ComputorEdge™ Online — 08/19/11

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Which Social Media Alternative Is Right for You?

There is much more to social networking than Facebook.

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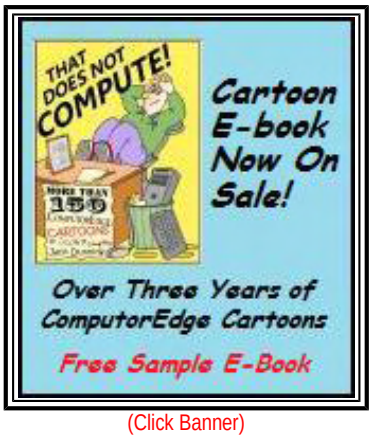

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Digital Dave

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

Fiber Optic Network Cabling; Viruses; Who Owns the Internet?

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm buying a home in Blossom Valley, just east of El Cajon. I want to install fiber optic cables throughout. I'm planning on by-passing Cat 5 & 6 cabling because they'll end up obsolete. I might as well spend the money now and get technology that will be top tier for a while.

I'm going to need a contractor who'll do the entire package, purchase, install and trouble shoot. Do you have any recommendations?

Skip Blake
San Diego, CA

Dear Skip,

While I couldn't give you a specific recommendation, be sure to find someone with fiber optic experience and good references. Pulling and connecting fiber optics has more sensitivities (and expense) than regular network cable, but it does have its advantages. In particular, the broadband capabilities are far beyond what you will find in the typical home installation. This will come in handy when you need to transfer terabytes of data from one computer to another. It will also be useful when you are developing the launch system for your backyard ICBM. (I guess that last comment was a little too patronizing.)

All joking aside, unless you have development plans that go far beyond the average computer user, running fiber optic cable throughout your house may not be worth the cost. Fiber optics are more susceptible to damage and broken connections than standard cable, plus the device networks cards, which take advantage of the speed, are more expensive.

To be honest, in this day and age, I'm not sure that I would even bother with installing CAT 6 cable in a house. Wireless technology has come so far (and continues to progress) that you could find that your excellent cabling will go unused. I've seen this happen in the past.

I know a person who paid the bill to have his entire house wired for telephone, networks and cable television. When the house was completed he had everything up and running. It was a dream. A few years later, he was using Wi-Fi for his network and remote handsets for the telephone. The only cabling he was still using was for the cable television.

Again, unless you have a special project in mind which will require much greater bandwidth in a home than the current norm, I don't think it would be worth the headache and cost to deal with fiber optic cabling. I could be wrong (only time will tell), but I think we will be seeing more wireless and less cables in the future.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I sent you a mail on July 29 [see original letter below] about the iexplore virus and not much info about it. It turns out, in as much as I could never get a name to hang on it, I didn't actually know just what I had. I Googled "iexplore virus" and found a lot *of people with basically the same symptoms as mine.* All *instructions to remove were fruitless. Spybot, Hyjackthis, Trend-Micro, McAfee (<= a joke from Cox!), AVG, Avast, Supermalware.*

I was ready to reformat and start over, but I asked an acquaintance in one last attempt. He said instantly that I had "Internet Explorer redirect." I Googled it and found at bleepingcomputers.com *(among a few others) much good and needed info, plus several methods of removal. I opted for the easiest one first! It was from Kasperski Labs (*support.kaspersky.com/faq/?qid=208280684*) and it worked like a charm (TDSSKiller.exe).*

*Here is a Microsoft link (*answers.microsoft.com/en-us/ie/forum/ie8-windows_other/cant-remove-google-redirect-virus-help/1b8e71ff-7249-4ca4-b155-1bb2b0d39877*) which addresses the same topic.*

This is just to let you know, if you are interested to maybe help others.

* * *

Original Letter from Andy M

First, hi! Then, "help!" *I have a major problem with (?)iexplorer. It keeps popping up in "task manager" by itself, but not in a window.* Everything *searched, Google, etc. is redirected elsewhere. It keeps changing (from Firefox) to Internet Explorer as default. If one Googles "iexplore virus", you get a lot of links which describe my problem exactly.*

McAfee (which I have on the problem computer—I'm doing this on an old computer with Ubuntu installed), Avast, AVG, Trend-Micro, etc, never heard of it when using their 'search' functions.

It reset the "hide system files"` and "show hidden files" to default settings. Open program files/Internet Explorer and iexplorer.exe is there, but when using "search" for "files or folders", the computer does not find the file. I think it came from a page that has lyrics to old R&R songs.

I am really careful where I go with the Windows computer, and use this Ubuntu (v. 10.04) computer for cruising the net, I really do not want to reinstall windows system again (XP Pro SP3). BTW, At the same time I got a bug called "Windows Repair", which I managed to remove.

Andy M
Vista ca

Dear Andy,

Thanks for the tremendously useful information. Hopefully others who encounter similar problems will benefit from your experience. It's a good thing that your acquaintance had the right words for your search. Sometimes the words used in an Internet search are the difference between finding a solution and just giving up.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

No, I'm not an elementary school student doing a report. I've seen the Internet change from being a curiosity to becoming a major backbone of commerce.

ComputorEdge *is a case in point, publishing solely online now. Many companies rely on it for every single commercial transaction. They have all their eggs in one basket, and I'm wondering, "Whose basket is it?"*

Many thanks for the publication and all your columns.

Gary Jones
Lakeside, California

Dear Gary,

That's an excellent question. It does seem like there would be a good deal at risk if one group could control (or shutdown) the Internet.

Fortunately, the Internet is owned by no one, or more accurately everyone. The Internet consists of the billions of connections which tie every single online computer together with every other Internet device. There is no one single path, but many alternative paths which may be used at any given time.

The major arteries are called Internet backbones (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_backbone*), delivering huge bandwidth around the world. The Internet Service Providers (ISP) who deliver the connection to your house or business, buy bandwidth from the backbones and resell it to you. The backbones are mostly maintained and operated by universities, government entities and major corporations.

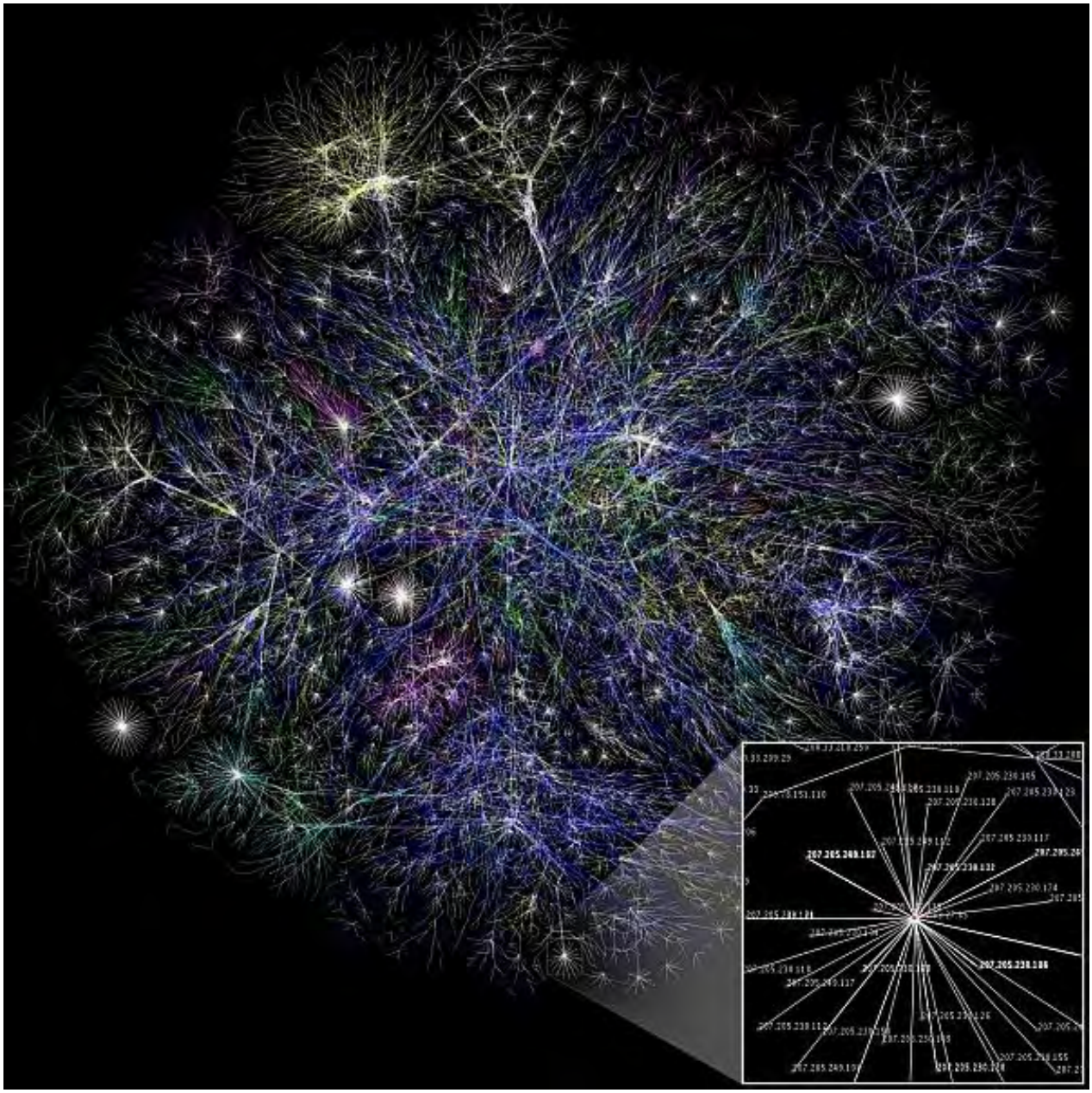

Figure 1. A depiction of the Internet backbones reaching around the world connecting IP addresses. (Taken from the above referenced Wikipedia article.)

The strength of the Internet is in its vastness and redundancy. Since no one person owns the Internet, it is very difficult to monitor and control. This is a problem which haunts despotic regimes worldwide. Even if a portion were to fall under the control of one entity, it could quickly be circumvented by the rest of the Internet.

There are so many alternative routes through the Internet, that your data will get through as long as you don't lose the terminating connection at either end. This makes the Internet robust and unlikely to experience total failure. (While it is always within the realm of possibility that someone could develop a virus which could bring down the entire Internet, it is highly unlikely. There are too many independent pieces to the puzzle.)

The Internet is truly a phenomena which almost spontaneously sprung out of collective human ingenuity. It shows what can happen without government interference—or maybe in spite of government interference.

Digital Dave

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The Other Social Networking Sites

"Special Interests and Meeting Cute" by Marilyn K. Martin

Facebook isn't the only social networking site. There are many different varieties with many different purposes—from special interests and blogging to quick meet mobile apps.

Today, social networking sites offer a way for people to catch up with old friends—or find new friends with mobile apps. Facebook is the global lion of social networking sites. But there are lots of lesser known social networking sites, which are generally more specialized. Whether you want to blog, seek advice/support, find a date, just meet new people in your city, or find someone who shares your unique interests, there is undoubtedly an Internet social network site to fit your needs.

Varieties of Social Network Sites

Wikipedia lists several hundred social network sites (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites*). They can be based in one country or even one city, or have a global reach. Most are interactive, and generally help people form bonds with others over the same common or special interests.

A Sample:

"Daily Strength," "Caring Bridge" and "PatientsLikeMe" are medical crises support groups.

"Athlinks" is for running and swimming athletes.

"Lifeknot," "Friendup" and "Stumbleupon" are for shared interests and hobbies.

"Epernicus," "ResearchGate" and "ScienceStage" are for researchers and other scientists.

"Eons" and "MeetSeniorFriends" are for baby boomers and older.

"GovLoop" is for people in and around government.

As usual, exercise caution, especially since some of these "connection" sites are rather questionable. I will list a few, in case your friends or children are on them, and you are unfamiliar with what they are really all about:

"Identi.ca" is a free micro-blogging site based on the Free Software StatusNet tool. I saw streaming mini-messages in a variety of languages with some disturbing messages, from hacker reports ("A million offline!") to suicidal I-just-want-to-die messages.

"Tagged" was created in 2004 in San Francisco, as a hipster social networking site for young people. It is something of a hybrid between a

social network and a virtual world, where participants can play games, share tags and exchange virtual gifts. But both New York and Texas have sued it for e-mail marketing and invasion of privacy issues. And sex offenders have been caught using the site.

"VampireFreaks" bills itself as an online community for the Gothic Industrial Culture. Founded in 1999, the site today advertises its New York City store and various bands and events. It is an adult site, and is controversial because of users, aged 12 to 50, who committed violent crimes.

"WriteAPrisoner" was formed in 2000 in Florida, as a pen-pal site for people who want to write to inmates. It is billed as a business to help reduce recidivism through "positive correspondence with pen-pals on the outside." And the site does address other needed inmate issues. But I'd counsel friends and family to think seriously before corresponding with an inmate.

Blogging

Most adults (and even some kids) have strong opinions and passionate interests. And combined with some sort of expertise, you can set up your own successful online blog. (The term started out as "Web log," But Peter Merholz jokingly broke it up in 1999 as "we blog," and the term was born.)

As of February 2011, there were 156 Million public blogs in existence. They range today from Personal Blogs, to Corporate, Organizational, Genre, School and Media Blogs. Some people hail blogs as "participatory journalism by uploading user generated content," But others fret that blogging is just a means of "getting around the filter," or pushing subjective (and occasionally bizarre and extreme) content directly on the public.

Blogs are basically just online diaries. "Open Diary (*www.opendiary.com/*)" was the first interactive blog, founded in 1998. A year before the term "blog" was invented, OD was billed as bringing "online diary writers together into a community." Currently it hosts about half a million "diaries" from 77 countries, and is credited with the innovations of allowing reader comments and friends only privacy.

Another of the older diary/blog sites is "MetaFilter (*www.metafilter.net/*)". Besides their Weblog, where anyone can contribute and comment, they also have sections for asking questions, music and even job listings. The user community seems older and eclectic, with everything from political rants to science announcements.

Some blogs are static, just an occasional essay or information posted by one person or a small group, possibly with a Comments or Contact option. But if you can blog often and interestingly enough, you can start making money if advertisers notice and want to reach your niche audience. And most modern blogs today focus less on text, and more on art, photos, videos, audio or music (podcasting). Although Webcam slice-of-life video blogs have been around for a while.

Larger blog sites invite users to upload relevant information, photos and videos, with "chat forums" and links. Some Internet commercial sites, like Amazon, started running a wide variety of "chat forums." with links to their related books and other merchandise on every page.

Definitely one of the most fascinating but startling public blogs is "PostSecret (*www.postsecret.com*)." People anonymously send in post cards or screenshots, with short blurbs of their most intimate thoughts and sentiments. Strictly for adults, they range from raw and intense emotions, to wistful thoughts and regrets. (This successful site also has a Twitter account, is working on a mobile app, and sells books of collected PostSecrets.)

For people who want to start their own blogs, Blogger (through Google) and Livejournal (*www.livejournal.com/*) are a couple of the more popular sites for setting up blogging Web sites. Free Web Site Hosting Services are explained at TheFreeSite (*www.thefreesite.com/Free_Web_Space/*). And BlogTopSites (*www.blogtopsites.com/*) ranks online blogs by traffic, and helps visitors and

bloggers connect to the most relevant and well trafficked blogs that match their interests.

Micro-Blogging

The newest blogging craze, for people too busy or uninterested in an immersive blogging experience, are micro-blogging sites. "Twitter (*twitter.com/*)" is the most well-known, and has been online almost a dozen years. Visitors have to limit their posts to 140 characters (including spaces and punctuation), but can also attach links, photos and videos.

Posters can "follow" friends and celebrities (if accepted), and be "followed," which is the determination needed to send "private messages." Even without a formal link of "being followed," posters can still "follow" someone and make comments. Twitter also offers a sub-site, Twiends (*twiends.com/*), which breaks down their top accounts by number of followers and in what categories. "Twitter" is ranked 9th in the world for social network user traffic, according to Alexa (*www.alexa.com/siteinfo/twitter.com*).

In my experience on Twitter, young people seem the most at ease with micro-blogging, posting random comments, with cell phone photos and video as they go through their day. Older people seem to use Twitter more formally, for making announcements or linking to their Web sites. Some online newspapers even have a section for Overheard-On-Twitter monitoring, to report on what topics are being discussed the most on Twitter. (Or what stories or celebrities most people are sick of hearing about.)

Cautionary Tales for the Young

According to a July article (*specialsections.suntimes.com/education/privateschools/6493196-555/students-careless-social-networking-can-impact-school-acceptance-safety.html*) in the Chicago Sun Times, parents are cautioned to be more aware of what their kids and teens are posting on the Internet, especially on social networking sites.

A recent survey found that 10% of 320 private high schools and colleges surveyed admitted to turning to social networking sites during the evaluation process. And "the majority (were) negatively influenced by what they saw." Posted photos, especially, can be misinterpreted out of context, and alarm academic evaluators with "questionable behavior."

In addition, texting on the run with mobile devices can lead to carelessness. A few misspellings are one thing. But snapping inappropriate photos can ignite privacy issues, and malicious/untrue gossip could lead to lawsuits. Not surprisingly, these text/photo devices also represent a growing outlet for cyber-bullying.

Many schools are building their own online communities. These allow teachers to post grades and blog. As well as posting instructive articles to educate parents and kids alike on how to better protect their online identities. One school even "begins the year with a formal lesson on critical thinking online," including the potential negative consequences of posted information cached forever.

The Rise of Geo-Location Social Apps

Searching for compatible romantic partners through online dating sites is still clunky, awkward and time consuming. And finding out your soul mate lives in another state (or country) can sometimes introduce problems and barriers even true love can't conquer.

At the same time, urban young people increasingly want to know more about others in their local city. They desire more casual settings to meet new friends, or find local people who share their unique interests. Thus the rise of "geolocation apps," or combining social networks with mobile apps. Users can set up Let's Meet notes for a group of friends to try out a new restaurant. Or post Let's Meet notes for complete strangers they've seen and want to get to know better.

"Loopt" came in early, connecting users to their friends based on location. Now there is a new app, "Loopt Mix (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/loopt-mix-chat/id333411051?mt=8*)". This quick glance app has an attractive thumbnail photo, age and gender information, and a short and snappy intro like "Just moved here. Love tennis. Say hello." Other quick glance features are how far away they are at that moment, and what they are doing ("Playing basketball," "Watching TV," "Having lunch downtown," etc.)

Another type of "quick meet" app is "Color (*www.color.com/*)" where people with the app near you can upload photos or videos of everything from sunsets to parties, and even just ongoing conversations. The user can select someone intriguing in that photo or video, and then text them to meet.

A similar site is "Hotlist (*www.hotlist.com/*)", based in New York City. It emphasizes coordinating future plans and locations to meet your friends—and perhaps new people. The site offers helpful sidebar apps like "Pictures of the crowd" and "Guy:Girl Ratio."

Pros and Cons of Quick Meet Mobile Apps

According to a July article (*techcrunch.com/2011/07/19/sv-angel-true-ventures-and-others-put-1-million-into-interest-based-connections-app-one/*) in TechCrunch, a 19-year-old entrepreneur named Cory Levy is tackling the conundrum of how to meet locals with whom you have a lot in common. "There could be people within feet of us in a coffee shop, office building or bar," says Levy, "Who share our friends, interests and professional connections. But we may never realize this in the physical world."

So Levy and co-founder Michael Callahan debuted a mobile app called "One," that notifies you when there are people around you that share your friends and interests. When you sign into the app, your interests and information is pulled from Facebook, or you can enter your personal information manually. The app will then track your location to determine who is nearby with similar interests, and who also has downloaded "One." Much as the way Facebook started, "One" will be launched on college campuses, specifically UC Berkeley, this Fall.

Complaints about these "Let's Meet" mobile apps abound. Principally, that too few people have also downloaded the same app. Or that not enough people of certain races or ages are using a specific app. But the inevitable shakedown will allow one or more of these meet cute (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meet_cute*) apps to emerge as the must have, quick meet app. Or else someone will figure out how to join all the "Let's Meet" apps, much as a search engine that combines Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Making New Global Friends

I think nearly everyone has had a foreign pen pal at some point. Today, sites like GlobalPenFriends (*globalpenfriends.com/penfriends/*) introduces "international postal pen pals or e-mail friends," This site also offers a Global Dating and Singles Club. And even has a Home Exchange option, if you want to swap houses or accommodations with someone in another country for a more "homey" vacation experience.

"Fotolog" (Make Friends Around The World) is more of a global quick meet site. Users post personal thumbnail photos with their country's flag, to attract new friends in other countries.

Joining a Social Network

Sites such as Social Networking (*www.whatissocialnetworking.com/*) offer safe and sane tips on how to deal with a social networking site. Short articles like "Creating Your Profile" advise that a photo is a must, never use your full name, and stay vague about your location and personal details.

Another article on "Cyber-bullying" explains how this can also be termed cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking, and when a user needs to report it. In addition, more schools (public and private) as well as state level sites offer advice on what to post—or not post—on social networking sites.

Social Network "Issues"

According to a July essay (*www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-innovations/we-share-too-much-and-its-stifling-innovation/2011/07/28/gIQAoVrgfI_story.html*) in the Washington Post, there is currently an argument raging on all this "sharing" on social network sites, especially the larger public ones. Some think this "democratization of media" will fuel innovation and create a more transparent society. They offer the example of how social media affected the recent Middle East revolutions as proof.

But others contend that constantly sharing everything online isn't promoting innovation, as much as making us conform to "group think." And by avoiding controversy, as we limit what we share and react to, our honesty—and innovation—is stifled. The solution, according to the article's author, Francisco Dao, is to use more "small and exclusive" social network sites, where Privacy allows for more candor and innovative thought. "Small and exclusive gatherings are far more productive than the large and open ones," according to Dao, who has his own invitation only site, "50Kings."

In the July 7, 2011 edition (*www.pcworld.com/businesscenter/article/235257/apple_ipad_day_7_social_networking_on_the_ipad.html*) of PCWorld Tony Bradley explains the importance to him of social networking. In a series of articles about "30 Days With The iPad," he wrestles with missing or poorly performing mobile apps linking his social network sites to his iPad.

He is an active member of Facebook (both personally and professionally), LinkedIn and Twitter. He explains that Twitter has a iPad app,

but neither Facebook nor LinkedIn do. So he has to use third-party iPad apps to get to Facebook ("Friendly for Facebook" and "MyPad"). And while LinkedIn has a "pretty awesome iPhone app," he'd like to see a specific app for the iPad.

In conclusion, it may be beneficial for us to check out some of these smaller or more specialized social network sites. Writing careful Profiles is always imperative. But we could find people we have more in common with, and have a more enriching and innovative experience by exchanging honest opinions and ideas. Especially while we wait for social network developers to create more highly desired mobile apps for all our hand held devices that keep us "linked" throughout the day.

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.

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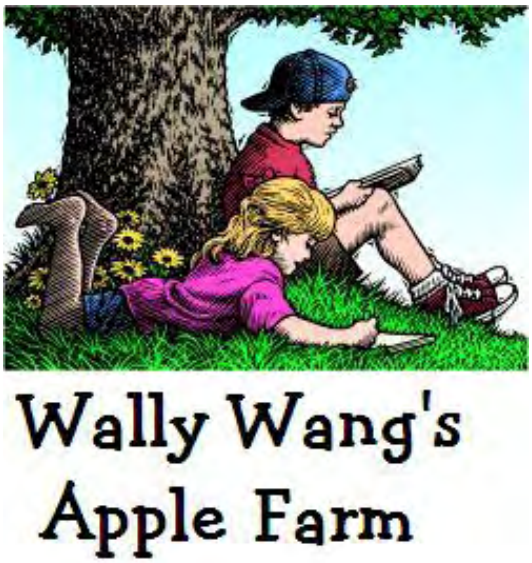

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Software Patents" by Wally Wang

Software patents; good or cheap?; Disney's Imagineers use iPad to expand Fantasyland; the world is going mobile; the most vulnerable software; recycle your PC; create an e-book with Legend Maker; The Finder.

With Apple suing Samsung, Oracle suing Google, Motorola threatening to sue rival Android (*www.electronista.com/articles/11/08/11/motorola.may.trigger.inter.android.patent.war/*) phone manufacturers (and Google buying Motorola Mobility for their patents), Kodak suing Apple and Research in Motion, patents are becoming the new battleground (*www.roughlydrafted.com/2011/08/09/are-software-patents-evil/*) for dominating the market. After bidding on Nortel's patents but losing out to a consortium that included Apple and Microsoft, Google now claims that companies should compete by innovating (*www.forbes.com/sites/ciocentral/2011/08/12/google-asserts-that-property-rights-are-anti-competitive/*) rather than through patent infringement lawsuits, although Google doesn't say exactly what they innovated in the mobile phone market.

Take a look at the initial Android user interface (*www.engadget.com/2007/11/12/a-visual-tour-of-androids-ui/*) and it looks more like a Blackberry. After Apple introduced the iPhone, Android suddenly looked more like the iPhone. Did Google change the user interface because they were innovative and just happened to reach the same design decisions as Apple, or because Google saw and copied the iPhone?

Figure 1. The early user interface of Android

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Google has another problem with Android. According to the open source license of Linux, any modifications you make must be distributed as well. All those companies modifying Android must provide the source code to their modifications or they'll violate the Linux license (*fosspatents.blogspot.com/2011/08/most-android-vendors-lost-their-linux.html*). Distribute these modifications and their competitors can now use them, which eliminates any advantage those modifications may have offered.

On one hand you have patent trolls, who file a broad patent and then use it to sue everyone in sight despite never developing any products based on their own patent. Then there are patent infringers who either unknowingly or deliberately infringe on another company's patents. When done deliberately, such blatant patent infringement is nothing short of stealing.

Imagine if every time Stephen King wrote a novel, anyone could freely copy that novel, make a few changes to names and the plot, and

sell that copied novel and keep all the profits without giving Stephen King any of the money. Clearly that's wrong, Yet at its worse, that's exactly what patent infringement does.

Patents, along with trademarks and copyrights, are meant to reward people for coming up with new ideas so they can profit from them. When people copy those ideas, that's infringement. The big question is whether a patent should have been granted in the first place and whether another product really does infringe on its patents or not.

Without patent protection, companies could freely copy each other's ideas to the point where no one would have any incentive to innovate since there would be no advantage in doing so. Why bother taking a risk innovating when you could just wait for someone else to innovate, find out what works, and then blatantly copy that idea instead?

Apple recently blocked Samsung from selling their Galaxy Tab in Europe (*www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/samsung/8691707/Samsung-Galaxy-Tab-10.1-blocked-in-Europe.html*), and now they may block Motorola (*droidupdate.info/tablets/where-does-it-stop-apple-wants-german-court-to-block-motorola-xoom-too/*) from selling their Xoom tablet in Europe as well. Whatever the patent details might be in this case, most tablet designs closely resemble the iPad in both appearance and features. Whether that's patent infringement or not, it's obvious that until the iPad came along, most companies were satisfied creating such monstrosities as Tablet PCs with screens that folded backwards over the keyboard, using a stylus to control programs that weren't designed for touch screens. There may have been earlier tablet designs, but the iPad is the one that made tablets popular.

We've already passed through the initial stage of denial that the iPad is useless along with going through the second stage of denial that netbooks are better than the iPad (as netbook sales continue plummeting). Now we're in the third stage of denial that every tablet is better than the iPad because they look and act just like the iPad (even if their sales don't come close to matching the iPad's popularity).

However these patent battles turn out, it's clear that until the iPad arrived, few tablet computers looked and acted like the iPad. Likewise before the iPhone arrived, most smart phones used a combination of a stylus and a keyboard.

The iPhone actually wasn't the first touch screen phone since it was officially announced on January 9, 2007, the LG Prada (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LG_Prada_(KE850)*) came out on December 12, 2006. LG Electronics claims that Apple stole the design of the iPhone from the LG Prada, although it's hard to imagine how since the LG Prada came out less than a month before the iPhone. Either Apple's engineers can create something from scratch in less than thirty days or more likely, Apple was already working on the iPhone at the same time LG Electronics was working on the LG Prada.

Despite the LG Prada coming out first, nobody is trying to create an LG Prada clone. Instead, everyone is trying to create an iPhone clone, which has influenced the design of smart phones to the point where Android, webOS, and Windows Phone 7 phones try to improve upon the iPhone (and not the LG Prada).

Every smart phones and tablet manufacturer mimics the design and features of Apple's products, just as every Windows PC with a mouse owes its design to the influence of the original Macintosh. Whether other products infringe on Apple's patents or not is ultimately irrelevant. Without Apple's influence, we might all still be relying on Blackberry OS or Windows Mobile 6.5 for our smart phones, Tablet PC designs for our tablets, and MS-DOS for our computers.

Good or Cheap?

The Los Angeles Times states that Android and the iPhone now account for over 60 percent of the global smartphone market (*latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/08/android-iphone-account-for-two-thirds-of-quarterly-smartphone-sales-and-rising.html*), and their combined sales continue rising. Android recently captured 38 percent of the smart phone market (*www.computerworld.com/s/article/9218185/Android_s_38_market_share_keeps_it_on_top*) according to *Computerworld* compared to the iPhone's 25.2 percent share and Research in Motion's 24.7 percent share. Microsoft has dropped from 7.7 percent to 5.8 percent.

While it's easy to declare that a large market share means that a product must be better, you have to look at all factors first. Android isn't a bad operating system (and neither is Windows Phone 7), but one reason for Android's growth is simply price. AT&T and other carriers sell Android and Windows Phone 7 phones at much lower prices than the iPhone, sometimes giving them away for free if you buy one or selling them for one cent.

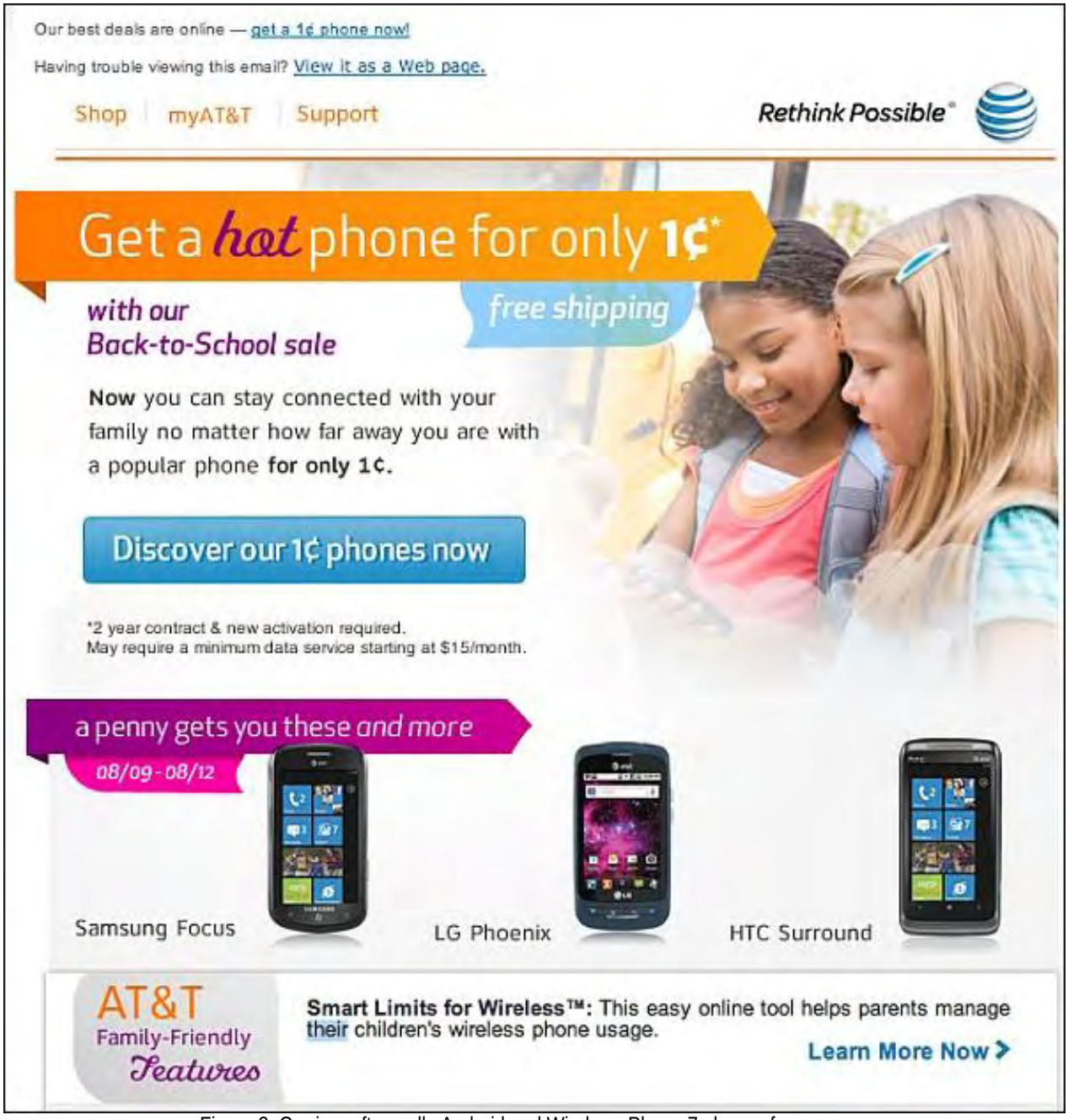

Figure 2. Carriers often sells Android and Windows Phone 7 phones for a penny.

If phone carriers sell both Android and Windows Phone 7 phones at the same price, why is Android growing while Windows Phone 7 stagnates? Most likely Android's huge head start over Windows Phone 7 means more people are familiar with Android while Windows Phone 7 arrived so late that there's much less support from developers to make Windows Phone 7 as attractive as Android.

Still there's little doubt that low prices can appeal to a certain segment. More people eat at McDonald's every day than at the top ten steak houses (*www.wherethelocalseat.com/10-Best-Steak-House-Restaurants/Search/*) in America, but nobody will argue that McDonald's food is better just because they have a larger market share.

To get an iPhone, people can pay a fixed price for the latest model or $49 for the older iPhone 3GS at AT&T. To get an Android phone, people can pay a variety of prices from free all the way up to the price of an iPhone, plus they have more choices of carriers than the limited selection of the iPhone from AT&T and Verizon.

Android simply offers more choices while the iPhone represents the standard that Android and everyone compares themselves against. Until the iPhone and Android are available at the exact same prices on the exact same carriers, it's impossible to say if people are choosing Android because they believe it's better or because it's cheaper or available on a carrier that gives them the best coverage.

With Google buying Motorola Mobility, Google now runs a mobile phone manufacturer, putting it in direct competition with rival phone makers like LG Electronics and Samsung. Will Google continue sharing Android with other manufacturers that can steal away market share from Motorola Mobility? Or will Google's close ties with Motorola Mobility give it an advantage that other companies won't have?

A recent study by the University of California, Irvine found that the iPod created 14,000 jobs (*www.infoworld.com/d/the-industry-standard/apples-real-worth-how-many-us-jobs-it-creates-169535?page=0,0*) in the United States. If the iPod alone can generate so many jobs in the United States, how many jobs did the growth of the iPhone and iPad create?

Sales of Android phones likely also creates jobs in the United States, so rather than focus strictly on market share, a more interesting comparison might be which device creates the most and the highest paying jobs in America. At least comparing job creation between the two rival operating systems is another metric that's just as valid as anything else.

Disney's Imagineers Use iPad to Expand Fantasyland

To expand Fantasyland in Disney World, Disney's Imagineers are relying on the iPad (*thedisneyblog.com/2011/08/10/a-testament-to-technology-imagineers-use-innovations-to-help-build-fantasyland-expansion/*). Disney's Imagineers use the iPad to view designs out in the field, which would have been difficult in the past using a traditional laptop computer.

In one example, contractors were confused over the placement of air conditioning ducts in The Little Mermaid ride. Normally air conditioning ducts are placed in the ceiling, but the Imagineers specifically placed them on the floor to accommodate the design of the ride. By letting contractors doing the actual building see and understand the rationale for this design through iPads, little time was wasted so construction could continue.

Figure 3. Disney's Imagineers use the iPad to check on the design of a new attraction.

Perhaps if Disney's Imagineers really wanted to get into the spirit of Fantasyland, they could build a special attraction just for people who still insist that nothing Apple creates has any value whatsoever. This portion of Fantasyland could be populated with anti-Apple critics, people who believe that one political party is solely to blame for all the world's problems, and anyone who still thinks that fascism (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism*) and communism (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism*) are swell ideas for running a country. At least if you gather these people in one place, they can all live in their own fantasy lands while the rest of the world actually thinks for a change.

The World is Going Mobile

In news that should be of no surprise to most people, iSuppli reports that sales of semiconductors for wireless devices (*www.isuppli.com/Semiconductor-Value-Chain/News/Pages/OEMs-to-Spend-More-on-Semiconductors-for-Wireless-than-for-Computers-in-2011.aspx*) is far surpassing those for ordinary computers.

"Led by Apple Inc.'s iPhone and iPad, demand is booming for smart phones and tablet devices," said Wenlie Ye, analyst for semiconductor design and spending at IHS. "This is spurring a surge in sales of semiconductors used in wireless devices, including baseband chips, applications processors and mobile memory. With overall sales growth for PCs slowing, the balance of power in the semiconductor industry is shifting toward the wireless segment."

Desktop PCs are cost-effective, but limited by their lack of mobility. How many college students want to be without a computer as they attend classes and only use a computer while stuck at a desk? How many business people want to only rely on computers when they're back at the office?

Smart phones, tablets and laptops will continue growing while sales of ordinary desktop computers will likely continue shrinking. If someone buys a desktop computer, chances are good they'll also want a mobile device, but not everyone who has a laptop computer also wants a desktop computer.

Microsoft hopes to transition from the desktop PC era to the mobile one by forcing Windows 8 to run on everything from servers and desktop PCs to laptops, tablets and smart phones. Can a server operating system work on a smart phone and vice versa? We'll find out, but with the iPhone, iPad and MacBook Air, Apple has a broad product line to capture the growing mobile market for at least an entire year before Windows 8 finally arrives in 2012.

The Most Vulnerable Software

Kapersky Labs recently created a list of the top ten vulnerabilities in software and for the first time in history, none of Microsoft's software (*/www.windows7news.com/2011/08/14/good-microsoft-security-apparently-good/*) appeared on the list, which Kapersky Labs attributes to the much improved security of Windows 7.

However, seven of the top ten vulnerabilities were found in Adobe's Flash player alone. Toss in Adobe's Flash on Windows 7 (or any operating system like Android) and you basically open a gaping hole in your security. With Adobe still struggling to keep Flash secure and responsive on mobile devices, it looks as if Flash's time has come and gone.

For those who still insist that Flash is a desirable feature, you can keep waiting and hoping that Adobe will fix Flash sometime in the distant future where people ride around in flying cars and power their homes with nuclear reactors, or you can simply move on and leave Flash behind along with floppy disks, RS-232 serial ports, and Iomega ZIP drives.

Recycle Your PC

If you're thinking of switching from a Windows PC to a Mac, you may wonder what to do with your old PC. Get a Mac mini and you can reuse your old monitor, keyboard and mouse, but rather than let your PC sit around and collect dust, you can recycle it (*www.extremetech.com/computing/92348-apple-now-offering-free-recycling-and-gift-cards-for-old-windows-pcs*) through Apple and get some money back for it.

You won't get much for an old PC, but at least you'll get your old PC out of your life. More importantly, recycling your PC will keep the dangerous chemicals used in the PC motherboard from poisoning a landfill.

Apple's recycling program (*www.apple.com/recycling/*) also extends to old iPods, iPhones and Macs too. At best, you'll get an Apple gift card that you can use to buy music from iTunes or apps from the App Store. At worse, you'll get nothing, but a free way to get rid of your old electronic equipment and feel secure that it will be recycled responsibly.

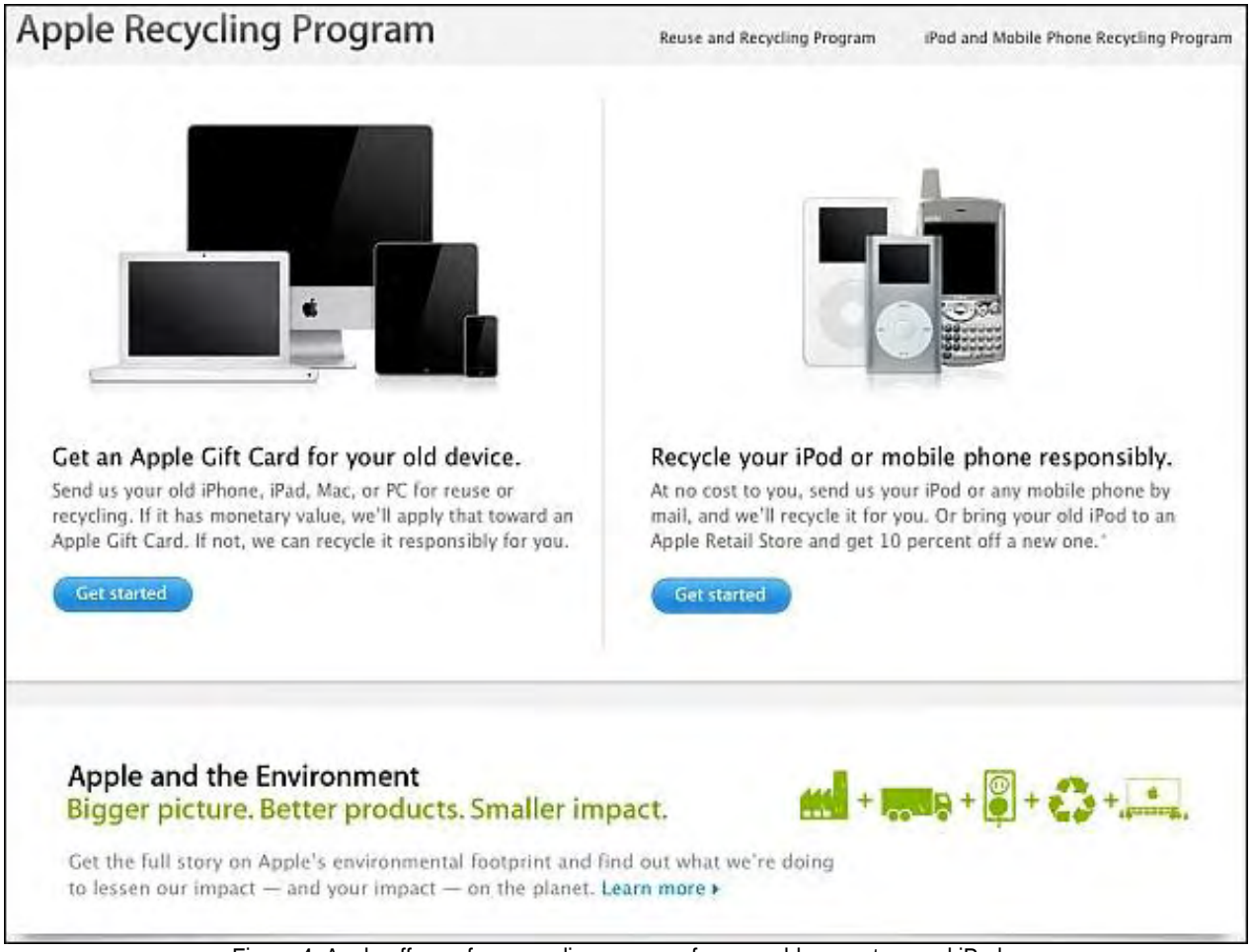

Figure 4. Apple offers a free recycling program for your old computers and iPods.

Create an E-Book with Legend Maker

Probably the simplest way to create an EPUB e-book is to use Pages, which is part of the iWork office suite from Apple. After you create your Pages document, export the file as an EPUB document and you're done.

Unfortunately, Pages only creates EPUB files, but if you want to create a Kindle e-book, you have to use another tool such as the $49.95 Legend Maker (*www.zapptek.com/legendmaker/*). With one click of the mouse, Legend Maker can create both an EPUB and Kindle version of your e-book.

Unlike Pages, Legend Maker is more of an e-book compiler rather than an actual word processor so you'll need to write your manuscript using a word processor. No matter which word processor you use, you'll need to format your document without headers or footers, page numbers, line spacing other than single spacing, and fonts. If you're using Microsoft Word, you also can't use special styles since they may not translate into an e-book.

If you want to add pictures to your e-book, you'll need to insert special tags in your document like this:

```
image:authorpic.png
```

Naturally, you'll need to include those graphic files with your word processor document so Legend Maker can put everything together. If you want to add audio and video, you'll have to add similar tags such as:

```
audio:chapter1.mp3
```

or

```
video:chapter1.m4v
```

Collect all your files together (graphic, audio and video) in a single folder, and Legend Maker assembles everything into a single EPUB e-book file. If you want to create a Kindle file, you'll need to go through one extra step of downloading Amazon's free KindleGen program. Then just add a descriptive title and tags to your e-book and let Legend Maker compile everything into an e-book file.

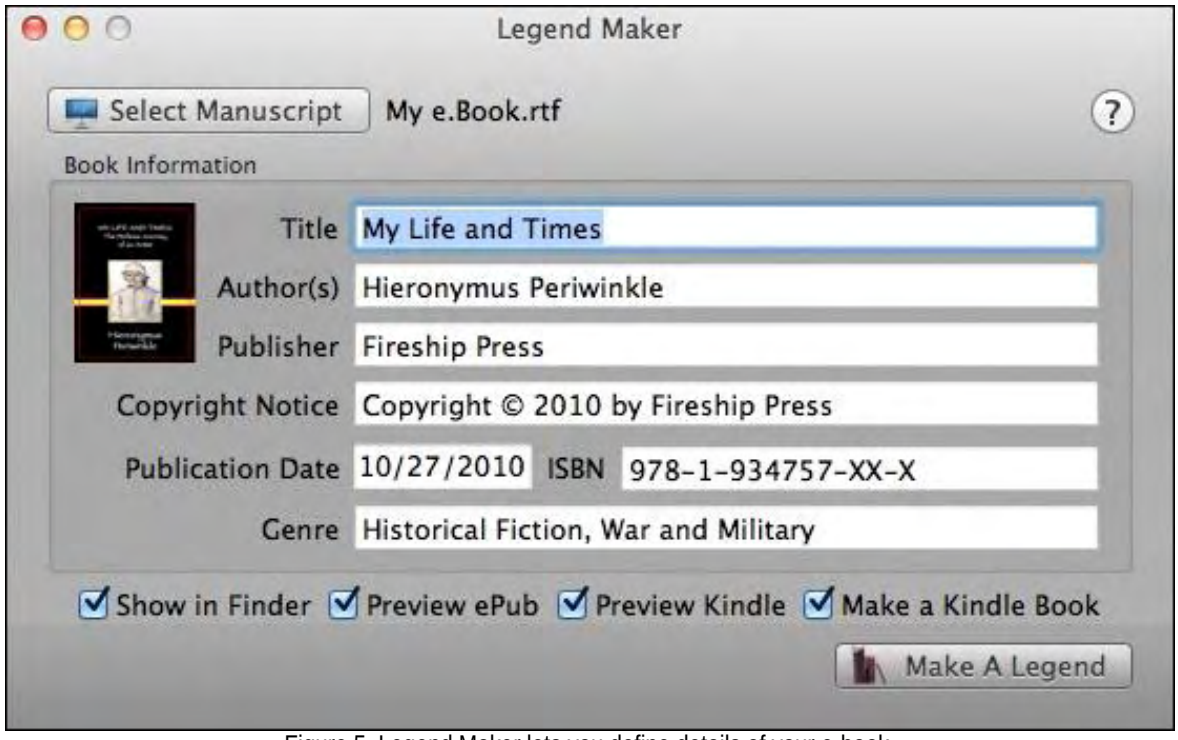

Figure 5. Legend Maker lets you define details of your e-book.

The process of using Legend Maker can be a bit clumsy since you must use a separate word processor, insert tags, and then compile the whole thing to see your final results. If it doesn't look right, you'll need to go back to your original document, modify it, and compile the whole thing all over again.

Since you need to follow certain formatting conventions when using an e-book, start off small with short documents. When you're familiar with all these odd formatting conventions, then you can use them properly with a much larger document.

Legend Maker isn't a complete solution for creating e-books since you do need a word processor, but it does simplify the process of turning manuscripts into both EPUB and Kindle formats. If you're interested in creating e-books and avoiding the collapse of the book seller and book distribution markets, Legend Maker can help you create e-books that you can sell yourself and reap the lion's share of the profits without sharing them with a publisher.

* * *

The Finder offers four different ways to display files. The most common way is as icons. However, icons can be a bit disorienting because every time you double-click a folder icon, you get buried deeper into the hierarchy of another folder until you may not know where you are and how to get back to another folder again.

To avoid this problem, try switching the appearance of your Finder window to Columns, which you can do by choosing View => as Columns from the Finder menu bar. Columns view lets you see the hierarchy of your folders and if you have a trackpad, you can just swipe two fingers left or right to see the entire folder hierarchy at a glance.

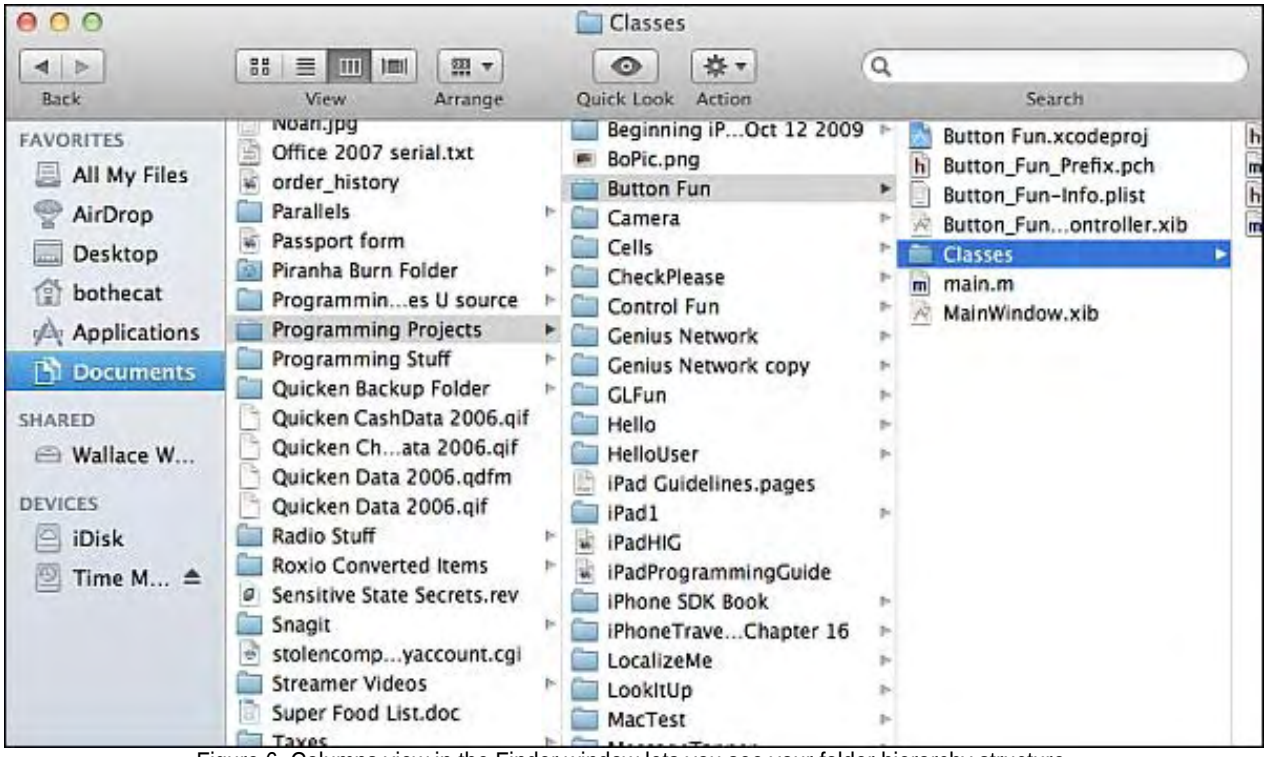

Figure 6. Columns view in the Finder window lets you see your folder hierarchy structure.

Another advantage of Columns view is that when you click on a file, you can often see a thumbnail image of that file's contents so you can see what that file contains without going through the wasted motion of opening the file or using the Quick Look feature to peek at its contents.

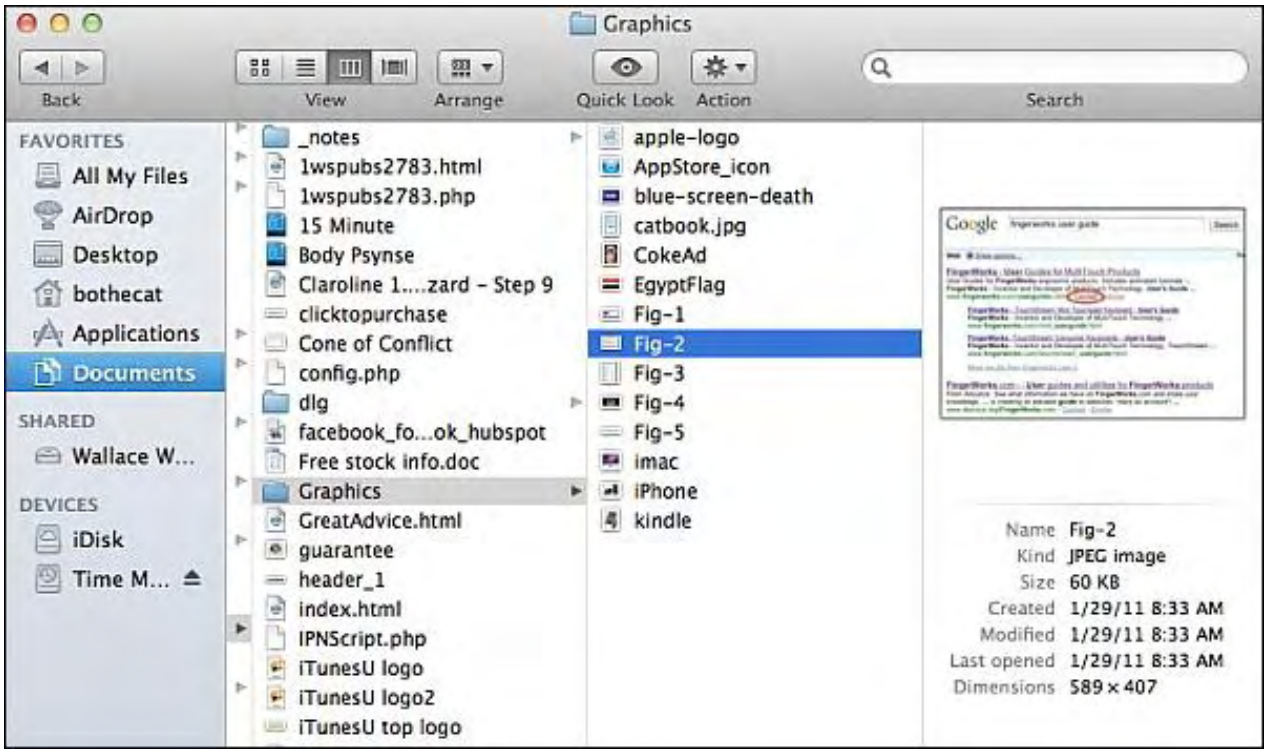

Figure 7. Clicking on a file displays a thumbnail image of its contents in Columns view.

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*.

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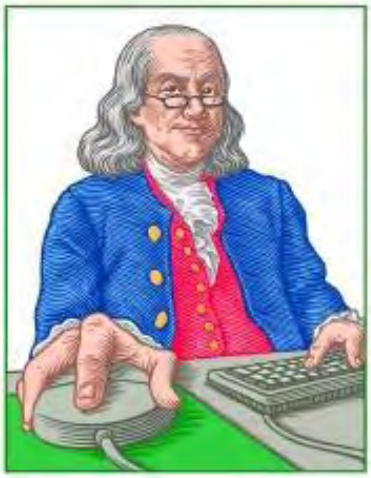

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

“Head and Tail” by Tony J. Podrasky

Tony shares two commands that will show the first ten lines of a file and the last ten lines of a file.

Filename: <head> and <tail>

Use: <head> will display the first 10 lines of a file. <tail> will display the last 10 lines of a file.

OK, these two commands don't appear to be very impressive in this day and age. Doing a <head myfile> will show you the first 10 lines of a file, while you could just as easily type <less myfile> and see a whole page—then, if you want to see more of the file, you can just hit the spacebar.

I only included <head> because it is the complement of <tail>.

Now <tail> can do two pretty cool things:

• One, it just shows you the last 10 lines of a file. You don't have to skip ahead by hand. Yes, you can tell it to do more or less than 10 lines.

• Two, if you give <tail> the minus-f flag <tail -f myfile> it will print the last 10 lines of a file. But, each time a new line is added to the file, it will display that one as well. It comes in really handy if you are watching a file and you want to see updates to it.

Example:

You may wish to watch the message log:

```
tonyp% tail -f /var/log/messages
```

[Excerpt from /var/log/messages]

```
Aug 14 11:33:14 m2404txp su(pam_unix)[32127]:
      session opened for user tonyp by tonyp(uid=500)

—Begin dmesg: Sun Aug 14 11:59:00 PDT 2011
—End dmesg:   Sun Aug 14 11:59:00 PDT 2011

Aug 14 12:04:08 m2404txp su(pam_unix)[32127]:
      session closed for user tonyp

—Begin dmesg: Sun Aug 14 12:59:00 PDT 2011
—End dmesg:   Sun Aug 14 12:59:00 PDT 2011
```

[This is what <tail -f /var/log/messages> reports when the command is given.]

```
1 Aug 14 13:25:42 m2404txp pam_rhosts_auth[1763]: allowed to root@hammy as root
  Aug 14 13:25:42 m2404txp login(pam_unix)
[1764]: session opened for user root by (uid=0)
  Aug 14 13:25:42 m2404txp login – root[1764]: ROOT LOGIN ON pts/6 FROM hammy
2 Aug 14 13:30:06 m2404txp login(pam_unix)[1764]: session closed for user root
3 Aug 14 13:30:46 m2404txp kernel: kjournald starting.  Commit interval 5 seconds
  Aug 14 13:30:46 m2404txp kernel: EXT3-fs warning: maximal mount count reached,
   running e2fsck is recommended
  Aug 14 13:30:46 m2404txp kernel: EXT3 FS 2.4-0.9.19, 19 August 2002 on sd(8,33),
    internal journal
  Aug 14 13:30:46 m2404txp kernel: EXT3-
fs: mounted filesystem with ordered data mode.
4 Aug 14 13:34:09 m2404txp su(pam_unix)[2875]: session opened for user root by tonyp
(uid=500)
  Aug 14 13:35:03 m2404txp su(pam_unix)[2875]: session closed for user root
```

1. Someone logged in as root.

2. They logged out.

3. Someone mounted a filesystem.

4. tonyp did a <su> to root.

* * *

Another interesting log is the one created by <dmesg>. I keep copies of it and truncate it on a regular basis—so you may see different results when you watch yours.

```
tonyp% tail -f /var/log/dmesg
tonyp% tail -f dmesg
kjournald starting.  Commit interval 5 seconds
1 Aug 14 13:40:39 m2404txp devlabel: devlabel service started/restarted
  Aug 14 13:40:39 m2404txp devlabel: devlabel service started/restarted
  Aug 14 13:40:40 m2404txp kernel: usb.c: deregistering driver hpusbscsi
  Aug 14 13:40:45 m2404txp kernel: usb.c: deregistering driver usbdevfs
  Aug 14 13:40:45 m2404txp kernel: usb.c: deregistering driver hub
2 Aug 14 13:53:16 m2404txp kernel: usb.c: registered new driver usbdevfs
  Aug 14 13:53:16 m2404txp kernel: usb.c: registered new driver hub
  Aug 14 13:53:21 m2404txp kernel: hpusbscsi.c: [hpusbscsi_init:250] driver loaded,
    DebugLvel=0
```

1. USB service was shut down.

2. UBS service was started up again (I cut out the 20-30 lines of information that it reported to keep this article short).

* * *

```
Silly signature du jour:
Tony J. Podrasky | I wanted to find out just how much the Earth weighs
                 | so I went into the bathroom and turned the scale
                 | upside down. BAD PLAN: the scale was crushed beyond
                 | recognition.  I'm not strong enough to lift the
```

```
                | Earth off of it, so now I'm stuck with a paper-thin
                | scale on my bathroom floor.       - Tony J. Podrasky
-:-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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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Internet Users Unknowingly Risk Identity Theft; Grandmax Klipper 3D Sound Speaker; Terraria: He Can't Dig It; All-in-one Graphics App.

Internet Users Unknowingly Risk Identity Theft

Research by the global Internet security company BullGuard (*www.Bullguard.com*) suggests millions are too casual about storing sensitive personal data online:

Internet users can be overly complacent about posting personal or potentially sensitive data online. When questioned about various information stored on social networking sites, forums, groups and other interactive services, 42% of 2,000 Brits surveyed admitted to posting their date of birth, 18% posted their telephone number, 28% opted to have usernames and passwords remembered and 14% did the same for bank details.

When questioned specifically about social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter, 36% admitted to posting their pets' names on public pages, 24% shared children's names, 7% their address, and 11% showed off photos of high value goods such as a car or TV. Worse still, over a third of Facebook and Twitter users admit to updating their profile to inform people that they are away for the weekend or going on holiday, thereby potentially alerting their absence to thieves.

Opportunistic malicious parties often find such sources to be prime targets for gathering information on users, and without sufficient security measures in place this makes it all too easy to gather personal details that could make an individual more vulnerable to attack.

"Though this sort of information may seem harmless to share with others, much of it is commonly used as security questions when accessing an online bank or confirming identity over the phone," says Claus Villumsen, Internet security expert at BullGuard. "It's also a bad idea to publicize the fact that you will be away for any period of time, especially if the house will then be empty, as this just gives more information to would be thieves as to your whereabouts."

Part of the appeal of social networking is obviously the ability to share information to stimulate conversation and build a "personality" online, but this is something that malicious users are also aware of, making it an attractive way to build up a profile on an individual. Though excessive caution may take the fun out of such activities, a number of simple safeguards can be used to help ensure that users don't become a target.

BullGuard recommends the following safeguards to help ensure that sociable Web users can enjoy an online experience without being at risk:

• Never accept friend requests from people you don't know, or who aren't easily identifiable from associations with other friends.

• Spend some time learning about the security measures available on sites like Facebook, and ensure that posts and photos aren't available to everyone. It's often easy to restrict information to friends, or friends of friends, though the former is obviously more secure as you can't guarantee that others will be as vigilant in whom they allow to read their posts.

• Strip out any personal details from a profile that don't really need to be there—for example pets' names, addresses, maiden name and date of birth. This is particularly important if you use services that request this sort of information to confirm your identity, have been used as a security question in the event of a password being forgotten or are used to log into a Web site.

• Ensure that any passwords used for important sites or services bear no clear relation to any hobbies or interests you may have, as a would be thief may try common words linked to these subjects when attempting to guess a password.

• Be sure to log out securely at the end of each session, and where possible use a secure login if you are accessing a site away from home. On public computers, the next user may be able to access your account and gather information at their leisure.

• Be wary of engaging in a conversation with people you don't know, and particularly so if they start to ask for personal information or other sensitive details. It's usually fairly easy to block these users to avoid being bothered by them again.

• Avoid storing any sensitive information, such as bank numbers, credit card details and passwords in e-mail accounts or documents on a computer. It may serve as a handy reminder, but could be disastrous if it were to fall into the wrong hands.

• Where possible use a pseudonym to identify yourself on sites where using a real name is not required. This will help prevent a third party from tracking down information to a named individual.

Grandmax Klipper 3D Sound Speaker

In the April 15 issue of *ComputorEdge Magazine* I did a review of my new Toshiba NB305-N600 netbook. As noted then I was not happy with the built-in speakers. I tried every trick that the support folks could think of and yet if I turn all the volume controls up to their max and stand 10-12 feet away, I can barely hear any sound. On the other hand, when you attach external speakers or earbuds/phones, the volume is quite acceptable.

I mentioned in that review that I was using the Creative Labs CSW5300 speakers on my Toshiba. I had bought these some time ago. I looked around the Web and they don't seem to be readily available anymore. That's the bad news. The good news is that I have found some speakers that work quite well and are currently available. They are the Grandmax Klipper 3D Sound Speaker. The unit is six inches long and about two inches deep and two inches high. It clips on the lid of your note/netbook without blocking your Webcam. It has a built-in 3D sound processor for home theater sound quality.

One complaint I read in a consumer review was that the lid of his notebook was too thick for the clip. As best as I can measure the bite of the clip, it appears to be about 1/2 inch so if the lid of your computer is thicker than that, you won't be able to use the clip. The press of a button switches between stereo and 3D.

The unit comes with a device that houses two retractable connectors. They are the audio and power cables. The connectors on one end plug into the speakers. The others plug into the earphone jack and an available USB port on the computer. It also comes with an external USB battery power case which holds four AA batteries if you want to use the speakers with your MP3 player. The unit comes in black or white. There is also a case for the speakers and connecting wires.

The price at the *www.grandmax.com* site is around $50. They can also be bought at Amazon.com for about $40. This is a great solution for notebooks/netbooks with less-than-satisfactory speaker output.

Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

Terraria: He Can't Dig It

A wise, old man (I think he's referring to me! — C. Carr) once told me, "Give a game like Terraria to a person who loves next-gen shooters and you will create nothing but disappointment." Truer words were never spoken.

Terraria is a 2D side scrolling adventure game that plays a lot (if almost identically) to Minecraft. It has the Mario-style blocky graphics, and it isn't much for the eye. All in all, the game isn't terrible; it's just directed at a very specific group of people—a group I don't happen to fall into.

Gameplay is fluid and has a simple concept: you dig down into the ground to collect ore and rock, chop trees to obtain wood, and fight monsters in search of treasure … and that's it. You slave and grind away collecting materials for hours, and in the end all you get is the satisfaction of having an inventory full of random stuff that you can put together to make more random stuff. Games like Terraria and Minecraft have no story line and no characters. To me, there just isn't that special something to keep you coming back for more.

On the flip side though, it must be acknowledged that both this game and Minecraft are smash hits. There are *tons* of people out there who absolutely adore this type of open-ended gameplay. And they don't care that the graphics are not flashy. My own brother, for example, absolutely loves Minecraft and has built himself a small city with amazing houses, roads and lots of other stuff.

So I think the moral of the story here is that it takes a special kind of gamer to see the true potential in this style of game. For anyone who is a diehard fan of FPS games like Call of Duty or Mass Effect that feature cutting edge graphics and story-driven gameplay, Terraria probably isn't for you. However, if you're perfectly happy playing games of the more open-ended type like "The Sims," then this might be

right up your alley.

Terraria can be picked up on Steam (*www.steampowered.com*) for $10.

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan.

All-in-one Graphics App

"Jack-of-all-trades, master of none"—compliment or insult? As used in this review to describe all-in-one graphics package Canvas 12 (*store.acdsee.com/store/acd/en_US/DisplayProductDetailsPage/productID.219452100?resid=DgfM8goBAh4AAEPmstwAAAAQ&rests=1310940279806*), the clear intent is to compliment but with a few notable reservations.

Canvas is one of the most useful, productivity enhancing software products available (Figure 1). This content creation program supports (in alphabetical order) CAD, desktop publishing, diagramming, drawing, flowcharts, GIS, illustration (including 3D and other special effects), image editing, outlining, page design and layout, Web page/site design and layout, wireframe functionalities, and more. It might be lacking some of the whiz-bang features found in one-trick-pony competitors, but each of Canvas' functionalities includes substantially more than just the basics. Examples of Canvas' output are available at graphics pro Mike Bedford's Web site (*www.plugsandpixels.com/canvas.html*).

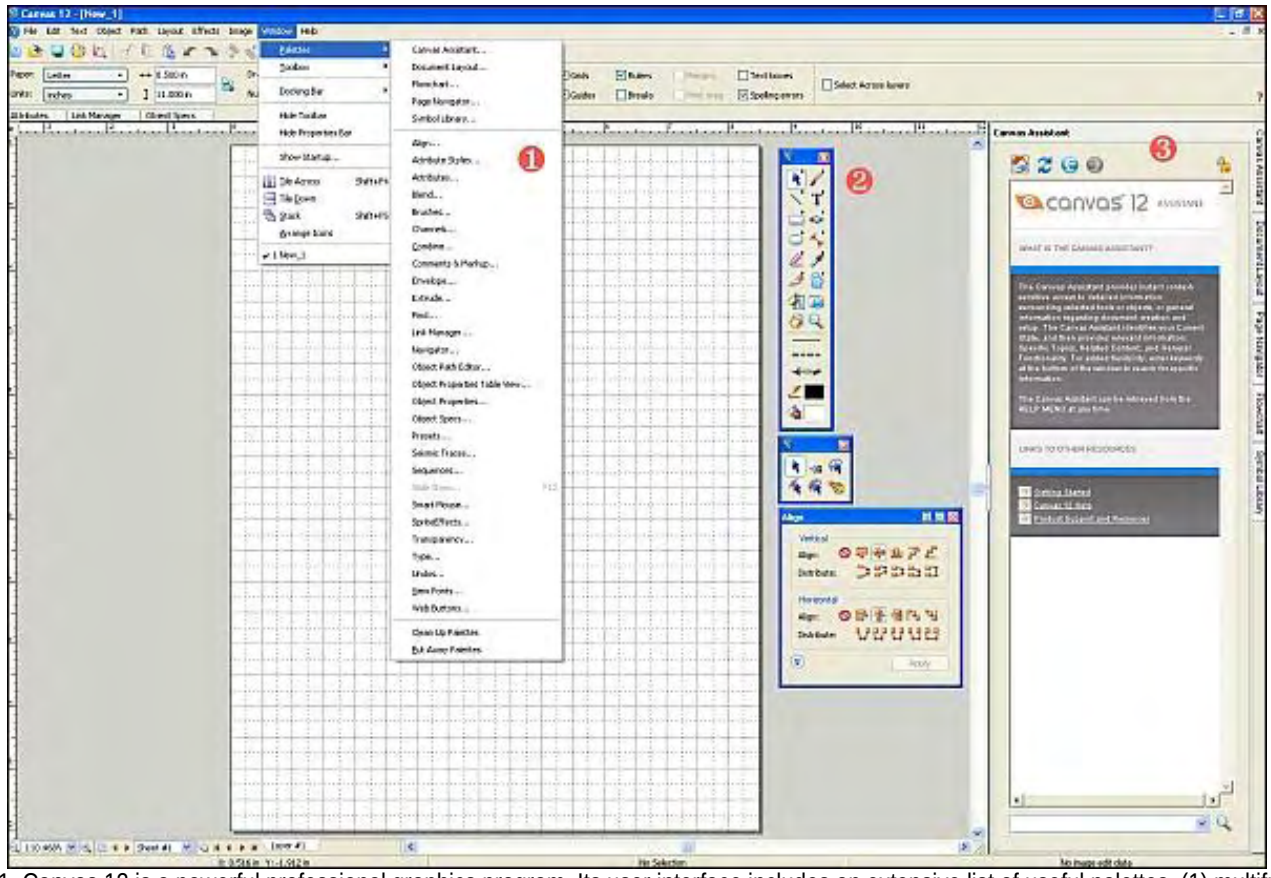

Figure 1. Canvas 12 is a powerful professional graphics program. Its user interface includes an extensive list of useful palettes, (1) multifunction toolbox, (2) docking pane that is a new feature of version 12, (3) ample customization options to meet most users' needs.

This is a professional grade software package (*store.acdsee.com/store/acd/en_US/DisplayProductDetailsPage/productID.219452200*) with a professional grade learning curve and price tag (MSRP $599; note that a $299.50 upgrade price exists, but the process for obtaining it is exceptionally complicated. First you must have and log into an account at ACDSystems' Web site (*www.acdsee.com/support/myaccount/login*) (Canvas 12 with GIS+ is available for MSRP $899; also note that the user guide costs $50 extra), then provide evidence of your Canvas 6 or greater license, and they issue a "coupon" code for the upgrade; also note that the user guide costs $50 extra). Regardless, I have enthusiastically recommended Canvas over the years to numerous coworkers who (mis)used spreadsheet software to perform desktop publishing, illustration, or image editing tasks. The price paid in dollars is rapidly offset thanks to

ample time saved (and potential frustration avoided) by using this jack-of-all-graphics-trades app.

What's so special about Canvas' multifunctionality? Consider Microsoft Outlook, a popular productivity program that houses several functions under a single roof. After launching Outlook, you're immediately good to go on calendars, contacts and e-mail. Canvas likewise does much of what the multiple programs in Adobe's Creative Suite collectively do, except all functionalities are accessible from a single menubar instead of from separate apps' menubars. If you like Outlook's one-stop shopping approach, you'll probably like Canvas too.

When we last reviewed Canvas, it was at version 9 and supported Mac OS X and Windows. A lot has happened to this program since then. Its original developers (Deneba Software) became part of ACD Systems of America (publishers of ACDSee Photo Manager and ACDSee Pro (*store.acdsee.com/store/acd/DisplayHomePage/Locale.en_US/Currency.USD*)), and they steadfastly insisted that they would continue developing Canvas for Macintosh (*www.wizaerd.com/forum/index.php?pAction=Read&Start=2700&Msg=3230*). Much to the consternation of Canvas' loyal Mac-based graphics professional users (*community.acdsee.com/forums/topic/sell-canvas-mac*), however, ACD Systems terminated Canvas for Mac (*community.acdsee.com/forums/topic/acd-systems-is-discontinuing-sales-of-canvas-x-for-mac*) OS X in 2008. Canvas 11 and the current version, 12, therefore only support Windows with slim prospects of a resurrection for Mac OS X Lion (*www.wizaerd.com/forum/index.php?pAction=Read&Start=0&Msg=5965*).

Hope is not totally lost, however, for Macaholics who understandably view Canvas as a must have tool. Instead of purchasing a Windows PC, Mac using graphics hobbyists and professionals can have their cake and eat it by installing and running Canvas 12 in a Windows based virtual machine (VM) or by installing and running Canvas 12 under CrossOver without installing and running Windows.

These two unconventional approaches to running Canvas 12—on a Macintosh in a VirtualBox VM with Windows, or in CrossOver without Windows—served as test environments for this review. My experience was mostly positive, but definitely not preferable to a Mac native version of Canvas.

Canvas 12's top benefit—productivity—gets an appreciable boost from this review's test environments. You can get more stuff done under these environments because they shield against the time consuming malware, registry, fragmentation and maintenance hassles associated with Windows. Wait, how is that possible with VM-based Windows? Easy—use the VM only for Canvas, forget about maintaining the VM's Windows installation, and access e-mail, the Web and networks in Mac OS X where the chances of malware infections or attacks are less likely.

How does Canvas 12 perform under these alternative environments? In general, at least satisfactorily. Most of Canvas' features performed as expected during my testing. I was especially thrilled to find that this version fixes a misbehavior that existed in every Mac version of Canvas I've used since the 1990s—Canvas 12 remembers the user defined size and position of a saved document's window from one session to the next.

Some noteworthy drawbacks became apparent during my tests. Running Canvas (or any other industrial-strength app, for that matter) in a Windows based VM means appropriating sufficient RAM and hard disk space to accommodate the installation. Entry level or previous generation Mac minis, iMacs and MacBooks therefore could be underpowered for running Canvas in a Windows-based VM; they should be OK for running Canvas in CrossOver, however, because CrossOver does not involve installing or running Windows.

Some of Canvas' features did not perform as expected. A gotcha that graphics professionals already know about relates to differences between Windows and Mac based fonts—despite having identical or similar names on the two platforms (e.g., Helvetica and Times New Roman, respectively), some fonts have subtly different metrics that can mess up a page layout. Additional glitches include CrossOver's lack of support for Canvas' Configuration Center, Help and Docking Pane's tabs (Figure 2). Lastly, despite their similarity, I still would much prefer a current native version of Canvas for Mac (*community.acdsee.com/forums/topic/sell-canvas-mac*) than one for Windows.

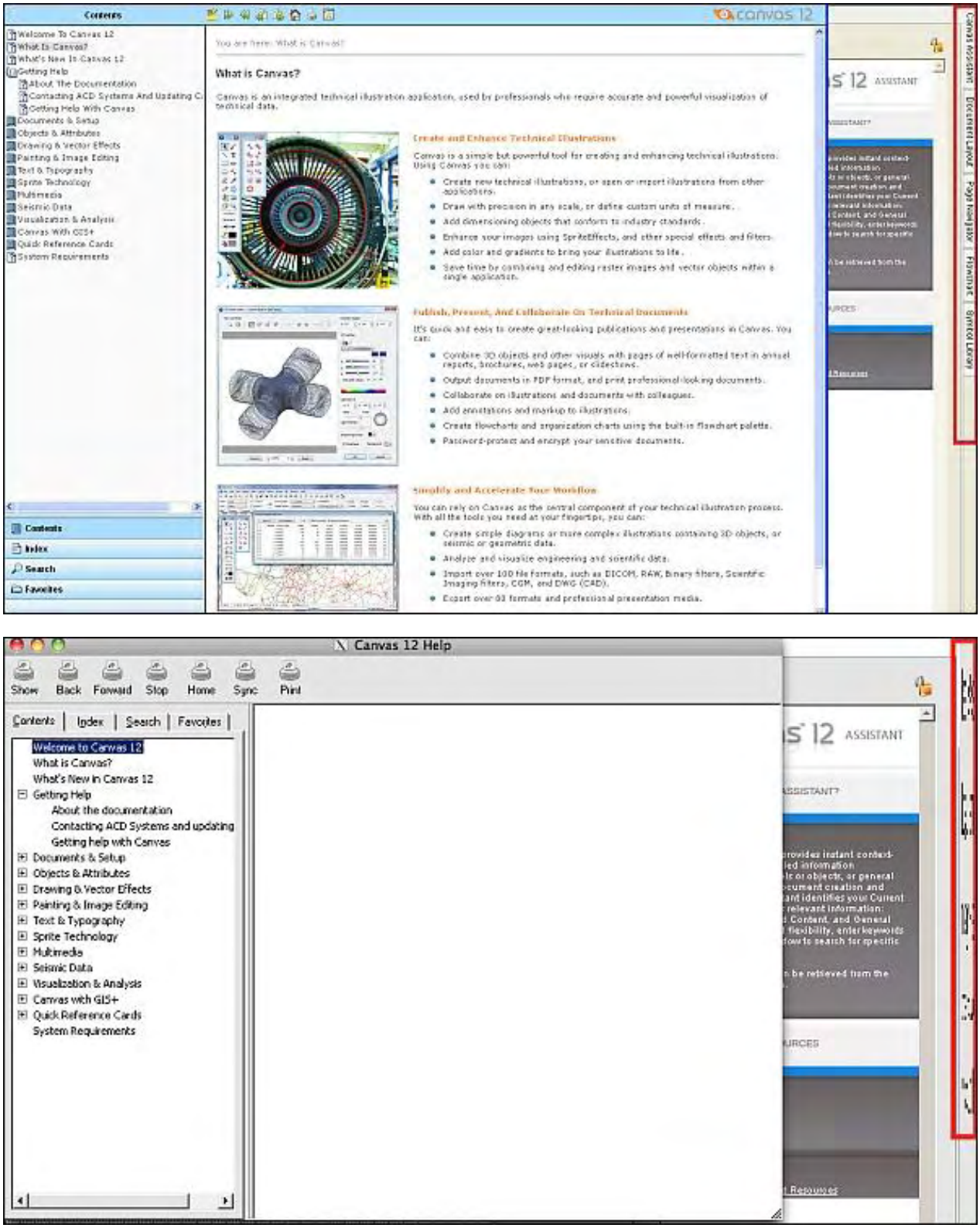

Figure 2. Canvas Help displays and functions properly and the Docking Pane's tabs display properly in a Windows-based VM (top). CrossOver for Macintosh does not support Canvas Help (bottom), evidently because it is Web-based and needs to launch the operating system's default browser. Less evident is why the Docking Pane's tabs display improperly under CrossOver.

The aforementioned Docking Pane has to be my favorite of Canvas 12's new features. Its tabs provide handy, one click access to Canvas Assistant (Figure 1), the Document Layout palette, Page Navigator, Flowchart Symbols, and the new Symbols Library (which is automatically installed on the hard drive; in previous versions of Canvas, symbols came on a DVD). If screen real estate is at a premium, the Docking Pane is dismissible.

Other noteworthy new features for design hobbyists and professionals alike include the Symbol Pen (a tool that makes pen strokes based

upon user-selected items in the Symbols Library); Smart Join and Vector Fill tools; improved scaling functionality; enhanced support for 3D View, AutoCAD and CGM4 files; Object Geometry Import and Export; Object Properties Table View; and Multi-Save (export to multiple file formats simultaneously). Details about Canvas 12's new features are available at ACDSystems' Web site.

In conclusion, I still recommend Canvas (despite its considerable price tag and learning curve) for users who have to struggle with the wrong software tool (e.g., spreadsheet or word processor) to accomplish graphics and design tasks. This program also is recommended for graphics hobbyists and pros looking for an alternative to Adobe's products. My enthusiasm would be even greater, however, if a Macintosh-native version were available.

reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Backing Up," "Cell Phone Problem," "Restoring iPod Content to a PC," "AptiQuant Hoax"

Backing Up

[Regarding the July 29 Digital Dave column:]

Hi, a response to Mike of Lakeside's question about backing up. I use Casper and clone my computer. I have two external hard drives and have exact duplicates on each drive. It is a paid program, but what a great feeling knowing that I will not lose it all. Backing up is good, but cloning is so much better!

-Marion, El Cajon, CA

Cell Phone Problem

[Regarding the August 5 Digital Dave column:]

Anthony's final comment about losing his cell signal when an incoming land-line call knocked him off the DSL connection really threw me. I noticed you did not address it at all. Did you have more info? Otherwise, maybe there was something about the configuration that Anthony left out or confused?

Your comment about needing line filters made sense and the possibility that a cordless phone could be causing interference was logical also. Unless they have a lot of cordless phones though, it would be cheaper to upgrade the cordless phone instead of the router and USB adapter. Cordless phones have become really cheap these days.

-Dale Harrington, Aurora, CO

Actually, Dale, I did address the cell phone problem: "This interference could also be a source of the cell phone problem [...] Diagnosing Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) is like working with magic. A screen door opening and closing could cause a dropped signal."

I didn't get more specific because it is most likely all part of the same problem. It is more than a coincidence that both the Wi-Fi and cell phone have a problem when the phone rings. Electromagnetic devices do not keep their emissions neatly within prescribed frequency bands. Harmonics and other leakages can affect devices which normally wouldn't come close to interfering.

You're right. If the phone system is the problem, then it might be cheaper to replace it than the router, although routers are not all that expensive.

-Digital Dave, ComputorEdge

Restoring iPod Content to a PC

[Regarding the August 5 Digital Dave column:]

Reader Jim White's dilemma is a perfect example of why backing up is such an important and worthwhile investment of time.

As such, an alternative answer to Jim's question would be to restore from a backup or clone of the broken Windows PC to the intact one. The restored backup of iTunes includes a backup of the iDevice's content.

Each time iTunes syncs an iDevice, it automatically updates a backup of that iDevice. The process is seamless and transparent to the user, but dependable.

This eliminates the need to use third-party programs to copy content from an iDevice to a computer.

Additionally, iTunes can be used to manually back up an iDevice or restore it. This iTunes feature likewise eliminates the need to use a third-party program for copying from an iDevice to a computer.

This is documented in Apple's knowledge base article (*support.apple.com/kb/ht1414*).

Perhaps the real reason why Apple "make[s] downloading from the iPod obscure" is because it's not necessary rather than "they will miss out on a commission…"

-Barry Fass-Holmes, San Diego

AptiQuant Hoax

[Regarding the August 5 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

From AptiQuant's Web site (*www.aptiquant.com/IQ-Browser-AptiQuant-2011.pdf*):

"Download 'IQ-Browser-AptiQuant-2011.pdf'

"Please note that the file you are about to download is a fake report. The study/survey mentioned in the report never took place, and this report was was created to be a hoax."

-Dennis, San Diego, CA

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