

ComputerEdge™ Online — 11/19/10



This issue: Holiday Shopping Issue

Gadgets and gizmos and tech toys, oh my! Here's a look at the latest must-haves for your computer.

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

Gift Ideas

For the Apple-philes in your life, great gifts abound, ranging from iPad accessories to the Magic Trackpad. Also, a look at interesting software gifts; HP's Slate tablet computer "sells out"; Apple has issued some software updates; and a tip on using the Terminal program to control your Macintosh from a command line.



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[Rob, The ComputerTutor: Technology Solutions](#) by Rob Spahitz

Open Office Databases

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



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[EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher](#) by Jack Dunning

The Future of ComputerEdge

In the New Year, ComputerEdge will shift into a more free-form Web publication.

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

ComputerEdge Staff

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

"Virus Sources," "Bob's Dual Monitor Issue and Ray's DVR," "New Folder," "Windows Tips and Tricks"



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Digital Dave

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

A reader's Windows PC freezes up for no apparent reason. Are Windows memory issues to blame?; Should a reader buy an OEM version of Win 7 or a retail upgrade?; a reader wants to save all sent e-mails to Outlook's Sent folder.

Dear Digital Dave,

Why does my Compaq PC with Vista OS frequently "freeze" and give me the error message: "Windows is not responding"? This usually occurs while in Windows Mail or Internet Explorer. Sometimes it occurs in Office Excel 2003. Rebooting does nothing—I just have to wait until it comes back. Otherwise I shut down hard and reboot. Any help is appreciated.

*Paula
Santee, CA*

Dear Paula,

When your computer freezes for a period of time, yet eventually comes back, it means that your processor was otherwise occupied. Unfortunately, this is not uncommon with Windows Vista. There is either some type of background work (backup, defragmenting, memory/drive swapping, antivirus scanning, etc.) flooding the processor with demands, or there is a running program that has temporarily taken the total attention of the CPU. At this time you will get an error message saying that the program you're trying to use is not responding. That doesn't mean that it won't respond eventually, but you may need to sit there a few agonizing seconds. (Twenty seconds can seem like an eternity when you're waiting for a computer to respond. The temptation to hit the reset button is high.)

While this can happen to any type of computer, the regularity of it will depend heavily upon the type of computer and the operating system. The more powerful the CPU, the greater the capacity of the memory; and the faster the hard drive, the less likely it is that this type of temporary freeze will occur. Windows Vista is one of the worst for this, but I have seen it happen with Windows 7, although for a much shorter duration.

If you can add more memory to your system, this is likely to help with the problem. If you want to minimize this problem, limit how many programs you run at one time and the number of programs that are operating in the background. Even then, I would expect that you will occasionally experience this problem, especially while loading certain specific programs that hog the processor.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave

I'm thinking about updating my system from XP64 to Windows 7 Professional. I've read that you

have to do a backup of your files and a fresh install of Windows 7. If that's the case, is there any advantage of buying a retail upgrade of the OS vs. an OEM version of the Windows 7 Professional package?

*Dale Timko
Escondido, ca*

Dear Dale,

The primary difference between the retail version of Windows 7 and the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) version is the price and a little more flexibility with the retail version. The OEM version is designed for use by computer dealers who build their own systems; therefore it is a little cheaper than the retail version. When installed it becomes attached to that computer and is not supposed to be used on another computer.

One major difference is that the retail version will come with both the 32-bit and the 64-bit versions. You decide which to install. With the OEM version, you will need to specify whether you want 32-bit or 64-bit. This could be a problem on some older computers since some will not run the 64-bit version. It can be difficult to return an opened 64-bit OEM version, which won't run on the older machine, and swap it for a 32-bit version. Once the seal is broken, OEM versions generally cannot be returned.

The OEM version does not come with a box, nor does it include any support from Microsoft. (I've never heard anyone say that support directly from Microsoft was a plus—or even possible.) While I understand that it is relatively easy to move the retail version of Windows from one computer to another, if you need to re-install the OEM version on either a new computer or the same one after a hard drive crash, then you must call India and explain why you're moving it. They will then give you a new code.

I'm not particularly familiar with the retail version, since I've only used OEM versions on my computers.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

My dad uses Outlook Express, and he has the box checked to save sent messages in the Sent Folder. It saves one e-mail only—the most recent one. Each e-mail sent replaces the one in the folder. What setting are we missing to save all e-mails sent?

Also, what does it mean when an error message comes back from a Yahoo.com mail server saying an e-mail was undeliverable, or that the e-mail server was busy too long? I've never seen that before.

*Rob Macfie
San Diego*

Dear Rob,

Assuming that you have set Outlook Express to save outgoing e-mails in the Sent folder (probably Tools/Options/Send tab), then the most likely cause is that the Sent folder (or Inbox) is full. In Outlook Express there is a two gigabyte size limit on the amount of e-mail in any one folder, which is kept in a DBX file for that folder. However, if your Inbox folder reaches the limit, it may affect other folders. You can either delete old e-mails or move them to a new folder (i.e., Sent Backup). This will make space for saving the new e-mails again.

If this doesn't fix the problem (or I'm misunderstanding the question), then I recommend that you move to another e-mail program that doesn't seem to have this problem, such as Thunderbird (www.mozillamessaging.com/en-US/thunderbird/) from Mozilla (the Firefox people). Many people have experienced this problem with Outlook Express, and you're not likely to get much help from Microsoft.

There are a variety of reasons why an e-mail might bounce back. Among the most common are "Mailbox Full" and "User Unknown." In the case of "e-mail server busy," it can be almost anything. E-mail servers will hold messages in a queue for a limited amount of time before they will notify the sender that they can't deliver it. It seems to be a problem on Yahoo's end of things (or it could be a bad address or forwarding problem). In any case, I would try to resend the message. Next time, it is likely to go through. If not, check out the address.

Digital Dave

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Computer Outlands

“What new gadgetry and downloads out there are fun, useful and gifty?” by Marilyn K. Martin

Here are some ideas for cool, useful, fun or overlooked computer products that may suit at least some of your gift-giving needs perfectly.

Is your best friend's keyboard so dated that it has, or is rapidly approaching, incompatibility with the rest of their upgraded computer? Has your father's monitor devolved into strange colors, or does it have "ghosting" problems with pixel changeover? Do you have a teenager who longs for a special, non-free screensaver or cursor collection? Has some relative been grumbling about finding a Web cam with privacy features? Or do you have a disabled relative who can't seem to find the correct assistive computer product? Then read on!



**Holiday preparations pause
while the Internet is down.**

With the holidays approaching, I decided to check out the latest non-belly-of-the-beast hardware and non-office software. In other words, products and downloads that non-techies like myself can understand and appreciate. The pretty stuff. The fun stuff. The unusual stuff. The I-can't-believe-someone-is-actually-selling-this stuff. All of which can offer you great ideas for gift-giving.

Everyone has computers today, whether at home, work or school. So you can't go wrong shopping for personal computer gifts. Especially since a lot of niche products are popping up for specialized needs, whether it's a foot keyboard or a gaming monitor. So here are some ideas for cool, useful, fun or overlooked computer products

that may suit at least some of your gift-giving needs perfectly.

Mouses

Mouses have burst out in an unbelievable variety, perhaps partly because this is the most personal connection we have to computer hardware (followed closely by keyboards). Computers are now considered a necessary (no longer just optional) investment, so there are plenty of individuals, families and companies willing to spend whatever it takes to meet everyone's different mouse needs. (And besides, companies with a computer in every cubicle can quickly do the math. Buying an ergonomic mouse is vastly less expensive than medical leave and surgery for carpal tunnel or other hand/wrist injuries.)

So mouse designers have now come up with incredibly clever new devices to fit virtually everyone. You can now buy small, egg-shaped mouses with ergo-curves and some strange looking "assist" mouses. All are designed to fit hands that range from child to adult, and even hands damaged by carpal tunnel or arthritis. Mainly for desktops, they now come wireless. And most new mouses can now register by moving over practically any surface, paint to glass.

You can find "infection control" mouses (www.ikey.com/ProductsList/?productID=15&menu=2&prodListID=6) with a silicon overlay that can stand up to industrial cleaning agents. You can also buy the ultimate in mouse security, with a fingerprint detection mouse (www.aratek.net/products/hw-FMs100.htm) that eliminates the need for passwords. And there are even "chatroom" wireless optical mouses designed with Anti-interference and Auto Channel Hopping.



FMS 100 Fingerprint-ID Mouse.

There are Skype mouse-and-phone combinations. And PowerPoint "presenter" mouses with laser pointers and change-slide features. You can even buy stainless-steel optical trackball mouses, and USB multi-remote mouses with infrared remote control. There's also Bluetooth technology available now to connect a mouse or external keyboard to a laptop.



Skype phone and mouse.

If you have your own business, you can buy a set of "promotional gift" mice. And some retailers even sell mice with university logos. Aqua-liquid mice are the hottest advertising sensation right now. They consist of a standard mouse with advertising over a liquid interior, where you can choose the liquid color and custom-designed floaters.

Everyone seems to have various ergonomic mice, although some companies specialize in anti-fatigue and anti-injury ergonomic and "assist" mice. Most sell the vertical mice, which allow your hand/wrist to remain in an upright, handshake position. This doesn't twist the forearm to create or exacerbate hand/wrist injuries.

(Aerobicmouse.com and EnableMart (enablemart.com) are specialty companies for "assist" mice, as well as other "assist" computer products.)



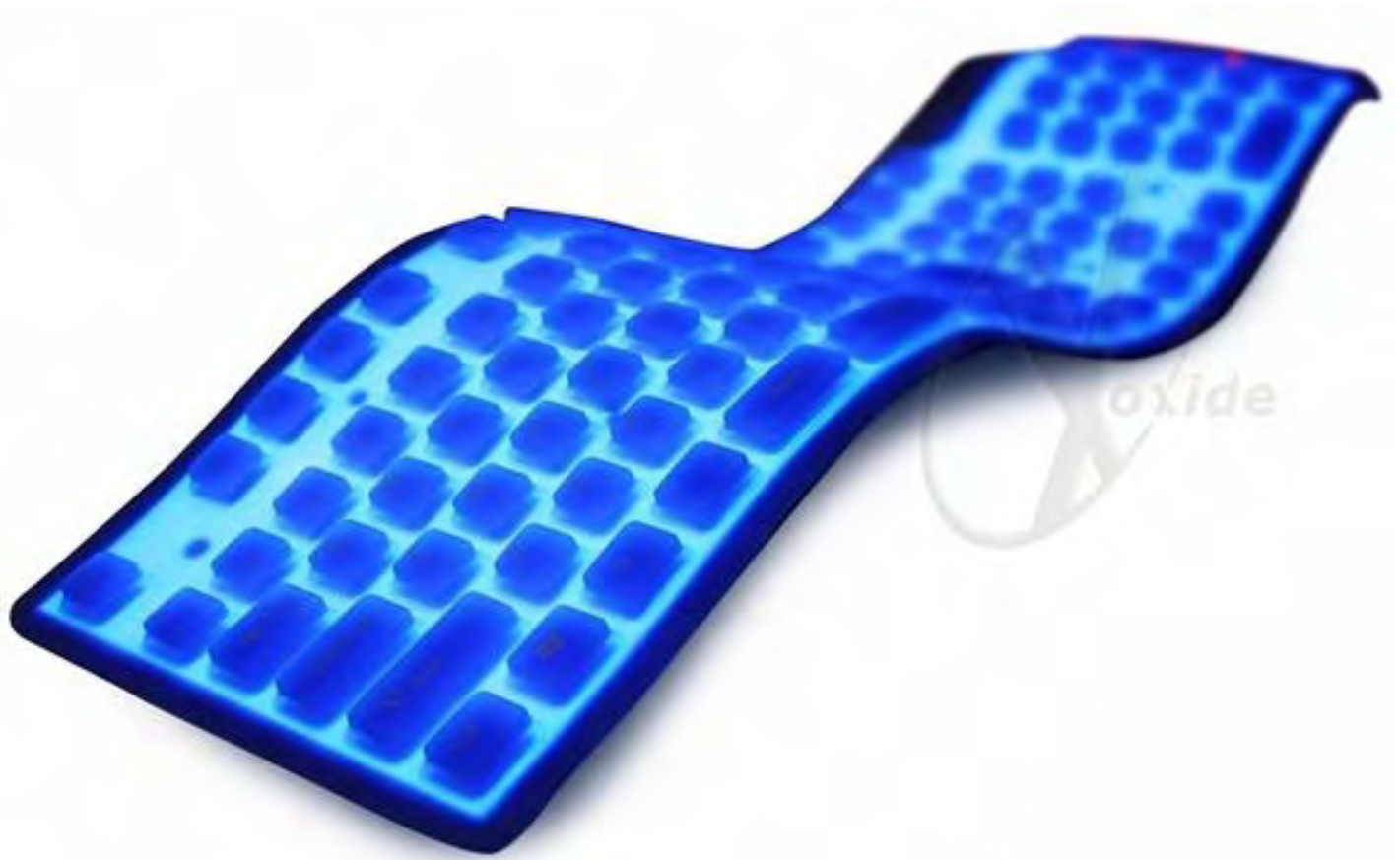
White Vertical Anti-Fatigue Mouse.

You can find "assist" mice from an upright joystick, a trackball, or a mouse button-box, to a large resting-hand mouse that looks like an iron. There are also hands-free or feet-operated mice. And for \$1,500, there is even a mouth-operated "assist" joystick mouse.

Keyboards

Keyboards have come a long way too, and have solved some of the issues I raised in a past humor column, "Kursing the Keyboard." You can now buy all manner of wireless keyboards, wavy or curling ergonomic keyboards, and even illuminated or custom keyboards.

Modtek (www.modtekusa.com/index.php?page=details&id=4) makes backlit or glowing keyboards, as well as flexible/roll-up keyboards that can also be illuminated. This might be the perfect gift for a college student pounding out a past-due paper at midnight—especially when he or she can't turn the lights on and disturb a sleeping roommate.



Modtek Flexible EI Illuminated USB Keyboard.

Gaming or multimedia specialty keyboards are also in demand, with programmable specialty keys. Some multimedia keyboards also offer laser trackballs and scroll wheels. Other specialty keyboards available include one with a small scanner attached to the top of the keyboard to scan in photos.



ThermalTake Challenger PRO Gaming Keyboard.

Fentek Industries (fentek-ind.com/) offers to make you a "customized keyboard" in your choice of custom keys (large letter or different language), sizes and colors. One of these could earn you the undying gratitude of a relative struggling to become proficient in another language, or always squinting to see the keys.

Fentek also offers programmable and spill-proof keyboards, keysticks and foot-pedal keyboards, and left-handed or one-handed keyboards. They even sell plastic-molded covers, and adhesive keytop labels. (For when all your key letters start disappearing, say, due to a key-pounding alpha-male spouse.)



Maltron One-Handed Keyboard.

Monitors

Monitors have also continued to evolve, with high-resolution widescreens and flat-panels now the monitors of choice. CRT (cathode ray tube) and VGA (video graphics array) monitors have gone the way of the dinosaurs. They've been superseded by DVI (Digital Visual Interface) and HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface).

The very latest monitors available are TFT (thin film transistor) LCDs (liquid crystal display) (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TFT_LCD). They have licked the "ghosting" problems of slow-to-changeover pixel colors, and their contrast ratio is

now 50,000:1.

Rotating monitors are popular now with gamers, since you can "rotate" the rectangular monitor between portrait or landscape. You can even find laptop replacement or upgrade screens at LaptopScreen.com (laptopscreen.com). Basically, you can find any monitor you want, or find a blog where you can ask, "What do you recommend if I want my monitor to do this and that?"

Screensavers



Screensavers, wallpaper or backgrounds are all the rage for monitors, and some people change them up every week. Lots of Internet companies advertise free downloads to, um, "pimp your screen." But computer-screensavers.com warns that too many of these "free" downloadable screensavers come with enough Trojans and spyware to crash your computer in a heartbeat.

The most popular types of screensavers seem to be underwater or aquarium scenes, some allowing you to program how many and what kind of fish or other sea critters you want to see swimming by. Lake and waterfall screensavers are also popular, staying with the "soothing water" theme. Storms, fireplaces, outer space, landscapes, romance, animal and seasonal screensavers are also popular. Some screensavers even come with sound, tunnels, 3-D animation or slide shows.

The best screensaver download sites I found are 7art (www.7art-screensavers.com/), ScreenSavers.com (www.screensavers.com/), Smashing Magazine's Best of Screen Savers (www.smashingmagazine.com/2007/10/04/screensavers-best-of/).

You will have to check out which ones offer free and/or "guaranteed safe" downloads. But almost everyone has a relative who lives and breathes romantic poems, pop art, or is always daydreaming about being out fishing on a lake. A safely downloaded screensaver is inexpensive, and a great way to surprise someone by saying "My gift is your new screensaver. Enjoy!"



Alien Planet Clock.

Better yet, make someone close to you happy by teaching them how to rotate the pretty and safe screensavers that came with your computer software. Microsoft Vista stores its screensavers in the Control Panel, under Appearance and Personalization. For Windows 7, Jack Dunning wrote a column in the 10/22/2010 issue of *ComputerEdge* explaining how to program in your photos for your own personalized slide-show screensaver. Secretly programming in a loved one's "personal slideshow" is also a unique and inexpensive gift.

And lastly, are you annoyed by "stretched" wallpaper on your rectangular flatscreen? Or tired of laboriously cropping photos so they don't look fat or pulled sideways on your screen? Check out Ducklet (ducklet.com/). It has downloadable DeskPhoto software for about \$20.

Cursors

Cursors, or on-screen pointers, seem most interesting to the adolescent through teen set, with animated, sparkly, tailed/trailing or "too cute" cursors. You can even download a "cursor toolbar" from some sites, to change up your cursor whenever you feel like it.

But Computer Cursors (computercursors.net/) warns that, like "free" downloadable screensavers, safety should be of primary concern. You don't want to download a cursor or cursor toolbar loaded with viruses and Trojans, or else be conned into signing up for "free cursors" when your e-mail address will be sent to spam sites long after you've

dumped the cutesy cursors. This site's author offers good advice, and provides 10 free-and-safe cursors and pointers to download. And the only "free and safe downloadable cursor site" he trusts and uses is CursorMania (cursormania.com/).

Some of the more adult or "office-type" cursor sites include the following:

- Vivi Cursor (www.vivisoftware.com/vivi_cursor.htm)
- Really Hot Layouts (www.reallyhotlayouts.com/) (Although you have to download webfetti's toolbar.)
- Fun Utilities (www.funutilities.com/) (Kinda goofy but fun.)

Web cams/Computer Cams

Web cams/computer cams are another computer feature that is always improving. Many retail outlets offer discount Web cams with features including face recognition, megapixels, motorized pan and tilt, auto-focus and VGA sensors.

Some outlets offer a Blue Mics Eyeball Web cam and microphone that boasts 2-megapixel video and CD-quality HD audio—all in a Web cam with a retractable lens that turns itself off for your privacy, when you aren't broadcasting. It is also portable enough to mount on any level surface near your computer. They also offer notebooks and laptops with built-in Web cams.

Logitech (www.logitech.com/en-us/webcam-communications/webcams) offers high-end Web cams that can record in Full Hi Def 1080p, and widescreen Hi Def, for HD video calling and connecting online. Some companies even offer spyware and surveillance cameras.



Creative Live! Web cam Socialize HD.

For more "specialized" Web cams, Panasonic released a long-bar Web cam in Japan, that allows one to communicate via Skype over a Panasonic Viera TV. And HP offers an Elite Autofocus Web cam that takes still image shots up to 12MP, records video at 3MP, and even includes a "privacy shutter."

Music

Music through computers is also evolving at an astonishing rate. Far beyond Guitar Hero, you can now buy Music Production Computers by Rain Computers (raincomputers.com/products/), towers to laptops. Hitsquad (hitsquad.com/) offers Music Software Platforms, and Software By Category.

Magix (magix.com/) offers serious music production software for everything from "Samplitude Producer" to "Webradio Recorder." And the International Computer Music Association (computermusic.org/) is for everyone "involved in the technical, creative and performance aspects of computer music."

For the more casual music enthusiast, Logitech offers stereo mics on a Web cam. And Bootstrap (easyipodtransfer.com/) offers iPod transfer software to transfer songs from your iPod to your computer and back to iTunes.

Gift Cards

Gift cards are great for those of us not sure what computer gift to get someone. Or else we get confused trying to match the computer jargon to what a loved one has specifically asked for. The Apple Store has gift cards starting at \$25. And Dell sells gift cards from \$50 to \$500. For super-stereo needs, Bose offers gift cards ranging from \$20 to \$5,000.

If you prefer to give a gift card that offers more of a variety of computer products, check out your favorite electronics retailers. Most have gift cards starting out at \$25. Or go to iCard Gift Card (clickit.icardgiftcard.com/) for a wide variety of generic and specialty gift cards, from reloadable to all-electronic (to be e-mailed or printed).

Consider this article as a sampler plate of giftable computer products. If you settle on a specific computer item for a gift, I recommend you do your own more expansive search.

Have a terrific and safe holiday season!

Marilyn K. Martin is a freelance writer of nonfiction and fiction living in East Texas. She is the author of several published mini-articles and is currently writing a Young Adult Science Fiction series, Chronicles of Mathias, (www.amazon.com/Chronicles-Mathias-One-Reptilian-Rebirth/dp/1598249002) Volume One and Two are available on Amazon.

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The Ultimate Computer Christmas Gift: Telepathy!

“Will we finally be able to control computers with our very thoughts?” by James Hartnett

Recent advances in computing and technology have brought the detection and deciphering of brain signals into the price range of the consumer for the first time. This holiday season we'll start to see some products that incorporate this technology.

As a young student I once expressed my disbelief at the concept of punch cards, in which each card represents one line of a text document. How primitive! How difficult!

My rather sour-faced professor replied that he was just happy when it was possible to reprogram a computer without having to open it up and re-wire the inside. And he had a good point: No matter how primitive they look now, punch cards were a big advance on previous systems of interaction with the computer.

But are we reaching the ultimate computer interface? Will we finally be able to control computers with our very thoughts?

Reading Your Mind

Electroencephalographs (EEGs), maps of electrical activity detected by a network of sensors on the head, have been studied since the '60s, way back in the last millennium. Much has been learned about the detection of some mental states (like attentiveness, happiness and calmness).

One problem in the collection of this information is that the signals from the brain can be swamped by the signals from the muscles of the eyes and face. Compared to the very faint signals that leak out of the brain, the signals from the muscles are loud and clear, and are an annoyance to scientists who study the brain and are trying to isolate its signals.

But one man's noise is another man's information, and the developers of brain-scanning interfaces can make use of this information, as well as the more faint data coming from your brain. If the system can detect facial expressions, that is almost as useful as reading your mind.

I don't care how my computer knows that I am unhappy—but if it knows that I am unhappy and can take some corrective action, that would go a long way toward smoothing the human/computer interface.

Recent advances in computing and technology have brought the detection and deciphering of such signals into the price range of the consumer for the first time. This holiday season we'll start to see some products that incorporate this technology.

Two Basic Rigs

There are two basic brain-scanning rigs on the market, though they will be marketed in a variety of toys from different manufacturers. The two current players are NeuroSky (www.neurosky.com/), with its single-sensor EEG system, and the multi-sensor (14) Emotiv (www.emotiv.com/) EPOC headset. The NeuroSky headset will be the one used for most games, while more serious applications (and the upper-end games) will use the more information-rich EPOC rig.

Use the Force, Luke!

For those who follow the ways of the Jedi, try the Mindflex Game (company.neurosky.com/products/mattel-mindflex/), by Mattel. This game uses the NeuroSky EEG headset to allow the player to steer a levitating (on a cushion of air) ball through an obstacle course. I see these at various sites for a little over \$55.



Mattel's Mindflex Game.

The Force of the market is strong with Star Wars, because a rival product, Force Trainer (company.neurosky.com/products/force-trainer/), by Uncle Milton Industries, uses a NeuroSky headset to measure your concentration and move a ball up and down a tower. Also for about \$55, this game looks futuristic and will appeal to any young Jedi warrior.



Uncle Milton's Force Trainer.

Another NeuroSky game that I have read about, but have not yet seen on the market, is a Jedi light saber that glows when the user exhibits focus, but turns off when the player is distracted. This still might make it out this year.

You must silence your inner fears, Padawan learner, and remember the inter-contentedness of all things. May the Force be with you.

More Serious Applications

Technology like this is not being confined to the home gamer market. Interested parties include DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

DARPA brought us the Internet (in real life) and an evil computer named SkyNet (in the Terminator). DARPA's interest is in allowing soldiers to communicate telepathically, and influencing the minds of enemy soldiers so that they don't want to fight anymore. This is even more frightening than the Terminator movies.

On a slightly less terrifying note, a brainwave-based interface has obvious appeal for those too disabled to use a regular keyboard and mouse. If such a device can be made to replace the keyboard, then no physical handicap need prevent someone from using a computer to work, play and communicate.

Primitive, for Now

Currently these brain-reading devices are all very primitive, and there is lots of room for improvement. Certainly there is a wealth of electrical signals around the head—whether or not these can be translated into a reliable language for human-computer interfaces remains to be seen.

The silver bullet for this technology would be to be able to take input as from a keyboard, and do so faster and more

reliably than a keyboard. This is a tall order, and no one has achieved it yet. Combined with some of the computer screens that are painted on the inside of your sunglasses, this would be pretty Star Trek.

Building Your Own

For those interested in building their own brainwave-reading invention, the EPOC headset, for about \$300, will provide you with the data. Looking not much bigger than a set of headphones, the EPOC headset has multiple sensors to detect EEG signals.



Emotiv EPOC headset.

Mind Mouse software, by a company called Mind Technologies (mindtechnologiesinc.com/), allows some interpretation of the signals by a software package. The Mind Mouse software trains the system to recognize the signals that are generated when you achieve various mental states.

Stupid Fad, or Wave of the Future?

Are we witnessing the birth and development of a new, more advanced way of dealing with computers? Will our keyboards and mice look as archaic to our children as punch cards do to us? Only time will tell. But I look forward to the development of this fascinating and promising technology.

In the 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, William Gibson painted a dystopic future filled with technologically enhanced small-time crooks and launched the cyberpunk genre of science fiction. Central to cyberpunk is the direct connection between brain and machine. Let us hope that the future we create with this new technology can improve on Gibson's dark imaginings.

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 and Tricks

“What's using up all your hard drive space?” by Jack Dunning

A free program called SequoiaView graphically depicts your hard drive and its files, helping you see what the largest files are to gain more disk space.

There are times when we want to clean up our hard drives because they have accumulated too many files. Some may be redundant backups, while others may be hogging space because of their size—such as video files of television shows. When we start getting messages that it is time to free up disk space, there is often the problem of finding the folders and files that—when deleted—will make the greatest difference.

When using the Windows search tools, there are techniques for specifying the size of a file that you'd like to find. This will create a list of all the files over a certain size. This function works differently in all versions of Windows (XP, Vista and 7), but it is available in each. Then you need to look through the list, determining which of the folders/files are the best candidates for deletion. There may be a better way. Well, if not a better way, at least a more interesting and colorful way.

The Technische Universiteit in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, offers a free program called SequoiaView (w3.win.tue.nl/nl/onderzoek/onderzoek_informatica/visualization/sequoiaview/download_sequoiaview/) that offers a unique look at your hard drive. If you merely want to see how your drive is storing folders and files with a graphic look at how much space is being devoted to each, then SequoiaView is the program for you. It is simple to download, install and run.

When you first load SequoiaView, it will scan your primary hard drive. This may take a couple of minutes depending upon the size of the drive and the number of files on the drive. Once the scan is completed, you will see a two-dimensional depiction of the folders and files on your drive (see Figure 1). To see the colors assigned to file types, you may need to click the color scheme button in the upper left-hand corner (middle button).

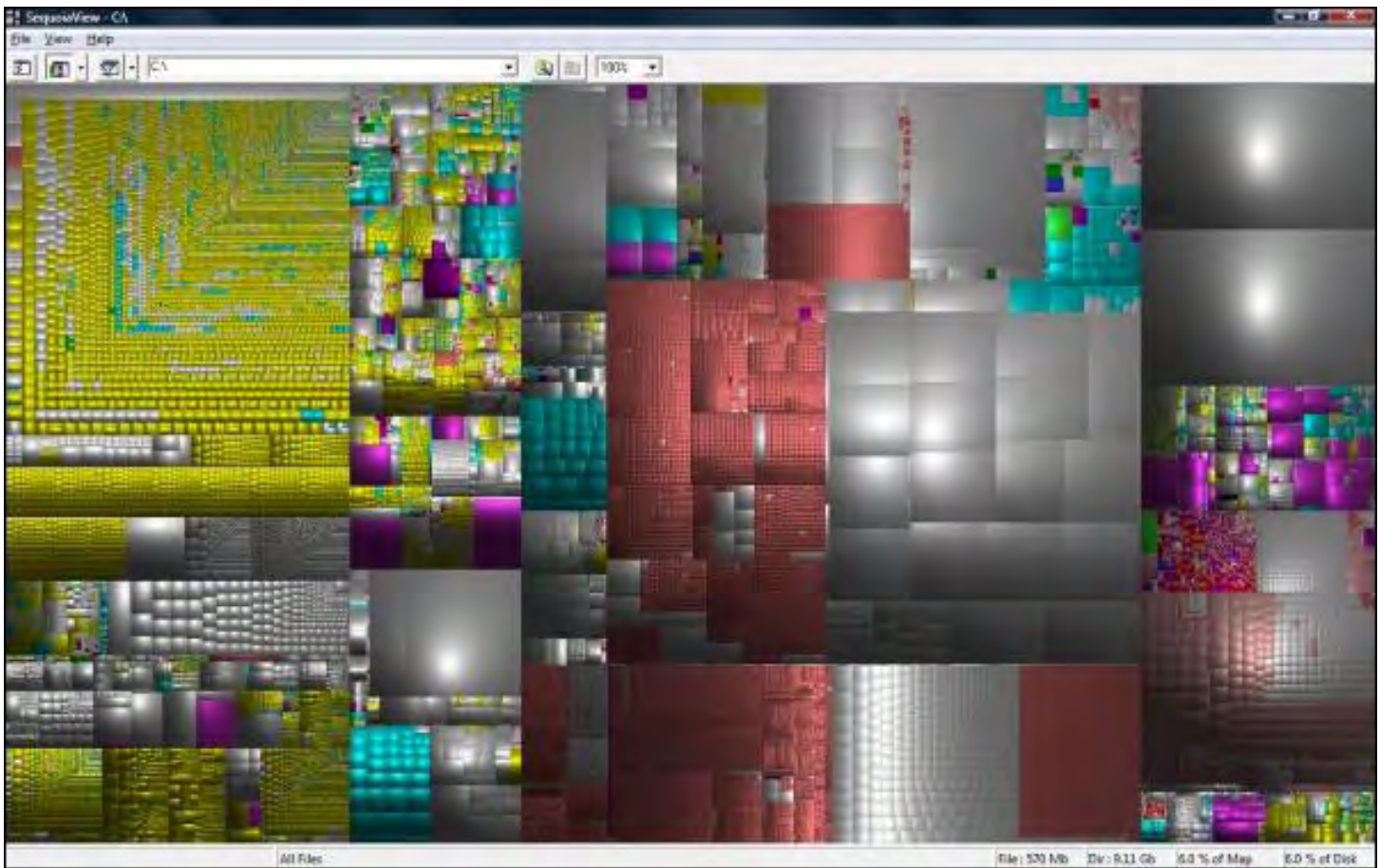


Figure 1. The squarified graphic depiction of a hard drive in SequoiaView.

This representation is not an actual physical or logical layout of the hard drive. Rather, it has grouped files within square folders and square files within those folders. The smallest squares represent individual files, with the size of the square approximately corresponding to the size of the file. The largest squares represent the largest files. (In this case the large gray boxes in the center of the screen represent video files of short films.) If you want to identify a file, merely mouse the cursor over the square, and the file name and directory will pop up (shown in Figure 4 below).

As you mouse over the screen, the next subfolder will be outlined with a yellow box (see Figure 2). If you right-click within the yellow box, a menu will open that offers the options to go Down One Level (display selected folder only), Down to File (display selected file only), Open File (using default program), Explore (open Windows Explorer), and Properties (open file properties window). If you have moved down beyond the root folder, then Up One Level and Up to Root (move to top level folder on the drive) will become available. Double-click on an area for quick burrowing down one level. As you can see, it is readily apparent which are the largest files on the drive.

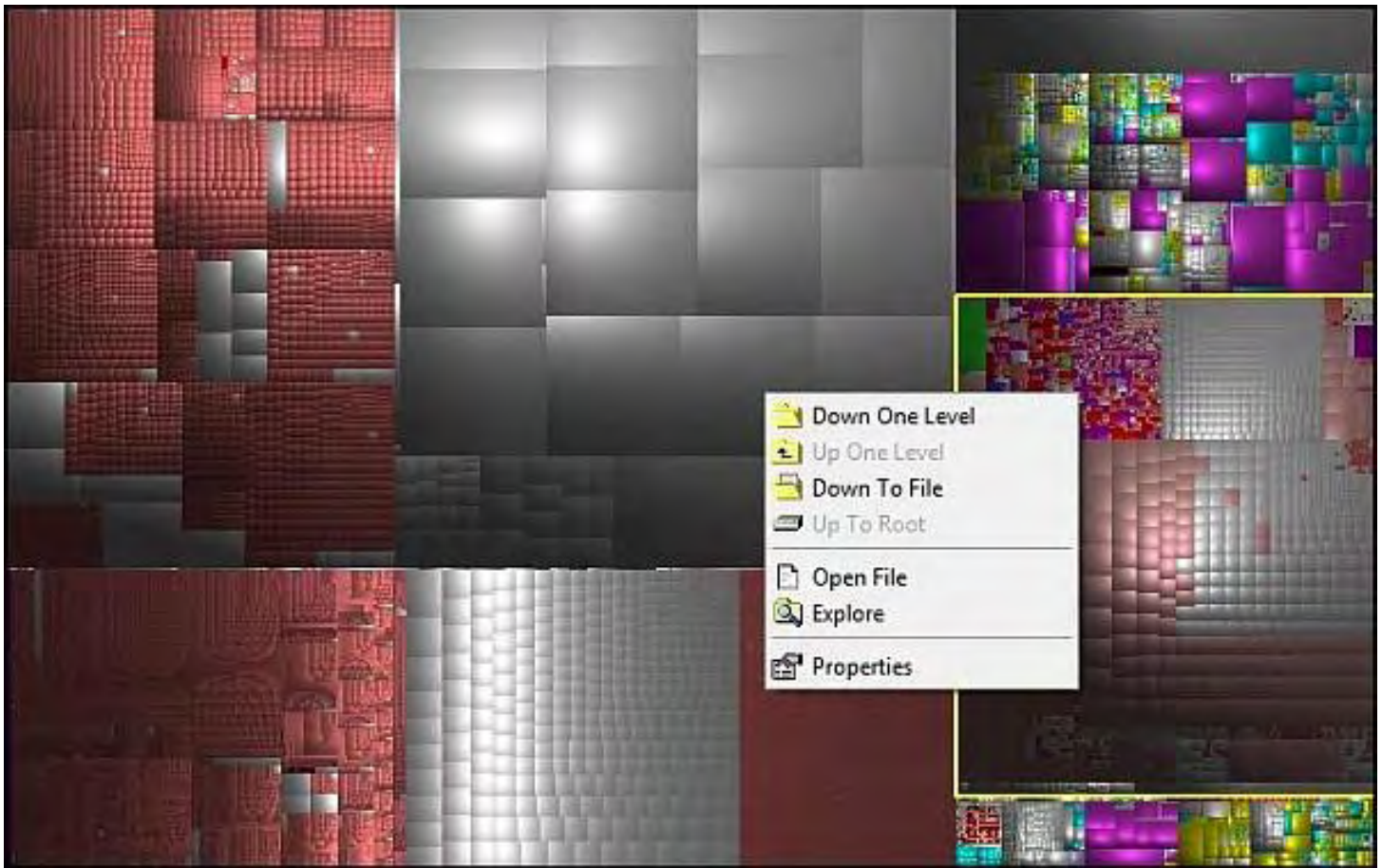


Figure 2. When you right-click on a selected area (folder shown by yellow box), a navigation menu pops open.

Figure 3 below shows the expanded folder selected in Figure 2. SequoiaView will adjust the arrangement to fit the available view on the screen. Therefore, if you re-size the window, the overall look will change. The multicolored box in the lower right-hand corner represents years of *ComputerEdge* editorial working files, including DOC (blue), JPG (copper), BMP (red) and ZIP (purple) files.



Figure 3. After a double-click on the area selected in yellow in Figure 3, the folder expanded to fill the screen.

Moving further down the directory tree expands the view of the folders and files at the lowest level (see Figure 4). While the groupings don't follow a specific pattern (i.e., alphabetical or numerical order), it is easy to see their relative size.

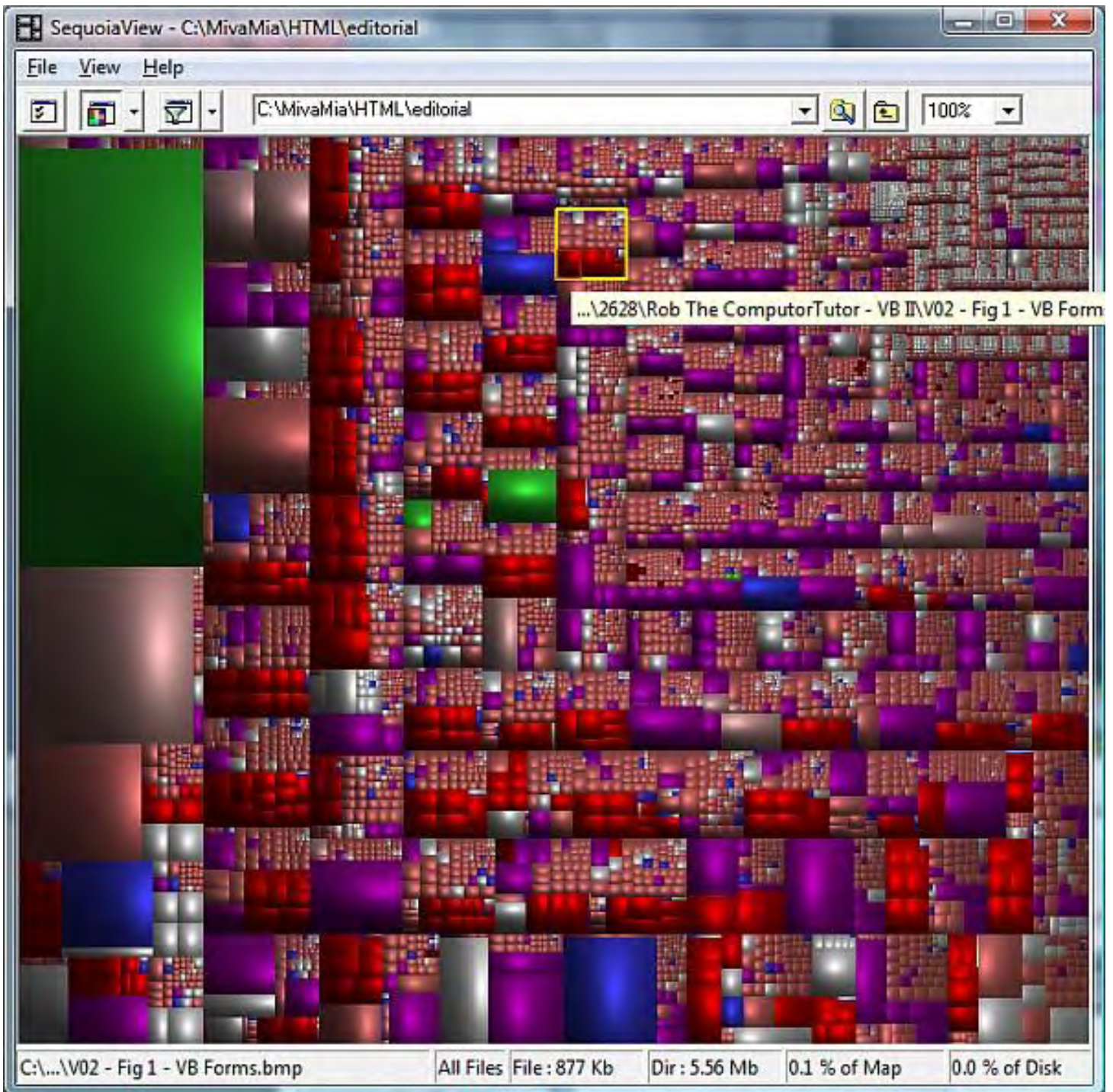


Figure 1. Working editorial for years of the magazine.

Playing with SequoiaView will demonstrate some of the other viewing modes available. You can use the program on any hard drive to do some quick analysis of what's using up all the space. Not only is it a useful tool to add to your arsenal, but it can make pretty pictures to use as desktop wallpaper.

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

“Gift Ideas” by Wally Wang

For the Apple-philes in your life, great gifts abound, ranging from iPad accessories to the Magic Trackpad. Also, a look at interesting software gifts; HP's Slate tablet computer "sells out"; Apple has issued some software updates; and a tip on using the Terminal program to control your Macintosh from a command line.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

If you know someone who uses a desktop and laptop Macintosh, get them Apple's Magic Trackpad, which lets you control a desktop Mac using the same trackpad finger gestures available on a laptop Mac. Some people may still prefer using a mouse with their desktop Mac, but the Magic Trackpad gives them the option of also using finger gestures as well, so they can use the Magic Trackpad as a replacement or a supplement to a mouse.



Figure 1. The Magic Trackpad gives desktop Macs the ability to accept finger gestures.

If you give someone a Magic Trackpad, consider giving them Apple's battery charger as well. Unlike ordinary battery chargers, Apple's battery charger reduces the amount of power it needs after it charges its batteries. Since you'll need

to use two AA batteries to power the Magic Trackpad, giving someone Apple's battery charger with a Magic Trackpad will let them keep a pair of charged batteries for those times when the Magic Trackpad batteries eventually die (usually after a month of constant use).

Reduce, reuse, recharge.

Introducing the first battery charger designed by Apple. It recharges quickly and uses energy wisely. And it comes with six AA batteries, so you'll always have plenty of power for your wireless Mac accessories.



More charges. Less waste.

The Apple Battery Charger has one of the lowest standby power usage values — or "vampire draw" — of similar chargers on the market.¹ That's the energy most chargers continue to draw after their batteries are fully charged. But the Apple Battery Charger senses when its batteries are done charging and automatically reduces the amount of power it needs. In addition, the reusable batteries that come with each Apple Battery Charger are designed to maintain a high charge capacity for hundreds of charges, so you no longer have to buy new batteries or toss them every few months.

Standby Power Usage

After your battery charge cycle is complete, the Apple Battery Charger reduces its power intake to 30 milliwatts — that's more than 10 times better than the industry average.¹

Apple Battery Charger	30 mW	
Average Battery Charger	315 mW	

Figure 2. Apple's battery charger uses less power than ordinary battery chargers.

If you know someone who owns an iPad, look at how they use it. Many people don't like the iPad's virtual keyboard, so they lug around an extra wireless Bluetooth keyboard. As an alternative, consider getting someone a combination iPad carrying case that includes a built-in Bluetooth wireless keyboard, such as the Kensington KeyFolio (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0043TB9D6?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0043TB9D6).



Figure 3. The Kensington KeyFolio iPad case includes a Bluetooth keyboard.

If you really want to surprise someone with a gift, get that person an iPad. Time Magazine even rated the iPad as one of the best inventions of 2010 (www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2029497_2030652_2029804,00.html), so giving an iPad can delight almost anyone, except for all those people who boldly proclaimed that the iPad would be a colossal failure.

If you have any programmer friends in your life, they might be interested in learning iPhone and iPad programming, so give them a copy of *Head First iPhone and iPad Development* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1449387829?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1449387829) by **Dan Pilone and Tracey Pilone**. Unlike traditional books, the Head First series uses plenty of diagrams and quirky photographs to get its points across. Some people may dislike this approach, but it does present complex information in a visually interesting manner.

Finally, consider just playing it safe and getting someone an iTunes gift card (store.apple.com/us/browse/home/giftcards/itunes/gallery). With an iTunes gift card, someone could buy new music, rent or buy a video, or download new apps for an iPhone or iPad.

Interesting Software

In the old days, people tried to stay organized by lugging personal digital assistants (PDAs) around. Today, people are carrying laptops, iPhones and iPads around. If you know someone like that, get them a copy of Bento, an easy to use database that runs on the Macintosh, iPhone and iPad.

One nice thing about Bento is that the company regularly provides templates that you can use to turn Bento into a unique database for specific purposes. One of the latest Bento templates is a free event planner template (solutions.filemaker.com/database-templates/detail.jsp?serial=2551721492), which can help you organize an event such as a business conference.



Figure 4. Bento offers free templates for organizing data.

A more specialized program is Soundboard (www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/soundboard/), which can appeal to disc jockeys who need a wide range of sound effects at their fingertips at all times. In the past, radio stations had to store sounds into a machine that needed to be dragged into the studio, but Soundboard turns any Macintosh into a virtual soundboard.

Just drag and drop different audio files in the Soundboard window to assign a particular sound to a specific key, such as the letter W or the letter D. Then when you need to play that sound, just press that key.



Figure 5. Soundboard lets you assign audio files to specific keys on the keyboard.

If you have a particularly long audio file, Soundboard shows you which audio file is currently playing so you can pause or stop it whenever you like. You can even have multiple audio files playing simultaneously.

Soundboard isn't for the average person, but if you need different types of audio effects at your fingertips, then Soundboard can be worth its relatively modest \$49 investment.

If someone has a Macintosh that's running out of hard disk space, they may need to defragment their hard disk. (Hard disks with plenty of room left don't need to be defragmented.) Since the Macintosh doesn't come with a defragmentation program (since most people don't need one), consider Drive Genius 3 (www.prosofteng.com/products/drive_genius.php).



Figure 6. Drive Genius 3 can help maintain a hard disk.

Besides defragmenting a hard disk, Drive Genius 3 can also remove unnecessary files to free up extra space on a hard disk and repair minor hard disk problems that could cause the computer to lose track of files. Drive Genius 3 isn't a program that you'll need right away, but the longer you keep a Macintosh, the more likely you'll need a simple utility program to keep it running in optimum condition.

The HP Slate Sells Out

When Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's CEO, demonstrated the HP Slate at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) earlier this year, he proudly proclaimed that the HP Slate was one of many Windows 7 tablet devices that would soon appear in 2010. Nearly a year later, the HP Slate finally trickled out and Hewlett-Packard made the extraordinary claim that due to unexpected demand, the HP Slate had sold out.

Of course what Hewlett-Packard didn't tell everyone was that it had planned to make only 5,000 units, but the company received orders for 9,000 units (www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2010/11/14/businessinsider-hp-slate-500-sales-2010-11.DTL). (For comparison purposes, the iPad sells approximately 46,000 units a day.)

It's easy to sell out of units if you never bother stocking that many in the first place. Could this be the reason why Windows Phone 7 devices appear "sold out" in Europe, but only managed to sell 40,000 units (www.maximumpc.com/article/news/windows_phone_7_sales_slow_start_40k_opening_day) in the United States?

Given the rapid rise of the iPhone, iPad and Android, it's clear that mobile devices represent a growing market that has left Microsoft behind. What might happen if Apple can finally launch the iPhone on multiple carriers beyond AT&T? If Verizon, Sprint and T-Mobile customers can use an iPhone on their favored network, there might not be a reason to switch to a competing phone.

Right now the iPad dominates the tablet computer market simply because there are no credible competitors. By the time rivals release their first-generation tablet product, Apple will be ready to release version 2 of the iPad by March of next year, putting rivals further behind once more.

In the old days, critics claimed that Apple products were too expensive, so that's why they preferred the much less expensive PCs. Today, iPad rivals such as the Galaxy Tab and Windows Phone 7 devices cost nearly as much as the iPad and iPhone, negating any price savings. Without a price advantage, why should anyone choose any competing product?

To mull over the future of tablets running desktop operating systems or phone operating systems, consider what NVIDIA's CEO, Jen-Hsun Huang, said about the iPad:

"I think that going forward you are going to see this tablet device being quite disruptive to both notebook as well as entry desktop. So I think this is an important trend and that every single company I know is working on a tablet. There are card companies working on tablets, consumer electronics companies working on tablets, computer companies working on tablets, and communications companies working on tablets. I don't remember the last time in the history of computing where a singular device is being worked on by all of the industries.

"I believe that mobile computing is the future of computing. I believe that the tablet form factor and touch is not a fad. I believe that this particular form factor is likely to be very, very disruptive to the traditional form factors of computing. If you gave somebody a choice between a netbook and a tablet, and a wonderful tablet, why would anybody choose a netbook?

"The iPad is not your normal device waiting around for somebody to beat it, I mean, this is an extraordinary device. If you want to build something that is desirable and even more desirable to some other customers, you've got to build something great. You're not just going to put a phone operating system on a larger display and ship it, you're just not."

Remember, Apple originally designed iOS for tablets first (blogs.pcmag.com/miller/2010/06/steve_jobs_at_d8_tablets_and_i.php), but modified it to run a phone. Google and Microsoft designed Android and Windows Phone 7 for phones first, and now they have to adapt it for tablets. Given a choice between an operating system designed for tablets (iOS) or one that has to be modified to run on tablets (Windows 7, Windows Phone 7, or Android), which one do you think will provide a more seamless and enjoyable experience?

Apple Software Updates

Apple recently released Mac OS X 10.6.5 along with iTunes 10.1. If you have an iPad, you'll need both of these updates to install the forthcoming iOS 4.2. Before installing any updates, make sure you back up your data, since there's always a chance that things can foul up, so it's better to be safe than sorry.

Be especially careful if you're using PGP to encrypt your hard disk. Many users have noted that updating to Mac OS X 10.6.5 with PGP encryption prevents your Mac from booting up. To fix this problem, you'll have to follow the instructions (www.pgp.com) posted on the PGP site. (Go to PGP Web site, select Support and search for "Mac PGP WDE customers upgrading to Mac OS X 10.6.5.")

* * *

Instead of using a sliding tray to insert a CD/DVD into a computer, every Macintosh uses a slot that literally sucks in your disc when you've inserted it in far enough. However, sometimes you can't eject a CD/DVD. When this occurs, open the Applications folder and look in the Utilities folder for a program called Terminal.

The Terminal program essentially gives you a command line for controlling your Macintosh. At the prompt inside the Terminal program, type "drutil tray eject" (without the quotation marks) and then press Return.



Figure 7. The Terminal program lets you control your Macintosh from a command line.

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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
 Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468),
 Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
 My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
 My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
 My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),
 Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894),
 How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

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

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor: Technology Solutions

“Open Office Databases” by Rob Spahitz

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

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

Last week we finished our review of table creation. We created a table to help us track contacts. The definition is shown in Figure 1.

File Edit View Tools Window Help		
	Field Name	Field Type
	ID	Integer [INTEGER]
	FirstName	Text [VARCHAR]
	LastName	Text [VARCHAR]
	Address	Text [VARCHAR]
	City	Text [VARCHAR]
	StateOrProvince	Text [VARCHAR]
	PostalCode	Text [VARCHAR]
	Birthdate	Date [DATE]
	PhoneNumber	Text [VARCHAR]
	EmailAddress	Text [VARCHAR]

Figure 1. Contacts table definition.

Typically, when creating a database, you create several tables and join them together through a common field. This link creates a relationship, which is why these are often called relational databases. One major reason to create multiple tables is to efficiently store your data. If done right, you don't get redundancy and you can handle situations that are difficult in a "flat" database.

For example, it's difficult to store all people's phone numbers. You can either create many columns to hold multiple phone numbers (home, work, cell, pager, personal 800, etc.), or you can duplicate a row with all of the information repeated except for the phone number.

A better solution is to create a separate phone table, and then link the person to the phone number. In this case, the phone table would have multiple records with the ID of the person and the phone number. This keeps the data minimal

since each record has only two pieces (well, three since you probably also have a separate primary key). If you need to know more information about the person attached to a phone number, you simply look up the person using the person ID from the phone table (a foreign key) and use it to find the rest of the person data in the person table with that person ID (the primary key). Anyway, we'll explore that in a future article.

As a reminder, I've never used these features in Base, so I'm looking at these from the perspective of someone who's very familiar with Microsoft Access and a variety of other databases. If I find that there is something I didn't get right, I'll chalk that up to learning to use the tool and share it so others can learn from my findings.

Queries

Let's start by creating a subset of data from the contacts table. When you want to do that, you create a query that "inquires" the information from the desired table or collection of tables. By itself, it does not store data; it still lets the table store the data. However, the query can be used to retrieve, insert, delete or change data in the specified fields (if handled the right way).

When looking at Base, below the Tables area you see the Queries area, as seen in Figure 2.

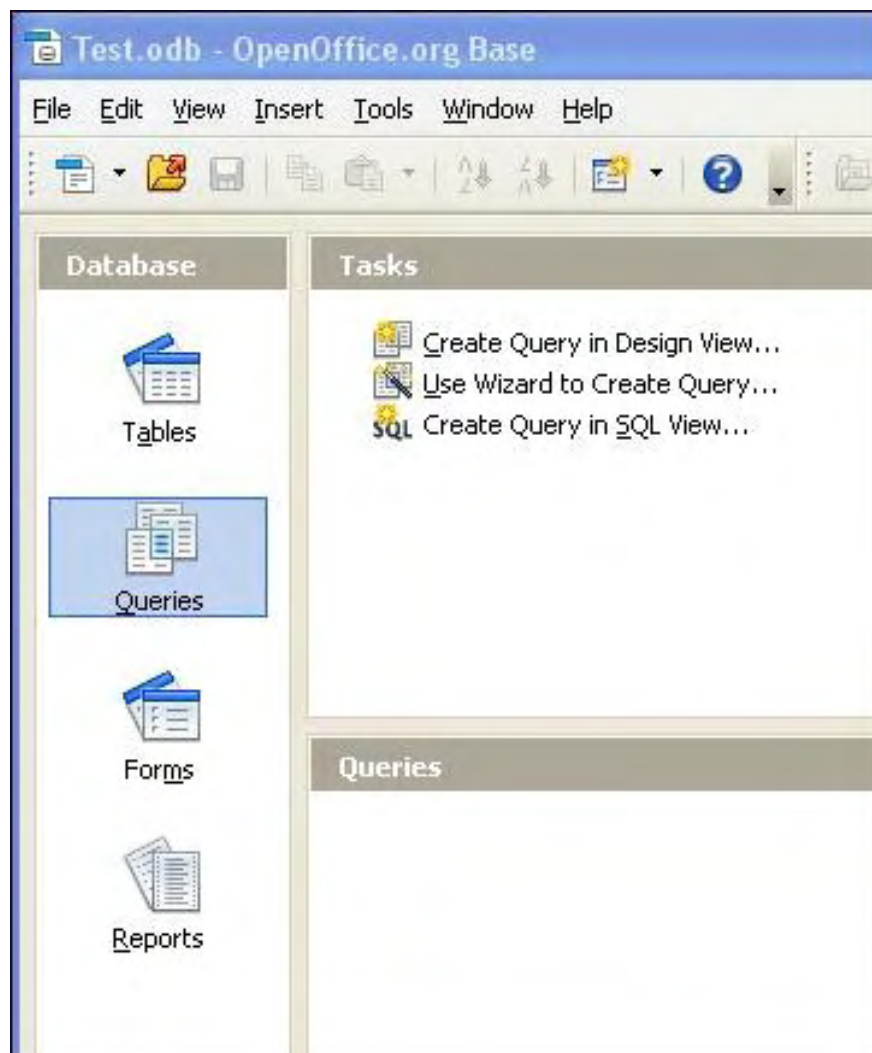


Figure 2. Queries.

If you previously created the table listed above, you should now be able to create a query. For simplicity, let's just create one that shows the contact's first name and last name.

Click on Create Query in Design View. This opens a new query design window and asks for which tables contain the fields you'd like to use, as seen in Figure 3. In this case, we have one table, so that's what we pick.

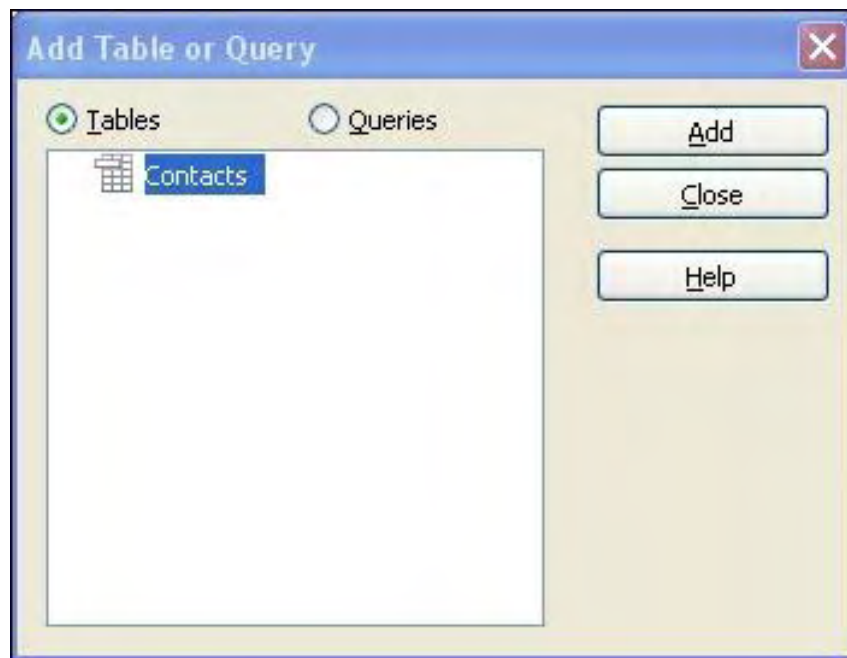


Figure 3. Query table selection.

Since the table is already selected, just click the Add button and then the Close button. Similar to MS Access, you see a representation of the table appear near the top, with field information below it, as seen in Figure 4.

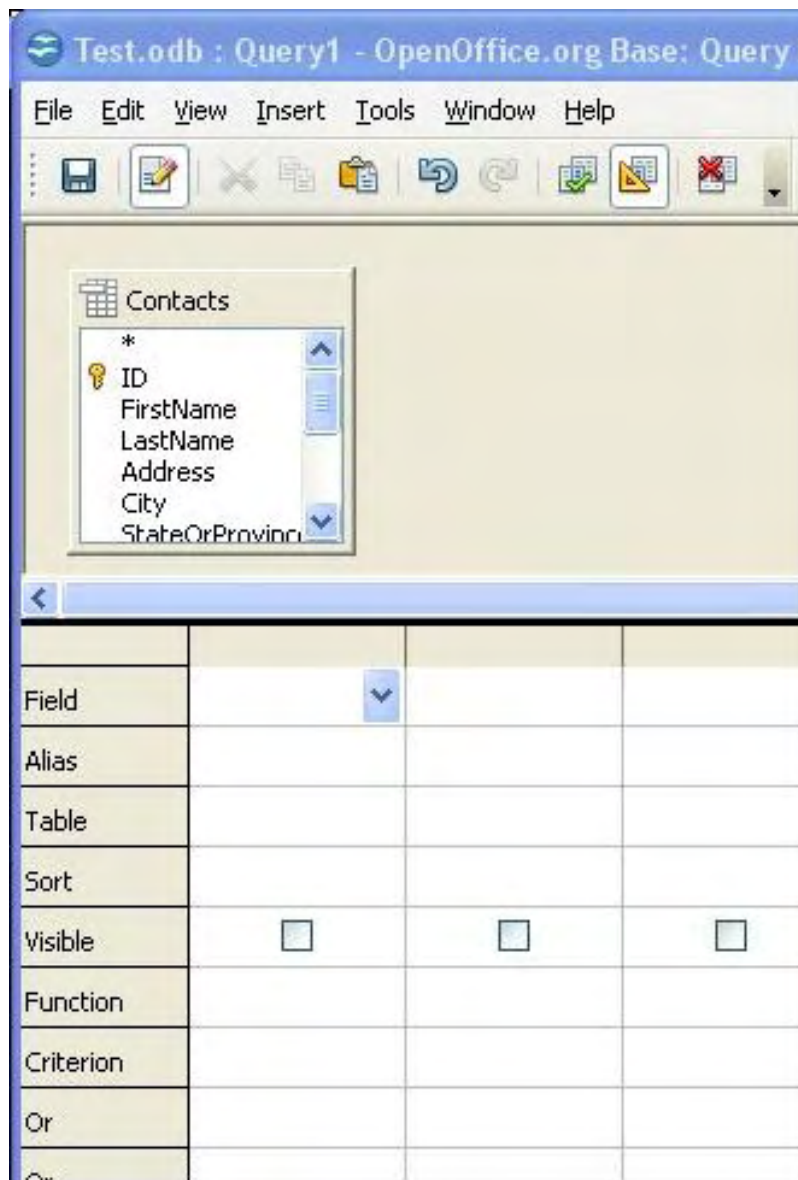


Figure 4. Query field selection.

To accomplish the task, select the desired fields. You can either double-click the fields from the top box, drag and drop them into adjacent columns, or select them from the drop-down list next to the Field row.

Here's a quick review of the rows or settings for the query.

The Field row contains the set of fields that you'd like to include in the query.

Most databases use SQL (Structured Query Language syntax for handling data communication), so you can also give this field an alternate name, called an Alias. For example, instead of FirstName you could give it an alternate name like FName, then use that whenever you use the query and refer to that field.

Next, the Table row contains the table where you can find the field in the first row. If there's only one table being used, obviously that will appear in that row.

The next row is Sort. If you'd like to sort a field, either lowest to highest (for numbers), oldest to newest (for dates) or alphabetically (for text, well, technically using something called the ASCII sequence), then you should use Ascending. For the reverse order, choose Descending. For no particular order, leave it blank (not sorted).

The next row, Visible, is whether or not to show the field. Since you may want to sort but not show, you can uncheck this, but usually you want to see the field, so you'd leave it checked.

Next, Function is used to apply various cumulative settings, like to sum up a numeric field or get the maximum date or show the number of records.

Last, Criterion lets you filter the data to show, for example, only those entries that have a first name of John. You can extend that in subsequent rows with the "Or," but including, for example, all records with first name of John or Sally.

For now, let's just see what we get when we select FirstName and LastName with no other special settings. View the results by choosing menu Edit/Run Query (or the corresponding button on the toolbar to the left of the button with the yellow triangle). I have no data in the database, so my result is limited, as seen in Figure 5. Apparently, in this case, this is also the same as setting the Preview option under the View menu.

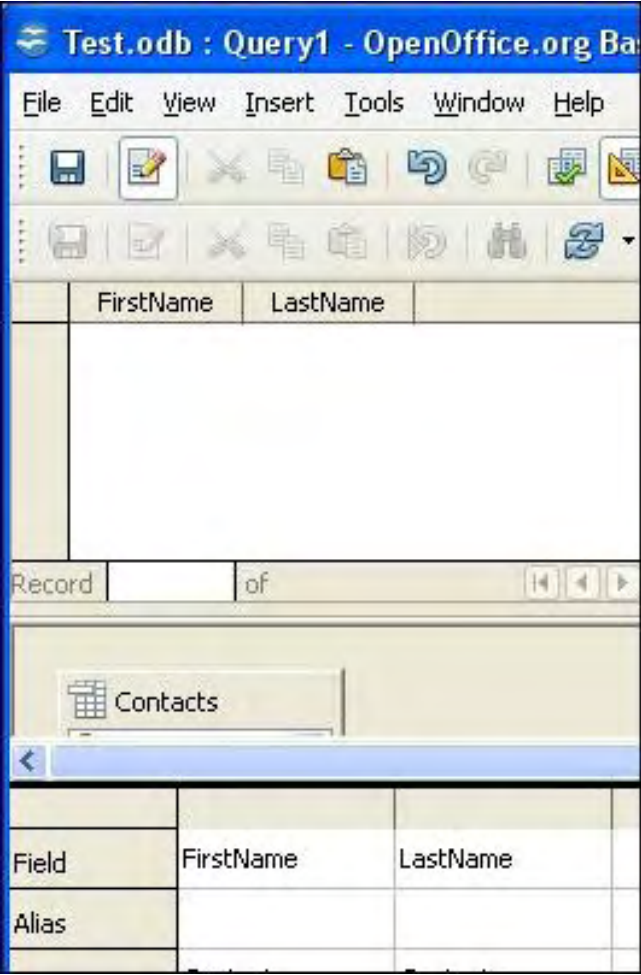


Figure 5. Viewing a Query.

Notice how the columns show up in a view window above the table and field definition. Save this and call it something like qryPerson. We'll use this in the next step. Close the window to continue.

Forms

Back on the left panel of the main form, click on the Forms image. Similar to the Query section, you can create a form.

This time, we'll try "Use Wizard to Create Form." That shows a window as seen in Figure 6.

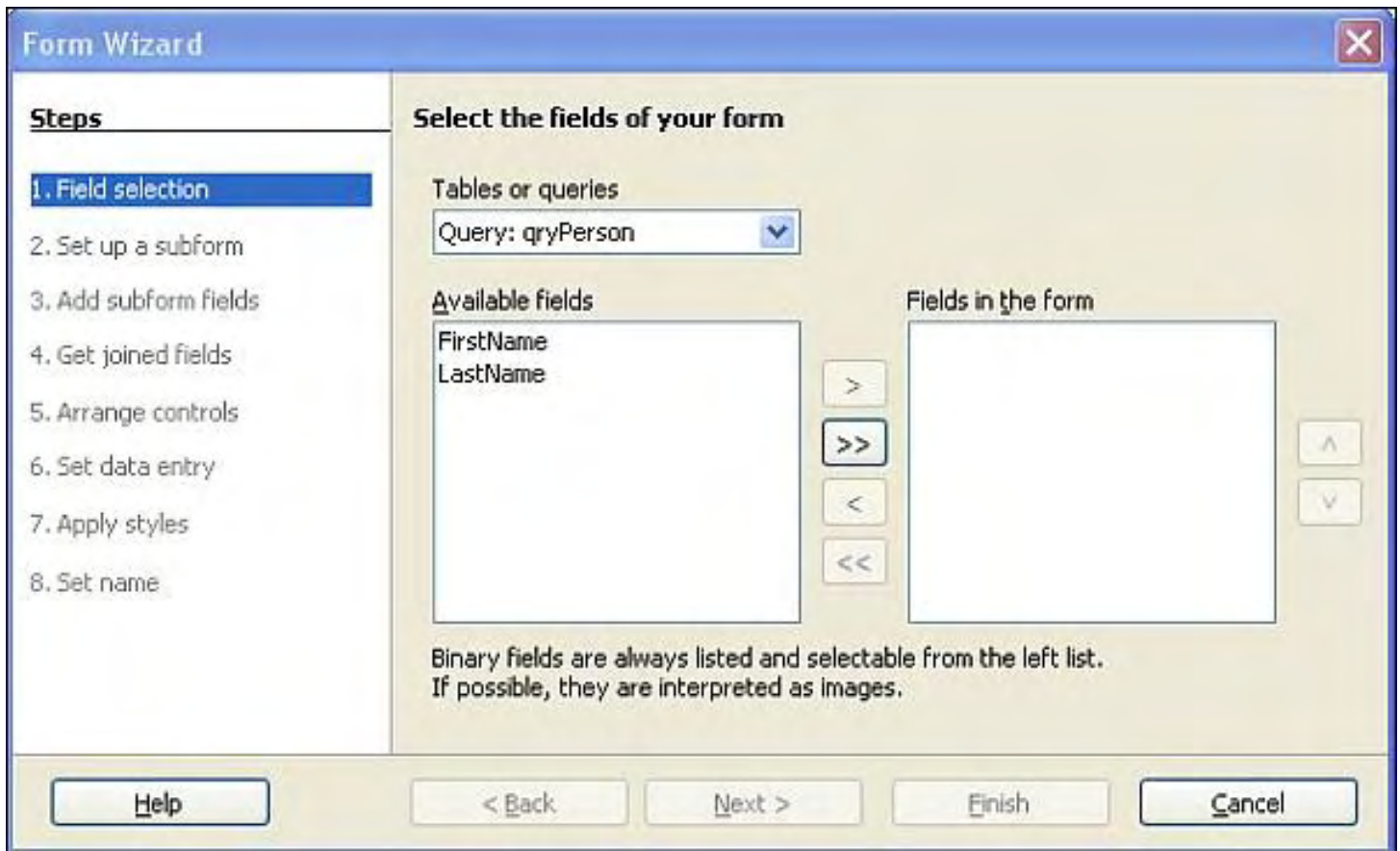


Figure 6. Form wizard.

As seen, there are several steps here. Let's zip through really quickly. First, we need to specify the table or query that contains the fields to use on the form. I'll change it from the query to the table, and then select all fields (with the ">>" button). Next, I can click on the Finish button, which results in a quick data entry form, as seen in Figure 7.

The screenshot shows the OpenOffice Base Form Design window for a database named 'Test.odt : Contacts (read-only)'. The window has a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Insert, Format, Table, Tools, Window, Help) and a toolbar. The main area displays a form design for a table with the following fields: ID, FirstName, LastName, Address, City, StateOrProvince, PostalCode, Birthdate, PhoneNumber, and EmailAddress. The form is currently empty, with a 'Field>' label in the top-left corner of the design area. The status bar at the bottom indicates 'Record 1 of 1' and 'Page 1 / 1'.

Figure 7. Contacts entry form.

Since we're out of space for this week, I'll leave it to the reader to explore this and Reports (which work about the same way).

Stay tuned as we continue to explore this free competitor of the Microsoft Office Suite of products.

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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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“The Future of ComputerEdge” by Jack Dunning



In the New Year, ComputerEdge will shift into a more free-form Web publication.

I've spent a good deal of time thinking about how I'm going to deal with *ComputerEdge* in the New Year. On one hand I know that I need to free up more of my time to work on other projects. On the other, there are thousands of readers each week who enjoy the computer and Internet information presented here. In particular, Digital Dave is by far the most popular column.

There are years of useful editorial on the *ComputerEdge* site, the majority of which is just as applicable today as when it was first written. With a little searching, relevant comments and answers can be quickly found. I often use the *ComputerEdge* search tool when looking to refresh my recollection. As long as people want to access this Web site as a reference, I don't want to take it down.

I also feel a strong obligation to the advertisers who have sponsored this site. There are thousands of people (primarily in San Diego) who visit their ads each month. In this age when it is difficult for small businesses to find media to generate more contacts, I don't want to eliminate one that I know is working for my most loyal sponsors. Therefore, we will be embarking on a more free-form type of Web publication. *ComputerEdge* will continue to be published on a weekly basis; however, the issues will no longer be themed in advance. The topics will be contributor-based. Whatever writers want to submit will make up the content of any given issue.

Digital Dave has offered to continue on a weekly basis, as will some of the other columnists. It is conceivable that an issue could be comprised of only Digital Dave and Editor's Letters—depending upon the offerings of other writers. I will need to stop writing the columns I currently include in each issue, which are already down to Windows Tips and Tricks and Edgeward. I will continue to process the submitted articles and columns, but it will need to be rare when I write any myself.

I would like to see *ComputerEdge* become a reflection of the readers. We will publish anything that is relevant and well-written, although we are not particularly interested in press releases. If you have something that you would like to submit, then I will take a look and try to give you a quick answer.

For me, the key is freeing up more of my time. *ComputerEdge* has become a labor of love, but I can no longer apply quite as much labor. Any thoughts are welcome.

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

"Virus Sources," "Bob's Dual Monitor Issue and Ray's DVR," "New Folder," "Windows Tips and Tricks"

Virus Sources

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's October 29 article, "Antivirus Program Downsides":]

While it's true that the primary source has moved from diskettes to the Internet, I think it would be useful to mention thumb drives, as they are a very dangerous source too.

-Doug Clements, Poway

Michael J. Ross needs to take a new look at Norton's applications. They are markedly improved and are easy on a system's resources. Also, he needs to look at Microsoft's MSE. Highly rated and free!

-Steve, Escondido

Bob's Dual Monitor Issue and Ray's DVR

[Regarding the November 5 Digital Dave column:]

The DVI output does not include sound. You will need a special cable or adapter that allows you to connect to the DVI connector and the speaker output of the computer on one end and the HDMI connector on the other end. It is also possible to do the same with a VGA cable and an audio cable (3.5 mm stereo plug on each end). I use a specialty cable that includes both the video and sound cables in one, which I use when I go on vacation to hook up a laptop to the HDTV in the condo. Besides, the VGA cable is a lot cheaper and the resolution is greater than most HDTVs can handle (1200p, WUXGA, 1920×1200). A 50-foot cable is \$20 bucks at Newegg with free shipping, Item #: N82E16882021087. Try to find a three-foot HDMI cable for that price.

One clarification on set-top boxes (digital cable/satellite). Many tuner cards come with remote controls and IR blasters. The IR blaster can be stuck on the set-top box and the DVR software will change the channels to match up to the guide. My new Haupauge dual tuner card comes with two tuners and two IR blaster outputs, although it comes with just one IR blaster. \$124.

-Marcus, Alabama

Marcus is right ... I had my computer connected with a DVI/HDMI cable, and I had to run "RCA" cables to the TV to get sound. So it is a bit more complicated. For my flat-screen monitor I used the analog port on my video card, since I had two ports.

Then I changed to an ATI ALL-in-Wonder HD video card (a Tuner/video card). The DVI port now goes to my computer

monitor, and the HDMI to my larger flat-screen HD TV. The HDMI does carry sound, but I have to use the Sounds speaker icon to change Adjust Audio Properties—audio from the computer's sound card to ATI HD rear output when I use the TV to play video. A minor hassle, but no big deal.

The Display Properties Settings only gives a Multiple Monitors option, which is what I want—a duplication of my monitor (for now, anyway).

The DVR software that came with the card, Catalyst Media Center, is pretty iffy, as it loses settings. I've been using NPVR instead (son of GBPVR). Setting it up isn't simple, but it does work well. I really like recording high-def and playing it back on my schedule on the big screen. But it took time and effort to get there.

-Rich, Lakewood, CO

New Folder

[Regarding the October 29 Digital Dave column:]

Not sure if it applies, but I notice that when I have a lot of folders and make a new one, it (by default) goes to the bottom of the page (and is highlighted in blue—ready to enter a title), but the screen does not center on the new folder. If you hit <CTRL><End>, it may be there. When you exit and re-enter the page, it alphabetizes to New Folder because no other name was entered.

-John Carlson, Vista CA

Regarding Orville's problem of a Windows folder not applying the rename until a refresh, I've experienced that on occasion, especially when I'm running a lot of applications. The problem seems to go away when I reboot, so I think it's related to memory usage (too many apps or apps sucking up memory and then not returning it: memory leaks). There could be other things, but Orville didn't mention anything about the hardware he's using, so that might be it. Maybe start by removing some of the things that load on startup.

-Rob ComputerTutor, San Diego

Windows Tips and Tricks

[Regarding the October 29 Windows 7 Tips and Tricks column:]

If you have dual monitors the Windows+right arrow will make it 50% right on the current window, 50% left on the second monitor, original size second monitor, 50% right on second monitor, 50% left on original monitor, original size original monitor.

-Marcus, Alabama

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