

ComputerEdge™ Online — 01/20/12



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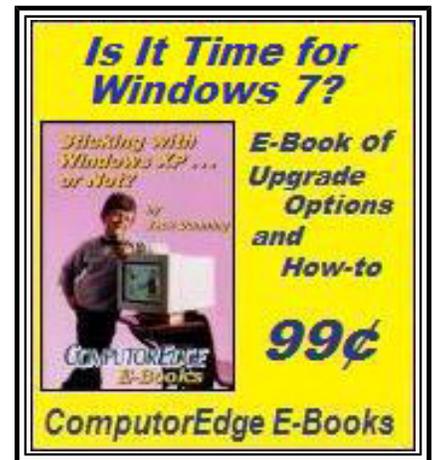
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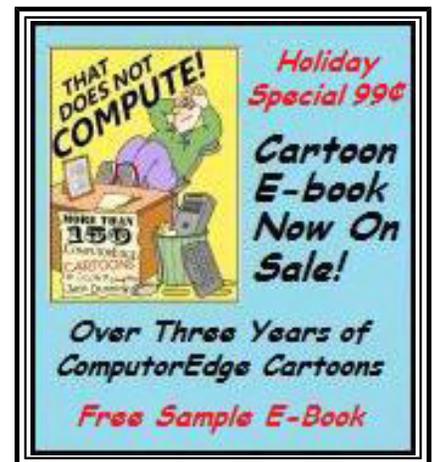
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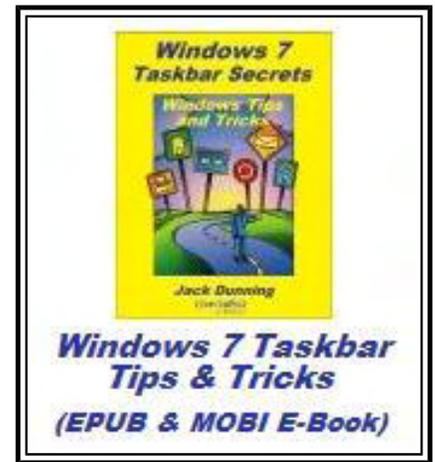
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Digital Dave

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

Drafting and Drawing; Removing Vertical Lines in Scanned Documents; USB to RS-232 for Serial Device.

Dear Digital Dave,

Can you recommend some drafting/drawing software (the free stuff!)? I still use my pencil-and-T-square drafting table, and I think this is why I can't get a date.

I mostly do the following: 1) Informational drawings, such as flowcharts, system block diagrams and PERT charts. 2) Dimensional drawings, mostly 2-D stuff such as metal and wood panel sizes, cutting dimensions, drilling locations and panel lettering. I can only print out "A" size with my Lexmark printer, but if the data files are in a universal format I can go to FedEx/Kinkos and make larger "D" and "E" printouts—or perhaps there's a way to print in sections and tape the sections together.

*Peter
Los Angeles*

Dear Peter,

I'm not an expert on computer aided design (CAD) software, but I do recall Jack Dunning mentioning a free CAD program in *ComputerEdge*. The program is called DraftSight (www.3ds.com/products/draftsight/free-cad-software/) by Dassault Systems. Jack seemed to think that it is one of the easier systems to learn, plus it works with the most used file formats. I would guess that printing shouldn't be a problem as long as you're using the standard file formats.

I do know that CAD software works from a different paradigm than most other software. It uses vector graphics (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vector_graphics) which are mathematical expressions of objects within a drawing. That means each piece of the drawing can be individually manipulated and it retains all of its characteristics. This is important in engineer work since the details are very important regardless of the size of the drawing or printout. However, this makes the learning curve for new users a little steeper.

A standard digital image (photo or artwork) is generally composed of raster graphics which is pixel oriented. However, once the image is saved, it does not retain dimensions and angles other than in how the image looks. There are no objects which can be separately manipulated—only a mass of various pixels. This is great for photos and displaying on computer screens, but of little engineering value. However, it is much more intuitive for people to work with these standard images in paint programs and other photo editing applications.

The point is that it is worth the time to work through whatever tutorials are available for the CAD software you decide to use. As you pick up the concepts, they will start to become second nature.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave:

How do I eliminate vertical lines on each page of my scanned documents on my HP Officejet 6500 printer/scanner? I Googled for instructions and cleaned the printer, but still have the problem. When I got to "Lift ADF mechanism, clean glass strip" I did not see a glass strip. The last time I called HP for help I was on the phone for two hours to someone in India who did not speak English well, and he could not help me, so hope you can.

Thank you,

*Marlene Imbsen
Oceanside, CA*

Dear Marlene,

If you check the manual (h10032.www1.hp.com/ctg/Manual/c01669504.pdf) for your printer, you will see that there are only three parts that it shows you how to clean:

- Clean the scanner glass
- Clean the exterior
- Clean the automatic document feeder (The ADF you refer to is the automatic document feeder.)

Of those three items the only one likely to cause vertical lines is the ADF. Since the document is moving through the feeder while scanning any marks on the glass might leave a vertical line on the image. The scanner glass does not move, therefore, if it's dirty, it is more likely to leave a mark than a line. The pictures in the linked manual should help you locate the glass strip in the ADF.

The real problem is if you get those vertical lines when you lay the original directly on the scanner glass bypassing the ADF. That happens when there are problems with the optics which move underneath the glass. It could be a dirty scanner light element or dirty mirrors. This type of cleaning is usually done by printer service personnel.

The scanner optics are sealed to prevent dust and other debris from causing exactly this problem. Many people who might try to open this part of the scanner (underneath the glass) could actually make the problem worse while trying to clean the optics. One fingerprint on a mirror could cause even more problems.

The problem with getting the printer serviced is that it could actually cost more than buying a new printer/scanner.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I want to get my Kantronic KPC 3+ back on the air, but my laptop has a USB, not a COM port. The TNC has a 25-pin RS-232. I already have a 25-pin to 9-pin cable. I have looked for a used laptop that might have a COM port, but they are only listed under their make and model. What to do?

*Richard West
Spring Valley, CA*

Dear Richard,

It has been a long time since a serial port (RS-232) was standard equipment on a computer. However, all you should need is a USB to RS-232 serial adapter (www.amazon.com/Plugable-Adapter-Prolific-PL2303HX-Chipset/dp/B00425S1H8/ref=sr_1_1?s=electronics&ie=UTF8&qid=1326828988&sr=1-1). This should turn any USB port into a serial port. COM is merely the logical designation for RS-232 serial ports (COM1, COM2, etc). I picked this particular cable only because it should automatically come up as a COM port after you plug it in to a USB port. If not, it comes with a disc of drivers (as shown in the pictures).

In any case, you need both the adapter cable and the necessary software drivers to emulate a COM port. Many of the cheaper cables may require you to search the Internet for the appropriate software drivers.

I can't guarantee that the above linked cable will work. Sometimes there are incompatibilities built into the older device which may prevent it from working, But rather than looking for an old computer, this is where I would start.

Digital Dave

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Hacker Update, Wearable Computers, and Prison Robots

“More Little Known High Tech Stories” by Marilyn K. Martin

Cyber War with China?; Going Ape for Unique Apps!; Movie Star Satellites to GPS Interference; Tablet Computers Go Big-Time; Hacker Updates: HP Printers, Vehicle Chaos and Card-Skimming; Wearable Computers; Facebook News: Causing Divorces and Finding Kidneys; Prison Robots to Ignition-Interlocks; Luxury Theaters And TV Programming for Xbox; More Domains and Wi-Fi in a Vending Machine; Job Search Using High Tech; Google's Flu Trends and Using Health Coupons; Snow Shovel Maps to Snazzy Start-Ups.

"Electronic Pearl Harbor"—Cyber War with China?

Military defense experts have been warning since 1997 that an "electronic Pearl Harbor (www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/nov/11/beijings-electronic-pearl-harbor/)" cyber war with China's army of hackers was inevitable. But even with 12 years of warnings, National Intelligence Adm. Mike McConnell recently told Congress, "The United States is not prepared for such an attack."

The Chinese have already successfully attacked private and federal electronics systems. One such attack allowed the Chinese to "copy and siphon off several terabytes of data related to design and electronics systems...potentially making it easier (for the Chinese) to defend against American F-35 fighter-jets." And in 2006, Chinese intrusions caused the shut down of the entire computer system at the U.S. Naval War College. Financial institutions and international organizations have also proved vulnerable to China's cyber attacks, since they have also stolen proprietary information from well known companies from NASDAQ to General Electric.

Going Ape for Unique Apps!



Three orangutans at the Milwaukee County Zoo have been playing with a donated iPad (latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/12/orangutans-play-with-ipads-love-it.html) a couple times a week, and love it. The orangutans can't hold the iPad since they are so strong they would break it. But keepers hold it up to their cage, and they can stick their fingers through the metal-mesh to interact with it. Now an orangutan conservation group,



Orangutan Outreach, is involved in the "Apps for Apes" program, and hopes to get the iPad program started at other zoos with orangutans.

The New York Times has just announced a new smartphone app called "Election 2012 (elections.nytimes.com/2012/mobile/app)". "News, opinion, polls and live election night results," their ad claims. "From The Times and other top sources around the Web. It's the best campaign coverage anywhere, all in one app." It is free from iTunes.

However, the *Mercury Times* reports in January 2012, that Japan is having problems with smartphone users secretly photographing (www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_19647736) unsuspecting targets, thanks to apps that silence the camera shutter sound. Even as the apps are tied increasingly to complaints of voyeurism, Japanese police report that there is currently no legal barriers to creating and selling these software programs. One "upgraded" app even displays an e-mail Web site on the smartphone's screen to "provide cover for the surreptitious picture-taking."

Global Electronic Security—Movie Star Satellites to GPS Interference

At the end of 2010, actor George Clooney came up with the idea to have a satellite spy (www.latimesmagazine.com/2011/12/i-spy.html) on genocide-ravaged South Sudan (Africa). He did the leg-work himself, meeting with Google and satellite company DigitalGlobe, and acquired helpful data from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, and human-rights activist John Prendergast's Enough Project in Sudan. Clooney even decided to personally bankroll the project's \$2 million annual budget. By August 2011, Clooney's eye-in-the-sky found evidence of mass graves in Sudan. And by mid-October 2011, more satellite-evidence determined that Sudan's Central Reserve Police had committed war crimes near a U.N. compound.

By last December (2011) the draft summary of a U.S. government test stated that Philip Falcon's proposed LightSquared wireless service lived up to the fears: it caused up to 75% interference (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19513275) of global-positioning system receivers. "The results showed that millions of fielded GPS units are not compatible with the planned nationwide wholesale service (of LightSquared)." So now U.S. regulators are withholding approval as they investigate GPS interference claims.

Late in December 2011, Bloomberg revealed that Israeli Internet-monitoring equipment (www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-23/israel-didn-t-know-high-tech-gear-was-sent-to-iran-via-denmark.html) was being shipped to Denmark, where it was relabeled and then resold to Iran. "The transactions illustrate how ineffective governments have been in blocking a global trade in new, intrusive surveillance technologies that authoritarian regimes can use as weapons for repression."

Tablet Computers Go Big-Time

A recent January 2012 Associated Press story (seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/business/technology/2017154301_apcncanadausborderipad.html) revealed that a Canadian citizen who approached a U.S. land border, suddenly realized he'd forgotten his passport. Not wanting to spend hours driving back home for his passport, he offered a border patrol agent his iPad with his scanned-in passport. It was eventually accepted, since he also had his driver's license and birth certificate. Scanned-in docs may be in our future, since airlines now accept digital boarding passes on smartphones.

Contra Costa Times reports that Britain's government is considering developing a bespoke iPad app (www.contracostatimes.com/technology/ci_19631584) "that would deliver key data straight to Prime Minister David

Cameron's tablet computer". Downing Street declined to comment, but *The Times of London* reported that the app "could include statistics and information from government departments, real time news and Twitter updates."

Hacker Updates: HP Printers, Vehicle Chaos and Card-Skimming

As I reported earlier, Hewlett-Packard was understandably upset when Columbia University researchers released their findings that some HP printers did not verify firmware updates. This left the HP printers susceptible to letting remote hackers take control of the printers. By late December 2011, however, HP had offered a firmware update (www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19608770) that would "mitigate this issue."

Security experts are becoming alarmed over another very real possibility: criminals hacking into multiple vehicles (www.contracostatimes.com/technology/ci_19633869) at one time, and causing terrorist-style chaos. Our vehicles have now become stuffed with electronic devices to control everything from air bags to brakes. One researcher "found that a car's computer controls could be remotely accessed through its Bluetooth, Wi-Fi or OnStar connections, potentially allowing terrorists to control the brakes of numerous cars simultaneously." Another researcher showed how a car's tire pressure warning system could be hacked, caused by trailing criminals so that when the alarmed driver pulls over, he'll get robbed.

A December 2011 article in the *Mercury News* reports that credit card "skimming" (www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_19516684) is on the rise, especially in California. "New technologies enable fraudsters to be more creative and hit more victims at once," notes Connie Trudgeon of CO-OP Financial Services. Crooks can use skimming machines in ATMs, or remotely insert malware into the entire credit and debit card processing system in a company's stores. Some can even receive stolen ATM security codes via text message from their homes.

Wearable Computers



"I say, Farnsworth! Your computer topper is really spot on!"

While admitting that smartphones are the largest group of "wearable computers" (www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19610437), researchers at Apple and Google have been secretly working on projects that will also become new versions of "wearable computers." In Google X's secret laboratory, researchers are working on peripherals that, when attached to clothing or a body, could communicate information. Apple has experimented with prototype products that could relay information back to an iPhone or iPod.

One idea being discussed at Apple is "a curved-glass iPod which could wrap around a wrist." Predictions for the future involve people wearing glasses and even contact lenses with working displays. (As I previously reported, the FBI is especially interested in these wearable types of peripherals, like a soundless keyboard display on a forearm.)

Facebook News: Causing

Divorces and Finding Kidneys

The Los Angeles Times reports that Facebook may be getting a bum rap for breaking up British marriages (latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/12/status-update-facebook-breaking-up-a-third-of-uk-marriages.html). According to Divorce-Online, a third of the 5,000 British petitions for divorce in the past year mentioned Facebook. Since Britain has no such thing as a no-fault divorce, break-ups citing "unreasonable behavior" mentioned infidelity or incriminating messages and photos posted on a spouse's Facebook page.

In the U.S., Facebook is also considered the "new lipstick on the collar" for exposing marital infidelities. And warring exes are even using Facebook posts as a "War of the Roses" battleground, to "air differences from picking up the kids to paying child support."

On a more positive note, Facebook has also been the link to help people find new body organs (www.staradvertiser.com/news/breaking/136506108.html?id=136506108). Facebook and other social media sites "are quickly becoming a go-to place to find a generous person with a kidney to spare." According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (a private nonprofit that manages the nation's organ transplant system for the federal government), just during the past year a Michigan man and Seattle man found new kidneys through Facebook, and a Florida woman found a kidney through Craigslist.

Law Enforcement Update: Prison Robots to Ignition-Interlocks

Law enforcement continues to benefit from new technologies, whether tricked-out patrol cars or algorithms to recognize crime hot-spots. Hawaii just finished their first year with ignition-interlocks for drunk drivers ([www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/16421878/af?](http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/16421878/af?utm_feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NawaiiNewsNow-News+)

[utm_feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NawaiiNewsNow-News+](http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/16421878/af?utm_feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NawaiiNewsNow-News+)), and have rated the new law a success.



This law offers people first convicted of drunk driving the option of having an ignition-interlock installed on their vehicle, instead of having their drivers license revoked. The idea is to make convicted drivers first breathe into the car-mounted device. If the device detects alcohol on the drivers' breath, the vehicle won't start. Fifteen percent of first time offenders agreed to have the device installed. An expanded version of the law for repeat offenders (who many times don't have a drivers license or any insurance) is being planned.

South Korea is about to roll out their five-foot tall prison guard robots (latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2011/12/south-korea-prison-robot-guards.html), who will patrol behind-bars hallways and even assess the mental states of prisoners. With a month-long trial starting at one jail in March, the guard-bots will conduct night patrols, scanning cells with sensors that can detect suspicious activities, or even injured or hostile inmates. South Korea already has

Artificial Intelligence (AI) robots doing household chores, and guarding the border with North Korea.

Hollywood Tech—Luxury Theaters And TV Programming for Xbox

Texas Instruments, Inc., who make the computer chips used in digital projectors, has predicted that the worlds' film projectors will be completely replaced by digital projectors (latimesblogs.latimes.com/entertainmentnewsbuzz/2011/12/digital-projectors-poised-to-take-over-the-world-by-2015.html) by 2015. The Dallas company reports that 62% of U.S. movie projectors, and over half of the rest of the world's movie

screens, have already been converted to digital projectors. The transition has been accelerated by the popularity of 3D blockbusters like "Avatar."

Mexican-based theater chain "Cinepolis," is ready to extend its brand of luxury cinemas (articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/25/business/la-fi-ct-cinepolis-20111025) into Southern California. "Cinepolis" has opened its first theater in Del Mar, California. It is gambling that high-end patrons will be willing to plunk down nearly \$20 per ticket to sit in leather recliners and punch a call-waiter button to order up teriyaki beef skewers or a glass of wine. ArcLight Cinemas and Gold Class Cinemas have also been opening luxury movie houses in Southern California, and most are out-performing expectations.

It was reported in December 2011 that Microsoft was looking for a TV executive to develop original programming (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19512105) for their Xbox, to expand their Xbox Live game and video service. A couple of former NBC executives have been approached, although Microsoft has reported that it will only hire the "right person"—or none at all.

Internet Expansion: More Domains and Wi-Fi in a Vending Machine

According to Bloomberg, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved a plan in June 2011 to "expand the number of top-level domains (www.contracostatimes.com/technology/ci_19636433) beyond the commonly used .com, .net and .org. ICANN wants to spur online innovation, but Senator Jay Rockefeller wants U.S. officials to seek a review of their plans to prevent companies and groups buying up domain names just to prevent others from abusing their brands. More than forty well known companies and the Association of National Advertisers are also opposing the expansion, saying "it will increase costs for companies, confuse customers and create new risks for Internet fraud."

TechCrunch reported in December 2011, that a Tokyo, Japan, beverage vending machine company (Asahi Soft Drinks) will not only offer bottled beverages, but send out Wi-Fi signals (techcrunch.com/2011/12/28/japan-gets-wi-fi-dispensing-vending-machines/) within a 50 mile radius. Customers don't have to buy a beverage, and can access the Wi-Fi for free for 30 minutes.

Job Search Using High Tech

The Detroit Free Press reported on three new techniques to help job-seekers (www.freep.com/article/20111227/NEWS09/112270305/Unconventional-job-search-with-3-methods) land a job. Job Search Television (myjstn.com) posts 60-second videos of job listings from around the country, which can be shared through e-mail or social media. Job seekers can also record their own 20-second resume to post on the site.

A Vizibility Mobile Identity Kit (www.ereleases.com/pr/vizibility-expands-online-identity-management-platform-mobile-identity-toolkit-63226) now allows users to share their resume with just a Quick Response code and the swipe of their smartphone. "We call this having your own mobile business card," reports the CEO of Vizibility. "You could apply for a job or send your video bio immediately with the QR code."

And third, Facebook offers several tools to expand your career network to everyone you know on the site. BranchOut and BeKnown are Facebook apps for networking. BeKnown users can search job listings provided by Monster.com, and BranchOut relies on Indeed.com for its job listings.

Health Tech News: Google's Flu Trends and Using Health Coupons

Google correlated flu-related Web searches (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_19649688) from 2003

to 2008, since searchers' Internet addresses revealed their location. Google then compared their findings with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data over the same period. Eventually, Google devised a "formula to estimate regional flu activity based solely on searches." They ended up with a "reporting lag" of only one day—beating out CDC flu reports, which typically aren't published until a week or two after outbreaks. Now their Google Flu Trends (www.google.org/flutrends) is accessible online for public health officials.

According to an *Associated Press* story at the end of December 2011, basically healthy folks without health insurance are turning to sites like Groupon and Living Social for limited-time health specials (www.chicagotribune.com/business/breaking/chi-uninsured-turn-to-groupon-daily-deal-sites-for-health-care-20111230,0,6995989.story), when the need arises. Deep discounts for teeth cleanings, eye exams, chiropractic care and even medical checkups are offered for a limited-time, from one day to a month. The customer pays up front and must redeem the coupon/deal before the time expires.

Chicago's Tech: Snow Shovel Maps to Snazzy Start-Ups



When the snow starts falling in Chicago, the complaints and rumors start flying over which streets or neighborhoods get their roads snowplowed first (www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/us/chicagoshovels-web-site-gives-lowdown-on-snow.html). So this year, Chicagoans can access a new city Web site (chicagoshovels.org) which uses GPS technology to map out where Chicago's 300 snowplows are in real time after a heavy snowfall. City officials hope that the snowplow tracker will "debunk the belief that routes are politically motivated." The interactive site also includes additional features like the Snow Corps, which matches volunteer snow shovelers with areas not yet plowed, and/or where someone's snow-buried vehicle has been towed.

Chicago-based high tech company Eved (www.eved.com) just raised \$9.5 million in venture capital. Founded in 2004, the company is an "event services and management company." They launched an online platform to link event organizers with service providers, and even offer tools for marketing, e-commerce and "other parts of the supply chain."

Chicago start-up BodyShopBids (www.bodyshopbids.com) has also just raised \$1 million in venture capital funding (www.chicagotribune.com/business/breaking/chi-chicago-startup-bodyshopbids-scoops-up-1-million-in-vc-funding-20120104,0,2166771.story). Launched in June 2011, the start-up already has 275 Chicago vehicle body shops signed up. Consumers can upload photos and a report of vehicle body damage to the site, and then choose from a list of received bids to fix the damage. The site also offers mobile apps for the iPhone and Android, so busy people can research vehicle repairs even when they are on-the-go.

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

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Windows 7 Tips and Tricks: New or Improved Free Windows Programs Since XP

“Some new programs are free downloads while old standards have been greatly enhanced in Windows 7,” by Jack Dunning

Since Windows XP, new free applications (Windows Live Mail, Photo Gallery, Movie Maker, and more) have been added as downloads. Plus, some new or vastly improved programs (Paint, WordPad, Calculator, Sticky Notes, Snipping Tool) are included in the Windows 7 installation.



Windows Tips and Tricks

After starting the work of updating and compiling "Windows Tips and Tricks" into e-books and publishing the Windows 7 guide for XP users, *Sticking with Windows XP...or Not?*, I realized that I had left out an important chapter—"What New or Improved Programs Are Included with Windows 7?" I had written about these changes a number of years ago, but my comparison was in relation to Windows Vista rather than XP—which is still going strong while Vista is rapidly on its way out. In this column I expand and clarify the additions and differences in the free programs which come with or can be downloaded for Windows 7. Many of these are in or can be used with Vista, but most are not available for Windows XP. *(This column has become a new chapter in the Windows XP e-book. For those who have already purchased this e-book, a new free download has been added to their account.)*

If you are already using Windows 7, you may find this column a source of programs which are available to you, but you may not have known that they exist.

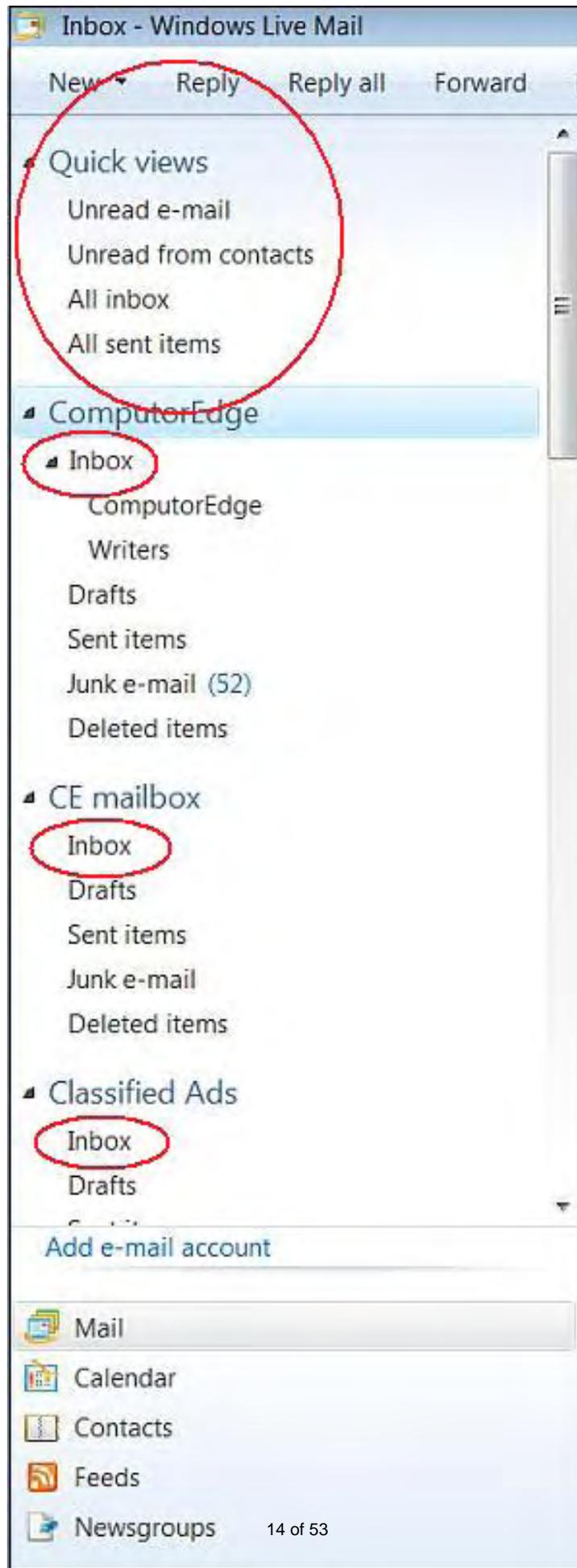
Programs to Download

There are a number of programs which may appear to be missing from Windows 7—especially when compared to Windows Vista. The most obvious is an e-mail program. However, they are available as free downloads in a package called Microsoft Live Essentials (explore.live.com/windows-live-essentials). Not only can you get Windows Live Mail, which integrates a calendar and contact program with Microsoft's version of the Internet Cloud, but there is also the Photo Gallery application and a very capable video editing program called Movie Maker.

Windows Live Mail

The big change in Windows Live Mail (explore.live.com/windows-live-essentials-other-programs?T1=t2)

is that it is account oriented rather than mailbox oriented. Each e-mail account gets its own inbox (see Figure 1).



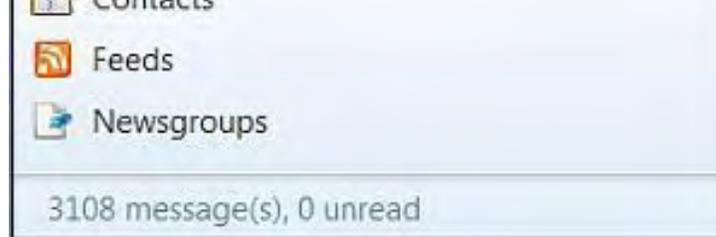


Figure 1. Windows Live Mail accounts and Quick Views.

To save the aggravation of checking each account, there are new mail checking features called Quick Views to screen your e-mail with filters such as "Unread email," "Unread from contacts," and "All inbox."

Windows Live Photo Gallery

Windows Live Photo Gallery (explore.live.com/windows-live-essentials-photo-gallery-get-started?T1=t1) is the photo cataloging and editing program which can be downloaded from Microsoft Essentials (see Figure 2). While it may not have as many features as a program such as Adobe Photoshop, it is quite capable and may be all that an amateur needs to process digital photos prior to uploading to Costco for printing or downloading onto your iPad for sharing with others.



Figure 2. Windows Live Photo Gallery is excellent for organizing and processing photos.

I haven't spent much time with this version of Photo Gallery yet, but some of the features look quite advanced. For example, there is a Photo Fuse feature for combining the best parts of two photos.

Windows Live Movie Maker

Windows Live Movie Maker (explore.live.com/windows-live-essentials-movie-maker-get-started?T1=t3) is a full featured video editing program (see Figure 3). I wrote an article on video editing with Windows in 2009 with the earlier version of Movie Maker. Glancing at the Windows Live version, it looks just as capable.



Figure 3. Windows Live Movie Maker for editing and producing videos.

When I start working on the Windows 7 multimedia e-book, I'll produce a video with Windows Live Movie Maker and write an update for *ComputerEdge*.

Other Programs in Windows Live Essentials

Microsoft is working as hard as any company to take advantage of the Internet and Cloud computing. It's difficult to evaluate how well they are doing in this area. They offer online storage—SkyDrive, online calendars, Messenger for high-definition Internet video chatting, and a number of other services. I do know that I get an e-mail reminder every Thursday night to put out the trash. Other downloadable programs include:

- Family Safety—Help keep your kids safe online.
- Mesh—Keep your files and photos synced on your PCs, and connect remotely to all of your files and programs.
- Writer—Create blog posts with photos, videos, maps and more. Then publish them to any of your favorite blog service providers.

- Messenger Companion—Bring your friends along when you browse the Web. See and comment on links your friends have shared as you visit Web sites in Internet Explorer.
- Outlook Connector Pack—Manage Hotmail from within Outlook.
- Bing Bar—Get search results from Bing without leaving the site you're on.
- Silverlight—Silverlight is a development tool for creating interactive user experiences for Web and mobile applications. Silverlight is a free plug-in, powered by the .NET framework and compatible with multiple browsers, devices and operating systems.

(These last descriptions were taken from the Microsoft site—not my words, although I did delete a few adjectives.)

New or Improved Programs Included with Windows 7

It's worth taking a look at a few new or improved programs in Windows 7. Some are brand new and others are new versions of old software. Whether these programs will be of any value to you depends upon how you use your computer and your skill level. Some are simple and easy for anyone to use. Other programs may require a higher degree of technical knowledge. These applications are not necessarily reasons to get Windows 7, but if you're upgrading anyway or already have Windows 7, they may be a bonus.

Windows Calculator

As far back as I can remember, Windows has had a calculator. It is located in the Programs/Accessories folder. In Windows 7, the program can be found by typing "calc" in the search field of the Microsoft Start Menu. The significant change for Calculator in Windows 7 is that it now includes special features for figuring mortgages, vehicle leases, fuel economy, unit conversion and date calculation (see Figure 4). Rather than creating your own spreadsheet or searching the Web for a mortgage calculator, you can use your own Windows 7 tools.



Figure 4. Windows 7 Calculator has its own mortgage worksheet.

The only complaint I have about the calculator is the same gripe I've had since day one: I would like to be able to put

the Calculator window in an "always-on-top" mode, as can be done with gadgets. There are times when I want to be able to see the calculator sitting in the corner without searching underneath other windows. In fact, I would like to see an "always-on-top" mode selectable for any window.

Windows Paint



Figure 5. Windows 7 Paint program.

The Windows Paint program is another feature of Windows that probably has been there since day one. In the past it has always been a rather crude utility, good only for quick-and-dirty jobs. Microsoft has now implemented the ribbon user interface—which mixes tabs and graphic toolbars—in Paint, while adding quite a few new features (see Figure 5). Windows Paint now handles many easy tasks better and offers a few more features. For example, the Fonts menu will now show the style of the font and will preview the selected text while scrolling through the menu. Plus, an alignment grid can now be turned on.

Windows WordPad

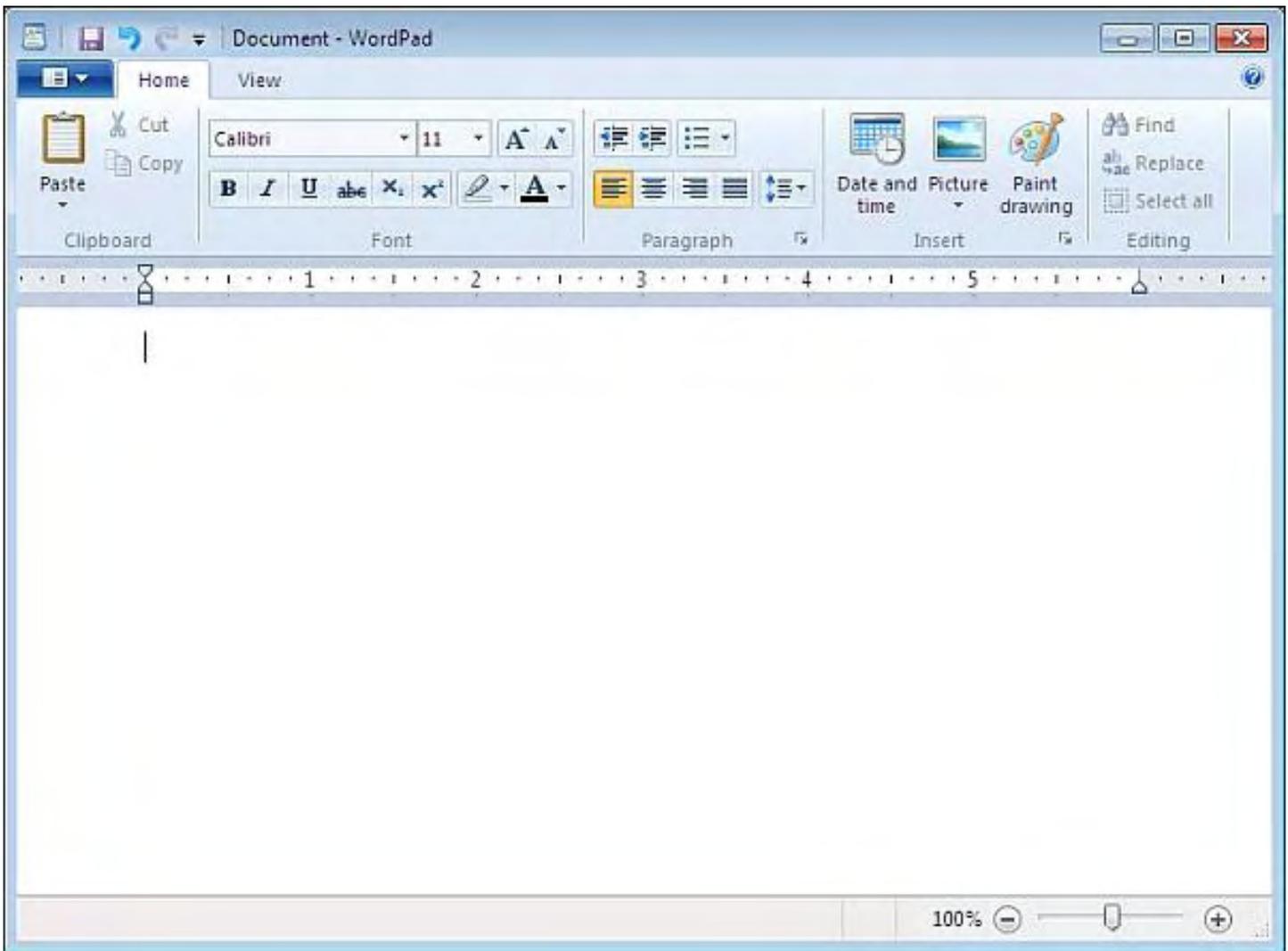


Figure 6. Windows 7 WordPad program.

Windows WordPad has also been updated with the ribbon UI. While I haven't taken a close look at it, for many people, WordPad may be all they need in word processing software.

Windows Sticky Notes

While there is a Sticky Notes program in Windows Vista, many people don't know it exists. The Notes gadget in the Vista sidebar is better known and more used. The problem with the Vista Sticky Notes program is that it doesn't act like sticky notes at all, although it can record audio.

The Windows 7 Sticky Notes program actually works like real sticky notes—without the sticky part. When you create a sticky note, a small text-editing note window that looks like the real thing is placed on the screen (see Figure 7). One advantage of this program over the Vista gadget is that you can drag the lower right hand corner of the notes to any size you like. The Vista gadget is limited in size.



Figure 7. Windows 7 Sticky Notes program. This shot shows three sticky notes plus a weather gadget.

Another advantage of the Windows 7 Sticky Notes program over the Vista gadget is that each time you add a note, a separate paper memo image is created, allowing independent placement and movement. Plus, if you have placed the program in a Quick Launch button, all the notes can be toggled open and closed with that button.

Being an integrated program, the text memos from Sticky Notes appear as list items after doing a search in the Start Menu (see Figure 8). In this case, the search was on the word "note." If the search term is "sticky," or any one of the words in one of the notes, then the appropriate items will appear on the list.

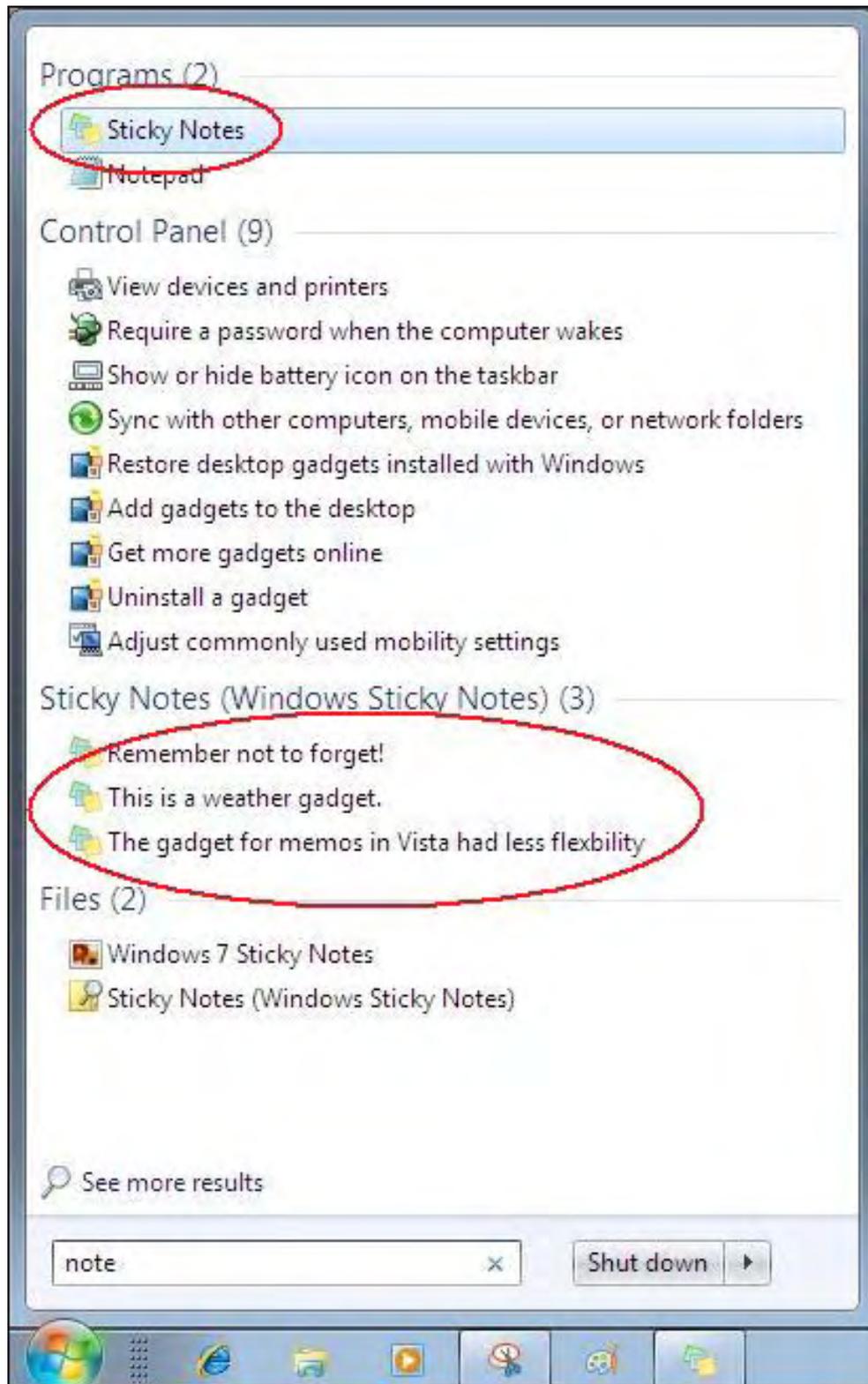


Figure 8. Sticky Notes will appear in a Start Menu search.

There are a couple of features of the Vista gadget that are better than the new Sticky Notes program. First, if you open the desktop, the Vista gadget doesn't disappear. Second, you can set a gadget to "always on top," which is useful for reminders. The "always-on-top" mode would be useful, just as it would be for the calculator.

What I particularly like about the new Sticky Notes program is the ability to make multiple notes, resize each note, toggle open and closed with one button, and see the memos appear in a search of the Start Menu.

Snipping Tool

Snipping Tool, the Vista screen-capture program, is still included in Windows 7. While all the old methods for capturing screens still work in Windows 7, Snipping Tool is particularly handy (see Figure 9). I keep it in the Taskbar. You can even cut out irregular shapes.

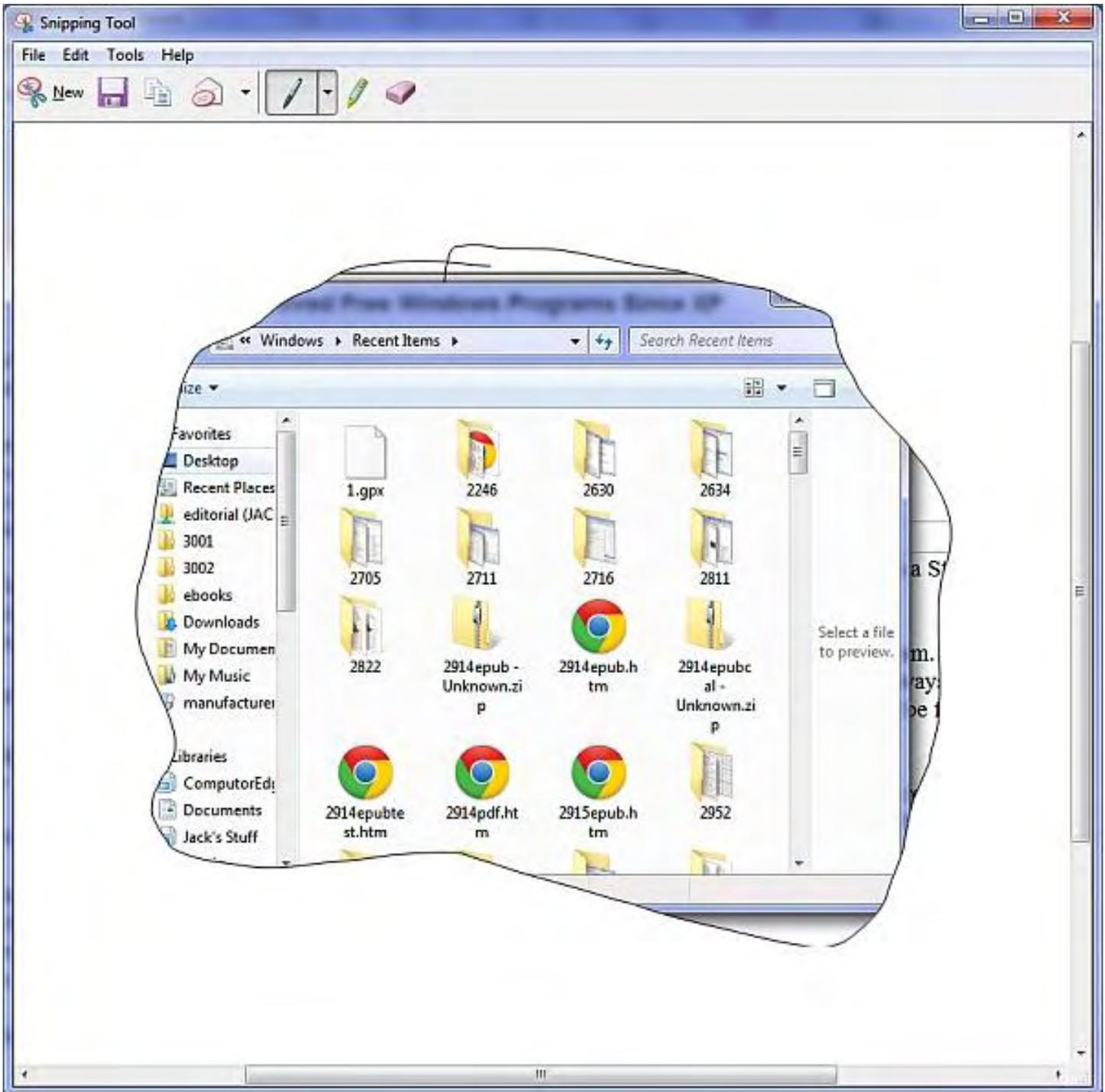


Figure 9. Snipping tools allows the capture of irregular shaped screen shots.

I use Snipping Tools to capture open menus, which can't be done with the standard key commands for screen capture. With the usual method when you press the key commands, the menu will close before the screen is captured.

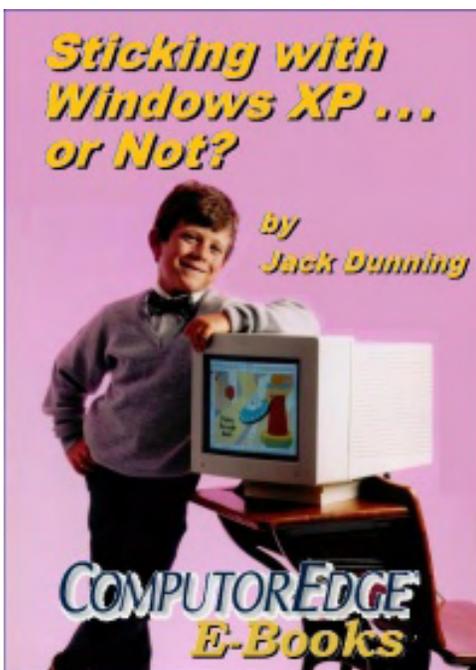
Windows PowerShell

Windows PowerShell is a scripting system for power users. It uses the .NET framework and has access to all the files and directories on the Windows 7 system. It's designed to be used by system administrators. PowerShell is an uber-command prompt. I haven't had a chance to take a closer look at PowerShell, but I'm sure that there are some creative ways for the tech-savvy to use it.

The tablet oriented Windows Journal is also included in Windows 7, along with a Math Input Panel for adding a formula or two to your work.

While none of these programs make or break Windows 7, they each have the potential to enhance your computing experience. Probably, none of them alone are a good reason to upgrade to Windows 7. As with a new car, it's not a good idea make the purchase based upon the number and location of the cup holders.

* * *



The picture at the left was taken close to twenty years ago for a cover of *ComputerEdge Magazine*. (The desk is even older.) Windows XP was first released in August of 2001. Windows 95 had not yet been released when this photo shoot was set up. It's hard to believe that what's depicted in this cover is actually from more than three Microsoft operating systems ago. Yet, the attitude displayed seems appropriate for the cover of a Windows XP comparison e-book. There's no need to apologize for a system that works.

(Hey, I just saw a copy of *ComputerEdge Magazine* (cgi.ebay.com/Computer-Edge-magazine-with-Sherlock-Holmes-cartoon-character-cover_W0QQitemZ200655683587QQcmdZViewItemQQssPageNameZRSS:B:SRCH:US:101) (*Colorado Edition*) that sold on eBay for \$8.00. Go figure.)

This article has now been incorporated in the e-book, hopefully, giving the Windows XP user a better understanding of what Windows 7 has to offer. If you're interested in Sticking with Windows

XP...or Not? (*iPad, NOOK, Kobo, EPUB* (www.computoredgebooks.com/Sticking-with-Windows-XP-or-Not-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0001-1.htm) or *Amazon Kindle MOBI* (www.computoredgebooks.com/Sticking-with-Windows-XP-or-Not-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0001-2.htm)), *it is available at* ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com).

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. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Windows 7 Explorer Secrets (EPUB for iPad, NOOK, etc.) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Explorer-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0003-1.htm)

Windows 7 Explorer Secrets (MOBI for Amazon Kindle) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Explorer-Secrets-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0003-2.htm)

Windows 7 Taskbar Secrets (EPUB for iPad, NOOK, etc.) (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-

Taskbar-Secrets-EPUB-for-iPad-NOOK-etc-Wintips0002-1.htm

Windows 7 Taskbar Secrets (MOBI for Amazon Kindle) ([www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-](http://www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-7-Taskbar-Secrets-MOBI-for-Amazon-Kindle-Wintips0002-2.htm)

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm "Kodak vs. Fujifilm" by Wally Wang

Kodak vs. Fujifilm; Dating Service for Apple Fanatics; Learning to Program for Free; Apple Sales Up, PC Sales Down; The Growing Problems with E-Books; Computer and iPhone Keyboards; Breaking Free From Your Spreadsheet Mentality; Time Machine Backup Program.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Look at the types of magazines offered in supermarket checkout lines and you'll find an abundance of celebrity gossip, women's beauty and tabloid news. One magazine you'll never see in the supermarket magazine racks is The Economist, which regularly covers the latest political and economic news about Argentina, Portugal, Indonesia, Russia, Egypt, Nigeria, Mexico, and a dozen other countries that most Americans know nothing about, yet feel fully informed on spouting their opinions on how to deal with these countries during times of crisis.

Reading just one issue of The Economist can give you a broader education on the world than several years of classroom work in most public schools. As an alternative to subscribing to The Economist, you can either visit their Web site (www.economist.com) or download their free iPhone/iPad/Android app (www.economist.com/digital/apps).



Figure 1. The Economist app lets you read select articles from the latest issue.

Both the Web site and their app won't let you read the entire contents of each issue, but they will let you read a sample of different articles from each issue. If you want more, you'll have to subscribe. However, just reading the handful of free articles can be interesting enough.

In one of the latest issues, The Economist compares the fate of Kodak vs. Fujifilm. Both companies made the bulk of their income from film and both knew that digital photography would wipe out their lucrative film business eventually. The difference is that Fujifilm adapted to change fast enough while Kodak didn't.

The Economist notes that "Both firms saw their traditional business rendered obsolete. But whereas Kodak has so far failed to adapt adequately, Fujifilm has transformed itself into a solidly profitable business, with a market capitalization, even after a rough year, of some \$12.6 billion to Kodak's \$220 million. Why did these two firms fare so differently?"

"Fujifilm has mastered new tactics and survived. Film went from 60% of its profits in 2000 to basically nothing, yet it found new sources of revenue (www.economist.com/node/21542796). Kodak, along with many a great company before it, appears simply to have run its course."

The transition from film to digital photography should have killed both Kodak and Fujifilm, but

Fujifilm took drastic action to adapt as rapidly as possible while Kodak didn't, and now Kodak is left teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

The lesson is clear. Change is inevitable, so how you adapt to change ultimately determines whether you'll survive or not. Just ask Kodak while they're still around to answer you.

Dating Service for Apple Fanatics

If you like Apple products and are single, you probably wouldn't get along with someone who knows little or nothing about Apple products, yet feels fully qualified to criticize and dismiss anything made by Apple. People willing to fabricate lies to bolster their own opinions are probably not compatible with anyone willing to make objective decisions based on actual facts.

For people looking to meet like-minded people who admire Apple products, visit Cupidino (cupidino.com/), a new online dating site geared specifically for Apple fans. You can sign up for free, but if you want to read any messages someone might send you, you'll need to pay \$4.79 a month.

The image shows a screenshot of the Cupidino website with four main promotional panels:

- Introducing Cupidino:** Describes it as the first ever "Mac-inspired" dating site, aiming to bring Apple fans and lovers of beautiful hardware and software design together. Includes a link to "Read more about why we built Cupidino, and who it's for."
- Sign up:** Promotes signing up for an account today, available exclusively on Apple devices (iPhone, iPad or Mac), and coming soon to the App Store. Mentions "Simple and inexpensive pricing." Includes an "Available on the App Store" badge.
- Newest Machearts:** States they are packed with designers, photographers, musicians, and tons of creative types. Shows four profile pictures with usernames: Machid, Lotus2, Anzy, and Azure74. Includes a link "See who else is on here".
- Check out the buzz:** Lists featured media outlets including Saturday Night Live, CNN, The Daily Show, and many more. Shows logos for WSJ.com, CNBC, cnet, Forbes, CNN, and GIZMODO.

Figure 2. Cupidino's site lets you date other Apple enthusiasts.

You may not meet your future spouse through Cupidino, but if you're single, it's worth a try. At the very least, you may just run into a lot of interesting people who share your appreciation of the Macintosh, iPhone and iPad.

Learning to Program for Free

Programming is one of those skills where you can study on your own and wind up becoming more skilled than someone taking years of computer science courses in college. If you've always wanted to learn programming but felt intimidated by the topic and needed the help and support of others, visit the Codecademy site (www.codecademy.com) where you can sign up for free JavaScript lessons. JavaScript is simple enough to learn so your knowledge can help you later tackle related languages like Java, C++, or Objective-C.

Codecademy wants to teach people the basics of programming so they can better understand how computers work. Non-programmers often believe anything from a computer must be right, but once you learn how programming works (or doesn't work), you'll also learn how faulty

computers can be so you'll understand that computers are only as good as the people who program them.

While many people learn programming for fun, for the intellectual challenge, or to create their own programs, many more people want to learn programming for a career. To see what eWeek magazine considers the top ten programming languages (www.eweek.com/c/a/IT-Management/10-Programming-Languages-You-Should-Learn-Right-Now/) to learn and why, read their list of languages that includes PHP, C#, JavaScript and C. If you're interested in writing your own Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad apps, then you'll probably want to learn Objective-C as well.

If you think you can't learn to program a computer, you might want to read Coders at Work (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430219483/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430219483) by Peter Seibel to learn about the world of programming without the details of learning a particular programming language.

You can also think about Arfa Karim Randhawa, who become a Microsoft Certified Professional at nine years old (digitallife.today.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/01/14/10158059-programming-prodigy-passes-away-at-16-hear-her-philosophy-of-life). Unfortunately, Arfa recently passed away at age 16, but she had a wise philosophy about life that many adults never achieve: "If you want to do something big in your life, you must remember that shyness is only the mind," she said. "If you think shy, you act shy. If you think confident you act confident. Therefore never let shyness conquer your mind."

Apple Sales Up, PC Sales Down

As usual, Apple continues selling more computers than the previous quarter while most PC makers keep reporting lowered sales (www.fool.com/investing/general/2012/01/12/apples-killing-your-pc.aspx). Initially, the PC makers blamed the economy (while ignoring the fact that Apple kept selling more expensive computers during that same economy). Then they started blaming the flooding in Thailand (www.ibtimes.com/articles/282386/20120116/plodding-pc-sales-weigh-down-microsoft-profit.htm) for hard disk shortages (while ignoring the fact that Apple kept selling more computers that also used hard disks). Perhaps their next excuse will be to blame the moon for not being in the proper alignment with Neptune and Jupiter at the end of the winter solstice.

Company	2011 Q4 Market Share	2010 Q4 Market Share	Unit Growth
HP	23.1%	29.4%	(26.1%)
Dell	22.4%	22.1%	(4.5%)
Apple	11.6%	9.0%	20.7%
Toshiba	10.7%	10.3%	(2.2%)
Acer	9.8%	10.4%	(11.4%)

Figure 3. Apple's U.S. market share keeps growing.

It's easy to see why Hewlett-Packard's PC sales are down. After boasting that they were going to dump their PC division and then changing their mind and keeping it, Hewlett-Packard drove away customers with their uncertainty (although they still had plenty of money to give to their former CEO for making this completely preventable mistake).

It's also easy to see why Acer sales were down. Acer depended on the netbook market and when that collapsed under the onslaught of the iPad, Acer's netbook market disappeared practically over night.

Watching Dell lose sales every quarter also makes sense since Dell is highly dependent on corporations and when corporate spending goes down, computer purchases go down.

Yet none of this explains why Apple keeps selling more computers every quarter. Some people claim that Apple has better marketing, but even the best marketing can't maintain growing sales over several quarters if people aren't happy with their products.

Perhaps the real reason Apple keeps increasing sales and market share is because they actually sell products that people want to buy. Once someone buys an Apple product and likes it, they'll be more likely to buy another Apple product as a companion or a replacement.

When people buy a Dell laptop, they're far less likely to buy another Dell laptop. They might, but they might also choose a Toshiba, Hewlett-Packard, or Lenovo laptop as well. With PC makers, there's far less customer loyalty since the products are basically the same with few outstanding features.

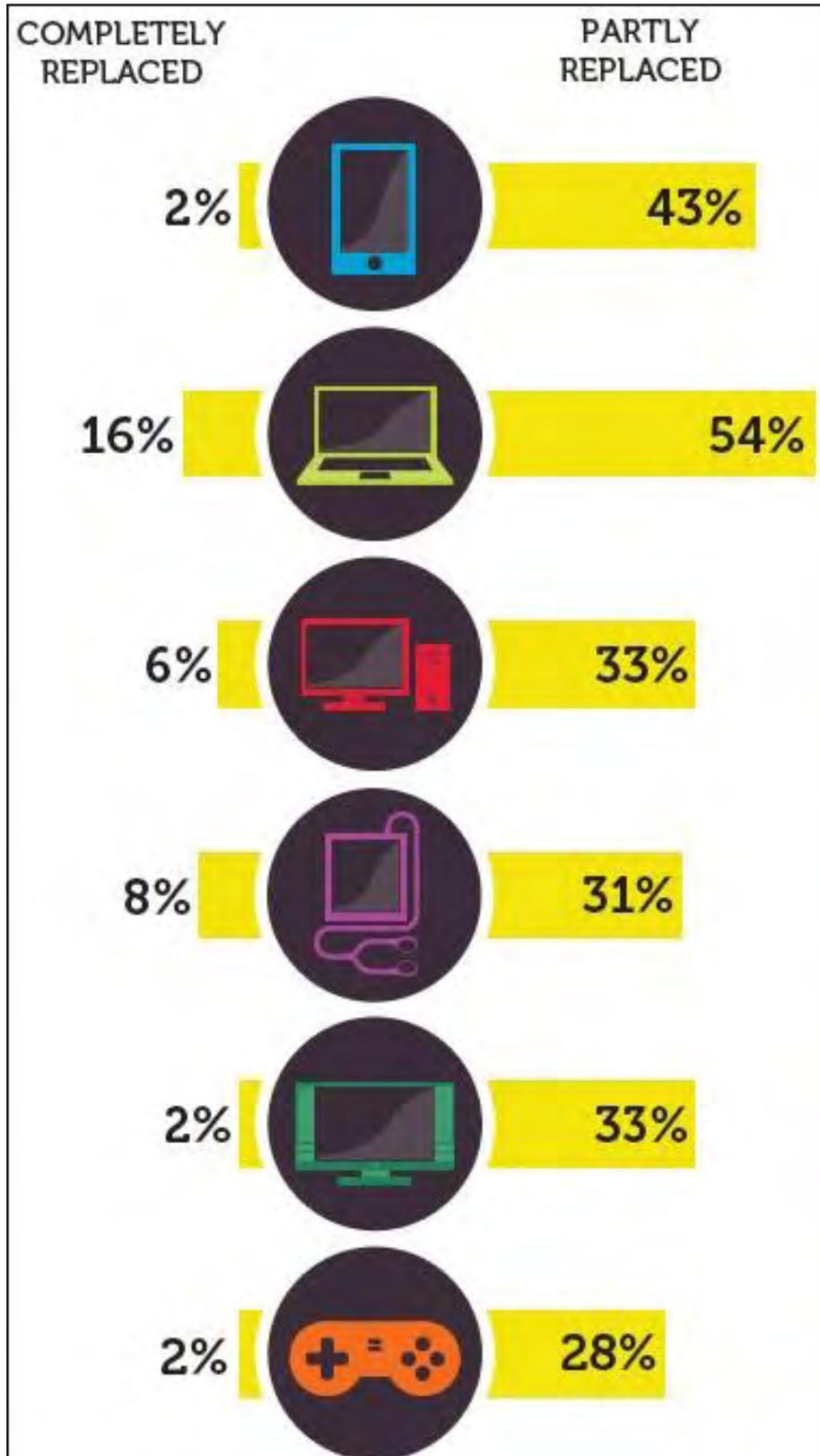
With the resurgent growth of the Macintosh, many PC users can leave the PC world altogether and switch to a Macintosh. Will many Macintosh users suddenly switch to a Windows PC? They might, but they probably won't. The end result will be a steady stream of PC defectors switching to a Macintosh while a much smaller stream of defectors trickles out from using the Macintosh back to the PC world. The end result will be a continual decline of PC growth and a continual increase of Macintosh sales and market share.

Even when Microsoft introduces Windows 8 later this year, that won't change people's minds. Will iPad users suddenly change from an iPad to a Windows 8 tablet? Probably not. Windows 8 tablets will likely appeal to people who haven't made up their minds yet about a tablet. Once they can see an actual Windows 8 tablet in action, they'll be able to compare it to the latest iPad to see which one seems best for their needs. The biggest problem is that Windows 8 tablets might cost more (www.slashgear.com/windows-8-tablet-drawbacks-mount-arm-locked-down-x86-overpriced-16209405/) than a basic iPad.

How many quarters in a row will Apple continue growing sales and market share before the critics finally acknowledge that Apple sells products that people want? Slick marketing can only go so far, but no amount of marketing can keep customers happy if your products make people miserable. Just ask Microsoft how much money they spent marketing Vista and whether their marketing millions helped overcome Vista's problems.

To learn more about the success of the iPad and the obstacles Windows 8 tablets must

overcome to compete with the iPad, download the iPad for Business (www.idgconnect.com/download/8007/ipad-business-survey-2012?source=connect) survey from IDG Connect. A large number of business professionals say that the iPad has partially replaced their use of other devices such as laptops or desktop computers.



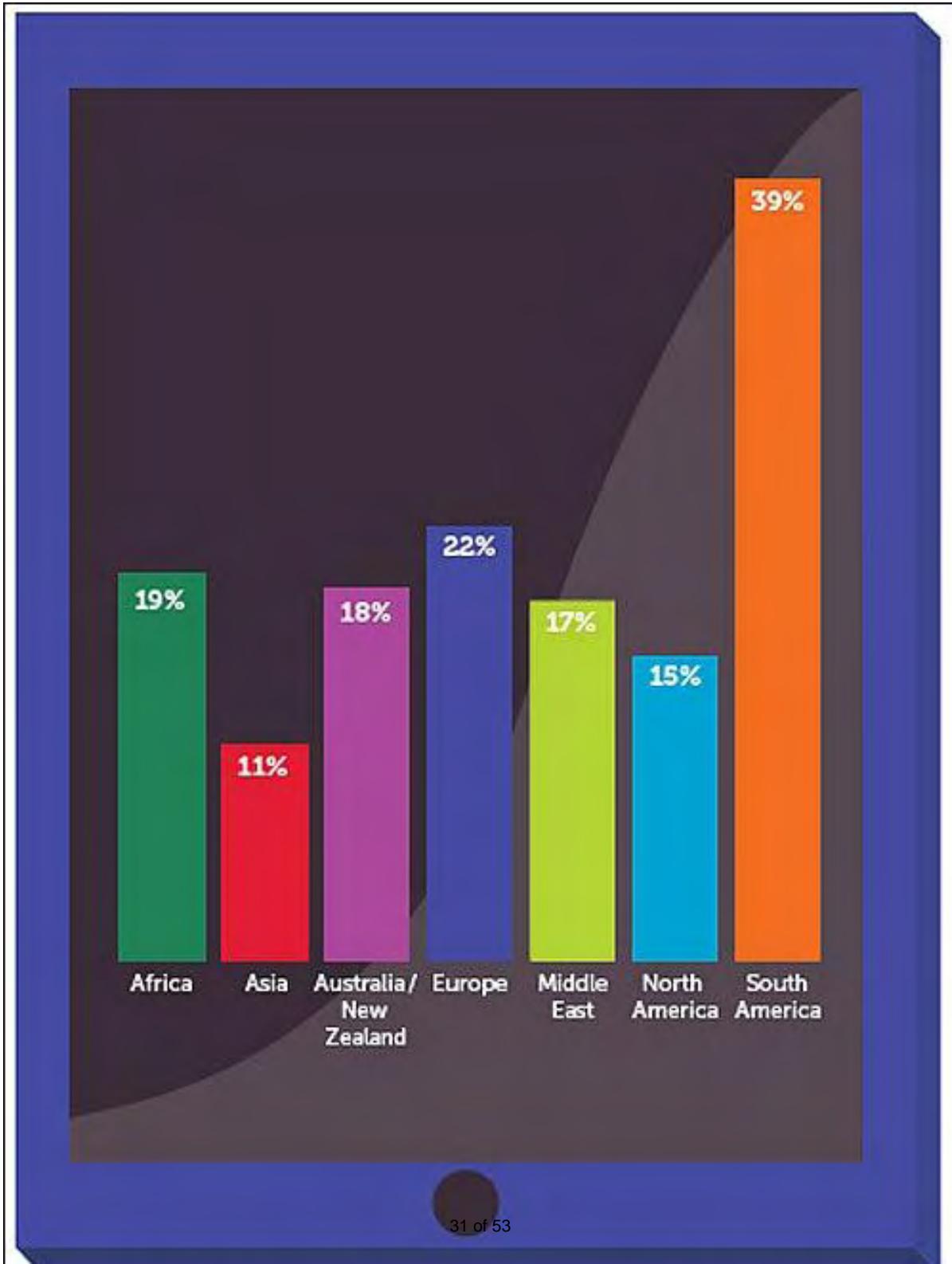
Number of professionals who say the iPad has partly or completely replaced the above devices

Number of professionals who say the iPad has partly or completely replaced the above devices

(Smartphone, Laptop, PC, MP3 Player, TV/DVD Player and Games Console)

Figure 4. Business professionals are using the iPad instead of other devices.

Perhaps the most telling statistic is the number of people who would consider buying a different tablet instead of the iPad. Based on this IDG Connect survey, well over half of iPad users are happy with their devices. Windows 8 tablets might appeal to the people unhappy with the iPad, but we'll have to wait until we see how happy people will be using Windows 8 tablets.



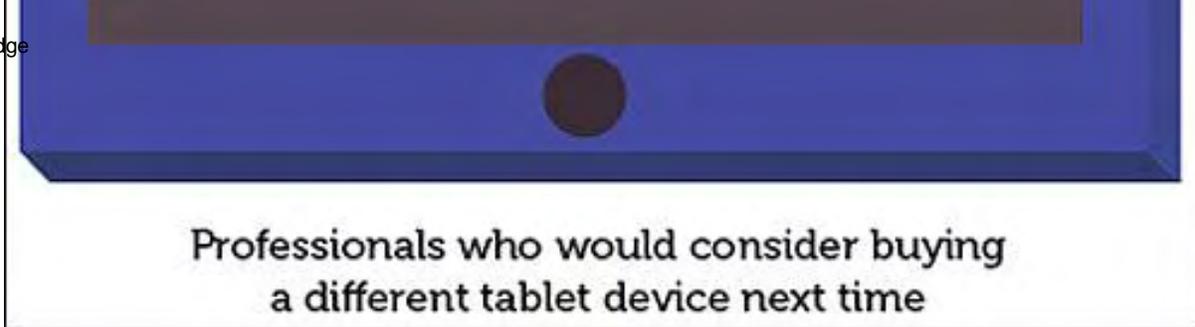


Figure 5. Some iPad users would consider an alternate tablet.

Until Windows 8 arrives, PC sales will likely continue slumping (www.ibtimes.com/articles/282386/20120116/plodding-pc-sales-weigh-down-microsoft-profit.htm). *Curiously, PC sales still include Macintosh sales to make PC sales look like they're not falling as fast as they really are. Take away Macintosh sales from the total PC sales and you might find PC sales falling faster* (thesmallwave.com/apple-vs-pc-shipments-pc-decline-worse-than-r) *than anyone might think possible. Toss in iPad sales* (www.appleoutsider.de/2012/01/15/what-if-we-count-the-ipad-as-a-computer/) *as part of computer sales and suddenly Apple is selling almost as many computers as Hewlett-Packard.*

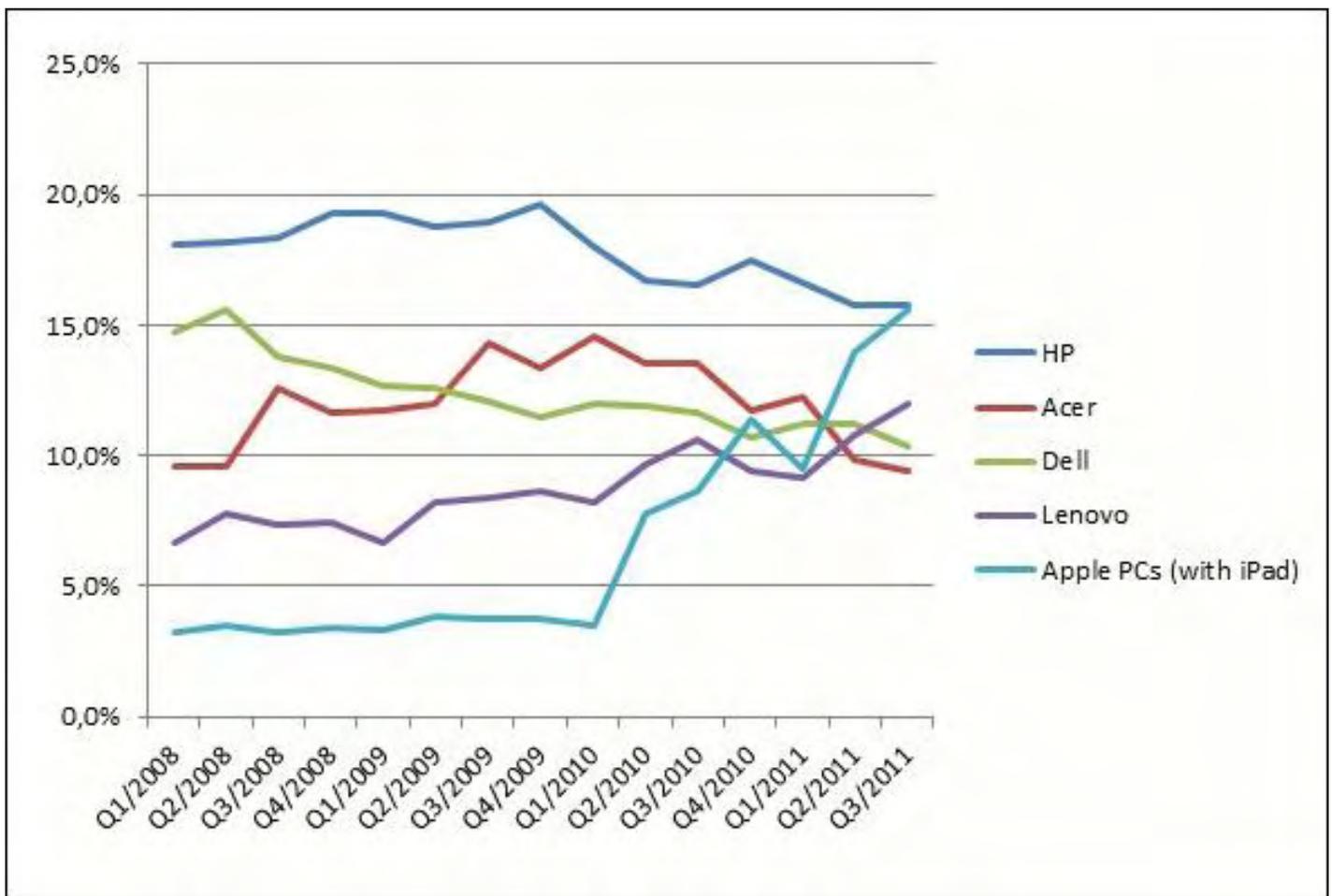


Figure 6. Including iPad sales boosts Apple's market share much higher.

Now that the iPad has become a success with growing sales each quarter, all those early predictions that the iPad would fail (www.windows7news.com/2010/01/28/why-the-ipad-will-fail-and-help-windows-7-to-succeed/) *look rather silly now. Of course, those early predictions that the iPad would fail looked rather silly when they first came out as well, but at least it's easier to see in hindsight.*

The Growing Problems with E-Books

The e-book market is already under assault. First, there are the problem with Spam e-books (www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jun/23/ebook-spam-problem-growing). These occur when someone takes public domain information or private label rights (PLR) content and repackages them as an e-book under different names. PLR content refers to information that someone has written and agrees to sell to others. When you buy PLR content, you also buy a license that allows you to distribute that information royalty-free.

The end result is that people buy such pre-written books, repackage them in half a dozen ways, and blast them on to the self-publishing platforms like Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/signin) or Barnes & Noble's PubIt (pubit.barnesandnoble.com/pubit_app/bn?t=pi_reg_home).

Just like Spam works by blasting millions of e-mail to people and expecting a small percentage will respond, so does blasting dozens of the exact same e-book under different names and titles increase the chance of selling a copy. Since the time needed to repackage an e-book is trivial, spammers are flooding the self-publishing, e-book market with books.

Not only do such Spam e-books flood the market and make it harder to find something worthwhile, but it also sours people on the idea of buying an e-book so it kills the self-publishing e-book market for honest authors.

Spam e-books is just one growing problem. Dishonest people are also copying legitimate author's e-books, repackaging them under their own names and titles, and selling them on their own. This would be like taking a Stephen King novel, photocopying every page, pasting them together as a book, and selling it as your own novel. The only difference is that duplicating a printed book is hard, but duplicating and subtly modifying a digital e-book is easy.

When people try to find and buy a new e-book, but wind up getting buried under an avalanche of nearly identical e-books or buying an e-book that someone else stole and repackaged under their own name, it makes the whole idea of e-books less appealing. This is where traditional publishers can step up and offer e-books under their own name to provide credibility.

Since ordinary e-books are too easy to copy and modify, the answer might lie in moving away from open standards like EPUB, which are trivial to copy and modify. Instead, we might start seeing e-books as apps, geared towards specific devices. This will make them difficult to copy and spread. While it's possible to steal an iPhone app, modify it, and submit it under your own name, it's not easy. It's much easier to do with an Android app because they're not compiled to machine code but to bytecode, which can be easily decompiled, modified and then recompiled again using a decompiler such as JAD Java Decompiler (www.varanekas.com/jad).

Whatever the answer might be, it's clear that today's open standards for e-books is making it easy for con artists and thieves to thrive while making it harder for honest customers and authors to enjoy the benefits of e-books and self-publishing. Toss in the ease that pirates can copy and distribute an e-book and the world of publishing is about to face the digital dilemma that wiped out the music industry.

Many of the big publishers won't even sell e-books to libraries (www.nytimes.com/2011/12/25/business/

for-libraries-and-publishers-an-e-book-tug-of-war.html) *for fear that people will easily copy and steal their e-books. The publishing world, like the music industry before them, is about to run face first into a digital wild west that they'll never be able to control. E-books are going to kill traditional publishers in one form or another. They just don't know how they're going to die yet.*

Computer and iPhone Keyboards

Chances are good that if you have an iPhone, you keep it nearby your computer when you're at your desk. While you could recharge your iPhone through its USB cable, Matias has another solution with their combination keyboard/iPhone charger dock (matias.ca/onekeyboard/standard/).



Figure 7. The Matias keyboard lets you type on and charge an iPhone.

Just plug your iPhone into the built-in recharging dock and you can recharge your iPhone while you use your computer. Now press a key and you can switch your keyboard from sending keystrokes to your computer to sending them to your iPhone instead.

By letting you use a full size keyboard to type on your iPhone, Matias makes it easy for you to send text messages or type notes on your iPhone. Buy the Pages app for your iPhone, use it with the Matias keyboard, and you'll have a full keyboard to turn your iPhone into a miniature word processor.

Matias sells three different versions of their keyboard/iPhone charger: an ordinary keyboard (\$99.95), a tactile keyboard specially designed for touch typists (\$199.95), and a slim keyboard (\$79.95) that mimics Apple's own small keyboard with flat keys. If you need to type on your iPhone when you're at your desk and want a full size keyboard for both your computer and your iPhone, then the Matias keyboard may be for you.

Breaking Free From Your Spreadsheet Mentality

Spreadsheets are basically 1979 technology based on the original VisiCalc program. Beyond adding charting and other features, today's spreadsheets are little different than a VisiCalc spreadsheet. For those who want to try something different, download the open source Matrex

program (matrex.sourceforge.net/). Here's a brief description of what Matrex can do for Mac OS X, Linux, or Windows:

"Matrex applies functions (formulas) to rectangular blocks of data, not to single cells. We call a block of data with the mathematical term matrix. A Matrex matrix can contain numbers, text, dates, boolean values.

"This approach is in general better than the original calculation by cell for big quantities of data like columns of database tables, feeds, csv files. It is always more usual to write spreadsheets containing this kind of data, so this should be the right way to go.

"For these data the calculation by blocks gives:

"Better performance: the function is called only once with blocks of data as parameters instead of many times with cells as parameters.

"Multithreading: functions are called less and they take more time to complete. This means that we can assign a thread to each function and still have a limited number of threads running together.

"Possibility of client/server, distributed architectures: matrices can be easily shared (not cells: too small, too many) and functions can be efficiently distributed among several processes.

"Better organization: matrices and functions are in a limited number so they can be named, commented, their behavior can be easily verified.

"Independence by the size of the block: if the matrices sizes change you don't need to change your function, like you normally do in a spreadsheet."

If this sounds interesting, give Matrex a try. The program is free so you can experiment and see if you can calculate something faster and more efficiently than an ordinary spreadsheet.

* * *

If you're planning to upgrade from an older Macintosh to a newer one, just get an external hard drive and clone your old Macintosh using the built-in Time Machine backup program (www.apple.com/support/timemachine/). Then plug your external hard drive into your new Macintosh and transfer all your programs, settings and data to your new Macintosh. By using Time Machine and an external hard disk, moving from an old Macintosh to a new one is fast, simple and easy without the need to reinstall anything all over again.

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 particples 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 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 (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 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.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
99% Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)
The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)
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.

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Buck's Blue Sky Advice & Cheap Tricks

Buck's Blue Sky Advice and Cheap Tricks

“Review of the Galaxy S 5.0 Player” by Buck Fadness

Buck reviews the Galaxy S 5.0 Player, a pocket size media player that is more than an MP3 player, but less than an iPad.

The Galaxy S 5.0 Player is more than a media player and less than a tablet. More than your usual media player in that it is running a full version of Android Gingerbread 2.3.5 and runs all of the same apps you would find on a 7" or 10" tablet. It has the latest versions of Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and GPS. It plays many different flavors of video and audio right out of the box and has 480 X 800 screen resolution and HD sound. Actually, the only way it's less than a tablet is that the screen size is only five inches. For me that is a plus, not a minus.



My first choice had been a 7" ACER A100 (why they named a 7" tablet the A100 and not A700, I don't know). My thinking had been that I would be able to read text and see videos better on a 7" screen and it would still be portable. Well, as it turned out, while it just barely fit into my inside coat pocket, the screen was just barely visible outside, even in partly cloudy weather and the

screen viewing angle was so bad you almost had to hold it in front of your face to see the graphics. I sent the ACER A100 back. By the way, I bought it from Buy.Com. After I boxed it up and sent it back, within three days I got a notice that it was received in good condition at the return facility. The next day I received an e-mail that said I would be getting a full refund credited to my account. I like Buy.Com, I have always had positive experiences when dealing with them.



With notice of the refund I was determined to do a lot more research before I bought my next tablet. To make a long story (two weeks) shorter, I finally decided on the Galaxy 5.0 player. It also comes in a 4" version, but I knew, with fingers like mine, I wouldn't be able to navigate a screen that small. I'm 6' 2" and my hands are 7 1/2" x 4". Plus, I wanted it to be big enough to make a decent e-reader. I have a PDA with a 4.5" diagonal screen and was happy with the readability of that size screen. The outside viewing on this 5" screen is quite good except in direct sunlight and the viewing angle is better than most laptops. The Android version is 2.3, older than the ACER at 3.2 Honeycomb, but the Galaxy 5.0 had the same size CPU, 1GHz, same internal RAM and memory size, and the SD card expansion is the same. Here are the specs from the Internet:

Processor: 1GHz S5P-C111 processor

Display: Size 5.0"

Resolution: WVGA (480 x 800)

Type: TFT-LCD

Camera: Pixel 3.2 Mega-pixel

Focus Mode: Auto Focus, Macro, Face Tracking (you can add a bar code scanning app)

Scene Mode: Portrait, Landscape, Night, Sports, Party/ Indoor, Beach/Snow, Sunset, Dawn, Fall color,

Firework, Text, Candlelight and Backlight

Timer: Yes

Front Camera: VGA Front Camera

Battery: Battery Time Audio Playback Max 50 Hours (Default setting, MP3 128Kbps, Volume 15, Normal

Sound, Display Off) [I never run the battery all the way down, but get 26 hours regularly.]

Video Playback: Max 8 Hours (Default setting, H.264 HD (480 x 800), Indoor)

Codec Video Play Format: DivX, XviD, H.264, H.263, MPEG4, WMV (up to 720p); RM/RMVB (up to 480p)

Music Play Format: MP3 / AAC / ACC+ / e-AAC+ / AMR / FLAC / OGG / WMA / WAV

Internet Tools:

- *Android Browser™*
- *Android Market™*
- *Google™ (Search, Gmail™, Map, Calendar, Latitude, Places and Google Talk™)*
- *YouTube™ (Support HD) (you can call via Skype when you're on a hotspot)*
- *Exchange ActiveSync™*

Connectivity:

- *Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n*
- *Bluetooth v3.0 (A2DP/ AVRCP)*

USB: USB 2.0 [You can't use USB peripherals, but can plug into your laptop or desktop and move files back and forth.

Memory: Built-in 8GB Flash Memory

External Support: MicroSD™ card (up to 32GB)

Special Features: GPS Yes

FM Radio: Yes [The radio is a true FM radio and when you have ear phones plugged in, or a dummy earphone jack with a bit of shielded wire on it, it pulls in FM stations that my expensive home system can't get.]

Speaker: Yes [It has stereo speakers that sound pretty good for their size.]

MIC: Yes

Multitouch Zoom In and Out: Yes [The zoom is fast and it is quick to refocus at your chosen size. It also has automatic orientation on most apps and screens.]

Multitasking: Yes

Size Dimensions: (WxHxD) 78.2 x 141.3 x 11.9mm [About 5 1/2" x 3 1/4" for us metrically challenged people.]

Weight: 182g = 6.5 oz [Or about 8 ounces with a soft case and screen protector. Also, you will want to get a stylus if you have oily skin like me.]

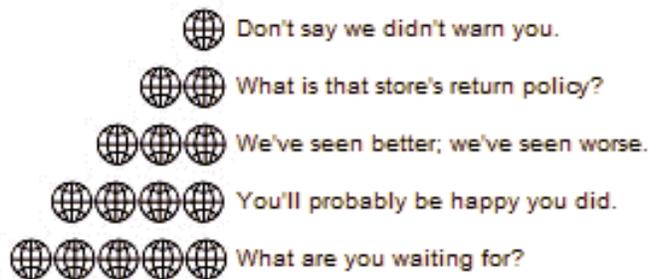
If you don't own a tablet or have not been researching them to see if you really want one—then these facts and figures may not mean much to you. But if you know anything about tablets, or computers in general, you will be impressed when comparing the 5.0 player to other media players or even 7 and 10 inch tablets. These specs are way higher than the same price range for media players. (I've seen it lately for about \$239.) I paid \$265 at Best Buy because Buy.Com was out of stock on this model and I wanted it before Christmas.

Most people who use an Android smart phone claim to have all of these features on their cell phone, plus Internet anywhere using 3G or 4G connectivity. I will grant you that I can only use the Internet or Google if I'm near a hot spot, but if I plan my trip or commute at home I can download any info I need into my Player (tablet) or even the hot spots along my route. Also, I can program POIs (Points of Interest) into the GPS app. (POIs being hot spots or trolley and bus transfer points for me, as I only travel by bicycle or MTS.) As my cell phone is a basic Virgin Mobile pay-as-you-go (\$20 for 3 months, if I don't talk too much), I don't have to pay the \$40 to \$150 per. I'm not trying to talk you into buying a tablet or claiming the Galaxy player will solve all of your portable media issues. But if you want a pocket size, super capable media player that is much more than a Video/MP3 player and somewhat less than an iPad, then check out this little diamond that's not so rough.

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

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Worldwide & Product news reviews



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Social Media Predictions for 2012; Tongue-in-Cloud; Sony C Series Notebook; Steam: Hot, Origin: Still in Its Infancy.

Social Media Predictions for 2012

According to Robin Brassner of the self-described *Technology Transactions Group*, Morrison & Foerster:

Morrison & Foerster has launched a new *Socially Aware* (www.sociallyawareblog.com) blog, a real-time companion to its award-winning online newsletter covering legal and business developments in the quicksilver world of social networking. The blog contains predictions on some of the developments that will shape the social media landscape in the year ahead. A few highlights:

- Watch for an explosion of employment law disputes involving social media this year. Morrison & Foerster says, "It's coming. Get ready."
- "We will see even the most conservative Fortune 500 companies adopting internal, company-wide social media platforms of the type offered by Jive, NewsGator and SocialText," Morrison & Foerster says. "And in 2013 and beyond, we'll be seeing a new generation of privacy, employment, defamation and other legal claims arising out of these enterprise social platforms."
- Expect the calls for greater regulation of online behavioral advertising to grow louder over the coming year, resulting in new legislation and regulations.
- Even with Facebook's recent settlement with the FTC over its data collection practices, Morrison & Foerster anticipates still further privacy law headaches for social media companies. "Many social media providers, anxious to justify astronomical valuations, are undoubtedly feeling pressure to make more aggressive use of personal information collected from customers. Watch for the first skirmishes in 2012 to be initiated by European regulators."
- As more and more companies enter into often extremely one-sided "clickwrap (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clickwrap)" agreements with platform providers, look for an increase in legal challenges to these agreements. "Although clickwraps are generally enforceable under U.S. law, we expect to see more challenges on public policy and other grounds to particular provisions in these agreements."
- Courts will continue to wrestle with Communications Decency Act provisions that provide broad

immunity for service providers against claims arising from user-posted comments to blogs and Web sites.

See Morrison & Foerster's full predictions (www.mofo.com/files/Uploads/Images/120110-Socially-Aware-Volume-3-Issue-1.pdf). The full predictions are on Page 9.

Tongue-in-Cloud

With the "cloud" likely to be a topic of much conversation this year, Marcy Hoffman, Vice President of Demand Generation at the Cloud Apps provider InfoStreetInfo, pens the following tongue-in-cheek Top 10 authored by "your competitor" that speaks indirectly to why the Cloud is so valuable:

Top 10 Reasons for Not Moving your Business to the Cloud in 2012

Author: Your Competitor

#10. Reduced costs: You've spent considerable dollars on computers, servers and software over the years. While it's true that much of it is outdated and many new programs won't operate on your older machines, it still works—sort of. We know that Cloud computing reduces hardware costs and networking management, but why improve on what works—most of the time.

#9. Scalability: The business climate is tough and you can't worry about potential growth. The Cloud allows companies to scale their business' storage needs seamlessly, using and paying for only what they use, but why worry about the future now?

#8. Automatic Updates: Your Company has been using the same software for years and the provider sends those pretty CDs for every update. You then get to use the extended quality time to bond with your staff while you plow through the upgrade efforts. The Cloud eliminates the need for IT to worry about paying for your future updates in terms of software and hardware, but what will your staff use for coasters?

#7. Remote Access: The Cloud allows your employees, partners and clients freedom to access and update information wherever they are, without having to run back to the office. Don't you want your team sitting at their desks all day instead of being on the road meeting with potential clients?

#6. Disaster Relief: Disasters come along so infrequently that why worry about the occasional flood, storm, or hurricane? It's true that the Cloud safely stores everything on secure data centers, accessible anywhere employees have an Internet connection, but with your PCs and servers safely tucked away in your old coat closets, your business has nothing to worry about.

#5. Ease of Implementation: Your IT person has set up your entire system to work, most of the time. He has everything networked and is available within 2-3 days to fix whatever is broken. It's true that implementing cloud services is easy and reduces both time and cost, but what are you going to do? After all, your nephew has been working so hard to get everything working properly.

#4. Skilled Vendors: Who would you trust to manage and protect your data? A company such as InfoStreet, IBM or Amazon—or your IT staff? After all, your nephew has been working so hard to get everything working properly.

#3. Even Playing Field for Your Small Business: You don't want to grow your small business too quickly and you certainly don't want to project the image that you can compete with your larger competitors. The Cloud gives your small business the same tools that Fortune 100 companies use yet your business will only have to pay for what you need (see #2). Small is cute so why change?

#2. Flexibility: Kids play with building blocks so they can build whatever their imagination designs. The Cloud will allow your business to select what your company needs, when you need it, and use it how you want to... You're not a kid, so grow up and operate the business the way your father did decades ago.

#1. The most important reason not to move your company to the Cloud: Because if you don't, we will.

Sony C Series Notebook

For those of us who have resolved to live our lives in the Windows world versus, say, the Apple world, there are not a ton of options out there as elegant and feature-packed as Apple's iconic line of MacBook Pros. But Sony's C Series notebooks (store.sony.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/SYCTOPProcess?catalogId=10551&storeId=10151&langId=-1&LBoId=8198552921666386654&categoryId=8198552921644784022) (about \$1299 with higher resolution screen and graphics options) go a long way toward not only taking aim at the best but, in certain respects, splits the old Apple right down the middle.



Right off the bat, the VPCCB2AFX/W looks fantastic with its distinctive white case and sleek lines. The unit, which comes preloaded with Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit, is available with a stunning 1920 x 1080 15.5" LED backlit HD Premium Display (although the standard 1366 x 768 display is no slouch either) and comes with a rockin' 2.30GHz (up to 2.90GHz with Intel Turbo Boost Technology) second gen Intel Core i5-2410M dual core processor. Throw in a back-lit keyboard with numeric keypad, HD Web camera, three USB 2.0 and one 3.0 ports, and a Blu-ray read/DVD write drive and you've got some mad performance happening.



The screen is really a stunner. Rich, deep, vibrant colors. Graphic response is very snappy using the AMD Radeon 1GB HD 6630M graphics option, even when I ran several first-person shooters. I can't say how fast it would be with the standard Intel HD Graphics 3000 Intel graphics chipset.

The Blu-ray drive makes it easy to connect the VPCCB25FX/W to your TV via an HDMI cable to watch movies. The notebook is also Intel Wireless Display Technology (WiDi) ready, allowing you to transmit video to an optional receiver connected to your TV at up to 1080p.



The VPCCB25FX/W has 4GB DDR3 SDRAM 1333 standard, expandable to 8 gigs. Where some computers fill up all the slots to get to 4, requiring you to buy all new DIMMs to get to 8, the VPCCB25FX/W leaves one slot open, requiring just one 4GB DIMM to max out memory.



So, what's not to like? I'm not nuts about the off-center positioning of the trackpad but that's one of those things you get used to. It would also be nice if the screen was less reflective but, sigh, a

lot of things would be nice. Also, the speakers aren't the greatest. They get a little buzzy if maxed out, but they're not bad—and it's a moot point if you use external speakers.



Steam: Hot, Origin: Still in Its Infancy

Thanks to more broadband connections in more homes, the traditional model of physically selling and distributing PC games using retail DVDs is rapidly being replaced by digital distribution solutions. For about eight years now, Valve's (creator of Half-Life, Portal, Left 4 Dead, and many others) Steam has been the leading digital distribution model. However, in the last couple of years, Electronic Arts (EA) has taken a crack at it with their own program, called Origin.

To help sort out the major differences between the Steam and Origin platforms, let's throw the two of them into the ring and see how they match up.

The Social Experience:



Steam: I've been using Steam for over five years now, and to this day I still cannot find a single problem with it. Steam offers a community of millions of active users. You have the ability to delve into a complete gaming Facebook experience. You can set up a community page (essentially your Facebook page of gaming), where you can brag about your kill streaks, join groups for specific games so you can chat or jump into games with people playing, and even add all your friends and chat while you're burning the midnight oil during a frag fest.



Origin: To put it bluntly, when it comes to being social, Origin is the shy kid who stays home on Friday nights. Origin does have a built-in IM (Instant Messaging) feature, and you can add friends ... but that's where it ends.

The Store:

Steam: Steam has a vast library of titles (over 1,800) with games from all the big producers including 2K Games, Rockstar and many more. There's also a thriving Indie game community as well with hundreds of games from third party developers like World of Goo and Bastion. You can even buy games for yourself, or gift them via e-mail or Steam to your friends.

The best thing about Steam, though, is the sales. Every weekend select titles go on sale with massive discounts. Over Christmas I managed to pick up Batman: Arkham City for 25 bucks when it was still selling in stores for 60! They also have package deals, where you can pick up five or six games for the price of three. And several times during the year, like summer and during the holidays, the deals and prices become insane! Shopping on Steam makes me feel like a criminal sometimes!

Origin: The sole reason I started using Origin's store was as a result of the lawsuit between Valve and EA, which resulted in Steam not being able to sell EA's first person shooter, Battlefield 3. As

a result, Origin became the only place you could digitally download this fantastic title. That being said, the Origin store is lackluster at best. They only have EA games for sale, and discounts seem to be almost non-existent for the more popular titles. You can also gift titles just as you can with Steam.

The Library:

Steam: Steam's method of keeping your games in order, is to put it simply...awesome. You can have all your games update with new patches automatically or you can choose to manually update. Each game has a page of news and updates specifically for it where you can learn about the latest patches or community events going on. There's also the Steam Cloud where many titles can automatically sync save games and settings. Thanks to Steam Cloud, you can open your games on a different computer and pick up right where you left off.

Origin: Origin's library is just a library, sadly. There are no fancy cloud features or news feeds; you can only view and update your games from it.

Security:

Steam: Steam has a nifty feature that requires you to activate the computers your account can be opened on. This means you have to have access to your e-mail as well as your Steam account. To do this, on the first use on a new computer, you log into your Steam account. Valve then e-mails you a code which you have to enter to ensure that you are the owner of the account. It's a one-time process that drastically reduces vulnerability of your account to bad guys.

Origin: Origin doesn't offer any security greater than your password.

The Verdict:

Steam drives the full experience and, if you only want to fool around with one distributor, it's the way to go. Origin has potential, but its lack of social features and a library of EA-only titles really drives me away. Still, the fact that EA titles such as Battlefield are Origin-exclusives will entice some of us to join both.

In summation, Valve's eight years of experience gives you a product so hot it has a right to be called Steam; while EA, well, for the time being has chosen the right name with Origin.

Steam (www.steampowered.com):



Origin (www.origin.com):



Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

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

Times *newspaper*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"USB Safe Removal; Right-click Web Search," "Back and Forth with Windows and Mac"

USB Safe Removal; Right-click Web Search

[Regarding the December 30 Digital Dave column:]

The USB Safe Removal and other USB comments were too cryptic for me to understand. I've never heard of USB Safe Removal. No rush, but some week could you rewrite the info in English?

The right-click Web search was something I didn't know about, so thank you very much. Unfortunately it doesn't let you start the search in a new tab, so you lose the page you've only partially looked at. If you know of an extension that can do this in a new tab, please let us know.

-Peter, Los Angeles

The behavior of the right-click search depends upon which browser you use. In the ones I tested (Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer), a new tab would open. However, you may need to set "options" to open in a new tab or window. Also, you can try holding down the SHIFT key while executing the search.

-Digital Dave

Dave, I have found that many USB removal and recognition problems can be solved by uninstalling the USB Hubs through Device Manager. Right-click on My Computer => Properties => Device Manager and then go down to Universal serial Bus controllers.

The three you want are the top three. In order, right-click each one and select uninstall. Usually the third one will be the mouse and keyboard. If not, you will have to shut the machine down manually, restart and then go back and uninstall the last one. Windows will reinstall all the drivers on restart and the system should work fine. XP and Vista don't like it when you don't click "Remove Device." W7 is slightly more tolerant.

-Bob Frincke, El Cajon, CA

Kudos, Jim. Love Unlocker. I see it also will unlock denied docs. Handy! Also appreciate the desktop icon script. Never lost that tray icon, yet, but have others.

Thank you.

DD, Thank you for the search tip! I did not know that. Nice shortcut.

-Paula Barefoot, Fresno, CA

Back and Forth with Windows and Mac

[Regarding the December 16 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

Still not convinced, Wally. I've looked at Macs over and over; I cannot justify the price. I want to get one for my wife, but even the Mac minis are just too expensive.

I can build a computer for half the price of a Mac mini, and still satisfy her needs. Unless you are using some specialty (read: Macintosh) app, then what's the use in paying \$1800 (tax and all... for an iMac) just to surf the Web, create e-mail, and keep up with your social apps (Facebook, etc.)? Crazy.

We have eight computers here in the house; from Windows 2k through Windows 7 Professional. Four laptops and four desktops. And that doesn't include my "shop" systems. Keeping them up to speed is not a chore—very little management/maintenance. I only want a Mac for the purpose of learning the OS inside and out—and maybe the hardware (although I'll have to wait until the warranty expires).

I recommend Macs all the time to those who just want to surf the Internet, read e-mail, and download iTunes songs. The iMac and its OS is very pretty looking. And yes, they will have less heartache when it comes to viruses, etc. The only reason I mention malware is that most people are too lazy to keep this protection updated. Remember though, Wally, you can be scammed or phished on a Mac too!

You want something solid (and free!), go with Linux (Mint, Ubuntu). I don't bash the Mac, but I'm sick of all the BS about how much "trouble" the Microsoft OSes are. I've been using, dissecting and studying these (Microsoft) OSes since DOS/Win 3.1. Maybe if I were a (successful) writer like you, I could afford a Mac :)

-Al Trudeau, San Diego, California

First of all, you can purchase an iMac for around \$1,200, not \$1,800. Mac minis are around \$600-\$700. For someone comfortable with maintaining a Microsoft OS with defragmenting, registry optimization, and malware protection, a Microsoft OS is no trouble at all. For someone unfamiliar with defragmenting, registry optimization, and malware protection, a Microsoft OS is definitely a lot of trouble to maintain. This is like saying that performing brain surgery is no trouble at all for someone who knows how to do brain surgery, but is definitely a lot of trouble for someone who does not know how to do it.

Most people have no idea that you even need to defragment your hard disk or optimize your Windows registry on a regular basis to keep your PC from slowing down over time. That's why you see so many TV commercials promising to speed up your PC, which is a simple task that people can do for free if they only knew how. The fact is that most people don't know how, so they're willing to pay extra for these services, which drives up the cost of using a Windows PC. Then over time, their PC gets slower once more and they feel the need to pay more to speed up their PC once again, over and over, gradually driving up the cost of using a PC until the cost of maintaining a PC soon pushes the price of the PC higher than if they had just bought a Macintosh.

The bottom line is that if you're comfortable maintaining a PC, then a PC is a less expensive alternative. If you're not comfortable with maintaining a PC, then a PC is a more frustrating and ultimately more expensive solution in the long

run.

I agree with you that if people want a simple and free solution, go with Linux just as long as you don't want to install any software beyond what the Linux distribution gives you because people confused by maintaining a Windows PC will also be confused with installing software and getting equipment to work with Linux, although this has gotten better over time.

-Wally Wang

Wally, yes the Mac minis list for \$599 and \$799—but they are incomplete. The \$599 only has two GB RAM. The video is subpar; it is "onboard" video. So it will have to be shared, further depleting the available RAM for (multitasking). You then have to purchase a separate optical drive; it doesn't come with one. That will cost you \$79. Then a mouse; \$49. Then a keyboard; \$49. And if you are smart you will purchase the AppleCare protection; you are prohibited from upgrading—or risk voiding the warranty.

So, after these minimal "upgrades" you are up to (without tax) \$927. That is quite a bit more than \$599. And remember, this is a system with "basic" video. So, really, you are paying \$1000+ for a system that will do: Internet, e-mail, listen to your iTunes, nothing really productive.

I went to the Apple Store and configured a 1) Mac Mini and 2) iMac. The Mac Mini (\$799 ver.) came out to \$1176 + tax and the iMac (21.5"/2.5GHz) to \$1368. The Mac Mini had 4GB RAM and 256MB video; bare minimum RAM and Video, if you ask me. The iMac had 4GB RAM and 512MB video; minimum RAM, decent video. At least the iMac comes with a keyboard, mouse and built-in DVD. I still think the AppleCare is a must.

Now, back to Windows... I don't know what you are doing, but I don't have to optimize my registry everyday, week, month, etc. I don't even have a utility to do that. I don't defragment. All one has to do is read up on this. It is being done automatically (when needed) in the background. Check the MSDN engineering blog "...Best practices for using defragmentation in Windows 7 are simple—you do not need to do anything! Defragmentation is scheduled to automatically run periodically and in the background with minimal impact to foreground activity." Malware? I use Security Essentials. I let it run overnight, once a week. Not brain surgery. My 11 year old son runs it.

-Al Trudeau, San Diego, California

The price of a Mac mini is fine for someone like yourself who may have several monitors and keyboards from old Windows PCs laying around so you won't need to buy anything extra. A mouse for \$49? Just get an inexpensive one for \$9, same for a keyboard. Then you can get a Mac for much less than the price of an iMac. Otherwise, I'd recommend just getting an iMac since you get everything for basically a little more than the price of a Mac mini. The Mac mini is best for someone with an old monitor, keyboard and mouse. Otherwise an iMac is better.

As far as Windows goes, it will slow down over time just by using it. That's why you see those TV commercials promising to speed up your PC. Notice there are no TV commercials for services to speed up a Macintosh? That's because a Macintosh doesn't suffer from defragmentation or registry problems like a Windows PC does. Yes, it is simple to maintain a Windows PC if you know about defragmenting, registry optimization, and malware protection. However, most people don't, which means their disks will get fragmented over time, their registry will get cluttered, and potential malware could affect the performance of a Windows PC. It's extremely simple to fix these problems, but on a Mac, disk fragmentation is much less of a problem, registry problems do not exist, and malware is much less of a

problem. In addition for a Mac, AppleCare is not a must. It may be nice, but not a must.

Windows Security Essentials is easy for an 11 year old to use, just as long as someone tells that 11-year old that you need it, how to find it, install it, and set it up to run periodically. Not hard at all just as long as you know it even exists and how to use it, but most people don't know about it, which means their PCs are too often left unprotected. Everything is easy when you know how. My point is that most people don't know how and thus Windows simply complicates their life unnecessarily.

-Wally Wang

Wally (Wang) and I have bantered over the (perceived) superiority of the Apple desktop computers and that of the Microsoft Windows driven PC. And, many (if not all) Mac users aggressively state that the Apple computer is superior to any other (desktop) computer out there today. They say that the world would be a much better place if Microsoft Corporation would collapse; then everybody would (be forced to) use a Mac... and be happy.

If Apple's ideology is about creativity, then why do they maintain a closed hardware approach? Remember, you cannot upgrade and repair your own Mac. You will have to take it to an Apple Store/Service center. Then they will either suggest hundreds of dollars in repairs, or "...why not just upgrade to the new iMac?"—either way, hundreds of dollars. That's why they set the AppleCare product so high in the first place; to discourage you from buying it when you (bought) your iMac/Mini. When the warranty plays out (in a year), you have to shell out big bucks to get it fixed. All one has to do is a Barnes and Noble or Amazon search for "Upgrading and Repairing Apple Computers..." and you will find five books; and none dated later than 2000.

As a PC user, I have choices. I can upgrade anything I want to on my PC. I don't have all those perceived evil PC slowdowns, etc. So, I guess this "open" and "thinking" comes into play with the programming side; applications for the Mac. Not too many books on that either! Open and creative, pfft!

-Al Trudeau, San Diego, California

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