ComputorEdge™ Online — 09/16/11

This issue:
Little Known Computing Stories, Part IV

Tech news stories include back-to-school must-haves, MIT innovations, wireless theft protection, and much more.

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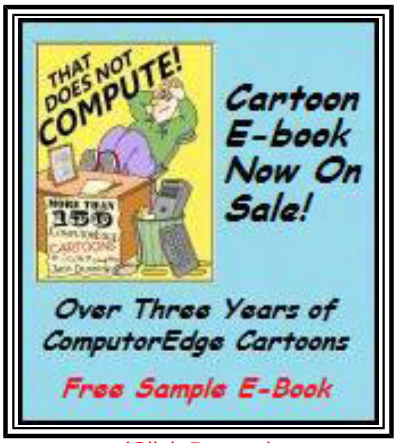

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Digital Dave

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

A reader longs to make comments to directory listings, as he did in XP; a reader wants to edit a Web site via a tablet like the iPad; a reader wants to turn his iMac into a fax machine.

Dear Digital Dave,

I remember in Windows XP I used to be able to add comments to my directory listing (whether by a toy or by design, I don't remember). I can't do this with Windows 7 (x64 Ultimate).

I download files and keep them in separate folders by month and year. But sometimes downloaded files are very similarly named and I end up clicking on them to start installation, only to find they are the wrong files. I used to add a comment about what the file was to prevent this.

Are there any "easy" ways to do this, or cryptic Registry entries I can make to get this feature back in? Such a handy and beneficial process shouldn't be lost in the new OS. I will always download files.

Mark
San Diego

Dear Mark,

This has been a serious issue for many Windows XP users. Where it was easy in XP to add and display properties such as title, subject, category, keywords and comments in Windows Explorer, these capabilities disappeared for many file types with the introduction of Windows Vista. Music, video, graphic and document files are well supported, but many others are not, including PDF and text files. Many businesses have made extensive use of this XP tagging feature, and it adds to their reluctance to upgrade to Windows 7.

I did not immediate find a solution, but I would guess that there may be a third-party Windows Explorer replacement program that will access and display the information. Perhaps another *ComputorEdge* reader will offer a solution—if they can find one.

There are Windows Explorer quirks that indicate that any information previously added is still there. For example, with PDF files, if you add Title to the Details column (right-click on headings and select More), then do a search on PDF, the title will appear in the previously blank column. Also, select the PDF file, then Organize/Properties, and it will display the extra information in the PDF tab of the Properties window.

Microsoft may have considered this a security issue in relation to EXE and other program files, but more likely it was a misstep.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm currently editing my Web site with FrontPage 2003. (I like the WYSIWYG nature and real-time editing.)

Question #1: Is there a different/better editor with similar features? And Question #2: Will this different editor work on any of the pads (iPad, Xoom, etc.)?

I guess I'm really interested in a pad/tablet that will allow me to edit my Web site.

BTW, I lost touch with you when you went paperless, but I'm back in the fold.

Larry Foster
San Diego, CA

Dear Larry,

The process of Web design/editing consists of two parts: the writing of HTML code and the posting (publishing) of the code pages to the Web. FrontPage has a special editor that creates the underlying code while you place objects, text, links, and more on the screen. Then FrontPage will upload those coded pages to your Web site, making it seem as if it is in real time.

If you're looking for a replacement for FrontPage on the PC or Mac, then the free KompoZer (*kompozer.net/*) will probably do the job, although there are numerous programs available that will generate code and publish to your Web site.

If you want to make real-time changes with a tablet computer, then you may want to investigate the Web-based systems, which are usually available from your Web service provider. They will range from simple page creation/editing systems with templates to content-management systems such as Joomla or Drupal.

I did not find a recommended WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) Web design system for the iPad—which is by far the most-used tablet with the most available software. My guess is that Android is farther behind in this area. One reason for this lack of Web design apps is that a handheld computer is not the ideal Web design platform.

It's awkward to do Web page editing on a tablet computer. While it can be done, a mouse and keyboard are very handy when entering/editing text and code or moving objects in a WYSIWYG environment. This means that the best use for the handy pads is as a supplement for your other computer—possibly when traveling or for quick, simple changes.

Most likely you need to work directly with the HTML code, whether on the tablet computer or directly on the site. FTP On The Go Pro (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/ftp-on-the-go-pro/id364787363?mt=8*) has received some good reviews from iPad users as an app for connecting and uploading changes to your Web site. At this point, an iPad with this app may be your best bet for a tablet, but you will need to work directly with the code before you upload the new page.

Web design on a tablet computer could be a rapidly changing area. A different concept in design is probably needed to take advantage of the touchscreen. That will take some time. Remember that the iPad is only about one and a half years old, and it pretty much owns the market right now. Web design apps are not high on most tablet users' priority list.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

How do I turn my iMac into a fax machine? I have a scanner, and I'm using U-Verse for my Internet connection.

Dave B.
Ellenwood, GA

Dear Dave,

What was once relatively easy on a Mac has now been complicated by the fact that Macs no longer come with a modem installed as standard equipment. The traditional fax is dependent upon phone lines for transmitting and receiving, but with the rapid increase in e-mail and Web fax services, the need to use a phone line has dramatically decreased.

You mentioned that you have a scanner. If that is part of an all-in-one printer, then you may have all you need to do your faxing. Many of the all-in-ones include a fax capability. All you need to do is plug a phone line into the printer. Most printers come with both PC and Mac drivers. Those drivers should include the faxing feature.

If your printer won't fax, then I would consider getting one that will. These printers are now very inexpensive, and the scan can be directly faxed to the recipient. It's a better option than buying a fax modem for your iMac.

If you don't have many faxes to send, then there are a number of Web services that will allow you to send them free of charge. If you check out this article by Jack Dunning, you will find links that will help you find one that's right for you.

When scanning your documents, save them as PDF files. Most of the fax systems will send PDF files and the results will be more consistent than other types of documents.

Digital Dave

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Marketing-by-Rumor, Searching for App Programmers, Six Degrees of Cyber Separation

“Digging up more little-known computing stories.**”** by Marilyn K. Martin

The latest high-tech news roundup includes electronic must-haves for students, mobile app development news, the latest from MIT, wireless anti-theft technology, hacks against business travelers and much more.

Electronic Must-Haves for Students

Younger generations have grown up embracing the Digital Age. So when they head to high school or college, there are plenty of suggestions on the Internet about the latest, coolest, must-have gadgets and apps. These might also be good gift ideas for the upcoming holidays.

The most essential gadget for the savvy college student is a good pillow.

Offers.com has an article on the Seven Essential Gadgets for the Savvy College Student (*www.offers.com/guide/article/essential-gadgets-college/*). Laptops, printers and digital cameras seem like no-brainers. But the site also recommends an external hard drive for term paper backup, as well as a stereo alarm clock that is programmable for any LOUD music or noise, so a super-busy student doesn't sleep through an important test.

TopTenReviews.com has a slightly different kind of list: the Top 10 Student Survival (Smartphone) Apps (*gadget-gift-stores-review.toptenreviews.com/top-10-student-survival-apps.html*). Some notables include Evernote (to take notes and organize them on your cell phone), to oFlash (digital flash cards), and Zoho Docs (to access your PC docs through a smartphone).

iPhones: Marketing by Rumor

Last year, an Apple employee "accidentally" left a prototype iPhone 4 in a bar in San Francisco. It was sold for $200 on eBay to a Gizmodo blogger, who wrote about the new phone. Flash forward to this year and, gosh, another Apple employee has "accidentally" left a prototype of an iPhone 5 in a Frisco tequila bar.

The International Business Times reports that this prototype too was sold for $200 (*www.ibtimes.com/articles/207118/20110901/iphone-5-prototype-left-in-bar-apple-s-marketing-brilliance.htm*), but on Craigslist this time, although Apple reported that it was able to track it down and recover the device. Whether the latest "left in a bar" story is true or not, the IBT thinks that Apple's strategy is brilliant. "Every few days or so, Apple iPhone 5 search words surge to the top of the Web's most-popular list as the latest rumors do all of Apple's work—the best free advertising a company could buy."

Social Media Connections

According to an August 2011 article in the San Jose Mercury News, Yahoo has teamed up with Facebook to recreate an iconic 1960's social experiment (*www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_18685746?IADID*). Back then, using mailed letters, the original study showed that there are just "six degrees of separation" between most people on the planet.

The updated study will use Facebook's 750 million members, with social scientists researching how many online connections it takes for people to relay an electronic message to a "target"—someone they don't know in a foreign country. The idea is that we are all connected through our friends, who have more friends, and that it takes only so many steps to send a message from friend to friend, to reach the target. Anyone with a Facebook account can participate in the project by going to *smallworld.sandbox.yahoo.com*.

According to an August article (*www.latimes.com/health/boostershots/la-heb-electronic-cigarettes-that-finds-other-ecig-users-20110826,0,2639991.story?track=rss*) in the Los Angeles Times, "blu Cigs (*www.blucigs.com*)" electronic cigarettes are scheduled to release a new charging pack that "will allow customers to find other users when they are within 50 feet (if voluntarily activated)."

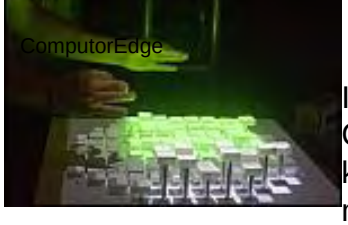
Mobile Apps—Looking for Developers

With most mobile app developers on the West Coast or New York, good app ideas go begging for developers in the middle of the country. An August 2011 article (*www.freep.com/article/20110830/COL41/108300342/Mark-W-Smith-Scarcity-of-app-developers-stifles-a-growing-industry?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|FRONTPAGE|s*) in the Detroit Free Press details how a non-developer named Kyle Hilla of Grand Rapids, Michigan, created a popular (and Webby Awards nominee) Apple app called CollabraCam. It allows up to four smartphones or iPads to record video simultaneously, sending the live feeds back to a fifth Apple device that acts as a director. This director device can switch cameras and create a multi-camera video production in real time—all with just iPhones or iPads.

Hilla contracted with an Indiana firm for $50,000 to develop his app. This highlights the lack of local developers for mobile apps in the middle of the country. All of which is compounded by universities and technical schools that are still fleshing out their curricula for mobile program developers. In the meantime, the article lists some online tools for inventors to learn app-development themselves.

Cutting Edge Developments from MIT

Recompose (*www.technewsdaily.com/recompose-interface-siggraph-3114/*) is a prototype input device (or keyboard) that was on display at the SIGGRAPH



Interactive Technology Conference held in August 2011 in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was conceived by MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) as a kind of "digital clay." Users can "sculpt" in 3-D through a tiled surface that can be manipulated like a keyboard via touch or gestures.

Recompose can serve as "an interactive model for any data with topography, from maps to stock portfolios," according to the article. Users can actually feel their data, manipulating 144 motorized buttons arranged in a 12-by-12 square, with either sweeping gestures or fine touches. Each square contains a servomotor and a sensor, so each keyboard button can rise or fall several inches. A Kinect suspended above the table monitors the user's hands, so they can pull the buttons up with a virtual string, or select entire sections of buttons to raise or lower.

According to an August 2011 article (*www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2011/08/22/wormhole_links_mit_and_stanford/*) in the Boston Globe, MIT has created a unique link to Stanford University, 3,000 miles away in California. Sitting in the MIT cafeteria is an odd Plexiglas dome over a video screen called a "wormhole."

The live signal displayed on the screen shows a similar cafeteria scene at Stanford. People from both colleges can sit "under the dome" to share coffee and research and brainstorm ideas. The idea is to encourage random encounters between students and staff at two of the country's premier technology-oriented universities.

Wireless Anti-Theft Technology

The public is becoming more proactive about protecting themselves and their property. An August 2011 article (*www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-stolen-camera-20110815,0,6605325.story*) in the Los Angeles Times profiled a chiropractor whose stolen digital camera had been equipped with an Eye-Fi (*www.eye.fi/*) device that wirelessly transmitted photos to his computer. Several months after the camera theft, when the trail had gone cold, strange photos taken by the thief started turning up on his computer monitor. But the chiropractor hadn't activated his Eye-Fi's geotagging function, so when the camera's battery died, so did the owner's hopes of getting his digital camera back.

In a similar case (same article), a stolen laptop with GadgetTrak (*www.gadgettrak.com/*) software started sending the owner's computer both photos and real-time transmitting location. The laptop was recovered, but the person who had it claimed it had been given to him as a gift. Since the person caught with the laptop was not pictured in the sent photos, he wasn't arrested.

Protecting Your Children and Pets

An interesting article (*www.familycircle.com/family-fun/technology/connecting-with-your-kids/*) in Family Circle is written by a technology journalist with a "plugged-in" family of his own. He offers sound, researched advice about how to help your kids stay "plugged-in" to the real world, as children who spend too much time typing/texting will have difficulty holding conversations, understanding body language, resolving conflicts and feeling compassion for their real-life friends and companions. These are all vital real-world skills, in both personal and professional relationships.

Another August 2011 article (*latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/08/gps-device-tracks-wayward-pooch-or-children.html*) in the Los Angeles Times focused on a new Garmin GTU 10 Tracker (*www.heartratemonitorsusa.com/garmin-gtu10-gps.html*) that can be clipped onto your dog, tucked into your child's backpack, or hidden in the trunk of your car. The device also offers a "geofence" option, through AT&T's wireless network. An e-mail or text message is sent to you if the gadget enters or leaves such a

geofenced area. Owners can create up to 10 virtual fences around such locales as a school, home or backyard.

Putting microchips into pets to help find them if they get lost or stolen is nothing new. Nor is electronically keying your animal's collar to pet doors to let only your pet in, and keep out neighborhood animals (or even raccoons) who find your pet's food a little too tasty. But now several companies offer dog and cat doors that are keyed to your pet's embedded microchip. SureFlap (*www.sureflap.com*) is considered the best for cats, with PetPorte, DogMate and Staywell rounding out the current providers of microchip-keyed pet doors.

Protecting Yourself Electronically

An August 2011 article (*www.washingtonpost.com/world/americas/scared-mexicans-try-under-the-skin-tracking-devices/2011/08/14/gIQAtReNUJ_story.html*) in the Washington Post states that frightened Mexicans are increasingly turning to implanting a radio-frequency or satellite identification chips under their skin.

With kidnappings in Mexico up 317 percent over the last five years (with 20 percent of crimes allegedly involving police or soldiers), more and more Mexican citizens are paying $2,000 upfront for an implanted tracking device from Xega (*www.xega.com.mx*). The implantees then have to pay another $2,000 a year for Xega to monitor their device. Xega reports that their business has increased 40 percent in just the past couple of years.

Some U.S. experts doubt that such a tracking device could be effective without a battery and an antenna. There are also less expensive keychain GPS tracking devices available in Mexico, which are continuing to see monthly sales increases of 20-25 percent.

Restaurants as Theater—Making Reservations Online

A new restaurant in Chicago called Next (*www.nextrestaurant.com*) is treating the dining experience (*chicago.metromix.com/restaurants/restaurant/next-west-town/2163403/content#listing-details-section*) like a theater. You have to make reservations and pay online for a "ticket" through their Web site. It rotates in quarters, featuring different and cleverly themed dining experiences. Its current theme, Tour of Thailand, is sold out through the September end of this quarter, but same-day ticket availability is announced on its Facebook page.

Patch Computers—Medical Uses to Covert Operations

The Independent in Britain, recently reported that a stick-on circuit (*www.independent.co.uk/news/science/how-computers-will-soon-get-under-our-skin-2336246.html*) can monitor heart rate as well as more traditional devices, but is "weightless, wireless and inconspicuous." This "ultra-thin and flexible electronic circuit can be stuck to the skin like a temporary tattoo." Called an Epidermal Electronic System, the circuit is the size of a postal stamp, and sticks to the skin by electrostatic forces (not glue).

Practically undetectable, the circuit could also be used for covert operations. A future circuit could detect throat movements around the larynx to transmit words, even if the person isn't making any discernible sounds. A stick-on circuit could also be applied to police radios, when it would be too dangerous to speak into a radio transmitter.

Saving Daily History for Posterity

An August 2011 article (*seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/businesstechnology/2015790335_apuseverybookwritten.html*) in the Seattle Times introduced Brewster

Kahle, an MIT-trained computer scientist with a passion to save every Web, printed or spoken TV/movie/video word. He founded the nonprofit "Internet Archive (*www.archive.org/*)" in 1996 to save a copy of every Web page ever posted.

Now he is trying to collect one copy of every physical book ever published. He is barcoding every book (so far he has about 500,000) to identify the exact cardboard box, pallet and shipping container where the book resides. Kahle is also involved in creating a digital library through his Open Library (*openlibrary.org/*) initiative. He has scanned three million physical books, which are then uploaded to the Internet for people to access for free (similar to Project Gutenberg (*www.gutenberg.org*)).

Hacking Business Travelers

An August 2011 article (*www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-travel-briefcase-20110815,0,65581.story*) in the Los Angeles Times warns business travelers that if you book through the Internet, you run a higher risk of being victimized by computer hackers and identity thieves. "Insurance claims for data theft worldwide jumped 56 percent last year (2010)," according to the article, "with a bigger number of those attacks targeting the hospitality industry."

Thirty-eight percent of the cyberattacks were aimed at hotels, resorts and tour companies. Business travelers who upload credit card numbers and other personal information to hotel Web sites and large hotel chains are especially vulnerable.

Crime Fighters—Algorithms, NASA and Computers on Horse Patrol

According to ABC News, police in Santa Cruz, California, are using a complicated math equation to predict where crimes (*abcnews.go.com/Technology/US/santa-cruz-police-math-predict-prevent-crime/story?id=14335517*) will most likely happen next. After eight years of local crime data was entered into a computer program, an algorithm developed a "predictive policing" program specific to Santa Cruz. The program went active in July 2011, and now 10 detailed maps are printed out daily of Hot Spots where new crimes are most likely to occur.

Santa Cruz PD has seen a 20 percent reduction in its staff in the past decade, but a 30 percent increase in calls for service. Zach Friend, the department's crime analyst, says "We need to leverage technology to become more effective and efficient." Even the cops on the beat like the daily Hot Spot maps, with the program (so far) correctly predicting 40 percent of crimes. Even burglaries were down 27 percent this July over last July 2010.

In another recent ABC News story, a couple of NASA scientists were surprised, to say the least, when the FBI came calling in 1996 for their help in "image processing techniques (*abcnews.go.com/Technology/CuttingEdge/story?id=119285&page=1*)." The scientists' "day job" is deciphering less-than-perfect images from the Hubble Space Telescope at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

They had developed a technique called Video Image Stabilization and Registration (VISR), to get a good video image from a poor and shaky one. The FBI asked for their help with the amateur videos people shot of the Centennial Park bombing during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Today, the scientists and their VISR technique are still being called upon by law enforcement, when poor quality video is crucial to a case.

In an August 2011 article (*www.contracostatimes.com/weird-news/ci_18668892*) in the Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, California), mounted Louisville (Kentucky) police now have computers to carry on their horseback patrols. The small portable computers, know as Mobile Data Terminals (MDT), are fastened to the breast collars of the horses, and lie on the horses' backs. This way, even mounted patrol

units can have access to emergency dispatch and their police department's records management system.

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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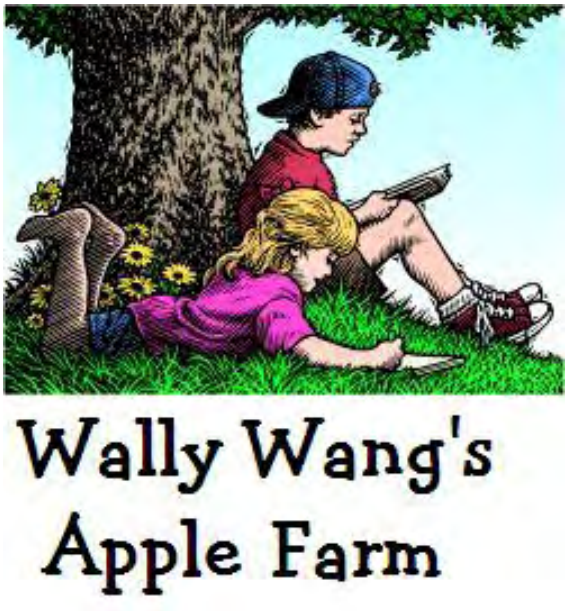

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Capturing Internet Videos” by Wally Wang

If you find a particularly interesting video on YouTube, you can now save it as a video file on your computer by using handy new software tools. Also, the future of PCs is looking dim; iBank is a popular Quicken alternative for the Mac; open-source Android isn't so open after all; you can define how a second monitor works with your iMac; Mac OS X 10.7 Lion effortlessly restored work after the blackout; and a tip on using the Mac App Store to market your software.

Sites like YouTube host videos that you can play. However, if you find a particularly interesting video, you have no choice but to bookmark its address and rely on an Internet connection to retrieve it again.

In case you find a particularly interesting video on YouTube, you can now save it as a video file on your computer by using the MacX Video Converter Pro (*www.macxdvd.com/giveaway/giveaway.htm*) program, available for free until September 20.

Just load the program, paste in the YouTube address of the video that you want, and the program yanks the YouTube video off the Internet and saves it as a file that you can view any time without an Internet connection.

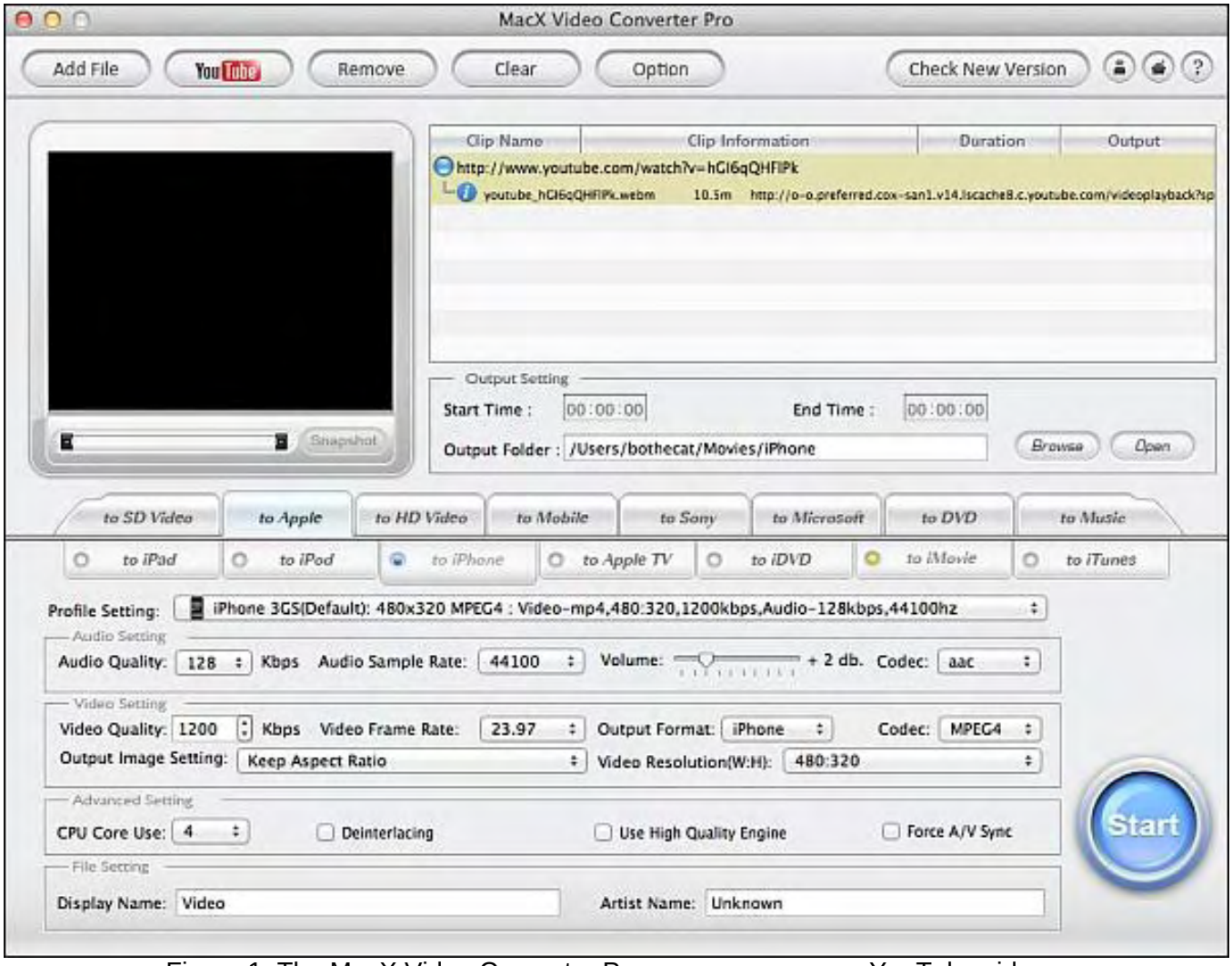

Figure 1. The MacX Video Converter Pro program can save YouTube videos.

Besides yanking videos off YouTube, the MacX Video Converter Pro program can also convert video from one format to another. If you have a bunch of videos trapped in ancient file formats like AVI or RM, use MacX Video Converter Pro to turn them into MP4 or QuickTime MOV files.

Another way to capture video off the Internet is to use a screen-capturing program such as the $69 Snapz Pro (*www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox/*). With a program like SnapzPro, you just need to define the portion of the screen you want to capture and then save it as a static image, such as a JPEG or TIFF file, or capture it as a video file.

After you capture a static image or video using Snapz Pro, you can use another program like Photoshop or iMovie to edit your captured pictures or videos. (Just remember that many pictures and videos are copyrighted, so you can't just copy and use them without permission.)

For a free but much simpler screen-capture option, just load the QuickTime Player program buried in the Applications folder and choose File/New Screen Recording.

The next time you find an interesting video playing on YouTube or any other site, save that video as a file on your computer to review later, send to others, or to edit as part of your own movies. Knowing that anything posted on the Internet can be captured and stored separately, this should make everyone pause before they upload a potentially embarrassing video of themselves on their Web site or Facebook page.

Another Lower Forecast for PC Sales

The Gartner research firm recently forecast lower PC sales (*www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iSX2G12JsL5ollPExFUKECYwLOAw?docId=CNG.8829b1c45c2bc379aa7f0f9e25749f3e.291*), lowering its original forecast of 9.3 percent growth to 3.8 percent growth. "U.S. consumer PC shipments were much weaker than expected in the second quarter, and indications are that back-to-school PC sales are disappointing," said Gartner research director Ranjit Atwal.

Gartner research director George Shiffler said that tablet computers have "dramatically changed the dynamic of the PC market. Vendors' tried-and-true business models are failing as traditional PC functionality is extended to other devices, and users continue to lengthen PC lifetimes."

Except for people in complete denial, it's clear that the PC market is nowhere near as active and dominant as it once was just a few short years ago, and the chances of those old days coming back seem slimmer by the second.

With tablets (specifically the iPad) cutting into PC sales, the shift is toward more mobile devices. The MacBook Air represents the first step toward merging the features of a traditional laptop with the benefits of the iPad. The old-style tower cases of PCs are less appealing in comparison, despite their greater features and power. After all, what good is all that power if you have to be chained to your desk to use it?

Curiously, PC assemblers are struggling to keep ultrabook prices (*www.digitimes.com/news/a20110907PD218.html*) below $1,000 to match the MacBook Air price of $999. If other companies can't compete with a viable tablet and can't compete with a lower-priced ultrabook laptop, they'll miss out on the two hottest mobile markets for computers.

While PC companies struggle against the iPad and the MacBook air, they're continuing to see Mac sales (*blogs.barrons.com/techtraderdaily/2011/09/12/apple-barclays-piper-note-surge-in-august-mac-sales/*) surpass PC sales. Both Barclays Capital and Piper Jaffray state that, "Apple's sales were almost three times the 7 percent overall PC market unit growth. And thanks to an average selling price on the Mac of $1,319—almost double that of PCs, at $723—Apple's dollar sales were up 16 percent, four times as much as PC dollar sales growth. Apple had 20 percent unit share in the quarter, and 37 percent 'value share.'"

With PC manufacturers unable to compete in technology vs. the iPad, unable to compete on price vs. the MacBook Air, and unable to compete against growth vs. the Macintosh, how bright can the future of PCs be?

Replace Quicken with iBank

One of the biggest software disasters was Microsoft's Vista, which the company's own executives couldn't install (*blog.seattlepi.com/microsoft/2008/02/27/full-text-microsoft-execs-on-vista-problems/*) without problems. Despite these complaints from its own executives, Microsoft released Vista anyway.

Eventually Microsoft patched Vista to become stable, but its reputation still suffers. Given a choice between Windows XP, Vista, or Windows 7, how many people think Vista is the better operating system?

Perhaps the second biggest software disaster is Quicken for the Mac. It's inconceivable that a multimillion-dollar company like Intuit still can't create a Mac version of its own Quicken software. Intuit did release Quicken Essentials for the Mac, but it's nowhere near as complete as Quicken for Windows.

Since Intuit still can't seem to duplicate its own software to run on the Mac, other companies are rushing to fill the void. The most popular Quicken alternative for the Mac is the $59.99 iBank (*www.iggsoftware.*

com/ibank/) program.

Like Quicken for Windows, iBank lets you track investments, import data from Quicken or Microsoft Money, create a budget, and display charts to visually display your assets. When moving from Quicken to iBank, the most jarring difference won't be the lack of comparable features, but the slightly different user interface. It may take time to transition from Quicken to iBank, so don't expect to start using iBank right away if you're already used to the way Quicken works.

Figure 2. iBank's checkbook register user interface provides icons to categorize transactions.

As you add new transactions, iBank automatically creates a new chart so you can see which expenses are eating up your income. By seeing your biggest expenses in a chart every time you use iBank, you're constantly reminded how you're spending your money.

One handy feature of iBank is the way it handles budgets by displaying different categories as envelopes where you put your money. By showing you how much you've spent in a certain category, iBank can tell you how much money you have left in your budget and how much you've spent in each category.

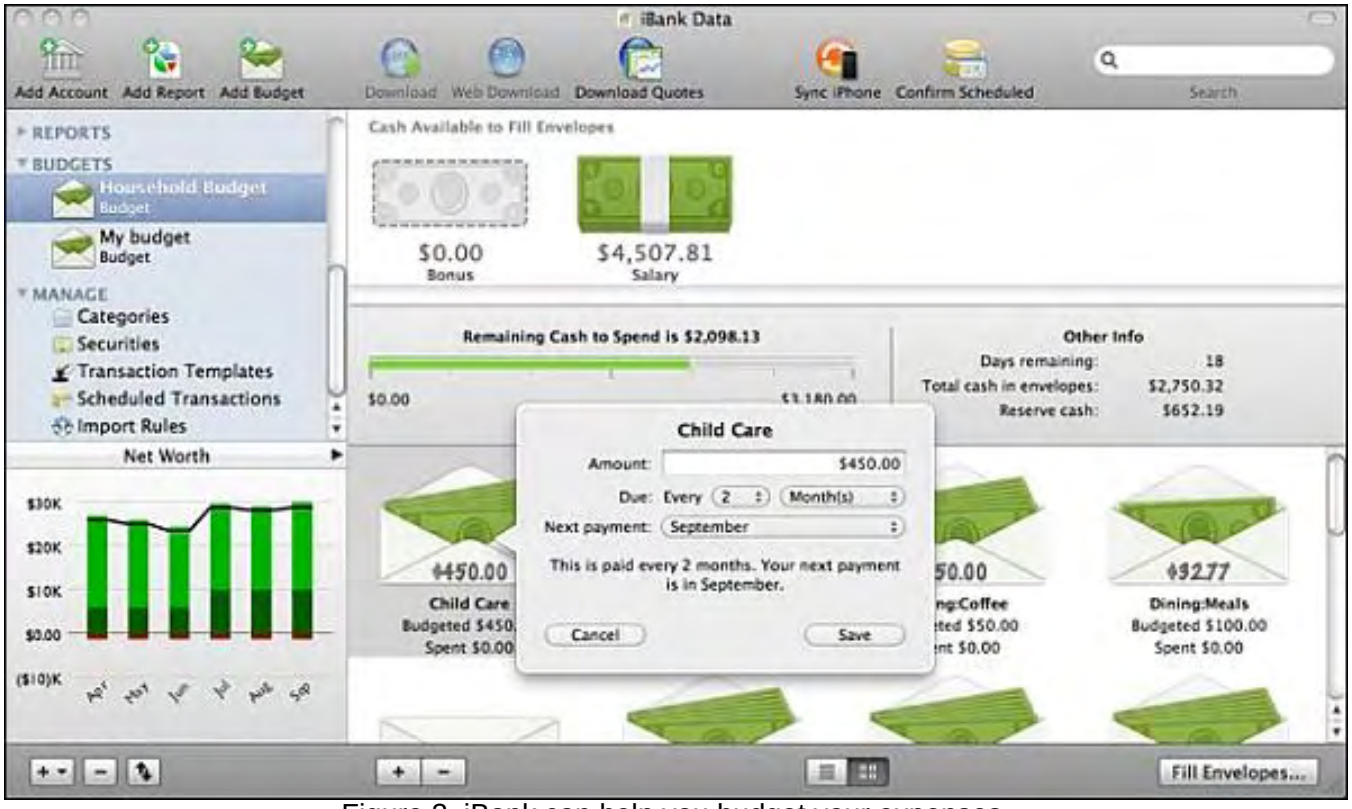

Figure 3. iBank can help you budget your expenses.

Like Quicken, iBank lets you import data directly from your bank's Web site as well as creating charts to help you understand where you spend your money. If you invest in stocks, bonds, or mutual funds, you can download the latest quotes from Yahoo and import them into iBank so you can see the value (or loss) of your portfolio at any given time. You can even do stock option trading within iBank, although it's more likely that such investors will prefer dedicated software to do this instead.

If you need to manage your money, iBank will get the job done. The two biggest drawbacks are simply learning iBank's user interface (especially if you're a Quicken user), and learning all of iBank's array of features. If you like Quicken, you'll find that iBank offers nearly everything you need.

Figure 4. iBank can create different charts to track income and expenses.

For those still using Quicken on the Mac, export your data out of Quicken and import it into iBank. iBank may not satisfy dedicated Quicken users, but for everyone else, iBank can make you forget about Quicken since Intuit seems to have forgotten about its Mac customers.

Android Not Open After All

One prominent feature of Android has been its open source roots. Because it's "open," companies can improve upon it and examine its source code without any restrictions. That's the myth. The reality is that Oracle's battle with Google over Android reveals that Google's own internal documents (*www.dailyfinance.com/2011/09/08/motorola-googles-android-favorite-all-along/*) ask about Android, "If we gave it away, how can we ensure we get to benefit from it?"

Two additional bullet points from Google's internal documents highlight this contradiction of Android's so-called openness:

"Do not develop in the open. Instead, make source code available after innovation is complete."

"Lead device concept: Give early access to the software to partners who build and distribute devices to our specification (i.e., Motorola and Verizon). They get a non-contractual time-to-market advantage and in return they align to our standard."

With Google buying Motorola Mobility, do other manufacturers believe they'll compete on a level playing field using Android? Google has already given Motorola Mobility preferential treatment before their acquisition, so it's unlikely that Google will give others equal access to Android now that Google has a financial stake in selling devices. If you believe that Android is superior because of its "openness," you can safely tuck that argument back in the closet and hide it away forever because Google's own documents indicate that this was never true, even from the beginning.

For another drawback about Android's so-called "openness," just ask developers about the latest report

(*content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2011/09/android-apps-less-profitable-than-iphone-apps/1*) from the Yankee Group that shows that Android app developers make less money than iPhone developers. The reason appears to be due to Android's openness, which allows piracy to run rampant.

Nearly half of all Android developers claim that pirating an Android app is very easy. "Android apps are living in the Wild West without a sheriff," said Carl Howe, Yankee Group director of research. "With five other major mobile OSes (operating systems) competing for consumer dollars, Google can't afford to simply let pirates kill app developers' businesses. They need to foster some law and order or developers will flee to other platforms and Android will lose customers."

Android may have a larger market share than the iPhone, but if that larger market share doesn't translate into larger profits, what's the incentive to develop apps for Android anymore? If developers shy away from developing for Android, what's the appeal of Android to the average consumer?

Dual Displays for Macs

In the old days, most computers connected only to a single monitor. However, connecting multiple monitors can be handy for desktop publishing, programming, Web page designing, or any task that often requires two or more windows displayed simultaneously.

The latest iMacs come with a built-in monitor along with a Thunderbolt port. Just plug in a Thunderbolt cable, plug a second monitor into this cable, and your iMac will automatically detect and use this second display.

Then click the Apple menu, choose System Preferences, and click the Display icon. Click the Arrangement tab, and now you can drag the second monitor around to define how it interacts with your original iMac's monitor.

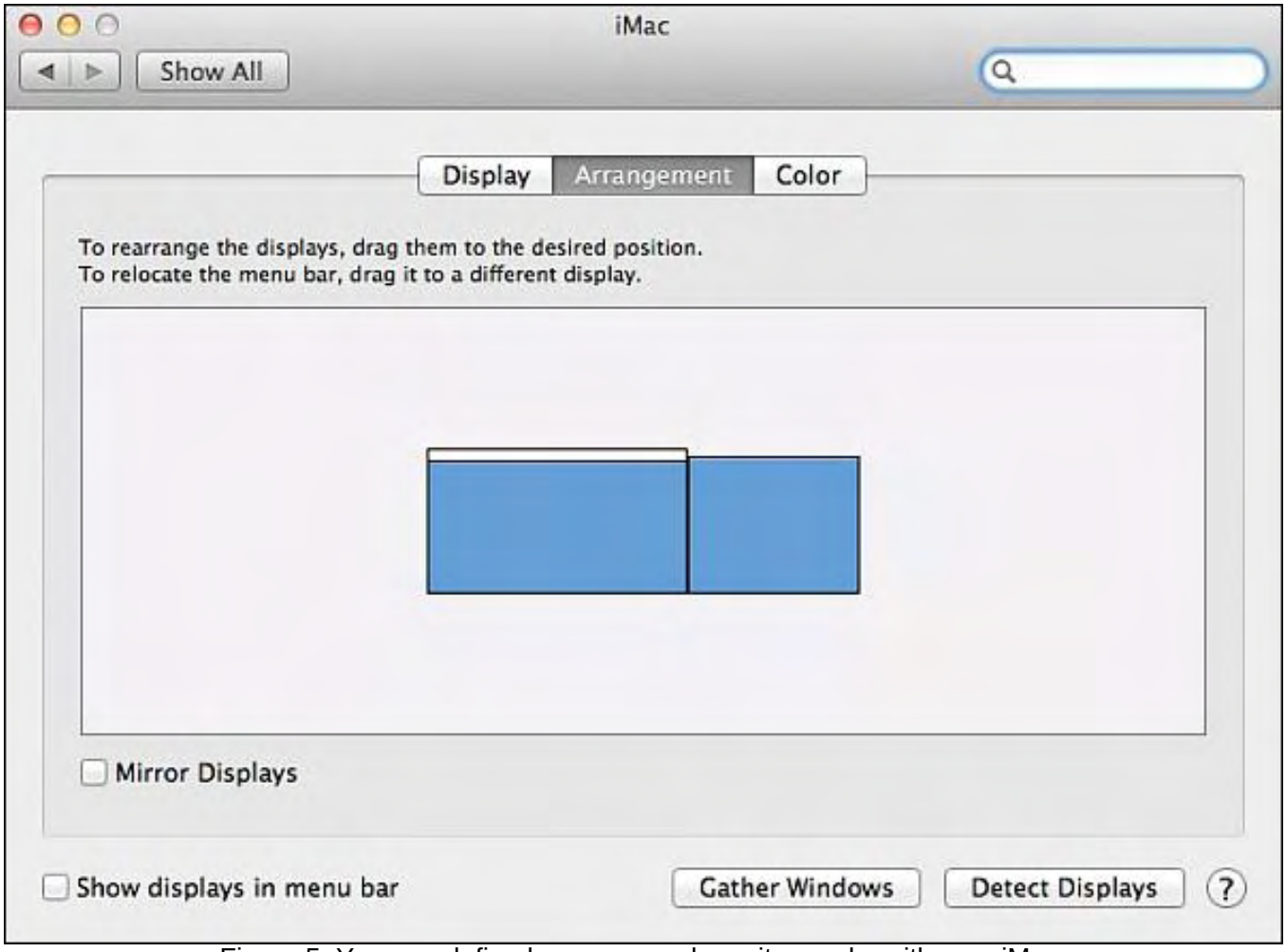

Figure 5. You can define how a second monitor works with your iMac.

Drag this second monitor image to the right of your iMac screen inside the Arrangement window, and the second monitor extends your iMac's screen to the right. Move this second monitor image to the top of the iMac screen, and your second monitor acts as an extension of the top of your iMac monitor regardless of the actual physical location of this second monitor.

Connecting a second monitor to your iMac can be one way to make your old monitor useful or give you extra screen space to work more efficiently, such as using the second monitor to display a Tools palette while displaying your actual work in your main iMac monitor.

Surviving the Southern California Blackout

On September 8, the power went out throughout Southern California up to parts of Orange County and all the way down to Mexico and east near Arizona. For most people, that sudden power blackout meant that everything they had been working on at that moment on their computer was lost.

However, if you had been using Mac OS X 10.7 Lion, the moment the power came back on, Lion would not only have restored every single window back on the screen, displaying their original contents, but all your data inside those windows, as well (provided you were using Lion-compatible software such as iWork). With Lion, the power blackout would have just been a minor interruption. With older versions of Mac OS X or any version of Windows, the power blackout would have meant losing all your data and manually loading all your programs and arranging their windows on the screen in the same location they were in before the power went out, then trying to recreate all your lost data from the last time you saved your file.

The next time the power goes out, you can either see it as a minor annoyance or a major disruption. If you aren't using a Mac running Lion, the potential of future power outages can be a good reason to upgrade from an older version of Mac OS X or any version of Windows.

* * *

In the old days, finding software meant browsing through a retail store or searching the Internet for a specific program that you need. Now the simplest way to look for new software is to simply use the Mac App Store.

Click on the App Store icon on the Dock (or double-click on the App Store icon in the Applications folder). When the App Store window appears, click the Top Charts icon to see the most popular paid and free programs.

Figure 6. The App Store can help you find the best and most popular free programs .

If you're a developer, the App Store makes it easier to reach customers. Instead of the hassle of setting

up a merchant account to accept and process credit cards over the Internet, you can just set up a Web site to describe your program and point people to download your program from the App Store instead.

This gives Apple a cut of the profits, but frees you from the problem of selling and marketing your software, since more people are likely to find your program through the App Store than via random searching through the Internet. If you're just getting started developing and selling software, the App Store makes it easy to get started right away.

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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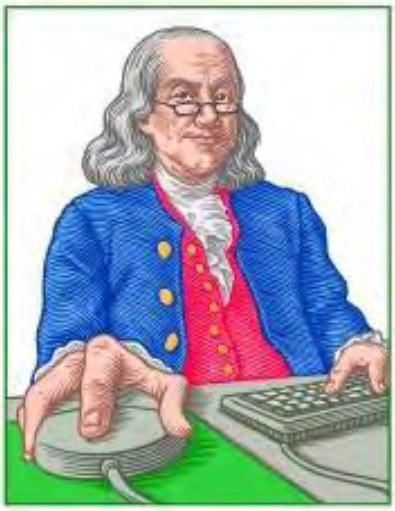

LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

“Memory Usage and Disk Space Utilities” by Tony J. Podrasky

Two handy utilities are available to retrieve information about the usage of memory and disk space.

Today's column is going to address two utilities available to retrieve information about the usage of memory and disk space.

Filename: <free>

Use: <free> displays information about available and used memory on the system.

Example:

```
tonyp% free
             total       used       free     shared    buffers     cached
Mem:       1028480     919784     108696          0     126632     408384
Swap:       835372          0     835372
```

Here we see two entries: one for Mem (memory) and one for Swap (swap space on the disk).

"Mem:" shows I have a total of 1,028,480 bytes of memory (a gigabyte). Of that I'm using 919,784, and there are 108,696 bytes still free. None of it is being shared, 126,632 bytes are being used for buffers, and 480384 bytes are tucked away in cache.

"Swap:" shows my disk has an allocation of 8,835,372 Bytes available for swap, none of which is being used at this time, and, of course, all of it is free.

(Newer versions of the <free> utility may have additional entries)

If you run <man free> you'll see there are several flags you can set to change the way <free> displays the information. You might try a <free -l> and see how high and how low the demand has been on memory.

* * *

Filename: <df>

Use: <df> displays the filesystem disk space usage.

Example:

```
tonyp: df -T
Filesystem    Type   1K-blocks      Used Available Use% Mounted on
/dev/sdb2     ext3     7787744   4604220   2787924  63% /
/dev/sdb1     ext3      132207     16913    108468  14% /boot
/dev/sda2     ext3     8254272   4568140   3266836  59% /sda
/dev/sdc1     ext3     4127076   2331268   1586164  60% /storage
/dev/sdd1     ext3    24034912  20017612   2796364  88% /maxbackup
/dev/sdd2     ext3   129798620 105212544  17992600  86% /maxmusic
```

Here we see six entries: The first two are partitions on the main disk. The next two are on different disks, and the last two are partitions on the same disk.

Information reported is:

Filename	The disk's identity in the device directory.
Type	Kind of filesystem.
1K-blocks	Size of the filesystem.
Used	How much of its space has been used.
Available	How much of its space is free.
Use%	Rough estimate of how much of the filesystem is used.
Mounted on	The mountpoint of the filesystem.

If you run <man df> you'll see there are several flags you can set to change the way <df> displays the information. I use the <df -T> so I can see the type of filesystem that is mounted. Right now (above) all I'm using is local disks that have the journaled filesystem on them. At other times they'll be NFS when I have a disk mounted from another computer, VFAT when I've mounted a disk from my Windows XP system, and ext2 when I mount a disk from an old version of Linux.

As above, run <man df> and try some of the flags. You might prefer to see the information displayed differently.

```
                              *         *         *

Silly Signature Du Jour:
Tony J. Podrasky | Great truths about life that little children have learned:
                 |
                 |       "Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time"
                 |
-:-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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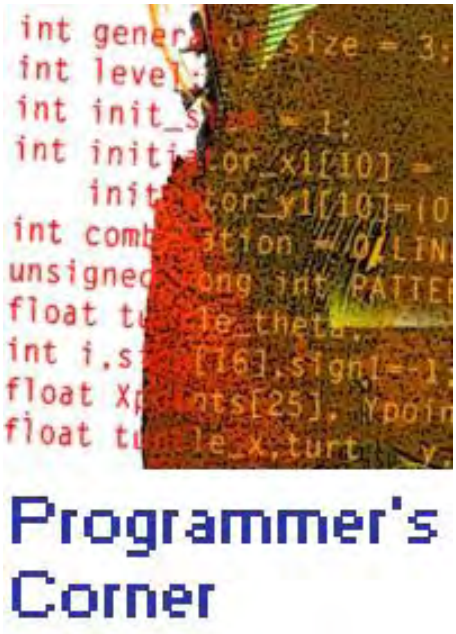

Programmer's Corner

"Adding Special Characters to Your Facebook Page" by Jack Dunning

Blow your "friends" away by using special characters on your Facebook page—just make sure you can communicate those codes without some of them being disassembled.

Our old friend, Jim Lipke, sent a list of special characters that can be used in your Facebook page, either directly pasted in or with the associated code. The problem is communicating those codes without some of them being disassembled by either the *ComputorEdge* Web system or one of the other media, such as PDF files or e-book files.

I put them into an EPUB format, which did a pretty good job. There were only three characters that didn't come through unscathed. But when I put the EPUB into various e-readers, more of the characters were mangled. iBooks on the iPad did the best job of maintaining integrity. I finally put them all into a document (DOC) called FacebookCodes.doc (*www.computoredge.com/misc/FacebookCodes.doc*), which you can download. Then you can open the DOC with OpenOffice.org or another word processor and either cut-and-paste the character or enter the code directly into your Facebook page. (These characters also work in many other applications.)

If you're using the code, both the "&" at the beginning and the ";" at the end are required. For example the German umlaut, ¨, can be either copied or represented by the codes "¨" or "¨" (no quotes), although I'm not sure how you would get it to appear over a letter. I guess you would just select the appropriate letter with the umlaut included from the list below. For more information on these codes see my article subtitled, "Accessing Special Characters That Aren't on Your Keyboard."

The following are some of the codes that you can directly cut-and-paste, plus they appear correctly in the *ComputorEdge* system:

¡ ¢ £ ¥ ¦ § ¨ © ª « ¬ -® ¯ ° ± ² ³ ´ µ ¶ · ¸

¹ º » ¼ ½ ¾ ¿ À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ð Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö ×

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ø ù ú û ü ý þ ÿ Œ œ Š š Ÿ ƒ – — ' ' , " " „ † ‡ • … ‰ € ™

Now you can use the ¼ character rather than typing 1/4 when you are adding your recent activity to Facebook. It will blow are your "friends" away.

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

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Buck's Blue Sky Advice & Cheap Tricks

Buck's Blue Sky Advice and Cheap Tricks

"What you hear is not necessarily what was sent to your speakers." by Buck Fadness

Learn some cheap, easy fixes you can apply to lessen any negative impact of your home acoustics and get the best sound out of any type of audio equipment.

It doesn't matter if you have an AM/FM clock radio or a high-end home theater system, the sound you hear is dependent on many factors. Some of these factors you can't control; some you can control to a greater or lesser extent (depending on your sound equipment). The good news is, there are a few things you have a great deal of control over.

What you are listening to, or what equipment you listen to it with, is less important than this fact: It's *your* ears that determine whether or not you like what you hear. There are definitely some visual cues that can make music and voice more, or less, enjoyable. If you see a performance of a song such as The Sound of Music, regardless of the quality of the sound, some people won't like it because they can't stand Julie Andrews (Gasp! Sacrilege). To them the song will not sound good, even if it's played on good sound equipment. What you enjoy hearing is personal to you. I'm not a critic or a music salesman. What I'm discussing here is strictly audio and ears.

If you are about my age (55 +/- umpteen years) you may have tinnitus, a tin ear or, like Van Gogh, only one ear. You are probably pretty much fixed on the range of music types you enjoy. You may be a person who prefers talk shows and news channels. Your radio or stereo receiver may have one or many speakers, two or many knobs and buttons. It may make music soar or your ears sore.

My sound system is a hybrid I built from scratch. A good Sony home theater receiver and a store brand Blu-Ray DVD player make up its core. Both were open-box items from Best Buy, so I saved hundreds, but they still had the usual guarantee. Plus, I talked my way into more of a discount because the receiver had no remote and the Blu-Ray had no manual. I later obtained these items online for little or nothing.

I picked up the speakers at yard sales and second-hand stores. I tested them before I paid for them, so I knew they would deliver the full range of sound that my ears were capable of hearing. I also checked to see that they were not damaged by high volume. They didn't rattle or hum at either end of the scale.

The DVD player can play any type of disc, plus it has USB and SD card slots so I can make up a playlist of my favorite music on my computer. I then put all of the songs (70 or 80 at a time) on a memory card or thumb drive. Now I can enjoy good sound for many hours without commercials. I probably have put around $300 into the system, but I paid it out over three or four months, so it didn't hurt.

Soon after I bought the receiver, I was able to listen to pretty good sounds. I used some old speakers plus a cheap DVD player I already owned. It took me a while to learn to get the best sound for my home out of the receiver, but I love music and like to tinker, so I enjoyed the challenge.

I'm not trying to sell anyone on my type of sound system, but, in my opinion, it beats the heck out of a clock radio. Also, I can adjust the sound output to drown out the high-pitched whistle of my tinnitus, or the

neighbor's barking dog.

Factors that you can control to some extent are obvious. Noise inside and outside the house? Turn up the volume or close doors and windows. I call this noise pollution. Like air and water pollution, there is only so much you can do about it, even if you are an activist. If the loud sounds are fairly constant and predictable, you adjust the volume high enough to hear your audio without covering other important sounds such as the phone, a baby crying or . . . your mother-in-law's voice? Noises or voices inside your head? I won't go there; I'm not a doctor or a psychiatrist. Poor reception of a radio signal or scratched/ dirty playback media? These can be fixed or at least improved by spending a little (or a lot) of time and some money. Tinny or fuzzy sound coming from your speakers? That may be as easy as buying better speakers. These things are part of what this column is all about. Remember the title: Buck's Blue Sky (Sound) Advice and Cheap Tricks.

I know the things you can control and many cheap, easy fixes you can apply to lessen any negative impact of your home acoustics and get the best sound out of any type of audio equipment.

You will enjoy more of what you listen to if you are able to hear as much as you can of that which is being sent from your "source" to your speakers. A simpler way to say that is, "The volume and tone of the sounds being sent may not be what arrives at your ears." I can't tell you exactly what will make your listening experience more enjoyable without knowing the type of equipment you own and what your audio environment is like. Do you have stark, flat walls made of drywall or wood paneling? Or are they covered with wall hangings and pictures? Are your speakers pointed toward your favorite chair or in random directions with no focal point for the sound to target?

I could write of the many things physicists and engineers have learned about sound and how to produce it, but instead of lecturing you on everything, I would like to answer your questions. So, send me an e-mail with your problem or question. Include what your room ambiance is like, details of your sound equipment and what you like to listen to. That way I can answer with what *you* can do to improve the quality of sound you have now, or suggest a new, affordable audio system.

They are your ears, but I can make what they hear sound better. A comedian once said, "I love work, I can sit and watch it all day." I've changed that to, "I love music, I can sit and listen to it all day." But only if the sound quality is acceptable to *my* ears!

Buck Fadness is a Boomer, who has done editing and writing of business forms and text books in the past, but is new to tech writing on the Internet. He has been a computer user and has built or upgraded numerous PCs since he first got interested in computers around 1988. Buying, selling and trading computers, reading about them and trying out low cost hardware and free software on Windows XP and Windows 7 laptops and desktop computers are some of his hobbies. He says he's frugal, not cheap, but he can make Lincoln "EEEK" when applying Penny Pinching hardware and software fixes to computers. He can be reached by e-mail, *buck-o@cox.net* or by using the comments links in at the top or bottom of this column.

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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Can the QNX Platform Save Blackberry—BlackBerry bets the farm on the QNX platform; When "Friends" Are Foes—A Trojan is spreading via fake Facebook friends; Doing Cartwheels Over Handstand—HandStand makes perhaps the best iPad case ever; Bag o' Tires—A protective sleeve for notebook computers uses recycled tires and seat belts.

Can the QNX Platform Save Blackberry?

Patrick Emmons, a technical architect with more than 15 years of programming and Web development experience, and co-founder of the Web development firm Adage Technologies, writes in this week:

It's no secret that BlackBerry has fallen behind the smartphone competition in recent years. Previously beloved for its ease-of-use and strong organizational tools, BlackBerry phones are now lagging behind the more application-friendly Android and iPhone devices. According to Gartner's most recent report, RIM's market share dropped down to 12.9 percent in the first quarter of 2011, a drastic decrease from the 19.7 percent share it held in the first quarter of 2010. Android, meanwhile, jumped up from 9.6 percent in Q1 2010 to a whopping 36 percent in Q1 2011. Apple's iOS system also rose slightly, from 15.3 percent to 16.8 percent.

Why the drop in BlackBerry phones? Today's smartphone users need more than just business planners. They want their phones connected to their everyday lives, giving them quick access to everything from their calendar, e-mail and camera, to GPS, social networks and games. The future of smartphone functionality lies in applications. Unfortunately for Blackberry, this has been their weak spot.

BlackBerry's app market is lacking compared to its counterparts, mostly because of its challenging development environment. BlackBerry offers smartphones with either a track ball, touch pad or full touch screen. This makes an application developer's job much more difficult, as separate applications must be created for each device. This can obviously get very costly and is why many major companies are more inclined to avoid BlackBerry altogether. In fact, BlackBerry has never had a very strong development eco-structure. BlackBerry's developing tools and UI framework have never been able to compete on a level that is the new norm (iPhone/Android). Also, BlackBerry has vacillated on how best to develop apps for its devices. This lack of decisiveness has led to confusion amongst its developer community.

But perhaps BlackBerry is addressing that issue now. Its new QNX operating system is replacing the old BlackBerry OS, and it could lead to a much more advanced development environment. If BlackBerry makes a strong statement that this is the future and is willing to push its large legacy base of users to a new device, then BlackBerry can get back into the fight. And it appears that's exactly what the company is doing: betting the farm on the QNX platform.

There is certainly a precedent that suggests this fresh start could lead to success. Microsoft went through a similar swap, getting rid of the outdated Windows Mobile platform and switching to the Windows Phone 7 platform. Nokia also realized it needed to adopt a stronger development ecosystem to stay competitive, hence the move toward Microsoft. Apple's iOS has preached scalability, and it's allowed a smooth transition from the iPhone and iPod touch to the now immensely popular iPad. BlackBerry's QNX

platform will allow similar scalability, giving developers an easier way to create applications for the BlackBerry smartphones and tablets.

But is the QNX platform enough to spur a BlackBerry revival?

That will likely be decided by the developer community. BlackBerry needs to show developers how it is going to provide the necessary tools to create the next "killer app." Maybe the QNX is that answer.

But aside from providing more powerful development tools, BlackBerry must simplify the breadth of devices that a developer must target by dropping support of older versions and adopting a standard form factor.

Basically, if BlackBerry is going to make a switch, it needs to make it quickly and universally. The PlayBook tablet, for example, is running on the QNX. The system, however, cannot run any of the Java-based applications that run on the current phones, meaning developers who wrote apps for smartphones must now start all over with the tablet. BlackBerry has promised that native BlackBerry phone apps will be able to run on QNX soon, but it has not announced when. At the same time BlackBerry was breaking the hearts of its current developer community, it adds to the confusion by touting support for Android-based apps.

Currently, BlackBerry does not even have support for a native PlayBook app. It is promoting using HTML 5 Web-based applications or Adobe Flash/Air solutions. Again, BlackBerry has assured its developer community that a native SDK is coming. It won't have a UI framework at first; that will also be coming later. But as more and more users turn to smartphones in the next few years, it's a terrible time for BlackBerry to look like it's lost a step.

The only way to reverse this trend will be to get back in the application game. BlackBerry appears to believe the QNX platform is the way to do that. While that is yet to be determined, what we do know is that BlackBerry will need to adapt quickly if it hopes to regain its share of the market. More and more users are ditching their BlackBerrys and, unfortunately for RIM, it is now competing with juggernauts like Apple, Google and Microsoft. For BlackBerry, the QNX platform will be looked back upon as either its key to recovery or its most damaging misstep yet.

When "Friends" Are Foes

We received info this week from security experts at Emsisoft (*www.emsisoft.com/*) warning of a Trojan that spreads by fake Facebook friend requests:

Every Facebook user is familiar with the friend invitation via e-mail on Facebook. The malware analyst team of security expert Emsisoft has now revealed that cybercriminals make use of this system to infect users with malicious software. Especially fraudulent e-mails with the subject "Kaamil Mahmoud wants to be friends on Facebook" do not lead to the original Facebook Web site, but to a fake one as soon as the recipient clicks the Confirm Friend Request link.

The fake Facebook page shows the message, "Your version of Macromedia Flash Player is too old to continue. Download and install the latest version of Adobe Flash Player." By clicking on Download and Install, the browser will download a malware file named updateflash.exe. It contains the Zeus Trojan, also known as Zbot. Unfortunately, not executing the file does not mean the victim escapes infection, as the fake Facebook page will also load another address (such as hxxp://vampirefishsd.com) in the background. An exploit script being part of the BlackHole Exploit Kit runs on this Web site.

Christian Mairoll, CEO at Emsisoft: "We advise people to update their operating system and all applications regularly, including security programs. Second, everybody should be careful with suspicious

e-mails. Those from Facebook always contain the name of the user and all links point to the legitimate Facebook Web site, of course. The safest way is to open Facebook manually in the browser and have a look at new friend invitations there."

Blog entry (*blog.emsisoft.com/2011/08/29/emsisoft-warns-zbot-trojan-spreads-by-fake-facebook-friend-request/*) • Emsisoft test results (*www.anti-malware-reviews.com/*) • Facebook (*www.facebook.com/emsisoft*)

Doing Cartwheels Over Handstand

Over the past couple of years, quite a few iPad gadgets have come across my desk. In the case and holder category, a company called HandStand makes perhaps the best one, eponymously named The HandStand.

The one-size-fits-all HandStand (*thehandstand.com*) (for iPad 1 or 2, in black, white, or pink, $49.95 list) has a built-in system that perfectly grips the edges, making it easy to carry your tablet without worrying it will slide it out of your sweaty little hands. Actually, it feels a little like you're getting ready to play one of those paddleboard games.

In the HandStand, the iPad can be rotated 360 degrees so it's exactly where you need it to be. Doing the weather on Channel 28? Turn it so the camera can see all those relevant little arrows you're drawing. Coaching an NFL team? Furiously scribble those play-by-plays without fear of an embarrassing on-camera faux pas.

The HandStand also doubles as a nifty stand so your iPad can be easily viewed and operated while it's sitting on your desk; it is made of 100 percent recycled material that feels super-tough without compromising the iPad's elegant appearance.

Note that you should definitely consider getting some sort of screen protection for your iPad because you're going to feel comfortable waving it around a lot more. Paddleball, anyone?

Bag o' Tires

Did you know that Californians generate more than 30 million tires (*www.sdcounty.ca.gov/reusable_components/images/dpw/recyclingpdfs/AutomotiveGuideEnglish.pdf*) for disposal each year? Can you imagine what our landfills would be like if all used tires ended up there? Thankfully, tires can be recycled (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tire_recycling*) or reused, and one product that helps divert tires away from landfills is the Rubber Bag (*nice-pkg.com/products/rubber-sleeve*) by digital accessories designer PKG (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rubber Bag is a notebook computer sleeve made from used tires and seatbelt straps. The sleeve's opening is sealed with two opposing pairs of Velcro strips (approximate location shown in red) rather than a zipper.

Rubber Bag is a protective sleeve for notebook computers that workers in India fabricate by hand-stitching used inner tubes and seat belts. This sleeve essentially consists of two sheets of rubber that form the product's front and back, a cloth liner with a blue interior that joins the two sheets together in conjunction with two pairs of Velcro strips (Figure 1, right) instead of a zipper for sealing the sleeve's opening, and a detachable shoulder (seat belt) strap. Two sizes are available—small (14x10.5 by 1.5 inches; less than 30 oz.) for 13-inch notebooks and large (16x12 by 2 inches; less than 37 oz.) for 15- and 16-inch notebooks. The former's price tag is $79.99, the latter's is $89.99.

What I like most about Rubber Bag is its eco-friendliness. PKG deserves kudos for its innovative approach to reusing worn tires and seat belts. Additionally, this product is protective and durable. It protects your notebook computer from dings, scratches, and mayhem due to rain or spilled liquids, thanks to its material's inherent water resistance, and it protects your thighs from heat that your notebook computer emits while positioned on your lap (this could be especially beneficial for road warriors who perform disk- and/or CPU-intensive tasks while on the go). Rubber Bag should be durable and survive ordinary usage (although the cloth material might be susceptible to perforation at its joints with aging and/or high usage wear-and-tear).

Although this product's eco-friendliness, protectiveness, and durability are important strengths, they are insufficient to overcome Rubber Bag's usability weaknesses that became obvious during my testing.

Rubber Bag's first usability weakness is the product's immediately recognizable assault on your olfactory system. Happily, Rubber Bag's profound odor diminishes considerably (although not completely) over time. The second usability weakness is that Rubber Bag's weight adds considerable heft to your notebook computer. For a 15-inch or 15.4-inch notebook computer tipping the scale at four or five pounds, the large Rubber Bag's three pounds, one ounce weight nearly doubles the load. When I put the Rubber Bag with my 15.4-inch MacBook Pro in my messenger bag, the weight on my back became noticeably uncomfortable.

A third usability weakness is that the large model is just a tad too short to properly accommodate the 15.4-inch MacBook Pro. Even after shoving the computer as far as it will go into the sleeve, Rubber Bag's Velcro does not close properly. Lastly, when using Rubber Bag as a barrier between my thighs and

notebook computer while working on the go, the sleeve flopped all over the place and interrupted my productivity. Your mileage may vary.

Taken together, these weaknesses put a serious damper on my enthusiasm for using Rubber Bag daily. Instead, my use of this product would be limited to rainy days under the condition of manually supplementing the Velcro to keep the open end properly closed.

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

"Eliminating Audio Hum," "Data Caps by Internet Service Providers," "Netflix Streaming Alternatives," "Search Query BS," "Wiring a House for Internet"

Eliminating Audio Hum

[Regarding the September 2 Buck's Blue Sky Advice and Cheap Tricks column:]

I find it enlightening. I have never tried to use my digital-out or SPDIF. Not being sure how the sound system would react to a PC, I never tried it. I have used my line-out on my sound card to connect to my stereo and play, and I even tried recording to my reel-to-reel. That is when I could hear the hum, and it is very faint.

You either need to record from the Internet on your PC, then copy it to a CD, then to any other recording devices you have from your CD player. I have removed the hum successfully with software from Maqix called Audio Cleaning Lab. It's pretty good software for cleaning up music and mastering, if you're savvy. All the equipment does need to be tied to the same ground. A surge protector called ISOBAR is very effective. I even have critical equipment at work connected to several of them.

-Michael Marsch, Chula Vista, CA

I had a problem with hum on my laptop. I would get a noticeable static during silence (no audio output), and the static hum would be present even during audio output. The solution was a 99-cent fix. It was being caused by ground loop feedback. I plugged my power supply first into a three-prong-to-two-prong power adapter, then into the grounded outlet. Presto! Hum was completely gone!

-Paul Anthony, San Diego, CA

Data Caps by Internet Service Providers

[Regarding the August 12 Digital Dave column:]

Dear Digital Dave,

I read with interest your editorial on data caps. I am a relative neophyte with such things, but I have been slowly researching alternatives to cable service. I hope at some point to get a Wi-Fi-capable flat screen and a digital antenna, drop my cable service and subscribe to Netflix, Hulu, or some such service, but data caps will certainly impact my plan. I find the availability and flexibility of streaming media very attractive. It allows the user to select his entertainment, and when and where (within limits) to experience it, not unlike a book.

Instead of limiting this flexibility, the cable providers should be embracing it. My impression is that they are providing less interesting content and marketing more "services"—services I may not want, but bundled with things I do want. I hope to see more editorials like this in the future. I find them very informative.

-Manny

Netflix Streaming Alternatives

[Regarding the September 2 Digital Dave column:]

Regarding Blu-ray, if your device is not Netflix compatible, then I would recommend you purchase the Logitech Revue. It just got its price slashed to $99. I just got one and I love it.

It has a very easy-to-follow setup, comes with a very nice wireless keyboard/touchpad, runs Google TV, and has a full-on Intel processor. I don't have a cable box so I can't comment on that aspect; however, I do get flawless, high-quality video streams, and I can access the Net.

The only thing missing is a hard drive, but I have a laptop for that stuff. My recommendation is that everyone should have it. I want to mention, again, that it comes with a very nice wireless keyboard/ touchpad.

-Paul Anthony, San Diego, CA

My son got me a Roku device for my birthday. It allows streaming of Netflix, Hulu and *hundreds* of other channels directly to your TV. Many channels are free, but some require you to pay. It uses an Ethernet connection to the Web and an HDMI or other to your TV. It is also able to use a wireless connection to the Web. The top model sells for about $100.

-James Tepe, Lakewood, CO

Search Query BS

[Regarding the September 2 Digital Dave column:]

[It's] "just a matter of using the right words in a search."

That is BS!

What !!!! A company worth billions requires you to do the work!

If your words are in a query, it should find the answer as part of lexical analysis.

-Nick, Denver, CO

Wiring a House for Internet

[Regarding the September 2 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

First of all, I totally agree with Art Blackwell. That was obviously written by someone knowledgeable, quite helpful!

-Paula Barefoot, now of Fresno, CA (formerly Borrego Springs)

ComputorEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputorEdge.com (*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 "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*.

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