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A Look at a Few of the 350,000 Applications for Apple's iPhone.

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Digital Dave

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

A reader wants to recover data from 5 1/4" floppy disks; transferring bookmarks to a new computer; a reader sees programs running on his computer, but does not know what they are.

Dear Digital Dave,

I use several computers with Windows XP, 7 and Vista OS's. My question is about the zillion ancient 5 1/4" floppy disks that I have flopping around somewhere in my garage. Is there any way I can read/restore/transfer info from those disks to my current (and slightly faster, more powerful and cheaper than they were 20 years ago) computers? I still have the old disk drives... is there any way to hook them up to a USB (so I don't have to install them inside my computer)?

RCO
Escondido

Dear RCO,

You certainly have a challenge ahead of you. While I still have some old 5 1/4" floppies laying around, it's been many years since I've used them for anything other than a Frisbee with corners. If I have any information on those floppies, it can't be worth the time it would take to recover the data—that's if they are readable at all. There is a good chance the floppies will no longer be readable. The material degrades over time and they are very susceptible to heat and electromagnetic radiation. A number of years ago (when I still had a working 5 1/4" drive), I tried reading a number of old floppies without any reasonable success.

While I see that there are 3.5" USB floppies drives available for about $20, there are no such 5 1/4" drives. If you find one, it will be built by a savvy individual. (None appeared on eBay.) Building your own 5 1/4" USB floppy drive would not be easy and subject to many complications which are way beyond the scope of this answer. Unless you know you have a ton of useful files on your diskettes, it's not likely to be worth your time.

A more practical approach may be to locate an old (still functional) computer with the desired drives. I'm sure that there are some sitting is garages all over the country. Many people will let you take them away for free.

If you know that there are a few diskettes with important files, there are services which will copy files on a 5 1/4" diskette to a CD-ROM for about $5 each. A quick search of the Web will give you a few possibilities.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm a weekly online reader of your column and I just got a new HP desktop. I use Mozilla browser. How can I transfer my bookmarks to this new computer, or can I?

Thanks,

Tom Waleska
San Diego

Dear Tom,

Most likely there are a couple of ways to accomplish the task of moving your Bookmarks (or Favorites) from one browser to another. Most browsers use HTML (the language of the Web) format files to transfer bookmarks.

In the Bookmarks or Tools menu there should be an option similar to Organize Bookmarks or Bookmarks Manager, depending upon which browser you're using. Within this function, you should find Import and Export features. Export will create an HTML file of all your favorites. Import will read the created file into your new browser. In some browsers, you may have one or both functions in the File menu—usually related to Internet Explorer.

Since HTML is the universal Web language, this technique should work with most browsers. I'm not aware of any browser which won't do this—although there could be one.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

In the area at the bottom of the screen (between the Start menu/Quick Launch and the Tray) the screen shows which programs are open. Periodically, I catch a glimpse of a fast flash. The flash is just barely slower than a wink of the eye, but quick enough I cannot move the mouse to click on it. This tells me some other programs may be running as well. I have no clue what they may be. My system is a Dell Studio 1735, running Vista Home Premium. I do run AVG and SuperAntiSpyWare. How can I find out what is causing the flash and then determine if it is safe or not?

Jeffrey Wagner
Colorado Springs, CO

Dear Jeffrey,

What you're seeing is very common when you are loading/installing/running applications. There are some features of programs that will open another window temporarily while it is completing a task. This is completely normal. Depending upon the speed of you computer, this often occurs so fast that you will never see it, While these windows are open, they appear in the task bar as if a separate program. This happens when certain applications load and/or when they start a new task. This is not something you need to worry about.

If you want to see what's running, hold down CTRL+LEFT SHIFT+ESC and the Task Manager window will open showing you all the running programs under the Applications tab. The Processes tab will show you all the routines running—including systems routines which will not appear under the Applications task. Be careful about using the End Process button in the Processes tab since many of the processes are required for the proper functioning of the operating system.

Digital Dave

Killer iPhone Applications
"From brillant to gadgety--and totally goofy." by Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn discusses the vast array of apps that are available for smartphones and tablets.

Even as slate/tablet computers merge with cell phones (like the iPad), iPhone apps have already exploded. Today you can download everything from smaller versions of your favorite computer programs, to the most incredible time and energy saving apps for while you are on the run. iPhone apps even include lots of imaginative, intriguing and niche-type applications that have been developed all over the world.

The Japanese *love* their cell phones and, contrary to rumors, embraced the iPhone when it was first introduced. In such a cell phone crazy country, developers were among the first to jump on the iPhone app bandwagon. Even in mid 2009, TechCrunch (*techcrunch.com/2009/09/06/japans-32-best-iphone-apps-all-available-in-english/*) had a "Must Have" list of Japanese iPhone apps (which still worked worldwide). Games topped the list, ranging from Samurai Chess to Newtonica. Newtonica is a beautifully designed action game where you rotate a sphere so that incoming meteors hit the cores with matching colors (A bestseller in Japan, with a great soundtrack).

ZeptoPad 3.0 (*zeptopad.com/iphone/*) is a Japanese note and whiteboard iPhone app, with a vector-based illustration program that can stream to a computer or projector in real time. GottaDo2 is a social task manager where cute little monsters gobble up your done tasks. (They can also grow or punish you if you are too lazy or slow with your tasks.) MemoryTree is a GPS based Japanese photo sharing app, where you can drop a photo on a spot on the globe where you took the photo, and add text. This geo-tagged photo can then be caught by other MT users in the same area, using the Same-Place function. Or you can use the Same-Time button, to

catch and view all the photos MT users took around the globe in the last few hours.

Other interesting iPhone apps with a decidedly Japanese slant, are Ukiyo-eBeauties (*itunes. apple.com/us/app/ukiyo-e-beauties/id310129699?mt=8*), which displays historic Japanese art. iShakuhachi, which is a traditional Japanese bamboo flute that can be played by blowing into the iPhone mic, and covering the virtual flute holes on the screen. And virtual girlfriend apps for young Japanese guys, like Bijin Tokei and Amamiya Momo (nothing on virtual boyfriends).

"I *would* take out the trash, but I couldn't find *that* application for my iPhone!"

After an initial reluctance to open their iPhone to developers (and probably getting run over by the Japanese), Apple finally turned their own developers loose on iPhone apps. Apple now offers 350,000 official iPhone apps (*www.apple.com/iphone/apps-for-iphone/*) on their site. They divide their iPhone app categories roughly into Work, Leisure, Student Research, Financial, Exercise, Current Information and Remote Control. According to the experts, the top apps in these categories will probably still be available, when the inevitable shake-out of these one-third-of-a-million (official) iPhone apps occurs.

Some nifty iPhone apps currently available in their Apple Store are worth a look. Their Work category of apps leans heavily toward on-the-go functions, which can eliminate lots of phone calls to the office between stops. Square is a mobile payment system, that enables you to accept credit card payments from customers and friends. LinkedIn gives you instant access to your professional network, and Salesforce Mobile allows subscribers to pull up business and client data from anywhere. You can track packages with Fed Ex Mobile, participate in meetings through Cisco Webex, and even download an iTimeSheet to track your time spent with each client, and in what activity.

Since iPhone's computing functions are minimal, compared to their iPad tablet computer/phone, the iPhone is also open to lots of simple and fun apps for those of us who are not high-powered executives or salespeople. These apps are primarily to let us call up quick information, from a recipe for dinner on the way home, to current information at an intended destination. While many of the remaining apps appear designed to simply entertain or briefly amuse, to fill in blank spots in a long day.

The Internet is full of gadget-lovers' and gizmo-addicts' iPhone app lists, from the Coolest to the Tastiest, the Must-have to the Funniest. But the "lists" of Strangest or Oddest iPhone apps are, predictably, the most entertaining. So let's take a look at the more odd selections in Apple's

350,000—plus a few interlopers'—iPhone apps. (Many are free, or charge a minimal $.99. Some may offer updated versions, while some apps are not yet globally available.)

TheGadget.net's short five favorite or "most unusual" apps are interesting. An 'iMouse' is a funny little animated mouse that knocks on the screen, amid whatever you are doing, to tell you "Please answer your phone!" A Voice Keyboard app lets you record any sound, and the keyboard plays and programs it. (Or tap the keys to play cool sounds.) An X-Ray app uses the iPhone camera as a gag x-ray machine. iSteam makes your iPhone screen look like a fogged mirror. (Use your finger to clean the fog, or align your iPhone to see the falling droplets. Simply blow on the screen to see the steam appear again.) While iFire is a remarkable simulation of your outer iPhone screen burning away.

TechRadar (*techradar.com*) offers their favorite iPhone apps, most of which will appeal to the trusty do-it-yourself crowd. TouchMouse lets your iPhone act as a wireless touchpad and keyboard for your PC or Mac, from anywhere in your house. Handy iLevel turns your iPhone into a spirit level after calibrating it on a flat surface. (Upgrade the app to iCarpenter and get four more useful tools: a plumb bob, bubble level, ruler and protractor.) iSat is another handy app for those whose satellite dish needs to be aligned. (Using the "i" button, pick your chosen satellite from the globe-spanning dozens, and follow the instructions how to align your dish accordingly.) Cleartune is a Chromatic Tuner, designed to tune your musical instrument using nothing more than your iPhone's mic, and works with a variety of musical instruments.

There are even some nifty iPhone apps for the nighttime crowd out partying. iNiteScene keeps track of all the hot spots and activities in Australian cities after dark. And Multi-color Concert Lighter lets you stand with the concert crowd while holding up your virtual lighter/phone, the pretend flame flickering and swaying in time with the motion. Have2P will probably come in handy, as it searches for the nearest public restroom, and provides details about cleanliness, and so on.

After a night on the town, Drunk Dialer keeps the tipsy from dialing-drunk, and ending up screaming at someone who didn't totally hate them before that call. And you might want to download Torch or iBlackout's flashlight function apps, which can come in handy if you are unsteadily trying to match key to keyhole at the front door. While Sleep Machine can soothe you to sleep when you finally hit the sack, with a variety of sounds or sleepy time tunes. (It comes with a timer, alarm and the ability to mix and match up to three sounds.)

If you have some outre-reality interests, here is a sampling of some interesting and specialized iPhone apps. The Paranormal State EMF Reader supposedly enables your phone to detect ghostly electromagnetic energies from Beyond (or a nearby power-line). Voodoo! features a virtual voodoo doll and a long pin, to take out your frustrations on your bully-boss. Afterlife has crunched everything from numerology to astrology, to determine what you'll be in your next life. Or try Oracle Board Ouija, where you can play alone or with friends, and watch the planchette spell out messages from Beyond.

For the Science Fiction crowd, download Hal9000, which randomly makes comments in the voice of HAL from the movie "2001." Or try Lightsaber Unleashed, to swing your iPhone like a lightsaber. Star Wars Sound Board lets you click on a picture of your favorite character, and hear them say a famous phrase.

Trying to stop smoking? Or working on a Smoke-Free Campus? Try Cigar and puff on a pretend cigar, or iSmoke and puff on a virtual pipe. Virtual Zippo Lighter even lets you pretend to light up a friend's pretend smoke.

Then there are those mind-game type apps, that are guaranteed to provoke surprise, laughter or disbelief in any bar or party. iFart lets you chose from 26 different sounds of flatulent outbursts (or you can record your own). iBeer is a fun gag app that appears to fill up your iPhone screen with beer. When tipped, you can pretend to be drinking it as the beer appears to drain out. (For the record, iFart and iBeer showed up on most guys' Best Apps lists online.) Stuck for an intro or come-on line? Zips lets you unzip a photo of your choice behind an on-screen zipper.

If you are between work projects, and your boss monitors your computer e-mails or games, there are some great fact-apps to pass some time entertaining yourself, and possibly learning something in the process. Amazing Animal Facts, Bizarre Holidays, Science Facts and Stupid Laws, among others, are fun to peruse.

If you want to sort through your stored iPhone photos—and feelings—try Pie in the Face to throw a virtual pie at someone in a photo. Big Mouth lets you make photos of others say what you want them to say. And Face Changer lets you morph your photos simply by dragging a finger across the screen.

If you are just hanging out with the gang, there are plenty of amusing Un-games for all to participate in. Everyone can time themselves playing Zits & Giggles, that challenges you to restore a not-so-great screen facial complexion. Or try iDumb for five mini-games that do absolutely nothing to improve your IQ or skills. The Moron Test determines if you and your friends are complete idiots. While Virtual Mouth Videos lets you place on-screen mouths over your own to amuse your friends.

If you work in an isolated location—or like to annoy those around you—you can download unusual-music apps like Kazoo, More Cowbell, Ocarina, Pocket Trumpet or Shake Ya Tambourine. If you *truly* want to irritate someone nearby, there are some obnoxious noise apps available. Annoying, Absolutely Annoying and Annoying Sounds have collections of up to 16 terrible sounds. While i-Horn, Pester and Sound Grenade produce headache inducing sounds guaranteed to make a teacher or boss lunge to confiscate your iPhone.

And then there are the head-scratchingly mindless apps that are still nifty for stress-release, since they don't require a lot of time or thought. Hold On! lets you hold down the only button on the screen, and then tells you how long you held it. Perfect Circle lets you draw a circle with your finger on the screen, and then rates your circle on a scale of 1 to 1,000. Or choose a screen app called BubbleWrap, that lets you pop virtual plastic bubbles to your heart's content. iPyro has pre-loaded pictures you can set fire to. (Or you can download your own photos to be i-toasted.) You can even watch a virtual hand bounce around your screen looking for something to do, with Bouncy.

On February 15th (2011), Apple announced its long-dreaded subscription plan. It sets up an easy way to charge recurring payments for iPhone (as well as iPad and iPod) content. It also mandates that outside developers use it if they want to set up any kind of subscription service, and they will have to pay Apple 30% of the money they make on those subscriptions.

So some of the non-Apple apps profiled above may not be around much longer. Besides, if your iPhone has been mostly just a phone, instead of a work-interface or mini-amusement-park, you really should check out the official iPhone Apps store. And then maybe cruise around the Internet for the odder must-have apps, you may wonder how you've managed to live this long without.

(Unless otherwise noted, thanks also to Datamation (*datamation.com*), The Telegraph (*telegraph.co.uk*), iPhonefreak (*iphonefreak.com*) and SemiStrange (*semistrange.com*) for their lists and iPhone app recommendations.)

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

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
"Making apps." by Wally Wang

Apple and Google are leading in the smartphones and tablets market—will other competitors be able to compete through the development of apps? The new MacBook Pros; The difference between Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and Windows 8; vinyl records making a comeback.

If you work at Google, you can devote up to 20 percent of your time pursuing any interesting side projects that can benefit the company. The idea is to keep talented people and allow them to pursue their interests outside of their direct job responsibilities.

Google claims this helps them retain their talent while making workers happier. Obviously, many companies have never thought of this because they don't understand the connection between happy workers and greater productivity. Now even Microsoft is offering a limited form of this benefit.

At Microsoft, workers are allowed to keep the intellectual property and profits from any Windows Phone 7 apps (*www.nytimes.com/2011/02/27/business/27novel.html?src=busln*) they develop and sell. Previously, anything an employee created had to go back to the company.

One reason Microsoft is allowing their workers to sell and develop Windows Phone 7 apps is to jump-start the entire Windows Phone 7 app market. Until there are enough compelling apps, people will shy away from Windows Phone 7 phones. Yet most developers won't spend the time creating Windows Phone 7 apps until more people start using it.

By tapping their own work force to create Windows Phone 7 apps, Microsoft hopes to provide a growing library of apps to entice more people to use Windows Phone 7 instead of Android or an iPhone. The fact that Microsoft has taken this step is proof that they're at least trying to make Windows Phone 7 successful rather than just relying on spending more money on television commercials that poke fun at people using mobile phones, and then conclude by trying to sell people a mobile phone.

At least Microsoft isn't taking the approach that Research in Motion (RIM) is taking with their Playbook tablet. Besides courting developers like Microsoft, RIM is reportedly making it possible for the Playbook to run Android apps (*www.technewsworld.com/story/71845.html?wlc=1298772490*). That way RIM can claim that the Playbook can run thousands of apps from day one.

The big gamble RIM is taking is that developers will look at their two alternatives and choose the most lucrative option. One, they can spend the time developing apps specifically for the Playbook. Two, they can develop Android apps that can run on Android devices plus RIM's Playbook. Given this option, more developers will likely just develop for Android and ignore creating Playbook-specific apps altogether.

The end result could turn RIM's Playbook into a mediocre Android tablet. Why get RIM's Playbook when you can get an Android tablet instead that can run Android apps just as well as the Playbook, or most likely even better?

The smart phone market is already boiling down to Android vs. iPhone and the tablet market is likewise boiling down to Android vs. iPad. Microsoft's smart phone solution is Windows Phone 7 and their tablet solution is to continue pushing for Windows 7 tablets, despite almost a decade of resistance from the market that still hasn't bought as many Windows-based tablets as Apple has sold iPads in the past year.

Hewlett-Packard is another third-place competitor with their webOS smart phones and tablets. RIM is likely falling further behind despite their forthcoming Playbook tablet, which is starting to look more antiquated next to the fresh batch of Android tablets appearing.

For Apple and Google, the future of smart phones and tablets looks promising. For everyone else, the future looks increasingly bleak. With Apple and Google carving the smart phone market between them and Apple grabbing the major share of the tablet market, developers are going to go with the leader. That means developing for iOS (iPhone and iPad) first, Android second, and everything else third, if at all.

That also means that more people are going to consider an iOS device first, an Android device second, and anything else third, if they consider any alternative at all. By being late to the market, Microsoft, RIM and Hewlett-Packard are going to beat each other up for third place and the meager crumbs left behind by Apple and Google.

The New MacBook Pros

Apple recently introduced new MacBook Pro laptops (*www.macworld.com/ article/157893/2011/02/2011macbookpro_benchmarks.html*) that take advantage of Intel's latest processors with speed that even exceed the performance of the latest iMac.

Speedmark 6.5 individual application test results: 2011 MacBook Pros

	Duplicate 1GB File	Zip 2GB folder	Unzip 2GB folder	Pages '09 Open Word Doc
13" MacBook Pro 2.3GHz Core i5 dual-core	29	181	65	83
13" MacBook Pro 2.7GHz Core i7 dual-core	27	158	59	76
15" MacBook Pro 2.0GHz Core i7 quad-core	31	184	64	81
15" MacBook Pro 2.2GHz Core i7 quad-core	23	**159**	51	77
17" MacBook Pro 2.2GHz Core i7 quad-core	24	**159**	49	76
13" MacBook Pro 2.4GHz Core 2 Duo	*32*	*239*	*69*	*115*
13" MacBook Pro 2.66GHz Core 2 Duo	*25*	*174*	*51*	*80*
15" MacBook Pro 2.4GHz Core i5 dual core	*32*	*211*	*68*	*82*
15" MacBook Pro 2.66GHz Core i7 dual-core	*29*	*190*	*65*	*80*
17" MacBook Pro 2.53GHz Core i5 dual-core	*28*	*198*	*60*	*74*
13" MacBook Air 1.83GHz Core 2 Duo, 256GB SSD	**13**	*262*	**39**	*118*
MacBook 2.4GHz Core 2 Duo (2GB RAM)	*32*	*238*	*68*	*106*
21.5" iMac 3.06GHz Core i3	*19*	*166*	*42*	*77*
27" iMac 2.8GHz Core i5 quad-core	*21*	*170*	*44*	*76*

Results are in seconds. Lower results are better. Reference models in *italics*. Best result in **bold**.

Figure 1. Comparing the speeds of current MacBook Pros to other Macintosh models.

The latest MacBook Pros also include Intel's new Thunderbolt technology that can daisy chain multiple devices, such as hard drives or monitors. The data transfer speed of Thunderbolt can transfer an entire Blu-ray disc in minutes, making Thunderbolt a much faster alternative to USB or FireWire ports.

With the new MacBook Pros available, you can buy the older, refurbished models for $1,000 or less. However, the cost savings of $100 or $200 may not be worth it when you realize that you'll be buying a slower computer that won't maintain its usefulness as long as buying a current model.

That also means if you're looking to buy a desktop Macintosh, wait. The Mac mini currently uses an Intel Core 2 Duo processor, which is already obsolete. The iMac uses an Intel Core i3 or i5 processor. If you wait a little longer, the Mac mini will undoubtedly get the Intel Core i3 or i5 processor while the iMac will get the i5 or i7 processor. The general rule is to get the fastest computer you can afford so it will last much longer. You can never have a computer that's fast enough so if you're in the market for a Macintosh laptop, get a MacBook Pro. If you're in the market for a desktop Macintosh, be patient and you'll have a chance to buy the new models in another month or so.

The Difference Between Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and Windows 8

Apple plans to release their next generation operating system this summer while Microsoft has announced that Windows 8 will appear in 2012 or 2013, just after the Mayan apocalypse. The most hyped feature of Windows 8 will be its user interface designed for tablets. However, Mac OS X 10.7 Lion (*www.appleinsider.com/articles/11/02/26/ inside_mac_os_x_10_7_lion_new_dock_finderdesktop.html*) is taking a different approach and adopting user interface elements from the iPhone and iPad.

Microsoft wants to bring the desktop operating system to mobile devices. Apple wants to bring the mobile operating system interface to reduce the complexity of its desktop operating system. Although it's impossible to tell which approach will be best until we can actually use them, it's easy to make some early guesses.

Taking a desktop operating system like Windows and squeezing it into a tablet might work, but the big question is whether programs can be optimized for both a mouse and touch screen interface without sacrificing usability on either device. If Windows 8 works great on desktop PCs but poorly on tablets, then nobody will want Windows on a tablet (just like now).

Ultimately the question is whether Microsoft can optimize a single operating system for two different styles of interaction. Secondly, how can an operating system make older programs, initially designed for desktop PC interfaces, usable on a tablet? Being able to run Microsoft Office on a tablet might sound great, but if the operating system doesn't help you actually use that program through a touch screen interface, what good will that program be just because it can run on a tablet?

A more serious problem will be that PCs use Intel or AMD processors while tablets often use ARM processors for lower power consumption. If you have a Windows program, you might assume you can run it on any version of Windows, but you'll be wrong. Today if you have a 32-bit version of a program, it may not work with the 64-bit version of Windows. Tomorrow, you'll have to worry if you have a Windows Intel version of a program or a Windows ARM (tablet) version of a program. Then you'll have to make sure you only install and run the right version of each program with the right version of Windows.

It will then be possible to have an Intel or AMD PC running Windows 8 and a tablet with an ARM processor also running Windows 8. To run Windows programs on your ARM tablet, you'll need to buy ARM versions of your old programs. When you buy new Windows 8 programs, the software publisher will need to include both an Intel/AMD version and an ARM version of that same program. Otherwise people might buy a Windows ARM version of a program and try to run it on an Intel/AMD PC, which won't work.

Despite looking the same, Windows 8 running on an Intel/AMD processor will be an entirely different operating system than Windows 8 running on an ARM processor. Today, Microsoft claims that Windows-based tablets give you the benefit of running all your current Windows programs on a tablet. Tomorrow that won't be true because Windows 8-based tablets will need ARM versions of the program, thereby negating the current "advantage" of Windows-based tablets.

Sound confusing? Then welcome to the world of Microsoft that forces non-technical users to learn technical knowledge just to use a computer.

Now let's look at Apple's solution that seeks to reduce complexity by taking the user interface of a tablet and bringing it to desktop and laptop computers.

Mac OS X 10.7 Lion seeks to simplify the user interface by making a Macintosh behave more like an iPad (*osxdaily.com/2010/10/20/mac-os-x-10-7-lion-features-screen-shots-mac-os-x-meets-ios/*). Some people will undoubtedly hate these changes, but others will love them right away. The vast majority will probably just get used to it with a little bit of confusion and learning.

Figure 2. Mac OS X 10.7 Lion makes a Macintosh look more like an iPad.

Despite its simpler user interface, Mac OS X 10.7 Lion also offers one major change. In the past, Apple sold a separate server edition of Mac OS X for $499. With Mac OS X 10.7 Lion, those server features will be built-in so you can turn any Macintosh into a server without buying any additional software.

One feature previously available only on the server edition of Mac OS X was a program called Podcast Publisher (*www.9to5mac.com/54003/podcast-publisher-lets-your-run-your-own-shows-debuts-in-10-7-lion*). The idea is to make it easy to create audio or video podcasts (including screen captures from your Macintosh) that you can easily edit and share with others.

Another unique feature may be a "Find My Mac" option, which works similarly to the "Find My iPhone" option to help you track a lost iPhone using both cellular network and Wi-Fi data. With

the "Find My Mac" option, a Macintosh will be able to broadcast its location over the Internet, which can be perfect for tracking down stolen computers.

Mac OS X 10.7 will drop support for PowerPC programs, so if you're still running really old Macintosh programs that were compiled to run on PowerPC processors, those programs won't work any more on Mac OS X 10.7 Lion.

This summer, everyone will get a chance to use Mac OS X 10.7 Lion. In another two years, we might be able to use Windows 8 as well. Then we'll be able to compare both operating systems side by side. We already know that Apple can successfully market a desktop computer and a tablet operating system. Now we just have to see if Microsoft can do the same.

Apple's future road map promises simplicity with more features. Microsoft's road map just promises more complexity. Which one do you want to use in the future?

Vinyl Records Making a Comeback

Although digital audio files are far easier to distribute, vinyl records (*www.usatoday.com/life/ music/news/2011-02-25-vinyl25_ST_N.htm*) appear to be making a minor comeback according to USA Today. Besides audio fanatics who prefer the sound of vinyl over digital audio files, many other people just enjoy the retro feel of vinyl records along with the cover art and liner notes that round out the entire vinyl record package. Although not every album comes out on vinyl, a handful of them still do, which gives a clue about the future of the book publishing industry.

E-books are definitely the future, but like with the return of vinyl records, many people still prefer the visual and tactile experience of a printed book's packaging. What's likely to happen will be that e-books will mimic the digital audio industry.

The majority of books will be e-books, but for certain best-sellers or special titles, people will crave printed editions. They may be more expensive than the e-book version, but the cost may be justified by the physical appearance of a printed book, especially if the book is autographed by the author, which is impossible to duplicate with an e-book.

To read most books, you'll have no choice but to get the e-book version. For classic books or best-sellers, you'll likely have the option of a printed copy as well. E-books will become the norm while printed books will become luxury items much like fine watches that people can brag about owning.

A library of printed books will soon represent wealth and luxury, just like in the early days when printed books were rare and expensive to make. The only difference is that people will still have access to less expensive e-books so reading will not be limited to a select few, or at least limited only to the select few who prefer reading over watching TV.

*   *   *

When you double-click on a file, it opens using the default program defined by that file. So if you create a Pages document, double-clicking that file will always open that file using Pages.

Most of the time you won't want to change this behavior. However, if you do want a different program to open a file, just right-click on that file in the Finder window and choose Get Info.

In the Info window, click on the Open with pop-up menu and choose a new default program for opening that file.
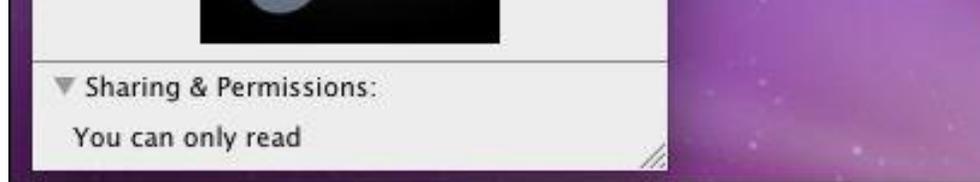
Figure 3. Redefining a default program to open a file.

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*. He also blogs about the latest technology trends at his personal site *www.wallacewang.com*.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

California Police Use Online Service to Locate Stolen Items; Mobile Users Play a Lot of Games; Do You Need a Data Center?; Sims 3 for PC.

California Police Use Online Service to Locate Stolen Items

According to a press release from the online theft-prevention service, LeadsOnline (*www. leadsonline.com*):

Detectives in Palm Springs recently returned a woman's Rolex watch to her despite the fact that she wasn't able to provide them many leads in the case.

Using LeadsOnline, a nationwide online service that tracks pawn shop transactions, Sergeant Walter Combs discovered that the woman's watch was sold at a local pawn shop a few weeks after it turned up missing. The store is one of thousands of pawn shops and secondhand dealers that reports its ticket information to LeadsOnline through daily uploads. High-value watches are a frequently stolen item, but thanks to the search capability of the online service, detectives were able to locate the watch and make an exact match based on the serial number.

"Jewelry can be hard to identify when it is stolen," explains Sergeant Combs, who oversee the Property Crimes Division for Palm Springs Police Department. "When we have information from residents that can help us identify personal property, such as serial numbers, we have a better chance of finding stolen items." Sergeant Combs says that along with watches, other high-end, brand name jewelry and Apple products, such as laptops, are often stolen in California.

In this case, and with the cooperation of the pawn shop involved, police were able to provide the victim with information that allowed her to recover and reclaim her watch. Eighteen pawn shops, secondhand stores, and gold buyers in the Palm Springs area report their store transaction information to police through the secure LeadsOnline service, which is free for businesses to use.

In June of 2010, San Francisco and Daly City Police used pawn shop information to help police in Washington State solve a homicide that took place during a Craigslist robbery. The suspects in that case stole a wedding ring from the victim and then traveled to California and sold the ring to a pawnshop that electronically reports their store information to police, allowing detectives to track down the murder suspects and solve the shocking crime.

"We check LeadsOnline everyday to help us locate stolen property," Sergeant Combs says. "It is especially helpful when we notice certain 'hot items' that are being stolen in our area." LeadsOnline instantly provides that information to police, no matter where the property is stolen or sold. Pawn shops and secondhand dealers report items sold to their stores by entering the information into the LeadsOnline database (similar to the JUS123 report), which is then

immediately accessible to law enforcement in Palm Springs and across the country. So, even if an item is stolen down the street, but sold to a pawn shop in Dallas, the system will still alert Palm Springs detectives. Other items that police have recovered using LeadsOnline included jewelry, lawn and sports equipment, tools and household items.

Because the system is an online service, pawn and secondhand stores have to upload their transaction information electronically, versus the previous way of writing paper pawn tickets that was time consuming and inefficient in helping police solve crime.

Each day, items are added to the LeadsOnline database by businesses including second-hand stores, scrap metal recyclers, pawnshops and Internet drop-off stores across all 50 states. Those electronic records are instantly available to law enforcement agencies, meaning crimes can be solved in seconds, not months.

An official eBay partner, LeadsOnline helps prevent illegal transactions on the eBay Web site by giving law enforcement access to the world's largest online marketplace through automatic upload of all eBay transactions into the LeadsOnline database.

LeadsOnline also includes LeadsOnlabs, a system for tracking those involved in the illegal manufacture of methamphetamines; a Metal Theft Investigation System designed to track copper and other metal thefts; and cross-checks names of pawn customers against the OFAC SDN list of known terrorists and narcotics traffickers. Each year, LeadsOnline is credited with recovering millions of dollars in stolen goods and solving thousands of crimes that are often associated with bigger crimes, such as homicide, identity theft and arson.

Mobile Users Play a Lot of Games

A recent survey commissioned by PopCap Games found large increases in overall usage and frequency of mobile game playing among U.S. and U.K. adults. According to PopCap:

The survey also found that among mobile phone gamers, the mobile phone is now the primary gaming device of choice, leapfrogging video game consoles and personal computers in less than two years. Further, "smartphone" owners (the fastest-growing mobile segment) are by far the most avid consumers of mobile phone games. These and other purchase and consumption trends identified in the survey suggest significant growth in the mobile games sector will continue for the foreseeable future.

"Mobile games are, along with social games, the hottest sector of the video game industry by far," stated Dennis Ryan, EVP of Worldwide Publishing at PopCap, which derives nearly a third of its overall revenues from sales of mobile mega-hits like Bejeweled® and Plants vs. Zombies™. "As more people purchase smartphones and the entire process of finding, purchasing and playing mobile games becomes as simple as browsing the Internet, the mobile games market is going to accelerate even more."

Among the other survey findings,

• 84% of all mobile phone gamers, and 97% of avid mobile phone gamers say they play games on their phone at least once a week; 92% of smartphone owners who play mobile games say they play at least once a week, and 45% say they play daily (compared to 35% of all mobile

phone gamers). In the 2009 survey, only 13% of mobile phone gamers said they played daily, and 40% said they played weekly or more often.

• Among all mobile phone gamers, 50% said that the amount of time they spend playing games on their handset has increased over the past year, and among smartphone owners the figure climbs to 63%; in the 2009 survey, only 20% of mobile gamers indicated their consumption of mobile games had increased.

• Among all mobile phone gamers, 78% indicated that playing mobile phone games had become a regular part of their weekly activities, and more than half (59%) indicated that they saw such games as a regular part of their daily activities; for smartphone owners the figures were 84% and 68%, respectively.

• When asked which gaming-capable device they play games on most often, 44% of mobile phone gamers chose their phones, catapulting handsets past video game consoles (21%) and computers (30%) to the top of the list. 51% of avid mobile gamers and 55% of those mobile gamers who own smartphones indicated they played games most often on their phones. This compares to just 17% of mobile gamers who chose their handset as their most frequently used gaming device in the 2009 survey.

• 43% of all mobile gamers, and 49% of smartphone gamers, said they had upgraded a free trial game to the full (paid) version in the past year; more than a quarter (27%) of all mobile gamers, and a third (34%) of smartphone gamers, said they had paid for additional content for an originally free game in the past year.

• Among mobile phone gamers, the average smartphone owner purchased nearly twice as many games as those with other types of phones (5.4 games vs. 2.9 games) in 2010, and spent almost $10 more ($25.57 vs. $15.70) on phone games.

Do You Need a Data Center?

Chris Witt, CEO of the IT architecture and engineering services provider WAKE TSI (*waketsi. com*) writes in this week:

If you still own your own data center you might be spending more money than you need and subjecting your organization to unnecessary risk. Your data center is the foundation for all your core computing resources. Any flaws in the data center puts everything installed in the data center, no matter how well implemented, at risk as well.

So what do you do? You need to securely house your servers and storage somewhere, and not go broke doing it correctly. Today, you have far more choices than you did just ten years ago. The added choices include numerous viable off-site solutions. While there are many permutations, the two basic choices boil down to keeping your data center in house or have someone else host it for you.

Before you evaluate your options, you need to understand your risks and how much risk you are willing to accept. Are you a nine to five business that only requires computing functions during the typical workday or are you a 7/24/365 operation that tolerates no downtime? If you have an outage, can it affect the delivery of patient care? Are you putting someone's life at risk? Do you

know how much it costs your organization for every hour of unplanned downtime? Did you know if costs about $100,000 per hour of downtime for a small- to medium-sized hospital?

Risks come in all shapes and sizes. When looking at the data center, your risk areas are in facilities, operations and monitoring. Is the physical plant appropriate to house a data center? Do you have sufficient power and cooling capacity? Is the data center structured correctly—hot/cold isles, airflow, rack layout? Is it secure? Do you have a dedicated data center operations group who oversees all activities? Are they always on hand when the data center is operating? Do they have well defined policies, procedures and processes? And are they following them? Are you able to monitor, alert and report on all activities taking place in and around your data center? There are a lot of questions and until you objectively assess your situation, you will never know where the bodies are buried.

Ultimately, you need to make a decision. This is not a decision to be made emotionally. It is a strategic business decision. Is owning and operating a data center a core strategic part of your business? If you are an IBM, Comcast, or Verizon, I would say yes—owning and operating your own data center is very strategic to your core business. If you are a hospital, manufacturer of goods, or a services oriented company, a data center plays a supporting role rather than being a core strategic function. You also have to evaluate financial models for keeping it in house and moving to an outside managed services solution. This is not always a pleasant exercise because it involves making hard decisions about giving up control of your assets and potentially reducing the size of your staff.

Every option has its pros and cons. There is definitely no "one size, fits all" type of solution out there. But knowing your current risks, understanding the risk tolerance of your organization, and having a clear organizational strategy will help guide you through the process. As a local clothing retailer used to say, "An educated consumer is our best customer." This is also true in the data center world.

Sims 3 for PC

The Sims 3 (*www.thesims3.com*) (about $30), the latest addition to The Sims family, brings new meaning to the phrase "escaping to the virtual world."

For those of you who are new to the series, The Sims is a type of nontraditional RPG where you create a Sim and guide them through their life. You build their job, their career, and all their relationships. At its simplest form it's a "life" simulator.

The biggest change you'll see right off the bat is that you are no longer isolated to a single lot during gameplay. You now have the capability of roaming completely around the neighborhood and doing just about whatever you want: visiting your neighbors, running to the store, visiting the gym, and lots more.

Your Sims have become even more customizable this time around. Along with designing what they look like and their different outfits, you now get to choose five traits and a lifetime goal for your Sim. The traits you choose give your Sim unique characteristics; and they range from "Daredevil," which makes your Sim crave the extreme part of life and a desire to live on the edge, all the way to "Computer Whiz," which makes your Sim a master of all things tech. The lifetime goal is a task that you select that your Sim works to over time. Once achieved, your Sim earns a ton of lifetime happiness points. You can also earn lifetime happiness by completing various in game tasks, these points can then be spent on extra traits that add more to your Sims personality.
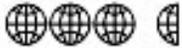
Another neat part of the game are the new ways your Sim brings money into the house. There are the traditional ways: getting a job, going to work, getting paid. Then there are the rather "nontraditional" ways, which are by far the most fun. You can hack computers, go fishing and sell your catch, or even become a thief.

Your Sims make more money from their jobs as you continue to level up their individual skills ranging from logic to handiness. You level up by just putting in the hours doing things like reading books or working out.

There are also the new "mood modifiers," which alter your Sims' mood based on previous actions. For example, you can put your Sim in a better mood by having a good meal or doing something fun. Their moods can be reduced by being deprived of food or sleep.

The only problem I had with The Sims 3 was the initial setup. It took me more than an hour to find settings so that I had no lag or frame rate problems—and my computer exceeded the requirements by a good margin. There have been a number of complaints from the community regarding this, so I wasn't alone. Make sure your computer meets or exceeds the minimum specifications before buying otherwise you may be in for a bumpy ride.

Overall, minus the technical glitches, the game was fun and definitely had the makings of a great sequel. The Sims 3 is available in two forms: the basic game for about $35 or the Deluxe version, which includes the "Ambitions" expansion pack for about $10 more.

⊕⊕⊕ ⦇

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

EdgeWord: There Is an iPad in the House

"Discoving the benefit of an iPad." by Jack Dunning

Jack gave in—he bought an iPad. He is going to chronicle his journey of learning the pros and cons of tablet computers, discovering if it will benefit his work or personal life.

I'll begin by admitting that I purchased an iPad the other day. I didn't do it out of mere curiosity, but as part of an endeavor I'm undertaking. After a year of watching the development of the tablet computer market, I've come to the conclusion that the flat electronic slates are carving out a unique niche which cannot be filled by any other type of computer. I don't believe that they are a replacement for laptops (which in many case are already replacing desktops), but they are a supplement which can go many places where the standard notebook is awkward.

I give Apple full credit for bringing enough hype and excitement to a floundering tablet market to push it to the forefront of urgency for users and manufacturers alike. Whether Apple will be able to maintain that lead is another question since the power of numerous computer (and cell phone) manufacturers will be brought to bear with mostly Android operating systems. From my prospective, it doesn't matter if one or the other wins the battle. I intend to hedge my bets and do both. I'll flow with the tide. But for now, Apple is in the lead and deserves primary attention.

I intend to chronicle my journey in *ComputorEdge* starting next week with my review and early impressions of the iPad. My opinion will be from someone who respects Apple, but is not a fanatic. While I've used Macs in the past, I don't currently own one. (I will be getting a Mac to work on projects, but I don't have any plans to make it my primary computer.) I have no desire to see iPad fail as a product—quite the opposite. I'm making an investment in this market because I think that the practical uses of tablet computers will outlast the novelty of the device. I don't believe the iPad is necessary the ultimate tablet design. For example, even though it is very light for a computer, I think it is still too heavy. It should be about the weight of a standard office clipboard.

Another reason for going with the iPad now is that the initial user excitement is wearing off. I knew that this would come. Almost one year ago I wrote in this column, "Possibly there will be important uses for tablet computing that have not yet been recognized, but my feeling is that we need to ask the question again six months to a year from now—after the current crop of excited buyers have had a chance to explore. Will the iPad become an integral part of their life? Will it be a source of continual entertainment that goes with them everywhere? Or, will it be relegated to a special spot on the desk—rarely ever touched?" There is some evidence that the last question may be true (Dan Frommer from Business Insider (*www.businessinsider.com/ipad-review-day-300-2011-2#ixzz1FNNZU6Hp*) says, "The main thing you need to know about my iPad right now is that I'm not sure where it is."), but I can see numerous practical uses for which the tablet is well suited.

As the some of the enthusiasm dies down, we will be able to find where tablets really belong. Not all applications will be useful and successful. For many, the iPad will always be a toy. For others, a tablet may become the tool which changes their life. Nobody *needs* a tablet computer. However, if the device can bring the right kind of benefit to someone's work or personal life, then eventually that person will say, "How did I ever get along without it?" I intend to find out if that's true.

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

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Cyber Crime," "Safe Storage," "Cleaning LCD Screens," "Junction Folders and 'My...' Folders," "Multicore Upgrade?" "Note on Apple Laptops"

Cyber Crime

[Regarding Keith Taylor's February 4 article, "Geezers, Computers, and Cyber Crime (Maybe)":]

An excellent article and one that I showed my aging parents and 86 year old grandparents. I especially liked the common sense approach when the evil dude wanted money and things didn't add up. Scams always follow a typical pattern. Keith really laid out the pattern well and proved that the patterns have just moved to the 21st century.

-Brian H, Golden, Colorado

Safe Storage

[Regarding Patrick Cotter's January 21 article, "Are You Practicing Safe Storage?":]

I've used these encryption programs, notably TruCrypt (Free). I've found, though, that it's easier and arguably just as good, to use encrypted zip files for sensitive info.

-Steve, Sandy Eggo

Cleaning LCD Screens

[Regarding the January 7 Digital Dave column:]

In the 1/28 issue, someone mentioned cleaning a screen with a paper towel. I wouldn't want to use a paper towel on my screen. My ophthalmologist suggested not using even a tissue to clean my glasses because the paper fibers could scratch the surface.

-Dick Kutz, Lakewood, CO

Junction Folders and "My..." Folders

[Regarding the February 11 Digital Dave column:]

Thank you for the article explaining the details of how the Windows 7 library is set up and why the "My documents and My Pictures" folders don't work the same as they did in Vista and Windows 98.

-Video Don, Temecula, CA

Correct, it doesn't have to do with the type of account. But the confusion can be avoided by keeping the default "Folder Options" choice, which says to "hide protected operating system files." So, I usually choose to view file extensions and "hidden files," just not the "protected" files.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

Multicore Upgrade?

[Regarding the January 28 Digital Dave column:]

Dave,

Your answer to Scott was spot on. His set up is fit for the purpose already and there's no need to mess with it. I still use a Pentium 1 Windows 3.11 computer to handle family and club finances for that same reason. It works properly, it's stable and it's performing.

-Stewart A. Levin, Centennial, CO

Note on Apple Laptops

[Regarding the February 11 Digital Dave column:]

Thanks for providing me a convenient way of getting something off my chest that as you will see has been there far too long! *My main objection* to Apple is that when they were neophytes just learning about computers they presumed sophistication and gave *new* names to what were already existing concepts in computer science. People like me who were already computer scientists took umbrage at this along with the arrogant superiority of their pricing which has ruffled my feathers to this day!

-Michael J Viehman, Julian, CA

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*.