

ComputorEdge™ Online — 04/08/11



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Digital Dave

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

Printing PDF files; Sync Chrome Bookmarks and Firefox Favorites; Windows 7 Freezes While Shutting Down.

Dear Digital Dave,

Why is it that some multi-page PDF files will print rather quickly, and others will take forever (print one page, wait, and then after a long time, print the next page)? This happens to me quite often, and I've tried comparing two documents, one that prints quickly, and one that prints slowly, and I can't tell what the difference is that makes them behave so differently.

Gregg Miller
San Diego

Dear Gregg,

Sometimes it seems like the printing process should be simple. Doesn't the printer just replicate what we see on the screen? The reality is that every file sent to a printer needs to be processed and formatted for that printer before it is actually printed. This is the purpose of the printer drivers. How long this process takes depends upon the type and size of file, as well as, the printer drivers.

The structure of a PDF (Portable Document Format) file can be quite complex. Since it is designed to replicate the look of virtually any other type of file, it must have routines for dealing with the huge variety of objects that it will encounter whether created from a text document (the simplest type), a Web page, or a desktop publishing page with multiple graphics. Looking at the final page will not always tell us what complications may be embedded in the PDF file. As you might guess, the more complications in the file, the longer it might take to be processed for printing. The printing programs need to unwrap the details and reformat for the specific printer.

The other issue in how long it might take to print a file is the amount of data to be processed for each page. Text is relatively simple because each character is merely one byte. Graphics are a different matter. While two pages may have embedded graphics which are identical to the human eye, one file type may be 100 bytes larger or more in size. If the larger, uncompressed graphic is being sent to the printer, it will certainly take much longer for the image to be processed. Also, if the text appears in a graphic file rather than as ASCII text, it will take longer to process—even though the two may look exactly the same.

There are also issues of what else is your computer doing while you are printing. If you have other processor consuming problems such as antivirus scans running, then you can also see a slowdown in the printing process.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I've been reading you since The Byte Buyer in '84, when my son told me that "Lone Wolf McQuade was in the magazine!" This is my first question: I use Firefox and Chrome. I want to share favorites and bookmarks between the two so that I can get to all my sites on either browser. I have SyncToy to share files on two computers. How can I use SyncToy to make favorites and bookmarks the same on both browsers on the same computer?

Thanks,

Pat Palmer
San Diego, CA

Dear Pat,

While there is no problem sharing favorites/bookmarks between the two browser by using import and export tools, there are some issues in syncing them so that they both reflect the same content as changes are made to one. When you export bookmarks from either Chrome or Firefox, a separate HTML file is created from the structure within the browser. The normal procedure for transferring these bookmarks is to import the HTML file into the other browser. I know of no way to use SyncToy to directly sync the bookmarks between the two browsers. How they are handled within each browser is different enough to make specialized software necessary.

Fortunately there are companies that have specialized in this problem. The best known is Xmarks (www.xmarks.com). They provide software which will copy the bookmarks from your browsers and save them on a server on the Internet. Then, as you add more browsers and/or computers the bookmarks are assessed and synced. You even get a Web interface where you can edit and manage your bookmarks which will later be synced with your various browsers/computers.

Xmarks announced last September that it would be closing due to profitability issues (running out of money), but was later acquired by LastPass (lastpass.com), an online password backup company. This highlights one of the problems of the free services which we take for granted. If they can't figure out how to make money while providing the service, they are likely to go away—unless someone else buys them.

Another, less well-known, company that provides a similar service is Tidy Favorites (www.tidyfavorites.com). These type of services have made syncing bookmarks/favorites easy. As long as there are services like these to help solve our problems, we don't need to resort to the complications of using programs like SyncToy to share specialized information in unique situations.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am unable to restart or shutdown my Windows 7 computer via the Start Menu. It gets stuck in "shutting down." I noticed this about three weeks ago. I had not added any new programs. I have run a defrag on the registry. In the Start Menu I don't see anything unusual.

Edie
San Diego

Dear Edie,

I have seen problems like this before, but in Windows 7 (if not caused by a virus, hard drive problem, or corrupted operating system), they would eventually straightened themselves out through updates. I would first ensure that all updates to Windows 7 have been installed through "Windows Update." (Windows 7 Service Pack 1 has been released, which includes fixes for many past problems.)

If you are up-to-date, then check this article from Microsoft (support.microsoft.com/kb/977307) "You cannot make a computer that is running Windows 7 shut down or sleep." It includes a patch for dealing with a problem similar to yours. That is not to say it is your problem, but you will at least you will know if it does work. This is also why you should first do all your updates. Fixes such as this one will often be included in other automatic Windows updates.

If none of this has worked, then you should try to revert to an earlier Restore Point in System Restore. If none of these steps have worked then you will need to do complete virus scans, check the integrity of your hard drive, or possibly reinstall the operating system—which I consider the last resort.

Digital Dave

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The Beginning of a Programming Climb

“Developing Apps for Apple” by Jack Dunning

In another one of his projects, Jack is learning how to program apps for the iPad. He shares his learning process of how to become an Apple developer and use Xcode.

I took the plunge and bought a Mac. It's another step in my adventure toward writing Apple iPad (and eventually Android) apps. I know that this type of development can be done on PCs (with some gymnastics), but it just seemed easier to dive into the Apple world completely—especially since the tools were built for the Mac. I don't think using a Mac is going to do much damage to my computer soul. I'm not planning to make the Mac my primary computer. Its position will be one of a development platform for writing and compiling programs.



Before Jack started his new career as a programmer, he purchased the official tools:

Before the Mac could become my main machine, I would need to check it out with a number of programs. Most of my apps for ComputorEdge are Web based, so it doesn't matter what type of computer I use as long as I have a Web browser. I know that I can hook up to my virtual private network with the Mac, but its connection regularity with the required software is a bit of a problem. (I may or may not take the time to figure that one out.) Maybe someday the Mac will seduce me away from my other computers, but, for now, it's just another computer.

I purchased the cheapest model Mac that I felt would do the job. There is a bit of sticker shock



Before Jack started his new career as a programmer, he purchased the official tools: a ball cap, an old t-shirt, shorts, sandals, Jolt Cola, Doritos, a yo-yo and a box of rubber bands.

reason I went with the laptop is because with all the other computers I have limited space on my desk. I can fit the MacBook in one corner of the desk, although I'll need to move the phone. (No one calls me anyway.) I also thought that it would be easier to take a laptop with me—in case I do any traveling.

When I first took it out of the box, I was surprised at how small this MacBook Pro was (13" screen). At first, I thought I was looking at a Netbook. (Apple makes MacBook Pros with 17" screens if you want to pay twice as much (\$2400)—I didn't.) However, I did like the lightness of the machine and found it much more useful than the iPad for cheating at crossword puzzles at the breakfast table (no stand required, keyboard less susceptible to error).

I'm not new to Macs. It has been a few years since I last used one, yet the interface seems pretty much the same (cosmetic changes). I had no problem diving right in. The Mac is probably easier to learn than the PC for the newbie, but I'm not the one to judge. (I'm not sure how many newbies there are now.) All-in-all, with the exception of the price, the Mac seems as good as any other computer.

On Becoming an Apple Developer

One of the good things about programming Apple products is Apple supplies all the tools and documentation that you need. It is relatively easy to get started by downloading the Xcode developers package. Apple says, "Xcode provides everything developers need to create great applications for Mac, iPhone and iPad." I certainly hope so since I paid \$4.99 to download it from Apple's iTunes. (The name iTunes is starting to sound silly now that it is used for so much more than merely music. I guess Apple is stuck with it.) The \$4.99 charge seemed pretty reasonable for 4.5GB of software. I think the \$4.99 charge is only there to prevent looky-loos from eating up bandwidth by doing gratuitous downloads. There were comments from quite a few developers complaining about the size of the download when they were only looking for a patch for their current version. They loved the product, but hated the download time. It took me about 50 minutes to get Xcode downloaded and another few minutes for the installation. When done I was presented with the window in Figure 1. It looks like all I need to do is click "Create a new Xcode project" and I'll be on my way. (Deliciously tempting. I'll do that in a few minutes.)

when I know that if I were buying a PC, I could get the same capabilities (or more) for half the price. The bottom line for even the smallest Mac (with keyboard and monitor) is one thousand dollars (\$999). I settled on the twelve hundred dollar (\$1199) MacBook Pro laptop. Part of the

I can fit the MacBook in one corner of the desk. I also thought that it would be easier to take a laptop with me—in case I do any traveling.



Figure 1. The Xcode start window on the Apple Macintosh.

I could get the Xcode tools for free by joining the Apple Developers Program. There are two of them, one for iOS (the iPhone and iPad) and another for OS X (the Mac). Each costs \$99 per year which means the Xcode package is not really free. Of course I will be joining the iOS program—when the time comes. Apple says, "The iOS Developer Program provides a complete and integrated process for developing and distributing iOS apps on the App Store." The main advantage to the program will be getting apps into the App Store (iTunes) for distribution.

I'm just starting so I don't need to spend the \$99 for the Developers Program yet. I first need to figure out how to program this thing. (As it turns out, if I want to test the programs with a real iPad, I will need to join the Developers Program. The Xcode package does have simulators for the iPad and iPhone, but there is nothing like testing on the real thing. Plus, Apple couldn't have people putting their own programs on their own iPad without some level of involvement. If I can go a couple of weeks without joining the iOS Developer's Program, I will get full use out of my \$4.99.)

Starting to Program

Not being one to waste a lot of time reading manuals, I immediately clicked "Create a new Xcode project." I was then presented with Figure 2. As can be seen on the left side of the window, there are template options for both iOS and Mac OS X. The Xcode package can be used for programming either the iPhone and iPad (iOS) or the Mac (OS X). This is convenient for the uber-programmer who is writing apps for both sides of the Apple world. However, there are separate Developers Programs for each side respectively. In order to be blessed by Apple the price of \$99/year for each.

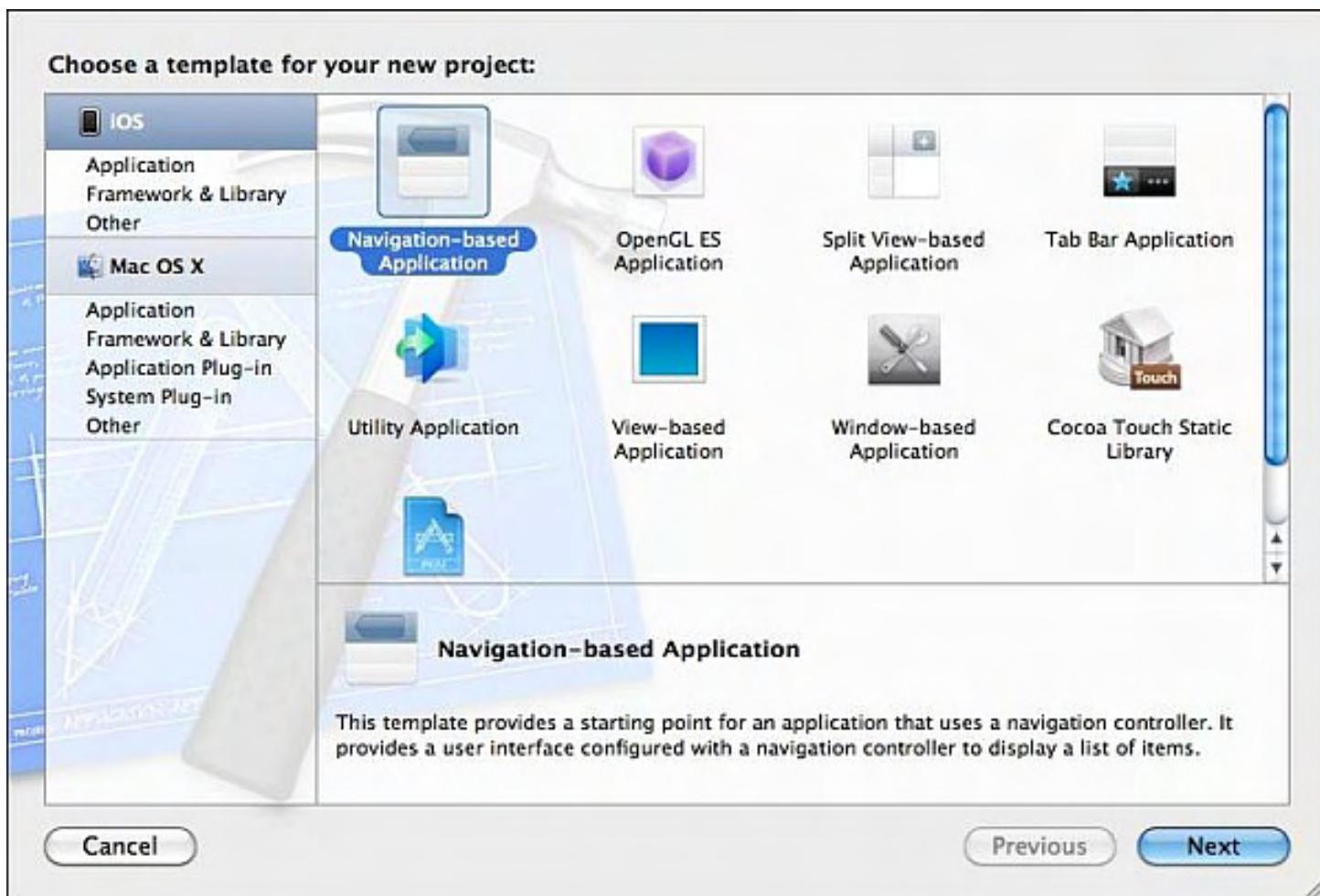


Figure 2. Choosing a template for my first program.

As I don't really know what I'm doing, I just accept the default of Navigation-based Application. In next window (Figure 3), it's easy enough to pick a name for the project.

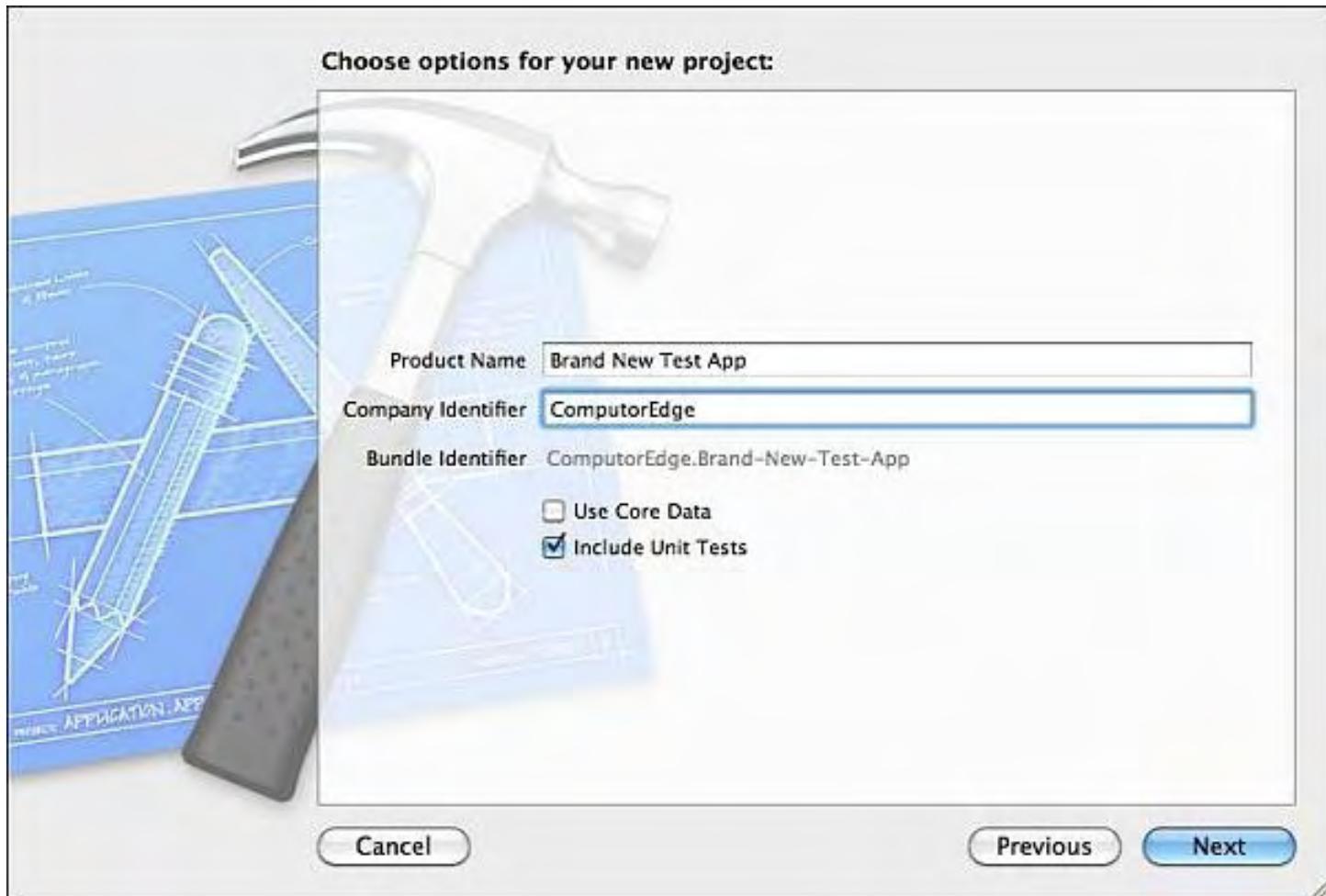


Figure 3. Naming the new project.

Then, I create a new folder for the project which I will most likely dispose of at some time in the future. See Figure 4. (To tell the truth, I will probably never dump this folder, even though in a few days it will most likely be totally useless. I'm not the best at being computer fastidious. I often don't even bother to delete Spam. I just move the important stuff to another folder.)

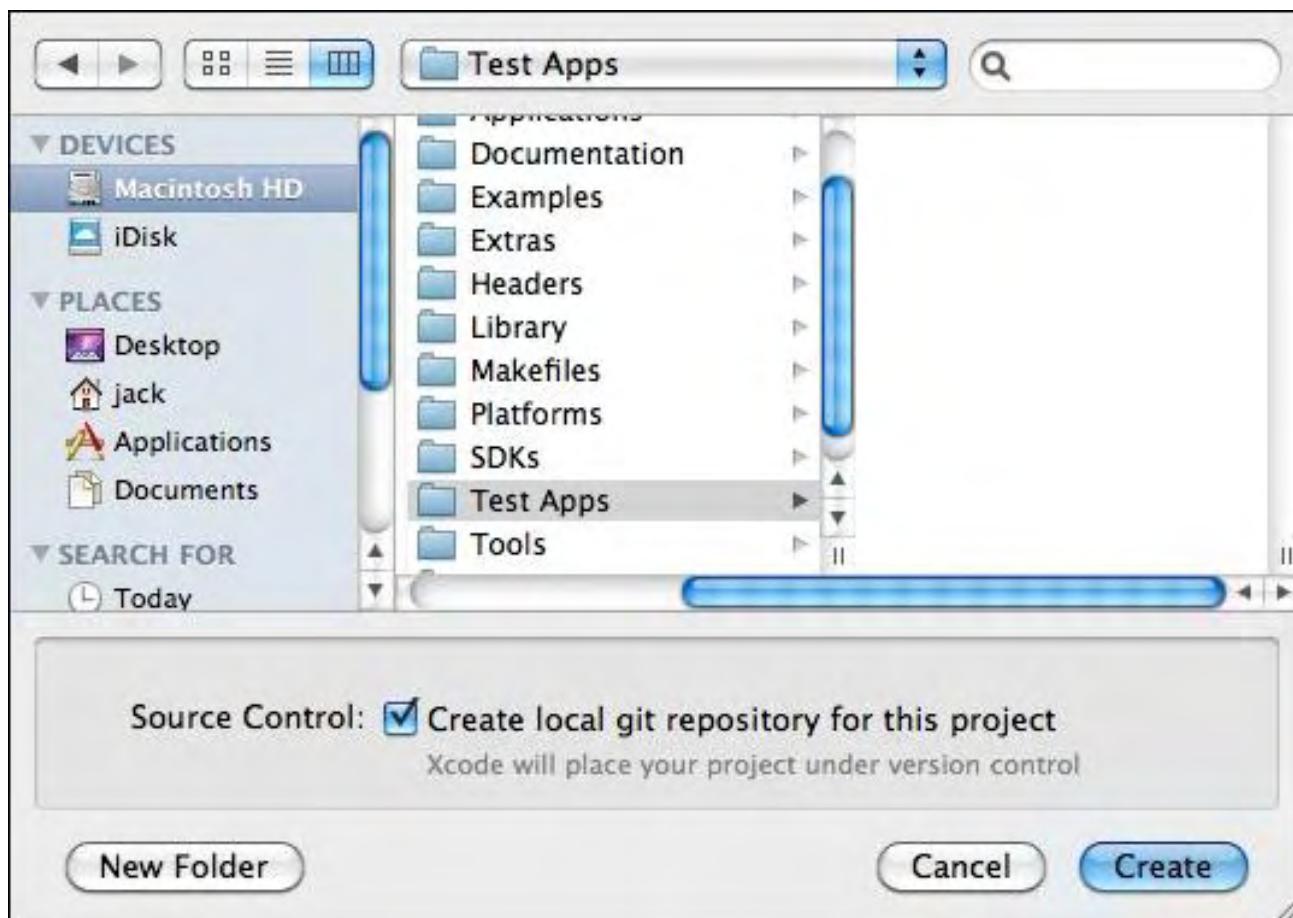


Figure 4. Creating the file location.

The screen shown in Figure 5 appears.

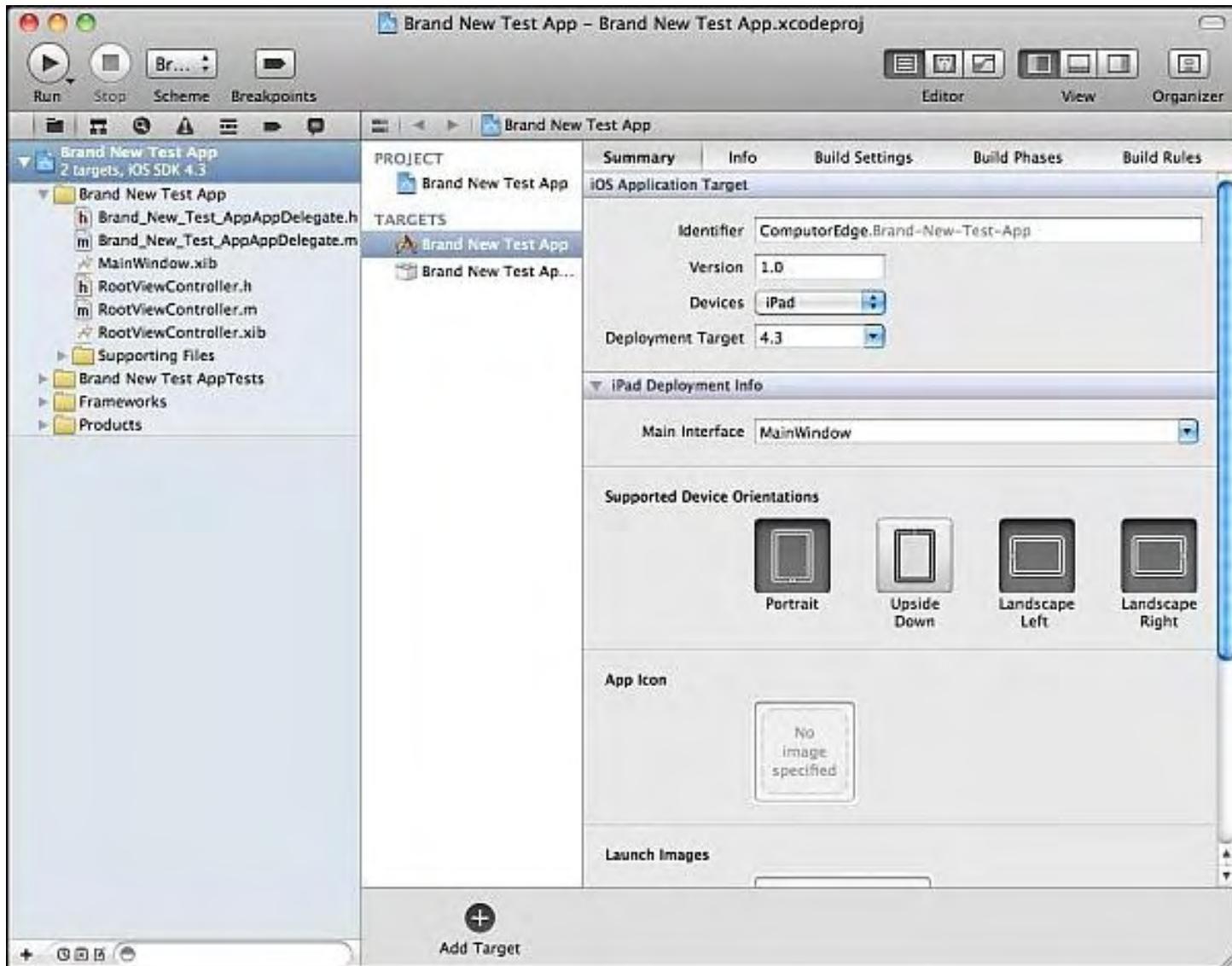


Figure 5. The Xcode programming screen.

Hummm. I guess I may need to consult the manual.

Xcode Documentation

Apple has done a pretty good job of creating a hospitable programming environment. There is extensive documentation available within the Xcode package. The editor helps with syntax errors in real-time by making suggestions and any command can be highlighted, then looked up. I quickly found the help screen shown in Figure 6, which clarified (a little).

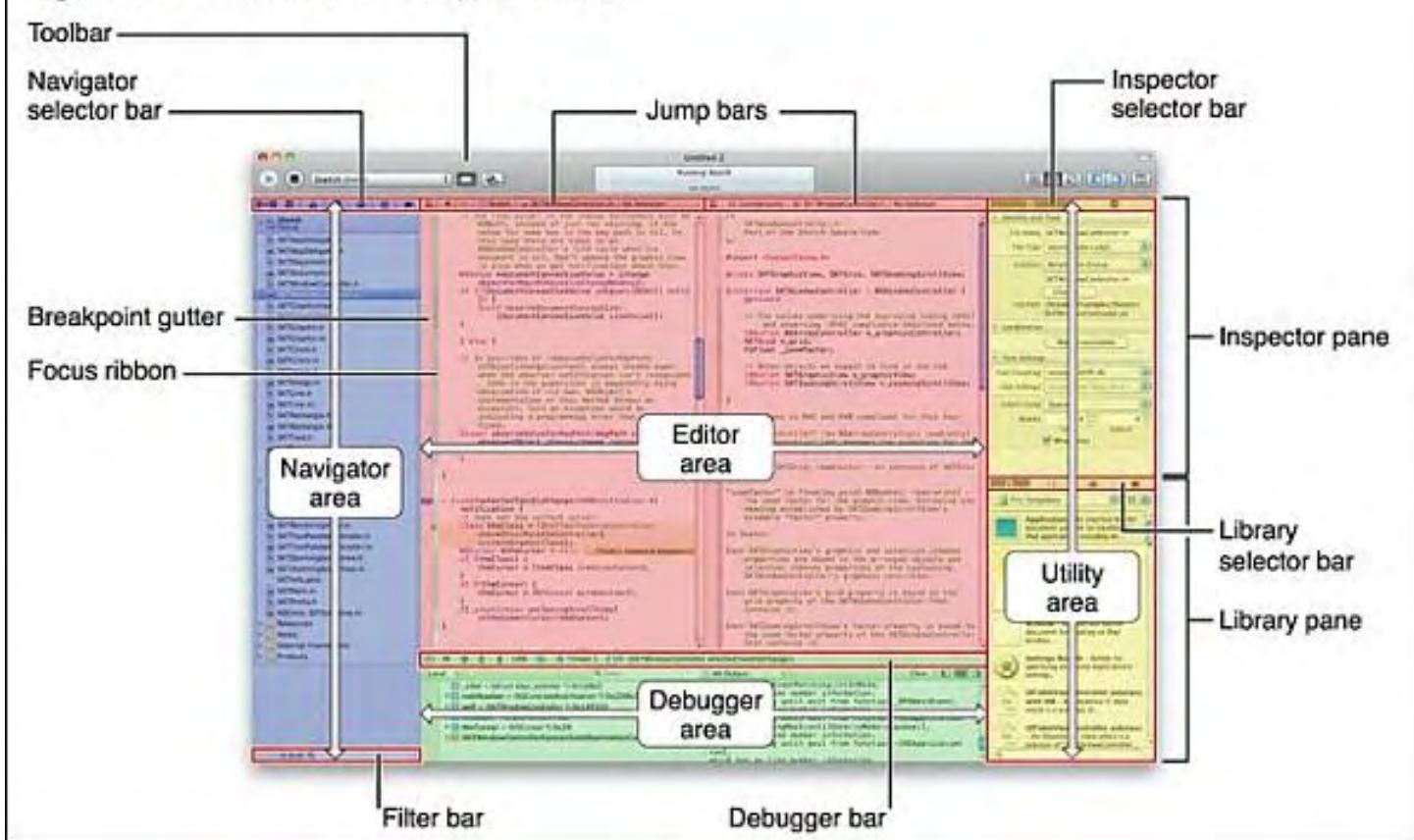
Figure I-1 The Xcode 4 workspace window

Figure 6. The Xcode 4 Workspace Window taken from Apple documentation.

I uncovered the "Hello, World" sample application and managed to get it working in the simulator. I made a couple of bone head mistakes, but that is par for the course. I will continue in this pursuit, but I don't know how much I will chronicle in *ComputorEdge*. I'm afraid that detailing the minutia of programming code would be deadly boring for most readers. Too often I've seen people's eyes glaze over while listening to two nerds talk about their latest triumphs. It's not a pretty sight.

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

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Why Bookstores are Dead" by Wally Wang

As bookstores are closing, big publishers need to adjust; more convoluted logic from Microsoft and Dell; Google works to stop Android fragmentation; where is iWork '11?; virtual keyboards are the future; how to use Wi-Fi to access your iTunes library on your iPad.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Borders is shutting down over 200 stores nationwide and their future looks about as cheery as Blockbuster Video, which is also shutting down stores across the country. Both Borders and Blockbuster Video suffer from the same problem. At one time, they were the only way to get the books or rent videos. When the Internet arrived, both Borders and Blockbuster Video lost their toll booth status.

If you needed information in the old days, you had no choice but to visit a library (with old books) or a bookstore (with the latest books and information). If you needed to order a book, you had to go through the bookstore and then pick it up a few days later.

With the Internet, people can order books themselves and have them delivered right to their front door. Instead of browsing through a bookstore, people can find the information they need much faster by using Google. With easy access to a computer, most people no longer have a reason to go to a bookstore to find information or order a book.

What makes physical bookstores obsolete is that they require a huge amount of space to stock a variety of different books, much like a general store in the Old West had to stock tools, food, toys, fabric, guns, etc. because they didn't know what people might want. Walk into a bookstore and close to 90 percent of all the books there probably won't interest you one bit.

The book selection you do care about will always seem so small compared to the total number of books in the store. Therefore, everyone can find something they like in a bookstore, but nobody can find the selection they really want in that same bookstore. In comparison, Amazon.com can offer a vast selection of books that cater to your specific interest in a way that no physical bookstore can ever do.

Brick and mortar bookstores are as obsolete as general stores that catered to everyone but never quite satisfied the needs of anyone. The demise of bookstores also spells the fall of book distributors and publishers.

If there are no bookstores, there's no need for book distributors to ship books. In the old days, publishers simply sold books to bookstores and let them worry about selling books. When bookstores were the only option, this strategy worked, but with bookstores no longer attracting foot traffic, publishers need to focus more on marketing.

Toss a book about wood working in a bookstore and 99 percent of all people walking through that store at any given time won't want a wood working book. The problem has nothing to do with the quality of the book, but with the fact that bookstores simply stock a little of everything in hopes of selling something. A book about wood working can thus languish on the shelves for days, weeks, months, or even years.

To sell a wood working book, publishers need to market that book to people interested in wood working, such as Home Depot, Lowe's or other areas where you can consistently and reliably find potential wood working enthusiasts. A book store is actually the worst place to sell any book because most people won't care about that topic.

The authors of those "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books initially sold their books in supermarkets, not bookstores, because they correctly guessed that the supermarket crowd would be more likely to buy their books than the bookstore crowd. To sell books, publishers need to target niche markets for their different book categories. Instead of trying to sell books in a general store (brick and mortar bookstore) and hope customers will find them, publishers need to actively seek out where their potential customers are already at, and then market to those customers.

Big publishers, who print a variety of books, will need to market their books to different niches. Instead of selling a wood working book and a cookbook to a bookstore, publishers will need to sell the wood working book to markets like Home Depot while selling cookbooks to kitchenware stores. Every book category will need to be marketed differently, which means that smaller publishers, who specialize in certain books, will have an advantage over a lumbering giant like Random House that has to cater to wildly diverse markets.

The real question is do we even need publishers any more? Publishers can improve and edit a manuscript, but they can also block books from being published. Over the years, numerous popular books have been rejected by multiple publishers (entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/literature/14-best-selling-books-repeatedly-rejected-by-publishers.htm) such as "Harry Potter," "Chicken Soup for the Soul," "Jonathan Livingston Seagull," "The Celestine Prophecy," "Gone with the Wind," "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," and "Lord of the Flies."

Circumvent the publishers and authors can get their manuscripts published as e-books, then market them directly to customers through Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook, or Apple's iBookstore. This makes bookstores obsolete, book distributors absolutely useless, and book publishers largely irrelevant.

With newspapers dying, magazines struggling, and books getting too expensive to print, ship and store, electronic distribution and targeted niche marketing is the new future of publishing. Today's authors may lament the loss of their familiar income base, but the smart authors will look for ways to profit from this new world of publishing while everyone else wrings their hands, whines and rants about how destructive change can be, but only because they're too blind to look for the new opportunities staring at them right in their face.

More Convoluted Logic from Microsoft and Dell

To address the issue of the Windows Phone 7 apps library (11,500 apps) being so far behind iOS (350,000 apps) and Android (150,000), Microsoft's Brandon Watson said (news.cnet.com/8301-13506_3-20049132-17.html?tag=topTechContentWrap;editorPicks) in a blog post that for Microsoft, it's a matter of "quality over quantity." So if Microsoft is promoting quality over quantity, that means the number of applications available on Windows shouldn't matter compared to the number of applications available on Mac OS X because it's a matter of "quality over quantity."

After killing Netscape by bundling Internet Explorer with every copy of Windows and claiming that Internet Explorer was an integral part of the operating system and couldn't be removed, Microsoft is now complaining to European regulators that Google is engaging in anti-competitive practices (www.politico.com/news/stories/0311/52290).

html).

Microsoft executive Brad Smith accused Google of having "engaged in a broadening pattern of walling off access to content and data that competitors need to provide search results to consumers and to attract advertisers."

It's a good thing Microsoft is concerned about the dangers of "walling off access to content and data" because that means Microsoft would never try to define their own Internet standards on the world through Internet Explorer, maintain their dominance in the Office suite category by using proprietary file formats in Microsoft Office, create their own Java language standard through their J# language, prevent competitors like DR-DOS from replacing MS-DOS by making Windows 3.0 incompatible with DR-DOS, or lock corporations into Microsoft software through corporate dependence on Microsoft Exchange and Outlook. Where would we be without the benevolence of Microsoft to protect us from the danger of one company blocking rivals from competing on a level playing field?

Of course, no company is ever completely innocent in twisting the facts and laws for their own benefit, but listening to Microsoft complaining about another company's anti-competitive practices is like listening to Charlie Sheen complain that everyone in Hollywood has an outrageous ego that makes them act erratically.

After Bill Gates himself once stated that tablet computers were the future, even as the Tablet PC design failed miserably for nearly a decade, Microsoft's global chief research and strategy officer, Craig Mundie, now claims (www.smh.com.au/digital-life/tablets/tablets-might-be-a-flash-in-the-pan-microsoft-global-chief-strategy-officer-20110330-1cfv2.html) that, "I don't know whether the big screen tablet pad category is going to remain with us or not." Meanwhile, Apple sold over 14 million iPads last year and people are still lining up to buy the latest iPad 2 wherever it's sold. Even Microsoft is pushing for Windows 8 to appear on tablets, so why would Microsoft be developing Windows 8 tablets when their own global chief research and strategy officer claims that the tablet category may not be around for long?

Dell's global head of marketing for large enterprises and public organizations, Andy Lark, claimed that the iPad wasn't useful for business (www.cio.com.au/article/381337/apple_ipad_will_fail_enterprise_dell/) because, "An iPad with a keyboard, a mouse and a case [means] you'll be at \$1500 or \$1600; that's double of what you're paying. That's not feasible."

Assuming you get the most expensive iPad for \$829, toss in a case for \$70, add in a Bluetooth keyboard for another \$100, and you're still nowhere close to the \$1,500 that Dell's Andy Lark claimed it would cost to make an iPad useful.

Even more curious is why Andy Lark believes you need a mouse to use an iPad. By exaggerating the costs of an iPad while ignoring that it's perfectly possible to use the iPad without any accessories whatsoever, Andy Lark is simply using fear and confusion to keep people from looking at the iPad while ignoring multiple corporations already using the iPad (www.informationweek.com/news/personal-tech/tablets/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=229400625&cid=RSSfeed_IWK_All) successfully, such as European firms looking to replace paper notes with iPads (www.electrónica.com/articles/11/04/03/europe.says.ipad.2.shortage.hurting.meetings/).

Rather than encourage people to objectively look at all their options and then make a decision based on what's best for them, so many people simply want everyone to avoid Apple products and listen to the "experts" tell them what they really should get.

If you don't want to think for yourself, want other people to tell you what you should get even if it's not in your best interests, then by all means, avoid Apple products at all costs. Then as you're willingly ignoring facts and blindly following the advice of "experts," you can claim that people only buy Apple products because they believe Apple's

marketing and can't think for themselves.

Google Works to Stop Android Fragmentation

For years, Android supporters have debunked claims that fragmentation is a problem with Android's open source model where anyone can use and modify the operating system. Now Google is taking steps to restrict Android modification specifically to prevent fragmentation (androidcommunity.com/google-adds-non-fragmentation-clauses-to-android-oem-agreements-to-boost-os-consistency-20110331/).

The main goal is to insure that Android provides a consistent user experience on all types of devices. Unlike Apple's iOS, which was actually designed for tablets and then modified for the smaller form factor of the iPhone, Google designed Android for smart phones first, and then had to react and change Android for tablets as well.

Although Google redesigned Android for tablets, developers have been slow to write tablet-specific apps (www.informationweek.com/news/personal-tech/tablets/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=229400697&cid=RSSfeed_IWK_All). If you bought a Motorola Xoom, you either have to wait until developers start creating more apps or you just have to be happy with what's already built-in with the Xoom. For technology fanatics, the Xoom is just another toy to play with, but for the average person who needs something that can actually help them be productive right away, the Xoom is still an on-going project. Technical specifications are meaningless if they don't help you do anything.

As Google works to keep Android from fragmenting, they may slowly be moving away from the freedom and chaos of the open source model (www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2011/04/android-trojan/) and more towards the guidance of a closed model like Apple's iOS, Research in Motion's QNX Playbook operating system, Hewlett-Packard's webOS, or even Microsoft's Windows Phone 7. Pretty soon the argument that Android is superior because it's open source that anyone can customize may soon be nothing more than a distant memory.

Where is iWork '11?

On January 2009, Apple introduced iWork '09. More than two years later, Apple still hasn't released iWork despite rumors that it would appear when the Mac App Store debuted. This two year time span is the longest between iWork updates, but at this year's Apple Developer's Conference (June 6th), expect to see a near final version of Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and a new version of iWork.

Apple will likely use iWork to demonstrate the new features of Lion so you can see how the latest operating system features can translate into greater productivity when tied to iWork. This combination of Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and iWork will likely generate excitement for both products, while highlighting the best features of each.

Combine iWork's ability to run on Mac OS X and the iPad (and possibly the iPhone), and you'll have an office suite that more Apple users will find attractive. They may still need to use Microsoft Office, but they'll probably have more fun using iWork instead.

While all the programs in iWork will undoubtedly get new features, one major feature will be the ability to create EPUB e-books beyond the basic text and graphics format that Pages currently offers. The EPUB format can technically allow audio and video to be embedded in a document. That way you can create an e-book with text and static graphics along with video clips and audio playback.

Suppose you're reading an e-book about history. You could view actual news clips of Vietnam War protesters in the 60's or hear an audio clip of Martin Luther King giving a speech. By taking e-books beyond static text and pictures,

tomorrow's EPUB e-books can be far more interactive and interesting, but these features will remain a hazy promise unless someone starts creating inexpensive software to allow the creation of such interactive e-books, which is one major feature that a new version of iWork can offer.

Virtual Keyboards are the Future

Although some people don't like typing on a virtual keyboard, it's the future. When computers first came out, many people complained they didn't like typing on computer keyboards either because the keys weren't angled like the keys of a typewriter. Further more, the computer keyboard didn't require as much pressure to type a letter, increasing accidental typing over the more physical pressure required to type a letter on a typewriter.

Notice how nobody's complaining about computer keyboards today and pining for the good old days of typewriter keyboards? The same will eventually happen as more people accept virtual keyboards.

The three key features of a virtual keyboard are the ability to change key layouts quickly and easily to allow typing in foreign languages or just to create specialized keyboards for spreadsheet work, the ability to predict the words you're typing when you type just a few letters, and the ability to make typing less physically stressful on the hands, resulting in greater comfort. Physical keyboards simply cannot compete except with people who prefer the familiar feel of a computer keyboard, just as people once preferred the familiar feel of a typewriter keyboard.

Virtual keyboards make sense on a tablet where there's no room for a physical keyboard, but can a virtual keyboard replace a physical keyboard on a laptop? Acer offers a unique dual-screen laptop (news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-20023718-1.html) where one screen can display a virtual keyboard.



Figure 1. Acer's dual-screen laptop.

While Acer's computer looks impressive, what will make this dual-screen laptop even more exciting will be programs designed to fully exploit this dual-screen interface. If Acer expects to sell a lot of these laptops, they can't just parade a bunch of technical specifications in front of the public and expect them to get excited. Instead, Acer needs to create unique, interesting and useful programs that show exactly how this dual-screen laptop can help you be more productive, have fun and offer something that you can't get on a traditional laptop or even a single-screen iPad.

When Apple introduced the first Macintosh, they demonstrated programs like MacPaint and MacWrite so you could see how to take advantage of the new graphical user interface and draw pictures or embed graphics and text in a document, which wasn't easily done with MS-DOS computers.

Will Acer create and demonstrate similar unique programs that exploit this dual-screen laptop? Or will they just list the resolution and pixel density of the screens as major selling points? If they do the former, they could sell a lot of dual-screen laptops. If they do the latter, then they'll just have all this wonderful technology that can't do anything better than a regular laptop. Can you guess what Acer's most likely to do?

* * *

If you have an iPad, you can transfer your entire music library stored in iTunes. However, if you have lots of music, this could fill up your iPad's storage capacity. As an alternative, use something called Home Sharing, which lets your iPad play music stored on your computer.

First, you need to make sure you have a Wi-Fi network that both your iPad and your computer can use. Second, click on the Advanced menu in iTunes and click Turn On Home Sharing. You'll need an Apple ID to complete this process, but you can get a free Apple ID (appleid.apple.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/MyAppleId.woa) by using your e-mail address.

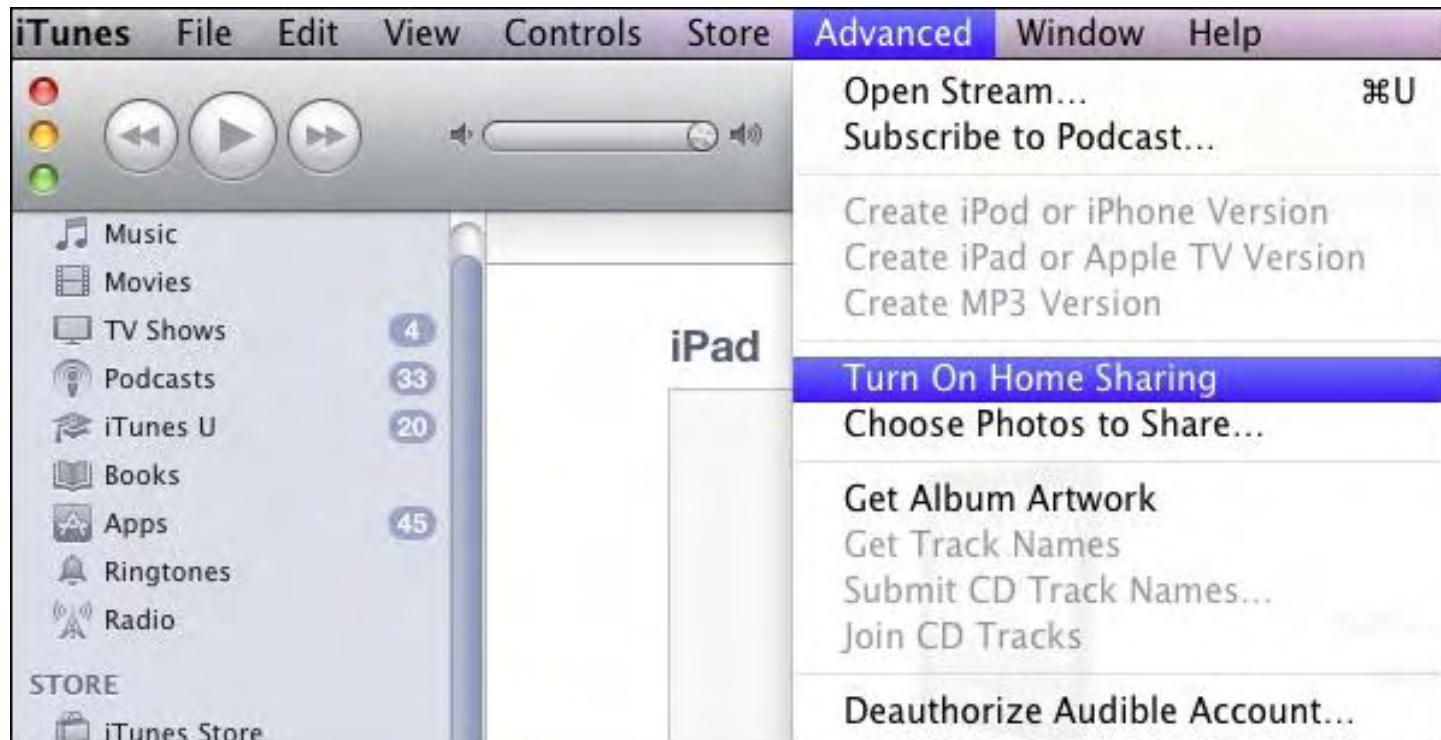


Figure 2. You must turn on Home Sharing in iTunes on your computer.

Third, click the iPod icon on your iPad and view your music library. Tap Library and a menu appears, letting you connect to your music library stored on your computer. Tap your computer's music library and you'll now be able to

play music on your iPad that's actually stored on your computer.



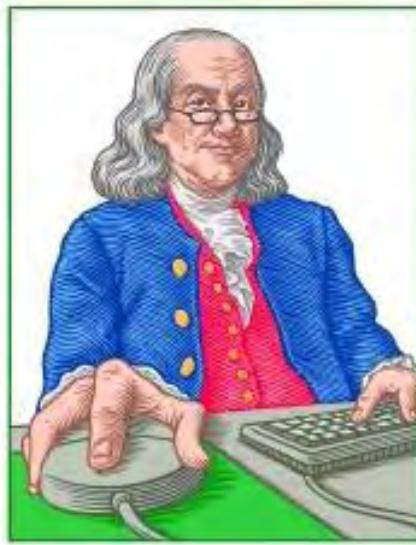
Figure 3. You need to select your iTunes music library on your computer.

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 particiles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

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),
 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),
 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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702))
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541), Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)),
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468))
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468), Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894))
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362) The 15-Minute Movie Method (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tI?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8) In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method" (www.15minutemoviemethod.com) along with blogging about electronic publishing and how authors can take advantage of technology at his site "The Electronic Author." (www.wallacewang.com) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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LINUX LESSONS

**"AN INVESTMENT
IN LINUX KNOWLEDGE
PAYS THE BEST
INTEREST."**

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

**"Finding Out What
Your Linux Machine is
DOING."** by Tony J.
Podrasky

Tony offers a shorts script which will isolate and display specific Linux processes.

Filename: DOING

Use: Locating specific information about something the system is "doing".

Invocation: tony% <DOING [whatever you are looking for]>

Example: tonyp% DOING init

System's Response:

```
USER PID %CPU %MEM SIZE RSS TTY STAT START TIME COMMAND
root 1 0.0 0.0 1504 496 ? S Mar01 0:39 init [3]
```

(You see that the response shows the word "init", which is what we asked it to find).

This simple shell file will take a snapshot of the process tree and examine it for the keyword you entered after the word "DOING". To get an idea as to how it works, save the shell file (below) naming it "DOING", and do a `<chmod 755 DOING>` (without the arrow parentheses). Next, at the system prompt (mine is "tonyp%"), type in `<ps -aux>`. You'll see a process hierarchy. Look through the huge response, select something that is buried in it, and type in: `<./DOING [put the name of the thing you selected here]>`. The output will only list lines with [the selected word] in it.

NOTES: I give my shell files uppercase names so that I *know* they are my shell files and not the system's binaries. Unlike some other operating systems (Windows), Linux is case sensitive which means "DOING" is not interpreted the same as "doing". You can rename the DOING file whatever you wish, but then in the shell file (below) edit the line that has "DOING" in it and replace it with whatever you called the file.

-CUT HERE-

```
#!/bin/csh -f
```

```
echo " "
echo "USER          PID %CPU %MEM SIZE  RSS TTY STAT START    TIME COMMAND"
ps -auxw | grep $1 | egrep -v grep | egrep -v DOING | egrep -v aux
echo " "
```

-CUT HERE-

Tony has been in the computer field since 1976 when he started working for Data General Corp as a field engineer. Later going on to design hardware interfaces, write patches for operating systems, and build networks. It was in 1995 while working with the military on several projects that he ran into a "spook" who showed him a laptop that ran a then-unknown O/S called "Linux." "A laptop running a form of UNIX tony = a marriage made in heaven!" Tony can be reach for questions at Linux Questions for Tony (hunybuny@netzero.net).

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Beyond Personal Computing

A Look at the Human Side of Computing

Beyond Personal Computing

"Conundrum Interface: The Disconnect Between Computer Pros and Non-Tech Users" by

Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn shares humorous anecdotes about Help Desk and Technical Support calls that show a gap in communication—lost in translation.

When PCs started popping up everywhere in the last half of the last century, the standard joke was that if you had too many PC problems, you obviously didn't have a teenage boy in the house. So, Yes, kids (especially teen boys) took to computers like ducks to water. And parents and even relatives got used to saying "Call Randy," if something went wrong with their computer.

But dealing with teenage-Randys, who were family and thus forgiving, was one thing. These kids could explain or go over computer instructions until you understood. Or until Randy graduated high school and left for college, whichever came first. But for homes without Randys, people had to turn to computer professionals for education and help.

And therein lies the conundrum: If computer pros are used to "thinking" in the alternate-universe reality of computers, how effective are they at teaching non-techies like us? (Who think finding the crumb-door on a new toaster is about as high-tech as it gets.)

Climbing that Learning Curve

Consider the lady learning to write and execute a simple computer program, in a BASIC programming language class. The instructor told them to type "R-U-N" and hit enter. But her program didn't work. Only when the instructor came over to investigate did he realize that she had typed in exactly what she'd heard: "Are-You-In."

And then there was the confused user, afraid that if he restarted his computer he'd lose all of his saved work. "After all, that's what happens every time I turn off my calculator," he quite logically explained.

And consider the office user who asked a co-worker: "See that recycle bin icon? Does someone come around to empty it?" Or how about this overheard bus stop conversation, "Yeah, this kid was so dumb! I had to explain what a CPU was. It's a computah! You know, C-P-U, Com-Pu-Tah."

How about a student asking his friend, "Do you know any computer programming languages?" "Sure," the friend replied. "I know .com, .net and .org."

Then there was the computer company employee who went to the Post Office to insure and mail some expensive software to a customer. The postal employee filling out the insurance form wanted to know exactly what this "software" was. "Is it, like, pajamas?" he wondered.

Sometimes even professional companies aren't in total sync with the Real World of Computers. Such as the manager at a company that makes Ethernet firewalls. Every month he gets a free magazine called "Fire Protection"—all about sprinklers and fire alarms. A bit unrelated to Ethernet firewalls, but I guess those macro-terms "Fire" and "Protection" at least sound relevant.

Help Desk Disconnect

Help Desks take a lot of heat when customers don't understand what they're saying. And, admittedly, a lot gets lost in translation over the phone. One Help Desk Tech in the last century even had a mouse pad with a target on it labeled "*Bang Head Here.*"

And pity the poor Support Tech on the phone, who was instructing, "OK, ma'am, I need you to do a ctrl-alt-del." The customer did, but "Nothing happened." After a few more instructions that were going nowhere, the user piped up: "Should I turn my computer on? Would that help?"

One Support Tech told a caller to "turn off error control and see if that clears the problem up." The customer was seriously confused. "Turn off *air* control? What the heck is *air* control?" Or consider the Support Tech who instructed "OK, in the bottom left hand side of the screen, can you see the 'OK' button displayed?" The user was duly impressed. "Wow! How can you see my screen from there?"

One Software Help Desk got an irate call from an older lady that installing their software had resulted in a non-working mouse. The Tech walked her through the installation procedure again, and suddenly the mouse was working fine. After which she snarled, "Why did your software unplug my mouse?" The Tech's explanations weren't accepted, and she put her husband on. "Why did your software decide my computer didn't need a mouse?" he asked angrily, then demanded another phone number to return the software.

Sometimes the simplest instructions just don't compute with us non-tech users. One Tech Support asked a phone-in customer, "What kind of computer do you have?" The huffy user replied, "I don't know. You're the Help Desk, you're supposed to know that!" Another typical exchange had a Help Desk Tech instructing, "Now type C, like Charlie." The customer started typing while murmuring, "C-H-A-R-." "Not the whole word, Sir," broke in the patient Tech. "Just the C. Now type an M, like Mary, but just the M, OK?" The customer starts typing and murmuring, "M-O-K ..."

Too often, Support Techs get an already exasperated and irate user with little or no computer experience. "My machine is broken! Nothin' but garbage on the screen!" The Tech gamely asks, "Can you read the garbage on the screen to me?" The user complies, reading the message letter by letter: "P-L-E-A-S-E P-R-E-S-S E-N-T-E-R".

Then there was the Support Tech trying to determine what operating system a customer had on their computer. "OK, right click on 'My Computer,' and select Properties on the menu." The customer was quick to respond. "Your computer? No, it's **my** computer!" "Yes, Sir," continued the Tech calmly, "But I mean the little picture called 'My Computer' on your desktop." The customer was still confused. "I don't see an icon called that on the top of my desk. But I do see one called that on my monitor screen."

Or how about the Support Tech who asked a caller, "Ma'am, do you see the button on the right hand side of your mouse?" The lady was confused. "No, there's just a printer and a phone on the right hand side of my mouse." Or how about an exasperated Support Tech on the phone asking, "What's the name of the icon you usually click on?" "Uh, the

mouse?" came the unsure response.

But sometimes the misunderstanding is with the Help Desk. "Hello, yes, it's me," said one caller politely. The Support Tech chuckled, glad to join the joke. "Oh, hey, yeah, it's me too." A brief silence, and then the customer clarified. "No, **Esmie**. My name is E-s-m-i-e." And I guess we should all hope that another call-in guy was kidding when he asked a Help Desk, "If my mail server name is male, does that mean my girlfriend's server is female?"

And I do wonder what the Help Desk answers were to callers stating the following:

"I have a U.S. Robotics Sportscaster modem."

"I have a teer to teer network."

"I'm in 386 Enchanted mode."

"I have a Kumquat Presario."

"What is this PUNKZIP thing?"

"Eudora keeps giving me the error 'connection confused'."

"I have an original Adidas PC." (And it runs great, right?)

"My computer won't start up. My monitor says to press F2 for setup. Or I can press F1 and fill out a resume."

"My computer is telling me I performed an illegal abortion."

Sexy Computing

On occasion, a call-in user overdoes the Cute Factor. "April here. I can't get to the Internet, and none of my screen icons say My Computer. All my screen icons are labeled Bill, Larry, Jim and Barbie. How old are you anyway?" The all-business Tech replied, "300 years old. I'm the Highlander. Let's reboot your computer. Now click on one of the names. Try Bill." The young lady reported that "Bill" opened up to folders, devices, etc. "So why did you name your My Computer icon Bill?" wondered the long-suffering Tech. "Oh, I just wanted to name it something cute," she replied. "Did I screw up?"

Then there was the user who told a Help Desk, "My computer just violated me!" Or how about the Receptionist who received a call from a user stating, "I was trying to reach testicle support." Or consider the user complaining, "My computer is getting cervical errors."

Mangled Miracles

And then there was the lady whose Windows were completely frozen, and she couldn't shut down the machine from the power button. The Support Tech determined that she had a power strip instead, which everything was plugged into. "So flip **that** off," he instructed. She did. "OK, I just gave it the finger, and I feel so much better."

One Support Tech got a call from an office, where a new desktop had been installed the previous day. The female user insisted that this new PC was "giving off some kind of electrical rays or something." When the technician arrived, a very serious young woman placed her hand, palm down, on her desk by her new PC, and asked the Tech to do the same thing. "You feel that?" she sputtered. "That's electricity! I even heard some kind of static on my phone for a second or so. And I've already had the phone guys replace the phone. It's gotta be this new computer. Do you **feel** this?"

The Tech only felt a small vibration from the PC's cooling fan oscillating. He lifted the PC a half-inch off the desk, to demonstrate to the woman that the offending vibes were just her PC's fan. She still wasn't convinced. As the Tech left, she called out after him, "Well, if they ever come in here some morning and find me fried, you'll know why!"

One Help Desk Tech had problems convincing a female caller that her problem would be solved by just ... turning the computer on. "Could you just press the button with the circle and the line on it, *please?*" pleaded the Tech. "OK, but nothing's hap— Oh! It's got some gibberish written on the screen now. It's all blue, and there's a thingie that says my name. Wow! My husband taught the computer my name!"

Or consider the call one day from a user who claimed her Enter key no longer worked. Several Techs who were Support for that particular organization jumped right on the problem. They led the user through the standard hardware troubleshooting procedures. They then resorted to swapping out the keyboard for another, but the problem persisted. The Techs checked keyboard mapping settings in the terminal, and in the software the customer was using. Still a problem with a non-working Enter key. Many more tests later, the Techs finally solved the problem: The user had suddenly started mistaking the space bar for the Enter key ...

Or how about these odd statements to Support Techs or Computer Salesmen:

"I want to buy a mainframe."

"I don't want one of those systems based on the cellulite processor." (Gosh, none of us want one of those!)

"Please put 60 nanoseconds of RAM in this computer."

"It says I have two zillion bytes available, and I need eight zillion."

"My boyfriend says my computer might need a new sea monster battery."

Foreign Translations

I know how hard it is to learn another language. And it works both ways, with foreigners struggling to learn English. Add a layer of computer-speak, and things can get very confusing very fast. Consider these Help Desk dealings with foreigners. One Support Tech finally sighed and said, "OK, Sir, well in that case I'll have to cancel the test and try again." To which the foreign voice on the telephone responded "What? You have cancer?"

Or consider the international Support Call Center, where a Russian employee kept asking his supervisor what "NT-wirus" was. Half a dozen tries later, the American Support Tech got the idea his Russian colleague wanted to know about "antivirus."

One student reported working with mostly Amigas and Macs in Art School. A Spanish exchange student asked him if he ever worked with "MS-2." It eventually dawned on the American student, that the Spanish student really meant MS-DOS, since "dos" in Spanish means two.

(Many of these funny anecdotes appear on multiple computer-joke sites. But special thanks to *Rinkworks.com* and *Netsmartinc.com*).

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

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EDITOR'S LETTERS

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Fold, Spindle, Mutilate?" "Laptop or Tablet?" "Microsoft IE,"
"Swearing Off Physical Media" "Asus EEE PC," "iPad 2 vs Xoom,"
"Get a Life, John!"

Fold, Spindle, Mutilate?

[Regarding the March 11 Beyond Personal Computing column:]

I enjoyed this article, but I think many of the anecdotes should be taken with a grain of salt. Some just don't seem to ring true. OTOH, truth is stranger than fiction, so who knows.

But I do have one nit to pick: It was not the 8-inch floppy that gave rise to "do not fold, spindle, or mutilate", as the author states. That maxim is much older than that, hailing from the punch-card era (which goes clear back to the 19th century!) and having its etymological roots in said cards.

-Pete Maurer, Rosarito, Baja California

Laptop or Tablet?

[Regarding Jack Dunning's March 11 article, "Beyond the Hype: Do You Need a Tablet Computer?":]

Thanks for answering the exact question I have been pondering for a couple weeks. I am going to be operating with both!

-Fred Conwell, San Ysidro

Microsoft IE

[Regarding the March 18 Digital Dave column:]

Dave said: "...occasionally Microsoft's Internet Explorer will work best for specific situations or Web sites. No, really!" I hate to say it, but you're right, Dave. Oh how I hate to say it.

-Gary Weinstein, Groveland, CA

Dave said "...occasionally Microsoft's Internet Explorer will work best for specific situations or Web sites. No, really!" That is part of the reason I got rid of Firefox. Way too many sites couldn't be viewed, and I couldn't figure out how to get rid of Firefox as my default browser.

I'm a member of the "Excel is the only decent piece of software Bill Gates ever gave us" club, but I'm too computer-illiterate to delve into the better stuff. I even tried Ubuntu once and after all the time and trouble to get it installed and running, the only thing I was able to do was play Tetris!

-Wes Nelson, Broomfield, CO

Swearing Off Physical Media

[Regarding the March 11 Digital Dave column:]

With my current PC LavaSoft antivirus, I found a much better price covering more computers for a longer time at my local Microcenter store than I ever was able to find online. The renewal "discounts" that LavaSoft offers are a joke by comparison.

-Stewart A. Levin, Centennial, CO

Asus EEE PC

[Regarding James Hartnett's December 24 article, "Years of Yumminess: How Has the Asus Eee Worked in the Field?":]

Just saw your story about Yum Yum. I also have one of these and adore it daily. Have installed Ubuntu 9.01 called "EasyPeasy," the best Linux version I have ever seen. I added a Samsung external CD/DVD writer and with Acronis True Image backups I can easily switch between various Linux programs.

I am going to Europe in May. The Asus and an iPad is all I will take along.

-John Vermeulen, Westminster, CO

iPad 2 vs Xoom

[Regarding Wally Wang's March 11 article, "The iPad 2":]

Specs between the Apple iPad and Motorola Zoom units are very close. Advantages to Apple are with the apps and weight. Advantages to Motorola are with a USB port, the ability to use microSD for expandable memory, and better resolution on the screen and cameras.

Depending on the media used for connectivity, the pricing appears to be a wash. Bottom line? I don't think you can go wrong with either device.

-RC Hamer, Lake Elsinore

Get a Life, John!

[Regarding John King's Comment in the March 18 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

Come on, John: get a life! It's quite obvious that Wally's comment was made tongue-in-cheek, and was rather humorous, even though he espouses Apple products. (FYI: that is also a joke)

-Andrew Kliss, San Marcos, CA.

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

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