

ComputerEdge™ Online — 12/31/10



**Rob, The
Computer
Tutor**

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A Look at the Next Year in
Computing

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Digital Dave

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

A reader wants to research printer ink costs before buying a printer; hidden Windows notifications are frustrating a reader; a reader needs to open a long-lost, password-protected WordPerfect file.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have heard about checking the cost of printer cartridges before buying a printer. Is this information available? Am I supposed to check each printer and somehow find out the cartridge numbers and then check the prices of the cartridges?

*Richard West
Spring Valley, CA*

Dear Richard,

If I wanted to know the average cost of printer ink cartridges (or the lowest priced), I would go to one of the major office or electronics store and browse through the multitude available. You will find that once you account for the capacity of the cartridge, most are in the same ballpark. You could try to identify the lowest-priced ink, then match the printers by model numbers listed on the package. However, those printers may or may not have all the features that you want.

Most printer manufacturers follow a marketing strategy that they offer a printer itself below cost, then make their money on the ink and new printer heads. They consider the printer disposable and would give it away if it wouldn't make consumers suspicious of the quality. You can easily spend many times the cost of the printer on ink and such during its life. (And don't expect any flexibility on warranties, as Jack Dunning encountered with a printer head for an HP printer.) Printers are generally not worth the cost to repair them.

One way to get around the ink price problem is to refill the cartridges when they run dry. There are many stores, including office, drugstores and discount, which will offer the service—or you can find cartridge refilling on the Web. You can buy kits to do it yourself, but I have no problem visualizing this cartoon without it needing to be drawn.

Kodak has taken a slightly different approach to the printer market. They charge a little more for their printers, but the ink is much less expensive. They've been doing this for a few years, but I have no idea how it's working out for them—or the people who have bought their printers. Perhaps *ComputerEdge* readers who have a little more specific experience could comment on their personal revelations.

When I pick a new printer, it is generally based upon the features of the printer. (The ink always seems to be at the same expensive level.) I find that I use the scanner and other electronic features rather than the printing itself—which I try to minimize. If I knew I was going to do a great deal of printing, I would need to at least take a look at the Kodaks

to see if they would do the job.

Digital Dave

Dear Mr. Super Digital Dave!

Is there a Registry tweak to make Windows 7 64-bit notification windows always pop up rather than appear under active windows? So many times I seem to wait far too long for a notification window to show up and indicate any progress, only to find that the window was hidden, waiting for me to find it.

*Joe
Hemet, CA*

Dear Joe,

I may be misunderstanding your question, but that has never stopped me from answering anything in the past. I believe that you are referring to windows that pop up when you are doing special procedures within an application (installation, setup, modifications, etc.) and not those from the notification icons on the taskbar. If someone else has a better answer, then hopefully they will provide it.

Generally, when there are special notification windows that give the status of the progress of some computer or application event, it will pop up on top of all the other windows. At that point, it becomes the active window. The problem is that it will only remain on top as long as it is active. All it takes for another window to become the active (and therefore on top) window is a click of the mouse cursor in that window (or on the taskbar tab). This becomes a common problem for those of us who like to click a couple of times just to make sure the first click took hold. The second or third click may actually send our status/progress window into the back. The only way to get it back is to either minimize the current window (click the little dash line in the upper right-hand corner), or select the taskbar tab for the status/progress window—if there is one.

I would suggest that when you are expecting such a status/progress window, minimize all the other windows and sit quietly and wait until the process is completed. There are some programs that will ensure that their status windows will stay on top of their program windows, but this is a matter of programming and will not be affected by anything in the Registry.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

In 1997 I had WordPerfect 5.7, and possibly Windows 95. I wrote a file I safeguarded with a password lock. I don't have that password now, so the file is locked. The file was not encrypted. All I need is to open it once. The software for this is supposedly quite expensive. It used to be so easy with WordPerfect to set up a password lock, or to change it, or to remove it altogether. I may have this file (a book I wrote) on a CD, but that's in storage 100 miles from here. I do have a hard copy of the book, of course. But I wanted to open the file to see if a PDF could ever be made directly of that original. I created an index with the WordPerfect index maker. It worked great. Going first to Microsoft Word would kill formatting and pagination. Please help.

Oz

Philadelphia, PA

Dear Oz,

Hmmm. I did some checking, and indeed there are a number of programs that claim to recover WordPerfect passwords, but they do charge a fee if you want to recover more than just a couple of letters. One such examples (a little less expensive than most) was WordPerfect Key (download.cnet.com/WordPerfect-Key/3000-2092_4-10257722.html?tag=mncol;8). There may be free programs available, but I would be a little wary unless you can find them at a source such as CNET. The real question is, "What's it worth to you?" You could drive the 100 miles to see if you have an unlocked copy on a CD in storage, but it might be worth it to save the gas money by just paying the software fee.

This reminds me of the story of the man who had locked his keys in his car. He called a locksmith who arrived with all the tools necessary to open the door and informed the owner that it would cost him \$100 to do the job. The man promptly agreed. Then the locksmith pulled out a tool and quickly opened the door, taking out the keys. The man said, "That was too easy, I'm not paying \$100 for that!" The locksmith threw the keys back into the car, then locked and shut the door.

What's it worth to you?

Digital Dave

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Rob Looking Back, Looking Ahead

“Technology prognostication at its finest.” by Rob Spahitz

The computer world has much more excitement ahead, but we'll need to give up our old clumsy ways and embrace the new technology while also learning lessons from mistakes made in the past.

As we roll into the New Year of a new decade of a new century of a new millennium, we once again get the opportunity to reflect on where we've been and where we're going.

So keeping with tradition, I'll will review the past and predict the future.

Back Then

Way back in 1986, I was introduced to free magazine called *ComputerEdge* that was found on street corners throughout San Diego. I found it to be a fun and interesting magazine. Some of the articles were interesting and there were ads announcing computers and parts that seemed a lot cheaper than the national magazines. I thought it odd that the name was spelled with an "o" in Computer, rather than the traditional "e" usually found in Computer. I would soon learn about the legal hassles they had with a very popular computer magazine at the time called *Byte Magazine* that didn't like their original name, *The Byte Buyer*. I was intrigued that this little magazine would persist by simply changing its name (and go on to outlive the bully magazine).



Meanwhile, I remember eventually writing a review for a few software applications that I submitted and got published. That made me feel very welcome to the group of authors who made their contributions on a regular basis, including the ever-persistent "Digital Dave" and the occasional contributions of Wally Wang (who, as I recall, philosophized even then—although he was



“Pardon me, sir. Have you finished with that copy of **ComputerEdge**?”

a PC guy back then!). I even remember submitting a tip to Digital Dave that he added to a sidebar column he wrote back then. As far as I know, I was the only contributor to ever make it into that sidebar. Thanks, Dave. I also noticed that the magazine was lacking articles about programming computers, which was a big thing in those days. I thought of writing articles for them about that, but I never got around to making the pieces fall into place (and the Internet was too young then and I had no e-mail...but often

wondered what those weird names were on some people's business cards: Why would a name include an "@"?)

Along came 1992 and with it the idea of a fair. Our publisher, Jack Dunning, decided to hold a fair to better match the many computer vendors in San Diego with the many "computers" who read the magazine. (At least I assume that this was his goal: match his vendors to his readers; or maybe it was just a fun thing to do). Anyway, he solicited the readers to become volunteers at the San Diego Civic Center. I joined and got a cool T-shirt. It was a fun time volunteering and getting a chance to meet some of the regular staff members who made the magazine run so smoothly (including the wife of Charles Carr, who is also still a regular contributor).

Years went by and I continued to volunteer, collecting a new T-shirt every year in exchange for working at various stations, as we moved from the Civic Center to the much larger Convention Center (renamed to the Computer Expo somewhere along the way). In 1998 (I think) I met Annie Zuckerman, who was volunteering at the entrance, checking badges. As we talked, she told me about a school where she taught and encouraged me to talk to the dean about teaching there. Partly with that encouragement, I joined the school in 2000 and continue to teach there today. As many of you know, that was the inspiration for most of the articles I've written in the last few years. Thanks Annie! And Jack! And Dave! And all the volunteers who made me feel so welcome!

Ah, and then there was the final year of the Computer Expo, one of the speakers was unable to attend and I offered to be a substitute speaker (but I don't recall the topic). Given the evaluation forms submitted at the end, I apparently did a pretty good job. I guess that my current students also like what I'm doing since I have a pretty good following.

Fast forward to 2007 and **ComputerEdge** is still in the stands at local computer stores and other locations, but they're also online and preparing to go entirely online by the end of the year. Microsoft Office 2007 has emerged and scared a lot of people who have used prior versions of Office for maybe a dozen years, but now have to find their way through this new thing called the Ribbon Bar.

January 2008 arrives and Rob The ComputerTutor's first article appears. I offer information about how to effectively use Excel (2003) and present various things from very elementary (what are a cell and a formula?) to very advanced things (creating advanced macros). I wrap it up in June by highlighting how Excel 2007 works. Next on to Access for six more months, followed by about 20 articles on how to use VBA ("macros" for Access), as I rolled into 2009 and wrapped up that year with a collection of articles on Visual Basic.NET.

Early in 2010 I began discussing the features of Microsoft Office 2010. It was similar to 2007, but I delved into parts that I didn't previously address, like Word, OneNote, PowerPoint and Outlook. I followed that with articles on HTML Web page creation; that led into a discussion on JavaScript. By mid-year, I wrote about using Word 2010 based on the beta copy that Microsoft had previously made available for free.

As the beta version was getting ready to expire, Microsoft announced its pricing place for Office 2010. Based on the

pieces I had written about (and expected to use), it would cost me about \$500 to buy the product. I felt that was too much money for me and the average user, so I decided to explore the world of competitors. I'm sure most of you are familiar with the Firefox browser, a free product created from the "open source" movement (where all computer code used to create the product—the blueprint—is made freely available). That same movement created a suite of products called OpenOffice.org. I decided to see how they stacked up against the big guys.

I looked at all of the products in the OpenOffice suite. Write vs. Word; Calc vs. Excel; Base vs. Access; Impress vs. PowerPoint; and Draw vs. well, maybe Visio. Although there were some quirks and differences (some better, some worse), for a free product, they work very well and can even export and import into Office XP/2000/2003 files. It's just a matter of time before they make 2007/2010 converters. At this point, I'd highly recommend this product to anyone who isn't ready to shell out hundreds of dollars to Microsoft for what is a slightly better product.

So here we stand, on Dec. 31, 2010, and many things in the world have changed since I first learned about ComputerEdge. Where do we go from here?

Predicting and Prognosticating

Everyone seems to love making and reading predictions. Let me throw a few out there and see how things fly.

- 1) The Android mobile phone/computer will continue to take off and hit record sales in 2011, before being taken down by a worldwide phone virus. In its next generation, it will come back stronger.
- 2) Related, the iPhone, as magnificent as it is, will continue to follow in Apple's footsteps of being a great product that knocks itself out of the market with its pricing and extreme controls. It will not get any viruses, but some new apps will cause it to crash, causing Apple to recall the afflicting application and gain its own black eye in the process.
- 3) The desktop computer (having been around for 30 years), and its cousin the laptop (with well over 20 years under the belt) will struggle through another year, but slowly lose its grip as iPhones and Androids show the world that the portable computer is the device of choice for the average user. The only people using desktops in the future will be the developers of the applications that work on these portable devices.
- 4) The iPad, as whiz-bang as it looks, will be spotted as the device it is: a business tool. It's not a portable device like the iPod/iPhone/Android; it's not a powerful computer like a laptop. It will, essentially, become a niche tool for specific tasks rather than a multipurpose tool like we expect from our computers. However, its re-programmability will extend its life (and the lives of its copycats) for years to come. Just don't expect to use it for more than a few things at a time until someone finally stumbles upon the foldable iPad, which can now be stored in your pocket—but that's a prediction for 2012.
- 5) With the economy getting better, more and more people will buy into the portable device market. Pre-teens will become so obsessed with these devices that they neglect their schoolwork. Eventually the AFT (American Federation of Teachers) will be forced to get out of the 20th century and demand that its teacher be allowed to teach through videoconference technology, and then demand that someone write an app for that so their teachers can teach these information-hungry students by means that work with the 21st century technology.

OK, what else? In the application world, we'll also see a lot of interesting things.

- 6) Microsoft Office will slowly lose sales and blame it on the iPhone. Their own portable phone will have vanished so they can't port things there.
- 7) The browser wars will become re-ignited as Google pushes its Chrome browser as the Web-portal app for Android

computers. This will force Microsoft to make a cleaner, meaner version for these portable devices, and Firefox will follow suit. Safari and Opera will never go in that direction and will fade away when desktops disappear years later.

8) Meanwhile out in "the cloud," applications will continue to migrate over to the Internet and become available only with a live connection. This will take the country by storm and hundreds of thousands will join in. Their world will come toppling down when an earthquake takes out some major communication stations, causing a large sector of the country to lose connectivity for an extended period. Without connectivity, more cell-phone technology will be pushed to solve the problem and the phone circuits will get overloaded and cause slowness throughout the system. However, this will cause a re-thinking of the technology that will lead to a stronger level of connectivity in the cloud, with greater redundancy and reliability.

9) The world of application development will change too. Java versus Microsoft.NET will continue as strong adversaries and the technology will be pushed more toward portable and Cloud apps. This combined with the new HTML 5.0 technology will finally give users something to talk about as small cloud-based apps start to make their way into everyday life (at home and in the business world).

Are there hardware changes? Sure, there will be some minor improvements, but nothing fancy. That "cool" 3-D home technology will fade away because nobody cares. Home entertainment will focus more on sound and connecting to the cloud for everything you want. Oh, and, well, that's not for five more years, but eventually those 3-D glasses will BE your computer. Touch the right side to channel the channel up; left side for down. But their broadcast will not be on a screen; they will be personal multimedia devices, projecting images ahead of you through the glasses, visible only to you. Give it time.

So there you have it. We've come a long way from chips to motherboards to laptop computers to portable interconnected devices. The computer world has much more excitement ahead, but we'll need to give up our old clumsy ways and embrace the new technology while also learning lessons from mistakes made in the past.

Oh, and one final prediction: Wally Wang will finally come over to the dark side and renounce Apple's stodgy ways of pushing technology on us; instead he will embrace the Android as the ultimate machine of the future.

Have a great 2011 everyone. I'll be submitting articles here and there, but if you submit topics to me, I may just write an article with a solution.

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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Will 2011 be the Year of Artificial Intelligence?

“The biggest development of 2011 may be something already part of our daily lives.” by Jack Dunning

Often the most important developments of the new year are those that are already part of our daily lives, yet they have gone mostly unnoticed. For example, we are immersed in Artificial Intelligence and tend to be totally unaware of it.

Each year, when attempting to predict the future, we rely upon the past. For example, this was such a great year for the iPad, that next year everyone will abandon their obsolete desktops and laptops (especially Windows machines) and buy iPads. Or, there were so many more things done over the Internet in 2010, that the prediction is for even more next year. Here is a good one: 10,765 people will have their computer printers stolen this year, but no one will notice that it is gone for at least two weeks. (“I thought it was a potted plant.”) It often seems that predictions are always more of the same—and they usually are. How boring!

It is also popular to predict the negative or what is not going to happen. How about this one? Electronics manufacturers will discover in 2011 the vast majority of people are not really interested in 3-D televisions because they don't like the way the glasses look on them. Or, movie theaters will experience a further slump because so many people prefer watching reruns of old television shows (“The Rockford Files”) on Netflix rather than enduring the inconvenience, price and mind-numbing tripe presented on the bigish screen.

Often the most important developments of the new year are those that are already part of our daily lives, yet they have gone mostly unnoticed.

The Droids Among Us

This year, for a change of pace, let's look at something that's already with us, although pretty much impossible to understand. (Even the people who do it don't really understand it.) That's artificial intelligence (or AI, as those of us who pretend to know a little about it like to call it). 2011 will be the year of AI. In fact, 2010 may have been the year of AI—we just didn't know it. If you're a little confused, don't worry, I'm just getting started. By the time I finish, you'll be just as confused as me—if you make it that far. The kicker, as pointed out in the January 2011 issue of *Wired* (www.wired.com/magazine/19-01/), is that we are immersed in AI and tend to be totally unaware of it. The Cylons are already in control and they could be a threat to our freedom—if they weren't so focused on how to make a better piece of toast. (More on better toast later.)

We thought that AI would produce androids that would think and act like us—only faster and better. They would have superhuman intelligence and strength and be easy to recognize—based upon their funky eyes or wires under their artificial skin (maybe oil, not blood). As it turns out, the human brain, which people thought would guide AI, is not a good model for building intelligent machines. When left to their own devices (which is all they have), machines don't want to think like us. In fact, they don't even care about us. They do what they do and learn to do it better. That is the essence of AI: improvements through learning.

If a machine does something because we program it to do it, that is not AI. The only intelligence involved is that of the programmer. But if the “droid” through trial and error (or other sampling methods) “learns” what to do, then we have AI in action. The reasons that we don't know the details of what our AI projects are doing is because they evolve (learn) so rapidly that they are changing their behavior before we can determine what they just learned. Humans do set up the basic parameters for the running programs and add the learning techniques used by the computers, but once running, an AI program may actually be rewriting its own code based upon the analysis it does and conditions it encounters. It's

pretty spooky, but this was a major contributor to the sudden crash of the stock market last May.

The AI Stock Market Storm

There are now a multitude of programs for stock market trading that are run entirely by computers. They use AI-type analysis (all top secret) to spot market trends, then quickly jump in and out to make a profit. Some programs deal with specific stocks or sectors, while others may look at the overall market. There are even those that are specifically designed to take advantage of the inconsistency of rival AI trading systems. If you could visualize all the activity generated by these computer programs, it might look like a weather system with bots chasing (or running from) system fronts, whether high or low, depending upon the AI purpose. The Securities and Exchange Commission doesn't really know what to make of this phenomenon. They have added a few stops since last May, but there is no way to guarantee that there will not be other such dramatic short-term drops in the market. There is no one person who can understand it all.

If you're an individual investor, then knowing this may make you more reluctant to participate in the stock market, thinking that there is no way that you can compete. Nothing could be further from the truth. With the exception of the occasional shocking drop (or possibly a steep climb), for most investors this activity will be background noise. Much like the weather, we will go about our business whether it is raining or sunny. The values of the stock for any particular company will ultimately depend upon the fundamentals of that company. Are they getting economic results? Computer trading can cause short-term fluctuations, but the company fundamentals will bring the price back in line. In theory, the rapid movements caused by so many trading programs actually helps to stabilize the markets by taking advantage of disparities that may skew the price—then getting out once normalization occurs.

The AI Toaster

If you read the AI articles in *Wired*, you will see a reasonable idea of how AI is affecting us. We have only just begun. I don't know if there is one in existence, but I could use a toaster that would make toast the way I like it—not too light and certainly not burned. The normal experience is to select what is thought to be the proper darkness level needed for perfect toast. While this occasionally works, it is usually too light. The toast is then put back down for darkening, only to soon find smoke billowing out of the machine. Oops!

This is how an AI toaster would work. Initially, the toaster would know nothing about how you like your toast. Therefore the initial setting for the toast would need to be according to a factory default depending upon your manual selection (light, medium, dark, burned). The toaster will be equipped with an optical sensor, possibly a heat sensor, and toast recognition software. If when the toast first emerges it is too light (the default position), the toast is put back down. The toaster uses the toast recognition software to identify the previously heated item and determines that you like it darker. Rather than just adding more time, it just makes it a little darker, remembering next time that is how you like it. The toaster could even learn to recognize the difference between a piece of bread, a bagel and an English muffin based upon shape, holes and crevices. Soon you would be getting perfect toast every time you used the toaster.

Of course, if someone else (with different tastes) used the same toaster, it could cause toaster confusion. A button might be added for selecting the person, but wouldn't it be better if the toaster recognized who was making the toast? Simply add another optical sensor with facial recognition software. But, then there could be a problem if there are too many people in the kitchen, or someone else is making your toast. I suppose the best thing is merely to tell the toaster who will eat the toast. "This is Jack's toast. Go ahead and burn it."

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 Future of Computing” by Wally Wang

The home of the future, which heavily featured Microsoft technology, already looks archaic; the Android tablets are coming; more news from the iPad front; OmniGraffle is a Mac and iPad tool for serious artists; Apple's virtual keyboard technology helps preserve languages; and a tip on using the Open in Tabs command to open multiple bookmarked Web sites at once.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Reading past predictions of the future can show how naively optimistic people can be. According to all those science fiction magazines from the 1950s, we would all be traveling around in flying cars, powering our homes with cheap and unlimited electricity from our own home nuclear reactor, and living in perfect health thanks to countless medical breakthroughs that would allow us to live several hundred years.

While it's easy for predictions to go drastically wrong when forecasting decades in advance, it's also interesting to see how wildly wrong predictions can be when forecasting the future just a few years ahead.

That's what Disneyland did in 2008 when it introduced its Innoventions Dream Home of the Future (dreamhome.disney.go.com/media/ap/dreamhome/index.html). This futuristic home of tomorrow is meant to show how we might all be living in the not too-distant future. Despite being just two years old, this Innovention Dream Home is already looking archaic.

Since Disneyland's Dream Home is sponsored by Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard, both companies' products play a large role toward shaping the future home of tomorrow. The first oddity is Microsoft's infamous Surface table (that costs \$12,500 and weighs 150 pounds).

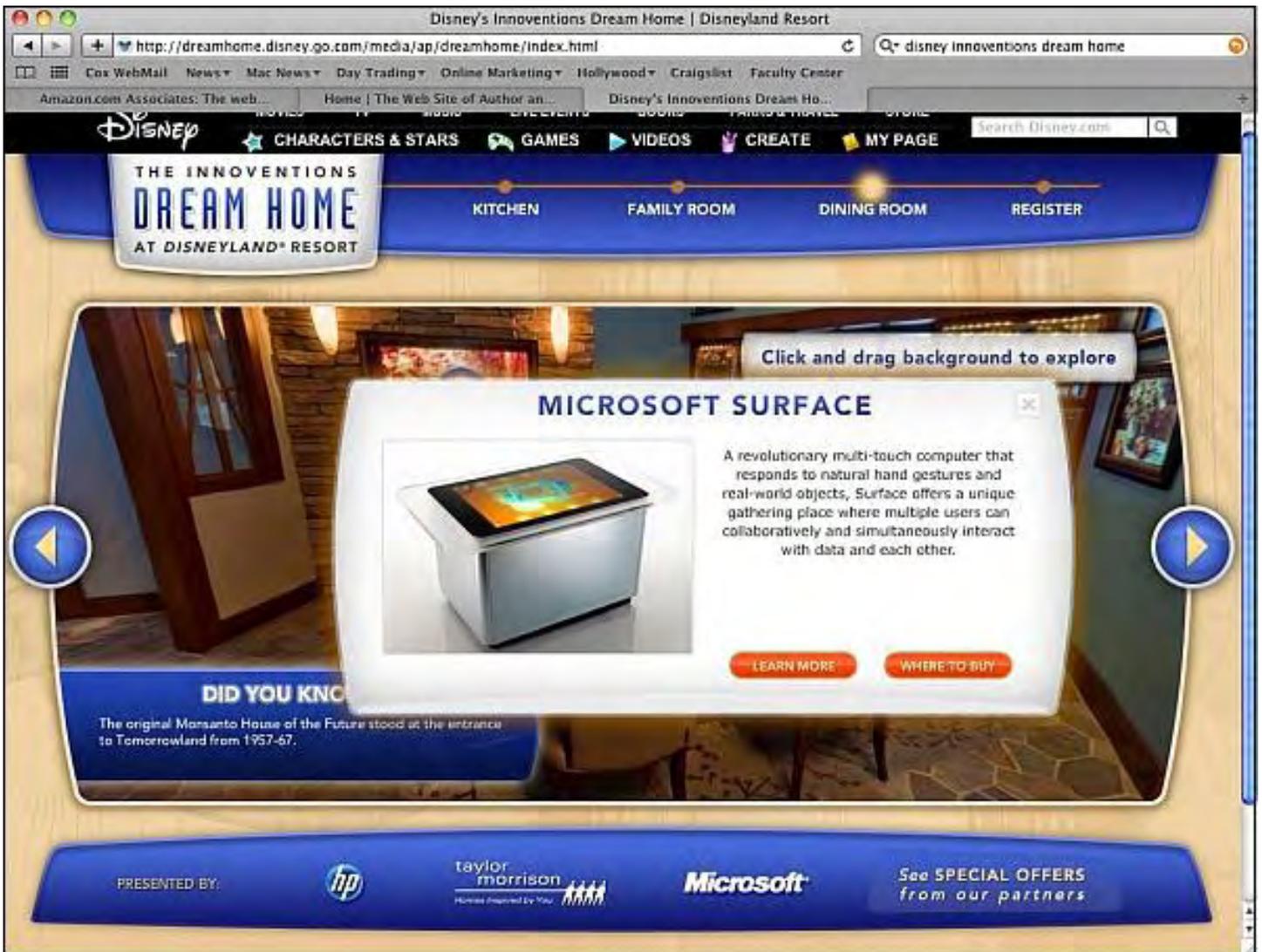


Figure 1. In the future, every home will enjoy touch manipulation computing with the Microsoft Surface table.

In retrospect, this prediction is much closer to reality with the \$499 iPad that weighs only 1.5 pounds and provides a portable touchscreen computer. The iPad's existence also negates the next technological wonder that was predicted to appear in every home of the future: a Tablet PC by Hewlett-Packard.

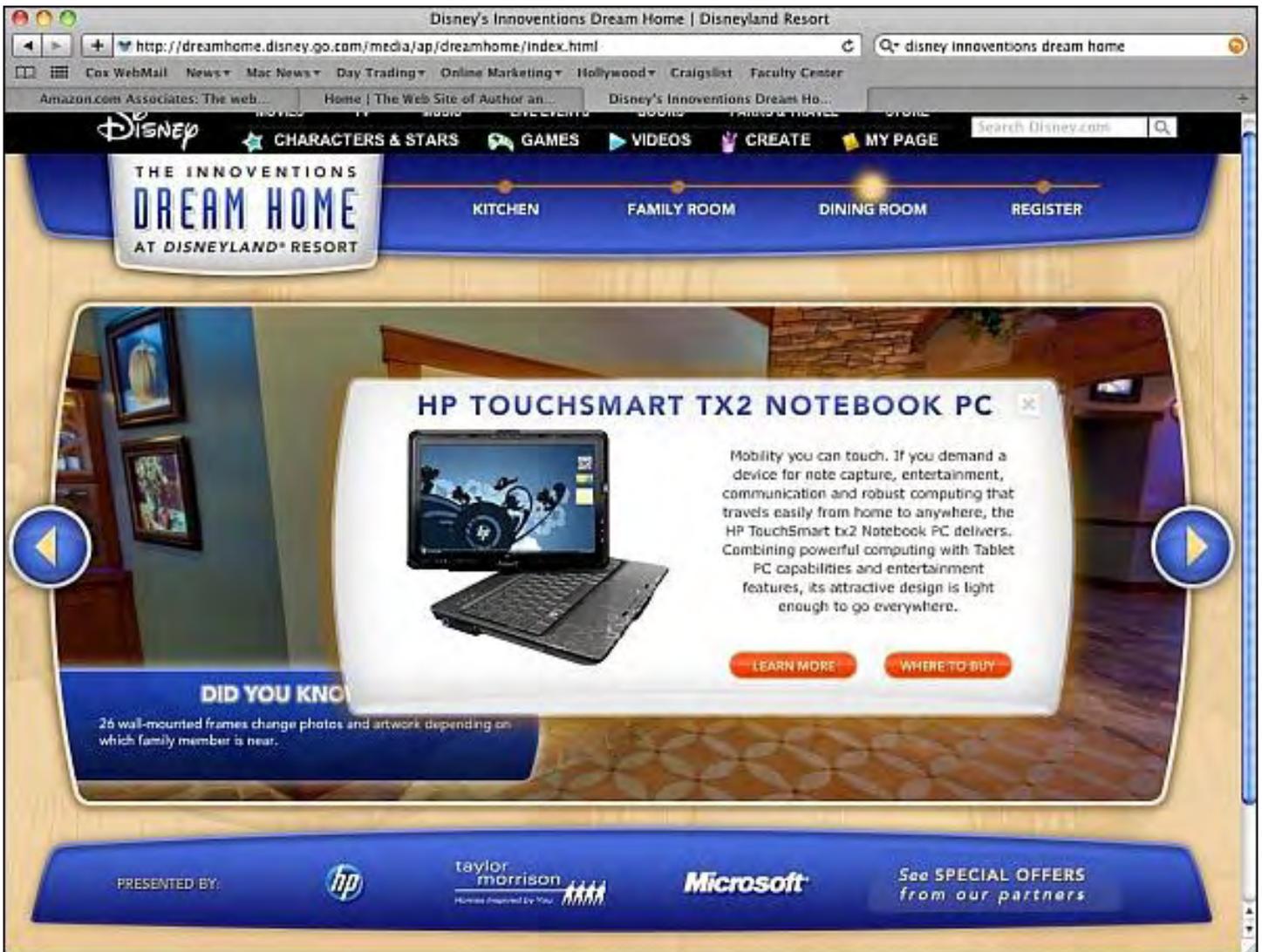


Figure 2. Tablet computers were part of the futuristic vision of tomorrow.

Instead of an ancient stereo, the home of the future was going to have a digital music player called the Microsoft Zune. This prediction wasn't too far off, considering that in 2008, the iPod had already cornered the major share of the digital music player market.

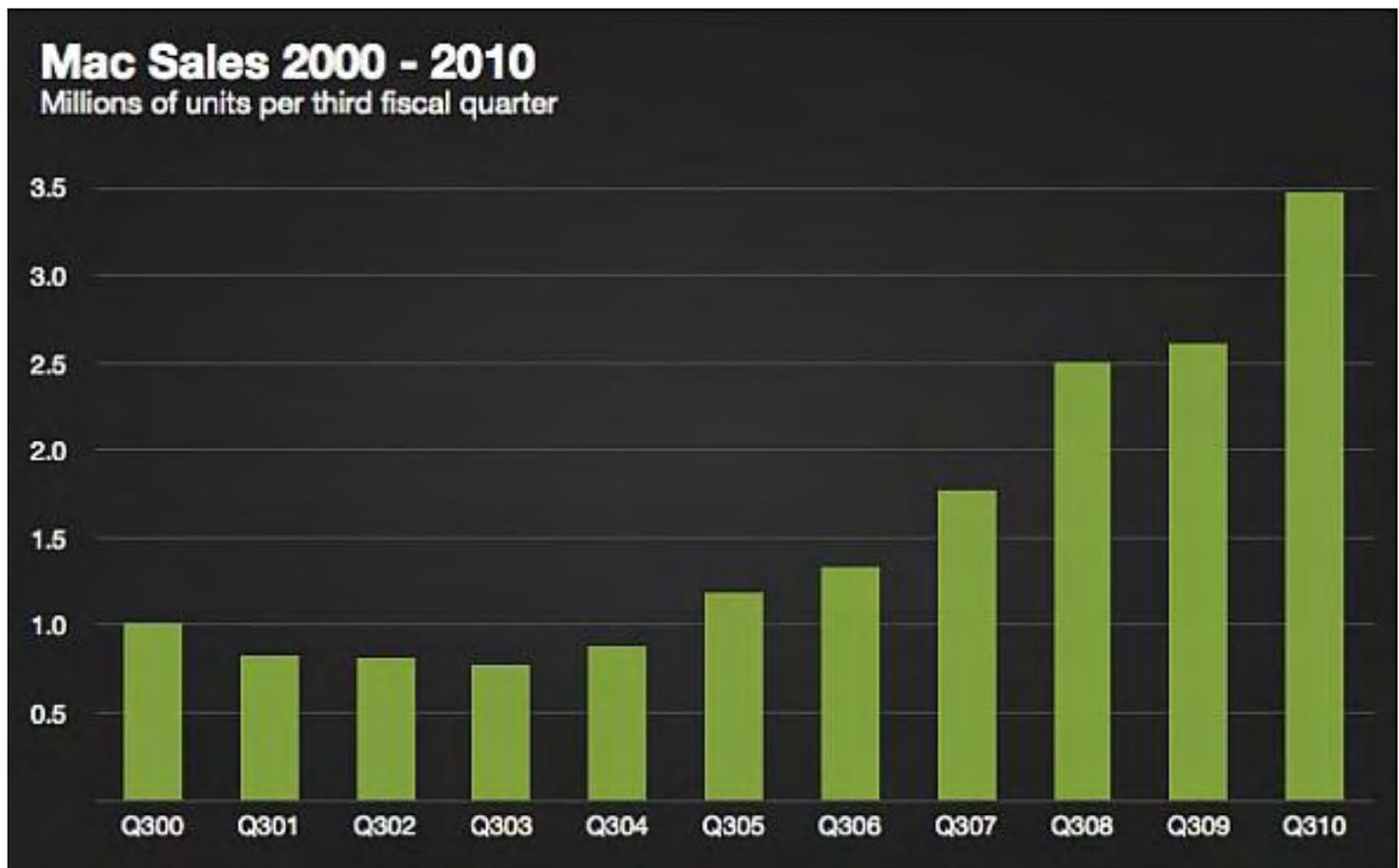


Figure 4. Macintosh sales continue rising every quarter.

Apple has already wrapped up the market for digital music players with its iPod, defined the standard for tablet computers with the iPad, and set the standard for smartphones with the iPhone. Each quarter, Apple sells more Macintosh computers (gigaom.com/apple/apple-q3-2010-record-mac-sales/) than the previous quarter, suggesting that Apple may be accurate in claiming that 50 percent of all Macintosh sales in their retail stores are to first-time Macintosh buyers.

With sales of Macintosh computers selling briskly (blogs.barrons.com/techtraderdaily/2010/12/13/apple-19-mac-growth-in-november-barclays-sees-q1-upside/) even during the worst recession in recent history, along with steady sales of the iPhone and iPad, it's easy to see that if this trend continues, the dominance of Windows PCs may be in jeopardy.

Perhaps the most telling state of the Windows world comes when even die-hard Windows enthusiasts start questioning whether Microsoft will play a major role in the world of computing tomorrow.

Mike Halsey, the author of *Troubleshooting Windows 7 Inside and Out* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0735645205?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0735645205), even wrote a blog post titled "Will 2011 be the Year People Begin the Move Away from Windows?" (www.windows7news.com/2010/12/19/2011-year-people-move-windows/)

Like most Windows enthusiasts, Mike Halsey seems ignorant of basic facts concerning anything made by Apple, even going so far as claiming that Apple hasn't done anything to improve the iPad (which conveniently neglects Apple's recent iOS 4.2 update that added multitasking and printing capabilities to the iPad).

Mike Halsey also exposes the fervent fantasy of Windows enthusiasts in hoping that Windows will always continue to thrive no matter what happens. Mike claims that "Apple Mac computers are used generally for different purposes than iPhones and iPads. This business-end focus for the Mac could suffer if the people who buy Macs don't like the consumerization of their interface. This could drive some Mac users towards Windows."

In other words, if Apple insists on making the Macintosh as easy to use as the iPhone and iPad, current Macintosh users may get so upset that they'll rush to embrace the greater complexity of Windows instead.

While Mike believes the iPad and rival tablets could drive people away from reliance on Windows, he concludes with the hope that, "It's entirely possible that 2011 won't be the year of the tablet...If this happens then Microsoft could still claw things back and keep Windows dominating the home space with Windows 8 in 2012, but that's a long time to wait, and in the interim a great many people could simply get bored and forget about tablets altogether."

This odd belief that people will somehow ignore any new technology that could threaten the dominance of Windows defines the heart of Windows enthusiasts. Such false hope clings to the desire that the world will forever remain stagnant so they don't have to inconvenience themselves by learning something new, different and unfamiliar.

Whatever happens in the future, the only certainty is that people who cling to the past and refuse to change (think of Montgomery Wards, Polaroid and Blockbuster Video) will not play a role in shaping their own future tomorrow.

If you're going to bury your head in the sand to avoid facing the realities of change, then you might as well go all the way and just dig your own grave. At least that will be an easy future for anyone to predict.

The Android Tablets Are Coming

Some people have a bizarre hatred of anything made by Apple. These people look upon anything made by Apple with disdain, yet cheerfully adopt copycat competing products without noting the irony that the products they depend on were largely influenced by Apple (the mouse, graphical user interfaces, different color computer cases, all-in-one computer designs, touchscreen smartphones, App Stores and tablet computers).

For those unwilling to get an iPad, you can wait for the growing onslaught of Android-based tablet computers (www.computerworld.com/s/article/9201721/4_Android_tablets_vie_for_your_attention?taxonomyId=15). Despite Google's insistence that Android 2.2 isn't optimized for tablets, many manufacturers are rushing ahead anyway without waiting for the version of Android specifically designed for tablet devices.

If you prefer dealing with a lesser user experience in return for a handful of missing iPad features such as a camera or a Secure Digital card slot, then you can soon choose an Android tablet tomorrow. Just remember that finding apps designed to run on your Android tablet may not be as easy as the iPad, and you won't find many accessories designed for your tablet either, unlike the iPad.

Curiously while critics claim that the iPad is useless (i.gizmodo.com/5458382/8-things-that-suck-about-the-ipad), they're often promoting tablet clones that look and behave like the iPad. If the iPad has no purpose, then why are so many companies wasting their time developing their own tablet devices that closely mimic the iPad?

More iPad News

Many people look at the iPad and can't figure out how they might use it. To those people, the iPad might seem as puzzling as a blank sheet of paper and a pencil might look to a kid raised on MTV, text messaging and constant Internet access.

However with a blank sheet of paper, kids might learn that they could write poetry, compose music, play games like Battleship or Tic-Tac-Toe, draw pictures, fold it into origami frogs or birds, make paper airplanes or boats, write stories, fold it into a fan and cool themselves, or curl it into a funnel to pour sand through.

Just as a blank sheet of paper can be used in a multitude of ways, so can an iPad be used in an equally number of creative and diverse purposes. All it takes is a little imagination, which people in diverse industries are discovering practically every day.

Buy a Hyundai Equus and forget about looking for your paper owner's manual in the glove compartment. Instead, you can read your owner's manual (www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bb3qZHQVe8&feature=player_embedded) on the interactive display of the iPad that comes free with every new car.



Figure 5. Hyundai provides their Equus owner's manual on the iPad.

In Ottawa, the government plans to equip government workers with iPads to save on printing costs (niagarafallsreview.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2897516). Treasury board spokesman Pierre-Alain Bujold said that iPads—not laptops—were picked for the project because they were lightweight, user-friendly, had a long-lasting battery and allowed for easy note-taking.

According to the latest survey of nearly 950 Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) members, the iPad may soon capture up to 70 percent of the healthcare industry (www.informationweek.com/news/healthcare/EMR/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=228800929).

Lynne Dunbrack, an analyst with IDC Health Insights, noted that the iPad's sleek design, intuitive user interface, and large screen (relative to a smartphone) has helped make it increasingly popular among clinicians.

A father created his own iPad app to help his son (www.thedenverchannel.com/health/26267279/detail.htm), afflicted with a rare genetic disorder, communicate with those around him. The app, called VerbalVictor, displays pictures of different activities and buttons that the boy can tap to play recorded messages, allowing him to communicate without having to speak himself.

VerbalVictor will soon be available for \$10 in one of the fastest growing app categories devoted to helping the disabled perform tasks that previously required expensive and clumsy specialized devices. By eliminating these bulky contraptions and using an iPad with the right app instead, disabled people can rely on less expensive and simpler technology like the iPad to help them get along in the world.

Clearly, many people are finding a wide range of uses for the iPad that go beyond merely wanting a new gadget. If you just exercise your imagination, you too may find an interesting use for an iPad that you couldn't accomplish easily with a traditional computer.

Free Apple Programming E-Books

If you have an iPhone or iPad, download the free iBooks app and visit the iBookstore. That's where you can find six free e-books (www.cultofmac.com/apple-publishes-six-free-electronic-books-for-developers/73673) published by Apple, explaining different aspects of programming in Objective-C to create Macintosh, iPhone, and iPad apps.

For anyone interested in creating and selling iPhone or iPad apps, these six e-books can form the foundation of your programming education. For more guidance, look for my new book from APress called *Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362), which should be out by January 2011.

This book guides you through the basic principles of using Apple's free programming tools. Even if you're already familiar with programming, you'll still need to take time learning the unique (and sometimes bizarre) ways of programming using Apple's tools (Xcode and Interface Builder) on the Macintosh.

OmniGraffle on the iPad

Most iPad apps offer more sophistication than iPhone apps due to the iPad's larger screen. For a drawing app that's as powerful as any regular computer drawing program, take a look at OmniGraffle for the iPad (www.omnigroup.com/products/omnigraffle-ipad/).

This \$49.95 app may sport a much higher price tag than most other kinds of iPad apps, but if you need a serious drawing tool, this higher price gives you a tremendous amount of power at your fingertips. Once you get used to drawing with your fingers, you may not even need a drawing program on a regular computer.

To create a drawing with OmniGraffle, you could start off with a blank page or modify the handful of templates available. By using a template, you can quickly create a specific type of drawing without much work.



Figure 6. OmniGraffle provides several templates that you can use and modify.

Besides free-form drawing, OmniGraffle can also be used to create wireframe mockup images of Web sites or programs. That way you can design a Web site or program with OmniGraffle and get feedback from a client before you spend any time writing any actual code.

Whatever type of picture you choose to create, OmniGraffle divides the tasks of making a drawing into creation and editing. When you're creating a drawing, you can choose between drawing different shapes (rectangles, circles, or triangles), lines, text, or free-form lines.

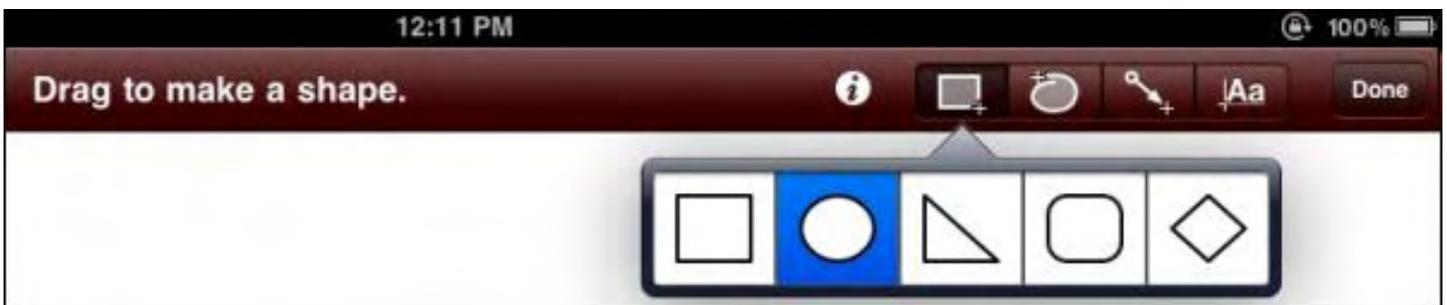


Figure 7. OmniGraffle provides different types of objects you can add to a drawing.

Like all drawing programs, each item you add is a complete object that you can layer over another object to create unique visual effects. When you're done adding objects to your drawing, the next time is modifying those objects. To modify objects, you switch to a separate editing mode, which OmniGraffle identifies by changing the title bar of the screen from brown to green.

In this editing mode, you can tap on an object to display handles around it so you can move or resize it. To delete an object, you have to display a separate menu, which lets you selectively delete objects or rearrange them so one object overlaps another one.

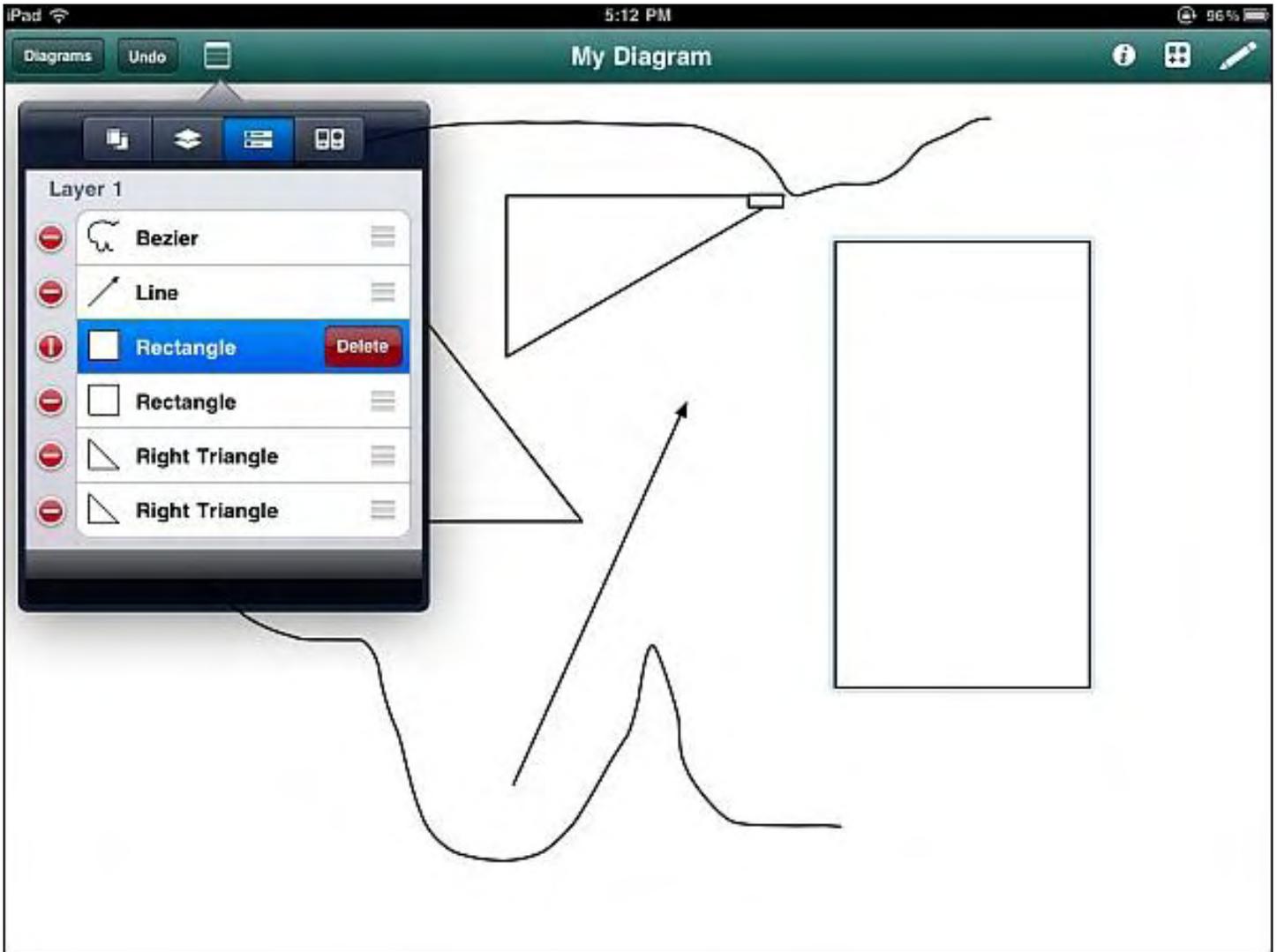


Figure 8. You must access a separate menu to delete or rearrange the layering of an object.

Besides letting you draw ordinary shapes like rectangles and triangles, OmniGraffle also comes with a library of stencil images such as common shapes for creating software flowcharts or three-dimensional objects.



Figure 9. OmniGraffle comes with a stencil library of different objects you can create.

Initially, this back and forth process of switching between creating a drawing and editing it can seem a bit odd, especially if you're used to a drawing program on a regular computer. However, once you get used to OmniGraffle's method of dividing its tools between creating and editing objects, you'll appreciate the ability to focus on one task at a time without accidentally messing up your drawing by choosing the wrong command.

If you have OmniGraffle for the Mac, you can share files with OmniGraffle for the iPad. That way you can create a drawing on your iPad, touch it up on your Mac, then transfer it back to your iPad so you can show your drawings to someone such as a potential client.

OmniGraffle isn't for casual users who just want a simple drawing program. Instead, it's a heavy-duty app for serious artists. For those artists who need a full-powered drawing app on the iPad, OmniGraffle is probably the only choice to turn your iPad into a portable electronic canvas for both creating and displaying your work.

Preserving History

One problem facing any hardware manufacturer is having to build different keyboards for foreign language markets. The keyboard used on a laptop sold to the United States won't look the same as a keyboard designed for French, German, or Spanish speakers who need additional keys for creating various accents and characters. Now imagine the difficulty in designing a keyboard for the Asian market.

Not surprisingly, the iPhone and iPad avoid this problem completely through their touchscreen surface that can easily display virtual keyboards to represent a variety of languages. This allows Apple to make a single model and sell it globally, which other hardware manufacturers could never do with their reliance on physical keyboards.

One advantage of such broad language support is that Apple recently added the Hawaiian and Cherokee languages (www.foxnews.com/scitech/2010/12/23/apple-preserve-chokeee-language). Such support helps preserve languages that most other computer manufacturers typically ignore for financial reasons.

Other operating systems may support obscure languages like Cherokee, but software support is pointless without accompanying hardware support, and that's where the virtual keyboard on the touchscreen surface displays its huge advantage over physical keyboards.

The ability to preserve an entire nation's culture and language may not have been the primary goal of the iPhone and iPad, but innovative technology often finds multiple purposes far removed from its original goal. Just look where the printing press and electric light bulb took us, despite the naysayers claiming they couldn't find a use for it, so therefore it was destined to fail along with other head-scratching inventions like the wheel, fire, and the use of a written alphabet.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." — Western Union internal memo, 1876.

Driving Yet Another Stake Into Newspapers

Craigslist killed classified advertising for newspapers. Now a new iPad app called The Funnies (itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-funnies/id409663955?mt=8) is threatening to wipe out another reason to get a newspaper.

If you like getting a newspaper to read the comics, then you can get your favorite comics directly on your iPad with The Funnies and eliminate newspapers altogether. If you find a comic strip that you like, you can even share it with your friends through Twitter, Facebook, or e-mail.



Figure 10. The Funnies can provide your favorite comic strip directly to your iPad.

Newspapers provide stale, day-old information, so it's no surprise that more newspapers will continue losing subscribers and advertisers. Print is dying, so it's only a matter of time before newspapers become as rare as rabbit-ear antennas on TV sets. About the only good use for newspapers these days is to wrap fish, paper train your dog, or as lining at the bottom of a bird cage.

* * *

If you have stored multiple Web site bookmarks on the Bookmark Bar in Safari, you can open all of those bookmarks at once by right-clicking on the bookmark menu to display a pop-up menu. Then choose Open in Tabs.

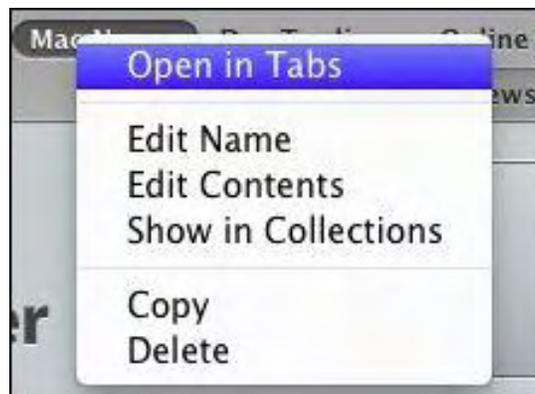


Figure 11. The Open in Tabs command lets you open multiple bookmarked Web sites at once.

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 particples with Jack Dunning and go to the gym

to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987),
 Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),
 Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
 Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468),
 Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
 My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
 My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
 My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),
 Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894),
 How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).
 Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

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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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Clipboard Alternatives," "Firefox Issue," "Cleaning Up E-Mail Forwards," "Jack's Program Problem"

Clipboard Alternatives

[Regarding the December 10 Digital Dave column:]

Here are more alternatives to XP's clipboard viewer (www.winvistaclub.com/t72.html) for use in Vista and Win7.

-Ron Cerrato

Firefox Issue

[Regarding the December 3 Digital Dave column:]

I tried to use Firefox to apply for a Discover Card today, and it would not work. In a "live chat" with Discover, they told me they have trouble with Firefox. (I told them to get a smarter programmer.) I then used Chrome, and no problem.

-Larry McLaughlin, Aurora, CO

Cleaning Up E-Mail Forwards

[Regarding the December 10 Digital Dave column:]

For Poz, regarding cleaning up e-mails, there is a free program available that is called Strip Mail (www.dsoft.com.tr/stripmail/) that cleans out the ">" from mails. I have used it for years and it does work.

-James Tepe, Lakewood, CO

Dave, please confirm this, as I haven't got an e-mail to test.

Do a Select All with Control-A on an original e-mail, and then paste it into a new e-mail. It will paste without the lines, etc., correct?

This may remove extraneous items, depending upon which e-mail program you're using. It is more reliable to only select the portion you want to forward. —Dave

-Gary Weinstein, Groveland, CA

In the December 10 issue, Poz asked about the best way to clean up an e-mail that has multiple forwards which include the ">" character preceding every line of the forwarded message. Though your advice to select text and delete makes sense if there are entire sections of info to be deleted, I believe Paz was really trying to find a way to remove

those intermittent characters while preserving the rest of the e-mail's content. There may be an easier way, but when I need to do this I copy into WordPad or my word processor the forwarded text with the ">" marks and then do a search and replace where the ">" is the search character, and I put nothing in the replace box. Quickly all unwanted characters are removed.

-Rick Tibbitts

Thank you for bringing up a personal security issue concerning e-mails. I live by this axiom. If it is worth forwarding, it is worth editing out the unnecessary and/or unwanted portions of the e-mail that may enable inadvertent or intentional use by someone for advertising or the selling to an advertiser.

-George W, San Diego, CA

Jack's Program Problem

[Regarding the December 3 Windows Tips and Tricks column:]

If you suspect it's a .NET issue, you can do a repair of the .NETs listed in Programs and Features. (I know you're skeptical of repairs of programs, but there is a known bug in the latest version of Windows Live Mail: junk mail filtering won't work until you do a repair of the Windows Live Essentials program!)

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

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

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