception of a few manufacturers like Kingston, just about any flash drive with a product name that doesn't have a cliché suffix like "Extreme," "Lightning," "GT," "GTR," "Turbo" or "Ultra" will typically fall into this category. Likewise, any product that has such a suffix or is labeled as a high-end model would fall into the High Performance category and will employ higher-binned flash memory chips and better memory controllers to increase transfer speeds.



The Voyager GTR 128GB Flash Drive on the left; 32GB on the right.

Ultra Durable flash drives can be either fast or slow, but are by far the most interesting in the way of their casings and enclosures. These can be encased either in rubber or a metal alloy to protect against impacts, and they may or may not have a watertight seal for the USB cap. Depending on the design, manufacturer's claims, and your definition of common sense, these babies can withstand drops/throws from the top of a building to a concrete surface below, are more likely to survive several rounds in the washer and dryer (if allowed ample time to dry before use), and without any adverse effect, can survive being submerged at the bottom of a diving pool. Better still, some can deflect bullets up to a .50 caliber, or withstand the almighty crushing forces of Honda automobiles.

Secure flash drives include any flash drive that provides hardware encryption for ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of the stored data. These drives employ an on-board co-processor to handle the encryption algorithms, thus allowing the drive to maintain moderate read and write speeds compared to generic drives used with software encryption utilities. A secure flash drive's authentication method of choice can vary from a simple username and password logon to more secure biometric fingerprint scanners and funky combination locks.

Other secure flash drive features may include self-destruct sequences, tamper-evident designs and centralized remote management. The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has published a document outlining cryptographic security levels in FIPS 140-2 (csrc.nist.gov/publications/fips/fips140-2/fips1402.pdf), and many drive manufacturers that wish to do

business with large corporations or government entities will certify their drives against these standards.

Novelty flash drives, last but not least, include any drive that stands out from the rest of the crowd either through the design or the inclusion of bundled features. A few examples would be insanely small and key-shaped drives, split-drives, a funky drive covered with Swarovski crystal, beer drives, coin drives, Darth Vader-lookalike flash drives, or a biometric flash drive built into a Swiss Army Knife with Bluetooth presentation controls.

How Should I Format My Flash Drive?

This largely depends on your intended use for the drive. Most thumb drives come preformatted as FAT32 for cross-platform compatibility with Windows, Mac and Linux. Unfortunately this formatting scheme limits the size of any given file to 4GB.

If you want to avoid this 4GB limit, we recommend reformatting the flash drive to NTFS, which allows for larger file sizes and also offers much improved reliability. NTFS is natively supported by all versions of Windows since NT/2000, and is also available on Mac and Linux thanks to the NTFS-3G project (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NTFS-3G). Most Linux distributions made within the last year already have NTFS-3G installed and ready to go; Mac users already have read-only support built into the operating system, but will need to install either the free Catacombae driver or the commercial Tuxera NTFS for Mac driver if write support is needed. Unfortunately, NTFS is not yet supported by many embedded devices such as televisions or media players due to the fact that NTFS is a proprietary system owned by Microsoft and requires licensing.

What Are the Latest Hot Trends Surrounding USB Flash Drives?

The biggest trend that everyone's looking forward to is USB 3.0, of course! Super Talent (www.supertalent.com/home/index.php) has already released three SuperSpeed USB flash drives that take advantage of the new interface with reported speeds that are five to eight times faster than the fastest USB 2.0 flash drives. Expect more USB 3.0 drives from other manufacturers to follow shortly.



Super Talent SuperCrypt USB 3.0.

Another big development with flash drives is how hardware encryption is becoming more of a commodity than a luxury or enterprise feature, being built into flash drives from a range of

manufacturers for as little as \$20. Drives certified against the FIPS 140-2 standard are almost as cheap, now available at the \$60 price point from online retailers.

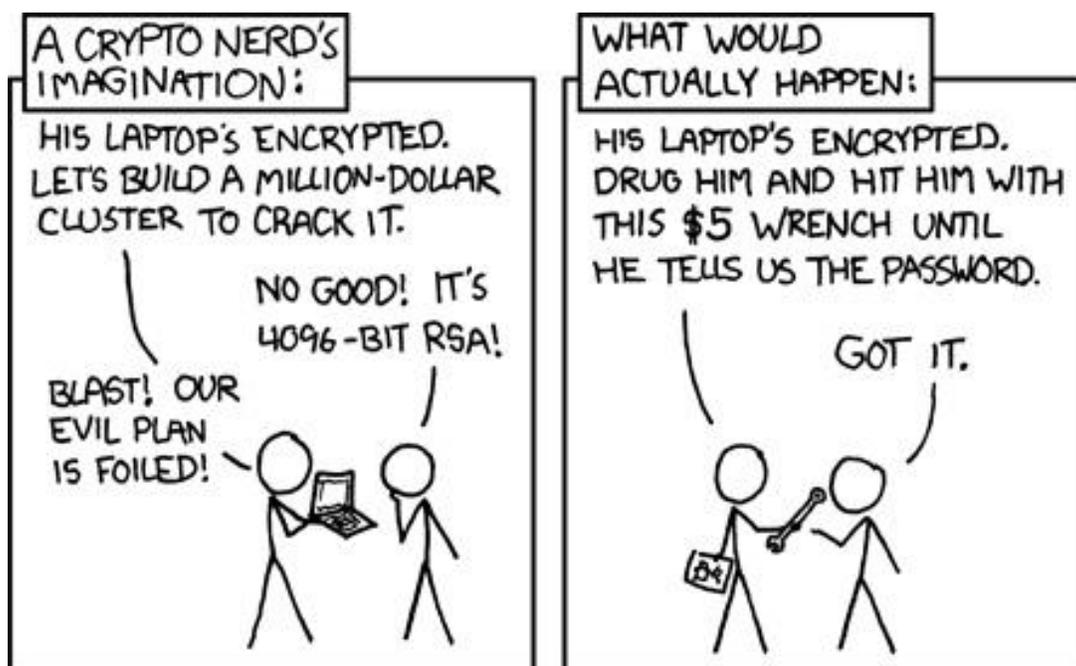
How Do I Secure the Data on My Flash Drive?

While the best security (and speed) often comes from hardware-secured flash drives with their built-in cryptologic co-processors, anyone can secure their regular flash drive through the use of a free open-source program called TrueCrypt (www.truecrypt.org). TrueCrypt offers a large array of encryption algorithms to choose from, including 256-bit AES, Serpent and TwoFish, or any combination of all three, and is available for Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems.

An alternative to TrueCrypt is Microsoft's BitLocker To Go (www.microsoft.com/windows/enterprise/products/windows-7/features.aspx#bitlocker), a full-disk flash drive encryption technology that's limited to Windows 7 Enterprise and Ultimate editions and Windows Server 2008 R2. Unlike TrueCrypt, BitLocker To Go doesn't require administrative rights to install or use. BitLocker uses AES 128/256-bit encryption.

Also unlike TrueCrypt, BitLocker does not have plausible deniability (www.truecrypt.org/docs/?s=plausible-deniability), and Microsoft actively aids law enforcement with recovery in certain scenarios. In a nutshell, don't leave your computer running because the encryption keys are stored in RAM and can be accessed using forensic software. This is a vulnerability shared by many drive-encryption programs and should not be viewed as actually cracking BitLocker. In an enterprise environment, if the volume recovery keys are stored in Active Directory and the system administrator has loose lips or gets handed a subpoena by the authorities, you can be compromised. Cryptome (cryptome.org/) hosts a copy of Microsoft's BitLocker lawful spying guide on its Web site. If you're interested, search for "win7-bit-spy."

Remember, there's no way to keep your data 100 percent secure if the computer you're using has been compromised, so be cautious of accessing your private data at public computers such as those in a PC cafe.



The weakest link in security is always the human factor, Randall Munroe, <http://xkcd.com/about/>

Why Shouldn't I Pick Up Any Flash Drive I See Lying in the Parking Lot? Should I Ever Use an Unknown Flash Drive?

If you do happen to encounter a stray flash drive and have the unrelenting itch to use it, you may want to take a few precautions. First, make sure you've disabled auto-run on your computer. Next, access the drive from within a sandboxed environment such as VMware or the freeware VirtualBox, and make sure that if it's a U3 drive, the virtual CD-ROM partition isn't compromised. If it is, you're better off simply destroying the drive. Next, check the data partition for viruses. If you suspect there might be any, you'll want to format the drive. Congratulations on your newly found (and unpaid for) flash drive!

On a serious note, this actually happened to me. I was asked by someone to take a look at "something" on their flash drive and what ensued was a cascade of errors, virus infections and odd behaviors such as hijacking of my entire desktop. In short, the computer I used was rendered useless and had to have the operating system reloaded.

Keep in mind, though, that not all misplaced flash drives are out to get you. Some might actually be lost and sought after by their owners. Others could be part of an elaborate marketing promotion. Always use your best judgment and caution.

Can I Boot My Computer to a USB Flash Drive?

Yes! A bootable flash drive can be the ultimate tool for recovering a downed computer, or perhaps your easiest means of upgrading a netbook's operating system without a CD-ROM drive. Because there are so many potential uses and ways to make a flash drive bootable, unfortunately we won't be able to go in depth for the purposes of this FAQ. To get you started in the right direction, however, here's a handful of scenarios and their associated walkthroughs that we feel are well-written and easy to follow.

- Boot the Ultimate Boot CD (www.pendrivelinux.com/install-and-boot-ultimate-boot-cd-ubcd-from-a-usb-device/) (UBCD) repair tools from a flash drive.
- Boot Clonezilla (www.pendrivelinux.com/install-clonezilla-on-usb/) (Norton Ghost alternative) from a flash drive.
- Boot/Install Ubuntu 9.10 Linux (www.pendrivelinux.com/create-a-ubuntu-9-10-live-usb-in-windows/) from a flash drive.
- Boot Windows XP (articles.techrepublic.com.com/5100-10878_11-6160062.html) from a flash drive .
- Boot Windows 7 (faelmar-tanada.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!73A0272B9E18B517!173.entry) from a flash drive.
- Install Windows 7 (technet.microsoft.com/en-us/magazine/dd535816.aspx) from a flash drive.

Obviously, the USB flash drive is here for the foreseeable future. They're getting better, more

secure, and have more storage capacity—all on inexpensive, easy-to-use and cross-compatible storage media. Flash storage technology is the future of mass storage. As the technology improves and becomes more efficient and reliable, we will only see more technologies emerge such as solid state drives. Older mechanical drives as well as optical storage will eventually be phased out.

Hopefully this FAQ has helped clear up some questions about flash drive technology. Feel free to submit your own questions. We'll post them and hopefully be able to find some good answers.

Pete Choppin has been an IT Professional for over 15 years. He currently works as a network and systems administrator for a company called Albion based in Clearfield, Utah. He has experience in all types of hardware, software, and networking technologies. He is proficient in many operating systems including Linux, Windows and Macintosh. His interests include cooking, sci-fi, computers and technology, and Web design—a semi-professional endeavor, having designed Web sites in the dental field, e-commerce businesses, and for the Boy Scouts of America.

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

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Really Big Flash Drives

“Tiny wonders hold a boatload of data.” by James Hartnett

The USB data stick is one of the wonders of the 21st century. Compact, inexpensive and almost indestructible, it can carry more information in your pocket than used to fit in your local library.

The USB data stick is one of the wonders of the 21st century. Compact, inexpensive and almost indestructible, it can carry more information in your pocket than used to fit in your local library. These devices have enjoyed amazing growth in capability and use.

The first USB data stick appeared in 2001, and in nine years they have completely flooded the market for cheap, portable storage. They are ubiquitous in workplaces and schools, and given away at trade shows.

The Jargon

As with any technology, you must first cope with the terminology. The USB flash drive goes by many names, from "thumb drive" to "data stick." It plugs into the Universal Serial Bus (USB) ports that are now found on all types of computers, and even high-end consumer electronics. Inside the small package is a flash memory chip.

Flash memory is similar to the Random Access Memory (RAM) that is inside your computer. But flash is (comparatively) slower and more expensive. It does have one major feature that RAM doesn't: When you turn the power off, RAM memory is wiped out, but flash memory sticks around.

Flash memory has its limitations. It can be rewritten only a certain number of times (like 10,000). Although this is a pretty big number, it limits flash memory to longer-term storage for computers. By contrast, RAM can be written and re-written many times a second, for years and years.

Flash memory is not really permanent (what is?). The information is held in a pattern of electrical charges in the chip, and those charges will eventually leak away. This takes years, however; most estimates I've seen say 10 years. Since USB flash drives were introduced only nine years ago, this can't have happened much yet.

Despite these limitations, flash memory is immensely popular these days. In addition to being used in USB flash drives, flash memory is used in cameras and mobile phones in the form of microSD cards, and inside every piece of consumer or industrial electronics with an embedded processor.

USB Should Win Oscar for Supporting Role

Although the flash drive is a very impressive device, it has achieved its current fame and success because it was able to take advantage of the USB standards. Without the USB ports, there would be no standard way to plug flash drives into every computer.

The USB standard is a marvel, and worthy of an article in itself. There have been two major

versions of the USB standard, and all the flash drives these days conform to USB 2.0, which provides much higher data rates.

Reliability

There is a real concern about USB flash drive reliability.

In some cases, it doesn't really matter if the drive fails. To bring a PowerPoint presentation to a meeting, I can use any old USB flash drive. If it fails, I just fetch another copy of the presentation.

But this cavalier attitude won't work if you are using the devices to back up important business or personal data. Don't put all your photos on a USB flash drive you got for free at a trade show! (However, in several years of using free USB flash drives, I have never experienced or even heard of a failure.)

There have also been cases of fraud on the size of the drive. For example, a 2GB drive is altered so that it reports itself to your computer as an 8GB drive. But it's really only got 2GB of storage, and when you exceed that, something bad will happen, possibly the loss of all data on the drive.

As with all memory, when I buy, I always buy from one of the reputable industry leaders, not some knock-off shop product. Corsair, Kingston, Verbatim, and ScanDisk are companies you can count on.

How Cheap Can We Get?

Not counting the free USB drives from trade shows, how cheap do they get? There are plenty of choices of 2GB drives below \$8.

These days manufacturers don't even make USB flash drives with less than 2GB, but there are still some in inventories, and they are being sold at rock-bottom prices. For example, Amazon is offering a half-gigabyte drive for \$3.99.

The low cost explains their popularity as give-aways at trade shows. With the company logo printed on the plastic case, they make useful and effective marketing tools, and they cost about the same as the stupid plastic toys and mouse pads that everyone used to give away.

How High Can We Go?

The highest-capacity USB flash drives max out at 256GB—larger than many hard drives. This will set you back quite a bundle: more than \$700. For exactly half that, you can get a 128GB USB flash drive, and that seems fair.

For a more sensible \$60 you can get 32GB.

What's Just Right Just Now

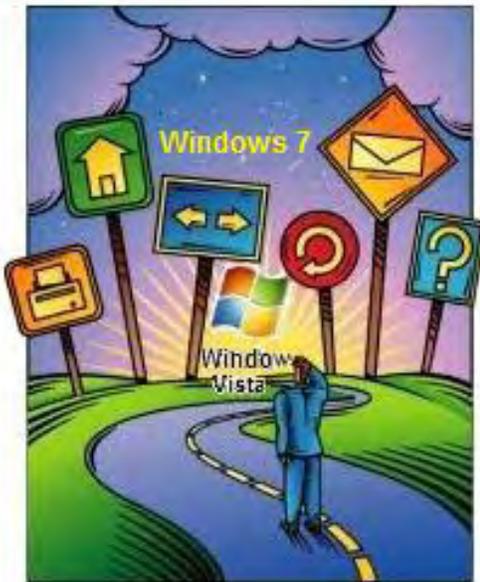
The sweet spot on price seems to be around \$20 for an 8GB USB flash drive. While getting a 32GB drive will cost less than four 8GB drives, you are unlikely to use that much storage.

Eight gigabytes is actually quite a lot of storage—enough for a library of 10,000 volumes. Even if you could read a book a day, that's more than 25 years of reading. Of course, video is a different matter, but eight gigabytes is still a decent amount of room.

As with all electronics, we can expect prices to drop and storage capacities to go up. So there's even better to come with these amazing storage devices.

James is a writer and software developer who has been with the free software movement from the beginning. He lives, writes, and programs in sunny Colorado.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips 7 and Tricks

“Windows 7 Taskbar
Quick Tips” by Jack
Dunning

Here are a couple of quick
tips for better functionality
if you are using the
Windows 7 Taskbar.

Here are a couple of quick tips if you are using the Windows 7 Taskbar. One problem is that while you can see the multiple thumbnails when you hover over a task button with multiple windows open, it is not always obvious which window you want to use. Left-clicking on the task button will merely open and close the thumbnails. However, if you hold down the Control key while left-clicking, each click will open the next successive window until you find the one you want. Once all the windows for a particular program are open, continuing to click will cycle through the windows.

The second tip is another way to open the jump list for a program without right-clicking. This may be valuable if you don't have a right-mouse button, or you're just annoyed about right-clicking all the time.

To open a jump list, hover over the desired taskbar program icon, then left-click and hold (see Figure 1).

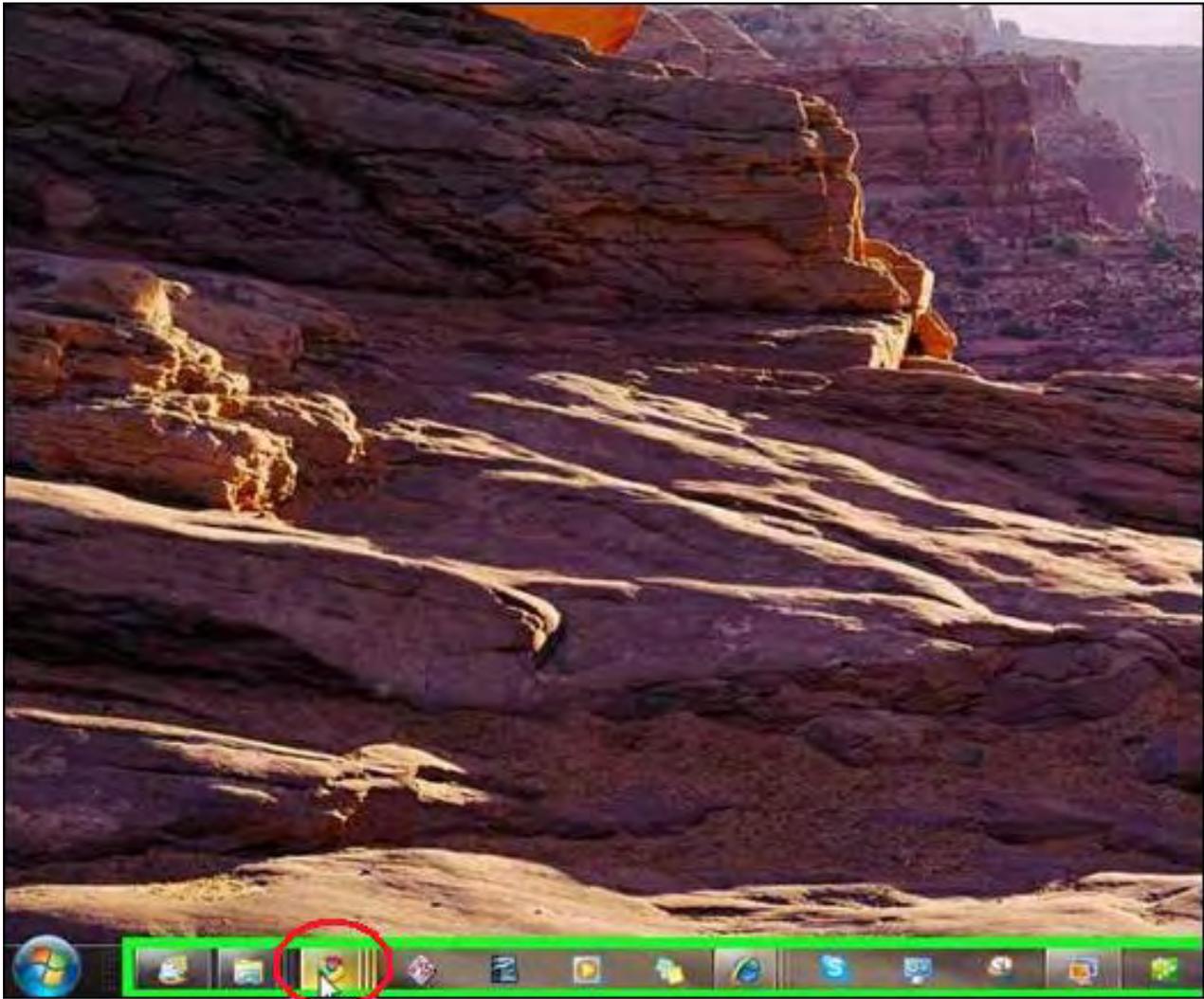


Figure 1. Hover over the Taskbar, left-click and hold.

Then drag the cursor onto the desktop. The jump list will come into view (see Figure 2).

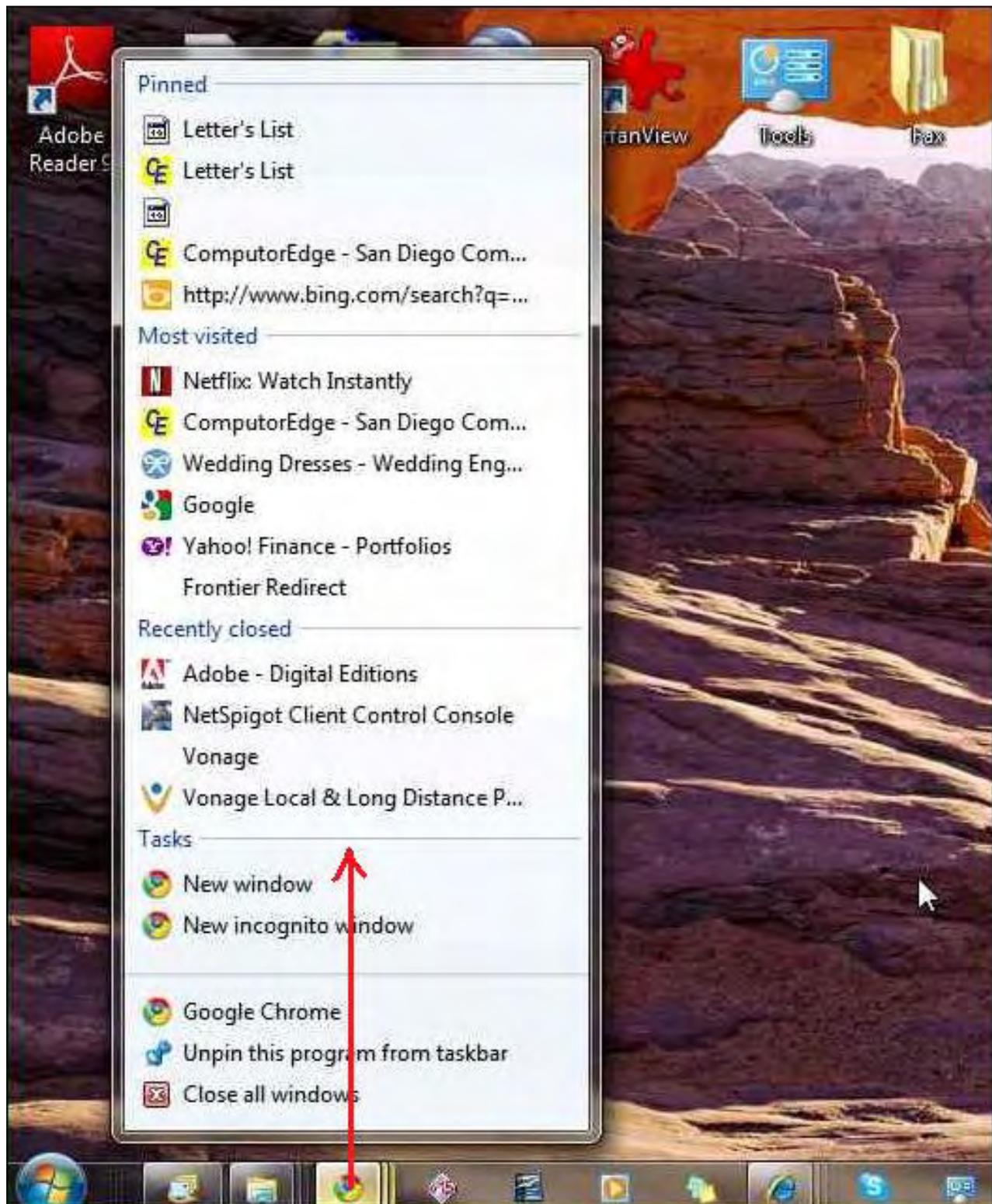


Figure 2. The jump list comes into view after dragging the cursor to the desktop.

The usefulness of these tips will depend upon how you use your computer, although I don't see much difference between a right-click and a left-click, hold and drag.

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

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Legacy of Vista” by Wally Wang

What likely drove most people away from Windows—and toward Apple products—was Vista. Also, Steve Ballmer vs. Steve Jobs; the iPhone/iPad DevCon caters to mobile app developers; more uses for the iPad; and a tip on customizing the fields in your Mail e-mail client.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

A friend of mine invited me to attend a special seminar designed to teach public speakers how to put on a better show for their clients. Some of the lessons taught at this seminar involved voice projection, stage presence, hand gestures, facial expressions, and tricks such as looking directly at an individual in each row of the room to create the illusion that you're looking directly at each member of the audience.

What struck me as remarkable wasn't just the number of people who make a living as a public speaker crammed in one room, but how many of these professional public speakers used a Macintosh laptop, an iPhone, or an iPad. The number of Apple users was clearly in the majority, with just a handful of individuals using Windows 7 laptops and BlackBerrys. In that entire room, I couldn't find a single person using a netbook.

Many of these professional public speakers charge several thousand dollars for a single appearance, so they could probably easily afford any type of computer they wanted, but they seem to have overwhelmingly chosen a Macintosh laptop, iPhone, or iPad. The question is, Why?

When I asked some of these professional speakers about their choice of a computer, not one of them said they bought an Apple product because they wanted to look cool or because other people were buying them so they had to rush out like sheep to buy them too. Instead, the main reason why so many of them used iPhones was because they liked having so many useful features packed into a smartphone that was easy to use. Many of them chose an iPad because they liked the idea of having a small, portable device that was easier to carry than a laptop.

What was more remarkable was that most of them had switched from Windows to the Macintosh because they got tired of struggling with Windows. They weren't attracted to the Macintosh, but rather repulsed by Windows. What likely drove most people away from Windows was Vista.

Vista left a sour taste with so many people that even Microsoft avoids mentioning the "V" word whenever possible. During the hype about the iPhone 4's antenna problems, Microsoft even claimed that the flawed iPhone 4 antenna was Apple's version of Vista (www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/microsoft/7891810/iPhone-4-woe-is-Apples-Vista-moment-says-Microsoft-executive.html). How bad does your product have to be where you can use it to insult a product of your competitor?

Few Windows enthusiasts can defend Vista's initial release as anything but flawed. Even though Windows 7 is a tremendous improvement over Vista, the damage in the public's mind has already been done.

Vista taught people that they don't need to upgrade their operating system (like sheep) every time a new version comes out, and that any alternative was better than Vista. This may explain why the biggest obstacles for Windows 7 to overcome are people sticking with Windows XP and people switching to the Macintosh.

Chances are good that five years ago, the majority of these professional public speakers were using Windows XP computers. They didn't switch to the Macintosh necessarily because they were attracted to the Macintosh as much as they were also repelled by Vista. This dual combination of attraction (to the Macintosh) and repulsion (away from Windows) is likely the main reason for people switching from Windows to the Macintosh.

To regain their lost customers, Microsoft needs a similar simultaneous event to occur where Windows 7 offers a superior alternative and Apple completely botches the next release of Mac OS X. Until both of these events happen, Windows will likely never recover the majority of their lost customers who defected to the Macintosh. If that room of professional speakers is any indication, Windows may soon not only lose its operating system market dominance, but may find itself in the minority as well, and Microsoft can thank its botched launch of Vista for that.

Steve Ballmer vs. Steve Jobs

When Apple's CEO, Steve Jobs, appears at a conference, people get excited because they want to see what new products Apple is going to reveal next. When Microsoft's CEO, Steve Ballmer (www.guardian.co.uk/technology/blog/2010/jan/07/ballmer-ces-2010-keynote-microsoft), appears at a conference, there are little or no expectations that he's going to reveal anything interesting from Microsoft at all.

To get people excited, Steve Jobs relies on innovation. In contrast, check out this YouTube video of Steve Ballmer attempting to get people excited (www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvsboPUjrGc) about Microsoft by screaming and jumping up and down.

Would you rather get excited over innovative products (substance) or because a CEO is screaming in your face (style)? This contrast between CEO appearances pretty much sums up the difference between Apple and Microsoft.

Notes from iPhone/iPad DevCon 2010

If you're interested in developing apps for the iPhone/iPad, you need to attend the iPhone/iPad DevCon, which is loaded with speakers who share their tips and insights on developing iPhone/

iPad apps. By listening to these speakers, you can avoid the traps that tripped them up and follow their hard-earned advice to create apps faster, simpler, and easier than ever before.

iPhone/iPad DevCon 2010
September 27-29 • San Diego

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See you on the East Coast!
iPhone/iPad DevCon EAST
➔ April 4-6, 2011

iPhone/iPad DevCon is focused 100% on iPhone and iPad apps development. If you're an iPhone or iPad developer looking for training, classes or workshops that will teach you iOS4 development, this developer conference is where you need to be. Produced by BZ Media — publisher of SD Times, the newspaper for the software development industry — this is the most info-packed, most practical mobile application development conference you'll attend this year.

At iPhone/iPad DevCon 2010, you can choose from dozens of iPhone development workshops and technical classes to customize your educational experience. Whether you're an iPhone developer looking for Objective-C training, or you're seeking best practices for successfully marketing an iPhone or iPad app, come and learn everything that fits your needs! The mobile application development sessions are organized into four tracks suitable for you and everyone on your team:

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Figure 1. The iPhone/iPad DevCon caters to mobile app developers.

The first iPhone/iPad DevCon (www.iphonedevcon.com/) conference was held in La Jolla on September 27-29, but the next one will be held on the East Coast on April 4-6, 2011. Like most conferences, the quality of the speakers varied considerably. There were plenty of hard-core programming talks for people who want to dig into Objective-C coding tricks, but there were also more general-purpose talks focusing on the business side of developing and marketing your apps.

For raw beginners to the world of iPhone/iPad developing, there were plenty of novice talks designed to introduce programmers to iPhone/iPad programming as quickly and painlessly as possible.

Mike Lee, a former engineer at Apple, gave a talk and urged programmers to think of their iPad apps as giving the user superpowers that they never had before. He suggested that the real power of the iPad is that, with the right app, it could turn the iPad into anything. By focusing on making your app turn the iPad into a tool for solving a single task, you'll meet the needs of most people.

Aaron Hillegass, the author of *Cocoa Programming for Mac OS X* (www.amazon.com/Cocoa-Programming-Mac-OS-3rd/dp/0321503619) suggested that the golden age of personal computers is over due to lower profits per unit and the decreased need to upgrade a computer every few years. However, smartphones were in the new golden age that programmers should take advantage of now.

There's a gold rush occurring right now with mobile apps, so any programmer who wants to join a growing and thriving market needs to jump into mobile app development as soon as possible.

If you don't want to miss out on this fast-growing iPhone/iPad market, you need to check out this next conference. If you're an Android developer, the same company putting on this iPhone/iPad conference also hosts an Android DevCon (www.andevcon.com/).

More Uses for the iPad

If you've ever been to a crowded restaurant, the host may put your name on a waiting list and then someone has to shout your name when your table is ready. A more elegant solution is to hand each person a plastic disc that buzzes and flashes its lights when your table is ready. Then you turn the plastic disc back and head to your table.

Now there's an iPad app called Tablewait (finance.yahoo.com/news/Heres-How-Apples-iPad-Is-siliconalley-4054898006.html?x=0&.v=1), which lets a host put your information into an iPad, which then transfers this information to a server. As soon as your table is ready, the server sends a text message to your cell phone, alerting you that you can now sit down. Since almost everyone has a cell phone these days, the restaurant saves money by not having to buy those plastic buzzing discs.

Even better, people can modify their table request while they're waiting using their cell phone, such as adding or deleting the number of people in their party, or even canceling their reservation altogether.

Another app, called Eventbrite, lets organizations create a VIP list. As soon as someone checks into the event, the host can quickly find that person's name on an iPad without fumbling through an alphabetical list of names printed on a sheet of paper.

While the iPad continues making inroads into various industries, iPad competitors are finally starting to show up. Blackberry recently announced its Blackberry Playbook tablet (www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39387014/ns/technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets), Dell has released its Streak tablet (www.maximumpc.com/article/reviews/dell_streak_review), and Samsung offers its Galaxy tablet (b4tea.com/information/review-information/samsung-galaxy-tab-p1000-price-specs-tablet-review).

Yet, with Apple's almost year-long head start and iPhone programmers already familiar with the tools needed to create iPad apps, all of these other iPad competitors have little more to offer. Front and back-facing cameras? Some people obviously like this feature, but it's definitely not necessary for other uses, such as checking people into an event.

Replaceable batteries? The iPad's battery actually does last its promised 10 hours, so for a restaurant or other business to use an iPad during the day, a replaceable battery is irrelevant.

Built-in USB ports? Another nice feature, but not necessary, especially since you'll likely be walking around with an iPad and don't need it hooked up to a printer or other accessory. How about the ability to run Flash? Businesses using the iPad as a tool, such as a reservation scheduler, don't need to be browsing the Web at the same time, so Flash isn't needed.

Multitasking? Most businesses simply turn the iPad into a single-purpose device, so even multitasking isn't necessary. The ability to run Windows? When using the iPad, businesses simply want to run a single app, not wade through the Start menu and run Microsoft Office and then try to touch type on a virtual keyboard while cradling a tablet in their hands. Nearly every Windows program is designed for a user sitting down in front of a computer, not for someone walking around with only one free hand to use a program.

For the majority of uses, the simple design of the iPad continues to find multiple and diverse ranges of applications. Rival iPad competitors face a chicken-and-egg dilemma. Developers will likely create apps for the market leader (iPad) first and maybe devote extra energy to the much smaller market of Android or webOS tablets later, if at all.

To succeed, all of these iPad rivals need a more compelling reason to own them than because they're cheaper or because they add marginally useful features that the iPad lacks. As Garrett B. Gunderson points out in his book *Killing Sacred Cows* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1929774516?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1929774516), don't always look at price alone but consider the value you'll receive from owning and using a product. So many people and companies have found unique uses for the iPad, but can rivals equal the iPad in providing similar value? As John Ruskin says, "There is scarcely anything in the world that some man cannot make a little worse, and sell a little more cheaply. The person who buys on price alone is this man's lawful prey."

Clearly the iPad has redefined the tablet category and now everyone else must catch up. If you don't use an iPad yourself, chances are good that one day you'll do business with a company that is using the iPad to simplify its own tasks, and you'll still wind up with the benefits in the end.

* * *

If you use Mail as your default e-mail client, you can customize the fields that appear every time you create a new message. Usually each new message will display To, Cc, From and Subject fields. If you never need to type in an additional e-mail address in the Cc field, you might as well make it go away. Likewise, if you need to use the Bcc or Priority fields, you'll need to make those fields appear every time.

To customize the fields that appear in a new message, start Mail and choose File/New Message to open a New Message window. Click on the icon that appears to the left of the From field. When a pull-down menu appears, choose Customize.

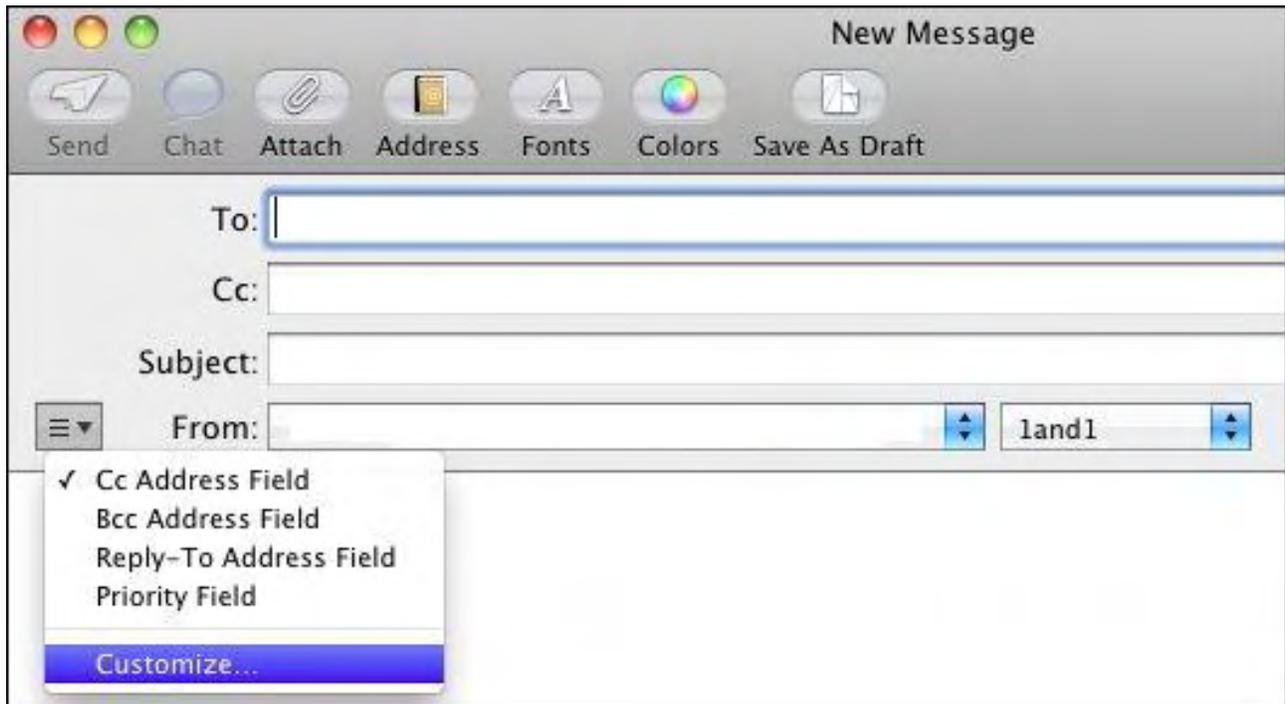


Figure 2. A pull-down menu appears when you click on the icon in a new message.

The New Message window displays all possible fields, so you just need to select the check box of the fields that you want to display every time you create a new message.

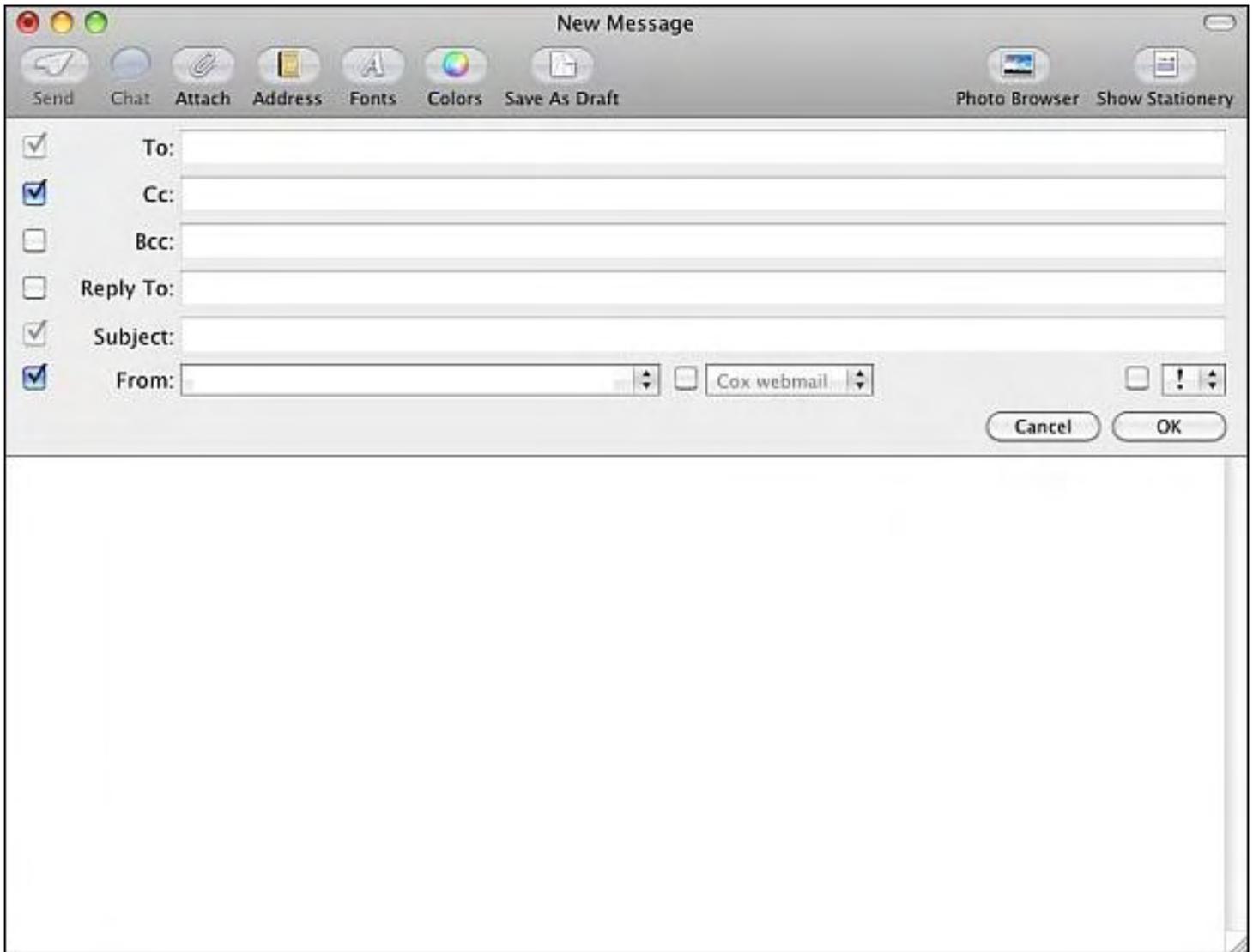


Figure 3. Just select the check boxes of the fields you want to display.

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)

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*.

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

**Rob, The ComputerTutor:
Technology Solutions**
“OpenOffice Spreadsheets” by
Rob Spahitz

This week we continue our investigation of the Calc tool from OpenOffice, a free competitor to Microsoft's Office suite. Calc is the competition for Excel.

This week we continue our investigation of the Calc tool from OpenOffice, a free competitor to Microsoft's Office suite. Calc is the competition for Excel. As a reminder, you can download the free OpenOffice applications from www.OpenOffice.org.

Feedback

Recently, a reader indicated that he has found that when you really put OpenOffice to the test and feed it more complicated things, it's not really the same as Word. That may well be. As I indicated, I've already seen differences (although minor), and if you want Word then something else may not quite work. However, if these tools can handle the tasks you have, then the only time it's important to have it work like Word (or Excel) is if you want to send it to someone who doesn't have and doesn't want this product. Similarly, if others send you Word documents that don't import well, then you're out of luck and need to use a more compatible program too.

That said, let's see if I can put Calc to the test and see what comes out.

Slice and Dice

Something I've previously done in my classes is to capture information from a Web page and then see if Excel can work with the pieces. We'll try the same in Calc.

First, I know that different browsers (and maybe versions) have different ways of handling copied data, so your results may differ.

Secondly, I need to find a site that has a good, static block of information so readers can try these examples for years to come. So I'll use my site with a page I expect to be there awhile.

Let's start by capturing a list of some of the many countries where we've delivered. Proceed to Dogopoly (www.dogopoly.com/dog/order.htm). You'll see the list near the top, as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Country List from Web Page.

I copied the list of countries (and flags) from the Google Chrome browser (version 4.0). When I pasted this into Calc (cell A1), I saw that the images did not copy. Just as a quick check, I tried this in Excel 2003 and it also omitted the pictures. However, the text appeared in a long line, whereas in Calc it wrapped within cell A1.

Here's the data:

United States Canada United Kingdom Ireland Australia France Germany Spain Italy Hong Kong Singapore

Since it appears that there are three spaces between each country, this looks like it will be easy to get this list from cell A1 into a separate column.

Step 1 is to locate the "next" separator of three spaces. I'll put this formula into cell B1: =FIND(" ",A1)

Hmmm. This produces: Err:508

I see from a tooltip that the Find function has three parts: what to find, where to search, and what position to start with. Excel has that, but the third part is optional. So I changed the formula to =FIND(" ",A1,1) but get the same results.

Just for a check, I ran this same formula in Excel and got #VALUE!. I know that this usually means that Excel is having trouble finding what you're seeking. Apparently those three spaces in the text I copied were not really spaces. And although the error in Calc is probably better than the one in Excel (since it gives a code number), a search in the Help files resulted in this:

508

Error: Pair missing

Missing bracket, for example, closing brackets, but no opening brackets

Apparently someone missed something when this code was set up.

As I check the pasted value further, I see that there are only two characters between each country name. Just to check, I copied again and pasted into Notepad and saw three spaces. I pasted into Calc and saw two spaces (confirmed when editing the value in the "input line" called the formula bar in Excel). And just to check, I pasted into Excel and saw the three spaces.

OK, so a quick look back at the Web page. I see between every country there is a space, image, space, another image and another space. Interestingly, Windows seems to copy the three spaces and ignore the images, as you'd expect. This is confirmed by pasting into Notepad. So why doesn't the paste work in Calc? I'm not sure since I'm still learning, but it's certainly a concern since you are very likely to copy and paste data if you want to enter information into Calc.

Just a quick note: After some research, I found that the reason Excel did not find the three spaces is because they are apparently copied from the browser as shifted spaces. In Windows,

space is normally saved on the disk as code 32 (as defined by the ASCII table definition used by almost every modern day computer). However, what pasted was code 160 (which happens to be 32+128, and there are 256 codes in the standard ASCII table, so the extra 128 is half of that and in some cases the "upper half" has some similarities to the lower half). (Most of this has changed in modern fonts, but maybe not with the space symbol.)

So anyway, how do we get around this? Well, I can simply copy the "spaces" between the countries and paste that into the above formula. When I do that with my original formula, I still get the same error. Apparently these don't paste as nicely as I'd like.

Digging Into Calc

Given these problems, I'll take a detour to explore what Calc thinks is there. In Excel I used the function called Code to get the ASCII code. Let me see if there's something like that and put it into cell A2. Sure enough, =CODE(A1) works and gives the result of 160, indicating that there is a "shift-space" at the beginning of the line (assuming that you copied the space at the beginning of the Web page).

Just for fun, I decided to try a few helpful things that I use in Excel. For one thing, I need to update the formula. What I would use in Excel is: =CODE(MID(A1,1,1))

This will go to cell A1 and then go to the middle of the text there and start at position 1, then take one character. Next it will show the ASCII code for that character.

As I try this, I see that the tooltip shows semicolons as separators rather than the commas that I've always used in Excel. When I apply that I see that it fixes the problem and, when applied to cell B1, it then returns the same #VALUE! That I saw in Excel.

So the lesson here is that Calc uses semicolons (;) to separate the different parts needed to help the functions work properly (pieces often known as parameters or arguments).

So at this point, A1 contains the list of countries separated by these weird space characters. Cell A2 contains a formula that happens to find that code and identify it as the character for code 160. Since I need to search for the character, not the code, I can use the CHAR function to take the code 160 to create the Shift-space character in the function in cell B2: =FIND(CHAR(160);A1)

This is fine for getting the first one, but I need to find two together. Using the Excel concatenation (text-joining) symbol worked to combine two code 160's together: =FIND(CHAR(160) & CHAR(160);A1)

This now produces the number 15 for me, which indicates that Calc found the two shift-spaces starting at position 15. With that information, I can pull off the first country by taking everything before that. Putting that into cell C1 gives me United States with this formula: =LEFT(A1;B1-1)

This goes to cell A1's text and grabs the left portion. How many characters? Well, that's the next part: B1-1. To get that we proceed to cell B1 and see 15, then subtract 1 and get 14. So the first 14 characters give the right result.

Using this concept to get the rest of the countries requires a little extra. If I copy cell B1 to cell B2, first I see that the reference to A1 changes to A2. Although I can manually change that, I'd like to copy the formula about a dozen times to get the rest of the countries, and I really don't want to change all of them back to A1 or to copy cell A1 down next to each cell. What I'd like is to use an absolute reference to A1 rather than a relative reference. This means that when I copy the formula, absolute references will remain fixed while relative references will change to match the offset to the new location (like 1 cell down changing reference A1 into A2).

In Excel, I can make a cell reference into an absolute reference by adding \$ before the letter and digit like this: \$A\$1. That works, but I usually use the Excel shortcut F4-key to do that for me. That didn't work here, so I had to manually enter the \$ symbols.

With this in place, I can copy the formula down to cell B2. From there, I need to change it so that it will start searching after the previous country. That third parameter lets you specify a starting position. The starting position is the same as the ending position of the previous country, so we can reference cell B1 (but then add 2 so we start after the previous shift-space block): =FIND (CHAR(160) & CHAR(160);\$A\$1;B1+2) This gives me the number 24, which is apparently the end of the country Canada in my list.

Applying this same idea in column C, I need to make the formula use an absolute reference for A1 (\$A\$1) but a relative reference for B1 (still B1). But since I don't want the left of A1, but want the middle of A1, I can change that to this formula: =MID(\$A\$1; B1+2; B2-B1+1)

This tells Calc to proceed to the middle of cell A1 (which is flagged as an absolute reference for when I copy it) then start at the position found in cell B1 (15) and add 2 to skip over the spaces, then take a certain number of characters that when calculated gives me the next country. In this case, that calculation goes to the position at the end of the current country (the number found in cell B2) and backs up to the beginning of the current country (found in cell B1). We add one to make sure that it grabs the correct number of characters.

Copy the formulas from B2 and C2 down to row 20. The final result shows everything except the last country, as seen in Figure 2.

| | A | B | C |
|----|--|---------|----------------|
| 1 | United States Canada United Kingdom Ireland Australia France Germany Spain Italy Hong Kong Singapore | | |
| 2 | | 15 | United States |
| 3 | | 24 | Canada |
| 4 | | 41 | United Kingdom |
| 5 | | 51 | Ireland |
| 6 | | 63 | Australia |
| 7 | | 72 | France |
| 8 | | 82 | Germany |
| 9 | | 90 | Spain |
| 10 | | 98 | Italy |
| 11 | | 110 | Hong Kong |
| 12 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 13 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 14 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 15 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 16 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 17 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 18 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 19 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |
| 20 | | #VALUE! | #VALUE! |

Figure 2. Extracting Data.

Note that those VALUE errors are back. Since we've run out of those space blocks, that's expected. I intentionally copied extra rows to help me quickly see where the list ends. Everything from row 12 down is not needed. Let's fix row 11.

The problem in the last row is that the text in cell A1 does not end in those extra spaces. When we search for it, starting from the beginning of the last country (Singapore), we don't find it so Calc sends an error.

A really simple "cheat" to this problem is to add the symbols we are seeking and we're guaranteed to find them. The way I usually do this is to add it to the formula like this in cell B11:
`=FIND(CHAR(160) & CHAR(160);A1 & CHAR(160) & CHAR(160);B10+2)`

All I did here was to change the second parameter so that it includes those extra spaces

(without changing the original cell A1. By applying this, Singapore appears as it should.

Finally, I like to make sure that all of my formulas are consistent so I copy B11 back to everything above up to B2, and nothing changes because the formula still does the same thing but now a little better.

Wrap-up

Well, that didn't go as smoothly as I expected, but in the end I was able to get the job done and learn a few things about Calc (such as using semicolons for my parameter separators). Also, I noticed that the countries actually had an extra space before them. It turns out that there really were three spaces between countries, so I'm not sure why the copy function in the Input box (formula bar) only seemed to give me two.

All in all, Calc looks like a good tool (especially for free), but it will take some time to adjust to the changes it offers.

Next week, I'll continue to explore its features and try another test like this one.

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

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



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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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



Attackers Doubling Down on You—Malicious spam continues to evolve; The Zombies Are Back—Call of Duty heralds the return of the fan favorites; A New Approach to Online Addictions—Saavi Accountability helps you sort out your issues on your own terms; PDF Editing App for Macs—PDFpen helps users get more editing features for their PDFs.

Attackers Doubling Down on You

Real-time Web and e-mail threat-protection expert M86 Security (www.m86security.com) has unveiled its latest Security Labs Report detailing "the emergence of combined attacks that leverage Adobe's ActionScript and JavaScript languages to thwart most of the new, proactive detection mechanisms."

The report covers the first half of 2010 and highlights the evolution of obfuscation through combined attacks. More from M86 Security:

This threat trend is the latest to emerge as cybercriminals seek new ways to limit the effectiveness of many proactive security controls. Because existing techniques for "covering their tracks" are becoming less effective, cybercriminals have begun using combined attacks, which are more complex and difficult to detect. By splitting the malicious code between Adobe ActionScript language—built into Adobe flash—and JavaScript components on the Web page, they limit the effectiveness of many of the proactive security-detection mechanisms in place today.

The report also covers another very concerning development, which was the automated widespread infection of legitimate Web sites by the returning Asprox botnet.

"Traditional methods such as spambots and dynamic code obfuscation are still very much in use. However the first half of 2010 has also seen the emergence of new advanced methods as seen in the new combined attacks. Cybercriminals continue to try and outsmart even the latest Internet security-protection mechanisms," said Bradley Anstis, vice president of M86 Security.

Whether targeting vulnerabilities in Adobe Reader/Acrobat through infected PDF files or themed campaigns exploiting the public's high level of interest in the World Cup by sending out malicious HTML e-mails and blended e-mail attacks, malicious spam continues to evolve. Even with successful take-downs of rogue ISPs, the global spam volume continues to increase, marching on unhindered by these efforts, indicating that this beast cannot simply be contained without going after its head: affiliate programs. These programs are set up by dubious online retailers who use botnet operators—or herders—to drive sales to their Web sites via spam

campaigns. These herders are then paid a commission on any sales made as a direct result of these campaigns.

Download the full M86 Security Labs Report (m86.it/srfh10).

The Zombies Are Back!

Game developer Treyarch has revealed that the community-favorite "zombies" is coming to Call of Duty: Black Ops, which hits stores worldwide on Nov. 9 and is published by Activision. According to Treyarch:

Zombies were originally introduced in Call of Duty: World at War and became an instant hit. Call of Duty: Black Ops fans can combat the zombie apocalypse in up to four-player co-op gameplay.

"Zombies have been such a hit with our community that we were committed to bringing brand new zombie experiences to Call of Duty: Black Ops," says Treyarch Studio head Mark Lamia. "We've taken extra special care to retain the essential ingredients of our Zombie game, and have also crafted a nice surprise for the fans."

Gamers can also experience an all-new co-op game in Call of Duty: Black Ops Multiplayer with Combat Training. Up to six players can rank up in this dedicated and exclusive multiplayer mode battling against enemy AI.

Call of Duty: Black Ops for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Nintendo Wii and Windows PC is rated "M" (Mature—Blood, Drug Reference, Intense Violence and Language). Also scheduled for release is Call of Duty: Black Ops for the Nintendo DS family of handheld systems, which is rated "T" (Teen).

Fans who can't wait for the November 9 release of Call of Duty: Black Ops can hone their zombie combat skills on iPhone and iPod Touch with the newest map release for Call of Duty: ZOMBIES, Der Riese ("Zombie Factory"), which is an adaptation of the popular downloadable content originally released for Call of Duty: World at War. The map is available for \$4.99 from the App Store at www.itunes.com/appstore/.

For more information, visit the Call of Duty Web site (www.callofduty.com/blackops), also via Twitter @JD_2020.

A New Approach to Online Addictions

A nationwide study by Stanford University (saaviaccountability.com) estimates that one in eight suffer from some form of problematic and addictive Internet use: online porn, gambling, excessive gaming/shopping/surfing/social networking, etc. A new program called Saavi Accountability tackles the problem with a new approach. Rather than block or restrict online access, the program relies equally on the person and his/her relationships to increase accountability, which in turn reduces online temptations and addictions. According to Saavi:

There are a number of monitoring and blocking products on the market, but they primarily serve as online access restrictors and don't address the underlying issues and addictions.

Saavi Accountability users make the decision to solve the addiction themselves and install the software on their computer. It is not something that is done "to" them; it is collaborative software instead of spyware, installed "with" their cooperation, understanding and support. The software assists by notifying an "accountability partner" (a parent, spouse, friend or trusted counselor) when questionable browsing takes place or if there are attempts to circumvent the software. Saavi Accountability records and reports when a person has regressed to the addictive behavior. The software increases a person's sense of accountability and works to reduce the desire for the addiction. It helps users resist temptation, not just avoid it. The longer the user can resist, the easier it becomes to resist, so he/she can have occasions of exposure and still not regress.

The typical model for overcoming addictions uses a 12-step process that relies heavily on total avoidance. "One of the biggest barriers to recovery, for sexual addictions, is not having the opportunity to be able to practice or be able to stop yourself voluntarily," says Todd M. Frye, PhD, LCPC, LCMFT. "This is what Saavi provides, the opportunity to make a choice." Therapist Todd Bowman, PhD, LPC, agrees. "Rather than putting a filter in place that inhibits conversation, Saavi Accountability opens the door for new levels of conversation to take place."

Saavi Accountability is a pay-as-you-go subscription service. It cost \$9 per month for up to four computers concurrently. The program is available for individuals and parents as well as offered to organizations and churches nationally to share with their groups. For every church member/family that uses the service, the group will receive money each month per subscriber to help with their educational programs.

PDF Editing App for Macs

Portable Document Format (PDF) (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pdf) is a file type invented by Adobe Systems Inc. that improves Windows' compatibility with Mac OS X (and vice versa). For example, although Corel WordPerfect's and Microsoft Publisher's native saved files are incompatible with Mac OS X, they can be converted into PDF files that are compatible. PDF files are compatible because they're platform independent and they open in various free apps including Adobe Reader and the Preview program that is bundled with Mac OS X. Reader and Preview have limited features for editing PDF files, though, and that's where Smile Software's PDFpen (smilesoftware.com/PDFpen/features.html) program steps up.

PDFpen is an editing program geared toward consumers who need more PDF editing features than the ones included in Adobe Reader and Apple's Preview but do not need the industrial-strength feature set—or the remarkably steep price tag—of Adobe's Acrobat Professional software. For a fraction of Acrobat Professional's price, PDFpen includes (but is not limited to) support for the following editing functions in PDF files: adding text, images and signatures; correcting, highlighting, underscoring and striking through selected text; moving, modifying, copying, or deleting images; filling and saving forms; selecting and copying text across multiple columns; adding and printing notes or comments; inserting or deleting pages; combining PDF files; and more (Figure 1 (smilesoftware.com/PDFpen/compare.html)). If your current PDF editing program has you complaining "It won't let me!," then PDFpen might be just the solution for you.

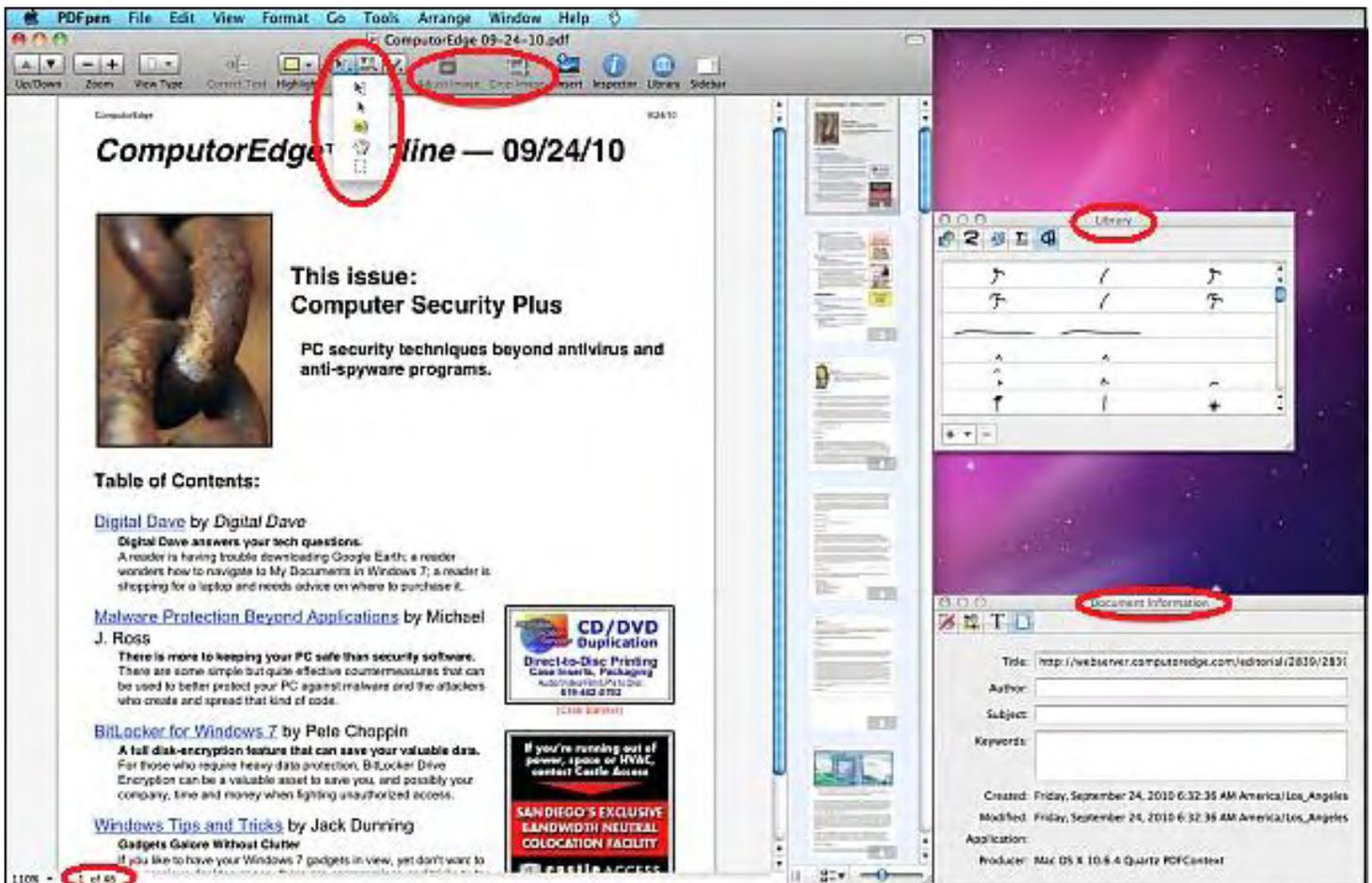


Figure 1. PDFpen is a PDF file editing program with some really nice features (e.g., the "x of y" page number indicator in the horizontal status bar, the Library which is like a persistent clipboard for storing frequently used objects such as proofreading marks, and the Inspector window) plus some potentially frustrating features (e.g., the Selection Tool pop-up menu, which does not display tooltips and the Adjust Image and Crop Image tools that behave counter-intuitively).

My top three favorite features in PDFpen are the Library (which is akin to a persistent clipboard or scrapbook that stores frequently used images, signatures, or objects including a built-in set of proofreading marks; see Figure 1); the optical character recognition (OCR) engine for converting scanned images of text documents into editable text (Figure 2; in my tests, PDFpen was impressively quick and accurate in performing OCR although your mileage may vary depending upon the scanned image to be converted); and automation via AppleScript (PDFpen comes with 12 useful factory-built scripts as shown in Figure 3).

Make Snow Leopard Purr

Snow Leopard is the current version of Apple's Macintosh operating system 10 (Mac OS X). It's optimized, elegant and chock-full of useful functionalities that promote the user's efficiency.

Despite Snow Leopard's elegance and functionality, some of its features could be even more efficient. For example, suppose you want to open a file that is located in a folder buried three or more levels deep in your Mac's hard drive. You could access the file by using Snow Leopard's Spotlight search utility, but it likely will find more files than just the one you want; or you could use the Finder, but doing so would involve opening a window and then drilling down all those levels until you eventually reach the folder containing that elusive file. Here's another example—suppose you want to look up someone in your collection of contacts. Again, you could use Spotlight (same story; it will find more items than just that one contact), or you could launch the Address Book program and scroll through its Names column until you finally arrive at the one of interest. And speaking of Spotlight, what if you want to customize its searches or its listing of search results in ways that Spotlight does not support?

In case you're thinking that there must be a more efficient way to accomplish mundane tasks such as these in Snow Leopard, you are absolutely correct. Snow Leopard's efficiency can be dramatically improved by installing a collection of third-party utility programs that facilitate these tasks. And in case you're thinking that the utility programs will cost an arm and a leg, how about a total price tag of \$0.00? Each of these efficiency-enhancing utility programs is made freely available, without crippleware restrictions, by their respective authors (although some do request a donation). I've been using these 10 utilities for years and highly recommend them.

Find erPop

The first in my top-10 collection of efficiency enhancers is FinderPop (www.finderpop.com). I am so fond of FinderPop that it is the first third-party program I install on my Macs. It consists of a System Preference and a daemon (background process that handles requests for services and otherwise is dormant) that augment the Finder's contextual menus (Figure 1A) and greatly simplify navigation through Snow Leopard's file system.

After installing and enabling FinderPop, you create aliases to your most frequently accessed and/or favorite folders and move these aliases to the "FinderPop Items" folder in your user account's Library folder. When you right- (or control) click any empty portion of the menu bar, the Desktop, any item in a Finder window, or any mounted volume on the Desktop (e.g., a hard drive, USB pen drive, etc.), a contextual menu displays that includes all of the folders you aliased to the "FinderPop Items" folder (Figure 1, top right). Each of these aliases is followed by a right arrow in the contextual menu, indicating that they represent hierarchical menus.

Figure 2. PDFpen's OCR engine is quite accurate as illustrated in this screen capture showing the engine's conversion of a scanned image of a printed page. The only error I found in the above text is "Find erPop" (it should be "FinderPop"); all of the words marked by the spelling checker (squiggly underline) actually are correct.

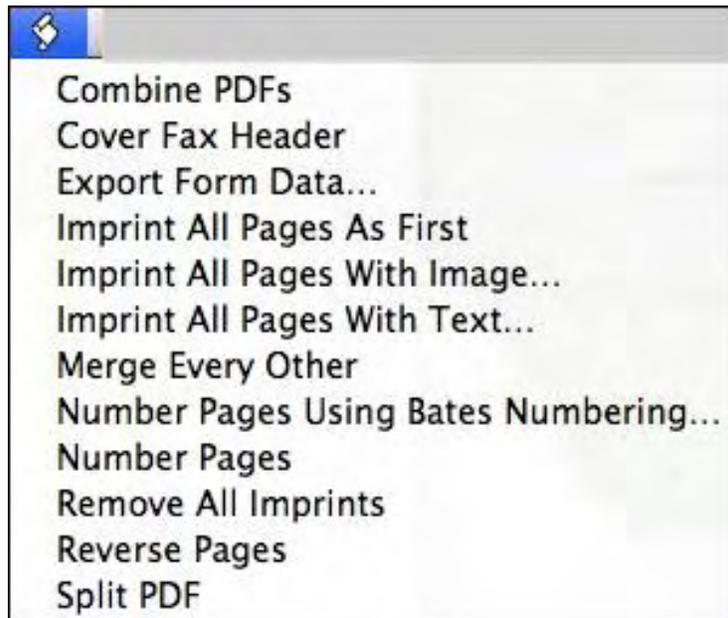


Figure 3. PDFpen's AppleScript menu includes a collection of handy built-in scripts that automate the 12 tasks implied by the scripts' names.

The latest and greatest version of PDFpen—5.0.1—came out just about a month ago. One of PDFpen 5's touted new features is 64-bitness (Figure 4), and consequently it requires Mac OS X 10.6 (aka Snow Leopard) or later; PDFpen 4.7.x is the final version that supports Mac OS X 10.5 (aka Leopard) or 10.4 (aka Tiger). Note that one of 64-bitness' (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/64-bit) selling points is support for more than 3GB of addressable RAM, hence PDFpen 5 can open majorly complex and/or humongous PDF files. Since PDFpen really is a consumer-level app rather than an industrial-strength one, however, the rest of us might be less likely than graphics or page-design professionals to benefit from version 5's 64-bitness.



Figure 4. The recently released, latest and greatest version of PDFpen—5.0.1—is a 64-bit app.

Other noteworthy new features in PDFpen 5.0.1 include (but are not limited to) redaction (two flavors: erase—which is like digital white-out—and block—which superimposes a black-filled rectangle; Figure 4); search and replace text or search and replace with redaction; image adjustments; and support for trackpad gestures (e.g., pinch and spread to change a PDF document's zoom). If these features seem enticing, a fully functional demo version is available for readers who want to check it out before buying; note that the demo inserts a watermark in documents.



Figure 5. Redaction, one of many new features in PDFpen 5.0.1, comes in two flavors—erase (above middle) which is like digital white-out, and block (above middle) which superimposes a black-filled rectangle (above right).

For users whose PDF editing needs include working with fill-able forms and/or building tables of contents in their PDF files, Smile Software has a solution, too. The "pro" edition (smilesoftware.com/PDFpenPro/index.html) of PDFpen includes support for building Mac- and Windows-

compatible fill-able PDF forms (it inserts text boxes, checkboxes, or radio buttons) and tables of contents. New in PDFpen Pro 5.0.1 is a spiffy feature that converts a Web site into a multi-page PDF document. Just select File => New from HTML in PDFpen Pro's menu bar, enter a complete URL, and PDFpen Pro automatically creates a PDF containing that Web page's contents for future off-line reading. Wicked cool!

Although PDFpen comes with some truly useful features that distinguish it from freebies such as Adobe Reader and Apple's Preview app, this program also has some issues that curb my enthusiasm.

My first quibble with PDFpen is its price—version 5 carries a \$10 price increase over its predecessor. This increase translates into a 20% hike...yikes! Still, the new \$59.95 price tag (vs. the old \$49.95) is way more affordable for the rest of us than Adobe Acrobat Professional (store1.adobe.com/cfusion/store/html/index.cfm?event=displayProduct&categoryOID=1795555&store=OLS-US&distributionmethodOID=103) (MSRP \$449 and up for first-time buyers; \$159 and up for upgraders.). By the way, PDFpen users who purchased version 4.x on or after February 14, 2010 are eligible for a free upgrade; users upgrading from an older version will need to surrender \$25. A "Family Pack" with licenses for up to five Macs in one household costs only \$15 extra (\$74.95).

My next and more serious quibble with PDFpen is my impression that it needs more attention to details that would improve its user interface and behavior. Perhaps I have been using Apple's Preview program for too many years and have become too spoiled by its user interface and behavior. Alternatively, perhaps PDFpen really needs a bit more polish.

One example of PDFpen needing more attention to detail is the types of files that it can save. This program currently saves files only as PDF or TIFF format whereas Apple's Preview can save to a slew of image formats (gif, jpeg, Photoshop, png, etc.; Figure 6) in addition to PDF and TIFF formats.

Two additional examples where PDFpen could use some polish are related to PDFpen's toolbar. The first deals with the toolbar's Selection Tool. After clicking the Selection Tool icon, a pop-up menu displays which contains five types of selection tool (Figure 1). Unfortunately, these selection tool types are unlabeled and PDFpen does not display tool tips when the cursor hovers over them. The second example pertains to the Adjust Image and Crop Image toolbar icons (Figure 1). During my testing with various image types (TIFF, jpeg, and png) in PDFpen, I chose the rectangular selection tool, dragged a rectangle over the image, then clicked the Crop Image icon in the Toolbar, and—boom!—absolutely nothing happened. The reason was that the Crop Image icon in the Toolbar remained dimmed (likewise the Adjust Image icon and the Edit>Crop Image... menu bar item). Instead, the user needs to select Edit => Crop Page to Selection from PDFpen's menu bar. I could be wrong, but it seems counter-intuitive that PDFpen considers an image to be a page (rather than...an image) with regard to cropping. In Apple's Preview app, I performed comparable steps, clicked the Crop Image toolbar icon, and—boom!—the image was cropped.

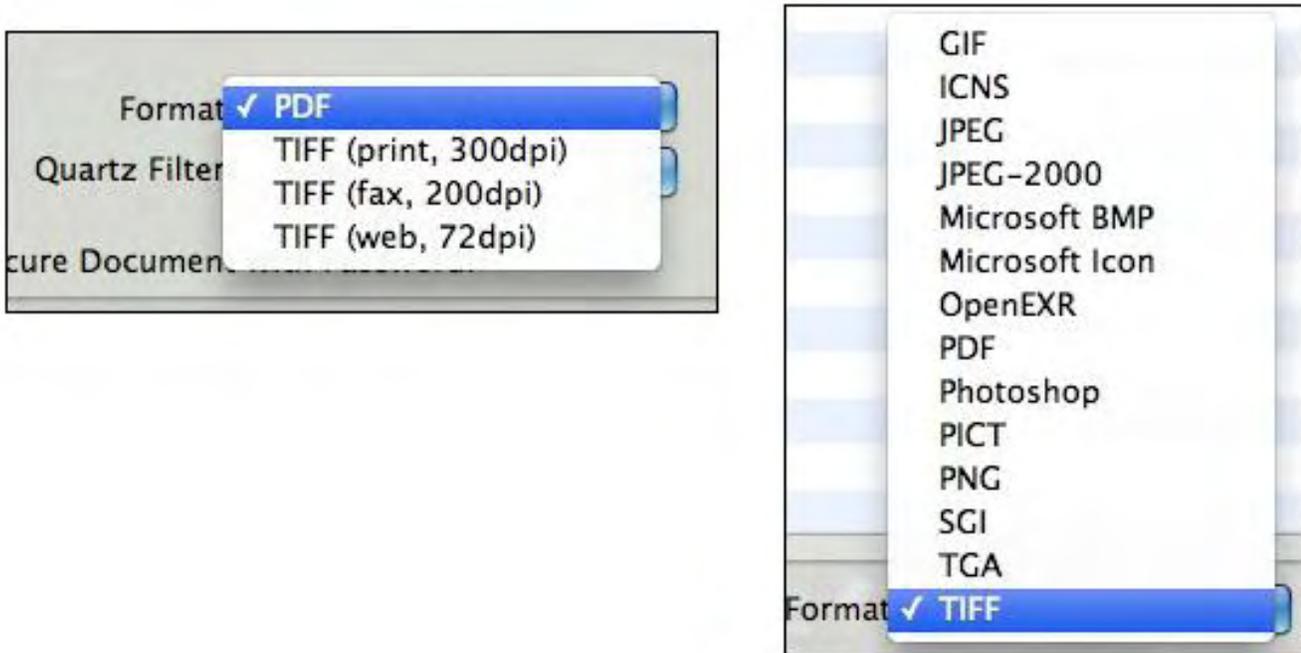


Figure 6. PDFpen has only PDF and TIFF options in its Save As dialog's Format pop-up menu (left) while Apple's freebie Preview program has a slew of image formats (right).

During my testing, PDFpen exhibited several additional counter-intuitive behaviors. After opening an image file (TIFF, jpeg, gif, or png), selecting the rectangle selection tool from the aforementioned Selection Tool pop-up menu, and dragging a rectangle, I pressed the Escape key on my Mac's keyboard to dismiss the selection rectangle and—boom!—nothing happened; instead, the selection rectangle persisted. Since PDFpen's Edit menu lacks a Deselect All item, I resorted to closing the document and reopening it in order to recover (very inefficient). An alternative (but still less efficient than just pressing the Escape key) is to select a different selection tool from the pop-up menu, then reselect the original (preferred) one. In Apple's Preview, pressing the Escape key dismisses a rectangle selection.

Two additional interface issues (among others) in PDFpen are noteworthy. The Spotlight search text-input box is located in PDFpen's Sidebar rather than in its toolbar. To access the Spotlight search box, you must display the Sidebar and select Search Results from the Sidebar's pop-up menu or you must select Edit => Find from PDFpen's menu bar. Apple's Preview program has a Spotlight search box in the toolbar. Lastly, the aforementioned block redaction feature is permanent after saving the file; if you made a mistake, you cannot remove the redaction (as least as far as I could tell during my testing, and Help did not include a solution).

In conclusion, PDFpen could be a handy supplement to—rather than a replacement for—Adobe Reader or Apple's Preview program. It has some nice features that the freebie programs are missing, but also is missing some nice features that the freebies have. For PDF users whose editing needs are not met by the freebies, PDFpen could be a preferable and more affordable alternative to Acrobat Professional keeping in mind, though, that the user interface could produce some frustrations.



reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“3-D: Hot Emerging Trend or Occasional Novelty?” by Jack Dunning



The current madness to put true 3-D (stereoscopic vision) into televisions may be doomed to failure, never being more than a novelty.

A number of months ago I walked into a Costco at which the televisions were on display (about 30 feet away) and marveled at the three-dimensional effect (3-D) of the HDTVs showing mountain scenes. I was amazed and curious. As I walked closer, the 3-D effect faded. While the picture was still excellent, it no longer popped out. I realized that in many situations the best distance to watch HDTV is from 30 feet away. This is why I think that the current madness to put true 3-D (stereoscopic vision) into televisions is doomed to failure, never being more than a novelty. (It's wise to keep in mind that my record for predicting the future is not notable.) The problem with trying to replicate 3-D in television (or on computers) is loaded with conflicting issues, and the solutions are not likely to add much to the entertainment value of the programming.

The first issue deals with how humans actually obtain depth perception. It is commonly thought (and partially right) that our ability to perceive distances has to do having two eyes being set a couple of inches apart. This is absolutely the case at close distances, but once we get a little away from the objects (about 30 feet) there are much more important factors that kick in. From there on, it's all in our heads. Our minds have the capability of using other visual clues to help us judge distances, so one object looks larger (closer) than another or a tree partially obscures (closer) a house. These factors weigh heavily in our ability to perceive 3-D.

This was the effect that I experienced on the HDTVs at Costco. I was beyond the range where stereoscopic vision derived from my two eyes being set apart would tell me that I was looking at a flat screen. My mind kicked in, using all the other visual clues in the picture to present me with what I thought was 3-D. Admittedly, this would not have worked if the scene—rather than being mountain scenery—had been one that I would expect to see at a closer distance. If we sit in most family rooms watching HDTVs, we know that we are looking at a flatscreen. Our stereoscopic eyes at 10 to 15 feet overrun our mental processes. The only answer for creating close-in 3-D entertainment is to deliver separate stereoscopic views to each eye. This is not easy and the results are nauseating for many people.

The most common solutions have involved putting a set of special glasses on the viewer. Holograms have been effective at displaying 3-D without people needing to wear glasses, but they are not practical as a solution for 3-D entertainment. A hologram requires monochromatic coherent light (a laser) to both photograph and display the 3-D object. This may be ideal for a haunted house at Disneyland, but not at home.

In the past, the most common approach to 3-D glasses has been a red filter on one eye and a blue filter on the other. The two cameras that do the filming are presented in the appropriate colors so that each eye only sees one separate image. The brain puts them together to create

the 3-D simulation. While used extensively over the years as a gimmick, this approach to mainstream 3-D is considered lame.

More sophisticated is the use of polarized filters in the 3-D glasses. The filters are rotated at 90-degree angles to each other, giving each eye a totally different view. When the movie is then shown, the images for each eye are projected with the respective matching polarization. This can be done in movie theaters, but there is no television that I know that can project two different images at different polarization—nor are you likely to see one.

The movie *Avatar* was shown in 3-D using polarized glasses. (To determine if you have polarized glasses, take two pairs and line up a lens from each pair. Rotate one of the sets of glasses while looking through the match lenses on both. The visibility will change from near clear to black as you rotate the glasses as the polarization changes from matching to opposing.) That movie may well be responsible for all the current 3-D insanity—in more ways than one. Many people took the 3-D glasses from the movie home with them in hopes that someday they could use them to watch 3-D television. They would have a better chance with the red/blue cardboard glasses that they got for free from 7-11.

The plan for 3-D television is to use special electronic shutter glasses that will sync with the television broadcasting the separate images so fast that, without the glasses, it will only look blurry on the screen. This will not be cheap for either the televisions or the glasses. Plus production of the entertainment programming will be expensive.

The idea of watching a football game on 3-D television is a joke. Unless they are within 30 feet of the huddle, even people who go to the stadium are not actually watching in stereoscopic vision. Their brain is making it work for them. The best view of a football game is the wide view at which the entire play can be seen. Only close-up replays could benefit from 3-D. Plus, who wants to watch a sport while wearing a helmet—I mean, special glasses? What if you don't have enough glasses to go around? Non-users would be forced to deal with the blurred images. Many people will become nauseated and dizzy.

In another five years we will be reminiscing about all the big 3-D push. I'm not saying that 3-D efforts will go away. It may be the only way to keep people going to the movies. But even if it makes it into the homes, it will never be more than an occasional novelty.

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

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Ignore at Your Own Risk," "Emperors of Search," "Finding My Documents," "BitLocker Review," "Zoho Office Productivity Tools," "Finding Windows Gadgets"

Ignore at Your Own Risk

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's September 24 article, "Malware Protection Beyond Applications":]

An excellent, thoughtful article that covered all the bases. Any reader who ignores its recommendations does so at his own risk.

-Allen Gates, San Diego, CA

Emperors of Search

[Regarding the September 17 Digital Dave column:]

Yeah, Google sizzle is OK, but what are they doing shuffling the part of the deck you are seeing? Better keep current on *other* search engines if you want to see some under-represented items!

-Michael Viehman, Julian, CA

Finding My Documents

[Regarding the September 24 Digital Dave column:]

I tried searching for my documents and the search returned 17 files because other users have profiles on this machine. To narrow the search I entered <username> (your logon user name) and my documents and it returned the one for which I was looking. For example if your user name is tswift type the following in the search box:

```
tswift my documents
```

-Marcus, Alabama

In your answer to Wayne Wood about where to find My Documents, you said once it is found you can pin it to the Start Menu. I tried that and when I right-click on My Documents there is no selection to Pin to Start Menu. I am using Windows 7.

-Poz

I forgot to mention that you need to drag the My Documents icon to the Start Menu icon (or Taskbar for pinning to the Taskbar) to pin it.

-Digital Dave

BitLocker Review

[Regarding Pete Choppin's September 24 article, "BitLocker for Windows 7":]

BitLocker sounds like a fine system that even my ancient brain might be able to work with—when I upgrade to W7. However, the size limit to 100MB is totally inadequate for even an average user such as myself, unless I only separated out my most critical files (a real nuisance).

Most sincerely,

-Allen Gates, San Diego, CA

Zoho Office Productivity Tools

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's September 17 article, "Zoho Office Productivity Tools":]

I spent 30+ years in development trying to get applications out of a "Host" and onto the desktop, since when the host was down everything/everybody was down. Now we are touting "Cloud" Computer with apps such as Zoho replacing the desktop as the point of interaction between people and computer. What's happened that I missed?

-Don Piller, Escondido, CA

Gadgets

[Regarding the September 24 Windows Tips and Tricks column:]

You told me how to find gadgets on 7 but not Vista. Didn't find them through Search, so now I have to start looking elsewhere.

Any hints as to where they are hiding?

-Steve, El Cajon CA

Sorry, you can get to the gadgets in Vista by typing "sidebar" in the Start Search field and loading Windows Sidebar. Windows Sidebar can also be found through the Start Menu => All Programs => Accessories.

-Jack

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

appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

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

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

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