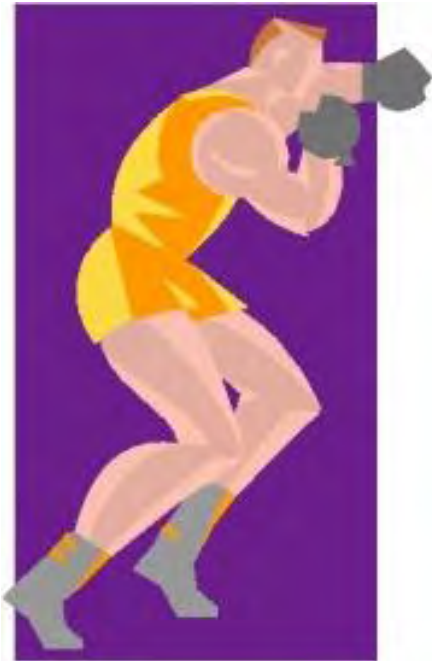# *ComputorEdge™ Online — 01/07/11*

This issue: Microsoft Strikes Back

Barry Fass-Holmes takes an alternative view on Microsoft's strategy for countering Apple's success.

Table of Contents:

Worldwide News & Product Reviews by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.

Social networking sites share personal information with third-party tracking sites; digital music collections are getting bigger and more disorganized; a look at a challenging 2D platformer—Super Meat Boy; a free top-down shooter—"Alien Swarm"; Journal Your Memories with MacJournal for Macintosh.

DEPARTMENTS:

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

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

"Netbooks Good for Traveling," "VLC Media Player VS. The KM Player," "Hiding an IP Address," "Cleaning Up E-Mail Forwards"

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Digital Dave

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

A reader's printer says full ink cartridge has expired; a reader wonders how to best clean an LCD screen; a reader shares a tip on creating a shortcut to ComputorEdge.

Dear Digital Dave,

More than a few months ago, I read a clue how to reset the expiration notice that keeps popping up telling the ink cartridge has expired. The cartridge level indicator shows the level high. At the price of these HP cartridges, it is offensive to be told a full cartridge has expired. What is the harm to continue using it?

Peg Salisbury
El Cajon, CA

Dear Peg,

Apparently, there are a few different warning problems with HP printers that were a cause for a class action law suit (*pacificink.com/blog/2010/11/16/hp-class-action-lawsuit-settlement/*). (Thanks to Bruce Allen of Ramona, CA for the link.) What affects your printer will depend upon the model printer that you own.

The usual warning from a printer is low ink level—which may or may not be true. There is no problem in continuing to use the printer as long as you are getting quality copies. But once the cartridge is empty (bad copies), you should replace (or refill) it immediately. It is not good for the print head to sit without ink in it. Over a period of time, the dried ink in the print head could cause it to stop functioning. Then you will be faced with both replacing the print head and the ink cartridge.

Some HP printers (and a few other manufacturers) have another problem (which may be yours) related to a supposed expiration date. The cartridges are fitted with a microchip with an expiration date. Once this date is reached, it will no longer deliver ink—even if the cartridge is full. This was designed to hinder the refilling of ink cartridges by third parties. On many printers there is an override for this expiration date, but you will most likely need to search the Web for your model printer and this problem. One fix that seems to have worked on HP printers is the temporary removal of the battery which will then reset the printer's internal clock. This is not necessarily easy to do, since the battery is generally hidden and not easy to remove. Again, you will want to do a Web search for information on your printer.

All this adds up to sleazy business practices, whether it's merely a warning to get you to replace the cartridge while there is ink remaining, or an ink cartridge expiration date designed to shut down the printer until you get new ink. The name of the game for most printer manufacturers is sell more ink. Since they are losing on each printer they sell, they feel you have a moral obligation to buy more ink from them. If they are forced to trick you—so be it.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

What is the best (and safest for the screen) way to clean my LCD TV/monitor? The screen is currently a bit slimy/grimy, as I use propane for heat and cooking. There is a film that eventually settles over everything. Most of my "stuff" I can stick in the sink or dishwasher, but I don't think that would do my electronics much good (joking). There are a ton of products available for cleaning my LCD screen, some are isopropyl alcohol based, some are advertised as being "alcohol free" products. Are they safe for the screen? Is there a better way?

Maxine Morgan
Ekalaka, MT

Dear Maxine,

You do need to be careful about what you use to clean an LCD screen. Most are covered with a thin plastic coating which may be damaged by chemicals and abrasive cleaners. I generally only use a soft dry cloth to remove dust and other bits which may have accumulated. The only safe liquid (added only to the cloth—do not spray directly on the screen) is water. Some people suggest that isopropyl alcohol can also be used to clean LCDs without harm, but even then it should only be used occasionally when there is something particularly stubborn to be removed. I have rarely found it necessary to use more than a damp cloth to remove any residue which accumulates on the screen.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Here is a suggestion:

I always read the printed ComputorEdge*, But kept forgetting to view the online version.*

My Solution:

Place this Shortcut on the desktop: http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?zone=SD No more forgetting, it's right up front, just one click away. I now read it daily.

Stan Logue
San Diego, CA

Dear Stan,

Thanks for the tip. It is always great to tell people about easier ways to reach my column. I would also note that you don't actually need the "?zone=SD" in the link. You could just use: http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc without the zone parameter. As it turns out, the last region (San Diego, Colorado, New Mexico, National) you visited is saved in your cookie. Each time you visit you will be returned to that same region with the current issue. If you want to link to a specific issue then the issue (i.e. issue=2901) parameter will need to be added to the URL. The article (article=dave) parameter along with issue will ID a specific piece of editorial.

However, you don't need to remember any of this. If you want to link or add to favorites (bookmark) a specific article,

you can use "Link to this Article" or "Add to Favorite" at the top of the article. "Link to this Article" will give you the exact URL with parameters to bring up the article. You can also find the link in "E-mail to a Friend" although this link will open your default e-mail program to allow you to easily send the link to anyone with an e-mail address.

ComputorEdge also supports an RSS feed if you prefer this method of keeping up to date. Both Firefox and Internet Explorer support RSS directly, but with Google you need their reader (at least when I last checked). The URL for the RSS feed is http://webserver.computoredge.com/rss/rss.mvc. Put that address into any RSS reader to get the current issue of *ComputorEdge*. For more information on RSS see the RSS Feedbag link at the bottom of the navigation menu on the left.

Digital Dave

2011--The Year that Microsoft Strikes Back
"Daring Predictions about What May Become the "Me Too!" Year for Microsoft." by Barry Fass-Holmes

Microsoft has had a bumpy ride in 2010. Will mimicking Apple be Microsoft's means to success in 2011? Barry predicts three ways that Microsoft will follow Apple's lead in 2011.

2010 was a bumpy year for Microsoft. Although the company scored successes with Windows 7 (*www.electronista. com/articles/10/10/21/microsoft.at.240m.windows.7.licenses.sold.in.year/*) and XBox (*www. electronista.com/articles/10/10/14/xbox.360.leads.september.console.sales/*), it also suffered setbacks at the hands of arch-rivals Apple and Google. One setback was that Microsoft's stock remained relatively flat during 2010, while Apple's skyrocketed (Figure 1). Another setback was that Redmond's newly minted Windows Phone 7 operating system made little headway (*www.appleinsider.com/articles/10/11/29/ windows_phone_7_developers_fear_platform_flop.html*) against Google's increasingly popular Android platform. Thus, Microsoft experienced mixed outcomes in 2010.

Price history – AAPL (10/23/2000 – 10/20/2010)

Figure 1. The value of Microsoft's stock contrasted with the value of Apple's stock during 2010 due to the former's persisting flatness and the latter's persisting upward surge (http://moneycentral.msn.com).

Although Microsoft had a bumpy ride in 2010, the company should be prime to strike back in 2011. One compelling reason for expecting the company to strike back is that its Compensation Committee sprinkled motivation on CEO Steve Ballmer. The committee cut Ballmer's annual bonus (*www.appleinsider.com/articles/10/09/30/ failures_in_mobile_space_cost_steve_ballmer_half_his_bonus.html*) by 50% in response to 2010's setbacks. Documents that the committee filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission referred to "…loss of market share in the company's mobile phone business; and the need for the company to pursue innovations to take advantage of new form factors." Committee members evidently were mindful of Apple's iPhone 4 and iPad profits plus Google's Android advances during 2010 in deciding to cut Ballmer's bonus.

How will Microsoft's leader react to the Compensation Committee's bonus cut? History shows that the company has a pattern of mimicking Apple. Examples include (but are not limited to) Windows Vista's Aero interface mimicking Mac OS X's Aqua version, Zune models mimicking iPod equivalents, and the company's retail stores mimicking Apple's counterparts. At the risk of sticking my neck way out on a limb (please resist the urge to send me a flame for doing this, dear reader), I predict that in 2011 Ballmer and Co. will react to the bonus cut by executing the strategy that historically has been Microsoft's strength—mimicking Apple. Let's take a look at three ways in which this prediction might play out.

Retail expansion

In 2011, Microsoft will follow Apple's lead and increase the number of its retail outlets. The company will continue its practice of opening shops in close proximity to pre-existing Apple Stores, as was the case with the locations in Mission Viejo and San Diego's Fashion Valley Mall. It's probably too soon for Microsoft Stores overseas, but my prediction is that the Redmond giant will launch new locations stateside in 2011.

A further prediction about Microsoft's stores is that they won't make a bit of difference to Apple's retail outlets in 2011. The logic behind this prediction is that Apple Stores uniquely provide one-stop shopping for just about all of Cupertino's products, whereas Microsoft Stores do not accomplish the same for Redmond's products. If you want to see, touch and/or test drive an iPhone, iPad and Mac under a single roof, you pretty much need to go to an Apple Store (Best Buy, Target and other big-box places that stock iPhones and/or iPads do not stock Macs). To see, touch and test drive Microsoft's offerings (Windows, Office, keyboards and pointing devices, XBox), you can go almost

anywhere (i.e., the company's diverse partners) rather than to a Microsoft Store.

J. Whiting
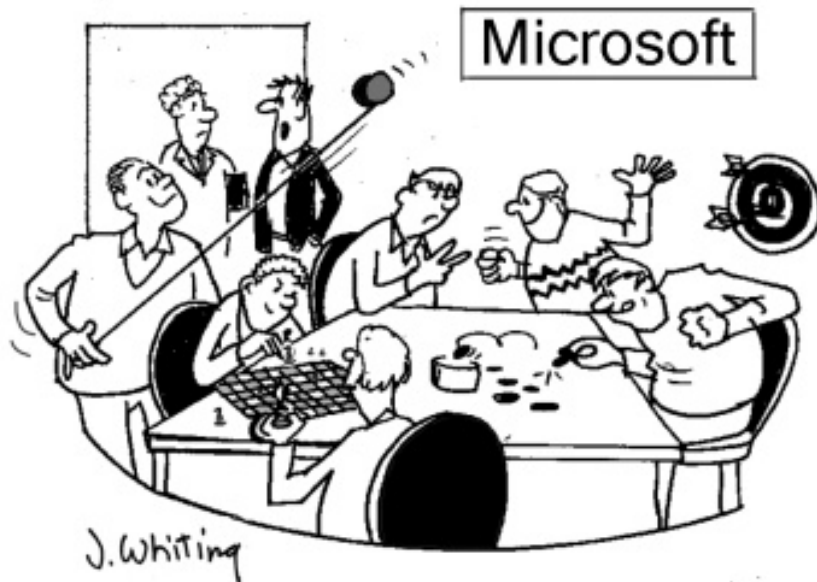
"We're just waiting for Apple to show us what we should be working on next."

In other words, Apple's stores provide a compelling reason for a prospective customer to visit them instead of going elsewhere. Microsoft's stores, on the other hand, provide little reason for a prospective customer to visit them instead of going elsewhere. That is why consumers will continue flocking to Apple's stores despite increased competition from Microsoft's expanding retail presence during 2011.

Anecdotal evidence supporting the above logic appeared recently in the LA Times (*www. latimes.com/business/la-fi-microsoft-stores-20101126,0,4878500.story*). The Times reported on customers' perceptions of Microsoft's shops, including one customer who "said the Microsoft Store lacked the exclusivity that draws consumers to the Apple Store. 'Everything sold [at the Microsoft Store] can be bought somewhere else, likely for a lower price. There is no exclusive product here to pull me in. But at the Apple Store, there's all kinds of stuff I can't get anywhere else.'" Before jumping to conclusions on the basis of only one customer's perceptions, however, a more rigorous marketing study will be needed to determine whether exclusivity (versus other factors such as customer service, quality, price, etc.) really is what makes a difference in luring customers to Apple's stores vs. Microsoft's stores.

Regardless of whether exclusivity is the most important difference between Microsoft's and Apple's retail outlets, my prediction is that Microsoft will open additional ones near existing Apple Stores during 2011, and that the former will have little (if any) impact on the latter's sales or profitability.

New Zune

In 2011, Microsoft will mimic Apple by integrating its newly minted Windows operating system for cell phones with its music playing hardware. My prediction specifically is that the company will produce a new Zune HD running Windows Phone 7 (WP7) (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zune*) to replace the current model that runs a Windows CE kernel for ARM architecture. This prediction is the exact opposite of PC Magazine's recent one forecasting the Zune HD's demise (*www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2370602,00.asp*).

The logic behind my prediction, contrary to PC Magazine's, is that Microsoft will mimic Apple's strategy of developing a single operating system version for all of its mobile devices. Apple produces a unified iOS (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ IOS_(Apple)*) for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch rather than producing a different OS for different devices. This strategy's benefits include (but are not limited to) a consistent end-user experience across devices and developer efficiency. Microsoft will take advantage of these benefits by producing a new Zune HD that runs the company's new mobile OS, thereby further expanding the universe of WP7-compatible products (which include Microsoft's partners' cell phones and tablets) and continuing the company's efforts to compete against Apple's iPod line-up.

A further prediction about Microsoft's Zune HD is that it will have little, if any, impact on iPods' 70% share of the digital music player market in 2011. This prediction is consistent with PC Magazine's claim that "Apple has, without a doubt,

won the MP3 player war. (Notice the manufacturers that, except for budget offerings, are out of the race: Samsung, Creative, to a certain extent, SanDisk.)" However, PC Magazine's additional claim that "Microsoft has a better chance of taking Apple's iPhone on by making [WP7] its top priority" seems a bit off base. The reason is that WP7 might have more success competing in the music player arena than in the cell phone arena where Android and Symbian are additional opponents with a huge head start over WP7 (*www.appleinsider.com/articles/10/11/29/ windows_phone_7_developers_fear_platform_flop.html*).

Regardless of whether WP7 can successfully compete in the cell phone arena, my prediction is that Microsoft will introduce a new Zune HD with WP7 during 2011, and that this product will have little (if any) impact on iPods' sales or profitability.

Microsoft computer

In 2011, Microsoft will mimic Apple by introducing its first namesake computer. The company will begin producing and selling its own computers with its own operating system (Windows), integrated programs (Internet Explorer, etc.) and peripheral devices (keyboard, mouse, music player, etc.). This runs contrary to the fact that Microsoft primarily is a software company, but my prediction is that Redmond will join the ranks of PC vendors in 2011.

The logic behind this seemingly far-fetched prediction is that Microsoft will mimic Apple's successful model of providing one-stop shopping for computer customers. As mentioned previously, Microsoft's stock has been flat for several years while Apple's has skyrocketed, Microsoft's market cap has stayed about the same while Apple's has climbed to the world's second spot (*www.appleinsider.com/articles/10/10/13/ apple_shares_crack_300_en_route_to_new_all_time_high.html*) behind only ExxonMobil, and Microsoft's leader got a 50% cut in his 2010 bonus while Steve Jobs got multiple honors (*hbr.org/2010/01/the-best-performing-ceos-in-the-world/ar/1*) and awards (*www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-the-day-apple-employees-love-steve-jobs-microsoft-employees-arent-so-hot-for-steve-ballmer-2010-12? utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+typepad%2Falleyinsider %2Fsilicon_alley_insider+%28Silicon*). Serious conditions call for serious actions, and Cupertino has shown that integrated hardware and software can be a seriously successful approach.

But wait—there's more to the logic behind this prediction that Microsoft will begin producing its own computers. In addition to contending with Apple (Mac OS and iOS) and Google (Android, Chrome OS, Google Docs), Microsoft now faces potential competition from one of its primary and long-time hardware partners—Hewlett-Packard (HP). HP's 2010 acquisition of Palm, Inc. (*money.cnn.com/2010/04/28/technology/hp_palm/index.htm*) along with its webOS (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WebOS*) operating system has positioned HP to mimic Apple's integrated model. WebOS is based upon Linux, and thus it has the potential to be developed for desktop and tablet computers as well as for cell phones. If HP develops and integrates webOS for its hardware products, Microsoft could be partially or completely left out of HP's product line-up. HP took the first step on this path when it confirmed on November 30, 2010 that it was dropping Windows Home Server (*windowsteamblog.com/windows/b/windowshomeserver/ archive/2010/11/30/hp-mediasmart-server-to-retire.aspx*) from its MediaSmart home servers and instead will use webOS on forthcoming products.

What would Microsoft name its own computer? If we were still in the 1990s, my guess would be "Microsoft PC" or "WinPC." These potential names would reinforce the company's brand and describe the product's function. However, in the 21st century, Microsoft's marketing people have invented product names without a branding or functional reference (e.g., Kinect, XBox, Zune). My guess therefore is that the company again will invent a name having little to do with branding or function.

In sum, Microsoft is prime for a reaction to the events that made 2010 a bumpy year for the company's and CEO's

fortunes. Time will tell how it reacts, but for now I would hardly be surprised if 2011 brings the introduction of additional Microsoft retail stores, a new version of Zune HD with WP7, and the company's own line of computers. The reason why I would hardly be surprised if these events happen in 2011 is that they would involve mimicking Apple, and Microsoft's strength historically has been mimicking Apple.

Barry Fass-Holmes has been reviewing products for *ComputorEdge* since 2003. He previously worked as a software support representative and quality assurance analyst in San Diego. His product reviews are available in *ComputorEdge's* archives and at his Web site (*web.me.com/barryfhphd/BF-H/art_comp.html*).

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
"The Year Ahead" by Wally Wang

The iPad has redefined the tablet market; some companies head towards bankruptcy, while others embrace change; the iPad is being used in new ways; how to avoid a dull power-point presentation; and anti-Apple critic's prediction fails to come true.

Brooke Crothers of CNET (*news.cnet.com/8301-13924_3-20026877-64.html*) announced that the iPad is the most disruptive product of the past year. Whether you like the iPad or not, few people can disagree that the iPad has completely changed and redefined the tablet market.

Before the iPad's introduction, tablet devices consisted mostly of bulky Tablet PCs that cost too much, weighed too much, and ran out of power after a few hours due to the battery needing to power a full-blown Windows computer.

After several years on the market, the Tablet PC remained a niche product until the iPad arrived and changed everyone's perception of how a tablet device should behave. The sudden proliferation of Android tablets along with RIM's PlayBook is evidence that rivals had no idea how to develop a tablet until they could copy the iPad's basic design.

As soon as these first generation iPad clones start arriving, Apple will be ready to release version 2 of the iPad around March/April. Most likely the iPad 2 will offer cameras for FaceTime video conferencing along with a faster processor. Besides setting the tablet standard once more, the iPad 2 will also drive down the cost for the original iPad in the same way that the latest iPhone 4 has driven down the price of the previous iPhone 3GS to just $99.

Rival iPad clones will not only have to compete against the latest features of the iPad 2, but they'll also have to compete against the lower price of the original iPad. This is in addition to competing against the iPad's large app library and the growing third-party market of accessories designed exclusively for the iPad. Every iPad clone is going to struggle just to gain a fraction of the iPad's market share, and these numerous iPad clones will hurt sales of each other, insuring that Apple remains the leading tablet manufacturer.

According to analyst Robert Cihra, tablet sales will more than triple, rising 226 percent to 54 million units (*digitaldaily. allthingsd.com/20101231/2011-the-year-of-the-tablet-apples-tablet/?mod=ai*) with Apple claiming 67 percent of that market (http://). Of course, the real question will be how good these rival tablets might be. "We are going to be up to our armpits in crappy tablets, and I do mean crappy," claims independent Silicon Valley analyst Rob Enderle (*www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/techfile/137635-tablets-galore-on-tap-at-major-ces-gadget-fest-.html*).

Besides the iPad 2, Apple will also release the iPhone 5 by the summer. The most notable change may not be anything new to the iPhone 5, but the possibility that the iPhone will be available on other major carriers, such as Verizon. Once the iPhone arrives on multiple carriers, we can see whether sales of Android phones continues to rise or not, even with the buy one get one free deals that you'll never see with the iPhone. In any case, the iPhone has already defined how smartphones should work with touch screen surfaces and app stores.

The Mac App Store will also arrive this year (January 6) so you'll be able to safely buy software from a trusted source. While you'll still be able to install software from other sources, the Mac App Store will go one step towards reducing the likelihood that people will get fooled into buying software from a rogue site that sells Trojan Horses disguised as "legitimate" security programs or utilities.

Accompanying the introduction of the Mac App Store will be the next version of iWork, Apple's office suite that offers an alternative to Microsoft Office. Perhaps the main advantage of iWork is that you can use iWork on your iPad and seamlessly transfer files from your Mac to your iPad without converting file formats.

The next major version of Mac OS X 10.7 Lion (*www.apple.com/macosx/lion/*) will arrive this summer. Two major features will be LaunchPad, which will display your programs like iPad apps, and Mission Control, for monitoring all your open programs.

Figure 1. Mac OS X 10.7 Lion will arrive this summer.

In the non-Apple world, you can finally expect Android 3.0, which will be optimized for tablet devices. Windows Phone 7 is still establishing a foundation, although the number of Windows Phone 7 apps (*money.cnn.com/2010/12/30/ technology/windows_phone_7_5000_apps/index.htm?source=yahoo_quote*) has already overtaken the number of apps available on Hewlett-Packard's webOS. Of course, Hewlett-Packard will likely release their Slate PC running webOS to compete against the iPad while RIM will release their Playbook to compete against the iPad as well.

Then there's Windows 7, which will simply go through its usual updates and service packs through 2011. Any major innovation in operating systems from Microsoft will likely have to wait until Windows 8 and 2012.

Given the choice between the Apple or non-Apple world, you have technology that defines the standards that everyone else follows vs. technology that copies this standard because these other companies don't know what to do otherwise. Which technology do you want to pin your future on?

Two Companies to Kiss Good-Bye This Year

To see the fate that stems from clinging to the past until change runs you over, here's a short list of companies you can kiss good-bye during the coming year. First, there's Borders (*online.wsj.com/article/ SB10001424052748703952404576052181202048882.html*), which is saddled with the high cost of retail stores that serve a dwindling book buying public. Borders missed the Internet book buying market that Amazon wrapped up along with the e-book market, which Amazon and Barnes & Noble cornered. That leaves Borders with nowhere to go but down.

Whether you like it or not, the newspaper, magazine and book publishing business is over and any company whose business model relies on printed materials is doomed to a slow road towards bankruptcy. Borders will disappear soon and Barnes & Noble may follow shortly afterward in another year or two.

Another company with the high cost of retail stores and cutthroat competition is Blockbuster Video. Netflix beat them to the DVD by mail business and the video streaming business. Blockbuster Video tried to mimic Netflix, but they forgot that they have their retail stores dragging them down, while Netflix has nothing but a warehouse to manage. As a result, Netflix can survive and profit while Blockbuster Video struggles to follow the exact same business model.

While Blockbuster Video got blind-sided by Netflix on one side, they got surprised by Redbox on the other, with Redbox's DVD vending machines scattered all over town. Vending machines are infinitely less expensive to maintain than a retail store with employees, so Redbox's $1 rental fees can easily undercut anything that Blockbuster Video can offer.

Note the common denominator in the demise of both companies. If it wasn't for the Internet, digital e-books and online shopping wouldn't have killed Borders. In the case of Blockbuster Video, Netflix cut into their lucrative rental fees by mailing DVDs and then following that up with even faster video streaming. Redbox could never exist without the ability for each vending machine to track DVDs and customer charges through the Internet. Eliminate the Internet and the army of Redbox vending machines could never have appeared.

The Internet has killed the music industry and now the book (along with the magazine and newspaper) industry is next to go while the video rental industry is still thriving, but in a way far different than Blockbuster Video could anticipate fast enough.

Borders and Blockbuster Video shows what happens when you stick with obsolete methods that new technology wipes out overnight. Both companies are as good as gone with many other industries certain to follow their path of denial until it's too late.

Want to guess which other companies may not disappear for good this coming year, but may see their market share start to shrink? Start with Microsoft and their heavy reliance on Windows and Office. Then move on towards anyone that depends on the dominance of Windows to thrive, such as Dell (which can't compete against Apple).

The majority of Dell's profits comes from enterprise customers, but enterprise customers are already looking at

alternatives beyond the traditional Windows infrastructure. RehabCare recently switched to Apple products (8,000 iPod Touches, 700 iPhones and 120 iPads) for their network instead of going with the usual Windows PC.

Rehab Care isn't just a small business either. The company employs 19,000 workers, operates 35 acute care hospitals and rehab facilities, and outsources therapists around the country while complying with the stringent Sarbanes-Oxley Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

RehabCare CIO Dick Escue said (*www.cio.com/article/641778/ One_Enterprise_s_Two_Year_Apple_Mobile_Makeover*), "There's this myth IT people perpetuate that these Apple devices can't work in the enterprise. We get so many benefits from doing it in the cloud and leveraging consumer technology."

Rather than force common "business solutions" technology down the throats of their workers, Rehab Care says that reliance on consumer devices like Apple products makes employees more receptive to using them. "They love the devices," Escue says. "User acceptance with consumer tech is instant."

There's the big difference between Windows and Apple products right there. Most people associate Windows as a dull work device while they associate Apple with being fun and creative. Yet Windows PCs are just as much a consumer item as an iPad, but which one do many people find more engaging to use?

As Apple steadily moves into the enterprise market, where does that leave those who depend on the current dominance of Windows PCs? If you fail to diversify your skills beyond a Windows-only world, you may soon watch your future sink faster than Borders and Blockbuster Video.

"It's the most unhappy people who most fear change." — Mignon McLaughlin

More Interesting Uses for the iPad

A company called Smule (*www.smule.com/*) has created an iPad app called "Magic Fiddle," which turns the iPad into a digital violin that you can play with your fingers. Students from the Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View recently played a concert at an Apple Store.

Figure 2. The "Magic Fiddle" app turns the iPad into a digital violin.

"It's fascinating," said Petra Clark, a strings teacher at the Mountain View school whose two boys joined the workshop. "My boys are not string players.To experiment with this software that is essentially a string instrument gives them a window into trying a new instrument without the barrier of learning the new instrument itself."

Evy Schiffman, director of marketing at the Community School, said she was thrilled to see the kids so engaged.

"Whatever you can do to connect them, to hook them in to use the technology to be involved in music studies is a win-win," she said, "And they teach each other. That's the dynamic I'm watching—and they're becoming an orchestra."

Turning the iPad into a digital musical instrument might be interesting, but if that's all the iPad could do, then it would be a relatively limited device. Fortunately, people in other fields have found a practical use for the iPad as well. Many restaurants, both individually owned and franchises, are using the iPad for taking orders (*www.nrn.com/article/ ipad-pos-use-rising-among-restaurants*).

Instead of spending up to $12,000 for a dedicated point of sale system, many restaurants are spending less than $3,000 to accomplish the same task using the iPad. Best of all, the iPad is not only cheaper, but more flexible than any expensive point of sale system could ever be.

In case you're one of the few people in the world who can afford to rent a private yacht for $600,000 a week, you'll be pleased to know that when you step on board, the crew members will hand you an iPad (*www.luxuo.com/ yachting/solemates-superyacht-charter-ipad-concierge.html*) to control the climate in the yacht and even

summon a crew member to bring cocktails whenever you need them.

The key to the iPad's diversity rests solely on appealing to non-technical users who want to accomplish a task as quickly as possible without wrestling with the complexity of ordinary computers. Non-technical users have no problems finding interesting uses for the iPad while technical users tend to look at the same iPad and see only flaws, problems and limitations. Which point of view do you think is more helpful in actually accomplishing something productive?

How to Avoid Making a Dull PowerPoint Presentation

Almost everyone has sat through a boring PowerPoint presentation. Sometimes the problem isn't that the information isn't interesting, but that it's presented in such a dull fashion. To learn how to present information in an informative and interesting manner, pick up Edward Tufte's *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information (*www.amazon. com/gp/product/0961392142?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0961392142*).*

The book shows how to make statistical information visually engaging, such as this map drawn by Charles Joseph Minard that depicts the loss of Napoleon's army as it tried to attack Russia. A quick glance at this picture shows the width of the army's march representing its initial 100,000 men. As the army marches towards Moscow, this width gradually shrinks. When the army retreats from Moscow, the color changes to black and the width decreases still further until it arrives at the final skinny line representing the 10,000 men who survived in the end.
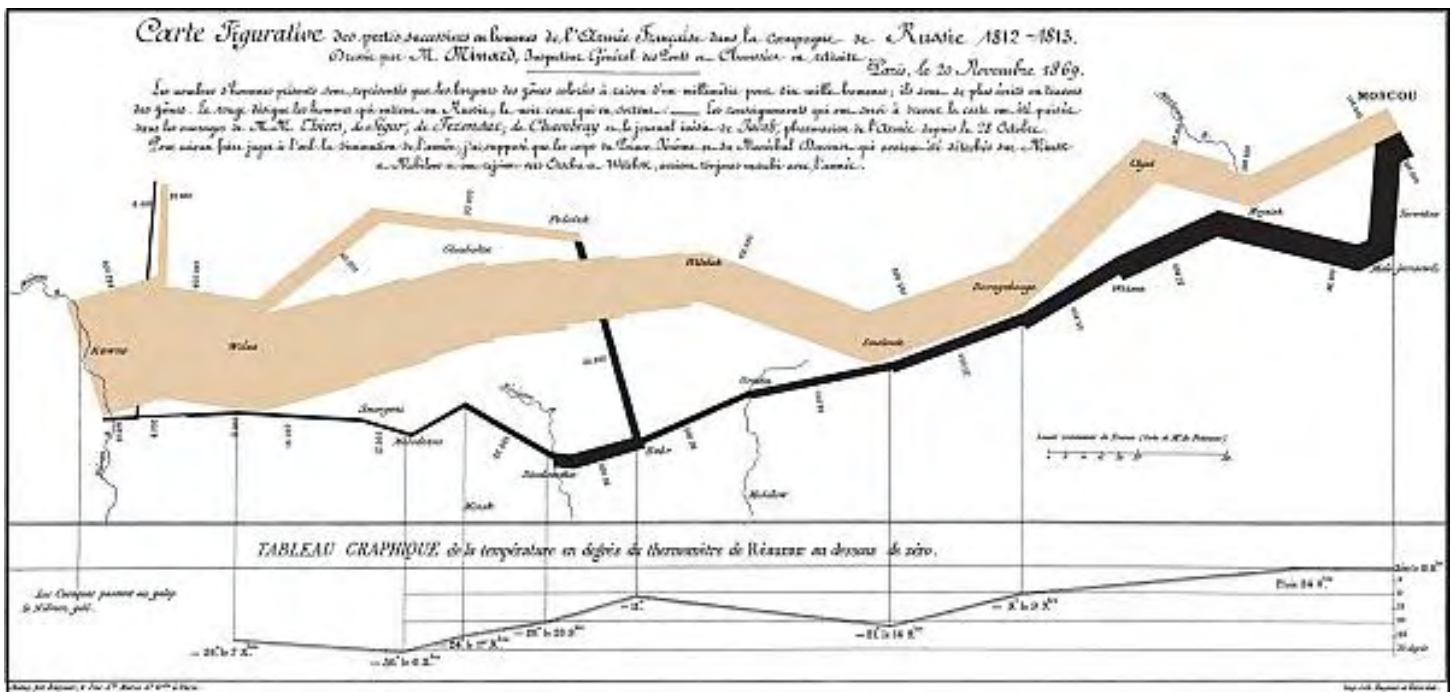

Figure 3. Charles Joseph Minard's picture that visually shows the loss of Napoleon's army through gradual attrition.

If depicting the loss of Napoleon's army can be so engaging in a simple picture, think of what tips you could pick up to brush up your own PowerPoint presentation skills for depicting numerical data. The more engaging you present your information, the more likely you'll get your point across whether it's to close a sale or educate someone about a particular topic.

Another Anti-Apple Critic's Prediction Fails to Come True

Back in October 2009, Steven Burke of CRN predicted that Apple's market share would plummet (*www.crn.com/*

news/applications-os/220600984/apple-will-feel-the-pain-from-windows-7-launch.htm?itc=refresh)
under five percent due to Microsoft's introduction of Windows 7. Yet according to Gartner (*www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1451742*), the Macintosh held 10.4 percent market share at the end of the third quarter of 2010. The chance that half the Macintosh market would defect to Windows 7 by the end of 2010, according to Steven Burke's prediction, seems highly unlikely.

Steve Burke even claims that Apple would promote several myths to maintain their market share. According to Steven Burke, "BusinessWeek says that Apple will likely make the case that PCs are more susceptible to viruses. A flat-out false claim. There are a bunch of Mac myths. And better security than Windows is the biggest one. Security experts say that if Mac users are less susceptible to attack, it's simply due to the fact that there are fewer viruses written for Macs than for Windows."

In the first sentence, Steven Burke claims that it's a myth that PCs are more susceptible to viruses than Macs. Yet by the end of the paragraph, Steven Burke claims that if Mac users are less susceptible to attack, it's because there are fewer Mac viruses. So if there are fewer Mac viruses and more Windows viruses, wouldn't that support the theory that Macs really are less susceptible to viruses than PCs?

Suppose there are 10 Mac viruses and 20 Windows viruses. Then it stands to reason that PCs running Windows would be more susceptible to viruses due to the larger number of viruses capable of attacking a PC compared to a Macintosh. Is it really that difficult to use facts and logic rather than deliberate misinformation to make a point?

*   *   *

When using a browser like Safari, the usual way to browse backwards through previously viewed Web pages is to click the Back button. However, you can also right-click on a Web page and when a pop-up menu appears, click Back. Now you won't have to constantly hunt for the Back button in the upper left corner of the screen.
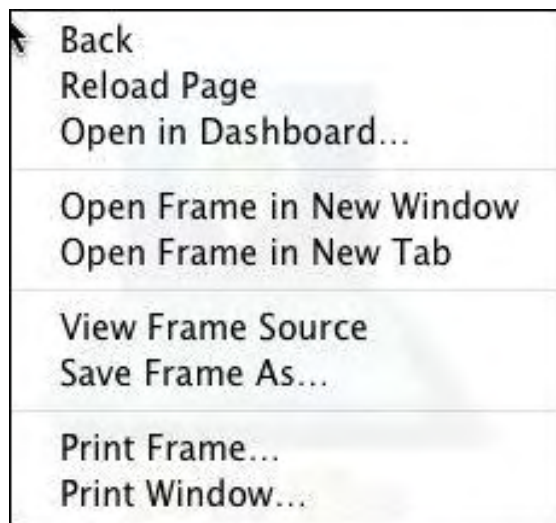

Figure 4. Right-clicking on a Web page displays the Back command.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

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

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Social networking sites share personal information with third-party tracking sites; digital music collections are getting bigger and more disorganized; a look at a challenging 2D platformer—Super Meat Boy; a free top-down shooter—"Alien Swarm"; Journal Your Memories with MacJournal for Macintosh.

New Social Sites, New Privacy Concerns

According to a new study by the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (*www.wpi.edu*):

After documenting for the first time in a 2009 study that online social networking sites leak personally identifiable information to third-party advertising tracking companies (making it possible to connect a user's previously anonymous browsing profile to his or her identity), a new study co-authored by a researcher at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) shows that mobile online social networks add a new dimension to online privacy leakage by providing tracking sites and other social networking services with users' physical locations or the unique identifiers for their mobile devices, among other types of personal information.

Craig Wills, professor of computer science at WPI, co-authored the study, "Privacy Leakage in Mobile Online Social Networks." In the study, the researchers examined 13 mobile online social networks, including popular services like Brightkite, Flickr, Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, Radar and Urbanspoon, and seven traditional online social networks that allow users to access them with mobile devices; these included Facebook, Linkedin, MySpace and Twitter. They looked at the kinds of personal information users can—or in some cases, must—post on these sites and at the sites' privacy policies. They also monitored what the sites transmit to third-party tracking sites.

The researchers found that all 20 sites leaked some kind of private information to third-party tracking sites. In many cases, the leakage consisted of a user's unique social networking identifier, which could allow the third-party sites to connect the records they keeps of Web users' browsing behavior with the their profiles on the social networking sites. Since mobile online social networks offer services and applications that capitalize on the ability of smart phones and other mobile devices to pinpoint their exact geographic location, the researchers looked to see if the sites passed this location information to the third-party tracking sites, but found that only two do so directly, though several use a third-party map service to show the location on a map. However, they discovered that six sites transmit a unique identifier for the user's phone, potentially making it possible for third-party sites to continue to track a user's actions as he or she uses the phone for other applications.

Beyond the leakage from individual mobile online social networking sites, the researchers found that the connections that are increasingly being forged between these sites and traditional social networking services are creating new and troubling channels for privacy leakage. For example, many mobile sites encourage users to "check in," or register their location, as they go through their day. Typically, those check-ins are shared with all users of the mobile networking site, though some sites allow users to share their location information only with their friends. A number of traditional social networking sites allow users to automatically post their check-ins on those sites, as well. The researchers found that even when mobile online network users choose to share their check-ins only with their friends, when that

information is re-posted on sites like Facebook, it becomes available by default to all users of that site.

The researchers also discovered that as information is shared among social networking sites, it can find its way to additional third-party tracking sites, greatly increasing the potential that these sites may accumulate multiple types of personally identifiable information about individuals and gain the ability to connect users with their personal information not only to their Web browsing behavior, but to the physical places they go and the activities they engage in with their phones and other mobile devices. "The combination of location information, unique identifiers of devices, and traditional leakage of other personally identifiable information all conspire against protection of users' privacy," the researchers note in the paper.

"This initial look at mobile online social networks raises some serious concerns, but there is more work to be done," Wills said. "The fact that third-party sites now seem to have the capacity to build a comprehensive and dynamic portrait of mobile online social network users argues for a comprehensive way to capture the entire gamut of privacy controls into a single, unified, simple, easy-to-understand framework, so that users can make informed choices about their online privacy and feel confident that they are sharing their personal, private information only with those they choose to share it with."

Neat Songs, Messy Info

According to Matt Lowe of INK inc (representing Cloudbrain, maker of the music organization accessory TidySongs (*www.tidysongs.com*) ($39):

Half of all music libraries are missing information. Strong sales of iPads, iPods and other music players this holiday season highlight an increasing problem with consumer's digital music libraries: they're a wasteland of missing cover art, duplicate songs and inaccurate information.

"Our digital music collections are only getting bigger," said Daniel Strickland, President and CEO of Cloudbrain. "And every time we import music from old CDs or transfer our music from computer to computer or from one account to another, the data gets more and more jumbled."

New data shows the problem of disorganized music libraries is huge. Over the Christmas weekend, TidySongs fixed, on average, 1,000 songs every minute as people unwrapped new iPods, iPads, laptops and wireless speakers and went in search of a way to fix their disorganized music collections. The single busiest hour for TidySongs 'fixing' was 4:00-5:00 p.m. eastern on December 26.

TidySongs found that the number of songs in an average customer's iTunes library is 7,160. The average number of songs missing album artwork is 4,230. The average number of songs in an iTunes library missing the name of the artist is 490. The average number of songs missing track or year information is 1,984. The average number of duplicate songs is 814.

"Back when music came on records or CDs, you would get all those great album details directly from the artist—beautiful artwork, liner notes, lyrics, track lists etc. That just doesn't happen anymore." Strickland said. "Instead, users are downloading songs from different sources with different formatting requirements, different information details and often missing and incorrect data. A lot of the fun of collecting a personal music collection has been lost. People take a lot of pride in a well-curated and organized music library."

"Super Meat Boy" Brings Home the Bacon

WARNING: This game is not for the gamers who are weak at heart.
Extreme determination is required!

Super Meat Boy is a 2D platformer developed by Team Meat for the Xbox 360 and PC. It's a game very similar to Mario in many senses, so any of you plumber fanatics are sure in for a treat. You play as a cube of meat who is out to save his girlfriend from a suit-wearing baby in a jar (yea, I thought that was pretty weird, too), and you chase him everywhere, from a salt factory and even through the depths of hell. However I warn you, finishing the game is no easy task. There's no health or shields here, so the second you make a mistake you're booted right back to the beginning of the level to try again. I came to know this system very well throughout the game, as I racked up a death count of 1,808 before conquering the story.

As previously mentioned, Super Meat Boy is quite possibly the most challenging platformer I have ever laid my hands on. At some points I found myself dying over 50 times to beat a level, but that's not to say it isn't a great game. The soundtrack is great, with a variety from techno to rock which adds to the experience (and also helps to ease the pain of replaying levels numerous times). The graphics and animations are incredibly smooth, and the game's story and cut scenes are pretty hilarious at times. The overall mixture of it all creates a very fun atmosphere that will have you crawling back for more.

The best part of this game is the variety of gameplay. The object of each level, in its most basic form, is to get from point A to point B, all while avoiding obstacles and enemies. Each level has a time goal, if you get underneath it you receive an A+ for that level, if you're over it, nothing else happens other than you continue on.

The levels on which you received an A+ on will now be available in the Dark World. The Dark World is another version of the level you just played, but it's harder this time around. Complete the Dark World all the way through for an alternative ending.

Some levels have worm holes which take you to a "warp zone" where there is a different task to accomplish, from playing three levels of a Mario mock-up to unlocking a new character to play.

Another part of the game are the bandages. I don't understand what they have to do with anything but, if you collect enough, you have the ability to unlock new characters. For those of you who are fans of the 2D platformer Braid, you can unlock Tim with enough bandages (Xbox only—and, yes, he can rewind time).

There's even a surprise for Portal fans in here. Along with the standard platformer mechanics (jumping over gaps and avoiding spikes) you'll meet a portal system as you venture in the game.

All in all, this game is worth every penny. However, if you are of the type that does not enjoy repeating tasks countless times until they are done perfectly (and I *mean* countless) then this game isn't for you. For those of you who are willing to put your video game chops up to the test—and experience quite a bit of shame in the process, you should

definitely pick this one up, it's available via Steam for PC (*store.steampowered.com*) (about $10) and on Xbox Live Arcade for $15.

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

Jeremy's Fantastic Freebie

Stumbling through Steam's featured games list this week I came across the title "Alien Swarm." It's a free top-down shooter, that turned out to be incredibly addicting. Choose from four classes and eight different characters, and blast away at the aliens, leveling up and unlocking new weapons and gear. Play by yourself or with up to three friends (or strangers) with the online co-op system.

So tell your friends! Log on to Steam (*store.steampowered.com*) and search for Alien Swarm to get this bad boy!

Journal Your Memories

Do you experience difficulty recalling details from the past such as former phone numbers, names of streets in cities you've visited, the year in which you first got a flu shot? If so, you're a candidate for journaling software and MacJournal is one of many available for Macintosh users.

MacJournal for Macintosh (MJfM) (*www.marinersoftware.com/products/macjournal/*) began life as a shareware program by developer Dan Schimpf, but in recent years it has been distributed commercially by Mariner Software ($39.95). MJfM is a fairly mature program—version 5.2.6 as of this writing—with just about all the bells and whistles one would expect from this genre of software. The closest thing to a complete feature listing is the product history (*homepage.mac.com/dschimpf/history.html*), which touts version 5 (*homepage.mac.com/ dschimpf/*) as "an all-new version…with an all-new user interface and lots of new features." Let's take a brief tour of several potentially appealing features.

The first feature worth noting is MJfM's user friendly interface. The interface is user friendly because it very likely will seem familiar to Mac owners who have used iTunes and/or Mac OS X's Mail program. MJfM's main window (aka "document") has seven components that collectively resemble a hybridization between iTunes and Mail (Figure 1). As such, this interface probably will have a shallow learning curve for newbie users and probably will be efficient for veteran users.
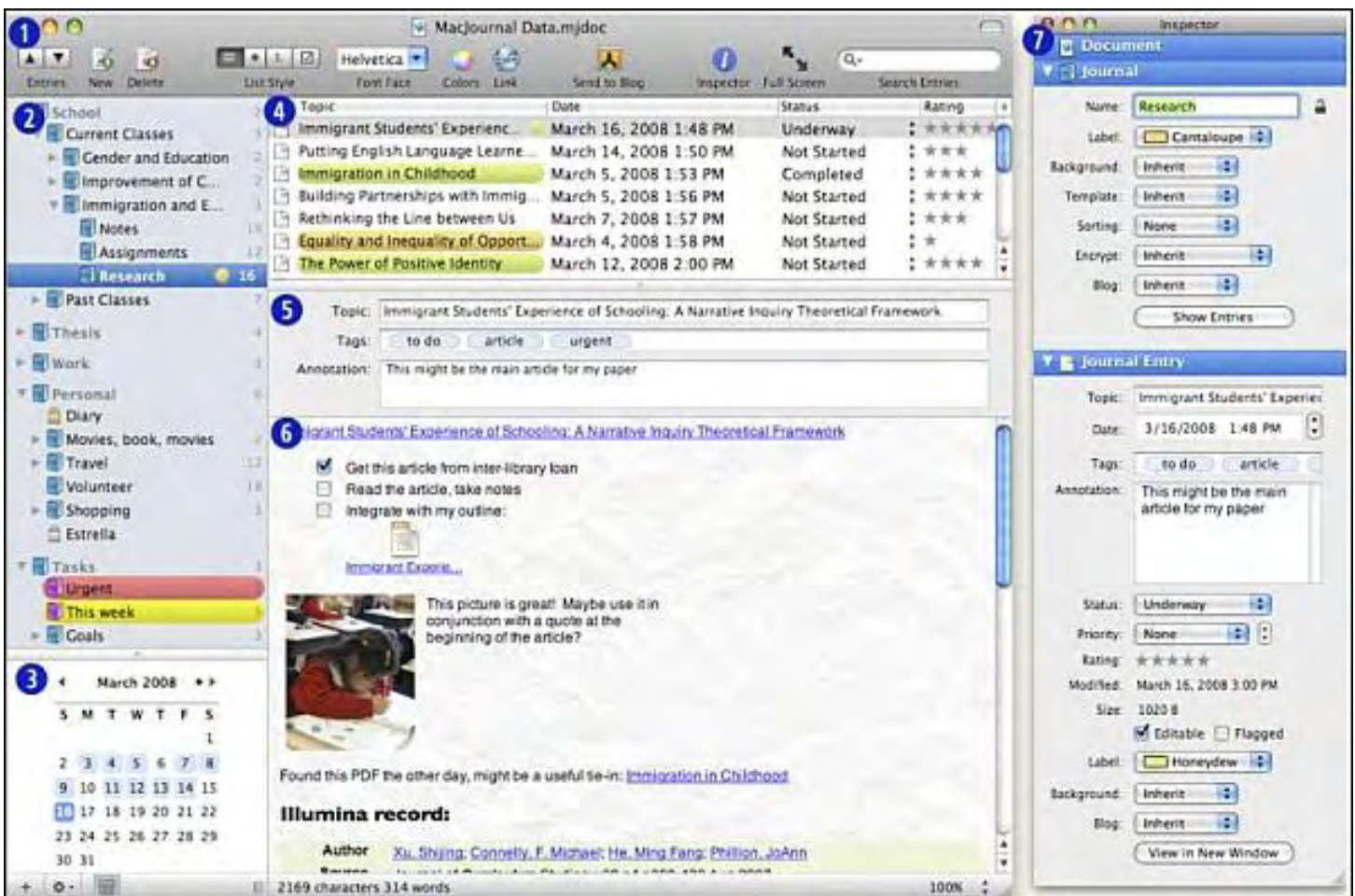
Figure 1. MacJournal's window (aka "document") consists of the following seven components. 1. Toolbar which contains one-click icons corresponding to various menu bar items (e.g., New Tab); 2. Sidebar which is like the one in iTunes, except it supports journals (which are nestable; e.g., "week 1," "week 2," "week 3," and "week 4" journals within a "month" journal) rather than folders or playlists; 3. Calendar that is useful for quickly creating new entries for a given day and displays which days have entries; 4. Entries Pane for browsing entries (like Outlook, MacJournal can be configured to display the Entries pane at the top (shown above), left, or right side of the document window; 5. Information Bar that displays tabs and customized information about the currently selected journal or entry; 6. Main Area that includes the contents of the currently selected journal or entry; and 7. Inspector which, like Finder's Get Info window, contains features for customizing the currently selected journal or entry.

Another potentially appealing and user friendly feature is MJfM's Quick Note. After configuring a unique invoking keystroke in the General tab of MJfM's Preferences window, the user can press this keystroke while working in almost any other program and a window will display that contains controls for adding an entry in MJfM and specifying the journal to which it should be added, or for appending text to a preexisting entry (Figure 2). Wicked handy!
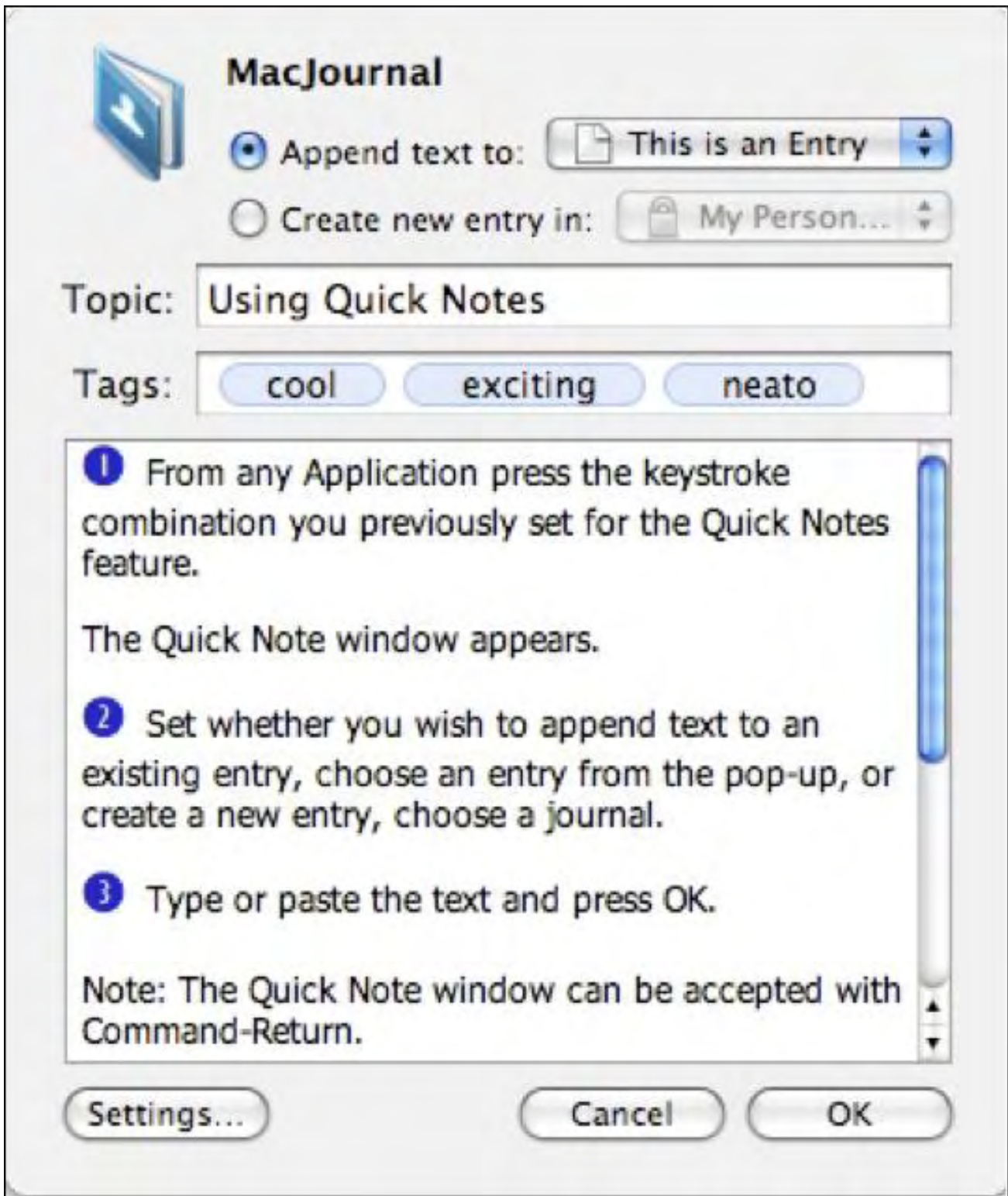
Figure 2. Press MacJournal's customizable keystroke combination and it will display a Quick Note window in the currently active application (e.g., Web browser, word processor, spreadsheet, etc.) in which you can create a new entry and select the journal in which you want to include it, or add text to an existing entry.

A potentially appealing feature for owners of Macs equipped with an iSight or Web camera and a (built-in) microphone is MJfM's audio/video recorder. With this feature, users can easily add a video and/or voice recording to a journal entry. After pressing command-option-r, a toolbar containing useful A/V recording controls (Figure 3) appears in MJfM's Information Bar.
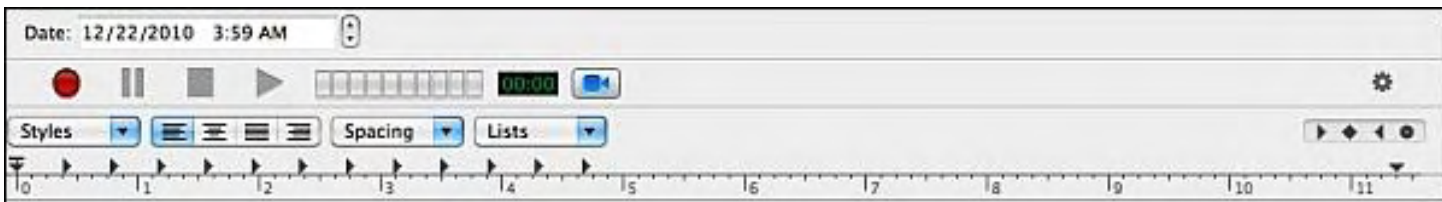
Figure 3. To capture and insert a voice and/or video recording within a journal entry, the user presses a keystroke combination to display MacJournal's toolbar with relevant controls. They include a red circle button to activate the Mac's built-in microphone, an input indicator that displays green bars corresponding to the recording's volume level, and a toggle button for activating the Mac's built-in iSight camera and opening a window that contains what the camera sees.

What if you want to include third-party files in a journal; for example, an iCal event, PDF, MP3, or digital picture? What if you want to add the text within a file without having to retype it? MJfM entries accommodate third-party files (Figure 4a) and append the text within .doc, .rtf, and .txt files (Figure 4b). Simply drag-and-drop a file from the Finder or use MJfM's import feature and—boom—you're done.

Figure 4a. MacJournal entries can incorporate third-party files such as PDFs. Step 1—create a new journal entry. Step 2—drag and drop the desired file from the Finder into the new entry. Step 3—there is no step 3.
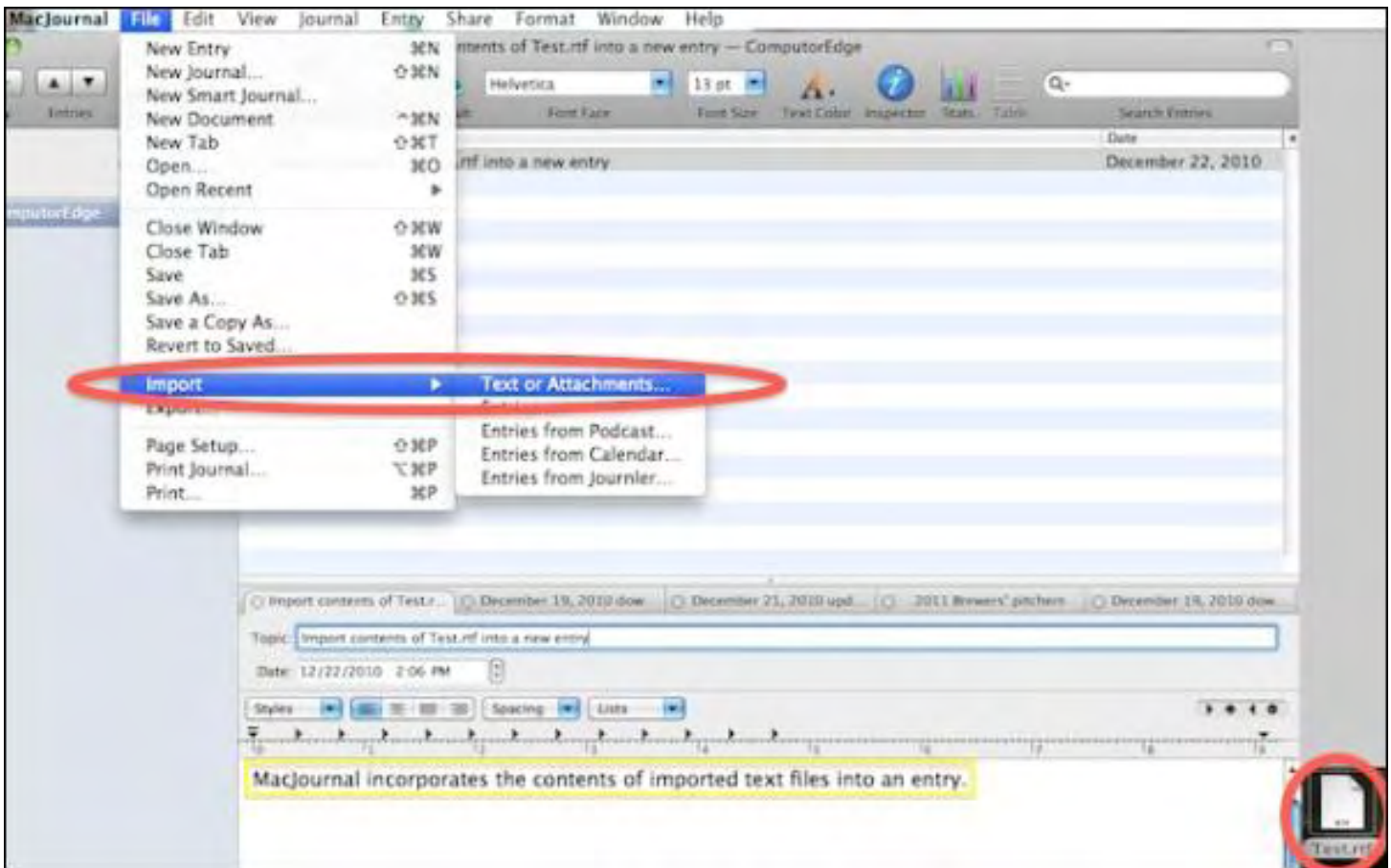
Figure 4b. MacJournal entries can append the contents of text files via the Import feature.

For social users who want to share their personal life with relatives, friends and/or the world at large, MJfM includes support for uploading entries to various blogs (e.g., Blogger, LiveJournal, WordPress) or to Apple's MobileMe, and for uploading digital pictures to Picasa or MobileMe. MJfM also is compatible with Atom, MetaWeblog and Movable Type protocols for Web publishing.

What I liked most about MJfM during my testing were the following features:

• Support for Mac OS X technologies—including the Inspector, Media Browser, Spotlight and Tables
• Tabs like the ones in Web browsers (although my preference is for the tabs to be located at the top of MJfM's window rather than in the middle as shown in Figure 1)
• Tags galore
• Formatting templates—using the Inspector, you can configure each journal's entries' default appearance so that they have a certain look; any subsequent entries that you create for a given journal will automatically adopt that appearance
• Journal encryption
• Text cleaning—change case, remove links, remove leading spaces, etc.
• Automatic backup upon quitting
• Editions for iPad (Figure 5), iPhone and iPod touch that can be synchronized with MJfM, thus making it easy for mobile users to take their journals on the road without needing to perform double data-entry
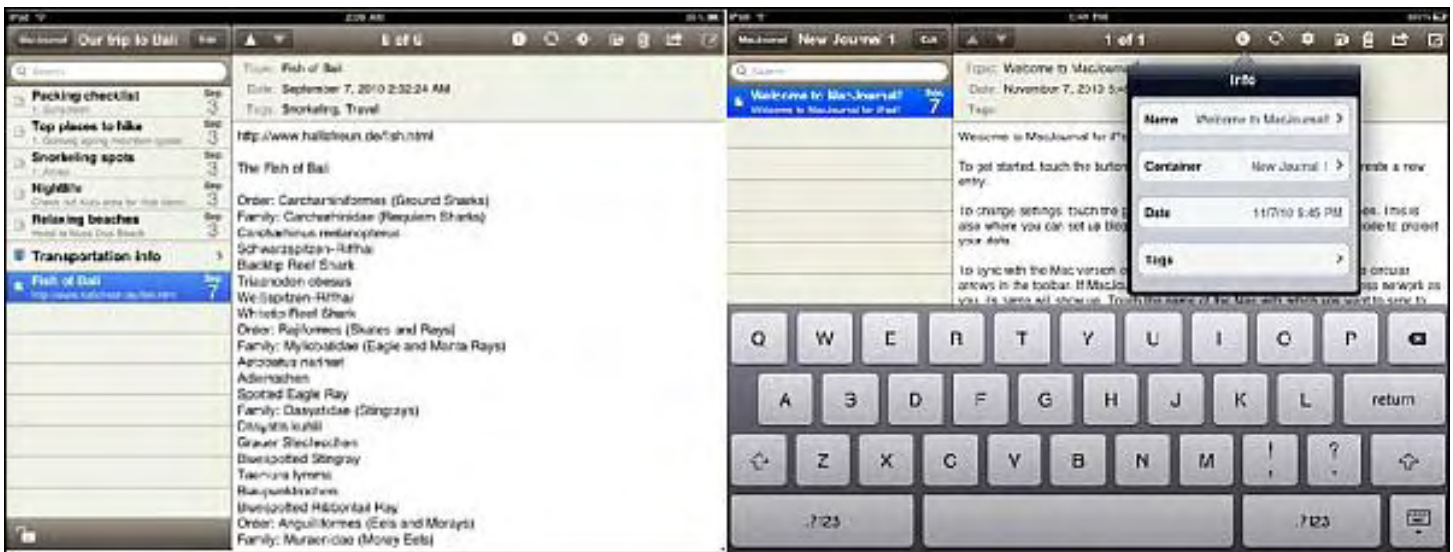• Exceptionally responsive technical support

Figure 5. Editions of MacJournal are available for iPad (shown above in landscape orientation), iPhone and iPod touch. They support synchronization with MJfM, but require Mac OS X's firewall to be turned off, which could pose a security risk.

Although MJfM is a robust and mature program, it still has some rough edges that include the following.

The documentation needs improvement. Although the user guide is thorough and well illustrated, it was written for version 5.1.3 and therefore lacks information specific to the product's current version (5.2.6). Documentation for the iPad edition currently is available only online in Mariner Software's FAQ Web pages (*marinersoftware.tenderapp. com/faqs/macjournal*).

Selecting Help => MacJournal Help from MJfM's menu bar opens the user guide in Mac OS X's Preview program rather than in the Help Viewer. As such, the Help menu item item really should be "MacJournal user guide" rather than "MacJournal Help."

MJfM's calendar (Figure 1) behaves counterintuitively IMHO. It highlights all dates that have an existing entry rather than highlighting the current date. Also, after right-clicking any date in the current month's calendar, the resulting contextual menu lacks "new journal" and "new entry" items; instead the only item included in the contextual menu is "Search for [selected date]."

MacJournal for iPad (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/macjournal-for-ipad/id391499253?mt=8*) (MJfiP) currently does not support entries containing both text and pictures; instead, a separate entry containing only a digital picture (*marinersoftware.tenderapp.com/faqs/macjournal-for-ipad/no-pics-ipad*) must be created. This might be attributable to the iPad's support for rtf rather than rtfd file format (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Rich_Text_Format_Directory*). Competing products for Macintosh and iPad such as ViJournal (*www. skoobysoft.com/vijournal/vijournal.html*) do support entries containing text and image(s), presumably because they rely upon a file format other than rtf.

Pricing is another potential drawback. Mariner Software considers the iPad and iPhone/iPod editions to be separate products. Therefore, if you are lucky enough to own an iPad and an iPhone or iPod touch and want MacJournal for both devices, you need to pony up the purchase price twice—$5.99 for the iPad edition, $4.99 for the iPhone/iPod touch edition.

My biggest complaint, however, relates to the synchronization feature. Because MJfM uses Mac OS X's Bonjour feature for synchronization with MJfiP, Mac OS X's firewall must be turned off completely before initiating a

synchronization. This currently is documented online only (*marinersoftware.tenderapp.com/faqs/macjournal-for-ipad/why-cant-i-sync-with-macjournal-for-mac-if-my-mac-is-listed-on-my-ios-device*). Additionally, if the firewall is turned on before initiating a synchronization, MJfiP likely will become unresponsive to taps for a period of time until it finally recovers on its own.

MJfM is available for a free 15-day trial period (http://www.marinersoftware.com/products/macjournal/).

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Review contributed by Barry Fass-Holmes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Netbooks Good for Traveling," "VLC Media Player VS. The KM Player," "Hiding an IP Address," "Cleaning Up E-Mail Forwards"

Comparing Apples and Oranges

[Regarding Jack Dunning's December 24 article, "Comparing Apples and Oranges":]

Very informative and insightful. Thanks for the analysis and a very Happy New Year to you and all the superior writers at *ComputorEdge*.

-Lynn Manning Ross, San Diego, CA

Jack, I think you hit the nail on the head when you said netbooks are good for traveling when you don't need to do any hard computing. I bought one on Black Friday just to take on cruises with my wife, to keep up with what's going on back home. I look forward to a much lighter load, and an easier way to get my e-mail and news from back home.

Here's the best use for an iPad (*www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9XNfWNooz4*
) I've seen.

-Larry

VLC Player

[Regarding Michael J. Ross's December 17 article, "VLC Media Player":]

You've piqued my interest, but I wonder how it stacks up against the KM Player, which can handle a lot of formats, but is buggy, has an unfathomable plethora of menu options, and lacks any kind of help file or tutorials. It'd be interesting to see a head to head shootout some time.

-Pete Maurer, Rosarito, Baja California

VLC Player also comes in a portable version, at least in Windows, that doesn't help to gunk up your registry. If the program is not your cup of tea, just drag the VLC folder into your Recycle Bin. Personally, I think it's a wonderful program, watching .flv files and DVDs with it all of the time.

-Andrew Kliss, San Marcos, CA.

IP Hiding

[Regarding the December 10 Digital Dave column:]

Hi Dave, I've loved your advice for years. I do want to say, though, that there are many reasons to hide your IP that are

not illegal, especially if you are a woman.

Stripping E-mails before Forwarding

[Regarding the December 17 Digital Dave column:]

I think one thing a person should do before forwarding an e-mail is to erase all the e-mail addresses embedded in it. That way, if it does fall into the wrong hands, the recipient is not provided a batch of good e-mail addresses, often linked with real names.

-Larry McLaughlin, Aurora, CO

What Dave from Escondido was asking about dangers from forwarding e-mails without cleaning them up first was the following: When we receive those e-mails, some funny and interesting, that get forwarded around the country, they sometimes still have many peoples' e-mail addresses on them as well as old virus scan results at bottom. I always "clean them up" before resending those that I choose to send. I have asked a couple of friends to do the same so that my name will not appear forever around the country (or world), but often they do not do it! That's my pet peeve and it could be dangerous (personally or politically with the government getting more into people's lives).

-Nancy

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

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