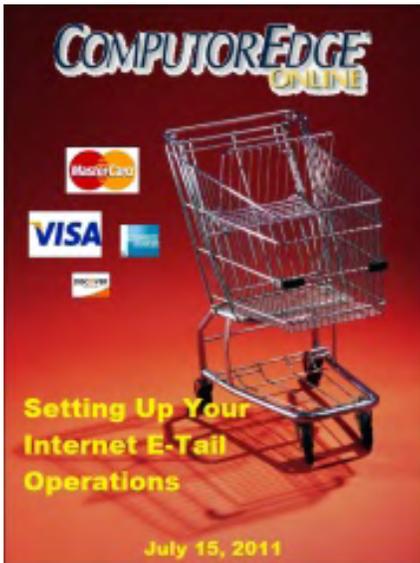


# ComputerEdge™ Online — 07/15/11



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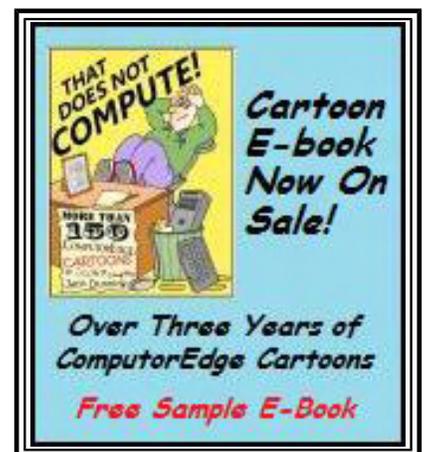
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## Digital Dave

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

I Need to Recover Data/Software; Installing Updates Fail in Windows Vista; PDFs and EPUBs?

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Michael's mom is having trouble booting her computer after a storm. Leo says that it's likely key files, which the computer needs to complete the boot, have been damaged. It's a good idea to backup the data, reformat and reinstall the OS. But, it may also be that there's bad sectors on the hard drive or even it is starting to fail. In that case, it's best to get a new hard drive and then install the OS. There's also SpinRite, which will correct the bad sectors. But, it's not cheap and should only be used if you can't get the data off the hard drive.*

*I got this info from Leo the Tech Guy. but I need your feedback too. I have an external hard drive.*

*Jorge Alvarado  
San Diego*

Dear Jorge,

While my advice may be similar to Leo's, I would definitely suggest that you try Startup Repair mentioned in my answer to Marian question this week.

As to whether you need a new hard drive, running CHKDSK (or Error-checking in the Tools tab of the Properties window for the drive—right-click on the drive in Windows Explorer) should give you an idea of whether you drive is going bad. The more bad sectors found, the more likely the drive is failing. If it does seem to be failing, it would be better to replace it now.

One of the best things about writing this column is that so many readers will contribute answers when I come up short. Last week I discussed your question about data recovery, I didn't give you any specific software recommendations. If you check the comments at the bottom of the page, you will see that Peter and Javier have each recommended a program for recovering data. TestDisk ([download.cnet.com/TestDisk-and-PhotoRec/3000-2248\\_4-10511775.html](http://download.cnet.com/TestDisk-and-PhotoRec/3000-2248_4-10511775.html)) is free while DFSee ([www.dfsee.com/dfsee/](http://www.dfsee.com/dfsee/)) is a paid program. I don't know which might be right for you, but they are recommended by *ComputerEdge* readers. Perhaps other readers will chime in.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*How can I successfully add updates? They all seem to fail. I use Windows Vista.*

Marian  
Aquebogue, New York

Dear Marian,

Unfortunately, when Windows updates start to fail during installation, it often means that some Windows system files may be corrupted. However, there are a number of things to try before resorting to a clean install of Windows and most can be done automatically from the Microsoft support Web site.

First you should use Microsoft Fix It Center to run an automatic diagnosis and repair utility for Windows Update ([support.microsoft.com/mats/windows\\_update/en-u](http://support.microsoft.com/mats/windows_update/en-u)). The Microsoft Fix It Center ([support.microsoft.com/fixit/en-us](http://support.microsoft.com/fixit/en-us)) is often overlooked when people are trying to resolve their Windows problems. It includes automated solutions for over 300 common problems. Whenever you're not sure what to do this is an excellent starting point.

The Center includes a number of leading symptoms to help you isolate your problem (see Figure 1). While not all issues may be resolved, the solutions will take you through many of the common answers without all the extra work.



Figure 1. Microsoft Fix It Center offers automated solutions and instruction based upon solving Windows problems.

Be careful if you use a search engine such as Google to locate the Fit It Center. There are many businesses with the same name which will take you to another location, usually for a paid software program.

If you can't resolve the problem through the Center then you may need to take alternative actions. Any of these may be applicable depending upon whether the problem is system corruption or a computer virus.

1. Return to an earlier Restore Point ([support.microsoft.com/kb/936212](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/936212)). This includes steps for running System File Checker (SFC).
2. Run Windows Startup Repair ([windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/Startup-Repair-frequently-asked-questions](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/Startup-Repair-frequently-asked-questions)) which will replace corrupted system files.
3. As a last resort, you may need to do a clean install of the operating system. Be sure to backup all of your important files first.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I've heard a lot about EPUBs lately for portable reading files on tablet computers. I always thought that PDFs were the standard for document files. Could you clarify the difference?*

*Thanks, I love your column.*

*Sandy  
San Diego, CA*

Dear Sandy,

Actually, both your statements are accurate. The PDF (Portable Document Format) is the standard of digital documents while EPUB is rapidly becoming the standard for e-books.

The difference in usage is that Adobe's PDF format is best for pages with a fixed format. When printed, they will look the same regardless of the computer or printer (within the capabilities of the printer). Once produced, the PDF is rigid in structure. While you can enlarge or shrink the page, it will not conform to the shape of your computer or tablet screen. Since pages are fixed, the page numbers are fixed. If you refer to a page on your computer screen, it will coincide with the same printed page. Excellent for paper, adequate for screens.

PDF is probably the best format for legal documents and any other type of material which may need to be regularly printed. E-mail PDFs has become a common way to send business documents, although, if a document needs to be signed and returned, it will generally be printed, signed and rescanned (or faxed). This is a bit of a hassle, but still beats snail mail.

EPUB has become the most popular of e-book formats for everyone except Amazon (who uses a MOBI compatible files —also e-books). The key word for EPUB is flexibility. This format, which is similar to the HTML you see in Web pages, is designed for reading rather than printing. You can read an e-book on almost any type of electronic reading device whether e-book reader, tablet computer, smart phone, or computer. The e-book will conform to fit the device and the choices of the user. The number of pages depend upon the size of the screen, the font size selected by the user and amount of text and graphics in the e-book. If you change the size of the type, the number of pages in the e-book will adjust accordingly. This makes an e-book much better for reading than PDFs regardless of the e-book format (EPUB, MOBI, etc).

The reading software for both PDF and EPUB is generally free. Adobe Reader ([get.adobe.com/reader/](http://get.adobe.com/reader/)) is the best

known PDF reader and has been downloaded at some time by most computer owners (whether they realize it or not). It works in conjunction with all of the major Web browsers automatically loading (or prompting download) whenever you attempt to access a PDF page.

E-book readers are more varied since they come on all different types and sizes of equipment. iPad, Nook and others have their own e-readers for EPUB plus special software e-readers to use on computers. Amazon Kindle does the same with their own format (including a free Kindle app for computers and tablets), although the files and readers work in pretty much the same way as they do for any EPUB reader. There are a multitude of free e-readers available, plus there are huge libraries of free e-books—especially for classics out of copyright. Adobe has a free e-book reader called Digital Editions, but acting as an actual reader, it does compare to almost any of the other applications (iPad, Kindle, Nook).

If you would like to compare the PDF and e-book experiences, you can do it by downloading one of the e-book readers and Adobe Reader for PDFs. (Some e-book readers, such as iBooks for the iPad, will also read PDFs.) Then check out the *ComputerEdge* Archives ([webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?article=pastiss](http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?article=pastiss)). There you can download many of the recent issues of *ComputerEdge* in EPUB, MOBI (Kindle), or PDF files (link just below the cover artwork) and check it out for yourself.

It looks like e-books will continue to grow for publishing books and Web content for consumption of portable e-readers and tablets. PDF is probably here to stay for business and legal documents which may need to be printed and filed.

Digital Dave

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## Setting Up a Web Store

“Credit Card and Shopping Cart Solutions” by Jack Dunning

There are various ways of making money from the Internet. Sites such as Craigslist, eBay and Amazon successfully help people sell items online, but there are disadvantages. Jack discusses some alternatives that may be more ideal for your situation.

There are two primary ways to make money from the Internet. The first is selling advertising. This is how Google makes their money. The other is through selling things (also called e-tailing). Amazon and eBay have both grown huge by making products available for sale. Amazon grew primarily through offering products which they stock and ship. Initially, it was books, today it is almost everything. eBay is the premier auction site where people can put up just about anything for sale, while eBay takes a cut from each transaction. Many people make a living based upon using eBay to sell their products. Private party sales have become so profitable for the middle man that Amazon now allows individuals to sell through their system. I know a number of people who cash in on their old books, DVDs and computer games by selling them through Amazon.



“He claims that somehow *his* shopping cart ran into *hers* while checking out at Amazon.com.”

The cheapest way to sell your old stuff is through Craigslist. It cost nothing to place an ad and any sales you make are all yours. However, you need to be cautious when using Craigslist since the system also attracts many bottom feeders and scam artists. There are people who successfully market their business with Craigslist advertising, but the restrictions placed on advertising (frequency and duration of ads) make the advertising process a continuous effort.

If you only want to dabble in odds and ends, then selling through others (Craigslist, eBay, Amazon) is probably the way to go. Even if you have a fairly

**He claims that somehow his shopping cart ran into hers while checking out at Amazon.com."**

large business, these selling outlets can be an excellent addition of your other operations. Yet there

is always a cost to any form of selling.

## Using Craigslist, eBay and Amazon

Whether you're a seller or a buyer, the Craigslist problems ([webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?zone=SD&issue=2809&article=edge&src=linkref](http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?zone=SD&issue=2809&article=edge&src=linkref)) are well documented. You need to exercise extra caution when doing business with the free advertising site. People have had their homes cleaned out after putting in their address in an ad for a garage sale. There have been cases of homes being fraudulently rented out (sight unseen) by unscrupulous individuals—while the owners were still living in the house. People have been lured to dangerous places by enticing ads. The response on Craigslist is often great. It's the people who respond that you need to screen.

I personally don't have much experience with eBay, but I know people who swear by it. My son, who is a master mechanic, always has a few car projects going. He regularly finds obscure automobile parts through eBay. Many people run small businesses from their homes almost exclusively using eBay. I would certainly like to hear more from people who sell through eBay.

I have often bought from Amazon and know people who regularly sell their old items (DVDs and computer games). As for selling books through Amazon, *ComputerEdge* E-Books now has one book on Amazon—the Jim Whiting cartoon book. It was easy enough to submit and get it listed in the Amazon site, but there are a number of issues with selling e-books through the e-tailing giant. In particular, Amazon charges 15 cents per megabyte to download an e-book. This is not much of a problem for the non-graphic (all text) e-book which are probably less than one megabyte. However, for books loaded with graphics such as the cartoon book (over nine megabytes for the Amazon format), this charge is huge when compared to the price of the book (\$1.35 per e-book download for a \$5.99 book). This is a disincentive for using Amazon to market kids books or any other type of e-book with extensive graphics.

We've submitted the same cartoon book to iTunes directly. (We looked at consolidators such as Smashwords, but decided that we were better off doing it our own. I think Smashwords wanted the book in Microsoft Word format. That would have been a hassle since we don't use Word and already had it in EPUB and MOBI, Amazon, format.) It's been about a month and Apple is still reviewing the book for "quality assurance." Maybe it's the set of "iPokes" cartoons which is slowing things down.

Partially due to these experiences (and because we plan to publish many more *ComputerEdge* E-Books), we've decided that we would set up our own Web shopping cart ([www.computoredgebooks.com](http://www.computoredgebooks.com)) and sell e-books directly. That way we would be able to offer more to the author (and ourselves). Surprisingly, it's not that expensive to get an e-tailing operation up and running. All that is required is accepting credit cards and a Web shopping cart.

## Accepting Credit Cards

There are many pieces to putting together a business, but at some point you need to take steps toward accepting credit cards. About a year ago, *ComputerEdge* switched to Intuit Merchant Services to process credit cards. We were getting rid of our old system because, quite frankly, we weren't processing that many credit cards anymore and the antiquated system wouldn't integrate with a Web store. We still needed the capability to take cards, but not the costs (or other inconveniences) we were getting from the old credit card company.

Years before I had investigated processing cards through VeriSign as a gateway, which then would send the data to a card processing company which deposited the funds in the bank. I remember that VeriSign charged about \$25 per month, with another \$25 per month for the credit card processor, then the per charge was added on. I wrote the software for interfacing with the Web site and the VeriSign system, but never fully implemented the system. I had the system working,

but there were a few steps and layers involved with processing a credit card. After this experience, I felt that I had some idea what to expect from Intuit.

I was wrong. Somehow in the intervening years—probably through competition—credit card processing had become easier—and cheaper. I thought I would be forced to deal with multiple companies (and multiple fees). Instead, Intuit made it easy (and cheap) to get started. (Actually, I do deal with two companies now, Intuit and the shopping cart company, but the complications are few.)

First of all, the monthly charges were waived by Intuit for the first three month. This helps when organizing a new business which is not likely to have many early sales. But, more importantly, the monthly fee was only \$11.95 to accept all of the major credit cards. This included credit card processing over the Internet through an Intuit Web site which acts as a cards processing terminal. If all you need is to run credits cards, say for telephone orders, then this could be all you would ever want. Run the card through the secure Web site and the money shows up in the bank the next day. However, this system does not include automatically processing credit cards for your Store Web site. This must be done via some type of Web shopping cart systems, whether home grown or hosted by another service provider.

Note: There are many companies other than Intuit which will give you the capability to accept credit cards. I just happen to use Intuit and have found it convenient and inexpensive. I would be interested to hear about those providers which *ComputerEdge* readers have had a good experience.

## Web Shopping Carts

Web shopping carts accomplish two functions. First the cart gives the buyer a way to accumulate products for purchase. Second, the cart offers a way to complete the purchase by accepting payment via the Web. The Web shopping cart may also include the ability to download digital product to customer, which was a requirement for *ComputerEdge* E-Books. Naturally, if a new e-tail business needs to take credit cards through the Web site, then a Web shopping cart is the right tool.

If you already have a Web site which displays a product catalog, then it is easy to procure a shopping cart system to link to that site. If you don't host a Web site, then it is possible for a shopping carts to act as your Web site and display both a catalog and the shopping cart. It is possible, especially if you're a Web programmer, to do all of the coding for the catalog and shopping cart yourself, but it is much easier to use the services of an outsider provider, plus you will be faced with less security issues.

Since *ComputerEdge* already hosts a Web site, all we needed was the shopping cart which would take credit cards, then making the e-book download available to the buyer. There are a few companies listed on the Intuit Web Store site ([payments.intuit.com/products/internet-merchant-accounts.jsp](http://payments.intuit.com/products/internet-merchant-accounts.jsp)) which had qualified to process cards through the Intuit credit card system. I looked them over and decided upon Go Daddy ([www.godaddy.com/ecommerce/shopping-cart.aspx](http://www.godaddy.com/ecommerce/shopping-cart.aspx)) because it looked like I could buy just as much as I needed, it was pretty cheap, and I had noticed their television commercials (although I don't remember understanding what they were advertising). There seemed to be a significant difference between the companies listed on the Intuit Web Store page. They could get quite pricey, but claimed to offer more professional and personalized service. (If you're looking for a coat-and-tie Web provider, then I guess Go Daddy may not be the one you want.)

Note: I should point out that Go Daddy also offers merchant accounts for accepting credit cards—as do many other Web providers. This means that it is quite possible to avoid dealing with more than one service. However, the fees for the Go Daddy credit card acceptance were higher than those for the Intuit merchant account service.

For \$29.95 per month Go Daddy offers a site which will act as a catalog, a shopping cart, accept credit cards which are processed through the Intuit account (\$9.95 per month more to Intuit for processing the Web store), and automatically sell

downloads over the Web. (A security certificate is also required for another \$49.95 per year. This is substantial less expensive than what many other companies charge, although some will throw it in with a shopping cart for free.) Of course, there's a discount if you pay for a longer term. The monthly costs (Intuit and Go Daddy) come to between \$50 to \$60 a month to operate a Web store.

The catalog was easy to set up and a new domain name *ComputerEdgeBooks.com* was included, which makes it easy to link from the main *ComputerEdge* site or anywhere else on the Web. There are many up sells available on Go Daddy (this is how they increase their sales with often unnecessary add ons), but we went with the bare minimum for now. Until we get more e-books published, there is no reason to rush into more or expanded features. (I've currently taken the new e-book publishing software to the point where I can start importing *ComputerEdge* articles into production as e-books, although there are bugs to be resolved—naturally. If you have any particular past editorial you would like to see as a portable e-book (iPad, Nook, or Kindle), then please let us know.) PayPal is available for an additional charge, but we are taking a wait-and-see approach before we add on that capability. Some sites take PayPal as an alternative to credit cards.

I'm not saying that Go Daddy is the best way to go. It's merely working for us and integrates with Intuit. There are many other businesses which offer complete packages, including Miva Merchant Services ([www.mivamerchant.com/ecommerce-hosting](http://www.mivamerchant.com/ecommerce-hosting)) which uses the same Miva software which runs the primary *ComputerEdge Web* site. If you're starting from scratch, look for a service which best matches your new business needs and search the Web for reviews and complaints before diving in.

## Why You Should Use Third Party Services for Your Web Store

I'm the type of person who likes to do things myself, but when it comes to taking credit cards, I don't want anything sensitive saved on my computers or servers. In this age of identity theft and hacking for profit, there is no need for anyone to take on the additional liability involved with financial information. When you contract with other companies to host your shopping carts and process credit cards, there are no credit card numbers recorded in your computer system. Security for those numbers becomes the problem of the service providers.

Even if I must to record a credit card number for recurring charges, I never put it in electronic form. I write it by hand (ink or pencil) and keep it in a locked file cabinet. This has its risk (break in), but the physical control is so much better that chancing it with electronic format on a computer or server—encrypted or not.

## Quick and Inexpensive

To get a Web store started, all you need is a Web shopping cart which accepts credit cards. This article offers a fairly quick and inexpensive way to get a Web e-tail business up and running. It's helpful to have some knowledge of HTML programming, but it's not required. I have not provided a comprehensive review of the many ways to start up in e-tailing. If you need more help than a simple system such as Go Daddy offers or your business will have more complexity, then there are many other companies geared to serve you. There may be other pitfalls which I have yet to run into, but you can be sure that if something strange or startling happens, I'll let you know.

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

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## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

### “The Difference the Right Management Makes” by Wally Wang

The difference the right management makes; Microsoft's no-lose business model; lawyers using iPad; another secret Apple weapon; back to school promotions; no more PowerPC programs; the future of e-books with Apple; Top Sites screen.

# Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Pick up most American newspapers and you'll find almost no news about other countries. Even among American cities bordering major countries like Canada and Mexico, you'll find little to no news about what's happening a few miles across an artificial border.

That's why reading a magazine such as *The Economist* ([www.economist.com/](http://www.economist.com/)) can be so refreshing since it provides regular news about different parts of the world such as South America, Asia, Africa and Europe. This isn't sensationalism news about earthquakes or royal weddings, but ordinary political and economic news that can help everyone stay informed on how different cultures cope with similar problems.

A recent article in *The Economist* investigates the idea that manufacturing jobs are leaving the United States ([www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2011/07/global-trade](http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2011/07/global-trade)) and going overseas. Three scholars, Greg Linden, Jason Dedrick and Kenneth L. Kraemer, published a paper in *The Journal of International Commerce and Economics* about how the iPod has created jobs and profits around the world. The paper, "Innovation and Job Creation in a Global Economy: The Case of Apple's iPod ([pcic.merage.uci.edu/papers/2011/InnovationJobCreationiPod.pdf](http://pcic.merage.uci.edu/papers/2011/InnovationJobCreationiPod.pdf))," claims that Apple's iPod has created 13,920 jobs in the United States, but 27,250 jobs abroad. Therefore, the conclusion is that innovation rewards other countries with jobs and does little to help America.

Yet *The Economist* argues otherwise. Although the iPod created twice as many jobs overseas than it did in America, the overwhelming number of those overseas jobs were in the lower manufacturing sector while the majority of the American jobs were in higher paying engineering and technical positions.

*The Economist* claims, "All Apple has done has put thousands of people to work making products consumers love. We can look at Apple and ask why it hasn't created jobs in the way Detroit did decades ago, but that's a stupid question... The question is not why Apple doesn't employ more Americans. The question is why there aren't more Apples."

To innovate, companies like Apple need creative people with the necessary skills to design products that people want. Apple even created an entirely new industry just through its App Store alone. Four years ago, nobody ever heard of a game like *Angry Birds*. Now this game, along with many other apps, have literally created jobs for people out of thin air.

Rather than ask "Why aren't there more companies like Apple?" maybe a better question to ask is "Why do so many companies tolerate and reward incompetent executives with huge salaries, annual bonuses and golden parachutes

(supposedly to retain "talent") and still receive (and tolerate) so little results in return?

In a recent article on AOL about Detroit automakers ([autos.aol.com/article/detroit-asian-auto-makers/](http://autos.aol.com/article/detroit-asian-auto-makers/)), David Kiley wrote that "Ford and Chrysler are examples of how management changes at the top have unleashed talent that was always there at the companies...Dramatically better products are coming from largely the same people but with much smarter people calling shots at the top."

Perhaps the real reason there aren't more companies like Apple is because upper management in too many companies prefer to focus less on quality and crafting dazzling products, and more about lining their own pocketbook. If companies like Ford and Chrysler can discover that better management leads to better products, maybe other companies will eventually learn this lesson instead of cranking out mediocre products every year because it's easier than actually trying to innovate ([news.cnet.com/8301-13924\\_3-20078052-64/hp-fiddles-while-apple-innovates/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-13924_3-20078052-64/hp-fiddles-while-apple-innovates/)) anything.

## Microsoft's No-Lose Business Model

Microsoft's Windows Mobile once held 20 percent of the mobile phone market. Now Windows Mobile is dead and Windows Phone 7 is struggling to gain traction. Of course, none of this matters if Microsoft succeeds in getting Windows 8 to run on mobile devices, which means Windows 8 could replace Windows Phone 7.

While Microsoft would love to license Windows Phone 7 and Windows 8 to other companies, they're actually making more money charging manufacturers using Android ([www.informationweek.com/news/mobility/business/231001194](http://www.informationweek.com/news/mobility/business/231001194)) instead. Because Android supposedly violates Microsoft's patents, companies that use Android must pay a patent licensing fee. HTC is paying \$5 a unit while Samsung is trying to negotiate from paying \$15 to \$10 a unit. That means every time someone sells a smart phone or tablet using Android, Microsoft still makes a profit while everyone else does all the work.

(Oracle is also trying to force manufacturers of Android devices to pay patent licensing fees ([www.networkworld.com/news/2011/070711-oracle-win-would-strain-android.html](http://www.networkworld.com/news/2011/070711-oracle-win-would-strain-android.html)) too, which could further drive up the cost to use Android.)

Most likely, the cost to license Windows Phone 7 or Windows 8 will be equal or less than the cost to pay patent fees for using Android. So whether manufacturers use Android or Windows Phone 7/Windows 8, Microsoft makes money. By charging lower licensing fees, Microsoft can encourage more manufacturers to use Windows Phone 7/Windows 8 ([www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jul/07/windows-phone-android-patent-seeking](http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jul/07/windows-phone-android-patent-seeking)) instead of Android.

Of course, Android profits only come in as long as manufacturers are using Android. Android exploded in popularity in the smart phone market because of its availability on multiple carriers and because of its lower cost than the iPhone. Unfortunately, Android's advantage in the smart phone market isn't translating ([seekingalpha.com/article/278539-why-android-tablets-fail-to-live-up-to-the-ipad-killer-promise](http://seekingalpha.com/article/278539-why-android-tablets-fail-to-live-up-to-the-ipad-killer-promise)) into the tablet market.

Unlike the iPhone, which was tied to AT&T in the United States, the iPad isn't restricted in the same way, giving Android no advantage. Android smart phones often cost much less than the iPhone, giving them a price advantage. In the tablet market, Android tablets often cost the same or more than an iPad, negating any possible price advantage.

When Microsoft starts imposing patent fees on Android tablet manufacturers, they'll find it even harder to compete on price with the iPad, making Android less appealing as a tablet operating system compared to Windows 8. Thus, it's possible that Android can flop in the tablet market while Windows 8 grabs second place as the tablet operating system of choice.

When competing on the level playing field of the tablet operating system market, Android continues to struggle. With the

threat of patent lawsuits hanging over them, manufacturers might find it cheaper just to use webOS or Windows 8 and avoid Android altogether.

## Lawyers Using iPad

While lawyers have experimented with using iPads as presentation devices, two lawyers in Phoenix, Marc Lamber and James Goodnow, have found another use for the iPad. Since clients often complain that they can't reach their lawyers, these Phoenix lawyers give their clients iPads to borrow. Now clients can contact their lawyers ([www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2011-07-05-ipads-attorneys\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2011-07-05-ipads-attorneys_n.htm)) 24 hours a day using these borrowed iPads.

"It was nothing that I ever expected," said Melissa Frankel, who was injured in a collision last year. Using the iPad, she has taken a video of her injuries and has Skype video conferences with the lawyers.

The iPad "is brilliant," Frankel said. "It is the best way, the easiest way to communicate with them."

Most likely, these law firm clients don't care about multitasking or the ability to play Flash videos. They just want a device that's simple to use and performs a useful task. By solving real problems, the technical specifications buried inside any device is completely irrelevant.

## Another Secret Apple Weapon

One reason why competitors find it hard to compete against Apple is because they focus on technical specifications, but ignore the big picture. The iPod didn't succeed against other MP3 players because of technical specifications, but because of iTunes and the ability to buy music to load directly on an iPod. Omit iTunes and you miss a major feature of the iPod.

Now rivals are struggling to compete against the iPad in the tablet market. Once more, they focus on technical specifications and ignore the App Store, which makes it easy to download and install apps to your device. Without a large selection of desirable apps, other tablets can't compete.

Apple recently patented something called macrosalar architecture ([www.zdnet.com/blog/storage/apples-macroscalar-architecture-what-it-is-what-it-means/1435](http://www.zdnet.com/blog/storage/apples-macroscalar-architecture-what-it-is-what-it-means/1435)). The basic idea is that you can only speed up a computer so far using a single processor. That's why newer computers use multiple processors to allow for parallel processing.

Multiple processors can speed up a computer, but only if the software can take advantage of it. This is where Apple's macrosalar architecture comes into play by working at the compiler level to optimize programs for parallel processing. Theoretically, macrosalar architecture lets a programmer worry about making the program work while the compiler takes care of the details to make it run fast on multiple processors.

Since Apple designs their own processors and writes their own compiler (Xcode), they can optimize their compiler for their processors. The result will be that programs written for iOS will run faster than similar programs written with other compilers for rival devices, even if those devices use similar parts.

Apple's first secret weapon with the iPad was their proprietary ARM-based processor. Now their second secret weapon is their macrosalar architecture for their compiler. Assuming you have a better processor and a compiler optimized for that processor, your programs should run better than the same program compiled for another operating system like Android, running on devices that may have different types of processors, making it impossible to optimize a program for any particular processor.

Whether this speed difference will be obvious to users or not is another question altogether, but it shows that Apple isn't

afraid to make long-term, strategic decisions that may not work out. In comparison, most other companies simply react to whatever the competition does next with no long-term, let alone short-term planning, at all.

## Back to School Promotions

To entice students to buy Macintosh computers, Apple is offering a \$100 gift card for every Macintosh you buy. With this gift card, you can buy music, movies, TV shows, or apps. To compete against Apple, Microsoft is offering a similar back-to-school promotion where you get a free Xbox game console with any Windows PC over \$699. Despite the higher value of the Xbox, WinBeta reports that more students are buying a Macintosh computer ([www.winbeta.org/?q=news/apple-back-school-promo-beating-microsoft](http://www.winbeta.org/?q=news/apple-back-school-promo-beating-microsoft)) over a Windows PC by an 8 to 2 margin. With 80 percent of the student population choosing Macs over Windows PCs, guess which computer these graduating students will probably want to use in the future?

From a financial point of view, Apple still comes out ahead. Suppose a student buys a \$699 Mac mini and gets a \$100 iTunes gift card. Any time you buy something through iTunes, Apple gets a cut of the sale, so part of that \$100 gift card will go straight back to Apple, meaning that the gift card won't really cost Apple \$100. Apple also makes a hefty chunk of profit by selling the Mac mini and an even larger profit if the student opts for a more expensive MacBook Pro or iMac.

Now consider Microsoft's situation. On any Windows PC no matter what the cost, Microsoft makes a fixed amount for the Windows license fee such as \$50. The retail price of an Xbox might be \$200, which means the actual cost to build an Xbox is much less. Assume that the Xbox costs Microsoft \$50 to make. By giving away an Xbox with every Windows PC, Microsoft essentially makes no money. Even if the Windows license fee is greater than the cost of the Xbox, Microsoft will make minimal profit compared to Apple.

With 80 percent of students preferring the Macintosh over Windows, despite the higher value of a free Xbox, this further demonstrates the appeal of the Macintosh over Windows. If the more valuable bribe of a free Xbox can't convince students to choose a Windows PC, then how will Windows PC sales fare without any offer to go along with it?

## No More PowerPC Programs

With Mac OS X 10.7 Lion, you won't be able to run any PowerPC programs any more. Most companies have created Universal programs, capable of running on both PowerPC and Intel-based Macs, and a handful of companies are starting to release programs that only run on Intel-based Macs, so the lack of PowerPC program support shouldn't bother most people.

The one major exception is Quicken. Despite all their money, Intuit Software still hasn't managed to create a decent Macintosh version of their Quicken program. Their only Intel-based Quicken program for the Mac, dubbed Quicken Essentials, has been panned by reviewers for its limited features. As a result, many people have simply stuck with older versions of Quicken for the Mac, which were PowerPC programs.

The moment you upgrade to Lion, you can't use your older, PowerPC programs, which means you can't use your older versions of Quicken, so you'll need to find a replacement right away. For those who just need a simple financial management program, take a look at CheckBook Pro ([www.splasm.com/checkbookpro/](http://www.splasm.com/checkbookpro/)) from Splasm Software.

The program retails for \$24.95 and provides the basics for creating accounts, filtering and searching through accounts, and creating simple graphs to show you how much money you're spending or saving. More importantly, CheckBook Pro can import data stored in other formats such as Text, CSV (comma-separated values) and Quicken format. This import feature can help you rip your data out of an old version of Quicken and import it into CheckBook Pro.



Figure 1. CheckBook Pro offers various ways to import data from other programs.

If you're used to Quicken, you'll find switching to another financial management program a bit awkward until you get used to the other program's user interface. Fortunately, CheckBook Pro is fairly straightforward so it shouldn't take you more than a few minutes to start adding and editing entries until you get comfortable with the program.

For example in my version of Quicken 2005, I can view my account entries as a list and double-click on any entry to edit it within that displayed list. With CheckBook Pro, you can view all the entries in your account but editing opens a separate window.

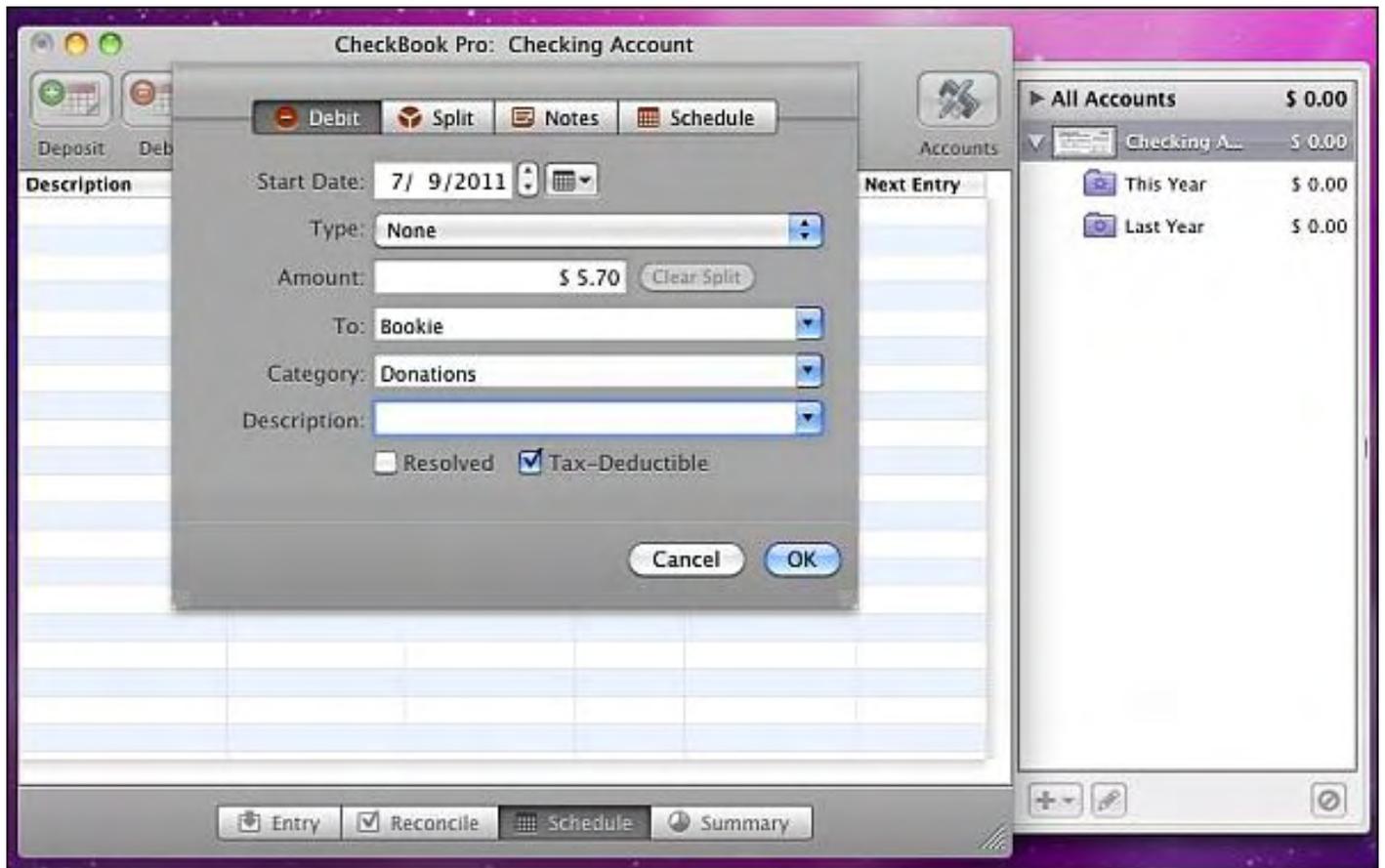


Figure 2. CheckBook Pro opens a separate window to edit account entries.

To help you analyze your data, CheckBook Pro provides a list of pre-defined account summary reports so you can quickly identify tax-deductible entries, income, or expenses at the click of the mouse.

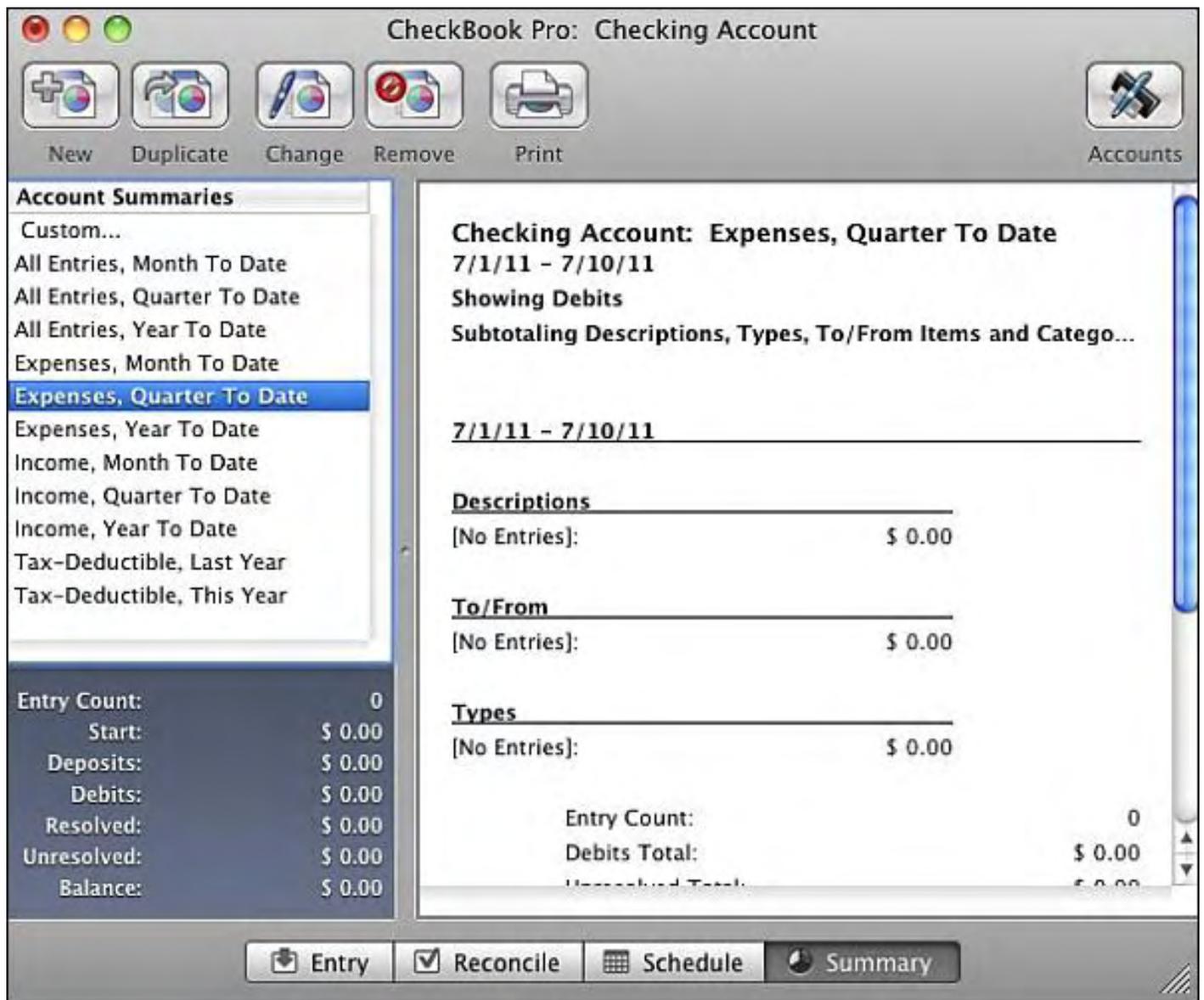


Figure 3. CheckBook Pro provides pre-defined account summaries.

CheckBook Pro (like the more expensive \$49.95 Quicken Essentials) won't do fancy tasks like online banking, check printing, or investment tracking like older versions of Quicken, so if those features aren't that important, you'll find CheckBook Pro a simple financial management program that's easy to use without overwhelming you with loads of features you might not want or need anyway. For \$24.95, you can skip Quicken Essentials and just go straight for the less expensive CheckBook Pro. If you need even more basic money management features, you can save more money with the \$14.95 CheckBook version.

Essentially, CheckBook and CheckBook Pro provide you with the basic features of money management. If this is all you need, then CheckBook Pro can provide a simple transition path between the PowerPC version of Quick and Mac OS X 10.7 Lion. (CheckBook Pro is a Universal app too, so you can run it on an Intel-based Mac or an older PowerPC Mac.)

Maybe Intuit Software might actually figure out how to create a Macintosh version of Quicken that's comparable to Quicken for Windows, but until this miracle happens, CheckBook Pro can be a less complicated and less expensive alternative to consider.

## The Future of E-Books with Apple

The last time I went to a bookstore, the parking lot was much emptier than normal to the point where I thought the bookstore had already closed. They were still open, but one glance at the bookshelves inside showed that they were stocking far fewer books.

In the old days, this bookstore used to cram books on a shelf with only the spine showing, so you had to tilt your head to the side to read each book title. Today, most of the books lay on the shelves with the cover fully in view. This gave the impression of a fully stocked bookshelf while hiding the fact that there were far fewer books filling the shelf.

Other shelves didn't hold books at all, but contained toys and games. With the bookstore's limited selection scattered sparsely among multiple shelves, there was even fewer reasons to browse or come back to this bookstore again. It's like watching the slow death of another Blockbuster Video store on its last gasp.

With printed books on their way out, take a look at this patent application ([www.patentlyapple.com/patently-apple/2011/07/apple-reveals-the-next-chapter-for-ibooks-new-chip-for-ios-devices.html](http://www.patentlyapple.com/patently-apple/2011/07/apple-reveals-the-next-chapter-for-ibooks-new-chip-for-ios-devices.html)) from Apple, describing a new way iBooks could possibly work to display e-books. The basic idea is that tapping a word or a phrase can link to a picture, additional text, audio, animation, a foreign language, or even an app such as a calculator or a stock market widget.

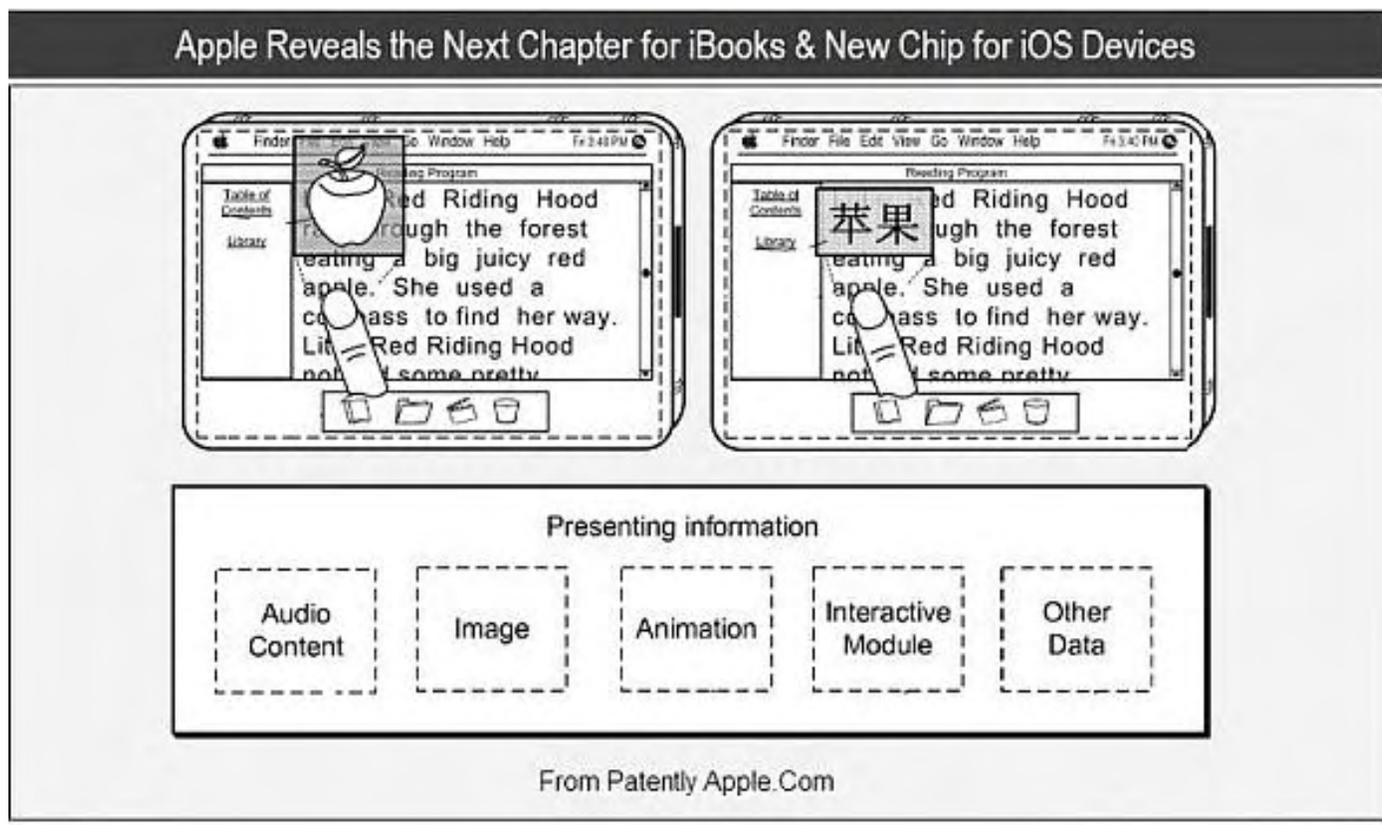


Figure 4. Apple has patented a possible way e-books can work in the future.

Swipe your finger across a word and the device can read that word to you, which can help you learn proper pronunciation. Such a feature could be especially useful for learning foreign languages or teaching people how to read.

The key to e-books is to move beyond the static text and picture paradigm of printed books and shift into a more interactive display of information through an e-book. This will likely cause an upheaval in the publishing industry as everyone tries to figure out how this will work best for converting current titles and developing newer ones.

Whatever the end result may be, printed books are going the way of audio CDs and video DVDs, which means

bookstores and book publishers must find a new way to survive if they hope to stay in business any longer. Most likely they'll cling to the past until it's too late, and that's when newer companies will spring up to take their place.

\* \* \*

If you use Safari, you may see the Top Sites screen that displays thumbnail images of your most frequently visited Web sites. To increase or decrease the number of Web site thumbnail images you see, do this:

First, open Safari and choose File => New Tab (or press Command+T). This opens the Top Sites screen.



Figure 5. The Top Sites screen displays thumbnail images of your favorite Web sites.

Next, click on the Edit button in the bottom left corner of the screen. In the bottom right corner, you'll see three buttons labeled Small, Medium and Large. Click on Small to see more thumbnail images or Large to see fewer thumbnail images. (Medium is the default appearance for the Top Sites screen.)

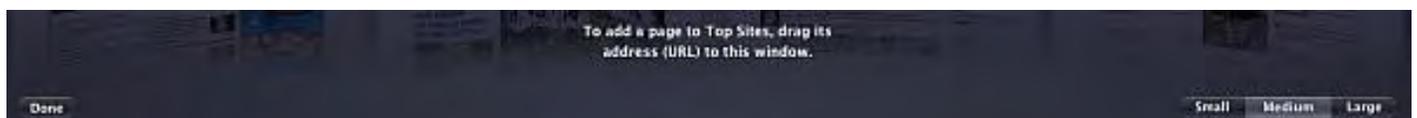


Figure 6. Three buttons in the bottom right corner of the screen let you display more or less thumbnail images of Web sites.

Finally, click the Done button in the bottom left corner when you're happy with the appearance of your Top Sites screen.

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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 particles 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](http://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](http://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](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=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?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468](http://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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894](http://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](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896)).

Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

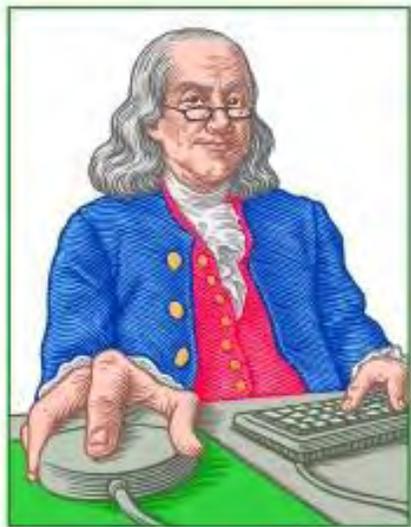
[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362))

The 15-Minute Movie Method  
([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8](http://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/](http://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](http://www.wallacewang.com)) Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto: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

**"Transcript Script"** by  
Tony J. Podrasky

Tony shares a script that makes a typescript of everything printed on your terminal—useful for a trail of what transpired during a session.

Filename: script

Use: Script makes a typescript of everything printed on your terminal. It is useful for students who need a hard copy record of an interactive session as proof of an assignment, as the typescript file can be printed out later with `lpr(1)`. (That's from `<man script>`.)

Another reason (and one that I think is its *real use*) is to give you an audit trail of what transpired during a session.

Example: Suppose you're trying to do something that you've never done before—say, setting up a NFS partition and mounting it. Or, maybe, you're going to play with the automounter and set up a partition that you can access from other hosts.

Before you *do anything*, you type:

```
root% script
Script started, file is typescript
```

The `<script>` utility will now record everything you type (from the `xsession` that it was started on—not from any other terminal) as well as the system's response to your command.

Think of `<script>` as if you were working from a hard copy terminal instead of a video terminal.

When you are done, just type `<exit>`:

```
root% exit
exit
Script done on Mon 04 Jul 2001 09:04:50 AM PDT
```

Now, `<cd>` to the directory in which you started `<script>` and you'll find a file called "typescript." You can print it out and see all of your commands, and how the system responded.

```

tonyp% cd
tonyp% script
Script started, file is typescript
tonyp% ls
sig_linus win952.xbm
tonyp% cat sig_linus
Tony J. Podrasky | When you say: "I wrote a program that crashed Windows,"
                  | people just stare at you blankly and say: "Hey, I got
                  | those with the system, *for free*. "
                  |                                     -Linus Torvalds

tonyp% exit
exit
Script done, file is typescript
[END OF THE SCRIPT SESSION]
tonyp% cat typescript
Script started on Mon 04 Jul 2011 09:21:23 AM PDT
tonyp% ls
sig_linus win952.xbm
Tony J. Podrasky | When you say: "I wrote a program that crashed Windows,"
                  | people just stare at you blankly and say: "Hey, I got
                  | those with the system, *for free*."
                  |                                     -Linus Torvalds

tonyp% exit
exit
Script done on Mon 04 Jul 2011 09:22:25 AM PDT
tonyp%

```

---

I'm going to end my little column with one of my .sig files. You are welcome to use them. If you use them (intact), please leave my name or the original author's name. If you modify them, remove the authorship and add your name if you wish.

```

Tony J. Podrasky | WHAT WOULD YOU DO ON A FIRST DATE THAT WAS TURNING
                  | SOUR? I'd run home and play dead. The next day I
                  | would call all the newspapers, and make sure they
                  | wrote about me in all the dead columns.
                  |                                     CRAIG - age 9

--:-ETX-:-

```

---

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*).

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## Beyond Personal Computing

“Mysterious Essentials: Understanding Error Messages” by Marilyn K. Martin

Error messages can be a point of real frustration. Marilyn shares some humorous anecdotes about different types of error messages and the complaints Tech Support personnel receive.

**Computer:** *A device designed to speed and automate errors.*

Whether a computer pro, repair tech, or a mere user with a computer at work or home, unfathomable error messages can reduce the strongest and most brilliant to blithering fury. Most error messages feature a number, which means each error fits into a devilish "list" of known error messages. But that nonetheless means absolutely nothing to most users, beyond the fact that their computer or printer has now stopped working.

And upset users complaining to Help Desks about "error messages" have entered the Myth and Lore of Tech Repair. Whenever the calm Tech asks the standard, "What kind of error message are you getting?", the usual answer is a panicked, "I don't know! Just help me!"

### Real Error Messages

Who hasn't been cruising the Internet, and found themselves suddenly stopped cold, staring at one of these more popular, cursed error messages?

400 Bad File Request (Syntax in URL is incorrect.)

401 Unauthorized (The Web site server is looking for some encryption from your computer, and not finding it.)

403 Forbidden/Access Denied (Similar to 401, special permission is needed to access the Web site.)

404 File Not Found (Server can't find the file you requested.)

### Unreal Error Messages

Here are some error messages you may wish to see—or hopefully never will. (Note: A sense of humor and an appreciation of life's absurdities helpful, but not required.)

"There is a problem with your Internet connection. Please search our Web site for a solution."

"Backup not found: (A)bort (R)etry (V)omit."

"Bad or corrupt header. Go get a haircut."

"Bad or missing mouse driver. Spank the cat? (Y/N)"

"File not found. Should I fake it? (Y/N)"

"Error: Keyboard not attached. Press F1 to continue."

"Big Error: You really screwed up this time. (I) know/(W)hat else is new/(T)'s my first day."

"Your energy level can not be found. Please revive it with a candy bar. (OK)"

"Your brain power has fallen dramatically. Go to bed. (OK)"

"Employment/Enjoyment Conflict: Your system administrator has determined that your current activity is providing a level of enjoyment beyond that which is allowed on company time. Your enjoyment will now be disabled: (OK)/(I)'m sorry/(D)ock my pay

## Dreams and Error Messages

One story is that there was once a lad who professed a desire to become a Great Writer. He dreamed of writing about things that the whole world would read, that people would react to on a profound emotional level. Things that would make people scream, cry, howl with pain and anger, or laugh themselves into a rubber-room. He now works for Miniplus, writing error messages.

"I was dreaming about 0s and 1s. And I think I saw a 2!"

## Error Messages That Don't Compute

Then there was the mother who called a Help Desk to complain, "My Mac has an error message box on the screen. It says Netscape navigator/Bus Error. I think my toddler must have shoved a toy bus into the computer."

A young man worked for a large company. One day one of the servers had a serious crash, and the Tech working on it needed assistance with the recovery process. He went to the CIO and asked for help. The CIO told him, "If a server has a hard drive and some ROM, push the 'On' button on the monitor to see if the screen at least flickers. If so, there's absolutely no way there could be any error on the machine whatsoever!"

Another Help Desk Tech had to calm down a distraught user. His computer had told him he was "bad and an invalid." The Tech had to reassure the user that "bad command" and "invalid" error messages only applied to the computer, and shouldn't be taken personally.

## Self-Help For Error Messages

One day a frantic businessman called up their in-house Help Desk, saying that he had a proposal due that very day. But he couldn't print it out, because WordPerfect was reporting an error that his fonts were missing.

With a back-log of other calls, the Help Desk didn't get someone to the man's desk fast enough. After continual calls all day, the man's frantic secretary suddenly called late in the day: "Could you *please* send somebody up as soon as earthly possible?! He's opened the computer with a screwdriver, and is looking for his missing fonts!"

One man had a computer retail business he ran out of his house. He sold a PC to a friend, who soon called to complain that every time he started his computer, he got the error message, "Be Sure To Keep Your System Clean." The seller suggested installing an antivirus program.

Several days later, the friend called up again, distraught. The antivirus program hadn't eliminated the error message, so the user tackled what the error message told him to do. He'd opened the case and vacuumed inside. Then he'd washed the outside with Windex. But he still couldn't get rid of the error message.

So he took it back to his friend, the seller, who then took a crack at this stubborn error message, "Be Sure To Keep Your System Clean". Turns out that the "error message" was actually a Word document the user had never closed out, so it kept appearing on start up. The buyer owned a pool business, and the "error" document consisted of instructions for how to clean a pool filtration system.

## The Error Box We All Wish We Had on Our Work Computers

(U)ndo Stupid Changes / (T)ake Back Flippant Comment / (C)reate Brilliant Idea / (E)xtend Deadline / (R)ead Bosses Mind / (A)djst Subordinate's Attitude / (T)erminate Smart-Ass IT Technician / (I)ncrease Salary / (F)ind Better Client / (R)eclaim Wasted Evenings / (E)xtend Weekend / (F)ind Perfect Mate

## Dangerous Error Messages—and the Police

An elderly lady called Tech Support one day, sobbing. When the Tech finally got her calmed down, she managed to hiccup that she'd been on the Internet and had read that ever popular message, "This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down." Within seconds, she'd heard police sirens going down the road. Her thought had then been, "Oh, dear! They're coming to lock me up!"

Another older lady bought a brand new desktop computer with all the extras. After about a month, she suddenly got the same error message about an "illegal function." Panicked, she proceeded to take the whole system apart, and hide all the pieces in different places around her house.

Then she called Tech Support to ask, "So how much longer do I have, before the police come and get me?" Needless to say, the Tech spent a lot of time on that call, helping her put everything back together again.

Another Tech was working in a community college. One day a Security Guard stopped by and pulled the Tech aside. "You need to keep this confidential," the Guard half-whispered. "But we've got a new person in our office. Over the past few days I've glanced over at his computer and saw a message that says, 'You have performed an illegal operation.' He just clicks something and makes it go away. I need to know if he's doing something illegal, and if we should call the police."

Then there was the Tech who got a frantic phone call about 3:30AM one Sunday. The user had a new Macintosh Plus. She had just gotten her entire family out of the house, and was calling breathlessly from a neighbor's house. She had just received her first system error, and had interpreted the picture of a bomb on the screen as a warning that the computer was about to blow up.

## Error Messages for Fun and Profit

There is even a company called Errorwear, Inc ([www.errorwear.com/index.php](http://www.errorwear.com/index.php)), whose motto is "Embrace your computer problems. 100% cotton, 200% error. No jokes, no logos, just errors." They sell \$15.95 t-shirts with well known computer error messages, such as "Bad Command or File Name", "404 Error", "403 Forbidden", and so on.

A bogus story making the rounds a few years ago, was that popular software company, Miniplus, was going to sell

advertising space in their error messages. Advertising executives thought that this move might change the face of product marketing forever. And some believed that even more advantage could be exploited, if Miniplash wanted to place pop-up ads inside their well known security vulnerabilities, such as advertising in their worms and viruses.

But, alas, other software giants immediately filed an injunction in Federal court, to block Miniplash from attempting to sell ad space in their own error messages. The other software giants claimed unfair monopolistic practices, that neither company could compete against. Miniplash had no comment.

## Not All Errors Are from the Computer

A customer called Tech Support from a medical center. "Our computer is having trouble reading your upgrade." The Tech suggested wiping the CD-ROM with a lint-free cloth. The user replied that they don't have any. The Tech couldn't believe it. "No lint-free cloths? In a hospital?!"

Then there was the user who set his type color to black, after setting his background color to black. Not much Tech Support could do, so it took him days of blind-typing to get everything back to where it was.

Then there was the office worker who called Tech Support because her screen was reading, "Bad Command or File Name." The Tech went to her desk and pulled up the file menu screen, which read: "1. Main Frame / 2. Word Processing / Press the number of your choice and hit ENTER."

The Tech instructed her to press either 1 or 2. She pressed 4. And then got another error message. The patient Tech asked her why she'd pressed 4, since only the choices were 1 or 2. She replied, "It says to press the number of my choice. So I chose 4!"

## Human Error Codes

Repair Techs and Help Desks have their own well known acronyms for "human errors":

PEBKAC = Problem Exists Between Keyboard And Chair

PICNIC = Problem In Chair, Not In Computer

PIBCAK = Problem Is Between Chair And Keyboard

And if anyone tells you that you have an "ID-TenT" error—you've just been insulted. Since the decoded word reads "ID10T".

## Errors That Stump Techs

"When I boot up my computer, I get a NetBIOS error. When is your server going to be back up?"

"Who's General Failure, and why's he reading my disk?"

"Which key is 'Any' key?"

(Many of these anecdotes are on multiple Computer Joke sites, but special thanks to *Rinkworks.com*, *Bitoffun.com*, *Guy-sports.com* and *Netsmartinc.com*)

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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/](http://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](http://www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.html)), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

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## Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Virtual Machines Very Useful," "What About Linux?" "iPads for Content Creation," "Can't Disable 'Simple File Sharing'," "Visionaries and the iPad Market," "Cloud Computing"

### Virtual Machines Very Useful

[Regarding Barry Fass-Holmes's July 1 article, "Virtual Machine Software Re-Update":]

I have created a number of virtual machines on my Linux host computer with Virtual Box. One was created solely for online banking. When installing the OS on the virtual machine I encrypted the virtual hard disk. I bookmarked my bank log on URLs, closed the virtual machine, then took a snapshot of the virtual hard drive. I restore the virtual hard drive to this state when I'm done banking online. The virtual machine's network is set up so it can access the Internet, but not the local network. The location of the virtual hard disk is on an external USB hard drive that is only turned on when I am banking online.

I find virtual machines more convenient than dual booting, because it is faster to switch between operating systems. There are some useful programs that are only available on one operating system and not the one that is currently running. Booting up a virtual machine to run that program allows me to switch back quickly.

I usually install new software on a virtual machine first to see if I like it. Uninstalling on my real machine can leave behind unwanted clutter.

I have found not all programs work in virtual machines. I can't get AutoCad to work in a virtual machine for example. Also, I find video to be slow and jerky. Although that could be caused by the limits of my computer.

-Dennis, San Diego

### What About Linux?

[Regarding Jack Dunning's June 17 article, "Ready or Not, Here Comes Windows 8!":]

Do you feel there is a place for Linux in all this?

-Cicero, Colorado Springs

*[Yes, I do—more than ever. There will always be a place for robust operating systems which aren't overloaded with unneeded features. Especially, if they don't cost very much. —Jack Dunning]*

### iPads for Content Creation

[Regarding Jack Dunning's March 18 article, "iPad: A Walk in the Garden":]

For iPad contrarians who claim that a "media tablet" is suitable only for consumption, here is the link to an article about a music video ([www.tuaw.com/2011/06/23/music-video-created-with-ipad-brushes-app/](http://www.tuaw.com/2011/06/23/music-video-created-with-ipad-brushes-app/)) created on an iPad.

-Barry Fass-Holmes, San Diego, CA

## Can't Disable "Simple File Sharing"

[Regarding the June 24 Digital Dave column:]

In Windows XP Home, you *cannot* disable simple file sharing. I just went through a lengthy and painful session with Netgear because they claimed their "Digital Entertainer Elite" EVA 9150 worked with Windows XP (on the package and in their ads) and it won't for this simple reason.

They finally admitted this after two weeks, claimed to be trying to find a solution for three months, and ultimately refused to accept the return of the device or offer any useful help. Fortunately, Amazon was kind enough to accept the return, even though it was well beyond their 30-day return period.

Oops, sorry to go off on that rant—more info than you needed to know, but after this second unpleasant experience with Netgear, not buying from them again.

-Cal Callahan, San Diego

## Visionaries and the iPad Market

[Regarding the June 24 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

I've often read about how corporate boards are looking for visionaries to run the show, but I think that little is known about how to recognize them. Steve Jobs has a proven track record for multiple successes. Most people, even if they are visionaries, are lucky to see one major success in their lifetime. If someone is a true visionary, they will most likely be regarded as a crank or lunatic by the average board of directors.

On another note, the chart showing consumer preference for tablet computers (Figure 1) is a little shocking if only because the Apple preference is a mere 50% in a market where they dominate with over 90% of the sales. There are no real competitors, yet half the people want to buy from someone other than Apple.

-Richard, Oceanside, CA

## Cloud Computing

[Regarding the June 24 Worldwide News & Product Reviews column:]

For most of us *upload* is the bottle neck!

-Walter, San Diego

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**ComputerEdge** always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com ([webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook](http://webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook)). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com).

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