

ComputerEdge™ Online — 11/04/11



This issue: Optical Character Recognition for Everyday Use

What was once difficult and expensive, OCR is now a common and cheap tool for pulling text off paper pages and out of images.

Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Ad Opens with Internet Explorer; Error Message in Browser; Windows 7 and the Disappearing Desktop.

[Optical Character Recognition on the Web](#) by Jack Dunning

Converting An Image To Text
It can be problematic when text is embedded in an image. Optical Character Recognition helps solve this problem. There are free tools available that can convert text embedded within an image into text that can be edited.

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

The Changing Face of IT
The Changing Face of IT; Apple's School Box Program; Blackberry and Android Woes; The Flip-Flop Logic of Hewlett-Packard; Creating Your Own Programs with LiveCode 5; Sending a File Attachment.

[Beyond Personal Computing](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

From On-Hold Wait Times to Instructions that Don't Compute: When Tech Support Isn't Helpful
Marilyn shares some humorous anecdotes on how users view Tech Support.



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

DEPARTMENTS:

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

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

"Contributing to ComputerEdge," "Jobs Will Be Missed? Not by Me!"

"Gimmick Web sites/Bogus Claims," "Apple Farm"



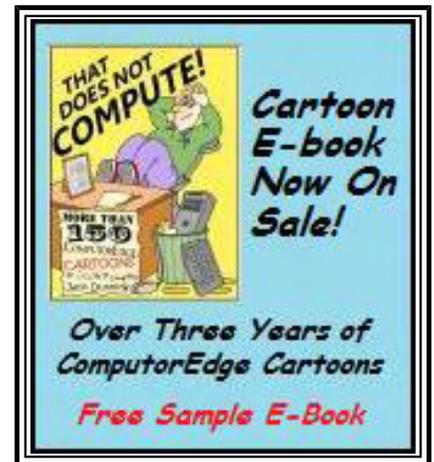
(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

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

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Ad Opens with Internet Explorer; Error Message in Browser; Windows 7 and the Disappearing Desktop.

Dear Digital Dave,

I had to do a restore on my computer recently and now Internet Explorer opens with a Trend Micro ad that I can't eliminate. I can't locate any reference as to why it always starts when I boot up. How do I eliminate this?

*Milton Bonham
Denver, CO*

Dear Milton,

Pop-up ads are one of the most common complaints about Trend Micro software. It seems that the company doesn't care how much they annoy users. There was a time that a fix could be found on the Trend Micro site for removing the annoying messages, but apparently that is no longer the case. When you did your restore you probably returned to the defaults which cause the ad to come up.

Since the problem occurs when you load Internet Explorer, it is most likely part of an extension or add-on to IE. You can find an article for disabling IE extras at Microsoft Support (support.microsoft.com/kb/298931). In particular, it could be a Browser Helper Object (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Browser_Helper_Object), and, ironically, Trend Micro makes software for fixing just such problems. (The reference Wikipedia article shows where Browser Helper Objects are located in the registry. Be careful when editing the registry, since making the wrong move can cause other problems.)

If disabling IE extras doesn't help or you can't find anything in the registry, you should run "msconfig" and uncheck it from the Startup section, if it's there. You may also want to check Uninstall programs to see if you have returned to a state which included Trend Micro, although this is unlikely.

As always, I'd recommend using a different browser if possible. From what I can see, it sounds like Trend Micro has hooks in some other anti-spyware and anti-malware programs also. It could require a lot of registry cleaning. Definitely a company to avoid.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

This error message just started popping up. It seems to happen when I open new Web pages, on Yahoo, Facebook and even when I opened this page! On the blue message bar it reads "Message from Webpage", then it says "DirectSearchFrame.findFrameColor: 'this._mYTBLAYOUT' is null or not an object." Totally perplexing and when I Googled it the answers were unclear. It doesn't seem to be affecting my Internet session, but I need to fix this.

Thanks for any information.

*Margaret
Chula Vista, CA*

Dear Margaret,

While you didn't say which browser you're using, I'm guessing that it's Internet Explorer. It could be caused by a problem with the installation or a corrupted file. The first thing I would want to know is if the error occurs in other browsers such as Google Chrome (www.google.com/chrome) or Firefox (www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/). If not, then it is definitely a problem with Internet Explorer, in which case you can either try reinstalling it or tuning IE with this help from Microsoft (support.microsoft.com/kb/936213/he) if you're using Windows 7 or Vista.

If you're using other versions of Windows you may be able to address an Internet Explorer problem with information on this page (support.microsoft.com/ph/807).

Personally, if I couldn't find a quick solution to the problem, I would switch to another browser. With all of the browsers being free, why waste time with annoyances.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have been a fan for many years. I am new to Windows 7. My husband received an Acer Aspire 5552 with Windows 7. After the unit has been on a couple of minutes, the Desktop disappears leaving a blank white screen. I cannot discover how to stop this from happening. It happens all the time. By clicking the Windows key, we can get to the programs we wish to access, but this is not a good solution. I am not a "newbie" and well versed in computers since the 80's. Please help.

*Carol Ess
El Cajon, CA*

Dear Carol,

Since the computer boots up normally, it sounds like there is a program loading that may be conflicting with normal operations.

To get some idea of what may be the source of the problem, use the Event Viewer, which can be accessed by searching for "Event Viewer" in the Start Menu (or type "eventvwr" in the

search). Look for those events which occur just after reboot at the time that the screen turns white. Check Windows Log => Application, then the Windows Logs => System for the times near the problem occurrence. (If you're not sure of the time, check the computer's time against your watch and reboot. Note the time that the screen turns white.)

If you find a possible problem, try disabling the culprit or, if necessary, uninstall it. It may be that the program is accessing the video card in a way that's not supported by the computer.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Optical Character Recognition on the Web

“Converting An Image To Text” by Jack Dunning

It can be problematic when text is embedded in an image. Optical Character Recognition helps solve this problem. There are free tools available that can convert text embedded within an image into text that can be edited.

In the course of researching articles and working on various projects, I often need to copy and save quotes from various sources. This is usually not much of a problem, but there are a few issues I encounter.

Capitalization

Some people insist upon capitalizing everything. This is more common in responses to Blogs. People either don't want to be bothered with determining which words should start with an uppercase letter or they feel that what they say is so important that the entire statement should be capital letters.



One of the biggest problems with people leaving messages in all uppercase letters is that it looks like, and is commonly regarded as, shouting. It is true that in many Web systems, including *ComputerEdge*, it is necessary to show one or two words in capitals if you want to provide emphasis. However, we change those emphasized words to italics to maintain the reader's stress while eliminating the yelling. If we see a paragraph or two in all capital letters,



we're tempted to disregard the comments completely. What are we? Hard of reading!?

If someone is not going to attempt proper capitalization, then we would actually would prefer that they leave the

caps lock off and do it in all lowercase letters. It's much easier to do the minor work of replacing a few capitals, then engage in the labor of changing everything to lowercase.

The correction of all uppercase sections is more of an annoyance than a real problem. Entire quotes can be pasted into most word processors and converted to all lowercase with a couple of keystrokes. (I could also write a Javascript routine which would do the same thing directly on the Web. I just haven't taken the time.)

Graphic Images

Saving and quoting text embedded in graphic files is a little more of a problem. It is not uncommon to find that information has been saved in some type of image file. Rather than being able to copy the text direct from one program or file to another, the best that can be done is copying the entire image. This is darned inconvenient if you need to manipulate the text or pull a quote.

There are a variety of reasons that text may be embedded in images. When creating banners and logos there is much more graphic flexibility when using images. On the down side, Spammers use image files so that anti-Spam software can't screen out advertising and scams by checking the text in an e-mail.

Much can be lost when image files with embedded text are used on a Web site. The search engines (Google) are not able to index the embedded text, which means the site will not get the relevance (or rating) that it may deserve. This could be counter productive to the purpose of the site. Additionally making changes to the site are more difficult when updating images. First the text for the images is edited, then a new image must be created for uploading. This makes even fixing a typo problematic. (I'm always surprised to see typos in a graphic image on the Web. It seems that more care would be taking in proofing before semi-permanently embedding the text in the file.) On the other hand, including e-mail addresses on the Web site as graphic images will make it more difficult for Spammers to harvest the addresses.

This brings us to the problem of converting text embedded in an image to text we can freely edit or excerpt it. The solution is Optical Character Recognition (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_character_recognition), commonly shortened to OCR.

Optical Character Recognition

The first patents for OCR were issued in 1929. Some of the early applications converted the characters directly to voice for the blind, but at the time most uses were too expensive to be considered feasible. In the following decades, there have been many advances in OCR to the point where today it is easy to find a way to pull text out of an image.

One of the most common uses today is converting old paper books into computer readable ASCII characters. This has made it possible to convert the classics into freely distributed e-books. The digital text e-books are much smaller than a comparable book composed of a computer image for each page. Plus it is much easier to copy quotes for reference in other documents.

Computer users have many tools freely available for OCR.

OCR as a Feature in Software

While Microsoft Office 2007 included OCR features (Microsoft Office Document Imaging), it was removed in Office 2010. Although, it can still be downloaded (support.microsoft.com/kb/982760) for use with Office 2010. Adobe Acrobat also includes OCR conversion features for graphics included in PDF documents. (Input from *ComputerEdge* readers on other programs with added OCR features is welcomed.)

Printer/Scanners OCR Capabilities

Many printers sold today are all-in-one setups which include a scanner. Along with the scanner there is generally utility software either built into the printer drivers or included with the package. Usually that software will have OCR features allowing you to scan paper documents and pages directly to text. If you need to scan directly to text, then this may be an excellent option. If you use separate dedicated software, you will need to first scan the paper to an image file and then run the image through the software.

Dedicated Software

There are many programs available for OCR. One of the most downloaded is FreeOCR (download.cnet.com/FreeOCR/3000-10743_4-10717191.html?tag=mncol;1). You can also get a free trial of SimpleOCR (download.cnet.com/SimpleOCR/3000-2070_4-10073196.html?tag=mncol;1), another popular program.

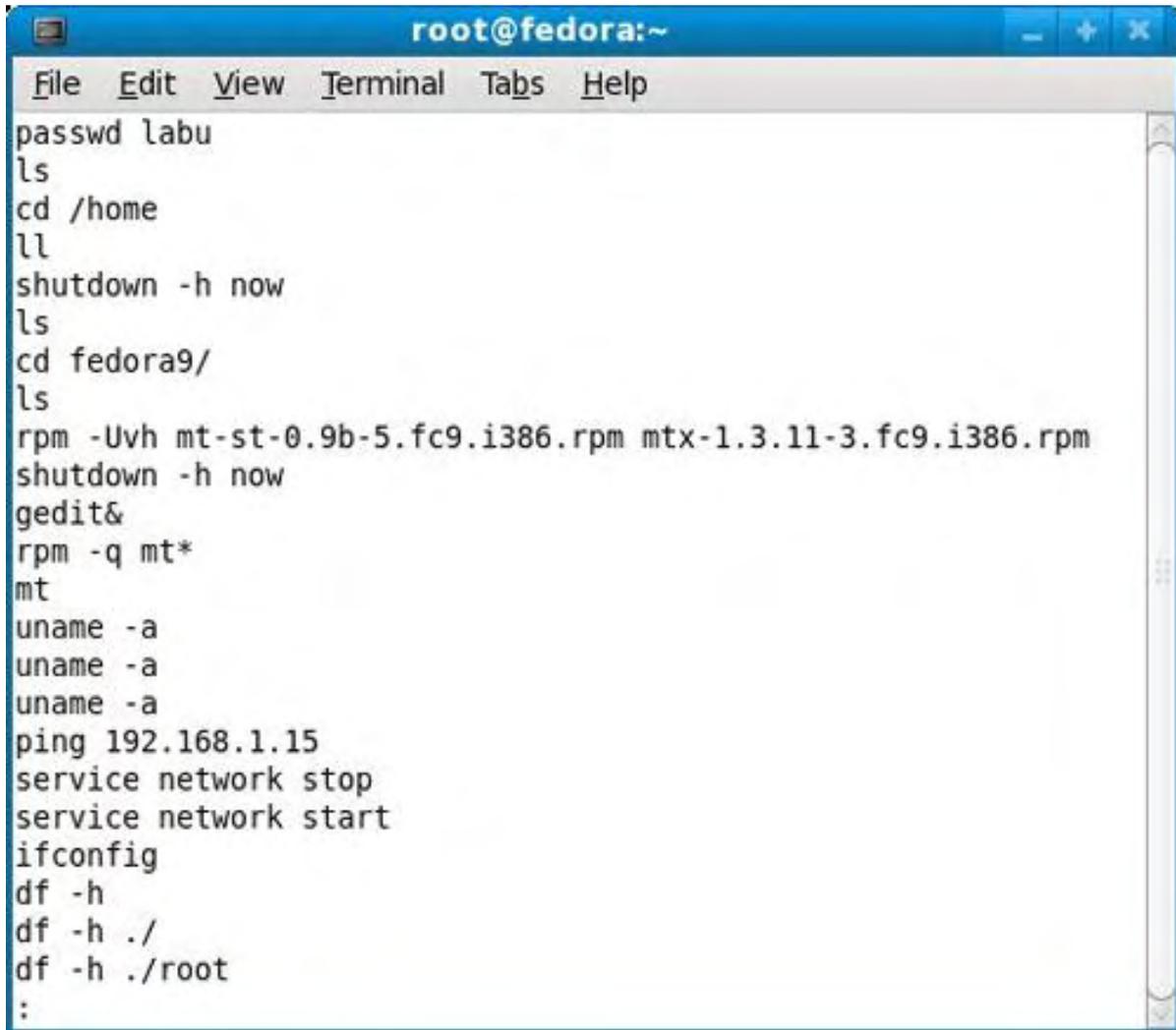
Generally, the paid programs will include more and better OCR features such as retaining word processor formatting and handwriting recognition—a much more difficult problem. If you have a favorite OCR program that you use for particular types of jobs, please leave a comment.

OCR Conversion on the Web

If you just need to do a quick, one time job, there are many Web sites which will do OCR on an uploaded graphic file. It's simple to do, but it won't give you many of the features that may come in dedicated software.

I tested Online OCR Service (www.onlineocr.net/default.aspx) for pulling the text from some Web graphics. I was creating company profiles from their Web sites, but a couple of the sites displayed the profile information in graphics rather than text. The following is an example of how simple it can be.

Suppose you find a site which may include examples of Linux commands that you may want to run. However, rather the using text which you can cut and paste, the commands appeared embedded in a graphics such as shown in Figure 1.



```
root@fedora:~
File Edit View Terminal Tabs Help
passwd labu
ls
cd /home
ll
shutdown -h now
ls
cd fedora9/
ls
rpm -Uvh mt-st-0.9b-5.fc9.i386.rpm mtx-1.3.11-3.fc9.i386.rpm
shutdown -h now
gedit&
rpm -q mt*
mt
uname -a
uname -a
uname -a
ping 192.168.1.15
service network stop
service network start
ifconfig
df -h
df -h ./
df -h ./root
:
```

Figure 1. This image is a copy of a graphic from the Web which includes some Linux commands.

When the you copy the image and save it as a file, you can then upload it to the Web site for conversion. The free service is limited, but you can get more features with registration. There is also a way to buy credits for more usage.

Once the file is upload, you enter the provided text code, click "Recognize", and the converted text appears in the window as shown in Figure 2.

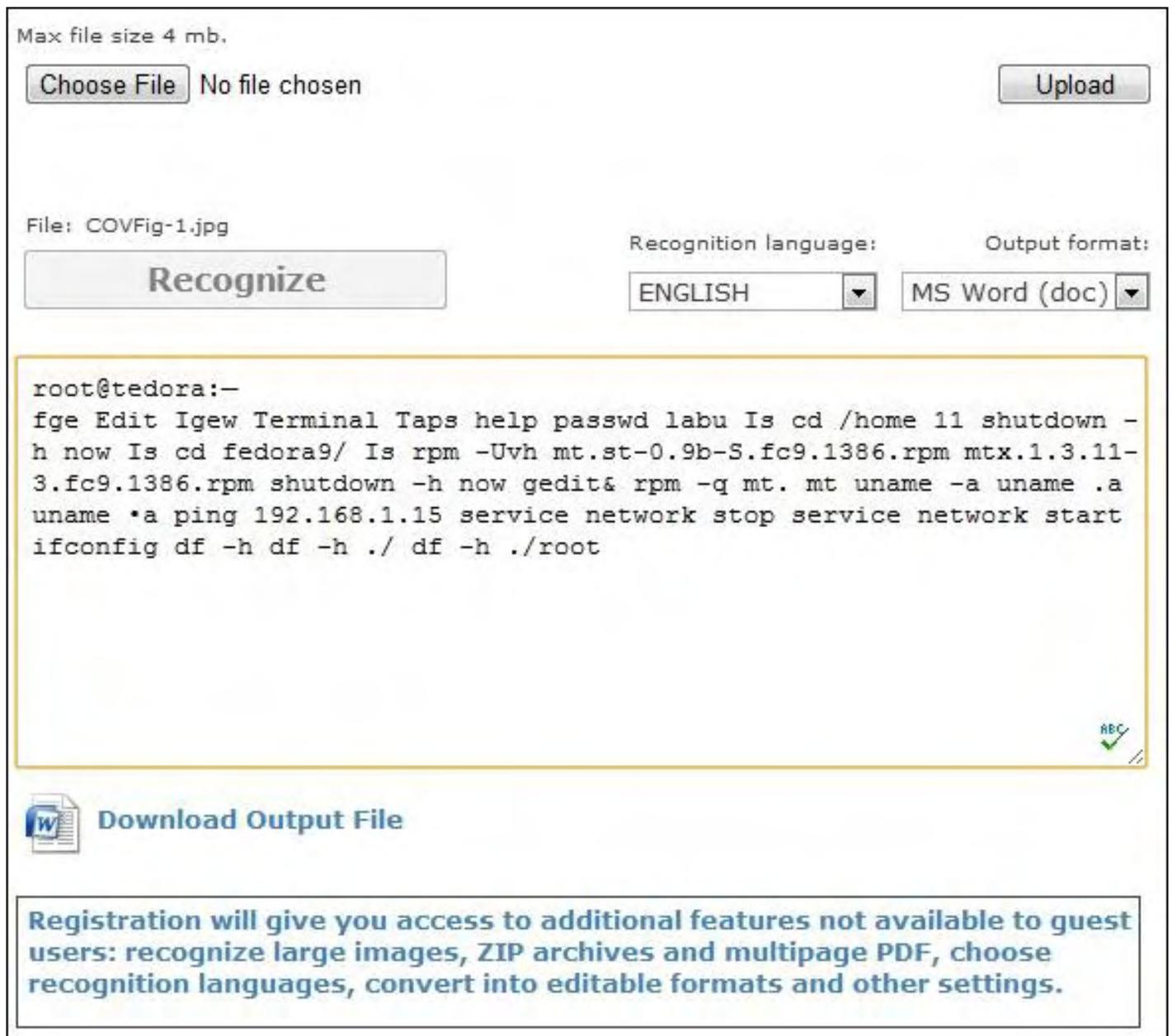


Figure 2. Converted text from Figure 1.

The actual text copied from the windows is as follows:

```

"root@tedora:~#
fge Edit Igew Terminal Taps help passwd labu ls cd /home 11 shutdown -h now ls cd fedora9/ ls
rpm -Uvh mt.st-0.9b-S.fc9.1386.rpm mtx.1.3.11-3.fc9.1386.rpm shutdown -h now gedit& rpm -q
mt. mt uname -a uname .a uname •a ping 192.168.1.15 service network stop service network
start ifconfig df -h df -h ./ df -h ./root"
    
```

In this case, the system may leave something to be desired—I didn't note any errors, but it did leave out carriage returns. It did OK when converting the company profiles, although some editing was still required. Strange fonts and text at angles can cause problems. However, if all you need to do is cut and paste some text, this Web site may be the answer.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to contribute to *ComputerEdge* endeavors, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/Contribute-to-ComputerEdge-Magazine_c3.htm).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Changing Face of IT” by Wally Wang

The Changing Face of IT; Apple's School Box Program; Blackberry and Android Woes; The Flip-Flop Logic of Hewlett-Packard; Creating Your Own Programs with LiveCode 5; Sending a File Attachment.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

As late as 2008, Forrester Research was still urging corporate IT departments to ignore the Macintosh (www.zdnet.com/blog/microsoft/forrester-forget-macs-in-business-its-still-all-about-windows/1303) and focus strictly on Windows. "IT departments crave standardization, and Macs pose too many problems for IT departments. The verdict for enterprise focused vendors is clear: Unless your market is a niche business group, Windows is the only desktop you need to support."

Now David Johnson has published a report (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2011/10/27/hell-freezes-over-forrester-urges-it-to-support-the-mac/) for Forrester Research urging that "Mac users are your HEROes and you should enable them not hinder them." The phrase "HERO" is a Forrester Research acronym for Highly Empowered and Resourceful Operatives.

"Most of the Macs today," writes Johnson, "are being freewheeled into the office by executives, top sales reps, and other workaholics. Forrester believes this is the same demographic that we're now calling the 'power laptop user,' and according to the latest Workforce Technology And Engagement Survey, power laptop users make 44% more money, use more collaboration apps, and carry an average of three devices wherever they go."

The Forrester Research report also concluded that these HEROes are paying for MacBook Pros out of their own pocket because their company supplied Microsoft Windows PCs:

"Are slowing them down. Time is the only thing that these fierce competitors can't make more of. Many of today's corporate PCs are saddled with management, backup and security agents that can bog down a PC. Employees want their PCs to boot in 10 seconds, not 10 minutes, and they don't want to have to get a cup of coffee while opening a 20MB spreadsheet in Excel. They're drawn to uncluttered Macs—especially those with solid-state drives, which are more responsive and boot in seconds.

"Look cheaply made. Image and personal brand are the currency of influence, and first impressions matter. For the same reason they wouldn't wear cheap shoes and a bolo tie to meet with Lloyd's of London to insure their cargo ships and cranes, these power brokers don't want to

show up to a meeting with a plastic laptop that sends the subliminal message that they aren't prosperous enough to afford something nicer."

The report explains six steps IT departments can take to "ease Macs into their enterprises" along with discussing three case studies of companies that have successfully incorporated the Macintosh.

"Stand in the way," Forrester Research concludes, "and you will eventually get run over."

Apple's School Box Program

Despite their obvious use for education, computers have always been expensive and cumbersome to use for classrooms, especially in remote areas of Africa where electricity may be in short supply. Apple's solution to providing education in remote areas is their new School Box program (blogs.computerworld.com/19167/apples_school_box_plan_to_innovate_education) that uses iPads, micro-projectors and solar panels to provide electricity.

"Apple's technology gives students access to things that excite and interest them," said Brit School headteacher Nick Williams. If kids don't like technology, they won't learn from it. However, "when they go to the Mac they won't come off", he added.

David Coltart (www.newsday.co.zw/article/2011-10-27-government-apple-in-ipad-joint-venture), the Education, Sport, Arts and Culture minister of Zimbabwe said, "I am very excited that Zimbabwe is collaborating with Apple in this ground breaking use of technology to advance education in the most remote schools. If we can get it to work in Zimbabwe I am sure it will spread to poor schools throughout Africa—and beyond."

A Digital Britain report in 2009 says, "In today's schools, young people are increasingly being prepared for a Digital Britain by using digital technology in the classroom, from 'mashing up' archive film in history and citizenship lessons using iMovie to teaching science with digital cameras and animation software."

With children excited to use the iPad, there's a good chance that the iPad will succeed in helping educate children all over the world in ways that the One Laptop Per Child initiative failed to do. Hand a child a netbook and hand another child an iPad, and watch which child can be more creative, have fun, and learn something at the same time. Hand one child an iPad and another child a textbook and see which one engages their mind and stimulates learning, which may explain why multiple schools are looking at ways to replace textbooks with iPads (www.nytimes.com/2011/01/05/education/05tablets.html?_r=2&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1320073278-EczFJcZSRej+7TBVhp9EuA).

After being introduced to an iPad at school, Liam Barry, a Year 10 student, commented, "This has been the best school day I have ever had."

If the iPad can get children excited about learning in school, then students will likely learn and retain more information. To glimpse the future of how technology will change education (despite those who continue to resist any sort of change), read *Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0807750026/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-

20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399369&creativeASIN=0807750026) and see if you still think kids should continue learning by sitting passively at a desk while a teacher lectures at the front.

Blackberry and Android Woes

Just a few years ago, Research in Motion's Blackberry smartphones were the corporate standard that everyone in business used. Then after Apple introduced the iPhone and Google introduced Android, interest in Blackberry phones has plummeted rapidly.

Besides their three day outage that prevented Blackberry users from accessing their messages, the latest sign of Research in Motion's troubles comes from Gazelle (www.gazelle.com/), a site that allows people to trade-in their old electronics for cash. Mobiledia now reports a massive spike (www.mobiledia.com/news/114026.html) in the number of people selling their old Blackberry phones.

While there's no single cause for this massive spike in Blackberry phones being traded in, Mobiledia suggests that people are simply abandoning their Blackberries and buying iPhones or Android phones. (No mention is made about Windows Phone 7 phones though.)

Blackberry used to be the corporate smartphone standard and now they're being dumped rapidly. Perhaps in a few more years, other so-called corporate standards of computing will also fall. If it can happen to Research in Motion with their Blackberry phones, it can certainly happen to other companies that are just as entrenched in the corporate market.

While Android continues dominating the smartphone market, all may not be well for Android when it comes to updating their phones. While Apple's latest iOS 5 can run on models as old as the iPhone 3GS, Android manufacturers often install older versions of Android or provide updated versions of Android slowly, if at all. The idea is that instead of giving Android users the latest operating system (www.electronista.com/articles/11/10/27/android.support.seen.lagging.iphone.by.wide.margin/), smartphone manufacturers can just make more money by selling yet another Android phone model instead.

Smartphone manufacturers don't make money spending time and energy providing free software updates, so it's often a low priority for them. Before buying an Android phone, check the manufacturer's history of software updates first. If you're going to spend money buying an Android phone, you might as well get the latest software updates to keep your phone useful for as long as possible.

In the meantime, you can read about how Sprint sold a record number of iPhones (www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/sprints-iphone-4s-launch-best-ever-day-of-sales/), setting a new sales record. With so many people buying the iPhone, you should at least compare the iPhone to any other phone before you decide which one to buy.

The Flip-Flop Logic of Hewlett-Packard

Hewlett-Packard acquired Palm Computing for \$1.2 billion, mostly for their webOS operating system that could run on smartphones and tablets. About a year later, Hewlett-Packard decided to dump their tablet business and still hasn't figured out what to do with webOS, which means the

company basically wasted \$1.2 billion buying something they're not going to use.

At the same time, Hewlett-Packard also mentioned they were going to get out of the PC business, frightening long-time customers as they worried who would support their PCs in the future as they flocked to rival PC manufacturers. Now Hewlett-Packard has changed their mind and said they're keeping their PC division (finance.yahoo.com/news/HP-says-it-wont-spin-off-apf-1796141004.html?x=0) after all and might get back into the tablet business again too, after their first failure with the Slate PC running Windows 7 and the TouchPad running webOS. Their third attempt may be the TouchPad running Windows 8.

With leadership like this, you have to wonder if Hewlett-Packard even knows how to innovate any more. Rather than try to copy Apple by releasing an imitation iPad, Hewlett-Packard should just try developing a useful product of their own. Even if it fails, it will still be a lot cheaper than chasing after Apple and wasting time and money in the process. Maybe from their failures, Hewlett-Packard might actually learn something besides handing millions of dollars to CEOs who steer the company in circles for no useful result whatsoever.

Creating Your Own Programs with LiveCode 5

Many people have a great idea for a computer program. Unfortunately, many people let their great ideas wither away because they don't know how to write a computer program or don't want to hire someone else to do it for them. That's the dilemma Max Schafer faced when he came up with an idea for writing a program to help children learn math. The only difference is that instead of letting his idea die, Max took action and turned his dream into reality by using LiveCode (www.runrev.com/).

Q: What type of problems did you face with teaching children math and why did you think a computer program could help them?

A: When a teacher presents a new Math concept, the student may not understand it completely, or may quickly forget it. Often some students still can't understand or remember the procedures to solve the problems, even after practicing the problems many times in the classroom. They may not have received enough guided practice in order for them to solve problems on their own.

Yet they are given homework for that concept, and usually have to solve problems without any assistance. So they usually make a mistake. On every subsequent problem they continue making the same mistake. Since there is no one to correct them at the moment they are making the mistake, their brain is reinforcing the wrong procedure. Not only will they need to learn the correct steps, but also they will need to unlearn the incorrect procedure. This could be very difficult.

I created Math Gadgets computer program for children in environments where they cannot get help with their homework. It allows students to enter problems from their textbook, and get step-by-step help and guidance for those problems. The moment a student enters an incorrect number, the computer alerts them, offers advice, and allows them to correct the problem.

For multi-step problems, it prevents students from wasting time continuing a long problem that they have no idea is already incorrect. Math Gadgets is designed to be robust enough to handle the most common problems from any Math book. This is radically different from typical math

programs, which provides only their own problems, usually covering only a few Math topics, or is in a game environment.

Q: Besides Live Code, did you evaluate or consider other programming tools to develop your program? If so, what were the advantages of writing Math Gadgets in Live Code over these other tools?

A: Every other programming tool was either too hard to learn, or way too limited. Live Code is so powerful, yet easy to learn. I consider it easiest to learn. It is very similar to HyperCard programming, which opened the doors to people from other professions who were not programmers. It is so easy to use; my own fifth graders were able to create their own simple programs.

On the other hand, it is incredibly powerful. As a creative person's ultimate playground, once you know the LiveCode language, you can create virtually anything, any productivity tool, any game, any educational program, or even a tool that defies any category. Truly, your imagination can run wild.

To help my company "Underdog Educational" grow, the Live Code company went out of their way to assist me and other programmers market and promote our programs. They even provided me booth space at the largest Educational Computer show in the world, BETT, in London in 2010.

Also, I can write the program once, then deploy it to almost any computing environment with just a few clicks of a button. I can make Windows programs, Mac programs, iPhone, iPad, Android, Web apps, and even Linux.

Q: Explain how MathGadgets works, what its purpose is, and which age group it's designed for.

A: Math Gadgets™ is jam-packed with 19 gadgets containing over 34 different math concepts. It is massive, comprehensive program, for children from 5 to 14 years old. It works with most problems right from your homework or Math textbook. Math Gadgets™ is a new kind of math program. It offers assistance for problems when the teacher is unavailable. It provides guided independent practice. Based on Dataworks™ research, It stops the student from repeating and reinforcing the same mistakes. Math Gadgets™ gives instant feedback about errors being made when they are being made. No more frustration doing long, complicated problems, only to find out later the answer is incorrect.

Math Gadgets Includes Addition; Subtraction; Multiplication; Division; Measurement Conversions; Mean, Range, Median; Factors Finder; Least Common Multiple; Word, Expanded, and Roman; Percent to Decimal; Numbers with Exponents; Ruler, Protractor and Clock; Area, Perimeter, and Circumference; Volume and Surface Area; Estimating Numbers; Math Properties; Finding Missing Angles; Geometric Shapes; and Tangrams.

Math Gadgets™ comes with "Primary Math Gadgets" (LACOE Award), (for kindergarten - 2nd grade) the award winning "Fourth Grade Math Practice" and "Fifth Grade Math Practice". Both programs come with hundreds of problems. Each Math standard is repeated over eight weeks, to ensure the concept is remembered into long-term memory.

Q: How easy (or difficult) was it to create MathGadgets in Live Code? What Live Code features helped the most?

A: Easy enough. Unlike code from many other programming languages, Live Code allows you to write code almost like you were writing directions in English. For example. "Set the width of this line to 4" (pixels).

With Live Code, I believed I could write a Math program that would be as powerful as any program written by a big software company like Microsoft. The only obstacle is that I cannot draw, and I did not want to use cheap clip-art. I wanted to make sure that my masterpiece looked professional. So I hired one of the country's top graphic designers, Scott Rossi, to insure it had a professional, slick look. Scott is a true fellow Live Code advocate, and was willing to offer me a discount on his services.

Q: What has been the reaction of students to using Math Gadgets? How has this improved learning?

A: Students love how easy it makes Math. They don't have to wait for the teacher in order to get help. They can never make a mistake. They know exactly where they need more practice. Their homework looks beautiful. They show all the steps in their homework, so the teacher knows they understand, and could not be cheating or copying answers. Also, my low achieving students learned their Multiplication facts in record time.

Q: What advice would you give others interested in using Live Code to develop their own programs?

A: Look at the support first. Getting stuck on even the smallest programming problem can frustrate the hell out of me, cause me weeks of delay, and make me want to give up altogether. New programmers must be able to get help immediately. Check out the rich user forums, the online manuals and help, the large selection of free programs made available by fellow users to provide examples of code, the online help and beginners videos, the Live Code news lists where users can ask each other for help, Facebook and Twitter pages, the weekly LiveCode TV broadcasts (via the Internet), the annual conventions, and the frequent Webinars. The best support I've received is from calling my Live Code friends in my area and fellow users I met at conventions. I believe Live Code offers the most enthusiastic and robust support, compared to any other programming community. Even Bill Atkinson, the creator of Hypercard, is a fan of Live Code.

Q: What else have you created?

A: I wrote two other commercial programs, "Young Authors" and "Viola Spolin's Theater Games for the Classroom Multimedia CD". Both programs earned me over \$20,000 each. Not bad for someone that is not a full time programmer.

Q: Is Math Gadgets available for sale or download?

A: Math Gadgets is available on *MathGadgets.com*. A demonstration video is available on the opening screen.

► HOME

MATH GADGETS
The most innovative math education program!

Buy Math Gadgets Online!

What Is Math Gadgets~?

The ultimate homework and schoolwork helper!

Contact Us for More Info

So many tools to help you learn and solve your own math problems.

► Learn More ► Buy It Now

A revolutionary, step-by-step tool to help students with math problems from their own math book or homework.

Math Gadgets™ is jam-packed with 19 gadgets containing over 34 different math concepts. Math Gadgets is a new kind of math program. It offers assistance for problems when the teacher is unavailable. It provides guided independent practice. It's perfect for classroom independent practice.

WATCH VIDEO LEARN MORE BUY ONLINE

See What it Can Do!
Watch the video and see for yourself!

► Play Video

KIDS & STUDENTS
No more frustration about doing a long math problems. Homework assignments can be printed out, with work details and every answer correct. Math

PARENTS
Math Gadgets works with most problems right from your child's homework workbook or textbook. It's the perfect homework helper. It's not a calculator. It's

TEACHERS
Math Gadgets is jam-packed with 19 gadgets containing over 34 different math concepts. It works with most problems right from your regular homework.

Figure 1. The Math Gadgets Web site where you can buy Math Gadgets for Windows or Mac OS X.

* * *

If you want to send a file attachment to somebody, here's the straightforward way to do it. First, load your e-mail program. Then create a new message. Now attach the file you want to send. Finally, type in an e-mail address and subject, and send it on its way.

Here's a different way to attach a file to an e-mail message. Search for the file you want to send and drag and drop it over the Mail icon on the Dock. This automatically creates a new message and attaches your file at the same time. Now all you have to do is type in an e-mail address and subject and send it.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book

writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),
Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987),
Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),
Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468),
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894),
How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
The 15-Minute Movie Method
(www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)
In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method" (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/) along with blogging about electronic publishing and how authors can take advantage of technology at his site "The Electronic Author." (www.wallacewang.com) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Beyond Personal Computing

*A Look at
the Human
Side of
Computing*

Beyond Personal Computing

“From On-Hold Wait Times to Instructions that Don't Compute: When Tech Support Isn't Helpful” by Marilyn K. Martin

Marilyn shares some humorous anecdotes on how users view Tech Support.

Tech Support and Help Desks put up with a lot of abuse. But it might be interesting (and humorous) to shift the viewpoint briefly to see how users view Tech Support. Remember: Not everyone was repairing their neighbor's computer when they were just six years old.

Tech Support in Caveman Days

"This Fire Support. Me Groog."

"Me Lorto. Help. Fire not start."

"You have flint and stone?"

"Ugh."

"You hit together?"

"Ugh."

"What happen?"

"Fire not start."

"(sigh) Make spark?"

"No spark, no fire. Me confused. Fire work yesterday."

"(sigh) You change rock?"

"I change nothing."

"You sure?"

"Me make one small change. Stone too hot, burn Lorto hand. Soak stone in stream. Wet stone should still work, right?"

Things to Consider Before You Call Tech Support

1. If your monitor is dark, have you possibly forgotten to plug in your computer—or turn it On?
2. Have you sent a descriptive Fax to Tech Support for them to have a ready solution when they call you?
3. Have you first consulted your manual?
4. Have you called up your know it all geeky cousin, whom you can't stand, but who could have fixed your problem in under five minutes?
5. Have you given the central processing unit of your computer a good, solid whack?

Questionable "Help"

A man was typing his resume one day, and listing his experience with different operating systems. When the Word spelling/grammar checker came across "Windows ME and Linux," it was quick to suggest the more grammatically proper, "Windows, Linux and I".

Someone was observing their new System Administrator trying to restore a crashed server. The Sys Admin inserted a CD, and needed to type a path name to a directory named "i386." At this point, the Sys Admin stopped and turned to the observer. "What's that thing that looks like an upside down exclamation point?"

The observer offered, "You mean the lower case 'i'?" The Sys Admin was thrilled. "Yeah, that's it!"

Things You Never Want to Hear from Tech Support

1. Press 1 for Support. Press 2 if you're with '60 Minutes.' Press 3 if you're with the FTC.
2. So ... what are you wearing?
3. Looks like you're gonna need some new dilythium crystals, Capt'n!
4. Bummer, Duuuuude!
5. In layman's terms, that's called The Hindenburg Effect.
6. That's right, not even MacGyver could fix it.
7. Hold on a sec ... Mom! Timmy's hitting me again!
8. Our only Support Tech is on vacation. Would you like to hold?

Just Trying to Help...

A high schooler wanted to install a fractal-drawing program on his high school computers' network drive. He quickly got in an argument with the Lab Supervisor. She kept insisting that she couldn't "put copy written software on our computers." When he assured her it was in the public domain, she wanted a downloaded hard copy for proof.

Rather than try to explain the concept of moderated binaries group, the student went through proper channels and brought in a hard copy. "OK, can I install it now?" asked the student. "No, we have to wait for our computer person to install it," was the reply.

Thank You for Calling Tech Support!

"All our technicians are currently busy helping people even less competent than you, so please hold for the next available technician. The wait time is now estimated at between fifteen minutes and eternity. In order to expedite your call, please punch in your 63-digit product identification number. Followed by your product serial number, which can be found in a secret compartment inside your computer. For security purposes, this serial number—if or when you find it—is printed in the smallest typeface known to mankind. Please note that you may need a size 11 3/4 torx screwdriver, which may only be available from your equipment manufacturer."

"We recommend that you sit at your computer, preferably turning it On at some point, and have all your disks, computer manuals and original packing materials accessible. This is to help the technician aid you in the unlikely event that he ever gets to your call. If you were forgetful and threw away all your original packing materials, please call the company that sent you your computer. Ask them to resend you a same-size empty box with the plastic bubbles, fake popcorn and the wasted paper advertising that they recycle. We will hold your place in line on the phone while you wait for your new/old packing materials to be delivered."

"In order to enable us to better assist you, it would be helpful to know more about you and your equipment. If you have called Tech Support before, please press "1" on your telephone touchpad. If not, press "2." If you don't remember, spell out the following phrase on your touchpad: "I am confused and despondent and quickly losing the will to live." Then hang up the phone and make arrangements to sell your computer, since it will be obsolete by the time a technician gets to this call."

"Unfortunately, all of our technicians just went out to lunch. This means that the estimated wait time we gave you earlier, can now be extended by at least two hours."

"While you are on hold, we would like to remind you that we would appreciate you refraining from sobbing while explaining your problem to the technician. And shouting obscene threats will cause you to be immediately disconnected and blackballed from any further communication with our Technical Support, and also every other electronics related firm in the industrialized world."

"Our system is overloaded with calls, and unfortunately you have lost your place in line. Our electronic sensors also indicate that you are about to slump over and die from a massive frustration attack, combined with severe dehydration from lack of food and water. Before doing so, please take a moment to put down your phone and turn off your computer. Since you are about to expire, you will have no further need of Technical Support, so we are going to now remove you from our list of registered product users. Good bye."

Final Words of Advice from Your Ever Helpful Company Tech Support

1. Don't write anything down. Techs can play back the error messages from their desk.
2. When a Tech says he's coming right over, by all means, stroll off for coffee. Or use a scathing tone of voice to snarl, "And just how many weeks do you mean by saying you'll be here 'shortly'?"
3. When you call a Tech to have your computer moved, be sure and leave it buried beneath a ton of postcards, baby pictures, stuffed animals, dried flowers, bowling trophies and popsicle-stick art.
4. When the printer doesn't work, or you need to change the toner cartridge, call Tech Support because, gosh, there's electronics in a printer.
5. When you are getting a no dial tone message at home, go ahead and call Tech Support at work.
6. When you have a dozen CGA monitors to get rid of, call Tech Support. They must be collectors.
7. Leave a message but no phone number. They love a puzzle.
8. When Tech Support tells you that computer monitors don't have cartridges in them, go ahead and argue.
9. When Tech Support is having lunch at their desk, has stepped outside for a smoke, is grocery shopping or at a bar on a date, by all means rush up and unload your computer problems on them.
10. Don't bother to learn proper technical terms. Techs have no problem deciphering "My thingy's outta whack."
11. When you can't find someone in the government directory, call Tech Support. The term 'Support' must mean they double as 411.
12. When you have a lock to pick on a locked file cabinet, call Tech Support. They also double as lock-pickers.

(Many of these funny anecdotes can be found on numerous Internet joke sites. But special thanks to *Computer-jokes.net*, *Computerjokes.net* (yes, they are separate sites) and *Jokescenter.com*.)

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Contributing to ComputerEdge," "Jobs Will Be Missed? Not by Me!" "Gimmick Web sites/Bogus Claims," "Apple Farm"

Contributing to ComputerEdge

[Regarding the October 28 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

Hi Jack,

Always happy to contribute to such a prime example of personal enjoyment.

Yes, like all the others, I've been a reader forever, absolutely learned tons from Dave *and* the other articles and contributors.

Love the way your magazine is put together with plenty of latitude taken by the contributing writers in writing and expanding their articles with personal notes and life experiences.

The "EdgeWord" is a good example where you give the reader clear view of the nuances in the computer world. Advising the public in the wisdom that the best computer is the computer that works for them is golden. As a tech, the doors of discussion that you open are both fun and many lead to new learning opportunities. I thank you for this and hope you continue to impress your readers as only a person with a teachers viewpoint can do.

Yes, I am also saddened that the print copy is no longer with us, but as we'll see in the near future, vanishing newsprint is a wave hitting our society that is just beginning its thrust. Do we call this the wave of the future? Do we blame it on the economy? Can we go as far as throwing in something concerning the literacy of our country in there too?

As for future publications, since you're Web based, what would it take to expand Dave's section to more than three correspondences per week? Not limited by paper, and having a quite popular column, why not expand to double or triple the responses he supplies? May I ask —is it a contract thing, or a budget limitation item?

Also, in offering more content to the readers that enjoy your magazine, I'd say I'd like to see more of the same. I (and tons of sandy eggo people) think you have a great thing going and would love to see more of it. Can you get more, or expanded articles from your contributors? I'm not savvy in the way of reporters and contributors, so I can only assume it's a contract type thing, they send in an article, you send them a check?

For me, continue with articles containing opinions of new software, personal experiences of quick

fixes and the reader tips and tricks. That's the stuff I dig for. Sorry, no big flash of ideas here, just a content reader.

Now, as for contributions, even blatant capitalists should see how injected income can procure even more personal enjoyment for the larger mass.

Love your show!

-Bob, Chula Vista, CA

Hi, Bob,

Thank you for your thoughts. My only comment is that Digital Dave is primarily limited by the time he has to devote to the column. He enjoys doing it, but unfortunately he has little spare time.

Our writers are also contributors in every sense of the word. They are working pro bono.

I will do my best to continue to make ComputerEdge as useful as possible.

Thanks again,

-Jack

P.S. If anyone else would like to contribute to ComputerEdge endeavors, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/Contribute-to-ComputerEdge-Magazine_c3.htm).

Jobs Will Be Missed? Not by Me!

[Regarding the October 7 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

Having dealt with the man [Steve Jobs] *before* he became a household word (we shared the same surplus stores and electronic flea markets in the SFBA), I don't miss Jobs and many engineers (including some inside Apple) are breathing a sigh of relief now that his *ego* and tantrums are gone. The public only got glimpses of the true nature of the man.

This cartoon (conservativebyte.com/2011/10/steve-jobs/) sums up my opinion of Jobs.

-Art Blackwell, Evergreen, CO

Art Blackwell's Link—Actually that cartoon is not a criticism of Jobs but a tribute. He's right, the thing needs updating.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

Mr. Cerrato's Personal Point of View: "Actually that cartoon is not a criticism of Jobs but a tribute. He's right, the thing needs updating. —Ron Cerrato, San Diego"

Ha! So says you. Maybe you could take it up with The One in charge there... and that wouldn't be Jobs, with all due respect to his many insights and talents.

-R. M., San Diego

Gimmick Web sites/Bogus Claims

[Regarding the October 21 ComputerQuick Reviews column:]

Right or wrong, I see these "gimmicky" con-man type Web sites as the latest spawns of the bogus antivirus software industry. These types pose as long awaited messiahs who want to help, yet are conceived solely to attract, deceive and eventually swindle naive or unsuspecting users out of their hard earned dough.

In doing so, these dark hearted vampire types employ cleverly designed ads fraught with bogus claims and false claimants who tell great stories of how wonderful it worked for them. They design and employ fictitious "product review" Web sites to further delude and deceive. They also buy advertising time on TV... and above board product review Web sites even get suckered into promoting them.

Then, when the bait is taken, and the hook is well set, exorbitant pricing and further outrageous practices take center stage as the poor fish gets reeled in, gaffed and consumed.

How does that time honored adage go? "Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart!" It really ticks me off, and I'm sure I'm not alone in my disgust. This occurs to the point where one never knows who or what to trust anymore.

What ever happened to individual morality, personal responsibility, self-policing and fair play... not to mention truth in advertising? I thought there were laws out there somewhere designed for just this type of thing. Or, is that another can of worms that we are afraid to touch, for fear of being labeled as those who would put unwanted regulations and controls on the Internet. I'm all for freedom and liberty without Big Brother getting involved, but this sucks! There has to be an acceptable balance somewhere.

It's just another prime example of ever darkening evil looming over our once placid world. Or, am I the naive dreamer here? Maybe so, but I still don't like it. How 'bout you?

-R. M., San Diego

R. M., of San Diego, wrote: "It's just another prime example of ever darkening evil looming over our once placid world. Or, am I the naive dreamer here? Maybe so, but I still don't like it. How 'bout you?"

No, you are not at all "the naive dreamer" here, although you might be in a small minority. I recently posted the informative "Silicon Exposé," which is a highly illustrated, 50 MB, 45 page, PDF file that documents the development and effects of the digital age on individual consciousness and our "once placid world" from many points of view. It's simple enough that anyone can understand it and it's absolutely free for download (min.us/m66wnFvR9).

-Shiva Notarajah, Tomé, New Mexico

Apple Farm

[Regarding the October 14 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

4gLTE?

All I see is people playing games, no real productivity gain, except maybe real estate agents!

-Nick, Colorado Springs

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to contribute to *ComputerEdge* endeavors, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/Contribute-to-ComputerEdge-Magazine_c3.htm).

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

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315