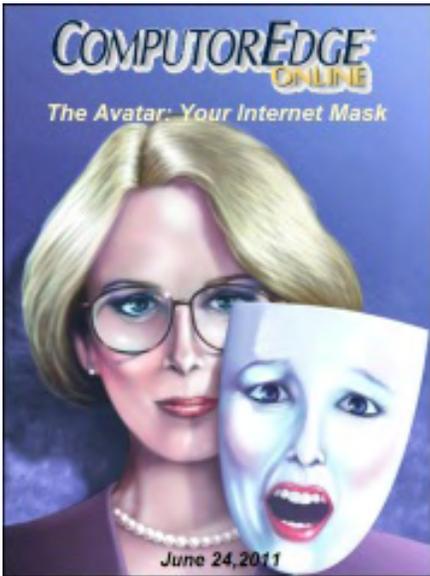


ComputerEdge™ Online — 06/24/11



This issue: The Avatar: Your Internet Mask

While an avatar may be our on-line personality, it could reflect more of us than we suspect.

Table of Contents:

[Digital Dave](#) by *Digital Dave*

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Go Back (Backup and Restore) for Windows 7; Lost DLLs for Photo Viewer; Permission to Open Windows Files/Directories.

[Computing Alter-Egos: Do You Like Your "Avatar" More than Your Real Self?](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

Avatars and Virtual Worlds
Marilyn discusses the history and uses of Avatars in the Digital Age. Sometimes the line between virtual world and real world can be crossed with Avatars—through emotions as well as psychology.

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

The Visionary vs. the Manager
The visionary vs. the manager; why Android malware is easy to make; will the real Android please stand up?; the success secrets of Apple's retail stores; don't buy a Macintosh (yet); organizing ideas with virtual index cards; death of a company; a Parallels clone; start your Macintosh up automatically after a power failure.

(Click Banner)

(Click Banner)

[Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users](#) by Tony

J. Podrasky

Getting Regular Linux Weather Reports
 Tony offers a Linux script for downloading weather reports.

[Worldwide News & Product Reviews](#) by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.
 Is Your Cellphone Messing With Your Head?; The Cloud: Soft and Fluffy or a Serious Contender?; Back to the Future: A Blast From the er, Future.

DEPARTMENTS:

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

ComputerEdge Staff

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.
 "An iPad and E-Reader Alternative," "CE on Kindle," "Microsoft Virus"



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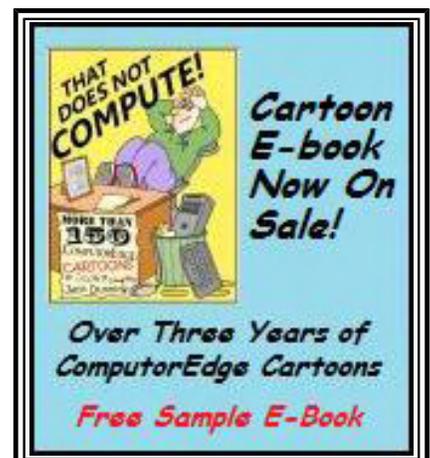
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Go Back (Backup and Restore) for Windows 7; Lost DLLs for Photo Viewer;
Permission to Open Windows Files/Directories.

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm running Windows 7 in a high-end HP. I was using XP and that had a good go back [restore] system, but Windows 7 doesn't. What gives? A long time ago, I used Roxio GoBack 3 which worked well. But that was 10 years ago. Does anyone make a go back like Roxio did for the new Windows 7 and so on? This is getting crazy. Microsoft yuk.

*Howard
El Cajon*

Dear Howard,

Actually, Windows 7 has a couple of restore ("go back") programs built in: System Restore and Backup and Restore.

System Restore is a program which will automatically create restore points for the operating system files and settings. Usually it is set to create a restore point whenever there is a Windows Update, a new program, and once a week by default. (The schedule of the regular restore point creation appears to correspond to the schedule set in the other Backup and Restore program.) By restoring to an earlier point, a computer can often overcome bad program installation, viruses and other recent malfunctions. System Restore does not back up personal and other non-system files.

The settings for System Restore can be found in the System Protection tab of the Systems Properties Window ("Advanced system settings" of System window in System and Security of the Control Panel). Selecting the appropriate drive and clicking the "Configure..." button will allow setting adjustments (see Figure 1).

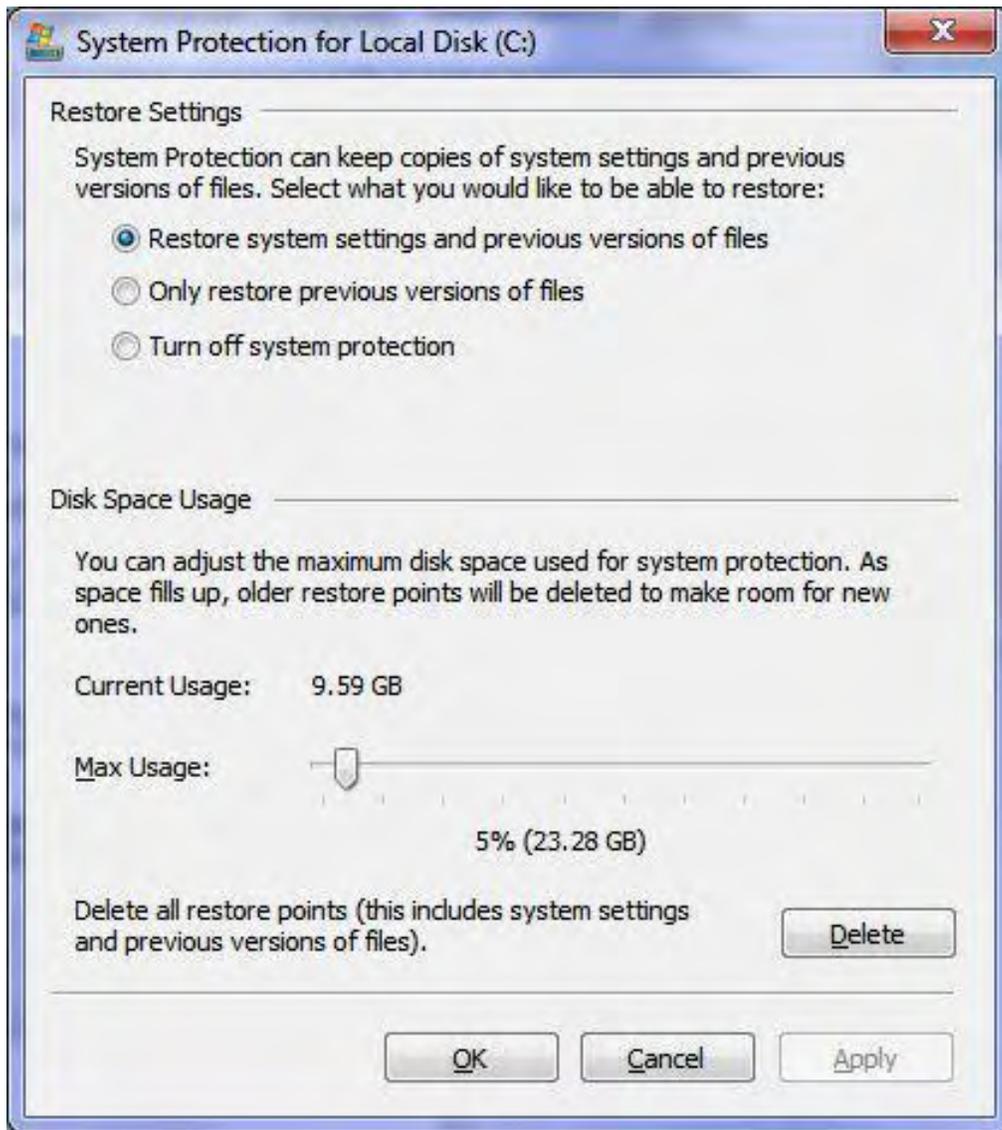


Figure 1. Windows 7 System Protection settings window.

System Restore will maintain as many restore points as the assigned space will allow. It will delete old points when it runs out of assigned space. (As mentioned above, to change the automatic restore point schedule use the setting in the Backup and Restore program.)

For more complete backup, including system image, Windows 7 includes Backup and Restore. This program will back up your files to another medium (external hard drive) on a scheduled basis. Individual or groups of files can be restored based upon the date the backup was made. Backup and Restore can be accessed through the same System and Security window in the Control Panel. If you want to do automatic backup to a network drive, you need at least the Professional version of Windows 7,

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

As a reader since The Byte Buyer days, I have read almost all of your columns.

My problem is a lost or corrupted DLL. WLXPhotoViewer.dll stops me from viewing photos. I

tried Bing to search, but all I found are programs to fix my computer. How do I replace the DLL or otherwise correct this problem? Any assistance would be appreciated.

Thanks,

*Art Bowen
San Diego*

Dear Art,

A DLL (Dynamic-Link Library) file is used by applications for regular and reoccurring functions required by the program. These extensions files are often shared by more than one program, although there are often DLL files associated with only one particular program.

When a program is installed, usually any required DLLs will be installed at the same time. Therefore, quite often—although not always—reinstalling the programs will also clean up the DLL problem. However, in some cases, you may need to uninstall the application first, thus making sure the remnants of the old DLL are removed. Occasionally, you may need to remove a corrupted DLL directly from the folder as not all uninstalls will remove DLLs and not all installs will write over an existing (yet corrupted) file.

This is complicated by the fact that many DLL files are shared by more than one application (yet another reason uninstalls may not be allowed to remove old DLL files). If you install another program which uses the same DLL, it may install a different version which could conceivably look corrupted to other applications which use the same named DLL.

Note: If you suspect that it is a system file problem, it may also be worth your while to run "sfc /scannow (support.microsoft.com/kb/929833)" in the Command Prompt window.

If uninstalling and reinstalling the application doesn't work, then I would look for a recently installed program which may have caused a conflict. I would also update to the latest version of the software since it would be most likely to include the updated DLLs. Checking directly with the Web site of the software manufacturer may yield better results than a search of the entire Web.

Another possible cause of the problem is Registry cleaners. Sometimes the link to a DLL is removed by a cleaner from the Registry. This again can be fixed by a reinstall.

There are numerous Web sites which claim to offer downloads of "missing DLL files." I avoid these for a couple of reasons. First, it is usually very difficult to find the desired DLL. Second, the Web site is normally trying to sell some kind of clean up program. These Web sites just feel contagious to me. If you're missing something, go directly to the manufacturer.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Help!

I had a six year old computer that went down and needed to get the files off the hard drive to a

replacement computer.

I placed the drive into the replacement computer as a second hard drive and it is readable (All Users), but I cannot access my "User" files—"Access Denied." I believe I know how to do it, but the problem is when I right click on the drive/user files directory, go to properties, I do not have a "Security" tab to change the settings to allow access to these files.

The both systems were/are XP with SP 3.

So, what happened to the security tab, can I get it back or is there another way to access the files?

*Jay Rickert
Denver, CO*

Dear Jay,

It seems that the availability of the Security tab in the Properties window for a file or folder in Windows XP is related to the use of a workgroup for log in. Plus, the techniques for fixing the problem depend upon whether you have the Home or Professional version XP.

I no longer have a Windows XP computer for testing purposes, but there is a good deal of information available. You may need to pursue a couple of these methods.

First, to restore the Security tab to the Properties window you need to disable "Use Simple File Sharing."

A Microsoft automatic "Mr-Fix-It" for restoring the Security tab can be found at "How to disable simple file sharing and how to set permissions on a shared folder in Windows XP (support.microsoft.com/kb/307874)."

To fix it manually, open Windows Explorer, and select from the Tools menu Folder Options. On the View tab, find "Use Simple File Sharing" in the Advanced Settings at the bottom of the list and clear, or uncheck, the check box next to it, then Apply. You should now have a Security tab when viewing the properties of a file on an NTFS volume.

For more information and other options visit "How to Set Security in Windows XP Professional That Is Installed in a Workgroup (support.microsoft.com/?kbid=290403)."

You ultimately want to take ownership of these files. You may find "How to take ownership of a file or a folder in Windows XP (support.microsoft.com/?kbid=308421)" helpful.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Computing Alter-Egos: Do You Like Your "Avatar" More than Your Real Self?

“Avatars and Virtual Worlds” by Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn discusses the history and uses of Avatars in the Digital Age. Sometimes the line between virtual world and real world can be crossed with Avatars—through emotions as well as psychology.

With the Digital Age, we now have access to the world stage through the Internet. And we can choose our level of privacy—or anonymity—by using a nickname or fake pen-name in blogs and chat rooms.



We can also choose a symbolic "representation" of ourselves, like an Avatar, or even experiment with new or unusual identities in games or virtual worlds. While the younger set, who is growing up embracing the Age of Computers, is busy changing Buddy Icons as fast as they change cursors and screensavers.

Avatars are a graphical representation of the users' character or alter-ego. It can be two dimensional as an icon in chat rooms, or three dimensional for games or virtual Internet worlds. They can even "represent" someone's

“But I didn’t expect you to actually look exactly like your Internet avatar!”

“But I didn’t expect you to actually look exactly like your Internet avatar!”

narrower aspects, such as different parts of their personality, beliefs, interests or social status. Regardless of what someone really looks like, their Avatar can be sexy, mysterious,

humorous, scary, aloof or mystical.

Avatar History

According to Wikipedia, Science Fiction authors were the first to detail Avatars in terms of virtual experiences in the cyber-universe. Norman Spinrad's novel, *Songs from the Stars* (1980), introduced the idea of humans involved in computer generated virtual experiences. William Gibson's *Count Zero* (1986) refined the idea of a character's "representation" socializing in an online world.

But Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel *Snow Crash* used the term to describe the virtual simulation of the human form in a Metaverse, or fictional virtual-reality application. The first real-life use of Avatars as on screen gaming representatives, was accomplished by Chip Morningstar and Joseph Romero in designing LucasFilm's online role-playing game "Habitat."

Free Avatars



Today the Internet is full of free, downloadable Avatars to choose from. The younger set still seems to gravitate to funny cartoons or smiley-faces (such as Smiley Faces (www.smiley-faces.org), or Jabo Avatars (www.jeboavatars.com/Smiley_Face_Avatars_298_1.html)), as their personalities continue to evolve. Older users usually put more studied thought into choosing an Avatar, occasionally connected to in-jokes, or a desire to "project" a certain refined or idealistic image.

People can even upload their own photos to certain sites (such as Zwinky (zwinky.com), Cartoon Your World (cartoonyourworld.com), or myWebFace (mywebface.mywebsearch.com)) to create a personalized cartoon personae. (Although some of these cartooned-photos have that big-eyed Japanese anime look, more cartoonish than realistic.) While sites like IMVU (imvu.com) and My Designer Games (mydesignergames.com) lets immersed Avatar users shop for virtual clothing and virtual furnishings, as well as hang out in chat rooms as their favorite Avatar of the moment.

It's possible to download free Avatars from practically everywhere online. With the same cautions as downloading free screensavers and cursors—make sure the sites are safe, and you're not also downloading viruses.

Some Avatar sites, such as All Avatars (allavatars.com), get quite creative. They feature a wide variety of Avatar categories from Abstract to Fantasy to Ornamental, many of which aren't remotely human in form. These Avatars can be artistically stunning, and still convey a mood or favorite image of the moment. For humorous Avatars, check out Jabo Avatars (jeboavatars.com) or Funny Avatars (funny-avatars.net).

Gravatars

The Atari arcade game aside, Gravatar is an abbreviation for "globally recognized avatar." This is a service for providing globally-unique avatars, and was created by Tom Preston-Werner. Users can register an account based on their e-mail address, and upload an avatar to be associated with the account.

Gravatar plugins are available for popular blogging software, so that a registered user's gravatar will show up alongside their comments. WordPress (wordpress.org) has an excellent explanatory article: "Using Gravatars (codex.wordpress.org/Using_Gravatars)."

A Gravatar can be up to 512 pixels wide, is always square, and is displayed at 80 by 80 pixels by default. Many Gravatars are rated with an age recommendation, like movies (for sexual content, violence, etc.), for Webmasters to control the content of the Gravatars on their Web sites. Popular sites are Gravatar (en.gravatar.com), and the above mentioned WordPress (wordpress.org).

Unfortunately, Gravatars are vulnerable to "dictionary attacks" (a technique to defeat a cipher or authentication mechanism, by determining its decryption key or pass phrase by searching likely possibilities), and "rainbow tables" (a precomputed table for reversing cryptographic hash functions in order to crack password hashes).

Buddy Icons

Derived mainly from PC games, Buddy Icons were introduced by AOL instant messaging in the 1990s. More message-y and less an identity than Avatars, Buddy Icons are usually small pixel or animated images that a user can add to the lower left-hand corner of an instant message. They can represent the user, as a Buddy Avatar, or convey a joke or message. AOL introduced "SuperBuddies (canada.aol.com/portal/what/communications/superbuddy.adp)" in 2002, which were animated icons that talked to users as they typed and read messages.

Sites such as Iconator (iconator.com), Coolbuddy (coolbuddy.com) and IconHell (iconhell.com) feature Buddy Icons that are more funny images or mini-messages than Avatars. They can be everything from pixel-art to thumbnail-photos, and range from poetry/sayings to celebrities, holidays to movies or sports. Sort of a snapshot of what's on the mind of that (usually in-school) user at the moment.

They can also be personalized to refer to romantic crushes, song lyrics or jokes. (I noticed that most Buddy Icon sites had a separate category for "College." So I'm guessing that this is what older teens gravitate to, when they grow out of sparkly cursors and smiley-face emoticons.)

Identicons



Considered "graphical digital fingerprints (haacked.com/archive/2007/01/22/Identicons_as_Visual_Fingerprints.aspx)", Identicons are geometric images derived from a digest hash, usually of the poster's IP address. These were invented by Don Park in 2007, when he came up with the idea "as an easy means of virtually distinguishing multiple units of information, anything that can be reduced to bits."

Users can stay anonymous but still be uniquely identified from session to session without the need for registration or authentication. A hash function is a one-way algorithm for



converting data into a number, which can be used to identify the data without revealing the data. If an account is compromised, a dissimilar Identicon would be formed, as the attacker would be posting from an unfamiliar IP address.

The original Identicon, according to Wikipedia, was a 9-block graphic which could be extended to other graphic forms. It is considered a "privacy protecting derivative" of each user's IP address, displayed next to the user's online name. It is relatively unique, and it's not possible to recover the IP by looking at the Identicon.

The original source package was server-side Java, and the current version is 0.5. Today, even third party software is available to generate Identicons for the purpose of identifying, say, eBay sellers. Although hackers can use stored hash to hack into a system (www.passwordhack.com/). They just need to know that the hash they've stored corresponds to the password being typed.

Real Emotions in Virtual Worlds

How people act in virtual-worlds through their Avatars is a topic ripe for study by social scientists. John Suler's "The Psychology of Cyberspace (www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/index.html)" was written in 1996, with multiple later revisions. He started out by focusing on a virtual world called "Palace", which Jim Bumgardner had created as a cartoony masquerade party.

"Palace" required that attending users had to be costumed and masked Avatars, to free up their psyche to act and communicate in new and interesting ways. This gave users a chance to deliberately step outside anything realistically-representative, unhindered by body-image, racial or cultural identifying factors. They could attend the Palace's masquerade party as anyone or anything, even as a celebrity or an animal. They could even take on an abstract aspect, and appear as Evil, Power or Seduction.

According to Shuler, these masked-Avatars could both hide and amplify different aspects of the users' personalities, even if the users were unsure exactly why they chose that particular masked-Avatar. Some regulars at the Palace had a hundred different masked-Avatars to choose from, depending on how they felt at the particular time they visited.

Curiously, people still held their Avatars to the norms of civility and non-intrusiveness expected in real society. Even feelings of conflict and unease were noted if several users arrived as the same masked-Avatar, much like female celebrities on the Red Carpet in the same expensive gown.

Suler discovered that physical interactions in the Palace could create tangible sensations, based on our internalized behavioral standards in real life. A key dynamic is "personal space," which even graphic masked-Avatars respected. It was also noted that "the emotional depth of these non-verbal behaviors can ... provide glimpses into underlying feelings and attitudes not being expressed verbally."

Even if it's an interacting masked-male celebrity and a masked-female animal, flirting, budding romances or rejection and hurt feelings can and do regularly occur at the Palace. Or, as Suler concludes, "Fantasy can be more entertaining, educational and, paradoxically more 'true' or 'real' than the real world."

Avatar Psychology

Dr. Leon James, of the Psychology Department of the University of Hawaii, published a 2008 book titled *Discovering the Mental World of Eternity* (theisticpsychology.org/books/mental-psychology-p1.htm). He invented "Avatar Psychology," dedicated to gaining a better understanding of mental anatomy through experiencing a virtual world. Working through the virtual world of Second Life, Dr. James came to several interesting conclusions.

"Due to the unpredictable and adaptive feature of Avatar behavior," Dr. James wrote, "Owners can be impressed by their Avatar. (So) there can be a seepage effect, whereby the virtual reality and the physical reality become somewhat mixed up with each other." And that "overt interpersonal performances of (Avatars') collaborative actions inworld, constitute the existence of an objective event in the virtual world."

In other words, how people act and think through their avatars in a virtual world, can reflect or alter their real life thoughts and behavior. Thus Dr. James' First Research Hypothesis: "Mental co-presence in 'Second Life' is more intense than mere social presence."

Using Avatars for Psychotherapy



More and more therapists are using Virtual World software to help treat their patients. A 2009 article in *Scientific American*, ("Therapists Use Virtual Worlds to Address Real Problems (www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=therapists-use-virtual-worlds)"), discusses how customized Virtual World software can succeed with difficult to reach patients, where traditional therapy fails. Another White Paper, "Troubled Kids and Computer Games: Using Virtual Worlds for Successful Behavioral Therapy (www.techrepublic.com/whitepapers/troubled-kids-computer-games-using-virtual-worlds-for-successful-behavioral-therapy/937901)", is also available on the Internet.

One of the earliest forms of VR software available was called Simulated Environment for Counseling, Training, Evaluation and Rehabilitation, or SECTER (www.saic.com/products/simulation/olive/). This specialized software lets troubled teens, especially, role-play in a 3D Virtual World environment, in which they communicate more freely with therapists through Avatars.

John Suler describes using multimedia chat software as a therapist, "to interact in a virtual space, where (the patient's) visual surroundings can be changed at will. And where each can shape-shift their appearances, thereby creating alternative and imaginary personae."

He gave an example of one such patient, angry and depressed Kirk. He shape-shifted through

his childhood self, recreating and re-experiencing hurtful events for his therapist. He went on to virtually explore the Avatars of both his parents, seeing and finally understanding the things they did through their eyes. Kirk started out portraying himself as his favorite movie star, Tom Hanks, but eventually came around to being comfortable with an Avatar of his real self.

Whenever the therapist unlocked the virtual room graphics, Kirk (through his computer) could arrange the virtual furniture/landscape to recreate everything from a dream to a recent argument with his wife. The therapist and Kirk could then discuss the elements in the virtual scene. It was a visual expansion of a troubled mind, that gave the therapist an unusual and revealing component for a better understanding of Kirk's torment.

Virtual Reality therapeutic software is also available for people with Special Needs. Such as V-Tree software (www.vtreeinc.com/), for the physically and developmentally challenged communities. And VRoot (vroot.org/node/4356), which offers a reprint of a Miami Herald article about "the growing number of health, education and youth programs using Virtual Reality games and programs to achieve a varied array of goals."

Therapists can also check out the International Therapist Leadership Institute's June 2011 "Virtual Conference (therapistsleadershipconference.com/2011/)", free via livestream video.

And finally, for the healthy-confused, is a smartphone app called "Marcus Virtual Therapist (download.cnet.com/Marcus-Virtual-Therapist/3000-2072_4-10914280.html)" for iPhone. "Marcus" is an Artificial Intelligence advertised as "being your confidant, answering your questions and analyzing your thoughts."

Avatars for Extended Lives

Curiously, newer virtual world sites, especially for young adults, are moving away from masked, disguised or cartoony Avatars in surreal environments. They encourage instead an environment of realistic-looking Avatars, who can bring their own music, games and movies, and have encounters and interactions that are more representative of real life.

The Virtual World of Kaneva (www.kaneva.com) is one such site. Their Web site home page brags "Kaneva blurs the line between the offline and online world in a 3D virtual world, where the virtual you is an extension of the real you." Even then, their Safety Tips warn that "online friends are not the same as real friends. There is no guarantee that your virtual friends are who they say they are."

Users can design their own realistic Avatars (some of whom appear nude, hence the no-one-under-13 rule), and download their favorite videos, photos, music and games. The Virtual World of Kaneva is a free site based in a modern virtual city, where each new member gets their own free 3D Kaneva City Loft. They can furnish and decorate their Loft, then invite virtual friends over to watch a movie, play a game, or just party. Users can also meet in Kaneva's public places and chat in real-time.

One male user mentioned that the opening screen for his most recent visit to Kaneva showed the usual groups or couples chatting in Kaneva's public places. But also, oddly, there were a number of single female Avatars dancing by themselves. This may be designed as a quick way to attract male Avatars. But instead of approaching them as an Avatar, the real life male downloaded their

dancing, added music, and uploaded the video to You Tube. Ah yes, that 'ole creative tug-of-war between creating media content and meeting new virtual friends ...

People are drawn to Kaneva, according to VirWORLD (*Virworld.com*), because of the fun atmosphere, and ability to create their "own stuff" in-world. Kaneva also has very low system requirements, which makes it ideal for people with older computers.

Kaneva also has its own Facebook community Web site, for users who don't feel like logging in to the virtual world, but still want to communicate with their friends. Kaneva also offers developers a platform (*developer.kaneva.com/*) from which new virtual world applications can be created, such as "Pet Paradise" and "Harvest Time."

If you want to visit or become part of a Virtual World, you can check out the various sites at: Fun Sites (*www.funsites.com/in-virtu.html*), or Virtual Worlds Review (*www.virtualworldsreview.com/*) (Might be better and more fun for stress relief, than talking to AI "Marcus"!)

Becoming Your Values' Avatar

A 2008 article in Psychology Today, "The Avatar's Advantage (*www.psychologytoday.com/blog/smarts/200812/the-avatars-advantage*)" by Tad Waddington, PhD, speaks about how "embodying a value through action is how people raise their mundane actions to a higher level." This can be accomplished from the outside in, by observing a problem and seeking to solve it. Or from the inside out, by starting with a virtue or excellence and applying it to achieve something. "Your values are your animating force," Dr. Waddington states. "When you embody your values, you manifest their essence, and become your values' Avatar."

It may be hard to imagine this 'value-added Avatar' in the Avatars we currently use for entertainment, as we practice our gaming and polish our social skills. But perhaps virtual Internet worlds will one day expect us to think and act on a higher plane, and our real selves will follow in kind.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist with many interests. She has sold teen anti-drug articles, as well as had numerous esoteric articles published. She has almost seventy mini-articles on Helium.com (*www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles*), and is writing a humorous Young Adult Science Fiction series, *Chronicles of Mathias*. Volumes One and Two have received a "Gold Star for Excellence" from TeensReadToo.com (*www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.html*), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Visionary vs. the Manager” by Wally Wang

The visionary vs. the manager; why Android malware is easy to make; will the real Android please stand up?; the success secrets of Apple's retail stores; don't buy a Macintosh (yet); organizing ideas with virtual index cards; death of a company; a Parallels clone; start your Macintosh up automatically after a power failure.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

In the book *Car Guys vs. Bean Counters* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1591844002/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399701&creativeASIN=1591844002), author Bob Lutz, former vice-president at General Motors, claims that in the 60's, General Motors designed cars through the vision of highly regarded car designers who were minor celebrities in the auto industry. Then the car companies dumped their celebrity car designers and started dictating how cars should be designed by specifying the size of the trunk or the width of the wheel base.

By focusing on the details rather than following the overall vision of a talented car designer, the Big Three auto makers started churning out boring cars that led to declining sales. Cars, like any products, Bob Lutz argues, should be designed by people passionate about their products.

"It applies in any business. Shoe makers should be run by shoe guys, and software firms by software guys, and supermarkets by supermarket guys. With the advice and support of their bean counters, absolutely, but with the final word going to those who live and breathe the customer experience. Passion and drive for excellence will win over the computer-like, dispassionate, analysis-driven philosophy every time."

Look at how Microsoft thrived when guided by the leadership of Bill Gates, a computer programmer who envisioned Microsoft software running everywhere. Everything Microsoft did back then was focused through this idea of Microsoft software everywhere. Now look at how Microsoft seems directionless under the leadership of Steve Ballmer, whose vision seems more about maintaining Windows and Office at all costs.

In his book *The Road Ahead* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1405879327/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1405879327), Bill Gates even said, "Microsoft has been a leader in the PC era. So from a historical perspective, I guess Microsoft is disqualified from leading in the highway era of the Information Age...I think the tendency for successful companies to fail to innovate is just that: a tendency. If you're too

focused on your current business, it's hard to change and concentrate on innovating."

Business Insider (www.businessinsider.com/apple-covered-in-37-posts-in-one-day-microsoft-3-heres-why-2011-6) even specifies the main difference between Apple and Microsoft. It has nothing to do with talent, but has everything to do with leadership. Microsoft probably has more talented programmers and designers than Apple, but if the leaders refuse to let these talented people create and design new products, all their talent will get buried under layers of bureaucracy, which translates into mediocrity.

Why corporations continue to pay top dollar for leaders who have no experience or passion for the business they're leading remains one of the greatest mysteries of the human race. Apple nose-dived when John Sculley, the former CEO of Pepsi, took over. Why would anyone expect someone who knows how to run a soft drink company to magically know how to run a computer company? That's like asking someone who's good at translating French to English to suddenly start translating Japanese to Russian just because the skill at translating is the same.

Visionaries are leaders who have a passion for what they're doing and want to excel. Managers are people who know how to maximize an organization's current assets, but often have no idea how to lead it. You need both, but given a choice between a visionary as a leader or a manager as a leader, it's obvious that any company run by just a mere manager will simply stand still until it's too late. Just ask all those CEOs who once ran Polaroid, Montgomery Wards and Tower Records. They can comfort the CEOs currently running Blockbuster Video, Borders Bookstores and every newspaper in the country.

Why Android Malware is Easy to Make

One major drawback of any open operating system is the threat of malware. The easier it can be to install software on any device, the more likely malware writers will infect those devices.

PC Magazine recently explained why malware is particularly easy to create for Android (www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2386813,00.asp). To write malware for Windows or Mac OS X requires programming skill, but creating malware for Android is much simpler.

First, most Android apps are written in Java. Unlike other programming languages like C++, Java isn't compiled into machine code but to pseudocode, also known as p-code. To run a Java program, you use a Java virtual machine. This virtual machine gives Java the ability to run on multiple operating systems without forcing the program to know the details of any particular operating system.

Unfortunately when you compile a Java program into p-code, you can easily decompile it back into Java source code again. This is like buying a meal in a restaurant and converting it back into its raw ingredients again so you can see the recipe for how it was made.

What hackers do is they find a legitimate Android app and decompile its Java p-code back into Java source code using a variety of free Java decompiler tools (java.decompiler.free.fr/). Now they add Java code that other hackers have created (and are freely available on the Internet) which can snare passwords or steal credit card numbers. Then they recompile the whole thing and post it on one of many Android app stores for unsuspecting people to download and install. Without even knowing how to write Java code, hackers can create Android malware.

By using this method, hackers can take almost any legitimate Android app and booby-trap it. If you want to avoid such booby-trapped Android apps, just download your apps from a trusted source, but since anyone can post an Android app on multiple Android app stores, it's difficult to know whether you're downloading a real Android app or a booby-trapped one.

This is the reason why even Microsoft examines Windows Phone 7 apps (*securelymobile.blogspot.com/2011/04/protecting-your-privacy-windows-phone-7.html*) before posting them on their own app store because they don't want to face the security nightmare that Android users face. This is also the reason why Amazon plans to examine Android apps before posting them in their own Android app store. By making Android open and free, Google also makes it easy for hackers to create and spread malware at the same time.

If you want the openness of Android, you'll have to take the drawbacks of openness at the same time. For those who believe avoiding any type of restrictions is worth the cost, perhaps you might be interested in moving to Somalia, which hasn't had a functioning government since 1991. Living in Somalia may be the most open place in the world, but do the benefits outweigh the chaos you have to tolerate in return?

Will the Real Android Please Stand Up?

When Android smart phones started overtaking the iPhone, everyone thought it was a repeat of MS-DOS and Windows overtaking the Macintosh in the personal computer market. What people didn't take into account was that Android was available for multiple carriers while the iPhone was initially limited to AT&T in the United States and a limited number of carriers in other countries.

Perhaps a more accurate comparison of Android vs. iOS can be seen in the tablet market where Android has to compete directly against the iPad with no artificial restrictions whatsoever. The problem is partly that Android tablet apps are still lagging, but also partly because no one quite knows what Android really is.

With a PC, you can buy a Dell PC with Windows and it works identically to a similar PC from Gateway or eMachines. Each manufacturer tends to install additional software with their PCs, but book publishers don't waste their time publishing books to teach someone how to use a Dell laptop or a Gateway desktop because it's easier just to publish a book teaching people how to use Windows instead.

That's not the case with Android. As ZDNet discovered, every version of Android on smart phones gets customized so there isn't a single Android standard (*www.zdnet.com/blog/mobile-news/the-ever-so-confusing-android-identity-crisis/2874*). When you use Android on a Samsung Galaxy phone, it often looks different than Android running on a Motorola phone due to each manufacturer customizing the apps and screen appearance. As a result, it's difficult to explain how Android works, so book publishers have to publish books specifically about each particular smart phone or tablet such as the Motorola Xoom and the Samsung Galaxy Tab. They all may be running Android, but Android is far more fragmented than MS-DOS or Windows has ever been.

Such fragmentation makes it harder for Android to take over the market in the same way that MS-DOS and Windows did. Technically there's nothing wrong with Android as an operating system, but from a user's perspective, Android lacks the standardization certainty that boosted MS-DOS

and Windows.

Watch how Android performs in the tablet market. Digitimes reports that many manufacturers are reducing their Android tablet investments and focusing on smart phones because Android tablet sales (www.digitimes.com/news/a20110616PD213.html) have been disappointing so far.

Android smart phones have a clear use to make calls with everything else secondary, but Android tablets have a much less compelling purpose. When most people think of a tablet, they think of an iPad (allthingsd.com/20110620/consumers-dont-want-tablets-they-want-ipads/). Few people think about buying a tablet by comparing technical specifications between a Samsung Galaxy Tab, a Motorola Xoom, iPad, HP TouchPad and an Acer Iconia Tab.

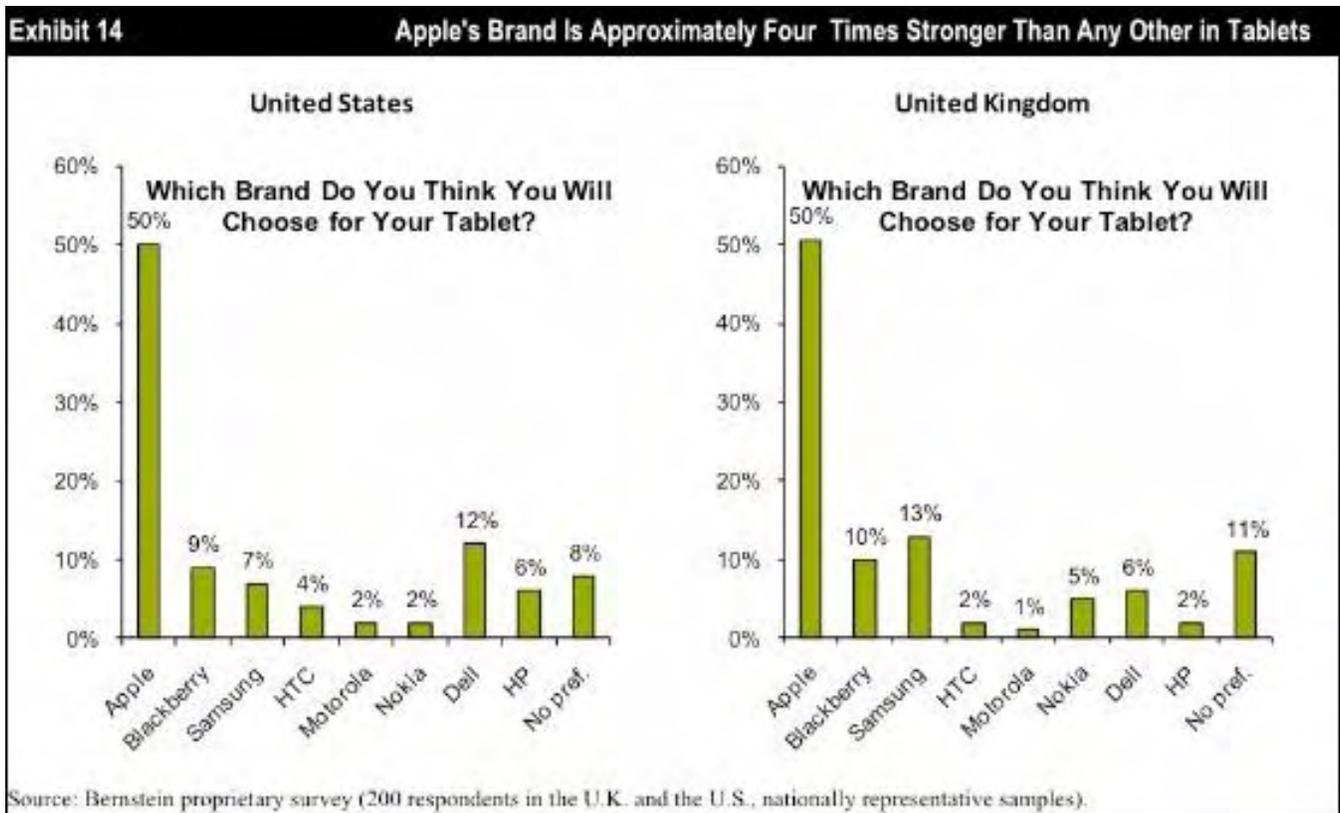


Figure 1. When most people think of a tablet, they think of an iPad.

Samsung's latest Galaxy Tab is actually lighter and thinner than the iPad 2, yet the lack of Android tablet apps makes the Galaxy Tab less versatile. Unless the Galaxy Tab does everything you want right out of the box, technical specifications just aren't as important as the complete user experience. Android tablets will likely get there eventually just like Android smart phones, but for now, Android tablets are best for technically-savvy people who don't mind fiddling with their devices to make them useful.

The Success Secrets of Apple's Retail Stores

When Apple first opened their own retail stores, many critics believed they would fail within a short period of time. Yet Apple Stores have succeeded by not only allowing people to examine various products, but also get technical support. Steve Denning at Forbes believes that Apple's success also lies in its paradoxical goal of not trying to make money (blogs.forbes.com/stevedenning/2011/06/17/apples-retail-stores-more-than-magic/2/).

Most businesses focus on profits first and everything else second. That often means trimming employees to the bare minimum, using the cheapest quality materials, and expending as little time and energy possible to help customers after they purchase your product.

The end result is predictable. Skeleton crews of overworked employees tend to give lousy customer service, cheap materials mean your products fail more often, leading to customer dissatisfaction, and minimal customer support translates into more confused and upset customers, which tends to hurt potential repeat business.

On the other hand, Apple specifically focuses on solving people's needs. By solving problems and going one step beyond to delight the customer, Apple creates loyal customers who tend to spend more money buying Apple products.

The secret to Apple's success is simple, yet until other companies stop focusing on making money and start focusing on pleasing their customers, they'll never mount much of a challenge to Apple. By focusing on money, companies will make less profit. By focusing on satisfying customers, companies will make more profit. With so many companies copying Apple, pleasing the customer is the one element they always neglect to mimic, and that's the whole secret to Apple's success.

Apple will never be perfect and may stumble at times, such as their latest confusion with allowing in-app purchases (www.businessinsider.com/apple-hulu-itunes-2011-6?hpt=te_pr), but their main focus is (usually) on the customer first while most other companies focus on themselves at the expense of the customer.

To prevent piracy, Microsoft locks Windows (www.windows7news.com/windows-licences-virtual-machines/) to specific hardware, which makes upgrading computers troublesome. To reduce costs, nearly every PC manufacturer outsources their technical support overseas, which places the burden of fixing and troubleshooting a PC on the consumer. To make extra money, PC manufacturers load their PCs with extra software such as trial versions of antivirus software (while ignoring free antivirus software that consumers could be using instead). To sell low cost PCs, netbook manufacturers offer underpowered netbooks that give consumers a crippled user experience.

Given a choice between a company that strives to satisfy the customer (and fails occasionally) or a company that deliberately complicates your life right from the start, which type of company do you want to support with your money?

Don't Buy a Macintosh (Yet)

Sometime in July, Apple will release the final version of Mac OS X10.7 Lion. Until then, it's pointless to buy a Macintosh because Apple plans to sell updated MacBook Air, Mac mini and Mac Pro models to take advantage of the new Lion operating system.

The new Macintosh models will include the Thunderbolt ports (designed to replace USB ports) along with the faster Intel Sandy Bridge processors. By just waiting a little longer, you can get the latest Macintosh model, or you can wait and buy the current Macintosh models at a discount through Apple's refurbished store.

Refurbished models are simply older models that Apple wants to clear out, so they're just one generation behind the latest models. By timing your purchase to each new announcement, you can pick up Apple's previous generation of products at a steep discount, or at least avoid buying a soon-to-be-obsolete Mac at the wrong time.

Organizing Ideas with Virtual Index Cards

Many people like to jot ideas on index cards and rearrange them on a desk or bulletin board. If you find index cards handy for arranging ideas, you might like the free iCardSort app (itunes.apple.com/us/app/icardsort/id384552728?mt=8) for the iPad for free.

Just type your ideas on a card and slide them around the screen to organize them. Change the color of each card to represent different ideas such as green cards holding financial ideas and blue cards containing work-related ideas. The ability to drag a card around with your finger makes the app as easy to use as real index cards, but without the inconvenience of storing physical index cards anywhere.



Figure 2. iCardSort lets you brainstorm using virtual index cards.

One unique feature of iCardSort is the ability to shuffle your cards. By letting your iPad rearrange

your cards randomly, you can combine different ideas together and see if they spark new thoughts that you might not have created otherwise.

Perhaps the only drawback with iCardSort is that you can't print your organized thoughts, but you can capture a screenshot of your cards as a graphic file, then transfer that image to your computer so you can print the image out.

If you enjoy manipulating ideas around, try iCardSort. The free version lets you play with your ideas while the in-app \$4.99 purchase lets you create and store multiple card decks of ideas. After using iCardSort, you may never go back to using physical index cards again.

Death of a Company

At one time, Research in Motion (RIM) held a majority of the smart phone market, especially in business. After the iPhone, iPad and Android arrived, RIM's fortunes keep falling (www.marketwatch.com/story/rim-earnings-fall-as-forecast-is-slashed-2011-06-16?dist=afterbell) as the company struggles to sell products that look ancient compared to the competition.

O2, a carrier in the United Kingdom, refused to offer RIM's Playbook tablet citing its poor customer user experience (www.businessinsider.com/o2-decides-not-to-sell-blackberry-playbook-2011-6). The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jun/16/rim-blackberry-playbook-review) said that "RIM's tablet offering is adequate, but being able to play Flash video, having a gestural interface and connecting to BlackBerry devices doesn't make up for a woeful lack of apps."

A company called Seismic even notified their customers that they're dropping support for Blackberry (blog.seismic.com/important-update-for-blackberry-users.html) in favor of iOS, Android and Windows Phone 7. When companies see more of a future in Windows Phone 7 than they do in Blackberry OS, that can't be a reassuring signal for Research in Motion.

How does a company go from being a leader to an also-ran in less than four years, despite holding a massive lead with loyal customers firmly entrenched in the business market? If we wait a little longer, we'll likely see other companies fall just as quickly.

A Parallels Clone

The best virtualization program for the Macintosh right now is Parallels 6.0 (www.parallels.com/products/desktop/). VMWare's Fusion 3.0 (www.vmware.com/products/fusion/overview.html) is good, but getting old and falling behind Parallels 6.0. If you don't want to pay for Parallels or Fusion, try the free Q emulator (www.macupdate.com/app/mac/20830/q-emulator) program instead.

The basic idea behind Q emulator (www.kju-app.org/) is the same as Parallels: create a virtual machine so you can load the operating system of your choice. Now you'll be able to run your virtual machine as a separate window inside Mac OS X.

Q emulator isn't as polished as Parallels or Fusion so be prepared for bugs and other minor irritations. Since it's free, you can't complain too much. One huge advantage Q emulator has over Parallels and Fusion is that Q emulator also runs on PowerPC Macintosh computers, so you can still run Windows or any other operating system (slowly) on an old PowerPC Mac.

* * *

Normally if the power goes out on your computer, it remains shut off. However, if you click the Apple menu, choose System Preferences, then click the Energy Saver icon under the Hardware category, you can select a check box that lets your Macintosh start itself back up automatically after a power failure.

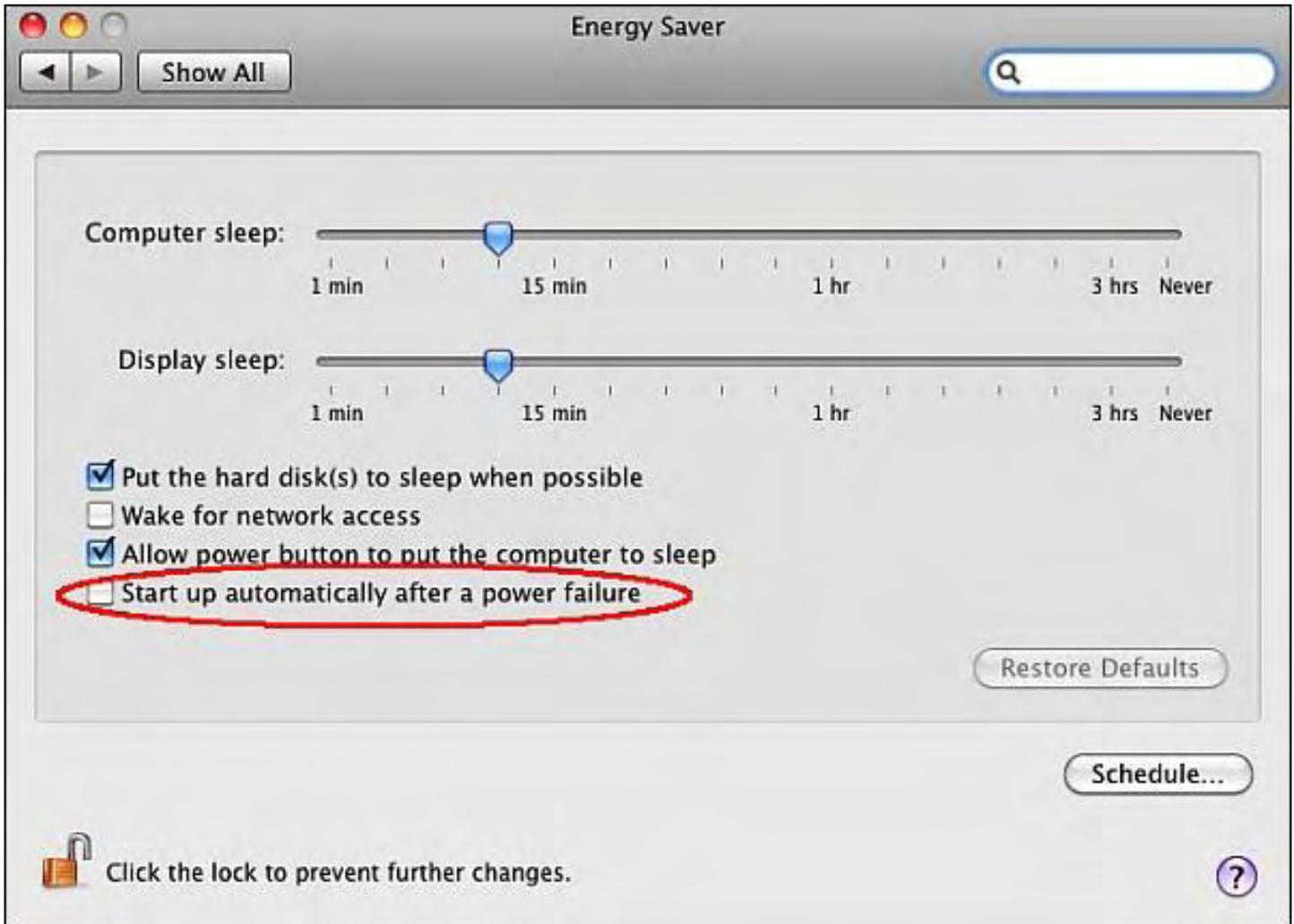


Figure 3. The Energy Saver dialog lets you select various power options.

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:

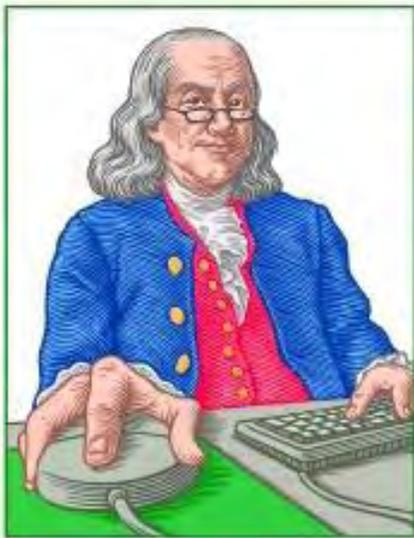
My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),

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?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),
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)
The 15-Minute Movie Method
(www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?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.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons:
Tips and Tricks
from Users

“Getting Regular
Linux Weather
Reports” by Tony J.
Podrasky

Tony offers a Linux
script for downloading
weather reports.

This time Tony offers a Linux script for downloading weather reports.

Filename: WEATHER_DOWNLOAD

Use: To download (ftp) weather reports from the national weather service (NWS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The shell file below will automatically connect you to the weather server and download the files you've selected, then disconnect you.

First, see if you can connect to their server:

```
tonyp% ftp 140.90.128.71
Connected to 140.90.128.71 (140.90.128.71).
220 Authorized users only. All activity may be monitored and reported.
Name (140.90.128.71:tonyp): ftp
331 Please specify the password.
Password:
230 Login successful.
Remote system type is UNIX.
Using binary mode to transfer files.
ftp>ls
227 Entering Passive Mode (140,90,128,71,226,201)
150 Here comes the directory listing.
-rwxrwxrwx    1 48      48          1702 Oct 29  2007 README.TXT
drwxr-xr-x   24 0        0           4096 Jan 20  2010 SL.us008001
drwxrwxrwx    2 3103    204        196608 Jun 17 19:55 aomc
drwxrwxr-x    2 0        0           4096 Feb 08  2006 aomclog
drwxrwxrwx    2 48      0           4096 Apr 30  2003 bin
drwxrwxr-x    2 0        0           4096 Feb 08  2006 com
drwxrwxrwx   14 3113    0           4096 Mar 21  2008 data
drwxrwxrwx    2 48      0           4096 Jan 06  2005 etc
```

```
drwxrwxrwx    2 48    0    118784 Jun 17 15:10 fax
drwxrwxrwx    2 48    0    4096 May 01 2003 lib
-rw-rw-r-     1 0      0    320 Feb 06 2006 logmsg.txt
drwxrwxrwx   18 0      0    4096 Apr 11 18:46 logs
drwxr-xr-x    3 0      0    4096 Dec 01 2009 metadata
drwxrwxrwx    2 0      0    8192 Jun 17 00:10 msgdist
drwxr-xr-x    2 0      0    4096 Jun 09 18:13 pub
drwxrwxrwx    3 48    0    4096 Jun 01 2000 usr
drwxrwxr-x    3 0      0    4096 Feb 08 2006 wmo
226 Directory send OK.
ftp> get README.TXT
local: README.TXT remote: README.TXT
227 Entering Passive Mode (140,90,128,71,111,93)
150 Opening BINARY mode data connection for README.TXT (1702 bytes).
226 File send OK.
1702 bytes received in 0.00386 secs (4.3e+02 Kbytes/sec)
ftp> close
221 Goodbye.
ftp> quit
tonyp%
```

The only caveat (above) is that when it asks for your name (Name 140.90.129.71:tonyp) enter "ftp" so that it will connect you using the anonymous user ID. For the "Password:" entry it is nice if you use your username and your host name. At the "Password:", I entered "hunybuny@netzero.net".

You should see a file called README.TXT in your pwd (present working directory). It contains some simple instructions regarding the use of their server. Please type it out and read what it says.

Next, create a directory where you want to download the weather files. For now, let's make it in the /tmp directory. Do the following:

```
tonyp% cd /tmp
tonyp% mkdir weather_data
tonyp%
```

Create WEATHER_DOWNLOAD with the following content:

—————CUT HERE—————

```
#!/bin/csh -f
# First, ftp the data from NWS/NOAA
cd /tmp/weather_data
```

```
ftp -vin 140.90.128.71 <<@EOF
user ftp hunybuny@netzero.net
bin
cd /data/forecasts/discussion/
get san_diego.txt discussion_san_diego
cd /data/marine/ca/
get loa_angeles.txt marine_los_angeles
get san_diego.txt marine_san_diego
cd /data/summaries/selected_cities/current/
get international.txt current_international
get latin_america.txt current_latin_america
get central_us.txt current_us_central
get eastern_us.txt current_us_eastern
get north_america.txt current_us_north_america
get western_us.txt current_us_western
close
quit
@EOF
```

CUT HERE

As always, don't forget to do a <chmod 755 WEATHER_DOWNLOAD> to make the file executable.

How the shell script works:

#!/bin/csh -f

Use the csh interpreter.

First, ftp the data from NWS/NOAA

General Comment—you can add more if you wish.

cd /tmp/weather_data

Go into your weather directory. Change this to where you really want it to go.

ftp -vin 140.90.128.71 <<@EOF

<ftp> to the server. Do a <man ftp> to see what the "-vin" does. The "<<@EOF" says do everything that follows until reaching the @EOF at the end.

user ftp hunybuny@netzero.net

Automatically log in as "ftp" (anonymous ftp) and use the next string for the password. Please change the "hunybuny@netzero.net" to your username and hostname.

bin

Set ftp for binary transfer.

<code>cd /data/forecasts/discussion/</code>	<i>Change <cd> to the /data/forecasts/discussion directory.</i>
<code>get san_diego.txt discussion_san_diego</code>	<i>Get the san_diego.txt forecast and save it in your /tmp/weather_data directory as "discussion_san_diego".</i>
<code>cd /data/marine/ca/</code>	<i>Change directory to /data/marine/ca.</i>
<code>get loa_angeles.txt marine_los_angeles</code>	<i>Get the loa_angeles.txt (it's supposed to be LOS_ANGELES, but someone messed up), and save it as "marine_los_angeles."</i>
<code>get san_diego.txt marine_san_diego</code>	<i>Get the san_diego.txt and save it as "marine_san_diego".</i>
<code>cd /data/summaries/selected_cities/current/</code>	<i>Same as above for each <get>.</i>
<code>get international.txt current_international</code>	
<code>get latin_america.txt current_latin_america</code>	
<code>get central_us.txt current_us_central</code>	
<code>get eastern_us.txt current_us_eastern</code>	
<code>get north_america.txt current_us_north_america</code>	
<code>get western_us.txt current_us_western</code>	
<code>close</code>	<i>Close the ftp connection.</i>
<code>quit</code>	<i>Quit ftp.</i>
<code>@EOF</code>	<i>End of file.</i>

Miscellaneous stuff about the shell script:

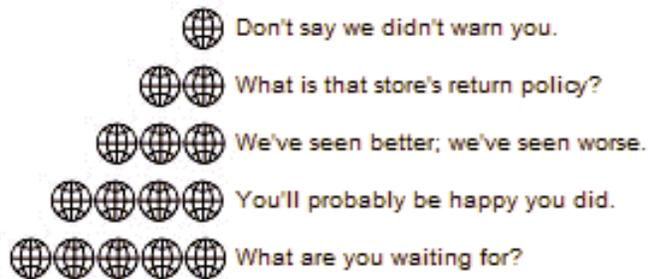
- You might not be interested in the same weather reports as I am. You can use the first <ftp> that we did above and poke around to see which weather reports might interest you. You can easily add or subtract what you download by looking at the shell script and adding or deleting entries.
- Notice that each <get> has two entries: the first is the name of the file on the server (ex: san_diego.txt) and the second is what you want to call it in your weather_data directory (example: discussion_san_diego). If you only put one entry on the line (like san_diego.txt), ftp will download the file and give it the same name. I give them my own names (the second entry) and group them. Notice that the files I pull in from the /data/marine/ca directory are saved as "marine_los_angeles" and "marine_san_diego". Likewise the files from the directory /data/summaries/selected_cities/current are all saved with the prefix of "current".
- You might want to put an entry into your <crontab> file and have it kick off the <WEATHER_DOWNLOAD> shell script in the morning so you can read the weather report while you're having your morning coffee.

NOTE: I give my shell files uppercase names so that *I know* they are my shell files and not the system's binaries. For example, when I save the data (the commands between the "CUT HERE" lines, which is the actual shell file) I might call it "VI", which is *not* to be confused with the system's "vi" file—but I call it "VI" because it calls (or uses) the system's "vi editor."

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 reached for questions at Linux Questions for Tony (hunybuny@netzero.net).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Worldwide & Product news reviews



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Is Your Cellphone Messing With Your Head?; The Cloud: Soft and Fluffy or a Serious Contender?; Back to the Future: A Blast From the, er, Future.

Is Your Cellphone Messing With Your Head?

Laurie Tarkan, an award-winning health journalist and author of three health books, wrote for BNET.com about a recent white paper on gray matter—your brain:

According to the latest research, you should be concerned and modify the way you use your cell phone.

The study (jama.ama-assn.org/content/305/8/808.abstract), conducted by researchers at the National Institutes of Drug Abuse and published in the prestigious Journal of the American Medical Association, compared brain activity via a PET scan in subjects who had cell phones turned on for 50 minutes or turned off. The subjects did not know whether or not the phone was in use because the sound was muted. The researchers found a 7 percent increase in brain activity in the area closest to the phone, specifically an increase in the metabolism of glucose.

"But a second group of researchers from Sweden also found long term increased risk of glioma brain tumors and acoustic neuromas," said Louis Slesin, editor of the Microwave News. "Yes, the research is inconclusive but it's becoming highly suggestive of a risk." Some doctors have urged people to err on the side of caution and limit their brain's exposure to cell phones.

Slesin provided these 10 ways to lower your exposure:

1. Use a land line whenever you can, like in the office or at home.
2. Use a hands free set. A headset or earbud keeps the radiation away from your brain.
3. Use speaker phone. It also keeps radiation away from your brain.
4. Avoid the phone when reception is weak. When cell phones are far from towers (and show fewer bars), they emit more radiation to communicate with the tower. Wait till you get outside, rather than making a call in the elevator, in a basement, or in the subway.
5. Keep conversations short. Try to use a land line when you need to sit in on a conference call or any other conversation you know will take some time.

6. Use blue tooth cautiously. A blue tooth uses much less power than a cell phone, but there is no distance between your head and the device (your ear actually creates some distance for a hand held cell phone). Plus, a blue tooth is always on you and it's not clear whether you're constantly getting exposed even when you're not using the phone. You may be better off using a headset.

7. Try texting instead of talking. No exposure to your brain.

8. Don't talk on the train or in a car. Try not to use phone in fast moving vehicles, even as a passenger, because as you travel, your phone moves from one cell tower to the next, and each time it tries to connect, your phone uses maximum power to make contact.

9. Wait a few seconds after dialing before putting phone to ear. During the time the call is connecting, the phone uses maximum power. It will power down once the connection is made. Keep it on speaker phone until someone picks up.

Read all of Tarkan's article at BNET (www.bnet.com/blog/health-fit-tips/cell-phone-radiation-study-9-ways-to-be-safer/261).

The Cloud: Soft and Fluffy or a Serious Contender?

Origin Storage's (www.originstorage.com) Andy Cordial writes in this week with the weather outlook for the future of cloud data storage:

With what appears to be limitless storage options, for many the cloud is an attractive proposition. It offers savings to organizations looking to cut down the premium space they need to store data centers, and it can increase efficiency with data and applications shared over the Internet. However, with questions still remaining over its security, how can organizations best utilize this exciting resource?

When you board an airplane you're asked to buckle your seat belt and listen to an important safety announcement. The same is true before you propel your data down the runway and jet it into the cloud.

So, what's in our safety demonstration: pack carefully, if you've flown before you'll know that there is limited space in the cabin with the majority of your luggage having to travel in the hold. Therefore, when you pack, you make sure your most valuable items are squeezed into your in-flight bag. For data, it's not very different.

Before packing all your data off into the cloud you need to sort it and, for most organizations, not all of it will be suitable to store in the "hold." If the data contains sensitive information that, if compromised, could damage your organization, then you need to be asking yourself if it really should be jetted off into the cloud.

Prepare for passport control. So, sticking with our aviation theme, before you get anywhere near an airplane and your luggage is in its hold, you have to pass through stringent security checks and have your passport examined. Legitimate travelers will have the correct documentation and allowed access and, in an ideal world, those that don't will be identified and prevented access before they can cause any damage.

Assuming you've decided to store your data in the cloud, you need to make sure your passport controls are as effective. If they're too stringent or time consuming legitimate users may not be allowed access, however too lax and anyone can get in and violate the data.

Providing flexible access may mean your users will want to use personal devices from outside the corporate environment. This can open a whole can of worms as the device may be infected with key loggers, or other malware, that could jeopardize the data or application's security.

If data is password protected in the real world, then virtually it needs even stronger defenses. The question has to be asked whether cloud security offers this and, if you can't be guaranteed, then serious doubts must remain over its suitability for your organization.

Fasten your seat belt and stow your table in the upright position. Personally, I always wonder just how effective an airplane seat belt is, but luckily I've never been on a plane when it has experienced violent turbulence or even crashed—so I haven't found out. Could the same be true for cloud seat belts?

New encryption software is creeping into the market designed to protect data stored in the cloud. With AES 256-bit encryption accepted as the most secure option in the real world, I wouldn't recommend anything less even be considered for virtual storage.

In reality, until we really know how insecure these storage facilities actually are in the first instance, we have no real idea whether these solutions are necessary or will even work. That said, admittedly I still fasten my seat belt when the pilot switches on the sign and would recommend you do the same for your data. What I would say is, if you're in any doubt about whether you can risk your data falling from the sky, perhaps it shouldn't be there in the first place.

You've arrived at your destination. We've all experienced the holiday of a life time that doesn't quite live up to its billing. The climate that's either too hot or too cold or that half the items you've crammed into your suitcase aren't needed, yet the cable to charge your mobile phone has somehow been left behind. The cloud is exactly the same.

It isn't suitable for everything, or everyone. Careful consideration and planning needs to be undertaken first if you're to migrate the right applications and data to benefit from increased efficiencies and lowers costs.

Another element is download speeds. Agreed, bandwidth should not be the only consideration when selecting a cloud service provider but it is an important factor. It needs to be balanced with quality of support, pricing, features and reliability.

One final consideration I would urge you to cover is, having planned your migration to the cloud, make sure you've got an escape route planned if you find it isn't everything you dreamed it would be. How will you reclaim your data, are you locked in for a given period, will they help you transfer to another provider?

It is my belief that the cloud environment will be compromised at some point—probably in the not too distant future. I don't appear to be alone in this as IT analyst Gartner advises businesses that they must work closely with their cloud computing services provider to ensure that potential security issues are flagged up, and dealt with, before they become a problem. Don't be blinded

by promises of performance or cost savings – a security breach could quickly eradicate both of these benefits and potentially deal a fatal blow to your organization.

So be warned, even a parachute might not protect your data if someone decides to push it from the cloud.

Back to the Future: A Blast From the, er, Future

Thanks to a stable of hit titles like *Sam & Max*, *Wallace & Gromit's Grand adventures*, *The Tales of Monkey Island*, and about a dozen others, Telltale games (www.telltalegames.com) has become a preferred provider of downloadable point-and-click style adventure games.



One of Telltales's most popular properties is *Back to the Future: The Game* (www.backtothefuturegame.com) (PC/Mac, \$24.95 for the complete five episode series, first three episodes currently available for iPad), which picks up the action six months after where the third film left off.

Reuniting the cartoon likenesses of Marty McFly, Doc Brown, and the iconic DeLorean Time Machine, the adventure takes on, among other challenges, the conundrum of keeping the space-time continuum from unraveling. The game features the voices of the stars who made the movies famous: Michael J Fox as Marty and Christopher Lloyd as Doc.



Each episode leads well into the next with just enough of a teaser that you want to see what happens next. The game looks just about how I would expect the movies to look were they made into cartoons. Cartoons but not cartoony. I appreciate the fact that they retain a modicum of realism.

For a casual gamer like myself, the puzzles in *Back to the Future: The Game* are just about right. It's easy to drop into for an hour or two at the end of the day. More serious adventurers, however, might find the challenges too easy, longing for the depth and complexity of classic graphic adventures like *Maniac Mansion* or *Day of the Tentacle*.



One thing I initially wished was that the controls were more PC-centric and felt less like the game wanted to be played with the relatively minimal choices of a console controller. But that was something I got used to pretty quickly.

Overall, a very good game and a delightful diversion. It's fun to get a chance to revisit a world that was such a memorable destination for our younger selves.



In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputerEdge* 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.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"An iPad and E-Reader Alternative," "CE on Kindle," "Microsoft Virus"

An iPad and E-Reader Alternative

[Regarding Jack Dunning's May 20 article, "E-book Reader Match Up":]

After ignoring all the hype and good/bad news about e-readers in general, I finally purchased a *tablet* which is sold as an e-reader (www.amazon.com/Velocity-Micro-Reader-Black-R101/dp/B00413PEZS) when the price got below my \$100 mark.

I paid 89.99 including shipping. Try Geeks.com for the regular price of 89.99 + shipping.

So what do you get? An Android 2.0 based tablet with a 500MHz ARM11 processor.

This tablet does much more than an e-reader. With built in Wi-Fi and a set of speakers, you get to listen to your music (or *audiobooks!*) while you read!

It comes with Borders Book App pre-installed...but the vendor list is almost infinite!

The key is the Apps available. If you want, you can go to SlateDroid.com for information on how to get the other Apps put on your little computer. Yes, after looking at the tech specs and internals, the Cruz R101 is a tablet based micro computer running on a truncated form of Linux.

After "rooting" (don't ask) the R101, I've set up the tablet to do everything possible on a laptop. That includes watching mp4 based videos.

Adding the many apps stores gives you many choices for your Android based computer.

You want to read the morning paper? There is an app for that. You want to surf the Web? There is an app for that. MS Office files? There is an app for that...

Since this computer has a full sized SD slot, you can stuff a 32GB storage card in it...and there is a Micro SD card socket for added internal storage of apps and data.

The only problem I have with it is the pop-up keyboard. I have fat fingers, so I use a retracted ball point pen as a stylus. I'll be looking at other keyboards when I get done with my internal mods.

The bottom line: why not choose something that does a lot more than just let you read a book?

P.S. I'm using Calibre to upgrade my library of regular .LIT format books as well as eliminating duplicate entries. And I have a 15GB library of various format e-books.

-Art Blackwell, Evergreen, CO

CE on Kindle

[Regarding Jack Dunning's June 3 article, "Quirks in Building E-Books":]

Being a recent Kindle owner, I consider this a milestone that you have decided to publish *ComputerEdge* in e-book format. It was very informative.

However, instead of downloading each issue of CE, I would rather have it sent to my Kindle every Friday. Is this possible?

-Bill Pierce, Hotchkiss, CO

Microsoft Virus

[Regarding the June 3 Digital Dave column:]

Dave, be careful presuming I was not attacked by Microsoft Essentials. When I went to the Control Panel, Remove Programs, clicked on Microsoft Essentials, and clicked on Remove, a pop-up appeared that asked: "Are you sure, you have 408 viruses"? That, I vividly recall and regret not capturing.

I didn't expect you to dismiss what I wrote or I would have supported it more. You may not know this but middle managers in large companies (Microsoft included) will do anything to survive or be promoted.

I am still not sure exactly what happened but note this: "With Microsoft Essentials installed, either it didn't work or I experienced a scam to force me to pay to continue using Microsoft Essentials."

I did not install the BestAntivirus2011 but now I wish I had downloaded it for later examination.

-Bruce Osterberg, Temecula, CA

Hi Digital Dave,

I've been seeing something "floating" around for about a month that seems to cause files, shortcuts, icons and programs to disappear. A pop-up window says the usual xxx files are corrupted, etc., etc. The name at the top of the pop-up window says "Windows XP Recovery" or "Windows Vista (or whatever) Recovery."

I've seen it on at least two computers I've worked on. Both with the same symptoms. It doesn't appear to be a virus, according to Security Essentials. The cause is a version of "scareware" that finds a way to check the Hide box in the properties of the various files. I usually have found a strange item listed in MSCONFIG. Disabling that usually stops the pop-ups. Searching the Internet shows several solutions, all of which seemed long and involved, to me, or costly. I had to use Windows Explorer and manually fire up the properties of all the folders and uncheck the Hide box. I know some of those files and folders should *not* be *unhidden*, but it was the only way to restore the missing icons and shortcuts on the Desktop and the various program folders.

Hope this helps.

-G R Bell, Oceanside, CA

I think it is the same as Best Antivirus 2008, that I got in 2008. I've tried several antiviruses including Norton, and none detected it. After two weeks, I called for help in the Microsoft support site and a live technician helped me step by step to remove it. He didn't charged me anything. Last year, a friend of mine brought me her computer because it was infected with the Best Antivirus 2009. (She left the computer without use for a year, because a technician wanted to charge her \$240 and the possibility of losing all her documents.) After trying several antiviruses with no luck, I did a restoration to an earlier point and the problem was fixed. Hope this helps.

-Victor, Seeley

Last week I had to send my new computer in for warranty repair. In the mean time I set up my old computer. Not two days after I started using my old computer I got this Shield Virus. It looks like a legitimate Windows program, and it states that from its latest scan of my computer it found over 400 viruses. Any attempt to use the Internet was intervened by this program/virus. I did not trust that I had over 400 viruses on a cold computer that had been sitting in a box for last 3 months. I decided to do a System Restore to about a month before I did the final shut down of this computer...that did the trick.

-R.M.H., San Diego, CA

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