

ComputerEdge™ Online — 05/03/13



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Most people are dissatisfied with Facebook, but are there any real alternatives?

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The advertisement features the Intel logo at the top left. To its right is a small image of a processor with the text 'Add Windows 7 Or 8 \$100'. Below this, the price '\$249' is prominently displayed in large red font. Underneath the price, the specifications are listed: 'INTEL® Dual Core G1610', '2.6Ghz 2MB Cache', '2GB DDR-3 MEMORY', '22X DVD/RW and', and '250GB SATA Hard Drive'.

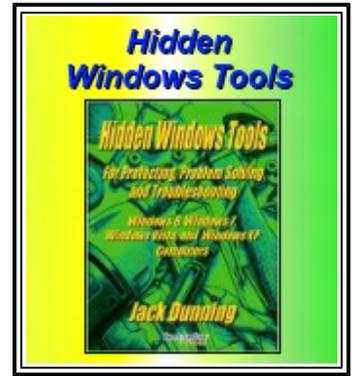
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The advertisement has the word 'redit.' in a large, bold, black font. Below it, the tagline 'intelligent outcomes' is written in a smaller, blue font. A horizontal bar with segments of pink, orange, yellow, green, and purple is positioned below the tagline. At the bottom left is a red square with a white plus sign. To its right, the contact information is listed: '888-redIT-411', 'info@redIT.com', and 'www.redIT.com'.

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The advertisement has a yellow background. At the top, it says 'Read Kindle E-Books Anywhere on Anything!' in bold black text. Below this, it lists 'FREE Kindle Reading Apps for iPad, iPhone, Macintosh, Android, BlackBerry, and All Windows PCs, or Read in Your Web Browser!'. At the bottom, the 'amazon.com' logo is displayed in its characteristic black font with a red smile underneath.

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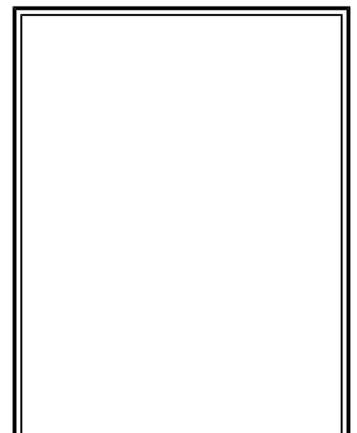
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Digital Dave

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

Internet Access Problems; Service from Computer Companies; Instantly Add More USB Ports.

Dear Digital Dave,

My Internet access randomly shuts down and I have to shut down my computer, unplug my router and unplug by my cable modem. I then must reboot my computer, then plug in the modem, wait for all the lights to come on, then plug in my router. Why does this work to fix it and how do I fix it permanently?

*Jeff Reid
Escondido, CA*

Dear Jeff,

This technique works because each device renews its connections and reassigns any needed IPs in the next device. (The usual method is to turn the computer back on last, although it obviously doesn't make any difference in your case.) Finding a permanent fix is a little more involved. The problem is figuring out what is causing the shut down in the first place.

The culprit may be the cable modem, the router, the network card in the computer, or an intermittent problem in one of the cables (including the connection from the cable modem to the lines outside). If you have any other devices on the same network, then it may be a little easier to isolate the problem.

Next time, rather than just resetting all of the devices, try them one at a time starting with the computer. This will help to find the problem. If that doesn't help, then when you have the problem, check for Internet connection failure on other computers, tablets Wi-Fi, Netflix, Internet phone or anything else that uses the Internet. For example, if you can get to the Internet with Netflix on your television, then the cable modem is not the problem. If you can get on the Web with another computer (or your iPad), you might suspect the first computer's Internet card or network cable. If your Internet phone has no connection, then it is either the router or cable modem (if plugged into the router), or cable modem (if plugged directly into the cable modem). If your Wi-Fi works, then it is on the direct connect side of the router (if the router is the source of the Wi-Fi).

You can also call tech support at the cable provider and have them do checking from their end. If they can't see your cable modem, then it is either a problem with the modem or the outside connection.

If you reboot the computer without resetting the router or cable modem and the connection comes back up, then you probably have either a bad network card in the computer or shaky cable to the router. (It's also possible that it's a virus.)

Once you have isolated the source of the problem, then you will most likely need to replace the device or cable. (It is possible that a firmware update could solve a router problem. Check with the manufacturer.) In any case, it is likely the problem will continue to get worse until you replace the faulty device. That's why it's important to systematically check each portion of the connection until you isolate the issue. Otherwise, you might end up replacing everything for no reason. Plus, some providers will charge you for a service call if you tell them it's the either outside connection or their cable modem, then they discover it's a network card in your computer or your router.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

You provide an excellent service to many who are rather expert in computer technology and have complex problems. However, there are many of us who encounter problems with programs i.e. Microsoft Word, our e-mail server, etc. that need quick answers.

Going to "Help" sites is useless, and trying to get the provider to respond to a problem is met with a response i.

e. "Ask a peer" or "Ask a knowledgeable friend." Going to the "Peer" site inevitably results in many others having the same problem—with no solution.

Almost invariably the problem is with the provider, who knows of the problem, but instead of admitting they have a problem and are in the process of fixing it, they simply let us go off on different tangents resulting in a lot of lost time and frustration.

This is the most infuriating situation imaginable. The provider apparently believes he has no obligation in the matter. What can be done about this? There must be millions of others with the same problem.

Wayne Ford
Huntington Beach, CA

Dear Wayne,

I certainly understand what you're saying and it's an accurate description of how support works (or I should say doesn't work) with many hardware and software companies. However, I have found a few companies that will take the time to help—even if they don't solve the problem. In the long run it's best to avoid those companies that have a complacent attitude, although that doesn't solve an immediate problem.

When looking for answers on the Web I often find groups of people with the same problem, yet no solution. I merely change my Google queries by substituting different keywords. Eventually, I usually find a clue, although it may take a good bit of time.

Another lifesaver is to do your homework in advance by going to sites such as Amazon to read the reviews of products before you buy. It is amazing how often you can avoid headaches because someone made the mistake for you.

Outside of that, the best thing you can do, regardless of what type of computer you own, is to learn how it works from a practical level. Then when something goes wrong, you will have a semblance of a clue as to the source of the problem.

I wish there were easy answers both for the users and the producers. Computers are tremendously complicated and sometimes we just don't know what's causing a problem. Supporting systems is tremendously expensive and unless a product commands a high price, support is often unaffordable. While support people are trained for their products, they are not the people who designed or built the hardware or software. Sadly, sometimes they don't know the answer or even if the problem is with their product or another piece of the system.

Digital Dave

Digital Dave's Tip

It is not uncommon for USB ports to fail, especially when you're regularly plugging and unplugging different devices. If the USB connector breaks because of too many in and out connections, it can be a real problem—especially in a laptop. To avoid this connector abuse I have two recommendations.

First, get a short USB cable (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000E5CYW8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?



[ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000E5CYW8&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000E5CYW8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000E5CYW8&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)) which you can leave connected at all times to the main USB slot. This will save wear and tear on the main slot since the frequent reconnecting will occur at the end of the short cable which can be replaced easily and cheaply.

Second, if you have multiple USB devices, get an inexpensive USB hub (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000Q8UAWY/ref=as_li_ss_tl?



ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000Q8UAWY&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) to expand the capacity of your computer. This will work well if you are using either low-power devices such as flash drives or USB devices with their own power source.

If you need more power than you can get from the original USB port, then consider a hub with its own power supply ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00483WRZ6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00483WRZ6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00483WRZ6&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)



ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00483WRZ6&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20). This will be good for USB devices which may demand more (USB hard drives).

Note that if you have USB 3.0 on your computer, you should get a hub for USB 3.0 ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006TT91TW/ref=as_li_ss_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006TT91TW/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B006TT91TW&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B006TT91TW&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20). Otherwise, you will lose some speed to the 2.0 USB hub. (Most of the 3.0 hubs appear to have external power of their own.)

Digital Dave

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Facebook Is King of the Social Networking Hill, But Will It Stay There?

“Are the Best Days Behind Facebook?” by Jack Dunning

Facebook is certainly the dominant force in social networking. Many people are now predicting its downfall. But if their demise is in the cards, what will replace Facebook.

It appears the Facebook may have reached its peak—although it’s at a pretty lofty height. Not only does it seem that the addition of new subscribers has slowed, but old ones are dropping out—either through boredom or lack of time. According to Matthew Humphries at Geek.com (www.geek.com/news/millions-are-leaving-facebook-every-month-due-to-boredom-1553510/), “Millions are leaving Facebook every month due to boredom.”

“According to independent analyst estimates, in the US alone Facebook lost six million visitors last month and has lost over 9 million over the last 6 months. That’s around a 4 percent drop. On its own that’s nothing to be too concerned about, but the same visitor retreat is happening in other countries across Europe, including the UK, Germany, Spain, France, Japan, and Canada.”

“So why are so many people fleeing the service? The answer is two-fold. Firstly, there’s competition from other services including the Facebook-owned Instagram and Path, created by a former Facebook employee. You also can’t forget the other big names operating in this space such as Google + and Twitter. But the second and potentially bigger problem for Facebook is boredom.”



There are many who says that the recent Facebook decline was inevitable. (“Facebook Losing Users: Is This the End Of the Social Network? (www.policymic.com/articles/23835/facebook-losing-users-is-this-the-end-of-the-social-network/)”) According

to Neicole Crepeau (www.businessesgrow.com/2013/02/22/the-disruptive-technology-that-will-replace-facebook/), we go to Facebook because that’s where everyone else is, not because there is anything particularly compelling about Facebook as a destination. It was the first to become *the* gather spot. “That’s exactly why Facebook is vulnerable, though. If it was creating a great user experience and constantly providing innovative, desirable features, it would be one of our top destinations. Since it’s not, if a few key friends start to go to another bar, we’re likely to start going there, too. The only thing keeping us on the Facebook Web site over another location is the other people on it. As more and more friends go to another bar, eventually there won’t be any reason to stick with Facebook as a destination.”



However, in order for a new site to replace Facebook, a disruptive technology needs to evolve. It can't just be another copycat Web site such as Google+ with a few different features. This new technology needs to address the concerns of the consumers, such as privacy, security and annoying ads.

Advertising for Survival

Even if an Internet business starts as a free service, eventually it will monetize for its own survival. While there are a number of possible models for earning revenues, the most common is advertising. Yet, there is always a tradeoff when it comes to the user experience.

Dan Tynan (www.itworld.com/it-management/351308/facebook-s-new-home-won-t-solve-its-advertising-problem) from IT World says, "To be blunt, as my Irish forebears might have said, Facebook's ads are shite. Nobody looks at them, and why should they? Easily a third of the ads I see every time I visit Facebook are from spammy companies selling stupid diets, bogus self improvement schemes, books on how to pick up chicks, or cheap knockoffs of brand name products... These guys are the bottom feeders of the Internet advertising world. Often these ads are so inept and patently false you have to wonder if anyone at Facebook is paying any attention to them at all."

People are really good at ignoring Internet advertising.

The Mobile Market

Facebook has recognized that it needs better access from mobile devices. (Facebook regularly crashes on my iPad.) However, their jump to smartphone is not going so well. Facebook's new smartphone app has flopped making its foray into mobile computing more problematic. Users have given the app very low ratings. It is more like malware than a useful feature. From Wired (www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2013/04/facebook-home-problems/), "[The app] takes over your phone like a virus." "Why would I want to turn my whole phone into Facebook? Facebook should always just be an app and not act as an operating system."

Facebook Survival Tactics

Maybe Facebook will encounter the fate of so many other Internet businesses that peaked and waned, but if it does fail, it won't be quick. Facebook has the resources to buy rapidly growing competitors and bring them into the fold. This is the strategy shown with Instagram and many others (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mergers_and_acquisitions_by_Facebook). Any upstart that makes progress in social networking will become an acquisition target. Facebook is now in the enviable defensive position of being number one. They will not be beaten by anyone merely doing the same thing—only better. History is cluttered with failures that had a "better" product. If Facebook does succumb, it will be from a direction which can't be purchased.

Disruptive Technology

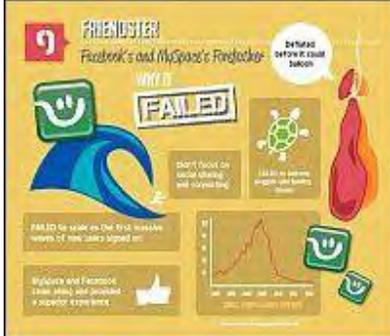
To defeat Facebook, it can't just be more of the same Web page technology. A new social networking system needs to evolve which will give people what they really want. People are sick of their private information becoming fodder for advertisers. They are annoyed by so-called "friends" who post endless list of drivel. The issues of privacy and security are huge and Facebook is like being in the Wild West.

Some people have suggested that mobile devices with their various apps will be the undoing of Facebook. It's true that many of these apps will eat away at Facebook, but I'm not so sure the mobile technology is the Facebook killer. In spite of its early missteps, Facebook will deal with getting people access to the site from their smartphone—that's not the problem. Ultimately, it could be that Web page based technology used for social networking with all of its vulnerabilities is the real problem. Who really wants to keep all of their personal information stored on massive data farms—whether built by Facebook, Apple, Google or Amazon? All the major high tech companies are setting up these huge centralized depositories for the convenience of their clients. Our personal information is being centralized.



The Breakdown of Central Structures

The hallmark of technology over the past few decades has been the erosion of old power structures. Thousand (or millions) of computers have eaten away at the control of central authority whether news organizations, large corporations, or governments. Ironically, the authors of this revolution have now become the new power structures—Apple, Microsoft, Google, Facebook. Could the same fate be in store for them?



If a new social networking system overtakes Facebook, most likely it will be a distributed system (a multitude of individual computers, whether PCs, tablets, or smartphones) owned by its users. In the long term, distributed technology in the hands of many people tends to break down monoliths. Distributed systems are much more powerful and flexible than the centralized systems. The appropriate model for the disruptive technology is the peer-to-peer network which forms natural social groups without dependency upon any central authority.

The success of this type of distributed network has already been demonstrated by BitTorrent (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BitTorrent) which uses the power of many individually owned computers to share massive files by breaking them into smaller, manageable pieces delivered by multiple computers.



The disruptive technology could be something similar to the community-run, distributed social-network Diaspora ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora_\(social_network\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora_(social_network))) which was started a number of years ago by four college students. Many people would list Diaspora (joindiaspora.com/) as a failure since the founders have turned it over the public domain. (See "What Happened to the Facebook Killer? It's Complicated." (motherboard.vice.com/blog/what-happened-to-the-facebook-killer-it-is-complicated)) However, the community may be where Diaspora belongs. Many software systems have flourished as open source programs and are well supported. Even if Diaspora is not the future of social networking, the concept of building social networks out of smaller individually owned networks makes more sense than the current one-size-fits-all Facebook approach.

Everyone Owns a Distributed Social Network



If a social network based upon distributed systems comes about, no one person or group of people will own it. It will exist on thousands (or millions) of servers individually owned by the users. These servers will be located and maintained in homes and businesses as necessary. They could be full blown PCs or something as simple and small as the \$25-50 Raspberry Pi (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SQQF9C/

[ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SQQF9C&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SQQF9C/) computer (see below). The networks would not be dependent upon huge server farms owned by a third party.



The \$25-50 Raspberry Pi computer.

Although linked as a group, each network would be private only admitting close friends and family. (Does anyone really want thousands of "friends"?) There would be numerous different levels of access allowing people to adjust sharing for each type of "friend." One of my biggest annoyances with Facebook is the fact that so many people who happen to be friends of friends can see my comments on a post. Or, even worse, I'm subjected to rants from strangers. A social networking system should reinforce your real relationships reserving certain conversations for only those specific people. Firewalls should exist between users which can be adjusted freely according to the relationship.

There would be no advertising on the next social network since no one owns the system. That would be one of its best features. Of course people will try to Spam just as they do with e-mail, but it should be fairly easy to come up with ways to block them.

Facebook certainly is in a strong position, but it's much more tenuous than that of Microsoft, Apple, or Google. It's difficult to say that anyone really needs social networking—especially not on any one particular site. If twelve-year old girls decide the Facebook is no longer cool, then that could spell a quick end. There will be continual attempts at taking on the king. Eventually one will likely succeed. It just not likely to be anyone that any of us suspect.

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

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).

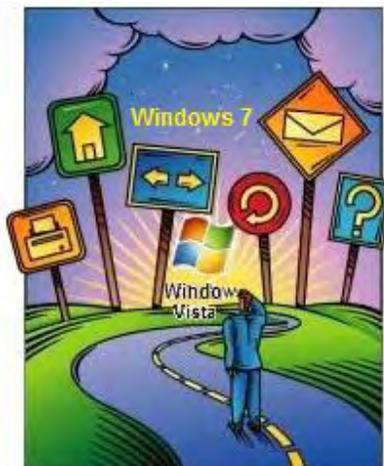
Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

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 ComputerEdge 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.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Removing ToolTip Messages from Windows Explorer and the Desktop
 “Here Is a Quick Technique for Removing ToolTip Messages” by Jack Dunning

Some people are annoyed by the little messages that pop up when hovering over a file or folder name—not me. For those people, there’s a way to get rid of them.

Some people are annoyed by the tooltip messages that pop up in Windows Explorer when hovering over a file name, icon or thumbnail (not me...I like them) (See Figure 1). It’s pretty easy to turn the little messages off so that they will no longer display in Windows Explorer or on the Desktop. (This technique will not affect the tooltips on the Taskbar.)

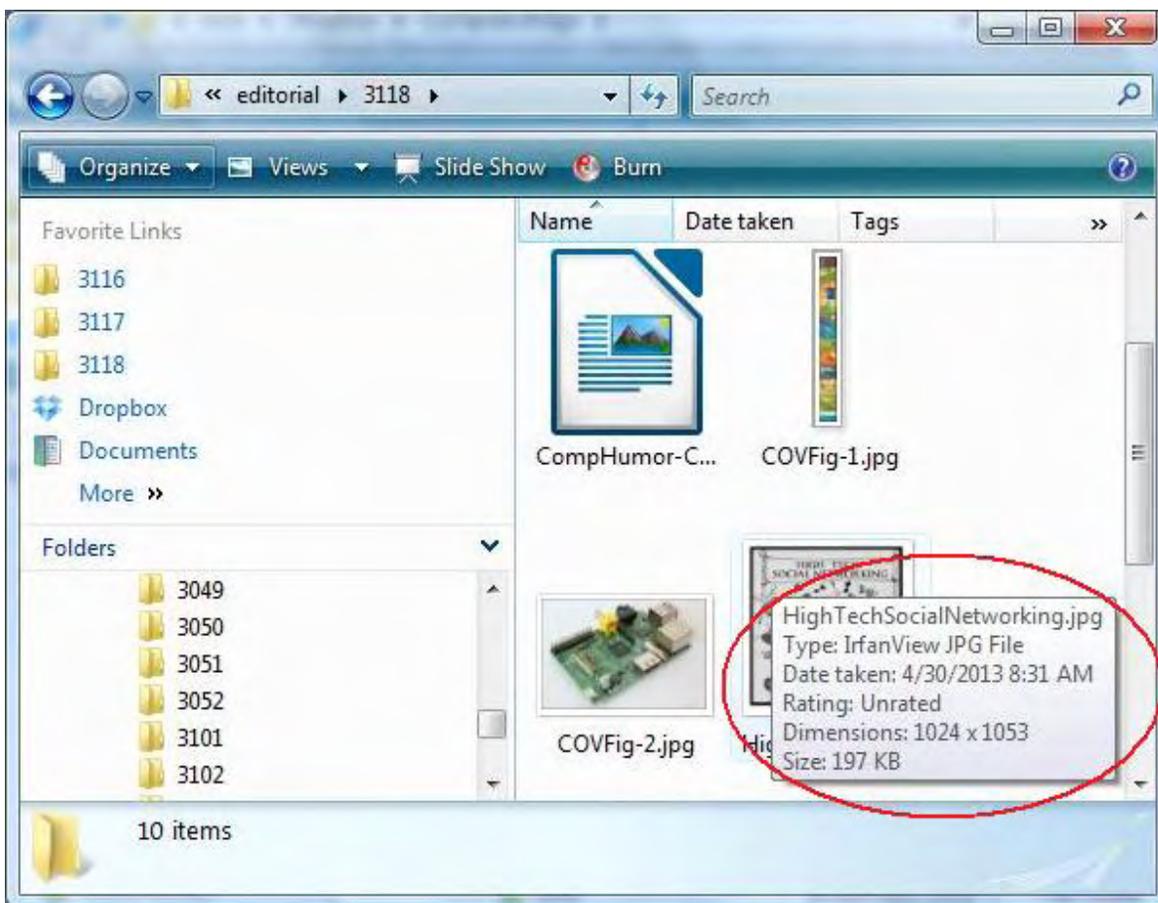


Figure 1. A tooltip is a little pop-up message which displays information when the cursor hovers over an object.

While the setting for displaying the tooltip messages is in the Windows Registry, in this case Microsoft has given us a way to change it without directly editing the Registry—which can be a little dangerous if you’re not sure what you’re doing. The checkbox for enabling/disabling the tooltips is found in the View tab of the Folders Options window (see Figure 2). Folder Options can be opened from Windows Explorer by selecting “Folder Options...” from the Tools menu (hit the ALT key if you don’t see Tools and it will pop up). In Windows Vista and beyond you can also open it through Organize => Folder and Search Options or type “folder” into the Start Search field. (Use +W for Setting search in Windows 8.)

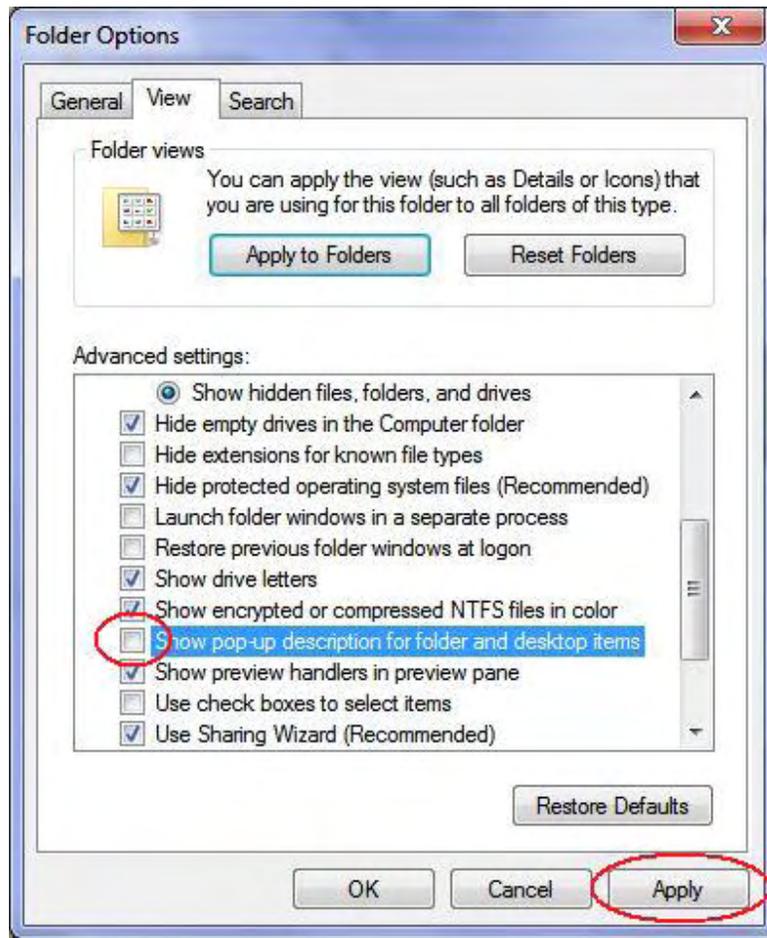


Figure 2. Tooltip messages can be disabled and enabled in the View tab of the Folder Options window by checking/unchecking the box and clicking Apply.

This change can also be made by editing the Registry directly, but, unlike the above technique, a logoff or reboot is required for the change to take effect. The purpose of discussing the Registry option is to show how settings are stored in Windows and to introduce making changes to the Registry with AutoHotkey—the subject of this week’s AutoHotkey column. While this change is simple in Windows without working in the Registry, there are other options such as changing the content of the same tooltips which can only be adjusted with Registry edits.

The first step for looking at the Registry is loading the *regedit* utility which allows the viewing and editing of the Windows Registry. Open Run (⊞+R), enter *regedit*, then click OK (see Figure 3).

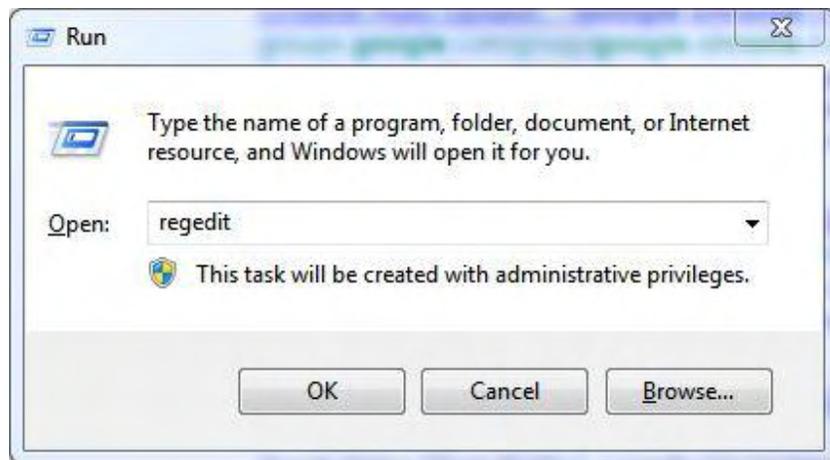


Figure 3. Run the regedit utility to open the Registry viewing and editing features.

The Registry Editor will open. The Registry is quite long and complicated. Generally, you should know exactly where you’re going before you start, although there is a search capability if you’re looking for specific entries. In this case, we follow the tree structure shown in this path:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\
Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced

The ShowInfoTip is the specific key which controls the display of tooltips in Windows Explorer and on the Desktop (see Figure 4). When the data value is 1 the tooltips will display. When 0 there is no display.

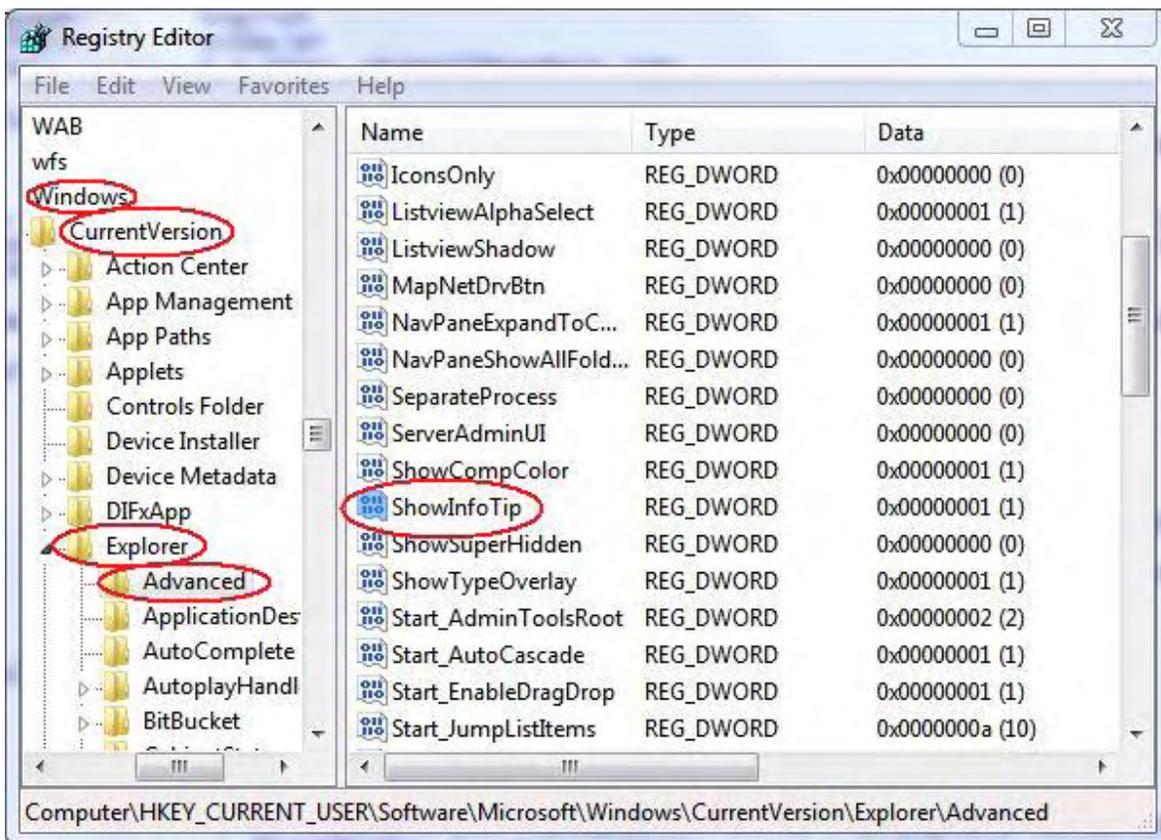


Figure 4. Registry Editor follows a tree structure in the same manner as Windows Explorer.

The value of any key can be changed by selecting the items and picking "Modify..." from the Edit menu. (Don't make any changes unless you're absolutely sure that it's the right key and value. Randomly making changes to the Registry could cause Windows instability.)

In the AutoHotkey column I demonstrate a short script which modifies the value of this tooltip key. It bypasses the need to open and navigate the Registry Editor. The compiled version of the script can be run on any Windows computer as a test and a demonstration of changing the Windows Registry.

If the script *WinToolTipToggle.exe* (free download at our AutoHotkey Dropbox (www.dropbox.com/sh/4qu48lyqtidxg7t/QdMY1dNuy7)) is run, the Registry ShowInfoTip setting is read and the appropriate message window is displayed (see Figure 5).

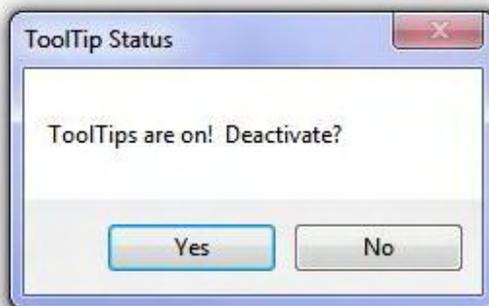


Figure 5. If the ShowInfoTip value is 1, the message is displayed with the option to deactivate it (set the value to 0).

If the Yes button is clicked the ShowInfoTip value is set to 0 and the following message is displayed (see Figure 6). Registry changes will

not take effect until rebooting or logging in again. Click No and the script terminates.



Figure 6. The AutoHotkey script reads the new value of ShowInfoTip and displays an appropriate message.

Run the *WinToolTipToggle.exe* script again and the reverse will happen.

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

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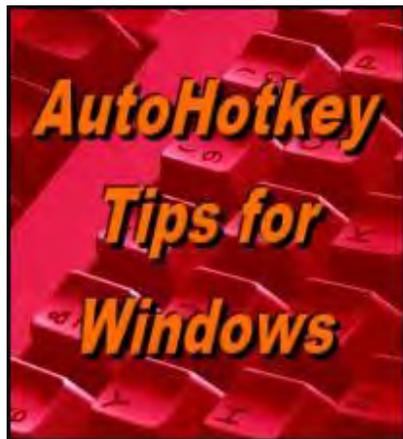
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Yet, One More Reason to Use AutoHotkey Free Software!

A Short Script to Change the Windows Registry

“Many People Don't Know that AutoHotkey Can Modify the Windows Registry” by Jack Dunning

Some changes to software can only be made in the Windows Registry. Here's how to do it with AutoHotkey.

This week in the Windows Tips and Tricks column I discuss how to turn off and on the Windows Explorer and Desktop tooltip pop-ups. It is easy to do this through Folder Options in Windows, but it's also an opportunity to explore the commands in AutoHotkey for reading from and writing to the Windows Registry. As an example, I wrote a short script which first reads the value for *ShowInfoTip* in the Registry, then displays the meaning of the setting in an AutoHotkey MsgBox (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MsgBox.htm) with an option to change the setting (see Figure 1).

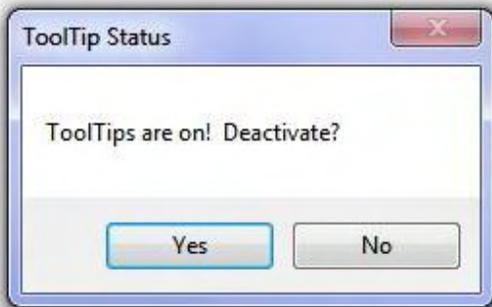


Figure 1. When the value of ShowInfoTip is 1, the tooltips in Windows Explorer and the Desktop are activated. Click Yes to deactivate.

The new value is written to *ShowInfoTip* in the Registry with another MsgBox then displaying the new setting and a reminder to logoff or reboot (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. This window pops up when the value is changed showing a reminder to reboot or logoff.

Working with the Windows Registry with AutoHotkey

There are two primary AutoHotkey commands for working with the Windows Registry: RegRead (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/RegRead.htm) and RegWrite (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/RegWrite.htm). There is also a Registry loop command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/LoopReg.htm) which processes a group of Registry entries which will be explored at a future time.

Working with the Windows RegEdit program can be tedious and confusing. To get to a particular key requires navigating through a long tree of registry categories. For example, to find the setting for displaying the Windows Explorer tooltip setting means drilling down through

the following path:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced

then finding the term ShowInfoTip in the list (see Figure 3).

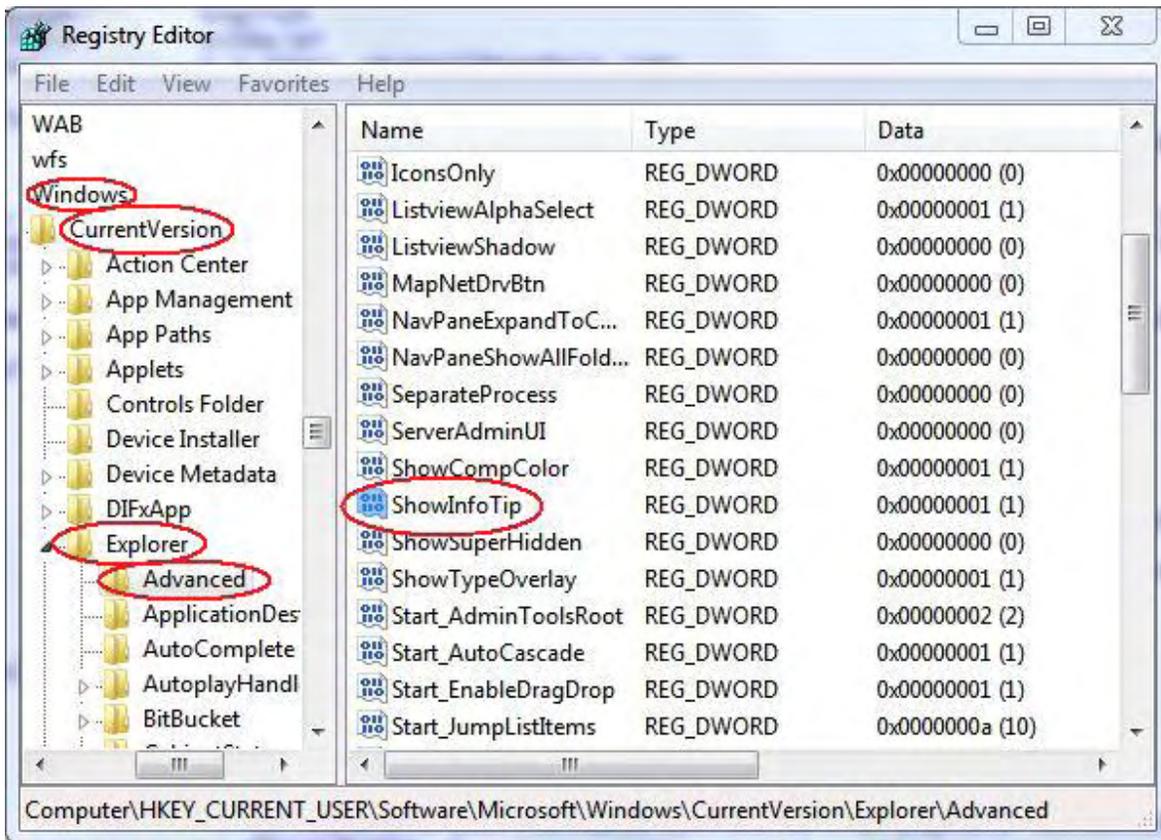


Figure 3. Finding the ShowInfoTip setting in Registry Editor.

This is fine for the occasional change to the Registry, but if it's necessary to change settings on a regular basis, a short AutoHotkey script will do the job. In fact, it can be done in one line if you don't need any feedback. This first line uses the RegWrite command to turn the tooltips off:

```
RegWrite, REG_DWORD, HKEY_CURRENT_USER
, Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced, ShowInfoTip, 0
```

It could be placed in a one-line script. The line to turn the tooltips back on is:

```
RegWrite, REG_DWORD, HKEY_CURRENT_USER
, Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced, ShowInfoTip, 1
```

There could be a script for each setting.

Note: The long lines of code are wrapped to fit this Web page. They do not need to be broken into multiple lines in the script. However, if they are, as shown here, then each following line should start with one of the punctuation marks—in this case the comma. Then all the broken lines will be treated as one continuous line.

With a slightly longer script, the app becomes a toggle allowing the user to decide whether to turn it off or on (as shown in the figures above):

```
RegRead, ToolTip, HKEY_CURRENT_USER
, Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced, ShowInfoTip
```

```

If ToolTip = 1
{
  MsgBox,4 ,ToolTip Status, ToolTips are on! Deactivate?
  IfMsgBox Yes
  {
    RegWrite, REG_DWORD, HKEY_CURRENT_USER
      , Software*\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced
      , ShowInfoTip, 0
    MsgBox, ,ToolTip Status, ToolTips are off! Restart or logoff to disable!
  }
}
If ToolTip = 0
{
  MsgBox,4 ,ToolTip Status, ToolTips are off! Activate?
  IfMsgBox Yes
  {
    RegWrite, REG_DWORD, HKEY_CURRENT_USER
      , Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced
      , ShowInfoTip, 1
    MsgBox, ,ToolTip Status, ToolTips are on! Restart or logoff to enable!
  }
}

```

How It Works

In the first line for the script the RegRead command is used to save the current value of ShowInfoTip in the variable ToolTip. Next there are two conditional *IF* statements. The first is used when ShowInfoTip is on (*ToolTip = 1*). The second is almost identical to the first except it is true when ShowInfoTip is off (*ToolTip = 0*).

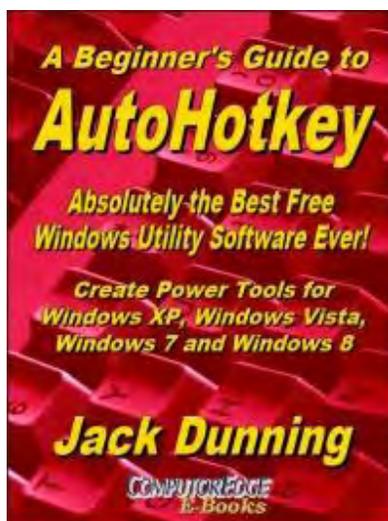
If the condition is true, then a MsgBox command is used to display the status of the ShowInfoTip setting and if it should be changed (Figure 1 above). The number 4 in the options section of the MsgBox command indicates that a Yes/No type box should be used.

The next conditional *IF (IfMsgBox Yes)* only executes if the Yes button is clicked. If so, the RegWrite command is used to set the value of ShowInfoTip to the opposite of the current setting. Then a new MsgBox with no action confirms the new setting and advises that logoff or restart is required (Figure 2 above). If No is clicked in the first MsgBox, the program is exited taking no action.

Since this is a toggle program, when you run it again it will do the reverse.

While this particular toggle is not needed in Windows, it is a good example of how you can change Registry settings with AutoHotkey without using RegEdit. There are thousands of Registry settings for both Windows and software applications. If you know what they are and how they are used, you can quickly write AutoHotkey scripts which will scan those settings and make the changes you want.

* * *



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Building Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8, AutoHotkey is the most powerful, flexible, **free** Windows utility software available. Anyone can instantly add more of the functions that they want in all of their Windows programs, whether installed on their computer or while working on the Web. AutoHotkey has a universality not found in any other Windows utility—free or paid.

Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his

learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of windows, making any window always-on-top, copying and moving files, and much more. Each chapter builds on the previous chapters.

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

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Zombie Code" by Wally Wang

Zombie Code; The New Compiler Market; The Most Reliable (and Ironic) Windows PC; The Lack of Customer Service; The iPhone in Your Car; The Alternative Worldwide Developer's Conference; A Smartphone Can Save Your Life; Information about Your Current Wi-Fi Connection.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

One problem with updating software is that eventually the original programmers leave and nobody quite knows how the whole program actually works. Not only do programs eventually grow beyond what a single person can fully understand, but with multiple programmers modifying the source code, it's difficult for anyone to fully understand how all the code interacts with the rest of the program. The result is that companies find it's easier to leave old code in a program and just keep adding new code.

At one time, WordStar defined the word processing standard and everyone used WordStar because everyone else did too. The original WordStar program was written in assembly code for maximum speed and efficiency, but eventually the original WordStar programmers left to form their own word processor company called NewStar, which was basically a clone of WordStar.

When WordStar tried to update their program, they found it nearly impossible to understand. So they simply bought the NewStar company and renamed NewStar as the latest version of WordStar.

When a program contains code that nobody quite understands and doesn't want to eliminate for fear it might be needed in some obscure part of the program, that code is called "zombie code." Zombie code affects all software programs. That's part of the reason why Microsoft rewrote Windows NT from scratch, which later formed the basis for Windows 2000, Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8. Apple tried updating their OS 9 operating system but eventually gave up and decided to start from scratch with OS X instead (which they bought from Steve Jobs' old company, NeXT). At a certain point, it's easier and more efficient to rewrite a program from scratch rather than waste time trying to figure out how an existing program works and modifying that existing program without making it more unstable.

PC Magazine recently pointed out the problem of zombie code with Microsoft Office (www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2418117,00.asp?kc=PCRSS03079TX1K0000584). As Microsoft Office has aged, it's likely to contain large chunks of zombie code embedded in the program. Eventually, updating the existing source code will become more trouble than simply rewriting the entire program from scratch. If you're using Microsoft Office and feel that it's getting bigger but not necessarily better, the code may just be getting too big and bloated.

A few years back, Apple totally rewrote iMovie along with Final Cut Pro. As iTunes ages, Apple will likely need to rewrite that program as well. No program is immune from the effects of zombie code and that includes major operating systems as well.

As a consumer, you have no idea what the effect of zombie code might have on a program so you just have to trust that the latest version of a program actually works as advertised. Unfortunately, as buyers of Final Draft 7, a screenwriting program, found out, sometimes the latest version of a program works less reliably than the previous version. Kent Tessman got so fed up with Final Draft 7 (www.kenttessman.com/2011/02/giving-up-on-final-draft/) that he decided to write his own screenwriting program called Fade In Professional (www.fadeinpro.com).

When faced with a new version of any program, ask yourself if that new version contains any must-have features that the current program version lacks. If so, then you might as well upgrade to the newer version and hope for the best.

In many cases, the newer version of a program doesn't offer anything critical. In that case, you might as well stay with the current program version, which is what most people are doing by sticking with Windows XP. Although Windows XP lacks many security features of Windows 7 and Windows 8, it still gets the job done so there's little reason to upgrade in return for greater potential headaches and incompatibilities using a newer version of a program.

If you don't want to upgrade to the latest version and the current program version isn't offering every feature you need, a third option is to switch to another rival program altogether. After Intuit put out a lame version of Quicken Essentials for the Macintosh that doesn't come close to Quicken for Windows, many Macintosh Quicken users simply abandoned Quicken for rival programs like iBank.

Switching to a new program still risks the problem of zombie code eventually, but it can provide immediate relief from the hassles of upgrading or sticking with your current program. This is part of the reason why people switch from Windows to OS X or Linux, or switch from Microsoft Office to Google Apps or LibreOffice (or vice versa).

Software will eventually get old and creaky like an old bridge or house. Just be aware of this inevitable problem and be ready to switch to another program. What you don't want to do is stick with a single program forever when it no longer meets your needs, just because you're too afraid to change.

The New Compiler Market

At one time if you wanted to write a program, you had to spend hundreds of dollars for a compiler such as Microsoft C. Then Borland International turned the compiler market upside-down when they released Turbo Pascal for \$49.95. Not only was Turbo Pascal far cheaper than competing compilers, but it was also faster and easier to use too.

Introductory Offer

PASCAL

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Standard Pascal for Your IBM PC, MS-DOS, CP/M 86, and CP/M 80 Computers

	TURBO	JRT	MT+
SPEED	TURBO	JRT	MT+
DISK SPACE	TURBO	JRT	MT+
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Hang on to your seats! It's Turbo Pascal.

	Turbo Pascal	JRT	MT+
8 & 16 bit	YES	NO	YES
Editor	YES	NO	NO
Generate Object Code	YES	NO	YES
Locates Run-Time Errors Directly in Source Code	YES	NO	NO
Compilation Speed *	1 s.	46 s.	69 s. (includes loading)
Execution Speed *	6 s.	69 s.	8 s.
Disk Space	28K (including editor)	85K (editor)	168K (editor)
Price	\$49.95	\$39.95	\$99.00

There has never been a Pascal compiler this good with so many powerful features. We know what you've been waiting for: a true Pascal compiler that works fast, offers a full screen editor, and has a great price. **Turbo Pascal** has it all. First, we've included a built-in, interactive full screen, Wordstar compatible editor; it not only lets you correct errors, but during program compilation the cursor even jumps directly to the error and waits for your correction. No kidding. Second, it takes only 28K of disk space, including the editor, and on your microcomputer you need all the space you can get. **Turbo Pascal** is 10 to 70 times faster during compilation, as well as execution than Digital Research's MT+ or JRT Pascal.

Hard to believe your good fortune on the price? Don't worry. We're Borland, and we produce only quality, state-of-the-art software. Companies such as Micro Pro, Morrow Computers, Access and others distribute our software products, so you can't go wrong. Place your order today. And we'll ship your Turbo Pascal out fast. For VISA and MasterCard orders call toll free:

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21 of 32

Execution Speed	6 s.	69 s.	8 s.
Disk Space	28K - editor	85K - editor	168K - editor
Price	\$49.95	\$59.95	\$99.00

Benchmark data based on *Eight Queens in Algorithms + Data Structures + Programs* by N. Wirth (Prentice-Hall, publisher). Turbo Pascal is a trademark of Borland International. MF is a trademark of MF Microsystems. BT Pascal is a product of BT. Wordstar is a trademark of Micropro.

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 Operating system: CP/M 80
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Please be sure model number and format are correct.

NAME: _____
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 CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____
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Figure 1. The original Turbo Pascal ad in BYTE Magazine in 1983.

For years, Borland International locked up the compiler market until Microsoft introduced Visual Basic and helped kill Turbo Pascal. Then to encourage more people to write programs for Windows, Microsoft started giving away free versions of Visual Basic along with Visual C#.

When people could download and use free compilers like Visual Basic Express or gcc, the compiler market collapsed. LiveCode (runrev.com) recently went open source so anyone could program using LiveCode, but if they wanted to create commercial programs, they had to buy a license.

Now Real Studio (formerly known as RealBASIC) has embraced this "free" model by offering their next generation compiler for free known as Xojo. Like the original RealBASIC, Xojo is essentially a Visual Basic clone that lets you run and create programs for Windows, OS X, and Linux. On June 4th, you'll be able to download Xojo (www.xojo.com) for free, but if you want to compile your programs, you'll have to buy a license.

By offering free compilers, LiveCode and Xojo hope to attract more programmers. Once programmers see the advantage of using LiveCode and Xojo, they'll be more likely to purchase a license so they can distribute and sell their programs.

If you're interested in writing programs, start with a free compiler. If you just want to create Windows programs (www.microsoft.com/visualstudio/eng/products/visual-studio-express-products), start with Visual Basic Express or Visual C# Express. If you just want to create Macintosh or iOS programs, start with Apple's free Xcode compiler.

If you want to create cross-platform programs, then try LiveCode or Xojo. LiveCode is better suited for non-programmers while Xojo is better suited for former Visual Basic programmers and other programmers familiar with traditional programming languages like C.

With free compilers available, there's no reason you can't create your own programs if you want. Who knows? With a little creativity and a lot of persistence, you could wind up creating a great new program that will help people all over the world.

The Most Reliable (and Ironic) Windows PC

If you're looking for the most reliable Windows PC laptop, ZDNet suggests that you should use a MacBook Pro (www.zdnet.com/want-the-most-reliable-windows-pc-buy-a-mac-or-maybe-a-dell-7000014469). The report, conducted by a company called Solutio, "takes into account program crashes and hangs (events in which an application becomes nonresponsive for at least five seconds), average boot time, the number of background processes, and the number of BSODs (STOP errors, aka the 'Blue Screen of Death') per week."

				Starting at	Soluto Score*
1	Apple	MacBook Pro 13, mid-2012		\$1,199**	1.05
2	Acer	Aspire E1-571		\$429	1.12
3	Dell	XPS 13		\$979	1.28
4	Dell	Vostro 3560		\$569	2.09
5	Acer	Aspire V3-771		\$699	2.44
6	Apple	MacBook Pro 15" Retina		\$2,199**	2.51
7	Dell	Inspiron 14z		\$549	2.54
8	Dell	Latitude E5530		\$519	2.90
9	Dell	Vostro 3460		\$539	2.95
10	Lenovo	Thinkpad X1 Carbon		\$1,169	3.20

* The score is based on a combination of crashes, hangs, BSODs, boot and background processes. Lower score means better performance. See methodology below for full details of score calculation.
 ** Windows license not included

Figure 2. The most reliable Windows PC laptops.

Other reliable Windows PC laptops came from Dell, Lenovo, and Acer, but none came from Hewlett-Packard. ZDNet reasons that Dell and Acer offer more reliable Windows PCs because "Both companies deliver relatively clean installations of Windows, with close attention paid to drivers. Dell includes minimal amounts of third-party software in its PCs, a practice that adds to the reliability of its products. By contrast, when I last looked at consumer PCs from HP and Samsung I found that crapware was a performance-sapping nightmare."

In general, the more bloatware installed on a Windows PC, the less reliable it seems to be, so if you're looking for a reliable Windows PC, check for pre-installed bloatware, get a PC directly from a Microsoft Store that's already been stripped of bloatware, or just stick with a Dell or Acer PC. If you're willing to pay more, get a MacBook Pro and compare its trackpad with the trackpad found on most Windows PC laptops. Despite the higher cost of the MacBook Pro, you might realize that sometimes paying more really does give you more for your money.

The Lack of Customer Service

T-Mobile recently started offering the iPhone and their no-contract plan has immediately run into problems for deceptive advertising. Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson wants T-Mobile to make their contracts more transparent (www.theverge.com/2013/4/25/4266374/t-mobile-agrees-change-deceptive-no-contract-ads-attorney-general) so people can understand exactly how much they'll have to pay when signing up for an iPhone through T-Mobile.

At a recent visit to a T-Mobile store to learn more about their iPhone plans, I wandered into an empty store filled with five T-Mobile employees who were grouped together talking among themselves. My friend and I stood in front of them, waiting to talk to

a representative, yet they continued to talk and joke among themselves while completely ignoring us standing less than three feet away. Finally, one of them asked if he could help us, at which point we were so disgusted that we just walked away.

This problem isn't likely specific to T-Mobile but to customer service representatives everywhere. When most people get paid to do their job, actually doing any work often interferes with their true desires, which is to do anything but work. Thus for many workers, helping customers is a nuisance. After all, why bother helping anyone if you get paid the same whether you help anyone or not?

People should get paid to produce results. If they're not producing results, then they shouldn't get paid. Until the incentive is to work, too many people will work as little as possible as long as they can continue collecting a paycheck. Not surprisingly, companies can always lay off useless workers without affecting efficiency.

Jack Welch (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Welch), the former CEO of General Electric, used to regularly fire the bottom 10 percent of his managers, correctly assuming that they weren't necessary in the first place. If people really want to get ahead in life, they simply have to do a good job. If they do an excellent job, there's a great chance that they'll wind up with more responsibilities and more pay. If their talents aren't being recognized in their current company, it can often be recognized and rewarded by another company. What will never be rewarded is laziness, whining, and avoiding responsibility.

The next time you visit T-Mobile or any store, watch how well (or how poorly) workers treat their customers. Even within a corporation, co-workers too often treat each other with disdain and contempt. Such useless people would be the ones that Jack Welch would have deservedly fired from General Electric in a heartbeat.

The iPhone in Your Car

Many people might use their iPhone to play music through their car stereo, but if Apple's latest patents reach the commercial market, you may be able to use the iPhone for more than just playing music. The first Apple patent involves helping you find your car (wallstcheatsheet.com/stocks/can-the-iphone-make-car-parking-headaches-history.html) after you've parked it.

The idea is that you park your car and the local coordinates of your car get stored in your iPhone. Now when you're walking back to your car, you let your iPhone guide you back to where you parked. No more walking aimlessly about, hoping to find your car by chance or trying to memorize odd numbers or letters designed to help you remember your parking location.

A second Apple patent involves letting your iPhone create different settings for a car. For example, a parent could program an iPhone to refuse to let a car go faster than a certain speed or drive a certain distance away from home. By customizing the settings on an iPhone, you can customize how a car behaves when you plug your iPhone into that car.

Such customization can eventually go beyond cars and into other areas of life as well. Customize someone's iPhone and that can give them access to a building during certain hours of the day. This can be perfect for housekeepers or pet sitters who need access to your house, but most likely not at three o'clock in the morning. Such a patent can turn the iPhone into an electronic, customizable key that hotels could eventually adopt as well.

Both Apple patents hint at greater uses for mobile computing. Of course, none of this would have occurred without smartphones and tablets, so you can see even more evidence on the usefulness of mobile computing that desktops and laptops could never fulfill.

The Alternative Worldwide Developer's Conference

Every year, Apple's Worldwide Developer's Conference (WWDC) sells out less than a day after tickets go on sale. Since not everyone who wants to attend may be fortunate enough to get a ticket, a group has formed an alternative dubbed the AltWWDC (altwwdc.com). The idea is still the same. Attend the conference outside the official conference and network with other programmers who didn't get a ticket to the official WWDC event either.

Conferences are often the best place to make new contacts. Then you can use social media and ordinary e-mail to stay in contact. Given the tremendous popularity of WWDC, attending AltWWDC even if you have a WWDC ticket can still put you in touch with other people who might be able to help you and vice versa.

Apple also plans to provide Tech Talks (news.cnet.com/8301-13579_3-57581749-37/after-wwdc-tickets-vanish-apple-touts-tech-talks-videos/) in various cities to allow programmers access to Apple's own software engineers. Through Tech Talks, Apple hopes to get more technical information out to programmers so they can continue taking advantage of the latest OS X and iOS features.

With so many people willing to learn more about programming Macintosh and iOS devices, you can see that both products will likely remain popular with consumers as more new software becomes available. As Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's CEO once mentioned, the success of any platform depends on support from developers. The more developers a platform attracts, the more customers it will

attract. This was why Windows was so popular for decades and this is why iOS is so popular today. Follow the developers and you can see which platform will be the most supported in the future.

A Smartphone Can Save Your Life

In the old days, people used to wonder why anybody would need a telephone. Within a few years, practically everyone had a landline telephone so people started wondering why you would need a mobile phone. Within a few years, many people started getting mobile phones.

Now the latest question is why do people need smartphones? Although ordinary mobile phones still outsell smartphones, that's gradually changing. More importantly, smartphones are becoming critical for business use along with unusual purposes as well.

During the Cold War, many communities set up warning sirens to alert people of a nuclear attack. Since those warning sirens were rarely used, communities started using them to warn people of tornadoes and other severe weather. While warning sirens can be helpful, they aren't always heard by people indoors. That's where smartphones come in.

In addition to using warning sirens or instead of using warning sirens, many communities now broadcast storm warnings through smartphones (usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/story/2012-06-28/weather-alerts-smartphones/55898356/1). By broadcasting storm warnings to smartphones within a given area, critical information can reach more people faster and possibly save lives by warning people when to seek shelter.

Just as people now question how anyone could think they didn't need an ordinary landline phone, soon people will wonder why anyone questioned the need for a smartphone. Beyond the convenience, perhaps your smartphone could one day save your life.

* * *

If you click on the Wi-Fi icon on the right side of the menu bar, you'll normally just see a list of Wi-Fi hotspots that your computer recognizes. However, if you hold down the Option key while clicking the Wi-Fi icon, you'll see additional technical information such as the encryption method used.



Figure 3. Holding down the Option key while clicking on the Wi-Fi icon displays detailed information about your current Wi-Fi connection.

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 participle with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac, Lion Edition (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)

My New iPad 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

Steal This Computer Book (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

Microsoft Office 2010 For Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)

Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)

The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)

Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

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.

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Beyond Personal Computing

"Smart-Homes: Geeks are Thrilled--Rest of Public, Not So Much" by Marilyn K. Martin

Everything you need to know about smart-homes.

Like everyone else, I've been reading articles on "computerized homes" for decades. Like self-driving cars, most of what has been realized by now is piecemeal, or just part of the smart-home puzzle with a lot of pieces still missing. Most high-tech workers can't wait to install the latest "smart system" in their homes that will take charge of the thermostat and respond to voice commands to turn on the TV or Stereo or change the room brightness. But the general consumer remains suspicious or downright resistant to a "connected home."

People Just Not Interested?

At first, automated-homes were too expensive, and the general perception was that you needed a resident engineer to program and work everything. But as late as March 2012, home designers were still lamenting a lack of interest in connected-homes. Designmind listed the five pillars of smart-homes (designmind.frogdesign.com/blog/not-smart-yet-what-will-it-take-for-consumers-to-buy-into-smart-home-products.html): telemonitoring, home automation, media access and playback, home energy management and security.

Energy management and telemonitoring were the most commonly mentioned applications. But an informal survey found that only 13% were excited enough about energy-management to buy such a system, while 45% were just "interested," and 41% weren't interested at all. Most of the unenthused respondents said the price was too high, or the problem to be solved wasn't that important. Results of another survey for telemonitoring fell along the same lines—too expensive for a relatively minor problem.

Everyone from Lowe's to TimeWarner to AT&T and Comcast rolled out "smart-home systems" last year. But most consumers remain uncertain, mainly over issues such as loss-of-privacy, trust, and the systems' complexity. Another problem is the diverse manufacturers, and getting them to use compatible standards so that all their electronics can talk to each other. However, the newest tablet computers are "remote-enabled," so perhaps this could spur more interest if one "smart-house remote" could work everything, once set-up.

"Smart" Eco/Ergo Items for Semi-Connected Homes

Trendhunter ran a slideshow in a 2009 article on Computerized Home Decorations (www.trendhunter.com/slideshow/computerized-home-decor). How about a faux-grass solar array (www.trendhunter.com/trends/renewable-computing-power-using-grass-to-buzz-your-surfing) that sits on top of your computer, and can generate about 60 watts of power per hour?

Or maybe a computerized, anti-snoring pillow introduced in Germany in 2007? It supposedly stops snoring by shifting the head's sleeping position until the snoring stops. The computer component sits on a bedside table, and reduces or enlarges air compartments inside the pillow to facilitate nasal airflow to minimize snoring. Oh, and it's also "ergonomic" and can give neck massages too.

Maybe One Smart-Room at a Time?

The Tim Allen TV show *Home Improvement* possibly signaled the future of the smart-home—one room at a time. He did episodes on "The Man's Kitchen" (where the only veggies are beans and potatoes, with a resident butcher for a made-to-order cut of beef), and "The Man's Bathroom" (with a lounge-toilet opposite a wall-mounted TV for continuous coverage of The Big Game).

For public venues like restaurants and airports, public restrooms are always open to more...smartness. It was reported in 2011

that restrooms in certain airports were turning mirrors into "interactive billboards." The mirror-technology (articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-01-20/business/ct-biz-0121-bathroom-ads-20110120_1_mirror-bathroom-offer-advertisers-access) started in Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Video or still ads run across an entire restroom mirror when no one is standing in front of the sink, and shrinks to a corner as someone approaches the sink. An embedded sensor counts "impressions," or how many people waiting in line for a stall looked at the mirror ads and for how long.

Also in 2011, a British company experimented with installing "hands-free" video games in bar urinals that men could control with their "stream," aiming at different sensors to control the outcome of the game. With a trip to a British Men's Room averaging 55 seconds, there was just enough time for short advertisements before and after a round of video-pee (www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/28/urine-powered-video-game-_n_1117240.html).

Laugh if you want, but in March 2013 it was announced that a Pennsylvania stadium for minor-league baseball has also installed video games (www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/27/us-usa-urinals-pennsylvania-idUSBRE92Q10C20130327) over Men's Room urinals, with sensors reacting to left or right streams.

Microsoft eHomes

Microsoft has always been on the leading edge of software that pushes the envelope. Bill Gates started building his \$60 million automated-mansion around 1990. Wanting to extend some of these ground-breaking smart-home products to the public, Microsoft Corp. unveiled a new "eHome Division" in 2001, which didn't last.

But the Microsoft Redmond campus outside of Seattle maintains The Microsoft Home, developed in 1994. It started as just a collection of rooms treated as a living laboratory for "working home automation prototypes and technology concepts" that are 5-10 years from hitting the market. The Home isn't open to the general public, but employees and customers can tour it by appointment.

The Seattle PI newspaper toured the Home (www.seattlepi.com/business/article/Microsoft-Home-pushes-boundaries-of-the-future-1215784.php) in 2006, and reported on a backlit control panel in the entryway wall, and a teenager's room with "a projection system that simulates digital wallpaper," the collage of images posted using a hand-held. A play area for younger children has RFID tagged toys and sensors, so that when a toy is returned to the proper bin, the child is awarded points for cleaning up their room. And a dining room table that turns into a touchscreen for kids' parties, featuring airplanes that zip around the table when tapped.

By 2011, The Microsoft Home had been reinvented as a full-scale model home with interacting computers (www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/features/2011/aug11/08-08MicrosoftHome.aspx). Now a palm-scan will open the front door, and "Grace, what's up?" from the tour guide unleashes a verbal response about appointments and messages, as well as information about weather and traffic. Sensors tell you when your plants need watering, and you can check your fridge and pantry inventory via your smartphone while in the grocery store. You can take a (2011) seven-minute YouTube tour of The Microsoft Home (www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_n7AiPeCBo).

Overhead Conversation Between Bill Gates and His Mansion Contractor

Bill: Sometimes when I flush the toilet, it won't stop. The water pressure drops so low that the showers don't work.

Contractor: That's a resource leakage problem. One fixture fails to terminate and is hogging the resources. After each flush you need to exit the house, turn off the water at the street, turn it back on, and then re-enter your house. The problem should be solved.

Do-it-Yourself Home Automation

Hacknmod.com (Hacknmod.com) is a great site for DIY electronics and piecemeal home automation, especially for younger geeks. Such as a See-Through Computer/Gaming Desk (hacknmod.com/hack/see-through-desktop-pc-and-gaming-desk/). Or how about a DIY Solar and Wind Energy Tutorial (hacknmod.com/hack/how-to-diy-solar-and-wind-energy-tutorial/)? If you feel the need for more Security, how about a DIY Robotic Turret (hacknmod.com/hack/defend-your-cubicle-with-a-diy-robotic-turret/) to watch your back with a Web cam, lasers and pellet gun, from TrossenRobotics.com, among other Turret Projects?

A site called SmartHomeUSA.com (SmartHomeUSA.com) has some interesting DIY smart-home products. \$50 will buy you a Mail Chime Remote Mailbox Sensor. And \$115 will get you a Voice Alert "annunciation system" to wirelessly cover home or small business zones. It's called a "plug-and-play solution for hard-to-wire areas," from Driveways to Pools to Supply Rooms to Customer/ Visitor notification.

Par-tah!

For younger generations, automated utilities aren't half as much fun as creating Instant Parties. Debuted in 2002, no party-animal house, apartment or dorm room should be without the emergency party button (hacknmod.com/hack/the-emergency-

party-button). This is a big red button device that closes the curtains, dims the lights, then turns on the music, laser show, fog machine, and LED lights. The YouTube demo is a great tutorial for parents wondering why their teens' room has so many "random light and smoke features."

Instructables.com even ran a DIY article on creating an Arduino-Powered Music Party (www.instructables.com/id/Music-Party-Facebook-Connected-Arduino-Powered-/). Synced to a Facebook account, and using a Music Party server, one can "automatically listen to the favorite music of everyone who taps in." More information is on the Web site for Music Party Time (musicparty.herokuapp.com/public/party).

Swellbeing and Simplicity—Homes of the Future

Some predict smaller, even micro-homes in the future, especially in island nations like the UK and Japan. More modular components in smaller houses will make homes more "adaptable," if noticeably cramped for storage or entertainment. Some predict more fluid homes (www.telegraph.co.uk/property/newhomes/6248079/Future-homes-Winning-the-space-race.html) with walls more like partitions that can open or close a space, or even descend from the ceiling.

Even normal furniture and appliances will have multiple functions, like tabletops that can double as computer screens with interactive displays. In kitchens, sinks and stoves will retract under counters when not in use, while refrigerators will have digital displays on front to list all the food inside and their expiration dates. Window box gardens will grow veggies and herbs instead of flowers, and slide in or out of a window to grow or be picked. Solar panels are expected to provide much of the power, with better insulation and rainwater recycling to cut down on utility bills and carbon footprints.

A March 2013 article from *North Jersey* said that smart-homes may finally be moving from niche to mainstream (www.northjersey.com/realestate/199730171_Home_automation_systems_More_streamlined_more_of_the_norm_into_the_mainstream.html?page=all)—slowly. More than 1.5 million home automation systems were installed in the US last year, double the number in 2011. Home automation installers report seeing a 30-40% uptick in business in the past few years, with many upscale buyers thinking "smart systems" will help their homes sell in a continued tight market. But with the cost of the installed systems ranging from \$5,000 into seven figures, this may just reflect wealthy buyers plotting resale, rather than the general public finally embracing connected-homes. Stay tuned...

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 *ComputerEdge*. ComputerEdge 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!

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EDITOR'S LETTERS

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"IE10...or Not!," "Linux Help, and Video Cards," "Searching Favorites," "Win XP Voices"

IE10...or Not!

[Regarding the April 12 Digital Dave column:]

I agree totally with Dave. I noticed that Internet Explorer has been extremely slow and clunky lately (yes, more than usual) and decided to do away with it and download Firefox on my Win 7 PC.

...Ah. That's better!

Kinda feels like when I downloaded Chrome for my XP laptop for similar reasons.

Microsoft will never learn that upgrades are not always that...

I appreciate Digital Dave giving us the insight to what is really going on.

-Russ, San Diego, CA

Linux Help, and Video Cards

To the several folks interested in Linux, there's an excellent club in San Diego that provides fantastic help, whether you're new to Linux or need advanced help. For those not in San Diego, we have several e-mail lists, one for new folks to post questions that might feel like they are too simple to bother others with and folks will give more details to help. The other is just the kplug list, for more detailed questions/help. Hopefully I can put a www.kernel-panic.org link here (www.kernel-panic.org).

As for video cards, nvidia is supported very well, radeon not so much, so pick up almost any nvidia card for your system and Linux will usually just work, as well as help install proprietary drivers to get the most out of the card.

Lastly, Fedora, while excellent, and great to get used to the way the commercial Red Hat Linux is set up, isn't quite as friendly to home users. I'd recommend Mint Linux, Knoppix, or Ubuntu (and variations of Ubuntu) instead. All are available with a "LiveCD", meaning you can boot from it and actually run a full fledged Linux desktop and applications without touching your current hard drive at all. Then, if you want, you can install it from that desktop.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Searching Favorites

[Regarding the April 12 Windows 8 Is More Like Windows 7 Than You Know column:]

Windows 8 still has the Favorites folder it has had since Windows 9x. The one where IE puts favorite Web sites. The Windows 7 Start Menu Search searches all files on your computer, so you can use it to find a favorite Web site file (also called "Internet Shortcut") along with many other files having the same name. As a test of the Windows 8 Search Charm, I put an Internet Shortcut into Favorites called "Twitter" (the Web site url) and also a Notepad file called "Twitter" (a text file). The search charm only finds the Notepad file in the Favorites folder but not the Internet Shortcut. So it looks like when you want to search for a Favorite (saved) Internet Shortcut you can only find it using the search box in File Explorer. Is there a setting to change this so I can include Web site favorites in my charms search?

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

Win XP Voices

[Regarding the April 19 Windows Tips and Tricks: Text-to-Speech column:]

Jack,

I have not tried to use AutoHotKey for Text to Speech, but I did some other things a while back that needed it. I found this (SAPI5) (www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=10121) for those of us still using XP. It has some other voices, Microsoft Mary for starters.

Ralph

-Ralph, Colorado Springs, CO

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