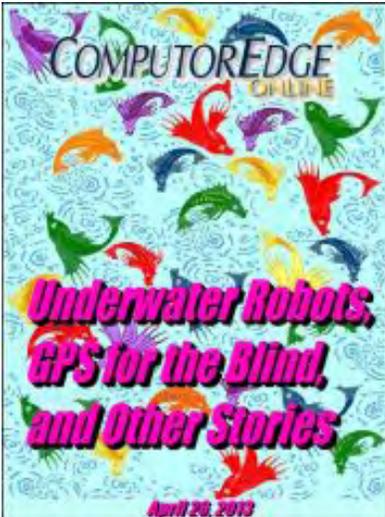# *ComputorEdge™ Online — 04/26/13*

This issue:
Underwater Robots, GPS for the Blind, and Other Stories

Underwater Robots; Facebook Updates: Vacationers, Netflix and Politics; Foreign High Tech News; High Tech Fashion; Google in Trouble? Privacy Issues to Manipulated Search Results; GPS Tech for the Visually-Impaired; Raytheon's "Riot" Software; Military Tech: Smart Uniforms to Bioeffect Weaponry; Tech Goes Microscale; Microsoft and Security Issues; Entertainment Tech Update: Tablets, Tweets and No-Glasses 3D; Cable TV and Movie Streaming.

Table of Contents:

Magically Appear When Hovering
When hovering a mouse over various controls in programs often help windows pop-up. Learn how to make them happen with AutoHotkey.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm by Wally Wang

The Warped Mentality of the IT Department
The Warped Mentality of the IT Department; Declining Video Game Sales; More Reasons to Distrust Other Companies; Garbage In, Garbage Out; Another Sign of Short-Sightedness; Programming on the iPad; The Share Icon.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.
So, Why Isn't Anyone Buying PCs?; Consequences of Living in the Digital Age; Auto Recall Inspires New Free Mobile App; Olympus XZ-2 Camera.
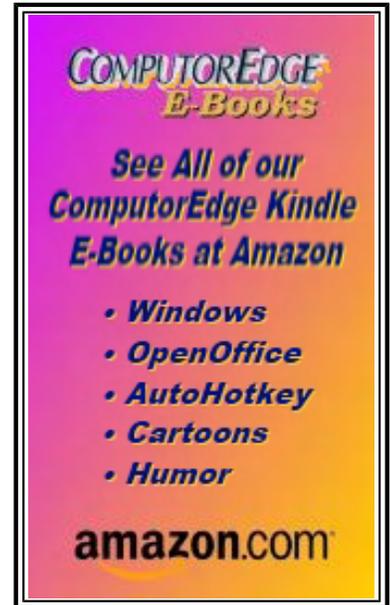
DEPARTMENTS:

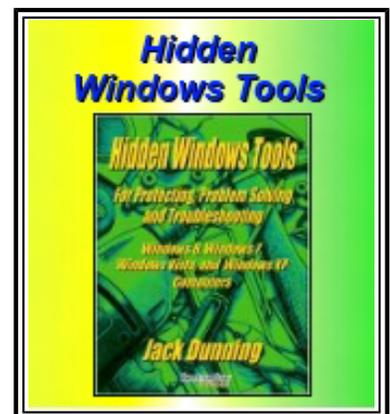## Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers by ComputorEdge Staff

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.
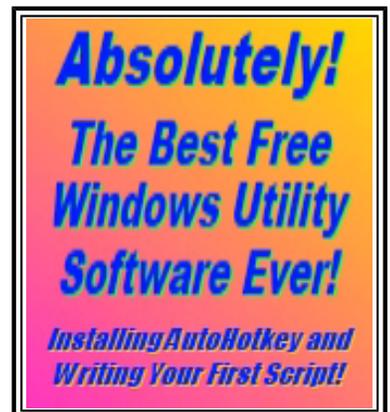"GrandKids App for Windows 8," "VB.NET," "IE 10 Win7 Behavior," ""Help" Is No Help!"

Digital Dave

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

Chrome "Not Responding"; Is UPS Battery Backup Dangerous to Your Health?; Viewing E-mail Message Source.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a strange problem with Chrome (in Windows Vista), every week/ten days it just gives me a "not responding" message when I try to open it, I'm forced to go into the Chrome User Data folder and change the name of the Default folder, restart the computer and copy all my Bookmarks to the new Default folder. Any ideas what could be the bugging problem?

Thanks,

Alfredo
San Diego, CA

Dear Alfredo,

This is not an uncommon problem—especially for Windows Vista computers. However, you should not need to change your default data folder to improve things. There are two things that make the problem worse in your situation. First, after a short period of time (a week to ten days sounds right) Windows Vista tends to gets clogged with various temporary files. Second, since Google Chrome runs a new process for every open tab, it can place substantial demands on the processor. Plus, if you have a number of plug-ins the problem may be compounded.

I've noted that when the "Not responding" message comes up, it is usually because things are just running slow. But many people think that Chrome has crashed and prematurely exit the program. Usually, a little more time will do the job. However, you really shouldn't be forced to wait.

I recommend that you pick up a program such as the free CCleaner (*www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download*). CCleaner will not only clean out the Chrome files which may be causing the problem, but it will also deal with other recalcitrant programs.

Check your Chrome add-ons and extensions. I have seen some, such as third-party grammar checkers, significantly slow down Chrome because they continually interact with other servers. Disable everything to see if that has any effect.

Google has an excellent help page (*support.google.com/chrome/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=113910*) on the topic. I particularly like the idea of testing a Web page in the incognito mode. The incognito mode disables extensions and stops most of the interactions which may slow things down.

I don't like the idea of changing your default data folder every couple of weeks. All you're doing is cleaning everything out by forcing Chrome to recreate the default setup. You have more control if you consciously delete files (History, Cookies, etc.), either through Chrome or with a program such as CCleaner. Then you won't need to copy your bookmarks over to the new data folder.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a PC with a backup battery system that is on all the time, in a closed 10'x10' room, with no exhaust fan to the outside.

I am in this room for long hours.

Could this battery backup unit cause any health problems?

FredCee

Dear FredCee,

Most UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uninterruptible_power_supply*)) batteries are of the sealed lead-acid (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead%E2%80%93acid_battery*) type. Lead-acid batteries (invented in 1858) are used because they can deliver the required surge power for the short-period of time when there may be a power outage—usually enough time to shut down your computer. When recharging they emit hydrogen and oxygen—plus may give off sulfuric acid fumes if overcharging. The sealed version of the lead-acid battery is used specifically in UPS systems (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001985SWW/ ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B001985SWW&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*) because the emissions are severely limited making them generally safe for use in poorly ventilated areas. However, all lead-acid batteries continue to give off some level of gases. It is always better to have some level of ventilation in any room with lead-acid batteries.

The primary symptoms of problems can be detected with your nose—if it's working. If you're getting excess hydrogen, then you will detect the smell of rotten eggs. Hydrogen is highly explosive so you should turn off the power to the batteries, leave the room and get the room ventilated. If there is a problem with overcharging then a sulfuric acid smell is likely which can be dangerous to your health if you inhale the gas. (I'm guessing that the acid smell is similar to the odor you smell if you've ever been around a car battery while it's being recharged.) Again turn off the equipment and get out of the room until it clears.

In both cases, you should replace the batteries (and possibly the UPS system). If the batteries have gone bad (and your system accepts replacement batteries), then the solution is to get new batteries. All batteries eventually fail to take a charge. However, it is possible that some of the protections built into the UPS have gone bad which may have caused the overcharging in the first place. In that case, new batteries will suffer the same fate.

I've been around a number of UPS boxes (mostly at work), but I've never noticed any type of problem or odor. The main issue with them is that they eventually won't hold a charge anymore, plus the big ones are really heavy. I don't use any type of UPS at home, other than the built in battery backup in my laptop. I make sure that I do regular backup so I won't lose more than a couple of minutes of work. Of course, I like to live a little dangerously.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Ever since my e-mail got hacked and all my friends received bogus mail from "me," I've been very careful when opening incoming, unfamiliar e-mail. My question is, is viewing the message source (select => right-click) which allows a peek at who sent the e-mail and what is in it, safe? Or is that just as bad as actually opening the e-mail?

Joe Piluso
San Diego, CA

Dear Joe,

Looking at the e-mail source is about as safe as it gets since all you will see is the original code in text format. There will be no active controls which can activate on viewing. I sometimes use this technique when I want to see more of the routing information.

However, most of today's e-mail client programs provide enough protection to stop any ActiveX or Javascript routines from running without your permission. Usually when someone falls victim to an e-mail scam it is because they were tricked into either clicking the wrong link or even more dangerously downloading an infected file. If you're careful about what you do when viewing e-mail, it should be safe even in the normal view mode. Just don't follow suspicious links or download unknown files.

To be even safer you could use Webmail (such as Gmail) through your browser. This has the advantage of being available anywhere on any computer, plus it has the added protections built into the browser.

Digital Dave
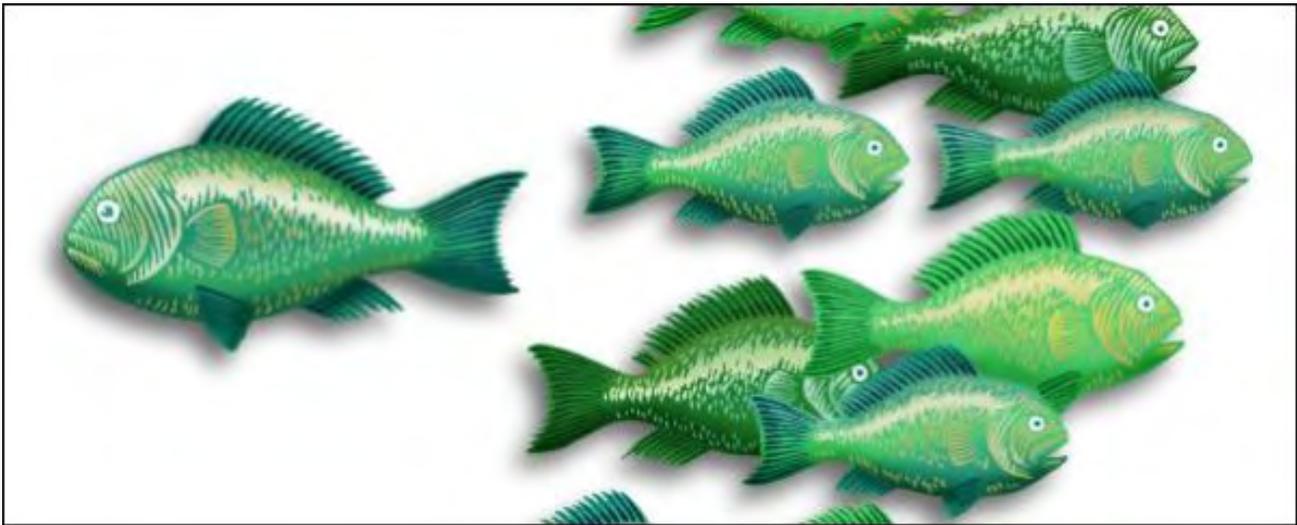
Underwater Robots, GPS for the Blind, and More Little Known High Tech Stories

"Robo-Fish, GPS for the Blind, EM-Harvester, Riot Software and High Tech Company Updates" by Marilyn K. Martin

> Underwater Robots; Facebook Updates: Vacationers, Netflix and Politics; Foreign High Tech News; High Tech Fashion; Google in Trouble? Privacy Issues to Manipulated Search Results; GPS Tech for the Visually-Impaired; Raytheon's "Riot" Software; Military Tech: Smart Uniforms to Bioeffect Weaponry; Tech Goes Microscale; Microsoft and Security Issues; Entertainment Tech Update: Tablets, Tweets and No-Glasses 3D; Cable TV and Movie Streaming.

Underwater Robots

In January 2013, AP through Boston.com ran a story on how robots are being used to find rare whales (*www. boston.com/news/weather/2013/01/19/robots-find-rare-whales-weather-humans-can/ ZUFsPCRG5oNcg5Crhjom7N/story.html*) in bad weather when humans can't. The Outer Falls area in the central Gulf of Maine is where the endangered North Atlantic right whale mates. Winter weather with steep swells and stinging wind gusts makes surface research nearly impossible. But now there are underwater whale-detecting robots shaped like torpedoes that can read "calls" from four types of endangered whales, and relay their locations in real time.

"I don't like the looks of this!"
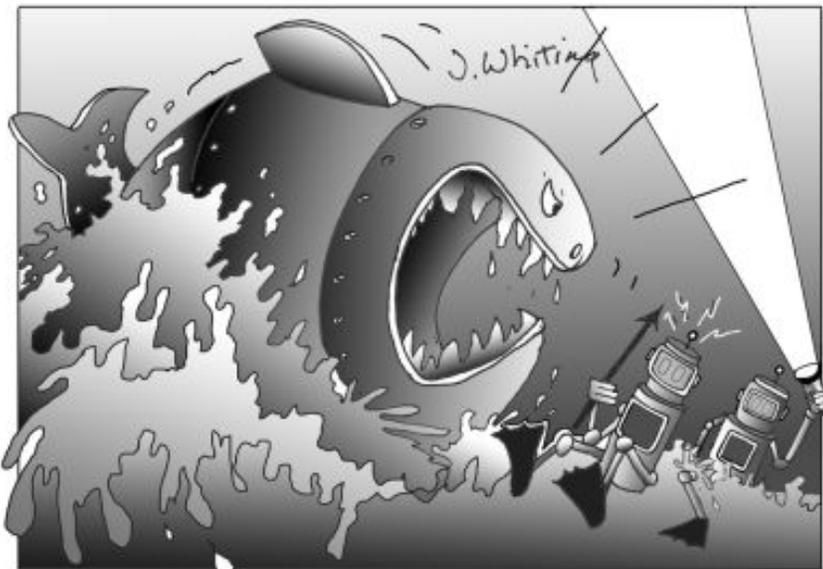
These underwater "gliders" were developed by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (*www.whoi.edu/*). The institute has developed other underwater robots, shown on their site as Robots of the Deep (*www.whoi.edu/page.do? pid=9779&tid=4142&cid=1112&i=1*). Another program testing underwater robots to track sea life in real time is the University of Delaware's shark-tracker (*www.nbcnews. com/id/49483229/ns/ technology_and_science-science/t/ underwater-robots-track-sharks-us/#. UVigBjdiP4Y*).

Northeastern University, Massachusetts,

"I don't like the looks of this!" teamed with other university and government programs in 2010 to develop small Biomimetic Underwater Robots (*www.neurotechnology.neu.edu/*) shaped like lobsters, for remote-sensing operations in rivers and on ocean bottoms. Both McGill and York Universities (Montreal, Canada) are currently doing 2013 trials on their AQUA underwater robot (*aquarobot.net:8080/AQUA/*) to better identify and interpret underwater features, including modeling 3D scenes using vision and acoustics.

Wired just revealed in a March 2013 story that a massive jellyfish recently photographed underwater is really a Navy robot (*www.wired.com/dangerroom/2013/03/robot-jellyfish/*). Cyro is an autonomous robot with eight mechanical legs around a metal chassis, designed to mimic the underwater propulsion of a jellyfish. The jelly-bot, created by a team of engineers from Virginia Tech, is still just a prototype. But it could indicate how the Navy envisions the future of underwater surveillance, with robots mimicking real sea life.

Facebook Updates: Vacationers, Netflix and Politics

The *Denver Post* revealed in February 2013 that 1 in 5 online adults have quit Facebook (*www.denverpost. com/business/ci_22527809/1-5-online-adults-have-quit-facebook-majority*), and 61% of Facebook users are "on vacation" from the site. A Pew Internet Project (*seattletimes.com/html/ businesstechnology/2020291237_apustecpewbreakfromfacebook.html*) had found that 21% of the "Facebook vacationers" cited a "lack of time" for Facebook. AP (through the *Seattle Times*) reported that the Pew Study also found that of the American adults who use the Internet, 67% are on the social site, with Facebook reporting more than 105 Million users in just the US who check in at least once a month. (Although how many are duplicate or fake accounts is unknown.)

The Hill reported in March 2013 that amendments to the Video Privacy Protection Act (VIPPA) now allow Netflix to let its customers share whatever movies (*thehill.com/blogs/hillicon-valley/technology/287899-thanks-to-new-law-netflix-adds-facebook-sharing-features*) or TV shows they are watching with their Facebook friends. According to an article in *TheMotleyFool*, Netflix is attempting to increase its number (*www.fool.com/ investing/general/2013/03/14/netflix-accepts-facebooks-friend-request.aspx*) of subscribers and retain members longer, since streaming-media is now a burgeoning market.

At the end of March 2013, Associated Press (AP) through the *Kansas City Star* reported that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was forming a political party (*www.kansascity.com/2013/04/11/4175605/facebooks-zuckerberg-launches.html#storylink=misearch*). The group is being formed to address issues from education reform to immigration and scientific research, and will launch shortly. Zuckerberg (28) has already donated millions of FB shares to New Jersey schools and Silicon Valley charities for health and education issues.

Foreign High Tech News

AP through the *Seattle Times* announced in January 2013 that a couple European science projects had won an EU Technology contest (*seattletimes.com/html/ businesstechnology/2020232020_apeueuropesciencebonanza.html*). One winning project is to map the intricacies of the human brain, and the other to explore the carbon-based material graphene. Each project will receive up to 1 Billion Euros each over the next decade. The leader of the project, Henry Markram of the Ecole Polytechnique Federale of Lausanne, Switzerland, said that the brain-mapping project could only have been publically funded. Mainly since too much fundamental science was required, and more profit-motivated industries wouldn't have touched it.

Also in January 2013, AP through Fox News ran a story on how Iran is developing new software to control social networking (*www.myfoxny.com/story/20510082/iran-building-software-to-control-networking-sites*) sites. Iran's police chief was quoted as saying that the new software would prevent Iranians from "being exposed to malicious content online, while still enjoying the benefits of the Internet." No specific social networking sites were named, but both Facebook and Twitter are popular in Iran. Iranian authorities already block some sites, such as those they see as "promoting dissent or considered morally corrupt."

PhysOrg reported in January 2013 that Antigua got World Trade Org. approval to become a "copyright haven (*phys.org/news/2013-01-antigua-copyright-haven.html*)," theoretically able to strip intellectual property protections from American goods. US officials are furious, calling the move "government-authorized piracy." This is all the result of a long-running trade dispute over the US embargoing the tiny Caribbean nation's online gambling industry, since US laws have long been interpreted to mean that Internet gambling is illegal if it crosses state lines. With little precedence, no one is sure how this "copyright haven" will shape up.

ExtremeTech reported in February 2013 that a German student has created an electromagnetic harvester (*www.extremetech.com/extreme/148247-german-student-creates-electromagnetic-harvester-that-gathers-free-electricity-from-thin-air*) that gathers free electricity from thin air. Although the details are secret, it is thought to be just another aspect of "wireless power transfer," like on upcoming smartphones. The EM-harvester created by Dennis Siegel of the University of Arts (Bremen) has no charging-pad, but can recharge an AA battery just by soaking up ambient, environmental radiation from overhead power lines, refrigerators, or even a Wi-Fi router. (If you could someday attach them to various devices around your house, they could not only lower your energy bills, but keep working when the power goes out.)

High Tech Fashion

Wired reported in December 2012 how a fashion entrepreneur, Ian Stikeleather (*stikeleatherapparel.com/*), wants to reinvent clothing fasteners (*www.wired.com/design/2012/12/reinvent-clothing-with-magnets/*). His new product line, Affectation, currently being funded through Kickstarter, is a system of modular clothes that use hidden magnets to replace buttons, zippers and other fasteners. The idea is to start with a basic dress or shirt, and add/remove accessories with small magnets as fasteners. Since magnets don't "interface" well with electronics or discs, it will be interesting to see who will be wearing these new mag-mod clothes.

TechCrunch reported in February 2013 how famously tech-averse High Fashion is finally warming to new apps (*techcrunch.com/2013/02/08/fashion-gps-breaks-into-the-notoriously-tech-averse-fashion-industry-just-in-time-for-fashion-week/*) and Web sites specially designed for it. Fashion GPS (*fashiongps.com/*) finally had a breakthrough in New York City's (February) Fashion Week. Fashion GPS offered several different iOS apps and Web services that let designers manage their runway shows directly from an app, from sending out invitations and tracking RSVPs, to interactive seating charts. After a show, buyers and editors could use GPS Radar to coordinate product samples going out to blogs, magazines and stores' buying offices. GPS Samples could then track the fashion prototypes through various locations and countries.

Google in Trouble? Privacy Issues to Manipulated Search Results

In January 2013, AP through *USA Today* reported that a dozen Apple customers in the UK were suing Google over its alleged "Safari tracking (*www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2013/01/28/google-sued-in-uk-over-safari-tracking/1871489/*)." Google was in trouble last year for the same practice of surreptitiously installing tracking "cookies" on computers and smartphones, circumventing privacy features on Apple's Safari Web browsers. Google settled those claims last year by paying the US Federal Trade Commission $22.5 Million in fines.

The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story in February 2013 about how Google is now under fire (*www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-google-under-fire-for-sending-users-information-to-developers-20130213,0,7558815.story*) for sending users' information to mobile app developers. When someone buys an app through the Google Play store, the buyers' name, location and e-mail address are automatically sent to the app developer. While app developers are split over the issue, Google claims everything is perfectly legal and that this is all spelled out in their Google Wallet Privacy Notice. Although Apple started the mobile app boom in 2008, Google Play now has the same number of apps as Apple—700,000.

In March 2013, *The Washington Post* ran a controversial editorial about how Google's search engines might shape our choices (*www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/could-google-tilt-a-close-election/2013/03/29/c8d7f4e6-9587-11e2-b6f0-a5150a247b6a_story.html*) and even favor a specific political candidate, in ways most voters would never notice. After a series of experiments with a fictitious search engine modeled on

Google, called Kadoodle, the results shine an even harsher light on Google. This also raises the question of whether or not the government should get involved if Google is indeed "distorting search results for political ends," especially with crucial swing-voters.

GPS Tech for the Visually-Impaired

Silicon Valley (from *Slate*) reported in January 2013 that Minneapolis-based attorney, Mike Hanson, who is blind, successfully hiked (*www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_22431932/blind-hiker-mike-hanson-customized-his-own-gps*) the 2,000 mile long Appalachian Trail by himself, with only GPS and trekking poles. He downloaded Loadstone GPS (*loadstone-gps.com/*), which is a free, open-source application specifically designed to facilitate the mobility of blind and visually impaired persons. The Loadstone system can store points-of-interest, like in schools or grocery stores, and provides oral instructions for clock-face directions ("Your cereal is at three o'clock").

Hanson then gathered data from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (*www.appalachiantrail.org/*) and other sources, converting them to the Loadstone format on his phone. He created a route-planner with checkpoints along the trail, along with his own oral instructions. He also once served as president of Capable Partners (*www.capablepartners.org/*), a Twin Cities non-profit to pair physically challenged persons interested in hunting and fishing, with sports-minded volunteers. Today, he continues to hike demanding trails, while developing new GPS technology for the visually impaired.

Raytheon's "Riot" Software

The UK's *Guardian* published a story in February 2013 on how a US defense contractor surrepticiously mines social network data (*www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/10/software-tracks-social-media-defence*) for surveillance. First-among-equals, defense contractor Raytheon (*www.raytheon.com/*) has secretly developed software capable of tracking people's movements and predicting their future behavior—all from mining social networking Web sites.

Raytheon hasn't sold the software to anyone yet, but their Rapid Information Overlay Technology (RIOT) program has been shared with the US government and defense industry for analyzing trillions of people from cyberspace. After this story broke, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) weighed in. They found a number of troubling issues (*www.aclu.org/blog/technology-and-liberty-national-security/raytheons-riot-social-network-data-mining-software*) with RIOT, such as it possibly being used to schedule black-bag jobs to plant spyware when people are known to be away from their laptops, to using "link analysis" to justify data collection on innocent people.

Military Tech: Smart Uniforms to Bioeffect Weaponry

In January 2013, SiliconValley revealed that researchers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (*www.llnl.gov/about/visiting.html*) are developing a snakeskin smart-uniform (*www.siliconvalley.com/latest-headlines/ci_22450859/livermore-researchers-developing-snakeskin-like-smart-uniforms*). This new uniform could protect soldiers from biological agents, and could switch to a more protective mode if chemical weapons are detected. The smart-uniform is made of vertically aligned carbon nanotubes, for both breathability and protection. The idea is for a soldier who survives a chemical attack to simply "shed" the top layer of this uniform and continue to fight. Current military hazard-suits have a limited range of motion and block moisture and air, so they can cause heatstroke if worn too long at one time.

Wired's Dangerroom ran a story in March 2013 about how the Navy wants to mount laser cannons on U.S. Marine Corps trucks to shoot down drones (*www.wired.com/dangerroom/2013/03/marine-laser-drones/*). Right now the Navy is just gearing up to award grants and contracts, but the goal is a laser cannon weighing less than 2,500 pounds mounted on a Humvee-sized vehicle. The specs call for a minimum optical output of 25 kilowatts, eventually scaling-up to 50 kilowatts, for a two minute full-power blast aimed at an enemy drone. The project is considered do-able, once problems of designing an appropriate power-source and after-cooling are worked out.

In April 2013, *Wired*'s Dangeroom also reported on how the Air Force wants new non-lethal Bioeffect energy weapons (*www.wired.com/dangerroom/2013/04/air-force-directed-energy/*). A $49 million contract for studies, tests and experiments is expected in September. The Air Force also wants to research the unusual health effects on soldiers if hit by Bioeffects, for both "defensive and offensive" uses. Sound-canons and pain-rays are not new, and were briefly used in Afghanistan before criticism forced a hasty recall. But after Benghazi, even the State Department is looking into non-lethal energy weapons to better protect their embassies against attacks.

Tech Goes Microscale

Futurity reported in October 2012 that the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) and the University of Rochester (New York) have created a new class of micro-sensors (*www.futurity.org/science-technology/ motion-detector-shrinks-to-microscale/#more-185022*). Stores are anxious for such microsensors to act as "personal navigators," popping up coupons and ads on customers' smartphones for every new aisle. These new "ultrasensitive accelerometers" are a step in that direction since they can operate at a large range of frequencies, and thousands of times faster than current motion sensors. These mini-motion detectors could be used in everything from consumer electronics to biomedical applications, and even in oil and gas exploration.

In March 2013, *Forbes* ran an article on how nanotechnology is expanding clean energy (*www.forbes.com/ sites/kensilverstein/2013/03/05/nanotechnology-expanding-clean-energy-and-easing-fuel-shortages/*) and easing fuel shortages. Green Energy technologies are commercializing the science, creating new building parts that produce desired properties while being smaller, stronger and lighter than what's currently available. Measuring electricity flow through nanotechnology would help utilities avoid outages, and make room for alternative electrons. Building nano-composites into wind power blades would also reduce stress for higher performance. Nanotechnology companies are already at work with electrical utilities in Hawaii and Spain, and both GE and IBM are getting involved as well.

Microsoft and Security Issues

In February 2013, AP through the *Seattle Times* reported on how Microsoft had accidently let an online security certificate expire, triggering a worldwide outage (*seattletimes.com/html/ businesstechnology/2020415142_azureoutagexml.html*) of its Azure online service. Called "sloppy housekeeping," it was an embarrassing lapse for MS, which is trying to bring in more revenue from its Azure storage service for businesses.

Also in February 2013, Microsoft admitted that it had fallen victim to the same Java-based malware attacks (*news.yahoo.com/microsofts-macs-hacked-java-attack-045502922.html*) that had recently plagued Twitter, Facebook and Apple. Curiously, it wasn't just Microsoft's Windows computers that were hacked, but mainly Microsoft's Macs—made by Apple. While Apple's Macs have long been believed to be immune to malware, a March 2013 article in the *Mercury News* says that MacBooks and iMacs are becoming bigger targets for malware (*www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_22741463/apple-are-mac-computers-becoming-more-vulnerable-malware-virus*).

Entertainment Tech Update: Tablets, Tweets and No-Glasses 3D

In January 2013, Silicon Valley wrote about how tablets—once scorned as a "distraction" for TV viewing—are now being embraced (*www.siliconvalley.com/ces/ci_22348246/ces-entertainment-industry-finds-tablets-ready-prime-time*) by the TV industry. About 40% of viewers fiddle with tablets or smartphones while watching TV at least once a day, sometimes even posting Twitter messages for a show to live-stream. So now the TV industry is working to develop original content and software for tablets, to encourage audience interaction and find new advertising revenue.

USA Today reported in January 2013 how a downtown theater in Providence, Rhode Island, is experimenting

with tweet seats (*www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2013/01/27/theater-tweet-seats/1868693/*). A small number of seats in the back of the theater are set aside for those attendees who promise to live-tweet from the performance on Twitter using a special hash tag. The tweeters can share anything about the performance, from the set, music, costumes or dialogue. The theater even had cast members tweeting from backstage too during a January performance of *Million Dollar Quartet*, and even sharing audience tweets with other cast members. A growing number of theaters have also been experimenting with "tweet seats." While other theaters are considering a "Twittermission," where an actor or staff member answers Twitter questions about the show during intermission.

Cnet ran a story in March 2013 about how Hewlett-Packard is working on a glasses-free 3D (*news.cnet. com/8301-10797_3-57575498-235/hp-creating-glasses-free-3d-tech-for-smartphones-tablets/*) technology for mobile devices. The result would be a hologram created through a "multiview" approach, using geometric optical tricks to create 3D images specifically for mobile devices. The technology is being explored by other companies, like Nintendo's 3DS handheld game player, although that company has just been found liable by a federal jury for patent infringement related to its 3DS technology.

Cable TV and Movie Streaming

In March 2013, YahooTV revealed that Netflix has closed a deal (*tv.yahoo.com/news/netflix-makes-deal-killing-season-3-100041294.html*) as the exclusive subscription TV service for the third season of *The Killing (*www.amctv.com/shows/the-killing*)* from Fox TV. Under the contract, Netflix will begin streaming the series' third season three months after the third-season finale airs on AMC. Season one and two of the series are already available to Netflix members. When AMC originally opted not to order a third season of "The Killing," the second revenue stream from Netflix helped convince AMC to buy another season.

Bloomberg reported in March 2013 that Redbox Instant movie streaming (*www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-14/redbox-instant-streaming-service-begins-accepting-subscribers.html*) service is now open to subscribers. Redbox Instant is offering sales, rentals and subscription streaming of movies, which puts them primarily in competition with Netflix and Amazon. But CEO Strickland thinks Redbox Instant can get movie titles faster than the other services, and hopes to also draw customers that prefer physical and local DVD rentals.

Also in March 2013, *Huffington Post* explained how Verizon is going to try and shake up the cable television business by paying television providers based on how many people actually watch their channel (*www. huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/18/verizon-cable-fees_n_2901271.html*). Especially since Verizon now pays much more money to some marginal channels than their viewership would justify, like ESPN. Under its new model, Verizon would measure a channel's popularity and pay the content creators based on the number of viewers. Verizon is only approaching mid-tier and smaller media companies right now, but viewers might eventually see a reduction in their cable bills.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. She has had short stories appear in the following 2011-2012 publications: Deadman's Tome (*www.demonictome.com/*) online magazine; *Strange Valentines* anthology; *Cosmic Crime* anthology; *PerihelionSF* online magazine; and *The Fifth Dimension* online magazine. She has also sold a short story to appear in the March 2013 anthology, *Universe Horribilis*. She is also writing a Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1598249002/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1598249002&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*),* and contributes weekly articles or humor columns to *ComputorEdge*.ComputorEdge E-Books has converted many of Marilyn's computer humor columns into four e-books. Now available in a four-book Kindle bundle from Amazon.com *The Best Computer and Internet Humor, Anecdotes, and Jokes Found on the Web (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B00ACVX2PC/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00ACVX2PC&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).* Marilyn's collection of the funniest stories about our computing machines and how we use them at home, the

office, and in cyber space. Save 25% off the individual book price!
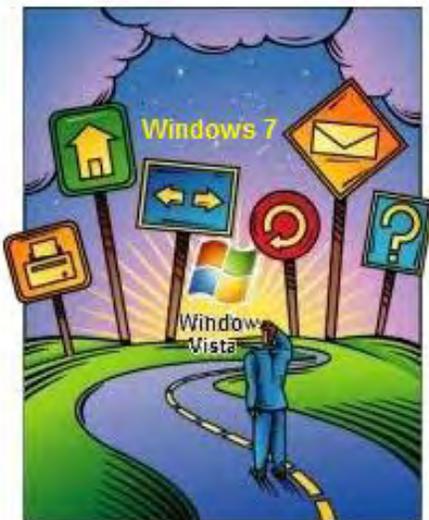
Windows Tips and Tricks: How to Disable Some Windows Programs, Including Internet Explorer

"Remove Features You Find Annoying" by Jack Dunning

Find out how to disable those games that make the kids hog the computer. Plus, disable Internet Explorer in Windows 7 or Windows 8.

Suppose you have kids (or a spouse) in the house who like to play games on your computer. Very annoying! Your best bet may be to turn those Windows features off. There are a number of Windows programs in Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8 which can be disabled without uninstalling them. It will appear as if they've been removed. (In Windows 7 and Windows 8, you can even use this technique to remove all signs of Internet Explorer.)

The first step is to open "Programs and Features" either through the Control Panel or a search for the key word "program" in the Start Menu. (Use ⊞+W to search settings in Windows 8.) Once the "Programs and Features" window is open (see Figure 2), the "Turn Windows features on or off" link appears in the left-hand panel. This is similar for all three versions of Windows.
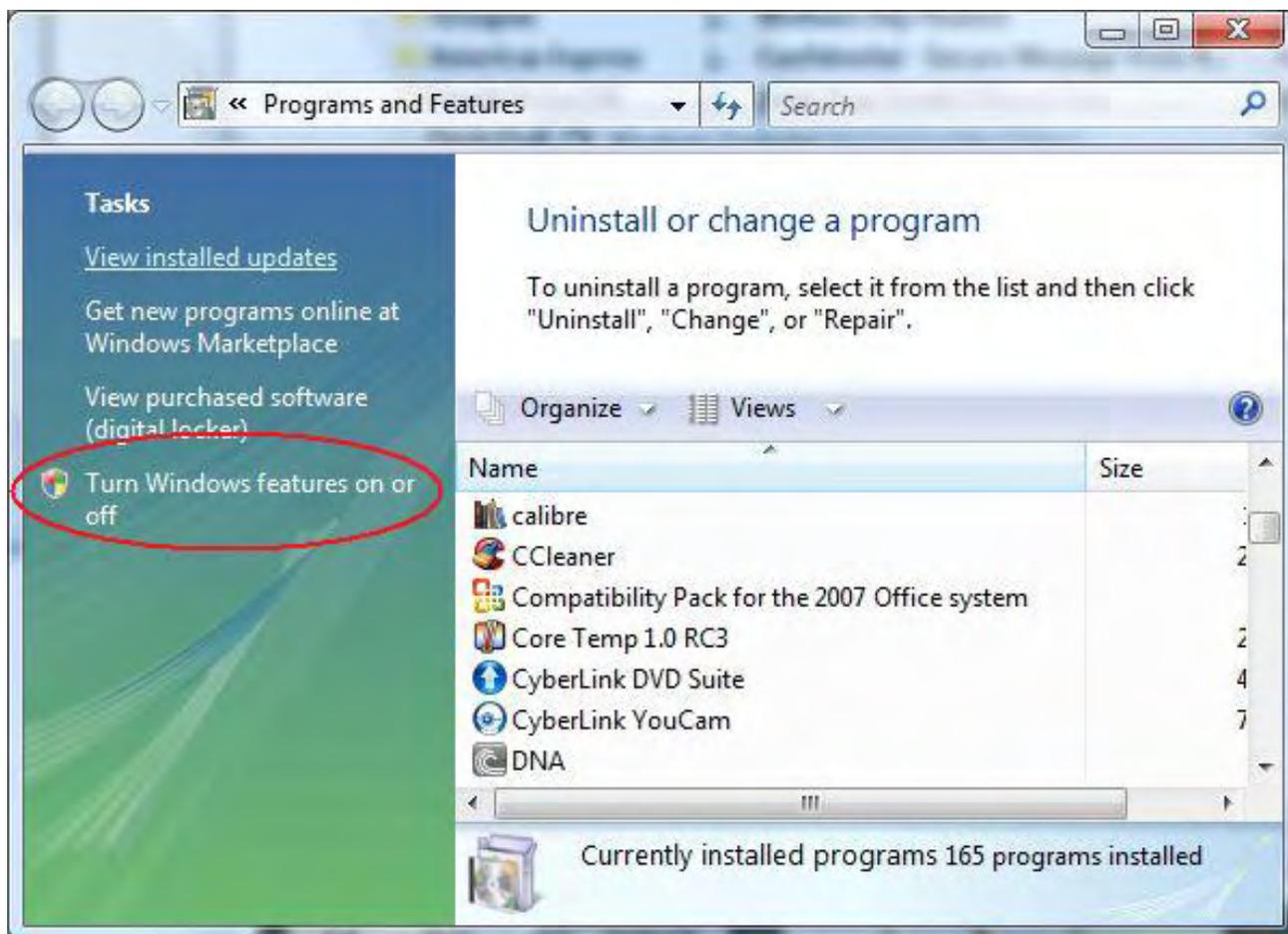
Figure 1. "The Programs and Features" windows in Windows Vista.

Click on the "Turn Windows features on or off" link to open the Windows Features window. It may take a few seconds to load.
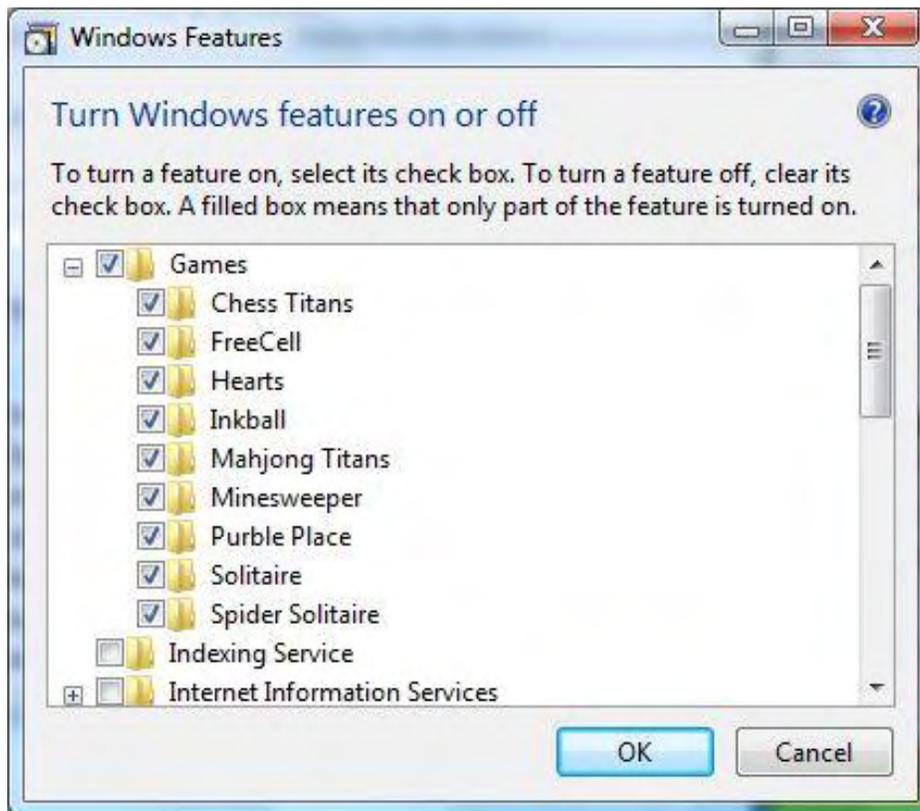

Figure 2. The Windows Features window in Windows Vista.

To enable or disable any of the Windows features check or uncheck the appropriate box and click OK. It's that simple.

Removing Internet Explorer

Now, if you want to remove Internet Explorer from your Windows 7 or Windows 8 computer, there is an option in the Windows Features window. Uncheck the box next to Internet Explorer. You will get a warning window. If you proceed, you will need to reboot the computer to complete the process. Then all signs of Internet Explorer 10 will disappear. To get it back, reverse the process.

*   *   *

*You can find information about this Windows technique and many other hard-to-find tools in Jack's e-book Hidden Windows Tools (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00B8Z2ASG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*) (for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8.*

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is *www.computoredge.com*. He can be reached at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Just Released! *Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8,*

*Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00B8Z2ASG/ ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00B8Z2ASG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).*
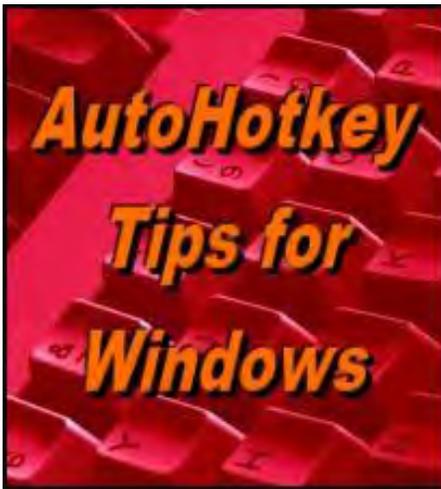
Our second compilation of stupid *ComputorEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputorEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?" (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)*

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*)!* Also available at Barnes and Noble (*www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463*) and ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/ Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle (*www.amazon.com/gp/ product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*),* *Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* and *That Does Not Compute! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

Adding Pop-up Labels to All Your Programs with AutoHotkey

"A Question about CapsLock and How to Add ToolTip Labels that Magically Appear When Hovering" by Jack Dunning

When hovering a mouse over various controls in programs often help windows pop-up. Learn how to make them happen with AutoHotkey.

*I'm a novice at coding and I've only been using AutoHotkey for a short time, but I share your enthusiasm for it. I bought your e-book (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*), and I copied and set up the script for putting selected text into capitals, lowercase, or initial caps. It works fine, but I've noticed that after I've used the initial caps command, it sets my keyboard to have CapsLock on, which I quickly realize as soon as I type anything. Has anyone else experienced the same thing, and is there a way to fix the code so that doesn't happen?*

Thanks,
Ellen (XP SP3)

I haven't heard of this before, it could be a computer specific problem, but there is a fix. You can use the SetCapsLockState (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/SetNumScrollCapsLockState.htm*) command to either turn it back off or turn it off permanently. You might add the line in the initial caps routine to turn it back off after the replacement is done. (There is also a SetNumLockState and a SetScrollLockState command on the same linked page.)

Even if the problem is not caused by AutoHotkey, which it probably isn't, it is still possible that "SetCapsLockState, AlwaysOff" will still work since it is independent of the CapsLock key. Put it in one of your startup scripts. It's worth a shot.

It could also be a keyboard problem with a CapsLock key sending spurious signals. The above command might deal with that.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Adding ToolTips to Your AutoHotkey Apps

One of the most useful features of Windows are those little messages called ToolTips (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Tooltip*) which pop up when you hover the cursor over an icon, filename, or object. They help us to know what's what in a program or app. AutoHotkey has a ToolTip command (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/ commands/ToolTip.htm*) for adding help messages to all of your scripts. The following examples demonstrate two different ways to use the ToolTip feature.

A Mini AutoHotkey Spy ToolTip

ToolTips are useful for displaying information. In this first example the ToolTip is used to tell us more about the windows and controls underneath the cursor by using the data provided by the MouseGetPos command. This is particularly useful since we can use it to determine the window titles and control names needed for

some AutoHotkey scripts. This script displays in a ToolTip pop-up the window's unique ID number, title, class, and the name of the control under the cursor regardless of whether the window is active (see Figure 1). This is a quick way to identify a window without clicking on it.
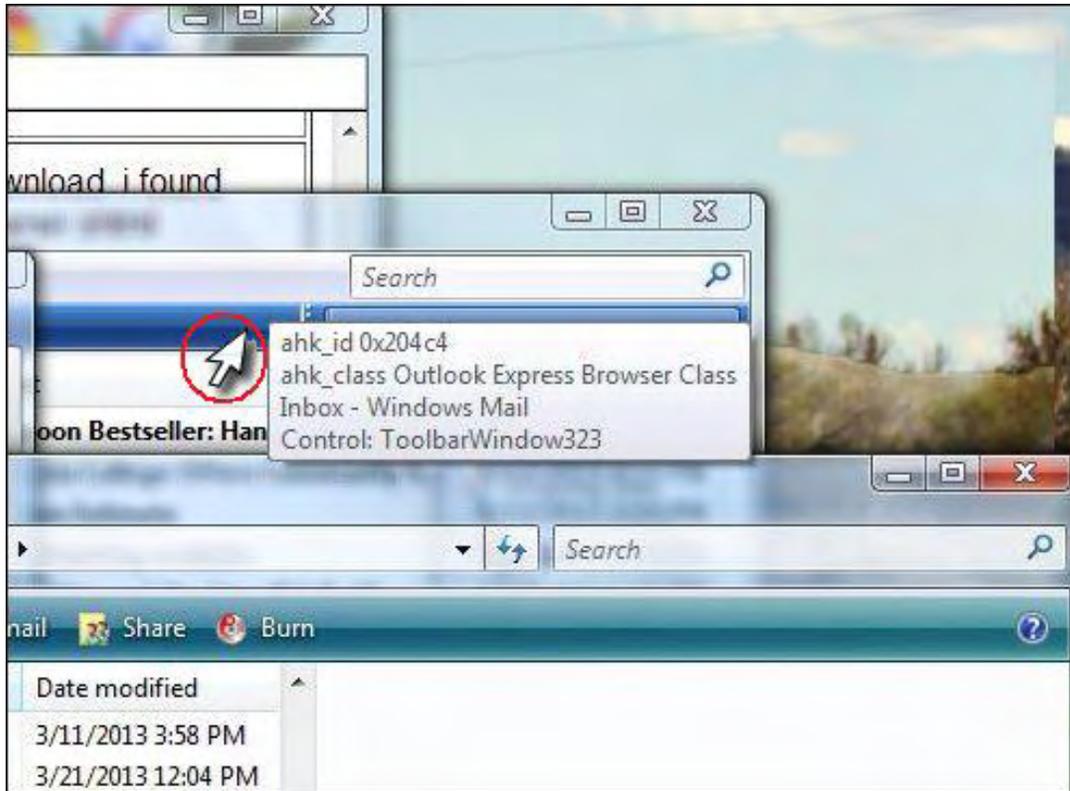
Figure 1. The ToolTip shows that the cursor is hovering over the Toolbar control in a Windows Mail window without actually clicking on the partially hidden window.

One of the cool features of MouseGetPos (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MouseGetPos.htm*) is that the window under the cursor does not need to be active—merely under the cursor. All you need is a corner of the window visible to make the identification.

If you're working with an AutoHotkey GUI object, then this same example can be used to identify the control names such as Button1, Edit1, etc (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The ToolTip sample script is used to identify the DateTime control in an early version of the Reminder app.

The code for this ToolTip example is fairly short:
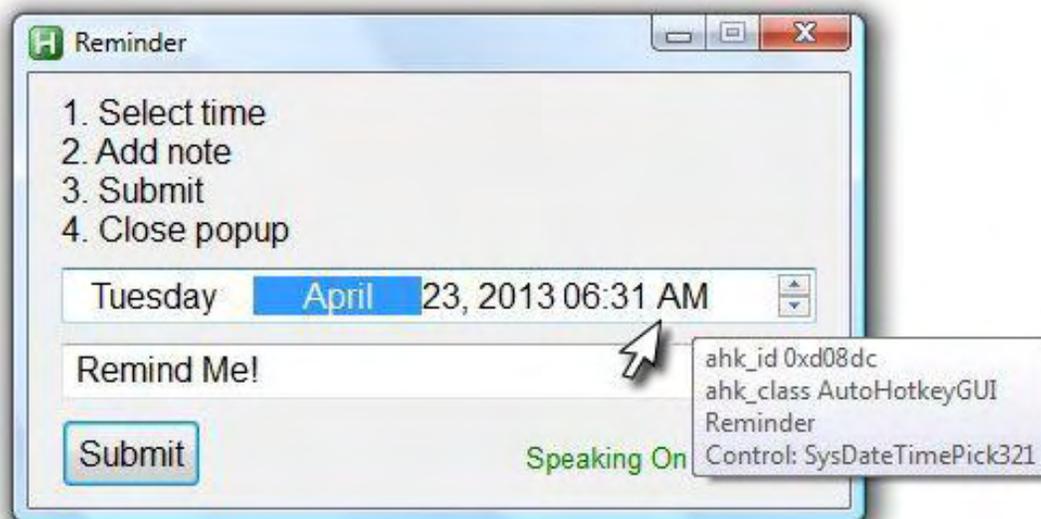
```
#Persistent
SetTimer, WatchCursor, 100
return
WatchCursor:
MouseGetPos, , , id, control
WinGetTitle, title, ahk_id %id%
WinGetClass, class, ahk_id %id%
ToolTip, ahk_id %id%`nahk_class %class%`n%title%`nControl: %control%
return
^#T::
SetTimer, WatchCursor, off
ToolTip
Return
```

In the first line of code (*#Persistent*) makes the script continue without exiting. This is often necessary when using the SetTimer command on its own.

The second line of the script uses the SetTimer command (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/SetTimer. htm*) to invoke the *WatchCursor* subroutine (label) every tenth of a second (100 milliseconds). This is a technique useful for routines which need regular updating. In the second example below, a built in Windows message is used to do a similar technique which doesn't use the SetTimer command.

The *WatchCursor:* subroutine uses the MouseGetPos command to retrieve the unique ID number of the window and the name of any control under the cursor. The MouseGetPos command can also retrieve the location of the mouse cursor in x,y coordinates, they are blank in this example since they are not needed.

The next two lines of the WatchCursor subroutine save the *title* and *class* of the window by using the unique ID number (*id*) captured in the previous line—*WinGetTitle, title, ahk_id %id%* and *WinGetClass, class, ahk_id %id%* respectively.

Finally, the ToolTip command is used to create the pop-up window with the information from the target window. Notice that the escape character `*n* is used to create new lines.

The last routine executed with the key combination ^#T (CNTL++T) is there to make it easy to end the script. The SetTimer command is used to turn the timer off and the ToolTip command is executed without any parameters turning the ToolTip off. Otherwise, the ToolTip would stay on the screen until the script is ended. You can add the original SetTimer command to a hotkey combination to allow you to turn the ToolTip feature on again without reloading the script.

Creating AutoHotkey ToolTip Help

A regular use for the ToolTip command is adding help pop-up windows to AutoHotkey applications. (This can be done for any Windows application if you use Windows Spy or the previous technique to identify the window and control names.) When hovering over controls in an AutoHotkey GUI, a ToolTip identifies the control's function or gives instructions (see Figure 3).
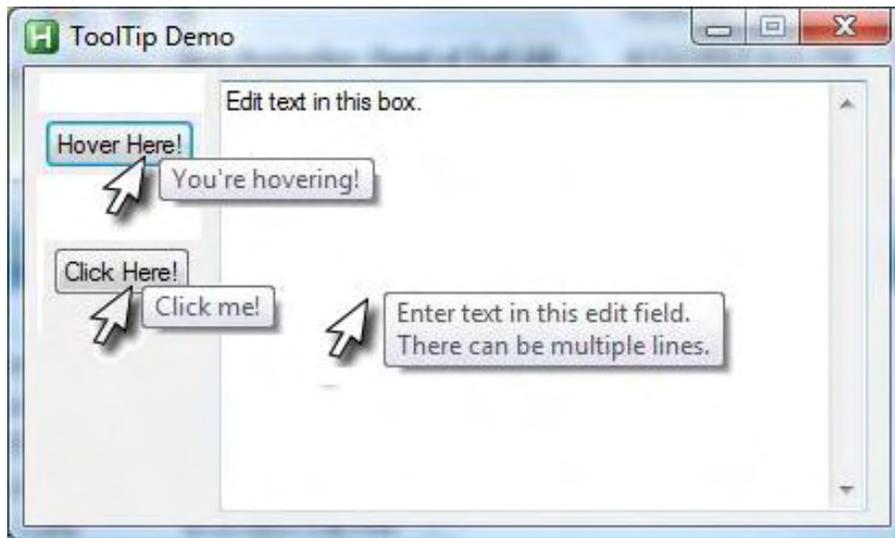
Figure 3. An AutoHotkey GUI shows three different ToolTips as the cursor is moved over each control.

In this example, the AutoHotkey OnMessage() function monitors a Windows Message (WM_MOUSEMOVE = 0x200), then using the called function *CheckControl* to post the ToolTip. The advantage to this approach is that you don't need to use SetTimer or worry about cancelling SetTimer.

While the script looks a little longer, it's as simple as the first:

```
Gui, add, button, , Hover Here!
Gui, Add, Button, Default, Click Here!
Gui, add, edit, w300 h200 ys, Edit text in this box.
Gui, show, , ToolTip Demo
OnMessage(0x200, "CheckControl")
Return
ButtonClickHere!:
MsgBox Clicked Here!
Return
GuiClose:
  ToolTip
  Gui, Destroy
Return
CheckControl()
  {
     MouseGetPos,,,, VarControl
     IfEqual, VarControl, Button1
        Message := "You're hovering!"
     Else IfEqual, VarControl, Button2
        Message := "Click me!"
     Else IfEqual, VarControl, Edit1
        Message := "Enter text in this edit field.`nThere can be multiple lines."
     ToolTip % Message
}
```

The first step is to set up a GUI. This is done with the first four lines of code using the GUI command (*www. autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Gui.htm*). Since creating GUIs has been discussed a number of times in previous columns, I won't go into the details with these lines.

The key ingredient in this script is the OnMessage() function (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/OnMessage.htm*) introduced to the Reminder app in the "Adding a Help Window to the AutoHotkey Reminder Script" column. OnMessage() uses Windows System Messages (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/misc/SendMessageList.htm*) to monitor or enact various Windows functions. In this case, the message 0x200 (WM_MOUSEMOVE) is used to monitor the movement and position of the mouse. When the mouse is moved the function *CheckControl()* is called.

Setting up the GUI and the OnMessage() function are the sum total of the main script. Most of the remaining work is done within the function *CheckControl()*. There are two other labels (subroutines) in this script: *ButtonClickHere!:* and *GuiClose:*.

ButtonClickHere!: is notable because it uses the default name for a label when it is not specified within the *Gui, Button* command. If a GUI control is not assigned a label, then the text assigned (the words which appear on the button control) becomes the name of the label by removing any spaces or unacceptable punctuation. Therefore, the text "Click Here!" which appears on the second button becomes the name of the new label *ButtonClickHere!:*. Here this label was added with a MsgBox to show how the default naming works.

The *GuiClose:* label is a standard way to remove the GUI. The addition of the ToolTip command to the subroutine ensures that the pop-up message is closed.

The function *CheckControl* called by OnMessage() can include up to four parameters (wParam, lParam, msg, and hwnd) which are from the Windows message, but in this case since none of them are used, they aren't necessary. As with the first example, MouseGetPos (*MouseGetPos,,,, VarControl*) provides the information necessary to complete the script—in this case the name of the control in the GUI (*VarControl*).

Next is a series of *IF* conditionals using the IfEqual command (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/IfEqual.htm*), a variation of the standard *IF* called the command-name style. The use of these types of conditionals can get confusing. They are designed to be used with one other command on the same line or other operations (or a command) on the next line only. The containing curly braces cannot be used to add more lines. They are great if you need a one-line conditional with a command (*EnvAdd* rather than +=) or a one-line operation on the next line as is the case here. You may want to play with these conditionals (*IfEqual*, *IfNotEqual*, *IfLess*, *IfLessOrEqual*, *IfGreater*, and *IfGreaterOrEqual*) to get a feeling for how they work.

Depending upon the name of the control (*Button1*, *Button2*, and *Edit1*), the variable *Message* is set to the corresponding text in the conditional. The ToolTip is then set to that value with the Tooltip command. When the mouse cursor is moved over a control, the appropriate ToolTip pops up. It disappears when the cursor is moved off the control.

The simplicity of this script makes it easy to add pop-up help messages to AutoHotkey scripts.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is *www.computoredge.com*. He can be reached at *ceeditor@computoredge.com*. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

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Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*)!* Also available at Barnes and Noble (*www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463*) and ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/ Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle (*www.amazon.com/gp/ product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*),* *Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* and *That Does Not Compute! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"The Warped Mentality of the IT Department" by Wally Wang

The Warped Mentality of the IT Department; Declining Video Game Sales; More Reasons to Distrust Other Companies; Garbage In, Garbage Out; Another Sign of Short-Sightedness; Programming on the iPad; The Share Icon.

People who work in the IT departments of companies seem to have the strangest logic. A friend of mine told me that after he requested a tablet to use when he's traveling, his company's IT department decided that what he really needed was a new laptop instead. To make sure he had the latest tools, the IT department bought a new laptop with a touchscreen display, and then to increase his productivity, they removed Windows 8 and installed Windows 7 on the computer instead.

The IT department rationalized their decision as follows. First, they wanted to be "on the cutting edge of mobile computing" by getting a laptop with a touchscreen. Second, they wanted to insure maximum worker productivity by using Windows 7, which isn't optimized for touchscreens.

If paying more for a laptop with a touchscreen and then installing Windows 7 on it so you can't take full advantage of that touchscreen makes sense to you, then you might be qualified to run the IT department at your company. Perhaps next time the IT department will give out laptops without a battery so no one can use them unless they're near an electrical outlet. To make the laptop even more useful, perhaps the IT department will refuse to issue power cords to go along with the laptops as well. That way workers will have to use the laptops only when they're in the IT department.

When IT departments twist their logic around to make completely irrational decisions, you can see why so many people just bring their own smartphones and tablets to work and skip the hassle and frustration of dealing with their IT department altogether. When people do this, you have to ask why is any company paying for an IT department in the first place?

IT departments constantly forget that their job is to maximize worker productivity, not force their own favorite technology on to others, especially when that technology isn't the best tool for anyone else. Instead of focusing on maximizing productivity, IT departments focus on simplifying their own jobs by learning as little as possible so they can dictate what other people should use without fully understanding what other people really need.

Why IT departments get away with this without getting fired immediately is one of those mysteries of the universe. Fortunately for the IT department, the CEO is usually too busy granting himself multimillion dollar bonuses to care what the IT department does, so everyone stays happy except for the poor workers saddled with inferior tools to do the actual work.

Part of the reason why IT departments continue clinging to the Windows world may lie in what Seth Godin identifies as "competence" in his book *Small is the New Big (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1591841267/ ref=as_li_tf_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1591841267&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*).* Seth argues that people who are competent know how to solve the same problem the same way, but they don't know how to solve different problems, nor do they feel confident solving the same problem in different ways. Competent people know one way to solve a problem so that's how they solve it over and over again.

Competent people fear change because that risks making them look incompetent. Rather than deal with change, they prefer dealing with what they know, which insures they can continue looking competent. As Seth Godin says, "In the face of change, the competent are helpless. Change means a temporary or permanent threat to their competence. But among the competent, the smart ones realize that change is inevitable—and that they are doomed. Hence the tremendous discomfort among our happily competent population."

Right now, IT departments (and many computer users) feel competent in their knowledge of maintaining Windows PCs. Yet dealing with other technology such as iOS or Android devices in addition to Linux and Macintosh computers, threatens the typical IT department's competence. Rather than openly accept other technological tools that may be better suited for other workers in a company, IT departments cling to the trap of competency by blocking and refusing to deal with anything other than what they already know, even to the point of making up lies about other products to justify their decision not to explore those other technology options. This is the classic case of knowing how to use a hammer so rather than learn to use a saw, a screwdriver, or scissors, use a hammer to solve every problem you see.

Ask the typical IT department if Windows is the perfect solution to every possible problem. The real answer is that no single technology is the perfect solution to every possible problem on the planet. Any IT department that insists on cramming a single technology (such as Windows) down every worker's throat regardless of what workers really need is proving their own lack of faith in their own ability to solve problems.

Until people stop fearing change because it might make them look incompetent, and start embracing change because it gives them new opportunities to be competent in other ways, too many people (and IT departments) will remain trapped in the past. Ultimately they can't help but fail in the long term, which means most IT departments are simply digging their own grave by refusing to step out of it.

Declining Video Game Sales

While everyone remains fixated on the decline in PC sales, most people are unaware that video game console sales and video game software sales have also been steadily decreasing (*www.zacks.com/stock/ news/88203/Video%20Game%20Sales%20Decline%20Yet%20Again*). According to market research firm NPD, video game sales have dropped 11 percent and video game hardware sales have dropped by 13 percent.

Beyond blaming the economy, one reason video game sales may be declining could be the rise of smartphones and tablets. As more people find their gaming needs met by simple games they can play anywhere, they'll find less of a need to play a dedicated gaming console.

In the past, you could only play video games on a laptop computer or at home on a desktop PC or a video game console. Now with the choice of playing games on a smartphone or tablet that you can use anywhere, there's less of a reason to depend on a video game console any more.

Video game consoles provide more realistic graphics than any smartphone or tablet can offer, yet that alone can't overcome the convenience of having a game at your fingertips wherever you happen to be. Most likely video game console sales keep dropping because people now have more choices for playing video games.

In the old days, the only way you could play a video game was by going to an arcade. Video game arcades lost their popularity once video game consoles and PCs became more powerful. Now the wider availability of choice on mobile computing devices is likely hurting video game consoles as well.

Video game consoles will likely be around because people enjoy the greater realism and bigger screen for playing video games. However, now that video game consoles are no longer the only way to play video games, sales of video game consoles have nowhere to go but down. Give people more choice and demand can't help but spread among all those choices. Video game consoles will likely fare as well as desktop and laptop PCs under the onslaught of smartphones and tablets.

After seeing the effect that smartphones and tablets have had on multiple markets, it's hard to believe that so many people were absolutely convinced that smartphones and tablets would never be useful. Just ask the manufacturers of PCs and video game consoles how well they're faring under indirect competition from mobile computing devices.

More Reasons to Distrust Other Companies

The common myth among anti-Apple critics is that Apple must pay people to say nice things about their products while every other company in the world does not engage in paying people to promote any particular agenda. For more evidence that critics will choose to ignore because it contradicts their way of thinking, you can read about how Samsung has been accused of hiring students to write bad reviews (*www.upi.com/ Science_News/Technology/2013/04/16/Taiwan-to-investigate-Samsung-over-faked-Web-reviews/UPI-717913661352727/*) of their rival's products.

Samsung recently apologized on their local Facebook page for their actions by stating "Samsung Electronics remains committed to engaging in transparent and honest communications with consumers as outlined in the company's Online Communications Credo. The recent incident was unfortunate, and occurred due to insufficient understanding of these fundamental principles." Samsung said it had ceased all marketing activities "that involve the posting of anonymous comments."

Why did Samsung believe that they could get away with hiring others to write anonymous comments, criticizing their rival's products? More importantly, why do some people refuse to acknowledge the growing evidence that other companies pay people to promote their agenda to create an artificial grassroots campaign?

For people who refuse to acknowledge evidence that other companies have paid people to promote an agenda without revealing their association with that company, why do they not speak out against these companies just as vehemently as they claim that Apple must pay people to say nice things about their products? Perhaps their silence on this matter is more revealing than anything they could possibly say.

Garbage In, Garbage Out

There's a common idea among programmers that if you put garbage into a computer, you can only expect to get garbage back out again. Yet many corporations forget this basic fact with their heavy reliance on spreadsheets that they don't verify for accuracy. According to Ray Panko, a professor of IT management at the University of Hawaii and an authority on bad spreadsheet practices (*www.marketwatch.com/story/88-of-spreadsheets-have-errors-2013-04-17*), "In large spreadsheets with thousands of formulas, there will be dozens of undetected errors."

A 2008 analysis of multiple studies suggests that nearly 90% of spreadsheet documents contain errors. There's even an organization called the European Spreadsheet Risks Interest Group (*www.eusprig.org*) dedicated to reducing errors in spreadsheets.

Just because you use a powerful spreadsheet like Excel (which was first developed for the Macintosh, so all those anti-Apple critics out there who hate anything that remotely involves Apple can now cheerfully wipe Excel off their Windows PCs) doesn't mean that you may be using it correctly. Basing decisions made by a spreadsheet riddled with errors is no better than just making wild guesses. Given the way corporate executives make decisions, wild guesses would be better since they could push a company into taking risks instead of maintaining the status quo and hoping that the world around them will suddenly change. Just ask

K-Mart, Kodak, and Borders Bookstores how well that strategy worked out for them.

Another Sign of Short-Sightedness

A friend of mine is working on a cartoon TV series when a 21-year old cartoonist, currently going to animation school, heard about my friend's fledging TV cartoon series and asked how he could get involved. My friend told this 21-year old cartoonist to submit some drawings so the production company could evaluate his work and see if his skills were good enough to work on the cartoon show.

This 21-year old told my friend, "Before I submit any cartoon drawings to anyone, they have to pay me for them first." Needless to say, this 21-year old will never get hired to work on this cartoon series.

Imagine looking for a job and when a company invites you to send in a resume, you refuse unless the company pays you for your time creating and sending them your resume. Anyone think you would get the job, let alone even get an interview?

Not surprisingly, such short-sightedness even exists in corporations. Most people in the corporate world aren't interested in helping the company become more profitable. Instead, most people are more interested in keeping things exactly the way they are because that's currently earning them a paycheck. The best way to keep things exactly the way they are is to blend in, not take risks, and not change anything. Of course, that's also the best strategy for failing in the long-term, but in the short-term, that strategy seems to work until it ultimately doesn't.

It's easy to see such short-sightedness in the technology world. Rather than objectively evaluate different technology to determine how best to use it, many tech-savvy individuals do everything they can to convince others to avoid any technology except the one they're personally familiar with using. The irony is that by promoting their own short-sightedness, these individuals are cutting off their own future. Perhaps then they can apply for a new job somewhere else and refuse to learn any new technology until a company pays them to learn it first before hiring them. At least they can keep that 21-year old cartoonist company while waiting in the unemployment line for the rest of their lives.

Programming on the iPad

One of the persistent lies that critics continue to perpetuate about the iPad is that it's only good for consuming content, not for creating it. Despite the fact that you can do word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation work on an iPad through Apple's Pages, Numbers, and Keynote apps (along with numerous similar programs from other companies), some people still insist on ignoring facts right before their eyes.

In the past, you could only practice programming on a computer, not an iPad, but techBASIC changes all that. With techBASIC, you can write, edit, debug, and run BASIC programs completely on your iPad (or iPhone) without using a separate computer at all. Now if you get a copy of *Building iPhone & iPad Electronics Projects (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1449363504/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1449363504&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*),* you can learn how to do the following:

• Access the internal iOS sensors and turn an iPhone into a metal detector.

• Hook up to external sensors like HiJack and make a plant moisture meter.

• Connect to Wi-Fi and a servo and trigger candy to fall from an M&M dispenser.

• Use an iPhone to control a Remote Control car with a BLE Shield and an Arduino.

• Use Bluetooth Low Energy to access devices like the TI SensorTag and then collect data from a model rocket flight.
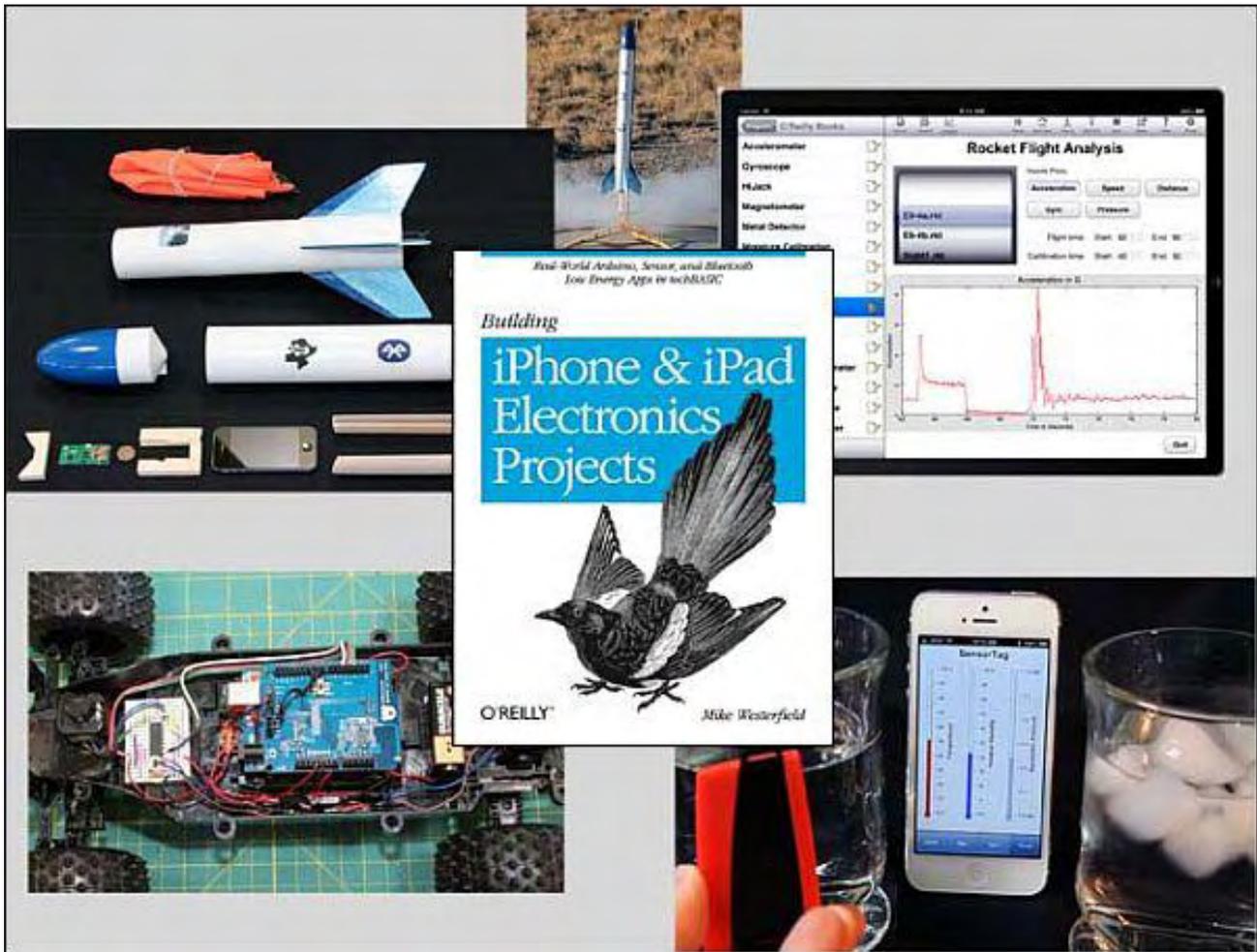
Figure 1. Learn how to program external devices connected to your iPad or iPhone.

Being able to hook up and control internal and external sensors using an iOS device, and then collect and analyze the data from the same iOS device while using techBASIC can spark your imagination and encourage you to practice programming entirely on your iPad or iPhone. To see a short video of some of the projects you can create, visit this YouTube link (*www.youtube.com/watch? feature=player_embedded&v=wn_VqZMfoMY*) that clearly shows it's possible to create content on an iPad.

If you like fiddling around with gadgets and electronics along with programming, get a copy of techBASIC and *Building iPhone & iPad Electronics Projects.* Then let your imagination run wild as you explore the future of mobile computing.

*   *   *

If you're using OS X 10.7 or 10.8, you may notice that a Share icon appears at the top of the Finder window. This lets you click on one or more files, and then click the Share icon to see a menu for different ways of sharing that file through e-mail, Facebook, or Flickr. By using the Share icon, you can quickly share pictures and other files with everyone.
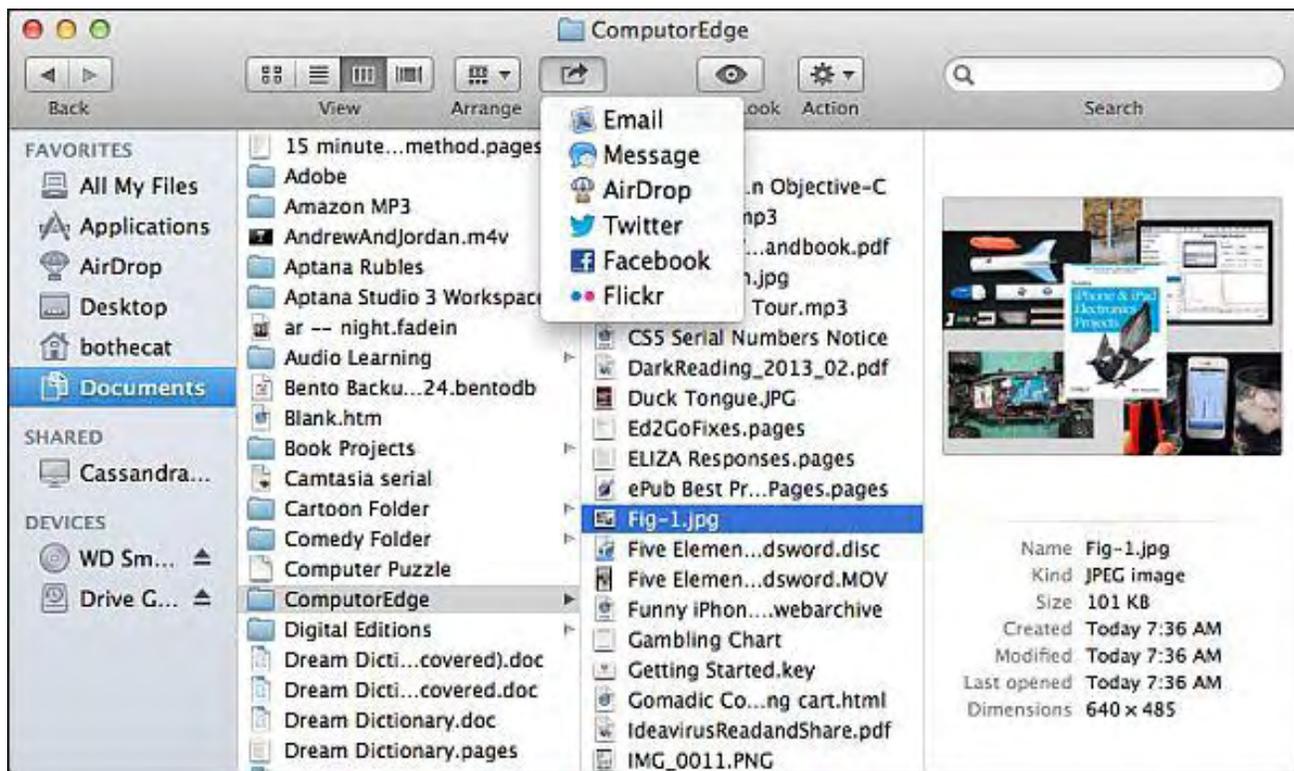
Figure 2. Clicking the Share icon at the top of the Finder window lets you share a file with others.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

*My New Mac, Lion Edition (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl? ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908*)*
*My New 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=159079189*)*
*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*)*
*Republican 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*)*
*Erotophobia (A novel) (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-
20*)*

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie
Method. (*www.15minutemoviemethod.com/*)" Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

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

So, Why Isn't Anyone Buying PCs?; Consequences of Living in the Digital Age; Auto Recall Inspires New Free Mobile App; Olympus XZ-2 Camera.

So, Why Isn't Anyone Buying PCs?

There's a fascinating piece over at the gaming site Rock, Paper, Shotgun that does a good job of explaining how two seemingly contradictory things—the stunning rise of PC gaming and the precipitous fall of PC sales—can be happening at the same time:

To analyze the state of the PC these days is to spin around until you get dizzy. PC gaming is climbing and climbing, with extraordinary numbers being published...[and] massive popularity of the download market and the phenomenal rise of the indie market.

When RPS launched nearly six years ago, there wasn't a single other big-name dedicated PC gaming site online. Now there are many. And indeed multi-format sites have switched from treating the PC as a barely mentioned also-ran, to a significant portion of their coverage. From MMOs to Humble Bundles, eSports to Minecraft, the PC is enormous right now.

So why isn't anyone buying them?

Data recently published by market research firm IDC...shows that PC shipments dropped more in the last quarter than ever before. Almost every major PC producer, except Lenovo, saw very pointy-down graphs. Even Apple saw their non-iOS units failing to fly out of stores. So what's going on?

(Credit: Net Applications)
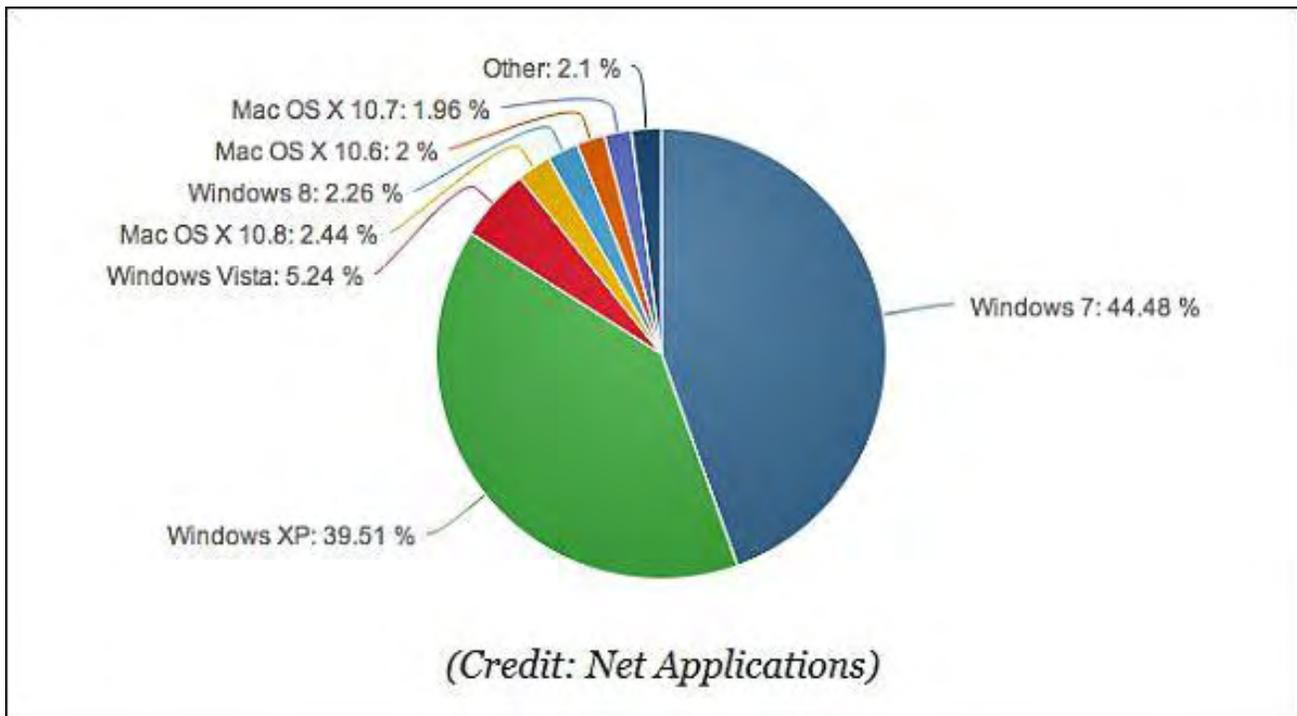
Comparing Q1 sales (Jan - March) for 2013 and 2012, HP saw a fall in growth of -23.7%, Dell -10.9%, Acer -31.3%, and ASUS -19.2%. Lenovo, meanwhile, saw their growth sit steady at a flat 0.0%. US-only figures look similar, seeing Apple in the top 5 sellers with a drop of -7.5%, and Toshiba with -5.2%. Again Lenovo bucked the trend here, showing growth of 13.0%.

Clearly this is while the world is still very much in the grip of financial issues—manufacturers across all manner of sectors are showing losses. But it's also impossible not to recognize these drops as indicative of a trend for PC hardware. No, the PC isn't dying (those drops aren't getting close to 0—the PC still sells well—it just doesn't sell as well as it used to), but it's clearly not too healthy. And the blame seems to be being laid at the feet of Windows 8.

IDC's Bob O'Donnell says, "At this point, unfortunately, it seems clear that the Windows 8 launch not only failed to provide a positive boost to the PC market, but appears to have slowed the market. While some consumers appreciate the new form factors and touch capabilities of Windows 8, the radical changes to the UI, removal of the familiar Start button, and the costs associated with touch have made PCs a less attractive alternative to dedicated tablets and other competitive devices. Microsoft will have to make some very tough decisions moving forward if it wants to help reinvigorate the PC market."

But clearly the reasons are more widely spread than just Microsoft's ill-advised and distinctly un-PC new operating system. There was a time when if a family wanted to be online, provide their kids with somewhere to do their homework, and have access to e-mail, etc, they had to have a PC. (Heck, I remember when I was 16 (1994), selling entire PCs to parents just so they could run Encarta for their kids' homework.) And that time stuck around for a good long while. But now a tablet can do much the same. With the exception of a useful way of doing word processing, the family PC—that so often morphed itself into a gaming PC—has been much usurped by other smaller, often cheaper devices. If you want to check e-mails, you'll most likely do it on your phone, rather than boot up the giant wheezing box in another room, or even bother opening up the laptop. And while I think common sense dictates that a full size keyboard, separate mouse, nice big detached monitor (or two), and a device properly designed to cope with multitasking still remains a very preferable solution, there's no point in denying it's not winning that battle...

But no, obviously, bloody Windows 8 hasn't helped. Microsoft's death-grip on the PC sales industry, such that it's nigh-impossible to walk into a store and buy a PC device without having it pre-infected, has put many off buying the hardware. Its bemusing blend of a touchscreen interface and over-complication of the most

primary PC purposes looks like it will be remembered as one of the most damaging moments in PC history. While Vista was utterly terrible, it at least looked like Windows, and Windows 7 was hurried along to replace it with something far superior. At this point, if Microsoft wants to recover from Vista II: The Even Vistarier, it's going to have to do some very awkward about-facing, back-tracking, and tacit-admitting of its failures. Something at which the company isn't too brilliant.

Fascinating piece. Be sure to read it all at www.rockpapershotgun.com (*www.rockpapershotgun. com/2013/04/11/as-pc-gaming-popularity-keeps-climbing-hardware-sales-down/*).

Consequences of Living in the Digital Age

Kristen Broyles of the Bohlsen PR Group writes in with info about a new book that aims to explain how prevalence of digital media changes our existence:
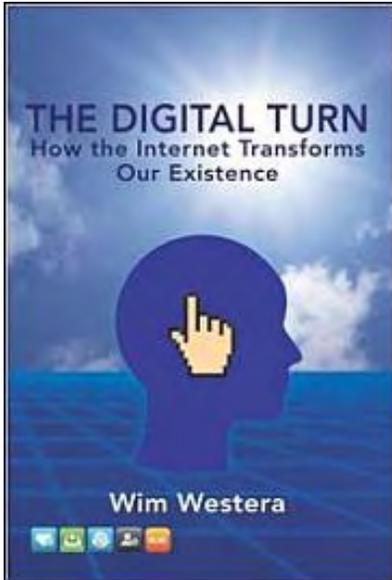
As the world becomes more digitized through constant Internet connection and new technology, the conditions of life are radically changing. In *The Digital Turn (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1477250328/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1477250328&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*),* Wim Westera explains how to prepare for living in a world dominated by technology and digital media.

Westera is a full professor of Digital Media at the Open University of the Netherlands who holds a PhD in physics and mathematics and has created dozens of TV programs and documentaries. Since the nineties, he has been involved as a researcher and practitioner in educational simulation, multimedia, and technology-enhanced learning.

"We seem to take emerging media for granted and eagerly adopt these without being aware of the radical changes they produce," said Westera. "We have to make sure that we keep in control of the media we use instead of being controlled by them."

According to Westera, the constant connection to different forms of media like social media sites and the Internet through mobile devices is leading many people to lose their ties with reality. As the world looks more and more like a video game, people are less likely to realize how seriously their perceptions are being affected by mediated communication.

"Living in a mediated reality changes the way we view reality, changes the way we interact with other people, and greatly influences our activities and behaviors," said Westera. "We should exploit the resilience of our cognitive system that helped us so much in the course of evolution, and adapt it to the requirements of the digital age."

Westera emphasizes the importance of learning about mediated communication and theories on how this kind of communication affects personal perceptions, behaviors and the way people understand the world around them. In order to adapt to this changing digital world, individuals must learn to understand the rules

and mechanisms of digital media.

For more information, visit www.thedigitalturn.co.uk (*www.thedigitalturn.co.uk*).

The Digital Turn
By Wim Westera
ISBN: 978-1-47725-033-4
Softcover retail price: $19.76
E-book price: $3.99

Auto Recall Inspires New Free Mobile App

Amanda Robinson with M&C Saatchi writes in this week with info about a new software program that makes the term "mobile app" doubly literal:

In recent weeks Honda, Toyota, Nissan, and Mazda recalled close to 3.4 million vehicles marking the third largest auto recall in recent history. Inspired by this news, a new mobile app launched today that can protect used-car buyers by letting them know if their vehicle is affected by this recall—or any other recall notices.

Challenging dealership retail values placed on used cars, a newly developed smartphone application launched today to provide shoppers with the potential to save thousands on their next vehicle purchase and create a hassle-free car-buying experience.

The first mobile app of its kind—available for the iPhone and Android—S.N.A.F.U. has introduced a portable VIN (vehicle identification number) barcode scanner to identify manufacturer recall notices and expose the dealer profit margins through accurately predicting the auction cost of vehicles.

"The most closely-guarded secret in the pre-owned car industry is what the dealer actually pays for vehicles at their auctions," said S.N.A.F.U. Founder Dennis Miller. "Without this knowledge, the consumer is at the mercy of the dealer's word. By making this information accessible to the public, it offers the average consumer leverage to negotiate a better price on prospective purchases."

Miller, a car dealer himself, claims factory recall notices are rarely checked during the sales process at the dealership. From faulty airbags and brake pads to fuel and electrical problems, identifying these issues upfront is not only an important negotiation tool, but life-saving knowledge as well.
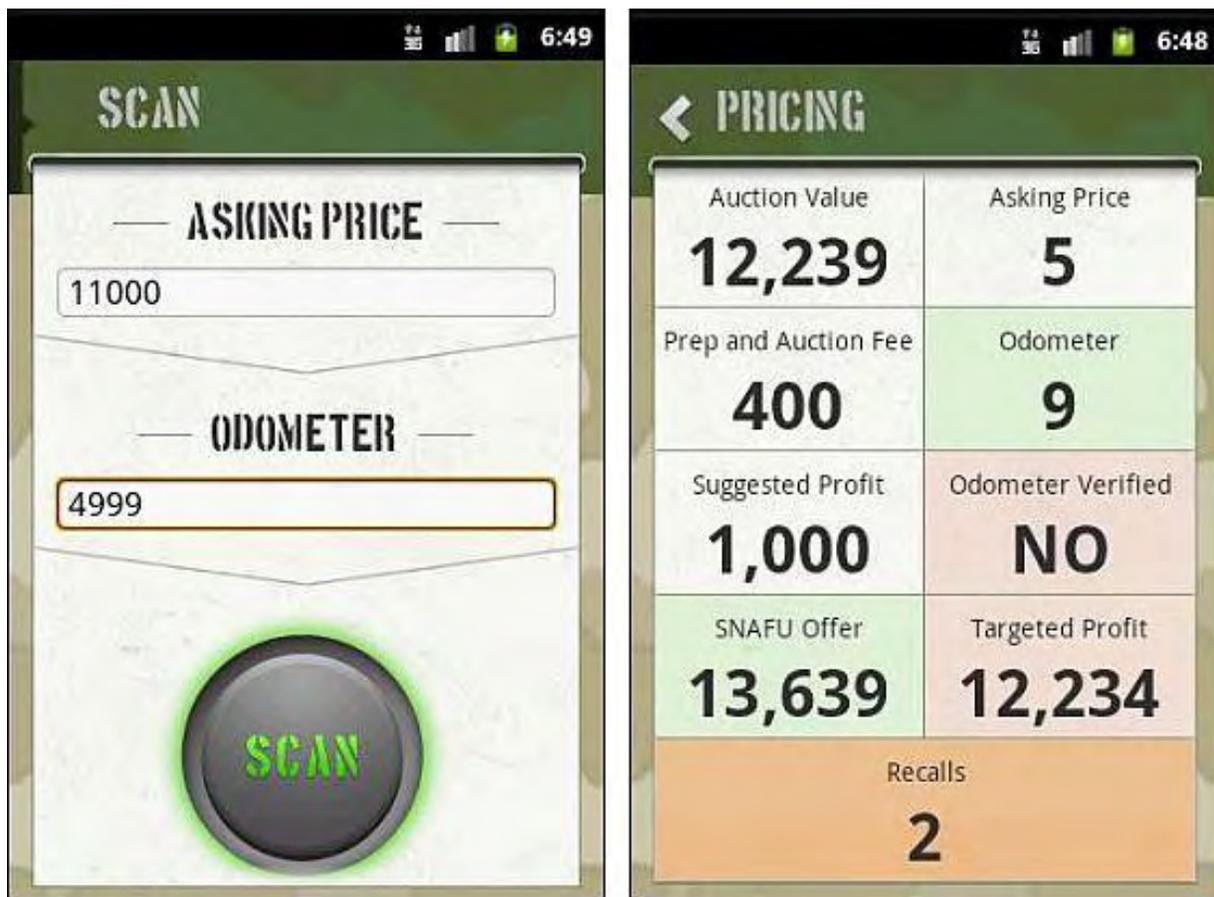
Operating off of an algorithm, which calculates past vehicle sales performance at dealer auctions, the application computes the current inflation rates, depreciation value of vehicles, the geographic locale of the user, and three other proprietary factors to produce the "S.N.A.F.U. Fair Price Offer."

The data is based on every make and model for the last five years and can be used to estimate vehicles from 1998 to current, resulting in a S.N.A.F.U. appraised value guaranteed to be within a few hundred dollars of the actual price dealers pay at private auctions.

The application is free to download – providing unlimited access to the factory recall scanner – with an optional upgrade of $9.99 for 30-day access to obtain the features of the projected dealer auction costs of a vehicle.

In addition to the upgrade, and utilizing an optional Autocheck account, S.N.A.F.U. provides:

• Past ownership history
• Current status of the vehicle's title: clean, salvaged, or rebuilt
• Accident reports
• Notification of odometer tampering
• Important tips and common tricks of the trade
• Ability to make S.N.A.F.U. Fair Price Offers online and access other services (at www.snafuscan.com (*www. snafuscan.com*))

"This is a game-changing application for used-car buyers and it is about time we change the way America buys cars." said Miller.

Having worked in the automobile business since 2007, in both pre-owned sales and finance, Miller has acquired firsthand and in-depth knowledge of the industry and how car dealers make profits on pre-owned vehicles.

S.N.A.F.U. is available now through iTunes App Store and Google Play for both the iPhone and Android by searching "Snafu Scan".

Olympus XZ-2 Camera

Product Name: XZ-2 Camera (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009AYJQ2U/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009AYJQ2U&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)
Manufacturer: Olympus
Web Site: www.getolympus.com (*www.getolympus.com/us/en/digitalcameras/xz-2.html*)
Price: $599.99 (When on sale, $549.99)

Product Name: VF-3 Viewfinder
Manufacturer: Olympus
Web Site:www.thephoblographer.com (*www.thephoblographer.com/2011/07/27/which-one-olympus-vf-3-or-vf-2/*)
Price: $159.88

For some time now I have been looking for a replacement camera for my 10-year-old Olympus C-5050Z. It had, over the years, developed some serious issues but its great lens continued to produce phenomenal photographs. At the January International CES, held in Las Vegas, I stopped by the Olympus meeting rooms (they did not have a display on the show floor.) I had been looking for a new Olympus with a lens as good as my old faithful, and it finally has appeared: the XZ-2 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009AYJQ2U/ ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009AYJQ2U&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*). I needed little convincing and bought one when I got home.

Unlike the XD memory Olympus has used over the years, the XZ-2 uses the more popular SD memory card. It also uses the LI90b lithium battery and you can get spares quite reasonably priced. I shopped around on Amazon.com and found a pair of batteries with an AC charger for about $10.

The camera comes with a USB cable and AC adapter for charging the battery in the camera. I prefer charging the batteries in an external charger. Some of the specs include a 3" articulating (+80,-50 degrees) monitor with touch functions, a CMOS sensor for improved low light capability, 12 megapixels, 4X optical zoom with 2X digital tele converter, image stabilization, 7 exposure modes, shutter speeds from 1/2000 to 60 seconds, built-in pop-up flash, HD movie mode in MOV format, sound recording in WAV format, micro HDMI and USB ports, and much, much more. A full list of the specifications can be found at the URL listed at the top of this article.

One drawback is the lack of a built-in optical viewfinder. You can get an electronic viewfinder which attaches on the external flash shoe. There are two models: the VF-3 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005FQSXFI/ ref=as_li_ss_tl?*

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B005FQSXFI&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) ($159) and VF-2 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B003A4GZUC/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B003A4GZUC&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*) ($259). The former has 920,000 dots; the latter 1,440,000 dots. I chose the VF-3 and it works quite well. It tilts up, up to 90 degrees. A button on the viewfinder switches the display between the camera's monitor and the viewfinder so the battery supports only one of them at a time. Even with the viewfinder, the unit is lighter than my old 5 megapixel C-5050Z.

I would have to give the camera only four globes for the lack of a built-in viewfinder and the in-camera battery charging system that comes with the unit. However the viewfinder itself gets five globes.

In the limited time I have had the camera, the results in both the still and video modes have been very good. For day-to-day use I have a less-expensive Canon which I carry around in my pocket. I'll be using the XZ-2 extensively on my annual trip to Italy this fall and to Las Vegas for CES next January. I'll be interested to see how it performs in the low light conditions found in many of the churches in Italy. I'll probably be doing a follow-up piece on the ZX-2 this fall after my Italy trip.

🌐🌐🌐🌐 (camera)

🌐🌐🌐🌐🌐 (viewfinder)

Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at *www.charlescarr.com*.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"GrandKids App for Windows 8," "VB.NET," "IE 10 Win7 Behavior," ""Help" Is No Help!"

GrandKids App for Windows 8

[Regarding the March 15 "Where to Save INI Files" topic:]

I believe you changed the location of the ini file for the Reminder app for Windows 8, since "%A_Username %" fails to account for the differences between a Local Account and a Windows Account. Wouldn't the same apply to the GrandKids app?

Current GrandKids:
C:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*%A_UserName%*bckslsh*Documents*bckslsh*GrandKids*bckslsh*GrandKids.ini

Original Reminder:
C:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*%A_UserName%*bckslsh*Reminder*bckslsh*Reminder.ini

Final Reminder for Windows 8:
%A_AppData%*bckslsh*Reminder*bckslsh*Reminder.ini

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

Yes, I would change the path in the GrandKids app as well. Although I would probably use A_MyDocuments rather than A_AppData since without other editing features A_MyDocuments will give better direct access for changes in the My Documents folder.

-Jack Dunning

VB.NET

[Regarding the August 21, 2009 Rob, The ComputorTutor Does VB.Net column:]

Thank you Mr. Rob Spahitz. I really need these articles.

-Misa, San Diego, CA

IE 10 Win7 Behavior

[Regarding the April 12 Digital Dave column:]

I may be misunderstanding the issue but Windows 7 behaves differently than Vista. When you click on something in the task bar it will open a new window if not already opened (and it is pinned) or go to the opened window. To open another instance right-click and then click on IE in the new dialog. Now when you click on the icon you will have a choice of which instance you want. Also you may want to pin frequently used programs so they are always there using the same right click menu.

-Marcus, Alabama

"Help" Is No Help!

I can't imagine being the only one to have this complaint: When I have a problem with Word, e-mail or you name it, I need to solve it now—not days from now. So, I Google the server, program provider, etc. (you know —the experts in the area of my dilemma) with my problem.

Their "help" site is anything but! Then, they suggest I "ask a friend who may be expert in the type of problem I'm having." This is where I start pulling the hair out of my head and losing years off my life! This is the most idiotic, frustrating scenario imaginable, and yet we put up with it—why?

Why is it not the responsibility of whoever is making the big bucks to at least admit the problem, and tell the subscriber it is being fixed? Obviously, if several users have complained, they should suspect something is wrong with their system—-but they continue for days to allow the complaints to come in.

It is great being able to get some answers from Digital Dave for rare or extremely technical or isolated problems. However, a glitch in something like Word or e-mail should require the provider to admit he has a system problem and is working on it—as opposed to making the subscriber think he has a unique problem which a "friend" might be able to help solve.

This is even more frustrating for people like me who are not "experts" in computers, and waste so much time chasing "phantoms" when it is simply a problem with the server who refuses to acknowledge his responsibility.

-Wayne Ford

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