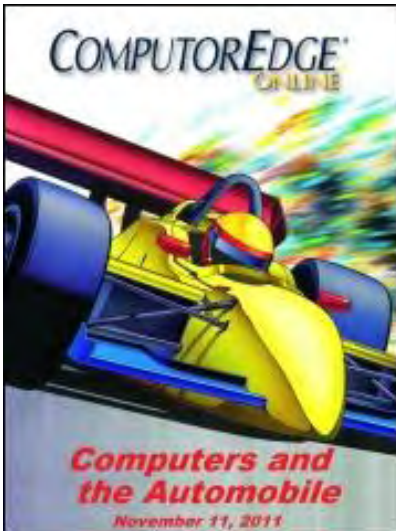# *ComputorEdge™ Online* — 11/11/11

This issue:
Computers and the Automobile

How computers and the Internet are affecting cars.

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Digital Dave

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

Blocked Senders List and No Reboot USB Hard Drive; Overlaying Text; PC to PDA Syncing; Signing into MSN—Error Code 84cc0009.

Dear Digital Dave,

I commonly use the Block Senders option when using Outlook Express. I can't seem to find a way to view my long list alphabetically. Is there a way to list or view them alphabetically?

Also, I just bought an external WD Passport USB hard drive for backups. It comes with a USB 3.0 cable. When my HD is plugged into the USB port, I can't reboot. It freezes up at the start of my Intel page. My system (XP Professional SP3) found my new hardware initially and installed necessary drivers. Any idea why I can't boot with it plugged in?

Thanks,

Bob
Del Cerro

Dear Bob,

The problem with the Blocked Sender list in Outlook Express is that there is no easy way to alphabetize the list. It is rooted in the Registry and even if you exported the list and organized it, it wouldn't help in Outlook Express. Sadly, the problem is that you have blocked too many senders.

Spammers continually change addresses, so adding each e-mail to a Block Sender list will add addresses which most likely will never be used again. The list gets too long and unmanageable. Block Sender should be saved for those unchanging address that you truly need to block.

Alternatively, the wise use of Message Rules will help you delete (or shunt off to a special folder) all those regular Spams. You can identify them either by addresses or text within the e-mail. This will be far more effective in reducing Spam.

On your second question, if the freezing is happening when the machine is coming back up, it is possible that the boot order in your setup is wrong. If your computer's boot order has the USB drive coming up before your main drive, then it could be that the computer is trying to boot from the USB hard drive. Check the boot order in your system setup. (See the answer to Jerry's question and comments from other readers in this past column for how to access the system setup.)

It could also be that there is pre-installed software which comes with the USB hard drive (often file backup programs) which is causing the reboot problem. This type of software is known to cause this type of problem with Windows XP computers. The best way to rid yourself of this unnecessary feature of your USB drive is to reformat the drive. (Right-click on the drive in Windows Explorer, Logo key + E, and select "Format...") Be sure to backup any data you want to save and *don't* format the wrong drive.

But before you reformat the drive, you may want to test it in other computers to make sure that it is not related to a problem USB cable or faulty USB ports in the Windows XP computer.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I love your column. I am using Windows 7 and Firefox. With a lot of Web sites I visit there is an overlay of text, like it typed over other text. I get this quite often. Is there a solution for this problem?

Thanks in advance,

Bob
Rancho Bernardo

Dear Bob,

This is not an uncommon problem for people using Firefox. It is most commonly cause by Web sites using inflexible parameters while the visitors are using the zoom feature to increase the size of text.

When you hold down the CTRL key and hit "+" (plus sign), the size of the text will get larger. If you hold down the CTRL key and hit "-" (the minus sign or hyphen), then the font size will decrease. CTRL+0 (zero) will reset the font to the original size. Holding down the CTRL key and scrolling the mouse wheel will also increase and decrease the font size accordingly.

My guess is that your viewing size is a little too large for the particular pages with the problem. although, I'm open to thoughts from others who have experienced this problem.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Can a PC using Windows Vista sync info to an HP PDA (HP iPAQ H1935 Pocket PC)? The PDA is eight years old.

Thanks,

David Niles
Phoenix, AZ

Dear David,

If you have all the necessary hookups you should be able to sync your computer with the HP Pocket PC. As I remember, the Pocket PC came with a cradle and/or cable which attached to the computer for transferring data.

The program used with Windows XP was called ActiveSync and it is now incorporated in Windows Mobile Device Center (*www. microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=14*) for Windows Vista and Windows 7. If you have all those pieces of the puzzle, you should be able to do it.

Good luck!

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm having a trouble signing into MSN. Every time I click on the sign in tab MSN gives me "error code 84cc0009." I can't log in. Please, I need help. I've tried one solution or more from the Internet I found on Google, but I still have the same problem. Please, I want a good solution.

Thank you,

Bassem Fakhouri
Beirut , Lebanon

Dear Bassem,

The error you're getting generally occurs when certain necessary files have become corrupted. Your best bet is to follow the techniques described in this Microsoft Help (*windowslivehelp.com/solution.aspx?solutionid=935bb770-b07c-4393-9de9-6bc1192dc8cc*). Don't worry that help talks about Windows Live rather than MSN. They are essentially the same thing.

Digital Dave

Smart Cars

"Internet Connections, Theft by War-Texting, and Self-Driving" by Marilyn K. Martin

Smartphones are now becoming influential in the car industry. New apps are being developed to help users do anything from pay a parking fee to remotely check their car's battery level. Even more interesting is that cars are becoming smarter themselves, some even drive without a driver!

People with smartphones have an ever increasing panorama of apps to choose from. And for the last few decades, all new private vehicles have come with computer chips to help run the car and assist in maintenance. But have you ever wondered exactly when our cars and the Internet would truly merge? And what smartphone apps are out there that are beneficial to drivers? Or what lurking Black Hat tricks could endanger your vehicle through your smartphone? If so, then please read on.

Autos Connected to the Internet

With all the technological advancements in our computerized vehicles, when can we expect to have Internet access in our car? Where we can jump online for real time traffic reports and warnings? Or maybe be contacted by our "connected" mechanic that something in our smart car needs to be repaired? According to a late October 2011 article (*www.computerworld.com/s/article/9220979/Car_tech_The_connected_car_arrives*) in Computerworld, Internet connected cars are soon to be a reality.

Current models like the Ford Edge, Audi A6 and Lincoln MKX can already connect to the Internet over Wi-Fi or 3G networks. These connections can bring streaming audio and video, Twitter feeds, and "spoken" text messages to keep you safe and focused while driving.

In the near future, you'll be able to surf the Internet and get Facebook updates on your in-car navigation screen. In the more distant future, "wireless standards such as dedicated short range communications (DSRC) will help cars connect to one another, and to the road infrastructure. This will communicate real time road conditions and other helpful information."

Can "War Texting" Steal Your Car?

A July 2011 blog in Computerworld (http://blogs.computerworld.com/18690/war_texting_sms_attack_to_steal_a_car_or_control_scada_systems) asks the scarey question: Could a smartphone utilizing SMS (a Smart Message Service, like texting) steal your car? According to security expert Don Bailey of iSec Partners (*www.isecpartners.com*) the answer is a Big Yes.

According to Bailey, it's now possible to send "war texting" SMS messages to affect everything from GPS, 3G security cameras,

traffic control, home and vehicle automation systems, and even SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition)—from infrastructure to industrial processes—all from a smartphone! (Too much trouble to track, stalk or manipulate through GPS? Just buy your own "malicious cell phone tower" for as little as $1,200.) To demonstrate, Bailey took only a couple hours to hack into a car alarm system. He then started the car by remote just by sending a text message.

Smart Park!

In the United Kingdom, November 1st allows a new convenience for drivers using certain pay and display (ticketed) car parks, to extend their park time by paying through a smartphone (*www.thisiswiltshire.co.uk/news/headlines/9336078. Now_you_can_pay_your_car_with_your_mobile_phone/*). Now in certain UK towns, drivers who register with PayByPhone (*paybyphone.com*) can park in a parking lot using the new system, and opt to receive a text reminder that their parking time limit is about to expire. They can then extend their park time by approving another park charge (and small fee) through their smartphone.

OK, who hasn't come out of a shopping mall, theme park or concert, and wandered around for hours trying to remember where they parked their car? There are now downloadable apps to help you remember exactly where you parked your car. FindMyCar! (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/find-my-car!/id349510601?mt=8*), downloadable through iTunes, is currently free, and has been selected by The Wall Street Journal as one of the "Top Ten Apps That Will Change Your Life."

How Safe Is It to Make Car Payments by Smartphone?

Several auto insurance companies are experimenting with texting options. GEICO will let you sign up for a payment notification by text, to either pay your bill or alert you what is about to be directly withdrawn from your bank account. And some car insurance companies, like Cure (*www.cure.com/payment.shtml*) have a "Pay By Text" option.

Starting in 2009, some car companies started experimenting with owners making their car payments via their smartphones. Mercedes-Benz even offers a MyMBFS free subscriber smartphone app, with a Finance Utility where owners can make bill payments right from the app.

But how secure is it to pay by text? According to BankRate, while smartphones are quickly morphing into "virtual wallets," there are serious security issues (*www.bankrate.com/finance/personal-finance/mobile-payments-by-smart-phone-still-dicey.aspx*) as large companies push for users to make sizable monthly payments through their smartphones. The main security issue right now is that store scanners can read the payment data on your smartphone.

Last year, PayPal's iPhone application had a serious flaw that allowed hackers to access users' passwords, and steal money from their online PayPal accounts. PayPal quickly fixed the problem, but other large companies still have major security issues with their mobile payment apps, such as storing data that is unencrypted. In addition, federal laws covering mobile payments haven't been finalized yet. So consumers are strongly advised to do their research, and add their own extra layers of security if they want to use mobile payment apps.

Automakers' Smartphone Apps

Car manufacturers are now offering free smartphone apps to entice the curious, help owners with real time performance and maintenance issues, as well as engage brand fans. Manufacturers now offer apps (*www.edmunds.com/car-buying/a-complete-listing-of-available-automaker-smartphone-apps.html*) for their vehicles with everything from the nearest dealer location and updated owner's manuals, to sophisticated apps for social networking with other owners of the brand, and even augmented reality and vehicle based games.

How-to videos and even your stored radio security codes are offered in the Acura app. You can "virtually rev" various engines through the Aston Martin app, including the iconic James Bond DB5 vehicle. Audi's app uses the car's OBD-II port to "give users access to real time performance data, including fuel efficiency and speed and emissions information."

The MyLink app for the electric Chevy Volt lets drivers remotely check the battery charge level, pre-heat or pre-cool the vehicle, and even set up an "alert" option that notifies owners of their car's "charging status." And Toyota (from video game loving Japan, of

course) even offers a PriusExperience app with a "physics-based game that lets users draw shapes and create spontaneous reactions in the car's environment" and a "multilevel game highlighting the vehicle's aerodynamics."

"Smarter" Cop Cars

I wrote earlier about how the Los Angeles Police Department has already bought a fleet of high tech police cars.

An October 2011 article (*www.suntimes.com/business/8310610-420/cop-cars-bells-and-whistles.html*) in the *Chicago Sun Times* showcases Motorola's "new age" police car, to be available in 2012. It features a push button on the steering wheel to contact Dispatch, allows voice commands to control vehicle equipment, and gives the officer the ability to see real time surveillance video from eight cameras on a dashboard computer screen.

This 2012 Chevrolet Caprice Police Patrol Vehicle boasts a six liter V8 engine, and starts at $30,170. Its eight cameras snap shots of every vehicle that passes by, or any interior or exterior angle that the officer wants to capture. The vehicle automatically checks every snapped license plate against a vehicle database, and notifies the officer if a vehicle is stolen, or has any outstanding violations.

The car's computer terminal has a real time, video streaming screen. These views can even be shared in real time with Dispatch, a Supervisor or a mobile back up unit, to order back up if the officer is in danger. And the inside vehicle video can be used as evidence in later investigations.

Even Smarter Cars—that Drive Themselves!

"They shouldn't allow humans to drive!"

With robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) constantly improving and being refined, the question inevitably arises: When do we get "smart cars" that drive themselves? The idea of "autonomous vehicles" has been around for a while, starting in Asia and Europe from the 1970s on. It has been a long and bumpy road (no pun intended), but we may finally be on the brink of seeing vehicles that, if not totally driver-less, at least have helpful semi-autonomous functions or abilities.

In the U.S., the most notable pioneering no driver events were the "DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, under the U.S. Dept. of Defense) Grand Challenges (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DARPA_Grand_Challenge*)." These were three competitions for full size "driver-less (robotic) vehicles" in 2004, 2005 and 2007. No robotic cars even finished the 2004 isolated desert course. But 5 out of the 23 entered robotic cars did manage to finish the 2005 course.

The last 2007 event was called the "Urban Challenge," and required the robotic vehicles to observe urban traffic regulations, maneuver past obstacles and be able to merge into traffic. It was controversial since 11 "Track A teams" had been awarded an unexplained $1 million each in advance funding, and the winning teams were given more detailed maps than the losing teams.

By 2010, Google was running its own secret "autonomous vehicle (*www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/science/10google.html*)" project, using a Toyota Prius. Using AI software to "sense anything near the car, and mimic the decisions made by a human driver," the Prius was spotted being tested on California's legendary (and dangerous) Highway 1 along the coast.

An October 2011 article (*www.pcworld.com/article/242240?*

how_does_a_google_selfdriving_car_drive.html) in PCWorld says that Google's project of self-driving cars has now bloomed into one of the company's largest endeavors. Their autonomous fleet has logged over 190,000 miles, and is now street legal in Nevada. The curiosity of how a Google self-driving car works, starts with a Velodyne 64-beam laser range-finder that's mounted onto the car's roof. The device scans and records the environment around the car, and creates a 3D model that it correlates to high resolution maps.

For other self-driving car projects, it's more about semi-autonomous vehicles, or vehicles performing mini-autonomous functions. An October 2011 article (*nextbigfuture.com/2011/10/self-driving-cars-will-save.html#more*) in NextBigFuture explained the current state of non-Google autonomous cars, and their smaller but focused abilities.

General Motors has an EN-V concept vehicle that can drop off the driver for an appointment, then find a parking space by itself. The driver then notifies the car by smartphone when he's ready to leave, and the car picks him up. BMW's semi-autonomous test car "automatically brakes, accelerates and passes slower vehicles—at over 70 miles per hour." It can also change lanes, slow down to let traffic merge, and keeps track of its surroundings through self checks and GPS.

Better safety and saving on fuel consumption are now being touted, with semi-autonomous functions like vehicle-to-vehicle communication that could reduce congestion and the dangers of irrational drivers. The U.S. Department of Transportation is sponsoring a program experimenting with sensors in stop lights that can communicate with smart vehicles, so that driver and vehicle are alerted to a light that is about to turn red.

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.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Facing the Future by Embracing the Past" by Wally Wang

Facing the Future by Embracing the Past; The Flip-Flop Logic of Hewlett-Packard, Part 2; Tracking Financial News; Moving Towards the Future; The Siri Threat; The Odd Surprise of an Android User; The Preview Program.

After seeing Borders Bookstores disappear into irrelevance while Blockbuster Video and the U.S. Post Office shut down buildings as their business model becomes obsolete, the next corporate train wreck to watch is Kodak.

Several years ago, Kodak voted for how they should deal with digital photography. The three options put before shareholders were 1) Focus strictly on the film business since that was bringing in all the profits, 2) Split resources between the film business while pursuing digital photography, or 3) Invest everything in digital photography.

Amazingly, nearly a third of shareholders voted for option #1, which essentially ignored digital photography in favor of milking the film business for as long as possible, regardless of the imminent threat of digital photography. Kodak chose option #2, but they didn't move fast enough and now wind up facing obsolescence in the face of digital photography that they saw threatening their business years ago. This would be like standing in the middle of the road, seeing a truck heading straight towards you five miles away, and yet remain standing in the middle of the road until the truck smacks you right in the face while you wonder how that could possibly have happened.

What killed Kodak was their reluctance to embrace the future while letting go of the past. That same mentality will kill other companies as well. The only "safe" strategy is to do what seems illogical on the surface, which is to threaten your own business before somebody else does it for you.

If Apple had obsessed on protecting the profits from the iPod, they would never have allowed the iPhone or iPad to play music stored in iTunes. That would have created a much weaker product as a result as competitors ate them alive with their own embedded music players in mobile phones and tablets.

Every product will eventually become obsolete, so it's better to sell the next generation product rather than protect your existing product until it's obsolete. That's a lesson that Microsoft can't seem to learn.

CNet recently published an article about why Microsoft killed their Courier tablet (*news.cnet.com/8301-10805_3-20128013-75/the-inside-story-of-how-microsoft-killed-its-courier-tablet/*). One division of Microsoft wanted to created the two-screen tablet device known as the Courier that ran a modified version of Windows. A second division wanted to created a tablet that ran an unmodified version of Windows.

Figure 1. The Courier tablet would have displayed dual screens hinged together like a book.

CNet states that "The company, with 90,000 employees, has plenty of brilliant minds that can come up with revolutionary approaches to computing. But sometimes, their creativity is stalled by process, subsumed in other products, or even sacrificed to protect the company's Windows and Office empires."

Courier could have competed against the iPad by offering a distinctly different alternative. Instead, Steve Ballmer decided to wait for Windows 8 on tablets and hope that Windows will remain dominant. The rationale for sticking with Windows is that people are familiar with Windows and will thus want a tablet running Windows.

What Microsoft doesn't realize is that most people familiar with Windows simply tolerate it at best and despise it at worse. Few people get excited about Windows like they did with the idea of Courier, as seen in this video animation (*www.youtube.com/ watch?v=pFQWc79TYcU*) of how Courier would have worked, yet Steve Ballmer is placing Microsoft's future on protecting past technology, and that "safe" strategy will likely flush Microsoft's future down the drain.

Microsoft could have easily backed both projects to see which one succeeded. Instead, their obsession with protecting Windows means that anything that threatens Windows must go. Protecting Windows at all costs is as short-sighted as protecting Kodak's film business from digital photography at all costs.

Apple isn't going to kill Microsoft. Microsoft's obsession with protecting the past is going to kill Microsoft, and when it happens, they won't have any idea how their short sighted decisions could have been responsible. When Microsoft dies, it will be through a self-inflicted wound.

The Flip-Flop Logic of Hewlett-Packard, Part 2

After Hewlett-Packard announced their Slate PC at the Consumer Electronics Show in 2010, they went on to sell a whopping 9,000 units. The company let the Slate PC wither away while they promoted the TouchPad running webOS, which only sold when they dropped the price to $99 and took a loss on each unit.

Now Hewlett-Packard is back with the Slate 2 (*www.zdnet.com/blog/computers/hp-doubles-down-on-business-tablets-with-699-windows-powered-slate-2/6974?tag=mantle_skin;content*), running Windows 7 in a modified Slate PC case and sporting a $699 price tag.

ZDNet reports that "At $699, the Slate 2 is priced lower than Dell's similar $859 Latitude ST, though the Latitude comes with a bigger 10.1 inch screen. Of course, these are both pricier than the cheapest iPad 2 (even a 3G model), but Dell and HP are clearly betting that corporations (and their IT departments) will feel more comfortable using Windows slates than Apple tablets."

In the past, corporations justified buying PCs because they cost less than Macintosh computers. Now Hewlett-Packard is trying to justify selling more expensive tablets to corporations because they won't want to leave Windows, despite the higher cost.

When Apple products cost more, corporations avoid them because of price. When Apple products cost less, corporations avoid them in favor of higher priced products. If corporations continue following this logic, it's no wonder so many of them can't stick with a strategy for more than five seconds like Hewlett-Packard's constantly changing tablet plans.

The key is that if a company focuses on building great products that people want, they'll make money. Yet most companies like Hewlett-Packard focus on making money first, so they don't want the expense of making great products, which means they ultimately won't make much money either.

In his biography, *Steve Jobs (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1451648537/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1451648537*),* Steve Jobs says that Apple made products that he wanted for himself, not because he wanted to make a lot of money. Steve Jobs wanted an easy to use music player so Apple created the iPod. Steve Jobs wanted an easy to use mobile phone, so Apple created the iPhone. Steve Jobs wanted a light weight, portable computer that would be easy to use, so Apple created the iPad. Despite being a billionaire, Steve Jobs never hired security guards or felt the need to build a massive house like Bill Gates because money was never his primary goal.

Rather than make products that they themselves want, most company executives simply focus on making money first by selling something that costs as little as possible that can be built as simply as possible with little regard for whether it's easy to use or not. This is no different than the way too many individuals think. Given a choice between doing what they want or making money, most people choose the seemingly "safe" path of making money first, which often means sacrificing their chance to do what they want and not making much money either.

These people, focusing strictly on money, wind up working for companies that also focus on making money at the expense of everything else. Because they're only comfortable with people who think like themselves with a "make money first" mentality, they hire CEOs who also think only of making money as their sole criteria for judging anything.

Then the CEO cuts jobs, churns out mediocre products, and ultimately makes the company less money until the next CEO arrives to repeat the same process all over again as people, who have their own "focus on money first" mentality, hold their heads in shock and wonder how this could possibly happen.

Focusing on creating great products won't guarantee that you'll make a lot of money, but focusing on making money first practically guarantees mediocrity at both a corporate level and a personal level as well. Given a choice between excellence or mediocrity, too many people choose mediocrity because that's all they believe they deserve, and that's the biggest tragedy in the world.

Tracking Financial News

If you're a financial news addict, you'll likely enjoy watching videos from Bloomberg TV (*www.bloomberg.com/tv/*), which provides short video clips covering world financial news 24 hours a day. While you can visit this site through any browser, you can also download the free Bloomberg TV app (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/bloomberg-tv/id460459302?ls=1&mt=8*) for the iPad so you can access these Bloomberg videos anywhere you take your iPad.

Figure 2. The Bloomberg TV iPad app lets you watch financial news video clips.

When you choose a video clip to watch, the app displays the names of companies and people mentioned in the video clip. Now you can tap a name to get more information about that company or person.

Figure 3. Additional information about people or companies is available.

With access to different Bloomberg TV videos along with the latest stock quotes scrolling at the bottom of the screen, you no longer need to get your financial news from a TV or computer as long as you have your iPad within a Wi-Fi hot spot. While you probably won't want to get an iPad just to watch Bloomberg TV, it just demonstrates the iPad's versatility.
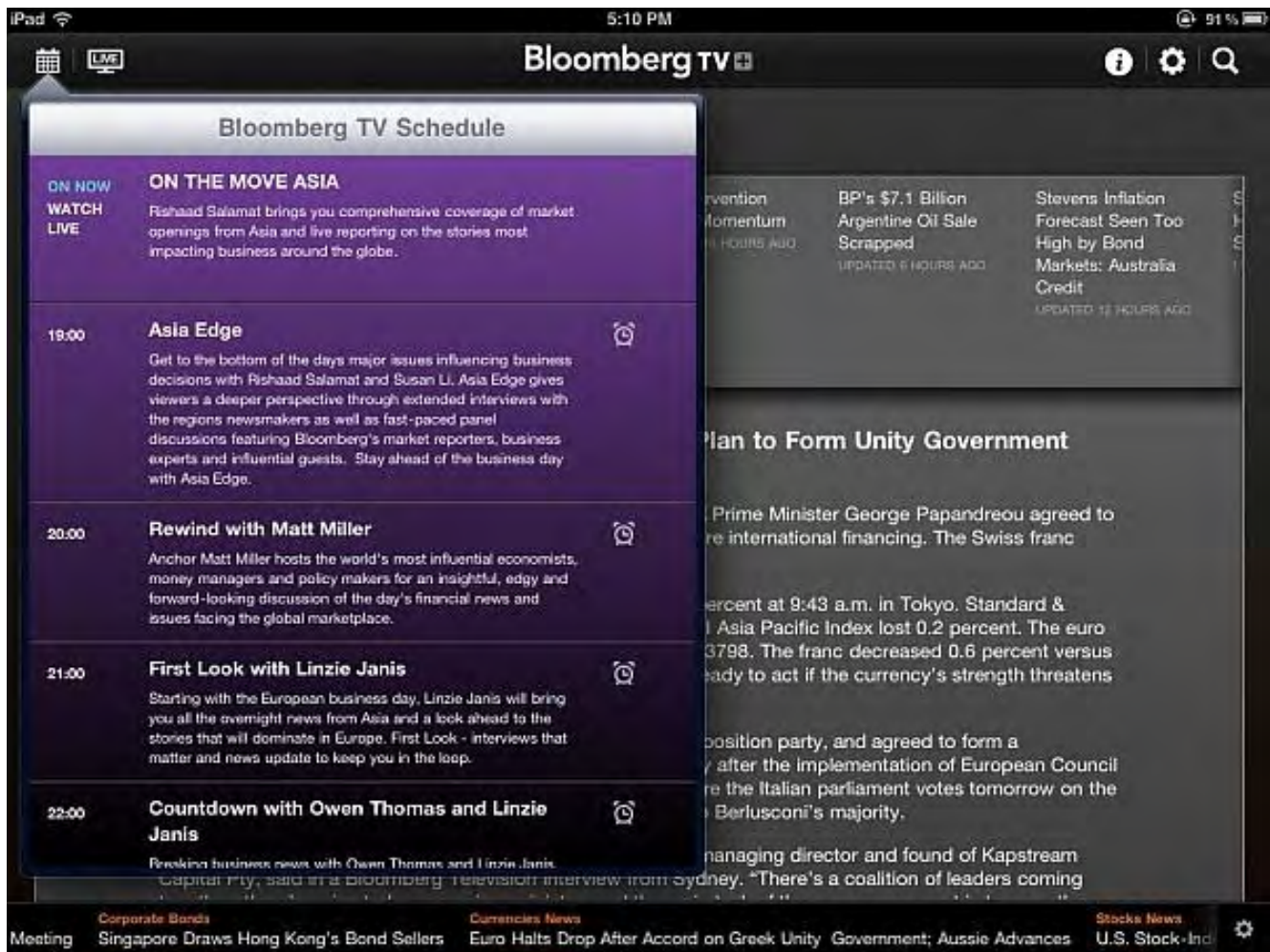
Figure 4. You can choose from a variety of different video clips.

There's no technical reason why other tablets can't offer a similar app, but with the iPad's growing popularity attracting more developers every day, rival tablets are going to continue falling behind as developers continue creating apps for the iPad first and other tablets later, if at all.

In the old days, people chose Windows simply because of the large software library available for Windows. Nowadays, people are choosing the iPad for the same reason, except for those people who suddenly create a new excuse for why a smaller software library is actually a benefit for any product not made by Apple.

Moving Towards the Future

The world of technology keeps changing as people drift away from old technologies and embrace the new. If you're involved in any kind of Web designing, the hottest trend these days is HTML5, which promises to create Flash-like animation without the need for a third-party plug-in.

To play around with editing HTML5 code, download a free copy of BlueGriffon (*bluegriffon.org/*). Because BlueGriffon is based on the Gecko rendering engines used in Firefox 4, anything you create in BlueGriffon should (note the emphasis on "should") be compatible with Firefox and most other browsers as well. By using BlueGriffon and a book like *Introducing HTML5 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/0321784421/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=0321784421*),* you can start experimenting with HTML5 and see what you can create.

For those interested in writing programs for the Macintosh, you can learn Objective-C and Apple's Xcode editor/compiler. For an easier approach, take a look at Objective-Basic (*www.objective-basic.com/*).

Figure 5. Objective-Basic lets you creative native Mac OS X programs.

The idea behind Objective-Basic is to let you write programs using the simpler BASIC language. To maintain maximum compatibility with the Macintosh, Objective-Basic relies on Xcode, which uses the gcc compiler (*gcc.gnu.org/*).

When you write Objective-C code in Xcode, Xcode sends your code to gcc to compile it. Objective-Basic works the same way. Write a program in BASIC and Objective-Basic converts it to Objective-C before sending it to the gcc compiler. Now you get all the advantages of Objective-C without the hassle of learning Objective-C.

You can download and use Objective-Basic for free, but any programs you create must be released free of charge. If you want to develop and sell programs, you'll have to buy the commercial version of Objective-Basic.

If you're familiar with BASIC, you can write entire programs in Objective-Basic or let Objective-Basic create Objective-C code for you so you can study and learn how it works based on your knowledge of BASIC.

With programs like BlueGriffon to teach you HTML5 and Objective-Basic to help you learn Objective-C, there's no reason why you can't keep up with the latest technologies. If the idea of using new technology frightens you, you can always go back to using Windows XP.

The Siri Threat

When Apple introduced the mouse and graphical user interface with the Macintosh, many critics claimed that the mouse was useless and that nobody needed graphical user interfaces because they were already familiar with the command line interface of MS-DOS. Eventually the rest of the world realized the benefits of graphical user interfaces and the mouse and few people remember that anyone could have possibly objected to a mouse and graphical user interface.

Now the world is using a mouse and graphical user interface to write criticism about Apple's latest user interface dubbed Siri. The

idea behind Siri is to understand both the words and context of spoken commands. While critics scratch their heads over the usefulness of Siri (just as they once scratched their head over the usefulness of a mouse), they're ignoring its potential for other applications.

Ford Motors introduced a touch screen, voice-activated interface called MyFord Touch that replaces traditional dashboard knobs and buttons with a touch screen system developed by Microsoft. After introducing the system in the Ford Explorer and Ford Focus, Ford reports that:

"Dealer phone lines and Internet chat rooms were soon buzzing with complaints. The system shut down without warning and took too long to reboot. It didn't understand voice commands and didn't always respond to owners' touch. Some owners found the information packed screens overwhelming. Ford had dealers perform four software updates and paid dealers to hold owner clinics."

Does anyone really want to attend a clinic to learn how to adjust the air conditioning of a car or switch to a different radio station? If it takes a training class to learn how to use a touch screen, chances are good that touch screen's user interface is poorly designed, poorly implemented, or both.

However, the touch screen interface of the iPhone along with the voice recognition commands of Siri could easily replace Microsoft's clunky MyFord Touch system. Not only would it be more reliable, but it's also been tested in actual use as well.

Siri currently works with English, French and German, but will soon understand Chinese, Spanish and other languages. With built-in multilingual capabilities, Siri will let you control a device and take dictation in the most popular languages in the world. With this capability alone, Siri will be far more useful than simple voice recognition systems that require speaking in a limited vocabulary such as saying "Phone call" first to alert the system that you want to make a phone call, followed by the actual number you want to call.

Siri promises to revolutionize the way we interact with our devices. Once people get used to Siri, they'll find doing tasks manually will seem as archaic as using a command-line interface in MS-DOS.

The Odd Surprise of an Android User

Stephen Chapman at ZDNet has tried various Android-based tablets (*www.zdnet.com/blog/btl/ipad-2-why-i-finally-bought-one-and-why-i-absolutely-love-it/62753*) and found them lacking. After struggling with these other tablets, he simply decided that he didn't need a tablet after all. Then he bought an iPad 2 after seeing so many people using one seamlessly without problems.

"My iPad has totally destroyed the perception of myself as an individual who wouldn't make use of a tablet device," Stephen says. "It has also totally destroyed my opinions of any other tablet out there standing a chance of competing against not just the device, but the app ecosystem and iOS on a tablet device.

"Lastly, I'd like to clarify that I really do love Android as well, but as a mobile phone OS. Android definitely gives you more freedom without having to hack anything, but I still stand by my opinions as per my comparison of the two in the context of the tablet arena. Ultimately, if you're not using an iPad simply because you're brand-loyal and/or anti-Apple, then there's a good chance that you're selling yourself short."

The simple fact is that if you objectively compare an Apple product to a rival product, you can ultimately choose which one is best. Why is that so hard for so many people to understand?

*   *   *

Instead of giving you printed manuals any more, most programs give you a manual stored as a PDF file. Unfortunately, reading a large PDF file can be clumsy since you have to scroll through the file to find the page you want. Then the next time you want to read that same page in the PDF file, you have to open the file and scroll through its contents to find what you want all over again.

Fortunately, the Preview program that comes with the Macintosh makes this task simple. First, if you open a PDF file in Preview, scroll to page 120 in a 400 page PDF file, then exit out of Preview, you can load that same PDF file later and Preview will open the

file at the last page you viewed before closing that file.

To insure that you don't lose your place in a PDF file, Preview lets you place bookmarks by choosing the commands in the Bookmarks menu. To jump to a bookmark in a PDF File, just click the Preview menu and choose Preferences, click the Bookmarks icon, and then click on the bookmark you want to view.
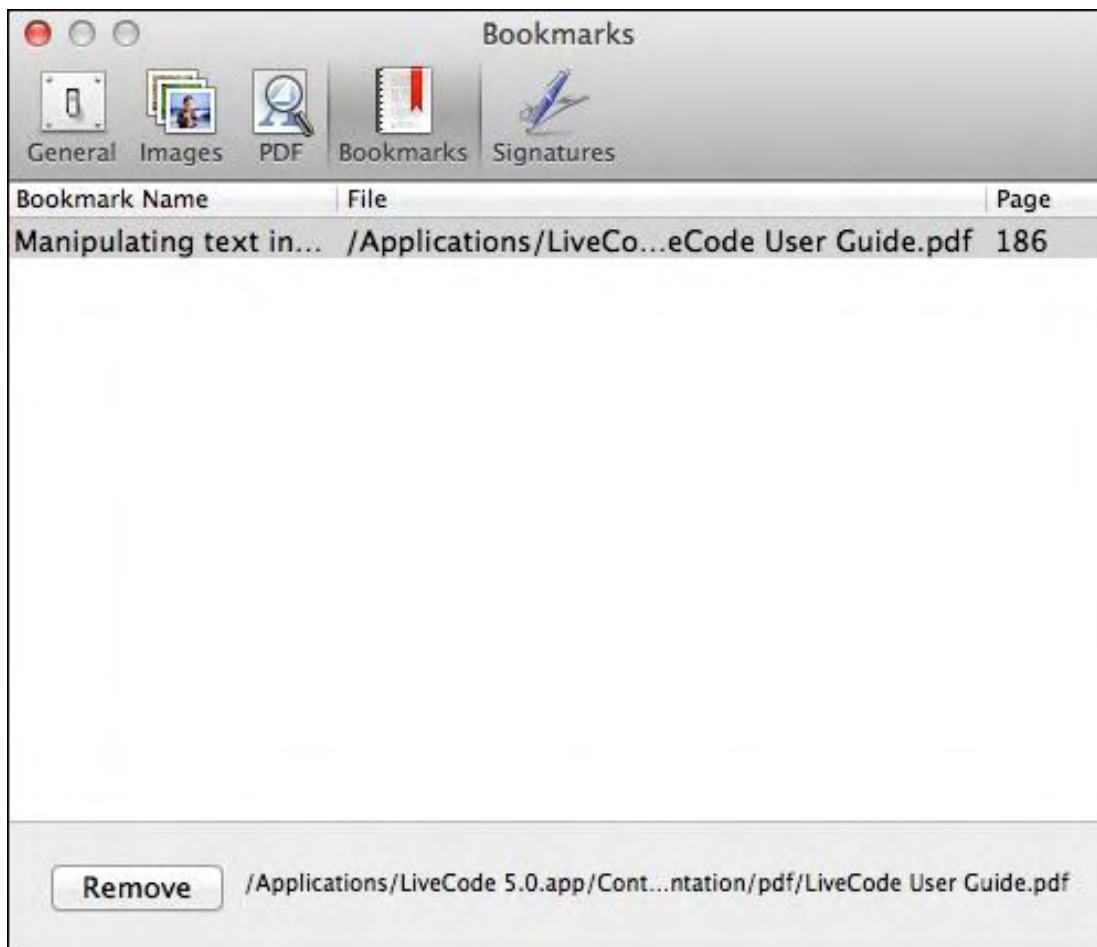

Figure 6. Preview lets you place bookmarks in a PDF file.

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, Lion Edition (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?*
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908),
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 2 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-*
20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X),
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/*) Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews
"The latest in tech news and hot product reviews." by Charles Carr

This Icelandic Cloud Has a Silver Lining; How to Find Nearly Anything in Linux; Targus Truss Case for Samsung Galaxy Tab; Products Specifications (from Targus); \r\nThe Future of Mobile Storage.

This Icelandic Cloud Has a Silver Lining

Peter Hopton, representing VeryPC (*www.greenqloud.com*), builder of high performance desktop computers and servers, writes in this week about a deal between VeryPC and the Icelandic cloud provider, GreenQloud, that goes a long way toward securing a future of cloud data centers with energy neutral footprints:

The words "Iceland" and "cloud" have instilled fear in every air traveler for the past few years. However, the two words now exist very much in harmony, in the form of cloud computing. The country has been ear-marked as world hub for the future of online cloud computing due to its vast quantities of free, renewable energy and cool climate. It's the perfect location for sustainable data centers—and that includes cloud computing providers.

There's no need to worry about the ash. Protecting such centers from volcanic ash is much safer and easier than protecting them from floods and earthquakes—two natural disasters prone to the current world centers of cloud computing.

Following successful trials of their energy efficient Odeum green servers, VeryPC has secured a large order from GreenQloud. Under the deal, VeryPC will supply GreenQloud with large quantities of efficient servers that together contain thousands of processing cores and petabytes of data storage. These will power a huge number of virtual servers that will be used by a diverse range of clients around the world—clients that want to lower their carbon footprint.

"Even though GreenQloud exclusively uses 100% renewable energy to attain our carbon neutrality, VeryPC further found reliable and cost effective ways of reducing our energy use and therefore our energy costs which results in GreenQloud being able to deliver services more competitively," said GreenQloud CEO Eirikur Hrafnsson.

A GreenQloud virtual server can be activated in seconds—and can be scaled up on demand in order to provide extra computing power when needed. Its desktops, Odeum servers and EcoVault storage arrays are being used in businesses, universities, schools and organizations worldwide.

How to Find Nearly Anything in Linux

IT veteran Don R. Crawley writes in this week to tell us how you can almost always find anything you want in the Linux file system using either the "find" or "grep" command—just two of the commands he explains in his new book, *Tweeting Linux, 140 Linux Configuration Commands Explained in 140 Characters or Less (*amzn.com/0983660719*)*, (ISBN: 978-0-9836607-1-2, published by soundtraining.net):

One of the biggest challenges we face in using Linux and UNIX on servers is how to find files or small strings of text lost in the labyrinthine file system of a server. "Where was that executable?" "PHPMailerHost? Where's that?" Fortunately, most Linux (and UNIX) systems provide two powerful tools for searching.
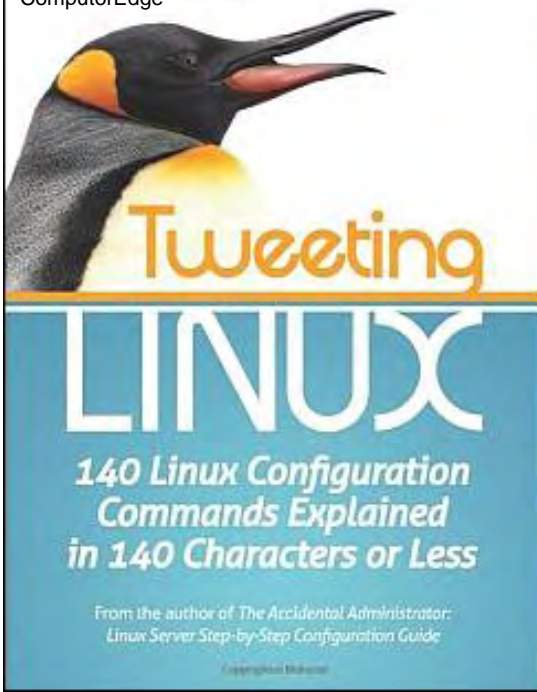
The "find" utility does just what the name suggests: It finds things by filename, size, date modified, or any of a number of other searching options.

The "grep" tool is a reminder that there is a God, a kind and loving God. The grep command traces its roots back to a vi predecessor called "ed." The name is an acronym based on globally search (g) for a regular expression (re) and print (p) the output. With "grep," we can filter output to look for a specific text string or perhaps the absence of such a string.

FIND

• "find /etc -name httpd.conf" will find the file named httpd.conf in the directory /etc

• "find /home -user beatriceh" will find all files under the directory /home owned by user beatriceh

• "find /etc -name "*conf"" will find all files under the directory /etc that end in conf

• "find /var/log -mtime +30" will find all files under the directory /var/log that were modified more than 30 days ago

• "find . -perm 644" will find files which have read and write permission for their owner, but read only permission for their group and the world

• "find -iname FindThisFile" will find all files, regardless of case, named "FindThisFile" in the current directory and subdirectories

• "find ~ -empty" will find all empty files in your home directory and subdirectories

• "find . -type f -exec ls -s {} *bckslsh*; | sort -n -r | head -5" will find the five largest files in the current directory and subdirectories

GREP

• "grep -Hrn Skinner /home" will search for every instance of the text string "Skinner" in the home directory and print to standard output. The options Hrn tell grep to print the filename (H) for each match, search recursively (r) under each directory, and to prefix each line of output with the line number (n) within its input file

• "ps aux | grep httpd" will pipe the output of "ps aux" into a grep filter to display only processes associated with the text string "httpd"

• "grep –c "cfquery" form.cfm" will search through the file "form.cfm", count the number of instances of the text string "cfquery", and print the number to standard output

There are myriad options with both "find" and "grep." As usual, the man pages or your favorite search engine are your good friends.

Explore and experiment in your test system (you do have one, don't you?) and you'll discover many ways to use these two powerful tools to find nearly anything in Linux.

Targus Truss Case for Samsung Galaxy Tab

The Targus Truss (*www.targus.com/us/productdetail.aspx?regionId=7&sku=THZ04001US&PageName=truss% 20|%20Targus% 20USA&productCategoryId=5&bucketTypeId=0&searchedTerms=truss&navlevel1=&cp=&bannertxt=Search %20Results%20truss*) is a well-constructed case for the Samsung Galaxy Tab 7" Android tablet made of durable leather, providing protection for your tablet's easily scratched and easily cracked screen.

The Truss opens like a book (as opposed to folio style, which opens from one of the shorter sides) and you can operate your Tab from right inside, unlike with a slip-on type of case. The Truss does a good job of keeping out of the way of the Tab's edge buttons and, especially, from the frame/bezel area where one generally begins a swipe down or across the screen. Too many cases completely cover the bezel, making swiping difficult at best.

Another nice touch is a wrap-around band that holds the case closed when being stored or during travel. Still, even better would have been some sort of magnetic clasp seen on other cases. I'm not sure how long that elastic will hold up. Hope it's better than the stuff in my BVDs!

The Truss also quickly converts into a stand. The durable pumpkin-colored interior incorporates ridges that lock the case at preset angles, perfect for watching YouTube videos or movies. (The Galaxy Tab plays Netflix movies and TV shows. If you didn't think it did, check out the Android Marketplace for the free Netflix player.)

Products Specifications (from Targus)

Color: Brown/Orange interior

Exterior Dimensions: 1.30"H x 8.07"L x 5.31"W

Warranty: Limited Lifetime Warranty

Weight: 8.32 oz

Material: Leather

Price: $39.99

More info: http://,

The Future of Mobile Storage

Hard drives can be a portable computer's bottleneck. They are relatively slow due to their mechanical heads that take time moving from point A to B on the spinning platter(s) and reading or writing data. Hard drives are advantageous, however, because of their

low price (currently as little as 10¢ per gigabyte), reliability and data retention after power is off.

What if a hard drive's mechanical parts were replaced with memory chips? That's the idea behind solid state drives (*en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Solid-state_drive*) (SSD). They contain no mechanical or moving components, and their NAND-based flash memory (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flash_memory*) chips retain stored data after power is off. Because of their compellingly advantageous speed, SSDs in the near future could become a popular upgrade (*www.macworld.com/ article/159827/2011/05/ssd.html#lsrc.rss_main*) for (and/or standard equipment in) notebook computers.

OCZ Technology's 120GB Agility 2 SATA II 2.5" SSD (*www.ocztechnology.com/ocz-agility-2-sata-ii-2-5-ssd.html*) is the subject of this review. The company distinguishes its Agility 2 SSDs from its other SSD models (e.g., Vertex 2 Pro) as suitable for "economical mass storage (*www.ocztechnology.com/res/manuals/OCZ_SSD_Selector_Q3_8.pdf*)" rather than for "performance mass storage" (gaming, video/audio editing, CAD applications, entry-level enterprise applications). This distinction is related to differences in the type of flash chips, controller, and/or firmware between models (*www.anandtech.com/ show/3667/oczs-agility-2-reviewed-the-first-sf1200-with-mp-firmware/2*).

Figure 1. The Agility 2 SSD houses NAND-based flash memory chips in an enclosure roughly the dimensions of an iPhone. Available capacities include 60, 90, 120, 180, 240 and 480GB.

Agility 2 SSDs are available for purchase from third-party resellers only. In early September 2011, online prices for our 120GB review unit ranged from about $160 to $210 (some included shipping and handling, others excluded). The former price translates to about $1.33 per GB, the latter about $1.75 per GB. These unit prices were typical (or near the low end) of SSDs at the time of this review (*www.anandtech.com/show/4604/the-sandforce-roundup-corsair-patriot-ocz-owc-memoright-ssds-compared*)—considerably lower than 2010's over $2 per GB unit prices but still much higher than what mechanical hard drives currently cost.

Our review unit arrived in an eye-catching green and black cardboard box measuring 5 x 6 x 0.5". Contents included a tightly fitting solid black cardboard insert with a black foam liner that had two indentations—one for the SSD in a plastic bag, the other for eight screws in a ziplock bag. A 3.5" adapter bracket for installation in a desktop computer, an information half-sheet (details below), and a decal ("My SSD is faster than your SSD!") also came in the box. The presence of Apple's Mac logo and text about Windows 7 on the box' backside implied compatibility with these operating systems (more on this later).

Service and support include a warranty period of 3 years, toll-free tech support, 24-hours forum support, and free firmware updates. This level of support is critical given the potential risks associated with SSDs in general that will be described below.

For readers who are interested in specifications (*www.ocztechnology.com/res/manuals/ OCZ_Agility2_Product_sheet_3.pdf*), Agility 2 SSD's are as follows:

• available in 40 to 480GB capacities

• supports TRIM; requires OS support

• dimensions: 0.37" tall x 2.74" wide x 3.93" deep

• weight: about 2.7 oz.

• power consumption: 2W in operation, 0.5W in standby

• shock resistant up to 1500G

• features include native command queuing, multilevel cell flash, RAID support, and SandForce 1200 controller (http://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/SandForce)

• mean time before failure: 2 million hours

• seek time: 0.1 ms

• max read: up to 285MB/s (for 50 to 240GB capacities)

• max write: up to 275MB/s (for 50 to 240GB capacities)

• sustained write: up to 250MB/s (for 50 to 240GB capacities)

• random write 4 K (aligned): 10,000 IOPS

Installing an Agility 2 SSD in a notebook computer likely will be a piece of cake for experienced do-it-yourself jockeys, maybe not so much for newbies. The keys to a low-stress, low-frustration SSD installation include (but are not necessarily limited to) appropriate tools and illustrated instructions.

For first time do-it-yourself SSD installation, my strongest recommendation is to view one of the many online demonstration videos showing the appropriate tools and exactly how it is done for your particular computer. Time savings and frustration prevention can be accomplished by viewing a demo video and acquiring any necessary tools (e.g., Phillips-head screwdriver, Torx, tweezers, etc.) missing from your collection before attempting to install an SSD.

After installing the 120GB Agility 2 SSD in a 2009 15.4" MacBook Pro (which involved some extra time and frustration), the review unit clearly demonstrated one of its major advantages—silent operation. Whereas the MacBook Pro's original equipment hard drive —a relatively slow performing Fujitsu 320 (*www.harddrivebenchmark.net/hdd.php?hdd=FUJITSU%20MJA2320BH %20FFS%20G1*)—has intermittently made an annoying clicking noise (*dougitdesign.com/blog/2009/12/mac-clicking- hdd-hard-drive-noise-hdapm-html/*) for months GB 5400 rpm unit, the Agility 2 was completely silent throughout this review. Ahhh!

Another major advantage of SSDs in general is speed, and the review unit confirmed this during benchmark tests. One test focused on boot up time—time to complete the launching of login apps (QuicKeys, Today and other utilities) after pressing the Return key in Mac OS X's login screen during a cold boot up. The results of this boot up benchmark test are shown in Figure 2.

SSD vs. HD cold bootup time*

SSD: 42

HD: 188

0   50   100   150   200

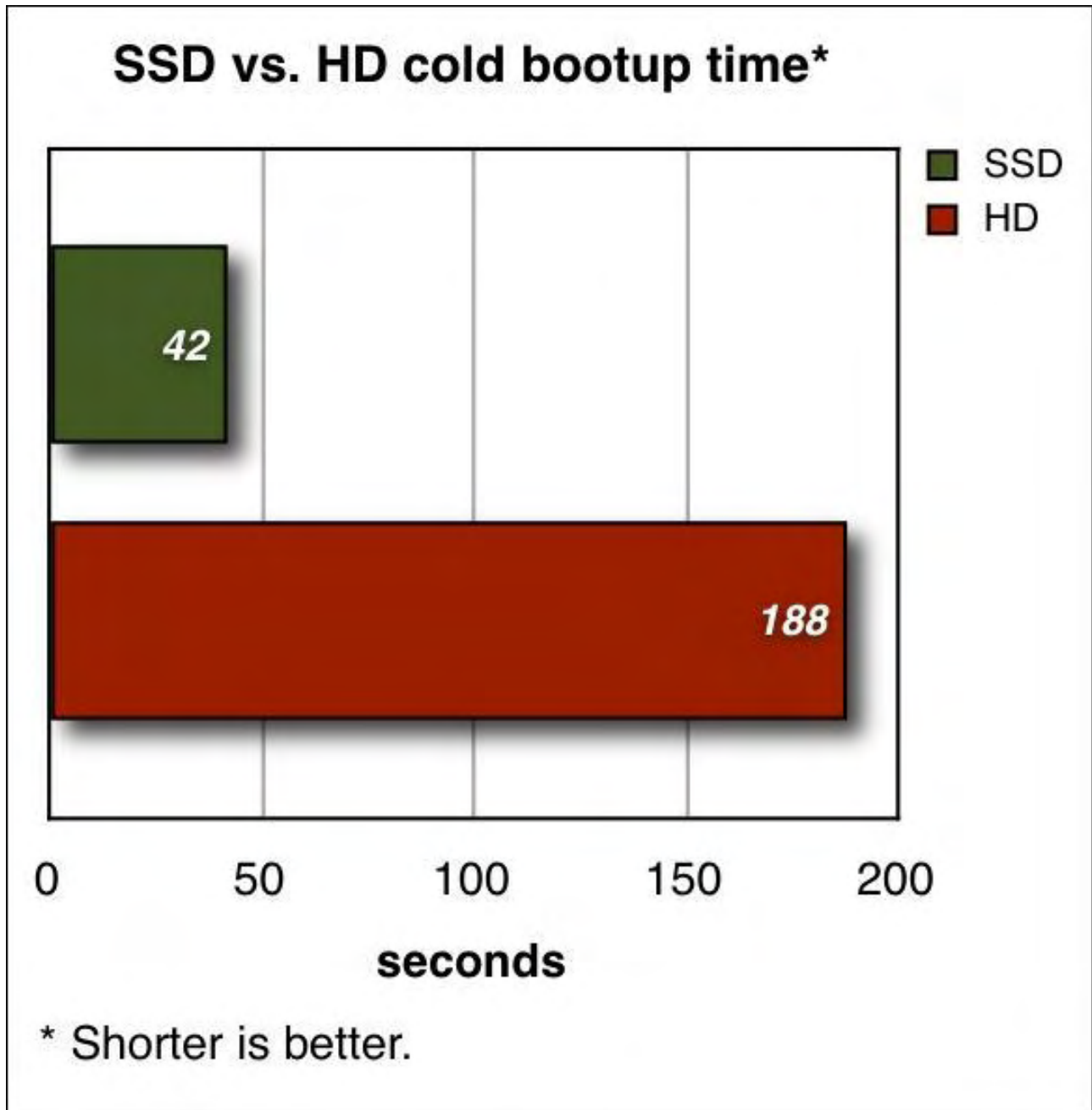**seconds**

* Shorter is better.

Figure 2. Agility 2 SSD outperforms an original equipment hard drive (HD) in the boot up benchmark test. This test measures time to complete the launching of login apps during a cold boot up.

Figure 2 shows that the MacBook Pro's original equipment hard drive takes more than four times longer than the Agility 2 SSD to complete the boot up test. Thus, the Agility 2 SSD is faster than the original equipment hard drive on launching login apps during Mac OS X's boot up process.

Another benchmark test in this review focused on disk read/write performance. The test used AJA System Test (*www.aja.com/ products/software/*) software that is intended for video editors. This benchmarking program executes (among other tests) a disk read/write routine that creates a file whose size is specified by the user, locates the file close to the selected volume's beginning, and measures disk speed using a frame size specified by the user. AJA System Test's disk read/write benchmark results for a 1.0 GB file with 1280x720 8-bit frame are shown in Figure 3.
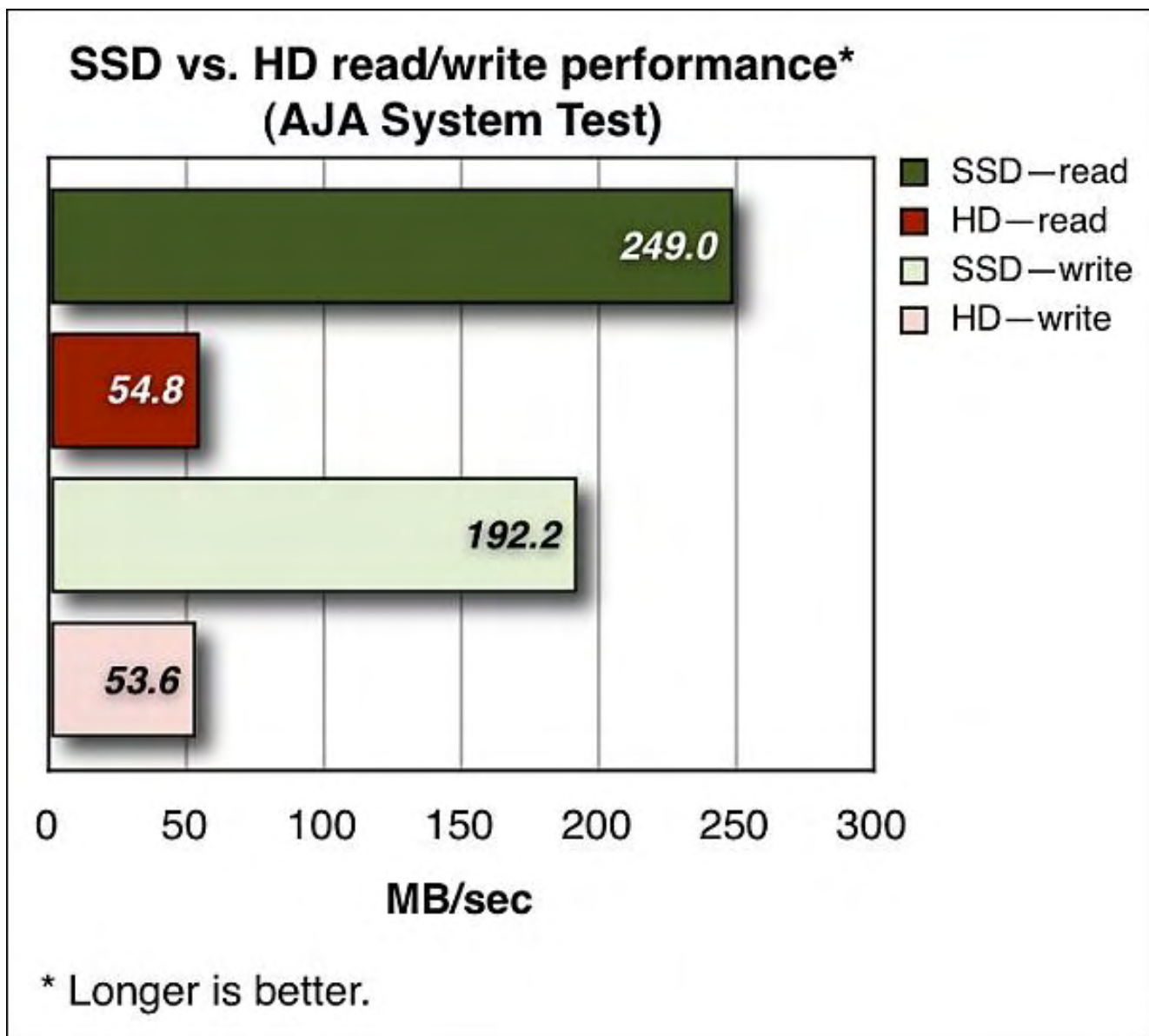
Figure 3. Agility 2 SSD outperforms an original equipment hard drive (HD) on AJA System Test's disk read/write benchmarking routines using a 1.0 GB file with 1280 x 720 8-bit frame. Each bar in the figure represents the average of three benchmarking trials.

Figure 3 shows that the MacBook Pro's original equipment hard drive is almost five times slower on AJA System Test's read routines and almost four times slower on its write routines than the Agility 2 SSD. Thus, the Agility 2 SSD handily outperforms the original equipment hard drive on disk read/write operations.

Additional benchmark data for Agility 2 SSD (and competing products) are available at MacLife (*www.maclife.com/article/feature/solid_state_drive_showdown*) and Anandtech (*www.anandtech.com/show/3667/oczs-agility-2-reviewed-the-first-sf1200-with-mp-firmware/2*) Web sites.

This quantitative data showing that Agility 2 SSD outperforms an original equipment mechanical hard drive are consistent with my qualitative impressions during this review. In general, the MacBook Pro felt convincingly zippier with the SSD installed than with its original hard drive—Finder windows snapped open immediately, apps launched almost instantaneously, files copied or moved speedily, etc. The MacBook Pro's performance was reminiscent of an iPad's (which, similarly, uses NAND-based flash memory for storage), giving an enhanced computing experience and saving time.

The aforementioned advantages—quiet and fast operation thanks to the absence of moving parts that make noise, wear out, and/ or could be damaged when dropped—are mostly the same as other SSD brands and models. These storage devices will benefit and delight users whose computer activities include disk-intensive tasks such as digital video or music editing, digital picture

manipulation, and file format conversions. SSDs probably will provide less tangible benefit, however, to users whose activities are limited to tasks which are not very disk intensive; e.g., text editing, e-mail, and Web surfing.

OCZ Technology's marketing material (*www.ocztechnology.com/images/products/downloads/ SSDvsHDD_quick_reference_6.pdf*) states that their products run cooler and require less electricity than hard drives. During testing for this review, the MacBook Pro's temperature readings after booting from the Agility 2 SSD were consistent with corresponding ones after booting from the original hard drive. This computer's battery drainage (14 percentage points in just under an hour) after installing and booting from the Agility 2 SSD was comparable to the amount (15 percentage points in just under an hour with essentially identical usage and environmental conditions) after reinstalling and booting from the original hard drive. Thus, testing for this review does not conclusively (dis)confirm whether cool operation and low electricity requirements are additional advantages of this product.

Agility 2 SSD's disadvantages also are pretty much the same as other brands and models. Sticker shock likely will be the most immediate one. As mentioned earlier, this product's unit price per GB (like that of competing products) is considerably higher than that of mechanical hard drives. Time will tell whether SSD prices continue dropping to a minimally shocking level.

Other weaknesses include the following:

Reliability—Are SSDs as reliable as mechanical hard drives? Are they as (un)likely to fail as a mechanical drive? These questions are especially relevant when thinking about replacing a computer's original hard drive (given its well known track record for reliability) with an SSD (given its less known track record for reliability) considering the aforementioned unit price differential.

During this review, the Agility 2 SSD performed silently and speedily but with some unexpected hiccups. For example, while installing an app after having booted from the Agility 2 SSD, a black screen of death displayed. After another cold boot up, the Finder's menu bar was missing and the Dock's icons were unresponsive. And while moving files from the Agility 2 SSD to a pen drive, the Finder quit unexpectedly. Although these symptoms could have been due to something else, none of them happened during months of using the original equipment hard drive before installing the Agility 2 SSD.

Perhaps do-it-yourself upgrade SSDs are currently more risky for mission critical production computers than standard equipment SSDs are for ultrabooks (like the MacBook Air) that have been tested and optimized to ensure reliability. A potentially low risk scenario for upgraders might be to install an Agility 2 SSD in combination with an existing hard drive, using the former for the operating system and the latter for data files. This scenario could be the best of both worlds, taking advantage of the SSD's time saving speed benefits and the hard drive's reliability.

Security—SSDs' mechanism that handles files marked for deletion (*reviews.cnet.com/8301-13727_7-20052922-263. html?tag=mncol;posts*) is inherently different from mechanical hard drives'. This mechanism results in a noticeable performance degradation (*www.anandtech.com/show/2738/8*) over time and makes secure deletion unreliable (*www. zdnet.com/blog/storage/mac-fail-ssd-security/1293*) according to researchers at UC San Diego. A related and controversial issue is whether or not users should activate TRIM compatibility support (*reviews.cnet.com/8301-13727_7-20052922-263.html?tag=mncol;posts*) in Mac OS X. TRIM compatibility is made unnecessary by equipping SSDs with a controller that manages file deletion (*blog.macsales.com/11051-to-trim-or-not-to-trim-owc-has-the-answer*), but the Agility 2 evidently is not one of them as indicated in its specifications (*www.ocztechnology.com/res/manuals/ OCZ_Agility2_Product_sheet_3.pdf*).

Longevity—Google Reviews (*www.google.com/products/catalog?q=OCZSSD2-2AGTE120G+price&oe=utf-8&cid=6058138411890451352&os=reviews&sort=1*) displayed 151 postings about 120GB Agility 2 SSD as of this writing; 38 (about 25%) gave a one-star rating and 67 (44%) gave five stars. On the first (unsorted) page of these postings, nine of the 10 describe failures and/or other serious operational problems that happened within six months of purchase. These customers' experiences tie into the above questions about reliability and potential risks for mission critical data files.

Documentation—Agility 2 comes with a folded half sheet that contains a congratulations statement, preparation statement (keep away from direct sunlight, water and temperature extremes), six steps for installation, how to format in Windows (nothing about Mac OS X), and limited warranty information. This amount of information seems scanty for first-time SSD customers; a user-friendly improvement would be to include URLs for installation demo videos, illustrated instructions, and/or a list of necessary tools.

In conclusion, Agility 2 SSD has essentially the same strengths and weaknesses as competing brands. Its unit price per GB is reasonable compared to competitors', but is substantially more than mechanical or hybrid hard drives. A purchase decision could benefit from considering whether the time that could be saved by replacing a slow hard drive with a speedy Agility 2 SSD will exceed the time that could be lost due reliability, security and/or longevity issues.

⊕⊕⊕

reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

Beyond Personal Computing
"Netflix Foibles" by Keith Taylor

> Netflix is a service that many people have grown to love, but not enough to stick around when fees doubled. Communication is the key to customer loyalty. Netflix could have saved a lot of cancellations had they realized this.

In this world of high tech wonders, we doddering geezers can only shake our heads and plod along as best we can. Eventually we catch up with the latest whiz-bang technology. Then we can join the crowd and sneer at the Luddites still left behind.

I was a reluctant convert to modern electronic miracles. But in a family with one computer engineer, one nuclear reactor supervisor in an Arizona power plant, plus various other children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, each punching buttons on electronic gadgets, I was dragged into the world of cyberspace.

This brings me to the latest foibles of Netflix, the outfit that made it possible for folks to see late edition movies from their armchairs. When VHS was perfected, Netflix started making copies of movies for folks to rent through the mail. Later DVDs replaced the tapes and they were on a roll. This was where I came aboard.

I was happy as a pig in pasta sauce with the simple task of opening an envelope, putting the DVD in the player, and watching at my leisure. I could even reverse the disc to watch the juicy parts. All that and a special bonus was the subtitles, often in a foreign language. How grand it was to watch Deadwood and not only hear Calamity Jane rip off a string of cuss words this old Hoosier farm boy had to admire, but be able to read them in French!

And documentaries! I could get smart all over again. Learning that Frank Lloyd Wright was a curmudgeon just like me was the sort of interesting information I'll have a use for one of these days.

Perhaps best of all, I could afford the popcorn.

What on earth could go wrong?

Lots of things. Perhaps it was too much cyberspace too soon. Perhaps it had something to do with the phase of the moon. My guess is it came about because cyberspace met modern business ethos administered by a schizophrenic.

Somebody made a terrible mistake in public relations or in management. Obviously some bright MBA forgot his first duty was to let the customer know what's going when prices are going to double.

Earlier this year Netflix went through a number of permutations. It was going to offer streaming, a nifty procedure where one could just select a movie and, after punching the right buttons, watch it on either his computer or his television set, perhaps even in HD. There would be a charge for it of course, but the company didn't add the charge until folks got used to it.

The thing is, nobody quite understood, or really cared that the movies they were watching could be seen without waiting on a letter carrier to drop them in a mail box. Netflix was unaware it had a ticking bomb waiting to go off.

Then the trial period ended. Sadly (at least for Netflix) most of us unaware we were even being tried. Rather than eight dollars per month, the fee doubled. We weren't asked for it. Netflix just took it, and it was legal, more or less. We each had signed an our agreement with them to charge the heightened fee to our credit cards.

You remember the credit card companies? They are the guys hundreds of thousands of people are yelling about on the streets of America.

That upset my wife who neither uses the computer nor Netflix. She does handle the finances though. When the charge was added to my Netflix account, I heard about it. She used language slightly cleaner than Calamity Jane's but still quite explicit.

My rejoinder that the increase was only about eight dollars a month didn't wash. "That eight dollars would add up to a sizable amount." I pointed that at age 81, we likely wouldn't hang around long enough to lose much.

Challenged, she pulled out the old grandchildren bit. They might want to go to college. What then?

I pointed out that most of our politicians went to college and I was unimpressed with their sagacity. A recent president went to Yale, and he didn't even learn how to pronounce "nuclear."

The public was no surer than I of the future with Netflix. According to National Public Radio, Netflix took a terrible nosedive in the third quarter as customers bailed out in droves and stocks fell by 26 percent. Some 800 thousand subscribers canceled, I among them.

Blockbuster was waiting, as if to pick up the pieces. I called and was assured I could have everything Netflix had and the charge would be a mere ten bucks. I joined the 800 and switched.

What I didn't know was that I could have stayed on Netflix for a mere eight bucks. Best of all I wouldn't have had to learn a new system navigating the Blockbuster system. A tech rep was apologetic. He'd even refund the extra eight bucks they were charging for the streaming I didn't want. I'm still on Blockbuster but thinking about the good old customer loyalty. It's there with Netflix. I even made friends in India who helped me keep my account.

What a lot of trouble and money Netflix could have saved that day if only someone had done a bit of thinking ahead of time and made sure their customers understood what was going on.

Among other things in my long life I've sold stuff and I've written stuff. In both cases it was paramount that the customer or reader understood what in the hell I was talking about.

Netflix should have hired an insurance agent.

Keith Taylor is a retired navy dude who lives in Chula Vista. He can be reached at *KRTaylorxyz@aol.com*.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Windows Address Book," "EdgeWord Comments," "ePub Article and Comments—Sept 30 and Oct 21"

Windows Address Book

[Regarding the October 21 Digital Dave column:]

Hi Dave,

I just did a Windows Explorer Advanced search on the C drive; check search Subfolders and search system folders. The PAB file was located in a few seconds.

Interesting observation; checking the Case Sensitive attribute didn't seem to work. All files with character string "pab" were listed.

-Don

Reading about upgrading a Microsoft e-mail address book brought back bad memories from when I exchanged my older computer for a Windows XP machine running Office 2003 about 8 years ago (which I'm still using). I've long forgotten the details, but just remember it was a major hassle to transfer my address book because Microsoft doesn't make it easy to find the address book nor understand it.

I'm using Outlook Express which may be structured differently from the full blown Outlook, but as I recall the only way I could make the address book transfer was to use Outlook Express on my old machine to Export my old address file to an intermediate text file (.csv) and then Import that into the new Outlook Express. I also vaguely recall being confused by address book file types since Microsoft seemed to use several. I just scanned my computer for Dave's suggested .pab file type and it doesn't exist on my computer. A little quick detective work just uncovered the fact that my current Outlook Express (part of Office 2003) uses the .wab file type for the address book so if you can't find a .pab file, look for a .wab file. Sorry my memory isn't better.

-Ted, Louisville, CO

PAB vs WAB: Ted said "Outlook Express (part of Office 2003) uses the .wab". It's true that OE uses a .wab file for the address book, but OE is part of Windows not Office. Office uses .pab. Microsoft doesn't include the ability to import Outlook files directly into Outlook Express since that would amount to downgrading from a paid program to a free one. So some type of intermediate format like .csv may be needed.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

EdgeWord Comments

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

Jack,

Some of your comments today cause me to think you just might be a Libertarian like myself. You and *ComputorEdge* have helped me to progress from learning to turn a computer on all by myself in July '06, to building and repairing them today. It has been a such a great help there is no way I could possibly repay you for it. You've made me feel like one of the "old family" even

though for me it has only been five years. I'm very happy to hear you will keep on keeping on, publishing *ComputorEdge* till you can no longer do so. I wish you long life and happiness for many years to come.

Thank you for your dedication, Sir.

-Paula Barefoot, Fresno, Ca.

Hey Jack, Great article! We all see what's happening in the computer world but no one puts it into words that thunder with truth. It takes a brave man to describe his own demise while he is still kicking.

While I'm an old timer in the PC world, you and Dave have come up with some eye openers and gems of wisdom that made me say "WOW! I didn't know that."

Thanks for being there and maintaining the attitude that the average computer user is important and should be given answers that make sense not dollars.

-Buck Fadness

Live Long and Prosper

-Frank

ePub Article and Comments—Sept 30 and Oct 21

[Regarding the October 21 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

I have been following your articles on ePub, having developed the interest after attending a class through San Diego Continuing Education on ePub last spring (since 2009, I have accumulated over 500 hours of instruction mainly in Adobe Creative Suite through this excellent program).

I am an occupational therapist working in group homes with developmentally disabled adults with severe physical disabilities; they are able to use heat or other bodily movement to activate switches. I have been using a computer interface switch connected to their personalized switch, to enable them to progress PowerPoint slides. As time permits, I try to develop individualized PowerPoints for them to view, many with audio. They also enjoy listening to audio books, many checked out from the San Diego Public Library.

Having been a devoted reader of *ComputorEdge* (and previous name) since the mid-80s, I get many ideas from the magazine's articles as to how to enhance my clients' lives as well as adding to my own learning. Your recent article about ePub on Sept. 30th and a reader's response on Oct. 21 started me thinking if I can bring ePub to my clients in addition to using PowerPoint.

I thank you again for this wonderful magazine that has enabled me to become quite computer literate over the past 25 years and even now being in my late 60s I still feel that I can somewhat keep up with the younger tech generations. I also love your feature of being able to download *ComputorEdge* to my Color Nook as an ePub.

-Susan Fisher McClure, MS, OTR/L, San Diego, CA

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*. If you would like to contribute to *ComputorEdge* endeavors, please visit ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Contribute-to-ComputorEdge-Magazine_c3.htm*).