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Holiday Shopping and 2014 Trends

November 22, 2013

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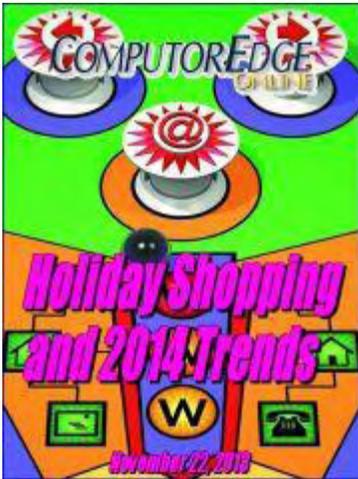
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Holiday Shopping News and 2014 Trends

Holiday Wars: Walmart and Amazon Ready for Early Shoppers; More Future Trends for 2014; More 2014 Projections: Snazzier Laptops; More 2014 Projections: Snazzier Smartphones Too; HP's New Moonshot Servers—and Google's Mysterious Floating Barges; Robot Updates: Social or Helpful Bots; Robot Updates: Mining and Farming Robots; Gaming Consoles: New and Popular Older Models; Sony Gaming News; Microsoft Gaming News.

Magazine Summary

[List of *ComputorEdge* Sponsors](#)

[Digital Dave](#)
by Digital Dave

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
DOS File Conversion; Internet Explorer 11 and E-mail Problem; Windows Spooler Subsystem App Printer Problem.

[Holiday Shopping and 2014 Projections](#)
by Marilyn K. Martin

Holiday Shopping News, More 2014 Trends, Robot and Gaming Updates, HP's Servers on a Chip and More
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Windows Tips and Tricks: Sysinternals Autologon for Quick Desktop Access
by Jack Dunning

Autologon Automatically Signs You Into Your Windows Desktop
If you live alone or don't worry about other people using your computer, then you can save some time and keystrokes by using Sysinternals Autologon tool.

AutoHotkey for Beginners and More Screen Dimmer Tips
by Jack Dunning

Using AutoHotkey Can Make an Incredible Difference to Your Windows Experience—If You Get to Know It
Beginning AutoHotkey is not as difficult as it looks from the outside. If you can write a letter on a computer, then you add AutoHotkey to your Windows life. Plus, adding a status bar to the screen dimmer app and making it open with one-click.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
by Wally Wang

Planning for the Future
Planning for the Future; Clean Your Mac; The 3D Printer Revolution is Coming; Why Computer Book Publishing is a Dead End; Tag Labels in the Finder.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews
by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.
Netflix and YouTube: Internet Piggies; See the Xbox in Its Natural Habitat; Six Tips to Keep IP Camera Hackers from Accessing Home Videos; Deadfall Adventures for PC; Contrast for PC.

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

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.
"Reinstall Windows 8 Programs?" "Windows 8 Search," "CMOS Battery," "Windows Backup Restore," "Wally Wang's Conspiracy Theory"

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Digital Dave

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

DOS File Conversion; Internet Explorer 11 and E-mail Problem; Windows Spooler Subsystem App Printer Problem.

DOS File Conversion

Dear Digital Dave,

I have an unusual question (aren't they all). I have a 386 computer that I purchased in November 1991. My wife still likes the old DOS games. I found files in a folder called "inventory" that I would like to retrieve. Went to DOS and used XCOPY to put the files on a CD. Looks like it worked okay.

Now I would like to read those files and convert them to Microsoft Word or text files. I have a desktop computer with XP and a laptop with Windows 7 Pro. Is this possible and, if so, how would I do it? I have been following ComputorEdge *for about four years.*

Thanks for any suggestions.

Tom Finnegan
Dunedin, FL

Dear Tom,

How you convert the "inventory" files depends upon the type of file. Usually the file extension (the letters after the dot) tells us the file type, but since you didn't mention one, it sounds like your files don't have an extension. The first thing you need to determine is what type of file it is.

When confronted with this type of problem I usually open the file with Notepad first. Quite often this will reveal clues as to the file type. Many of the older programs saved files as pure text without any special control codes. If this is the case then Notepad will show all the data. This simple look will often determine whether you even care about recovering the data.

I suspect that the files are some type of database file since that would be suitable for inventory

systems. If the data was in the old dBase format then the first line would include all of the field and format data. Even if it is some other file type the beginning of a file called the header often will include data that determines the file type. Sometimes the name of the file type can be seen in the header. (Even image files will give a hint to the file type in the header.)

If you see garbage or nothing at all in Notepad, then you will want to use a hex or binary editor. I've used one free program called HxD Hex Editor which can look inside virtually any file and display both the hex and the equivalent text (if any) along the right side.

If you can determine the file type and there exists a commonly used extension, then merely adding that extension could make the file readable in the appropriate program. I suspect that this is not the case since you're dealing with such an old file.

If the data is separated by quotes and commas, then it could be a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file. If this is the case, then you're in luck because this is a standard all text file format and many programs will allow you to import (and export) CSV files.

These are just a few starting points, but once you see the data you will know whether it is worth the time and effort to recover the data. In most cases it won't be.

Digital Dave

Internet Explorer 11 and E-mail Problem

Dear Digital Dave,

After updating my Internet Explorer to version 11 the embedded images in my Outlook e-mail stopped displaying. I went back to IE 10 and the e-mail images displayed properly. My cousin, who uses MSN e-mail, had the same problem. Can you please explain the relationship between the Internet Explorer and e-mail?

Dave P
San Diego, CA

Dear Dave,

If you're using Webmail, then there is a direct relationship between your e-mail and the browser you choose to access it. But even if you use a computer based e-mail client the Internet Explorer engine in Windows is used by many programs to access the Internet. It is quite possible for changes (bugs) in a new version of Internet Explorer to affect other software which uses Internet access.

It appears the Internet Explorer 11 is still not ready for Windows 7 primetime. There are many

problems occurring since its release.

If you do upgrade again a fix for some of the problems may be found in the Compatibility View setting (Tools => Compatibility View Settings). See Figure 1.
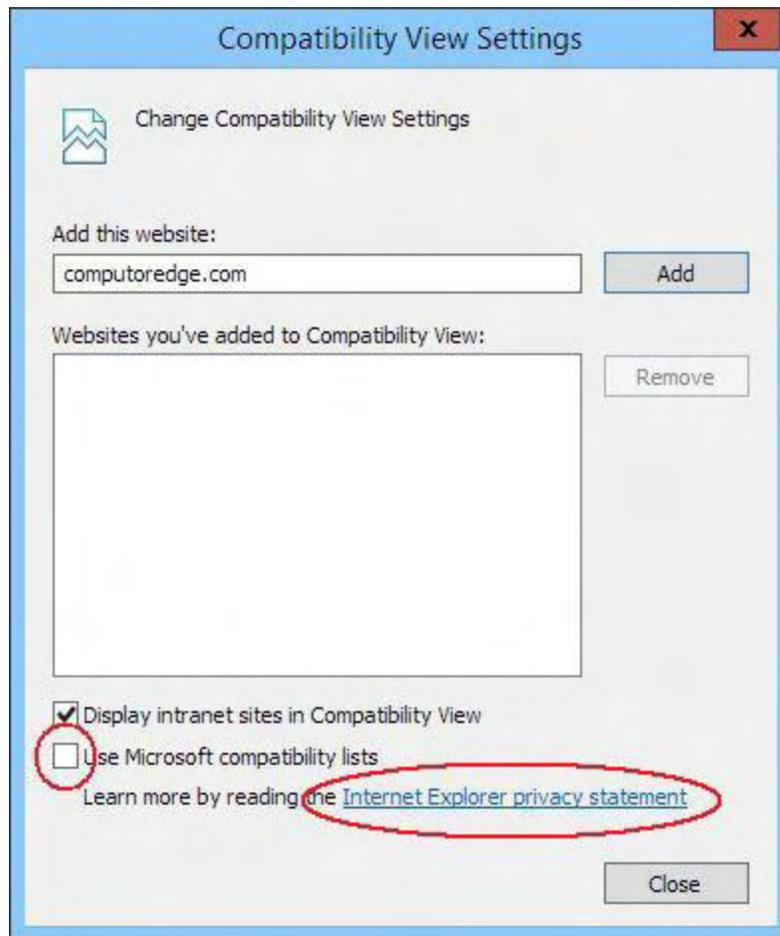

Figure 1. Compatibility View Settings may affect how Web pages are viewed.

Microsoft support says that the "Use Microsoft compatibility lists" may affect how some things are viewed. If you click "Internet Explorer privacy statement" in the same window, you will find a list of items which may affect other programs, such as the pop-up blocker. When activated it could be blocking images in e-mail which are often downloaded from the Web.

For now I would wait a while before attempting to upgrade to Internet Explorer 11 again. Eventually, Microsoft will work the bugs out.

Digital Dave

Spooler Subsystem App Printer Problem

Dear Digital Dave,

I am running Windows XP home, and all of a sudden I have a pop-up stating that Windows is having a problem with my spooler subsystem app which has caused me to lose my printers.

How do I solve this problem?

Dale
Chula Vista,CA

Dear Dale,

It seems that this problem can occur when installing a new printer when some old printer drivers are still installed. I would guess that this is more likely to occur with Windows XP computers since many companies are dropping support for XP. Microsoft is planning to stop support for XP in the form of updates next year.

If you recently installed a new printer, then I would remove all the old (no longer used) printers (and drivers through device manager) as well as the new printer, then reinstall just the new printer. If that doesn't work, then there is this Microsoft support page which details some more complicated steps which includes Registry changes. Be sure to follow the steps carefully.

Digital Dave

Holiday Shopping and 2014 Projections

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Holiday Wars: WalMart and Amazon Ready for Early Shoppers

In October 2013, *Forbes* announced that WalMart and Amazon are ready to go head-to-head over this upcoming holiday shopping season. While the shopping season officially starts the day after Thanksgiving (Black Friday), cautious shoppers are expected to start shopping earlier and more carefully.

Robots Shopping on Black Friday!

J. Whiting
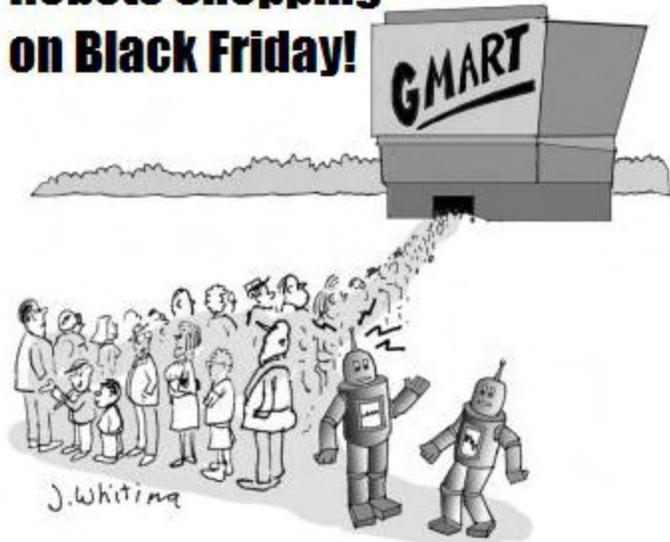
"I was at the front of the line so I powered down to wait. When I powered up again I was somehow at the end of the line!?"

Despite the dismal forecast, the trend toward online shopping looks to continue this Fall/Winter, which will benefit Amazon more than WalMart. Despite WalMart's 11,000 stores around the world, their online sales only accounted for roughly 1% of its total revenue in 2012. WalMart has been gobbling up start-ups to expand its online presence this year, however, even as Amazon aggressively expands in new directions like same-day delivery and urban grocery shopping.

USAToday reported in early November 2013 that WalMart has already debuted 7 Big Deals usually reserved for Black Friday. Consumers can already shop online for big-ticket items like TVs and computer tablets at Black Friday prices (while supplies last). Noting that last year online sales started to surge after Halloween, WalMart this year has doubled the number of products it offers online to 5 million, with free shipping on 99% of orders over $50.

Amazon is reporting that their Top Three Best Sellers this Fall 2013 are Toys & Games, Electronics and Cameras. And *DigitalBookWorld* revealed in November 2013 that Amazon is now offering independent bookstores the opportunity to sell Kindle e-readers. Through a new program called Amazon Source (similar to a deal cut by Canadian e-reading company Kobo last year) bookstores will have a couple different programs to choose from. Bookstores can sell Kindle devices with a small discount and get 10% of the purchase price of any e-book bought on that device. Or the bookstores can sell Kindle e-readers for a larger discount, but get nothing from subsequent sales of e-books from Amazon.

Yahoo!Finance reported in October 2013 that mall shopping is down 6%, with the Department Store sector losing shoppers to Off-Price retailers, Specialty/Vendor shops and non-traditional anchor stores like Home Improvement. Discount stores continue to trend upward with a 4.7% increase, according to *SpendTrend*. While upscale clothing stores (Buckle, Gap, Limited, etc.) have been posting disappointing sales, with the exception of the TJX stores.

More Future Trends for 2014

In September 2013, *Forbes* predicted that the overall economy will grow (inflation adjusted) by about 2.6% to 2.8% in 2014. Other "economic assumptions" for 2014, to aid business plans, are that the Consumer Price Index will increase by 2.1% in 2014, with unemployment

staying about 7.1%. Both commodity prices and oil prices are predicted to fall. But there is disagreement over when interest rates will start to rise, 2014 or 2015, when asset prices will correspondingly decrease. Oh, and there is a 15% risk of recession before September 2014.

In October 2013, *NextBigFuture* announced that, like the free operating systems for tablets and smartphones, free OS will soon start showing up in PCs and Laptops. Last year, Apple dropped their operating system's upgrade to just $19, and Microsoft has just announced that it won't charge consumers who upgrade to the redesigned Windows 8.1.

Engadget reported in early November 2013 that Windows 8.1's Web use doubled shortly after its launch in October. The speed of adoption of the free upgrade indicates a growing tech-savvy population that stays on top of new releases and upgrades.

The Motley Fool announced in October 2013 that both WalMart and Apple are increasingly turning to solar panels to power their stores. They join Costco and Kohls as the top four companies installing solar in their U.S. stores. WalMart is partnering with SolarCity to match WalMart's massive rooftop space with enough solar panels to power an entire store. Apple is going a different route, building utility scale solar projects next to its data centers by partnering with SunPower. Corporate America has finally woken up to the financial benefits of solar power, and with solar system costs down 40% since 2011, expect more corporate solar installations in 2014.

Also in October 2013, the *New York Times* reported that as adults gravitate to more mobile devices, even their small children are following suit. A new study by Common Sense Media reveals that even for children under 2 years, 38% had already used mobile devices. Tablet computers, especially, have become more common, with 40% of families now owning one (up from 8% in 2011), and even 7% of children surveyed had their own tablets. Some families even keep collections of family photos and videos on their smartphones, as quick and easy entertainment for fussy toddlers when away from home. The trend now is for children to spend up to 15 minutes a day on mobile devices, while TV/monitor watching has declined by half-an-hour since 2011.

More 2014 Projections: Snazzier Laptops

The drop in Apple's personal computer (PC) sales is being blamed on Apple's focus shift to the iPhone and iPad, plus the fact that it hasn't issued a major update to its MacBook Air line in several years. But there may be other factors at play.

The Street reported in October 2013 that Hewlett-Packard has just introduced a radical new laptop that sells for only $279, compared to Apple's MacBook Air which starts at $999. The HP Chromebook 11 is similar to the MacBook Air in dimensions, but with a superior keyboard

and trackpad. But its biggest innovation is that it comes with a new MicroUSB charger which can also charge most smartphones and tablets. Expect this type of "universal charger" to be seen with more products in 2014.

Hewlett-Packard also released an Envy 17 Leap Motion SE laptop in October 2013, according to *Techland*. With a $1,050 price tag, this Leap Motion laptop with wave-of-the-hand guidance for navigation and control, is the first laptop to go on sale with the Leap Motion controller embedded in the computer.

The Leap Motion technology is more accurate and less expensive than Microsoft's Kinect, and is aimed at more general-purpose computing than just entertainment. HP has also fixed some earlier complaints about their Leap Motion, and now offers 30 more apps in their AirSpace store. As more 3D motion controllers begin showing up in more products next year, Leap Motion may be riding the crest of the wave into 2014.

More 2014 Projections: Snazzier Smartphones Too

According to *Reuters* in October 2013, expect the US smartphone market to continue to be dominated by Apple and Samsung in 2014. Sony has announced it will focus on just Europe and their home-market of Japan, both of which account for 60% of Sony's smartphone sales.

BGR (through Yahoo!) also announced in October 2013 that Apple's iPhone6 will address a key complaint about the iPhone5, with a larger display. The iPhone 6 will have a 4.8 inch diagonal display, and should launch in the second or third quarter of 2014.

In November 2013, Yahoo!News reported that Samsung is working on future smartphones that will offer greater flexibility, ultra-high resolution displays, and a more mobile form of "fonblets" (previously called phablets, or phone-tablets). Samsung plans to significantly boost the performance of their smartphone cameras in 2014, by offering 16 megapixel sensors, and is working on its own 64-bit processor. Samsung will also commit half its annual R&D budget to fix its software, to improve the "user experience." And by the end of 2014, Samsung aims to offer mobile devices with 560ppi resolution—double the pixel density of a High Definition screen.

HP's New Moonshot Servers—and Google's Mysterious Floating Barges

In October 2013, *NextBigFuture* reported that Hewlett-Packard's small and low-power Moonshot Server is based on compact server-on-a-chip technology from Calxeda and Intel Atom. These small HP servers can still put 3200 processors into a 42U rack, drawing less than 20kW.

Newser reports that Google got a lot of buzz in October 2013 for its [4-story floating barges](#) on both East (Maine) and West (California) coasts of the US. People were guessing that they were a new "floating data center," similar to an idea Google patented in 2009. By November 2013, *USAToday* announced that the floating barges were both a [marketing-center](#) for Google Glass, to compete with Apple Stores, and a "backup data center" in the event of a natural disaster.

Robot Updates: Social or Helpful Bots

On the social-robot front, *TechNewsDaily* reported in May 2013 that Cornell University's Personal Robotics Lab has created a humanoid robot named Kodiak, that is being taught to [predict human behavior](#). A robot that can—on its own—bring you a new beer when the one you have is almost empty, or open the refrigerator when you approach with a covered dish, is a monumental step forward in helping bots predict what us unpredictable humans need help with. A database of 120 3D videos is used to help teach Kodiak to analyze human tasks, or help predict a number of possible futures for a certain course of action, and then step in to help based on the most probable course of an on-going task.

Not only are robots getting safer to work around and easier to program for new tasks, but technology is helping robots be more human-like. In August 2013, the *Washington Post* (through the *Seattle Times*) ran a story about how bots are moving closer to having the senses of [sight, smell and touch](#). These senses can allow robots to operate more independently, like "smelling" a gas leak or sorting objects by shape and color in warehouses.

In May 2013, *LiveScience* ran a gallery of how super-intelligent robots could impact our [lives and future](#). Military bots could one day move beyond drones and robotic pack-mules to actually fight our wars for us. Cybernetic implants could extend our lifetimes, while "empathetic robots" may be holding our hand when we do finally die. On the negative side, there could be mass unemployment and our economy could spiral out of control, if "intelligent agent software" could—on its own—just program a bot or computer whenever new "virtual workers" were needed.

Although *TechCrunch*, in October 2013, reported that smallish humanoid robots like [Poppy](#) are [open-source bots](#) anyone can build for about $9,000. While [Roombas](#), the round vacuum cleaners and hacker-platforms, have now sold 10 million worldwide. And *Physics Org* reported in October 2013 that the University of Maryland and Maryland Robotics Center are working on a [Robo Raven](#) with solar panels in its wings.

Robot Updates: Mining and Farming Robots

In September 2013, *Mining Weekly* reported that [multiple mining-bots](#) are now available to start mining at deep-levels in South African mines, which are too dangerous for human miners.

These deep-level mining robots have been designed to survive extreme conditions, and will help South Africa pursue a mining technology trajectory to get up to speed with other mining countries, which are already exploiting complex orebodies at greater depth.

NextBigFuture announced in October 2013 that Canadian company Nautilus Minerals has developed robotic technology for deep-sea mining. In collaboration with French company Technip, Nautilus Minerals plans to open their first deep-water mine in 2015. Solwara1mine will be located 1,600 meters below sea level in the Pacific Ocean, around Papua New Guinea, where large deposits of copper and gold have been found. Submersible robots will work on the ocean floor, with a pipeline to transport the loose ore to a ship on the surface.

GizMag reported in November 2013 that New Zealand's prototype AgriRover could someday make life easier and more productive for livestock farmers. Inspired by NASA's Mars rovers, AgriRover was built with off-the-shelf parts, and is designed to operate on a farm day and night, 24/7. Small enough to go under few-strand fences and gates, AgriRover can roam across livestock fields to address spot-problems, from urine patches to small weed clumps, as well as watch for cows about to give birth.

Gaming Consoles: New and Popular Older Models

Both of the new Microsoft's Xbox One and Sony's PlayStation4 were previewed in Spring 2013 for a Fall release. MS' Xbox came under fire immediately for its "always On" threat to privacy, and the fact that older games couldn't be played on it. By June 2013, the *CSMonitor* reported that Microsoft had reversed itself on the upcoming Xbox One. Microsoft announced that the Xbox One could play games online or offline without "daily online authentication." And that gamers could play, lend or sell used disc-based games. Sony's PlayStation4 was available November 15, 2013 for $399, and Microsoft's Xbox One will be available November 22, 2013 for $499.

By July 2013, the *New York Times* reported that game-maker Zynga had hired the head of Microsoft's Xbox division, Don Mattrick. The move was reportedly not the result of the initial blow-up over Xbox One, and Mattrick had also been talking to Electronic Arts about becoming CEO. The move to Zynga allows Mattrick to get back to his first love, designing games, although critics point out his lack of experience with mobile gaming.

The Atlantic Wire (through Yahoo!) reported in July 2013 that the new head of Microsoft's Xbox division was a 19-year company veteran, Julie Larson-Green. This brought out the sexist male game ranters, who were at least correct that she has no video game industry experience and isn't a "gamer."

In August 2013, *BGR* (through Yahoo!) announced that Nintendo has released a new portable gaming console that may be ugly—but cheap. Nintendo 2DS went on sale October 12th for just $130. The mini-console will play all Nintendo 3DS games, and is aimed at "anyone

looking for a more affordable entry point into the world of Nintendo hand-held games." While the reviewer acknowledges that this philosophy is a smart move, he wonders if the unattractive device, which doesn't fold, will be all that popular.

Sony Gaming News

In June 2013, *BGR* (through Yahoo!) reported that Sony had cleverly announced that it was not going to stop making PS3s, even after its new PS4 launched in November. Sony also announced that the launch of their cloud service in 2014 would even allow users to play PS3 games on the new PS4.

In August 2013, *Forbes* did a pre-release review of "Grand Theft Auto V," calling it more of a Character Drama than just the latest installment of a popular video game series. The dynamics between the three main criminals only makes the game more exciting, and seems to be what Rockstar does best in its open-world gaming.

By October 2013, *The Verge* announced that Sony's older PlayStation3 was the best-selling game console in the US in September 2013, breaking the Xbox 360's 32-month streak as the top U.S. seller. Everyone credits Sony's release of that special edition of "Grand Theft Auto V" for the jump in PS3 sales.

In September 2013, the *Motley Fool* wondered what Sony's PlayStation release timetable is really saying about the current state of the gaming industry. PlayStation 4 will launch in the US for the first time in November, with Sony slating an early 2014 launch in Japan—which is reverse of their usual release schedule. PlayStation was originally overly complex, making it too expensive, while most cross-over games played better on MS' Xbox. But the PS4 is the first Sony console to be primarily designed by a Western team, and the delayed launch in Japan is to develop software that "appeals (more) to the Japanese consumer base."

By early November 2013, Sony offered a unique sales pitch for their upcoming PS4 release, through photos and video of an "in-house tear-down." Engadget also announced that Sony has released details of their 11 entertainment apps available at launch in their PS4.

Microsoft Gaming News

Microsoft stepped up with news about their older Xbox 360 in August 2013, when *Variety* (through Yahoo!) reported that Time Warner Cable (TWC) was launching an "Xbox Live" app on Xbox 360. The move is a first, for a major cable provider to embrace a video game console to play its lineup of channels for pay-TV subscribers. (It also advances the idea of a game console as a "living room entertainment hub" that Microsoft had originally envisioned for Xbox One.) And it's one more step toward cable and satcasters being able to get rid of money-losing set-top boxes, just to get their content into homes.

The app gives Xbox owners all live channels available, similar to "Xbox Live's" Comcast's Xfinity and Verizon FiOS. While an Xbox Live Gold subscription with Time-Warner will let Xbox owners access up to 300 channels. The programming can also be controlled by using Xbox's voice and Kinect gesture-controls, and both TWC and Microsoft are working on making Xbox 360 capable of "streaming content" in the next six months.

The Verge announced in November 2013, that Microsoft has also announced its [entertainment app lineup](#) for its Xbox One launch later this month. Microsoft has detailed the 19 apps, already familiar to Xbox 360 owners, that will be available on the console for each of the thirteen markets it will be launching in.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. Besides short stories published in various magazines, she also has some new e-books available on Amazon Kindle: [Hunting Monster Aliens](#) is an on-going series of novellas, about a wise-cracking team of ghost investigators who occasionally turn into alien-monster hunters. [*Culture Crash! A California Yankee Transplanted to Texas*](#) is a collection of humor essays chronicling her adventures in her new home-state.

Twelve months (July 2012 through June 2013) of Marilyn's [Little Known High Tech](#) series has been compiled into an almanac (with a complete index) available exclusively at Amazon. If you want a quick reference for the obscure or unusual in computers and the Internet over the last year, then [check it out](#).

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*](#). 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!
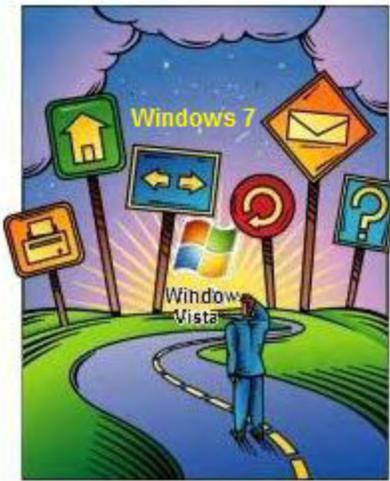
Windows Tips and Tricks: Sysinternals Autologon for Quick Desktop Access

"Autologon Automatically Signs You Into Your Windows Desktop" by Jack Dunning

If you live alone or don't worry about other people using your computer, then you can save some time and keystrokes by using Sysinternals Autologon tool.

While there is not much to be said about this simple utility app, you may find it to be one of the more useful Windows tools. "With a little digging around, gems may be found!"

This week we save some time and a modicum of typing. If you keep your computer in a secure location (at home?) and you're not worried about prying eyes (no one here—other than the dog), then you could be a candidate for a little utility from the Windows Sysinternals Web site called Autologon for Windows. Autologon allows you to save your encrypted logon information in the Registry and go directly to the Windows Desktop without entering your username or password. Download the *AutoLogon.zip* file and extract the *Autologon.exe* file. Double-click to run.

After you enter the data and click Enable (see Figure 1), your username and password is encrypted, saved in the Registry and automatically used to sign you in on the next boot (and every boot thereafter), thereby bypassing the logon screen.
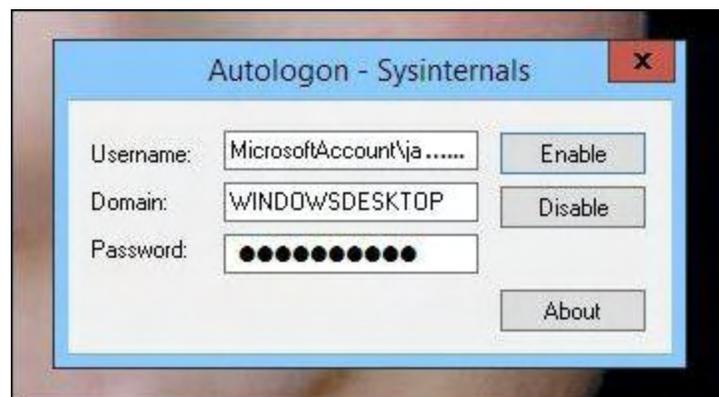
Figure 1. Autologon bypasses the logon screen when enabled.

Figure 2. Success!

I tested this on Windows 8.1 with the system configured to go directly to the Desktop. It worked like a charm. It's as easy to disable as it is to enable. Hold down the SHIFT if you want the opportunity to logon by hand. If you're leaving your computer for a little while, +L will lock the screen and require login credentials to get back in.

I think I'll put this on all my Windows computers. It will be especially useful for the slow booting Vista machine. However, if your computer is exposed to nosy people, you may not want to use Autologon. It makes it all too easy.

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

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While you're there, peruse our other books. We have an incredible deal on a two-book

bundle of Jim Whiting's ComputorEdge cartoons.

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:*

Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers.

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* and *Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey*.

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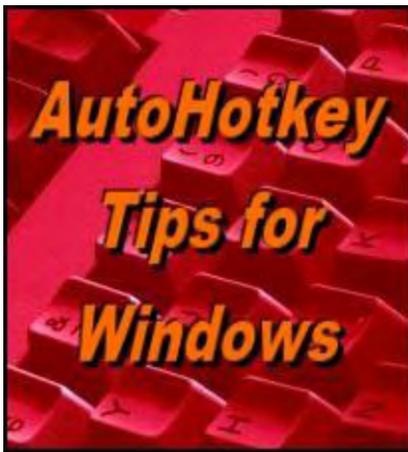
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Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7,
and *That Does Not Compute!*, brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

AutoHotkey for Beginners and More Screen Dimmer Tips

"Using AutoHotkey Can Make an Incredible Difference to Your Windows Experience--If You Get to Know It" by Jack Dunning

Beginning AutoHotkey is not as difficult as it looks from the outside. If you can write a letter on a computer, then you add AutoHotkey to your Windows life. Plus, adding a status bar to the screen dimmer app and making it open with one-click.

The Why and How of AutoHotkey for Beginners?

I may seem maniacal about AutoHotkey, but I see it as the *single best way* for someone to personally add new capabilities to their Windows computers, whether at home or in the office. It doesn't require complicated programming techniques (although you can write sophisticated apps if you want to) and gives immediate results—even for those people who are brand new to script writing. Yes, AutoHotkey does require a little coding, but I contend that if you can turn on your computer and send an e-mail, then you can make AutoHotkey work for you.

The object of using AutoHotkey is to make the Windows experience better by reducing the number of keystrokes needed, limiting the amount of mouse movement required, and creating easy useful apps for doing the things we want to do on a Windows computer. When you start using some of the simple little AutoHotkey apps, it doesn't take long for them to become a regular part of your computing. The beauty of writing your own simple scripts is that you can tailor them to your personal preferences. You aren't stuck with something someone else has produced. Maybe you're most comfortable with using just the AutoCorrect app for fixing your typos on the fly. Or, possibly, you use a number of AutoHotkey apps which are combined into one script. It's your choice when you do it yourself.

What's great about AutoHotkey is that it is not program specific. It will work with any Windows program. This universality means that if you create a two letter hotstring for entering your e-mail address (i.e. *j@* expands to *jackdunning@gmail.com*), you can use it in Word documents, in any e-mail, when filling in forms on the Web, or anywhere else that you want to enter your e-mail address. This can be done for dates selected from a pop-up window, as well

as, innumerable other types of items if information. You don't need to setup different tools for different Windows programs.

Just like any new spoken or written language, learning AutoHotkey can seem intimidating to the beginner. But if you can open Notepad, type a couple of lines (or copy-and-paste from examples), and save the file, then you can learn how to make AutoHotkey work for you. At first it may same seem like gibberish, but as you play with the code, "Aha!" moments will occur that give you insight into both how it works and, even more importantly, how it can help you. If you stick with it and continue to add more AutoHotkey commands one at a time, you start to develop an insight and fluency that only comes from using a new language. There are numerous tutorials on the Web for AutoHotkey beginners. Google "introduction AutoHotkey" and see what's available. Any of them will get you started, then it's up to you to take the next steps.

If you're not sure what you would do with AutoHotkey, then review the various free scripts available all over the Web. Many are simple one or two line scripts which offer immediate results. Pick the simpler ones that look the most useful to you without being too complicated. Copy the script and modify it for your own purposes. As you spend some time with AutoHotkey, your understanding will grow and the possibilities will open up before you.

This AutoHotkey column has evolved from one of beginner's tips to intermediate level techniques with examples of a variety of scripts. The earlier beginner columns can still be found on *ComputorEdge* starting with my first AutoHotkey article over a year ago, next the beginner columns in "Windows Tips and Tricks", then a dedicated AutoHotkey column. For more convenience, I've compiled the articles and columns into e-books by updating and indexing them. They are available online at the ComputorEdge E-Book Web site, Amazon.com, and BarnesandNoble.com.

Adding a StatusBar to the ScreenDimmer App

The *ScreenDimmer.ahk* script from last week is a relatively simple app which uses one mysterious function copied from someone else's script. The app works great for people who don't have an easy way to dim their screen, but it was written primarily as an example of how to use the AutoHotkey Slider control in a Graphic User Interface (GUI). This week we add a *StatusBar GUI* control displaying the current screen brightness value which will also act as a reset button for the dimmer. This demonstrates how to use the *StatusBar GUI* command which can be added to any AutoHotkey GUI window.

The StatusBar GUI control places an informational string in the bottom of a GUI window (see Figure 1). While primarily for display purposes the StatusBar control can also act as a button by activating a *gLabel* (subroutine).
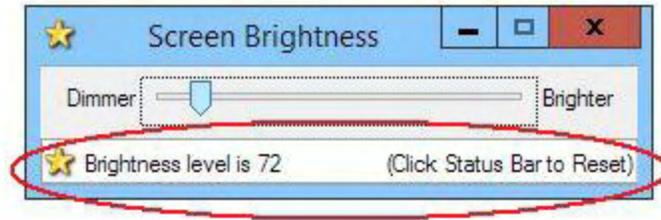
Figure 1. The StatusBar control is added to the ScreenDimmer script showing the current brightness level and acting as a reset button.

The *StatusBar* is added to the *ScreenDimmer.ahk* script with the following line of code:

```
Gui, Add, StatusBar, gReset, Default Brightness 128 `t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)
```

The text in the *StatusBar* is set as "*Default Brightness 128 `t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)*" initially. Text is automatically displayed left justified unless the TAB escape character is use (`t). Placing one TAB centers the text. Two TABs right justifies the text. In this case "*Default Brightness 128*" is left justified and "*(Click Status Bar to Reset)*" appears right justified. Adding the label *gReset* to the *StatusBar* options turns the status bar into an active button. The subroutine *(gLabel) Reset:* is called every time the bar is clicked.

Once the *StatusBar* is added to the GUI window, its content can be changed with *SB_SetText()* function placed in the *Dimmer* label:

```
Dimmer:
  Gui, Submit, NoHide
  DisplaySetBrightness( MySlider )
  SB_SetText("Brightness level is " . MySlider . "`t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)")
Return
```

By placing the *StatusBar* function (*SB_SetText()*) into the *Slider GUI* subroutine (*Dimmer*), the value of the screen brightness (*MySlider*) is altered in the informational bar as the slider is moved. Note that quotes and the concatenation operator (.) are required when passing the function parameters.

An icon can be added to the *StatusBar* as follows:

```
SB_SetIcon("Shell32.dll", 44)
```

This is the same Microsoft Windows icon that was previously added to the ScreenDimmer app.

There is also a *SB_SetParts([Width1, Width2, ... Width255])* function for breaking the *StatusBar* control into sections. If using a *gLabel* with the *StatusBar*, the variable *A_EventInfo* will contain the part number on the status bar. This allows different behavior for clicking on different parts of the bar—possibly for making the *StatusBar* into form of a menu bar.

23

The Reset subroutine called whenever the StatusBar is clicked merely sets the brightness to the default level and resets the *StatusBar*, as well as the *Slider* control:

```
Reset:
  DisplaySetBrightness( 128 )
  GuiControl, , MySlider, 128
  SB_SetText("Default Brightness 128`t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)")
Return
```

Instant Pop-up Windows Controls

When you click on the speaker icon in the Windows System Tray, a vertical slider for control sound volume immediately pops up. This is quick, convenient and much faster than navigating through the Control Panel to make adjustments. It would be nice to pop-up a hidden ScreenDimmer control with a single click of the star icon in the System Tray. That can be done in AutoHotkey by adding a couple of short lines with the Menu, Tray command:

```
Menu, Tray, Default, Show Dimmer
Menu, Tray, Click, 1
```

The first line of code sets the default right-click menu item to *Show Dimmer*, previously defined in the original script with the *Menu, Tray, Add, Show Dimmer, ShowWindow* line. The menu item appears in bold letters when set as the default.

The second line (*Menu, Tray, Click, 1*) tells AutoHotkey to select the default System Tray menu item when the icon is clicked with the left mouse button. Now the ScreenDimmer window pops up whenever the star in the System Tray is clicked. The following is the entire *ScreenDimmer.ahk* script (initially discussed in last week's column) showing the new lines in context:

```
Menu, Tray, Add, Reset, Reload
Menu, Tray, Add, Show Dimmer, ShowWindow
Menu, Tray, Add, Reset, Reload
Menu, Tray, Icon, Shell32.dll, 44
Menu, Tray, Default, Show Dimmer
Menu, Tray, Click, 1

Gui +AlwaysOnTop
Gui, Add, Text, vDim x0 y0, Dimmer
Gui, Add, Text, vBright x0 y0, Brighter
Options := "Range60-180 NoTicks Buddy1Dim Buddy2Bright vMySlider gDimmer"
Gui, Add, Slider, W200 x50 y5 AltSubmit Tooltip Reverse %options% , 128
Gui, Add, StatusBar, gReset, Default Brightness 128 `t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)
Gui, Show, W300, Screen Brightness
SB_SetIcon("Shell32.dll", 44)
DisplaySetBrightness( 128 )
Return

Dimmer:
```

```
  Gui, Submit, NoHide
  DisplaySetBrightness( MySlider )
  SB_SetText("Brightness level is " . MySlider . "`t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)")
Return

DisplaySetBrightness( Br=128 ) {
 Loop, % VarSetCapacity( GR,1536 ) / 6
   NumPut( ( n := (Br+128)*(A_Index-1)) > 65535 ? 65535 : n, GR, 2*(A_Index-1), "USho
 DllCall( "RtlMoveMemory", UInt,&GR+512,  UInt,&GR, UInt,512 )
 DllCall( "RtlMoveMemory", UInt,&GR+1024, UInt,&GR, UInt,512 )
 Return DllCall( "SetDeviceGammaRamp", UInt,hDC := DllCall( "GetDC", UInt,0 ), UInt,&(
    , DllCall( "ReleaseDC", UInt,0, UInt,hDC )
}

ShowWindow:
 DetectHiddenWindows, on
 WinRestore, Screen Brightness
 WinActivate, Screen Brightness
Return

Reload:
 Reload
Return

Reset:
  DisplaySetBrightness( 128 )
  GuiControl, , MySlider, 128
  SB_SetText("Default Brightness 128`t`t(Click Status Bar to Reset)")
Return
```

This script and the compiled version (EXE) can be found at the *ComputorEdge* Dropbox Download site in the *ScreenDimmer.zip* file.

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:

Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers.

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and *That Does Not Compute!*, 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

"Planning for the Future" by Wally Wang

Planning for the Future; Clean Your Mac; The 3D Printer Revolution is Coming; Why Computer Book Publishing is a Dead End; Tag Labels in the Finder.

When Microsoft dominated with well over 90 percent of the PC market, the company earned billions of dollars that could afford to hire the brightest minds and research the latest technology. Five years after releasing Windows XP, Microsoft used their huge market dominance, technological resources, and financial capital to release Vista, which even Windows enthusiasts have to admit was a disappointment. What went wrong?

Rather than pour money into developing truly innovative products like Visual Basic, Excel, and Kinect, Microsoft wasted their billions chasing leaders such as creating the Zune to chase the iPod, creating Silverlight to chase Adobe Flash, and creating the Microsoft Kin to chase the iPhone. Rather than invest for the future, Microsoft preferred to grant their executives massive salaries for doing a job that a dead St. Bernard could have done. How much of Microsoft's past decade was due to Steve Ballmer's brilliant leadership and how much was due to a company with a massive advantage simply coasting on inertia?

When people think of a company that innovates and plans for the future, they rarely think of Microsoft. If Vista was Microsoft's plan for the future, you can see they had no plan at all. If Windows 8 is Microsoft's new plan for the future, you can see that they still have no plan at all.

Now look what Apple is doing with their massive financial resources. Instead of chasing leaders in markets that will soon become obsolete, Apple is spending $10.5 billion on manufacturing technology so they can create products that no other company can afford to develop. While companies like Dell and Hewlett-Packard slap together off the shelf parts, Apple invests in manufacturing processes to custom design items as seemingly mundane as laptop cases crafted out of aluminum blocks and sapphire crystals sliced with lasers to form scratch-resistant lenses for cameras in the iPhone and iPad. Anyone think off the shelf parts can look and work as well as custom designed products?

Just use the touchpad of a typical PC laptop made out of plastic with little sense for aesthetic appeal. Most laptop trackpads are functional, but not exceptional. Now try the touch pad of a MacBook Pro laptop and you can feel and see the difference. Apple doesn't just charge more for no reason. Apple charges more because they invest in manufacturing processes designed to create the finest products possible.

Would you rather buy products from a company striving to create the best customer experience possible? Or would you rather buy products from a company that not only doesn't emphasize customer satisfaction, but deliberately changes their products so they frustrate their customers?

According to David Cross, a product unit manager at Microsoft who was part of the team that developed the User Account Control (UAC) feature in Vista that kept asking users to verify their actions over and over again, Microsoft's strategy was to irritate users so they would change their behavior. "The reason we put UAC into the platform was to annoy users. I'm serious," said Cross.

The future belongs to those companies willing to plan ahead and create products that people want to buy. The past belongs to companies that create products that ignore the needs of their customers. When one of the most popular Windows 8 programs is Classic Shell, which is designed to avoid most of the user interface design decisions that define Windows 8, you can already see which company has stopped trying to please their customers any more.

Clean Your Mac

The longer you use any computer, the more likely you'll wind up storing files that you don't really need. Over time, these unnecessary files gobble up space, slowing your computer down and giving you less space to store your important files.

One of the biggest ways to recover hard disk space is to strip your programs of foreign language support. Many programs include language packs to cater to various languages such as French, Spanish, and German. However for most Americans, they'll never need those foreign language features, so you can save space by stripping these foreign language packs out of many OS X programs.

You can do this manually, but it's much easier to use a program like Washing Machine instead. Washing Machine offers three features: Reclaim, Duplicates, and Organize.

Figure 1. Washing Machine provides a simple user interface to help you clean up and reorganize your Mac.

Besides removing unnecessary files such as language features in OS X programs, the Reclaim feature also empties old files out of the Download folder, deletes cache files used by programs like your browser, and deletes log files. You can define which folders to ignore and how aggressive you want Washing Machine to get in cleaning out files, so make a backup of your entire hard disk first and then let Washing Machine go to work.

Figure 2. Washing Machine lets you control which files to delete.

The Duplicates feature scans your hard disk for duplicate copies of files so you can choose which ones to delete. By eliminating duplicate files alone, you can often save huge amounts of storage space that would otherwise be wasted.

The Organize feature helps you clean unused icons from the Dock and the desktop, and manage Smart Folders, which is an underutilized feature that lets your Mac automatically store links to certain files based on tags, file type, or content. You can define a Smart Folder just to hold spreadsheet files and another Smart Folder just to hold word processor files tagged with a category such as Tax Information or Business. Then every time you create a new spreadsheet or word processor file that matches the Smart Folder's criteria, a link to that file will automatically appear in that Smart Folder so you can easily find your most important files.

Could you do all this without Washing Machine? Yes, but it would take time and require technical know-how to accomplish all of these tasks manually. With Washing Machine, complete computer novices just have to click a button to clean and organize their files. Just set Washing Machine to work and go to lunch. By the time you come back, your Mac should have more space.

Washing Machine is a handy utility for both novices and experienced Mac users. You don't need Washing Machine, but you may want it, especially if you want to keep your files organized as efficiently as possible on your hard disk.

The 3D Printer Revolution is Coming

Microsoft recently released a 3D printer app for Windows 8.1 so you can control common 3D printers such as the MakerBot. Even Microsoft can see that 3D printing has a future so their free 3D printing app gives Windows 8 users a chance to experiment with creating their own 3D objects. If you want a free, open source cross-platform 3D printer program that runs on Windows, Linux, and OS X, you can download the ReplicatorG program.
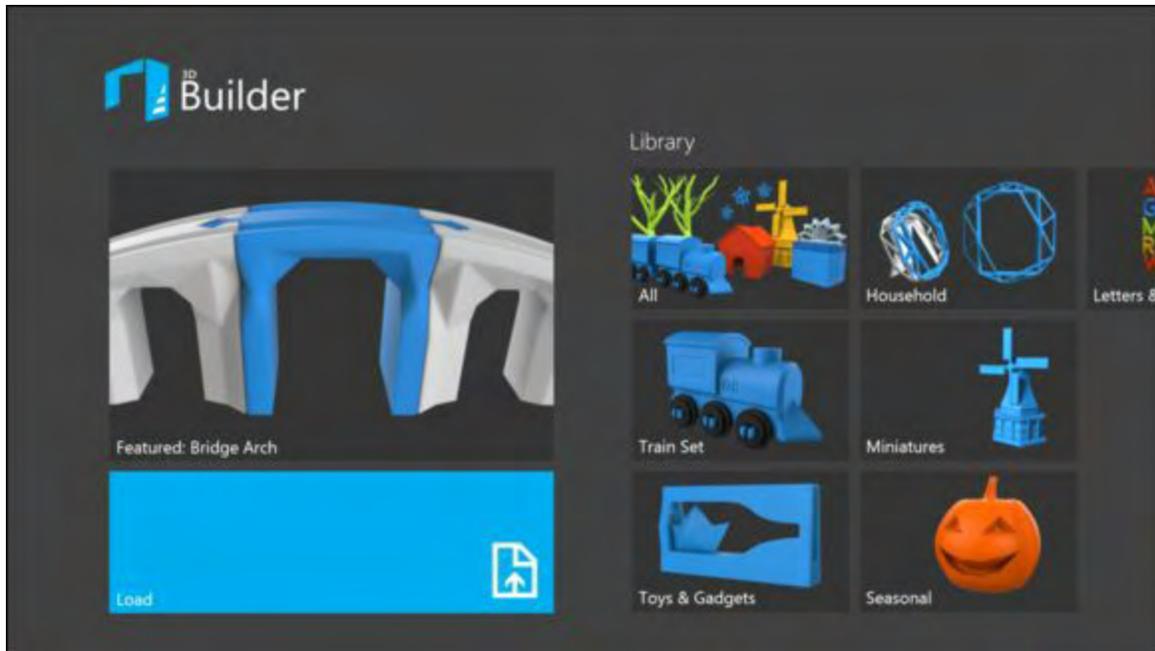

Figure 3. Microsoft offers a free 3D printer app for Windows 8.

If you have a few thousand to spend on a 3D printer and want to experiment with creating your own objects, you can view this gallery of 3D printed objects to get inspiration for your own ideas. After you see some of the unique designs other people have created with 3D printers, you can clearly see a future where manufacturing costs are so minimal that people can create and sell custom objects for others to enjoy.

Figure 4. 3D printers can create a car.

Why Computer Book Publishing is a Dead End

In the old days, computer books took up several shelves in a bookstore. Nowadays if you happen to find a bookstore that hasn't shut down yet, you can see that the computer book section is much smaller. At one time the only way to find technical information was to look in a book. Nowadays, you can easily find technical information just by searching the Internet.

What also helped kill the computer book industry is that in the old days, technology changed slowly. A book on Windows XP stayed on the shelf for years and never needed any revising. Today, technology changes every year so last year's Windows 8 books are obsolete now that Microsoft has released Windows 8.1. As a result, publishers have less time to sell books before they have to reprint and revise them a year later. That means they can only print smaller quantities, which raises the per unit cost of publishing each book.

Add smaller print runs to fewer sales in fewer bookstores that all generate much less money, and you can see why the print publishers are in trouble. John Wiley & Sons saw an [84 percent drop](#) in profits in one quarter and the prospects of improvements remain dismal.

Companies like Wiley are perfectly positioned to thrive in yesterday's business environment, but can't survive the growing cost of printing books and the shrinking market for selling them. When you get squeezed with higher costs and declining profits, you can't survive much longer.

The future is simply digital e-books that can be updated and transmitted rapidly anywhere in the world. E-books avoid time and cost delays for printing and shipping heavy boxes of books from one warehouse to another where they risk languishing on book shelves until they become obsolete a few short months later.

While the computer book publishing industry is unique from other types of book publishing, it's also a clear warning that all types of printed books have little future. If you're an author, it's time to skip the publishers altogether and go straight to digitally selling and marketing your e-books yourself.

The most popular way to sell e-books is through Amazon's Kindle, which you can sign up for through their [Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing](#) program. Although Barnes & Noble is slowly dying, you can also submit your e-books to their [Nook Press](#) site. To further expand your e-book reach, you should also sign up for [Kobo's Writing Life](#) program to get your e-book sold on Kobo readers.

Just create your manuscript using your favorite word processor and save your file in Microsoft Word or the ePub format, and upload your manuscript and book cover image. Within a day or two, your e-book will start going on sale. Then you just have to worry about the hard part in promoting your e-book so others even know it exists.

While there's probably little future in the Nook and Kobo, you might as well sell your e-book

on those platforms too. Besides Amazon's Kindle, the other major e-book reading platform is iBooks, which is now available for both iOS devices and OS X.

The big problem with submitting e-books to the iBookstore is that you must set up an iTunes Connect account first, which is free although you'll need to give Apple your credit card for some unknown reason.

The hard part is that if you want to sell your e-books through the iBookstore, you'll need to get an ISBN to uniquely identify your book, which costs money. You can buy ISBNs individually or in batches, so you'll need to spend at least $100 or more for that.

Finally, you can create your e-book using Apple's free iBooks Author program. After you submit an iBook to Apple, they need to review it to make sure the content is suitable (no pornography or hate information) and works correctly when viewed on an iPhone, iPad, and Macintosh. After getting past these obstacles, Apple will finally put your iBook up for sale.

Figure 5. iBooks Author is a free program.

As an author, your best bet for immediate e-book sales is through Amazon's Kindle program with the Nook and Kobo more as afterthoughts that you might as well use to make a tiny sliver of additional sales.

Beyond Amazon's Kindle, the second biggest and fast growing e-book market is Apple's iBookstore. By using iBooks Author to create interactive e-books, you'll be on the forefront of e-book technology. While Amazon currently dominates the e-book market, their e-books are little more than static text and pictures. Dominating dead technology may be profitable now,

but won't be profitable in the near future.

By submitting interactive iBooks to the iBookstore, you'll simply gain experience developing interactive e-books while laying a foundation for selling through the iBookstore. As more people use the iPhone, iPad, and Macintosh, the market for iBookstore will continue growing. As more people expect interactive features in an e-book, Amazon's Kindle market will have to compete, which means they'll already start behind Apple. Amazon needs to develop a free authoring tool like iBooks Author to help authors make the transition from static e-books to interactive ones.

Even then, Amazon's Kindle library will be jammed full of static e-books from the past while Apple's iBookstore will be loaded with a much smaller, but growing library of newer interactive iBooks. Amazon's Kindle will be great for finding old books. Apple's iBookstore will be better for discovering new books, and guess which market will grow the fastest over time?

If you want to read how George Lucas made the original *Star Wars* and see unreleased video footage at the same time, you can buy the $12.99 *Making of Star Wars* iBook. By letting you view video within an iBook, you can see how printed books with static images and text will pale next to an interactive e-book of the future.
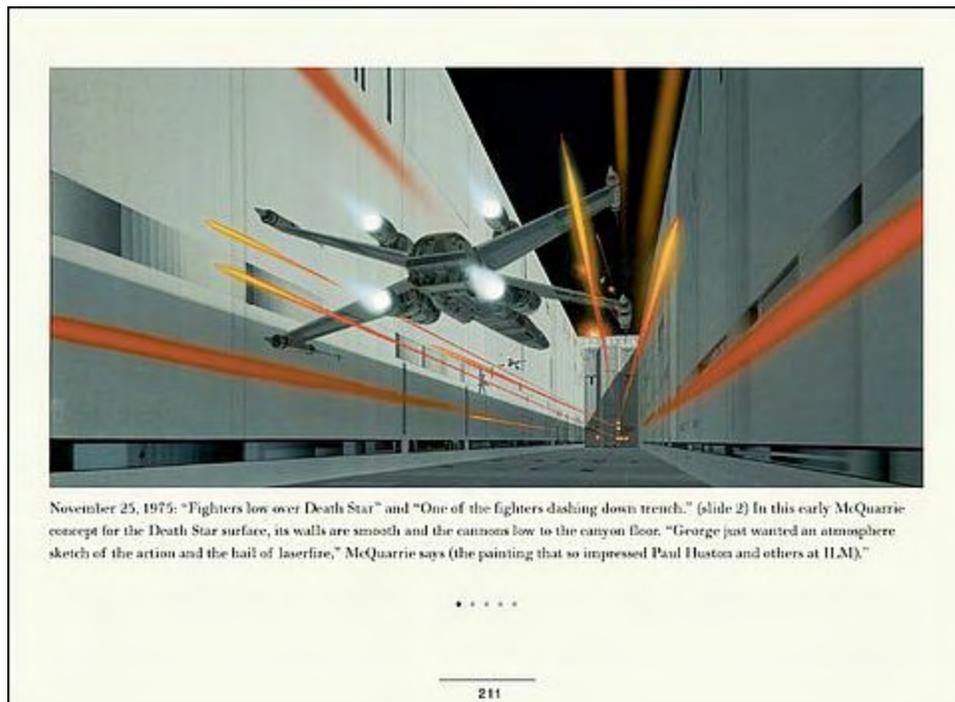
Figure 6. "The Making Star Wars" e-book contains previously unseen pictures and videos from "Star Wars."

The world of interactive e-books is coming and Amazon needs to take the threat seriously. Otherwise Amazon might want to ask Blockbuster Video, Blackberry, and Kodak how they ignored obvious trends that threatened their current business model until it was too late.

*   *   *

One latest feature of OS X 10.9 Mavericks is the ability to tab files with colors and labels to help you find related files. By default, the Finder displays tabs with generic labels like "Red" and "Orange," but you can customize these labels with more meaningful names.

Click on the Finder icon on the Dock, then click the Finder menu and choose Preferences. When a Finder Preferences window appears, click Tags. Now you can click on a tag label to change its name to something that better defines related files.
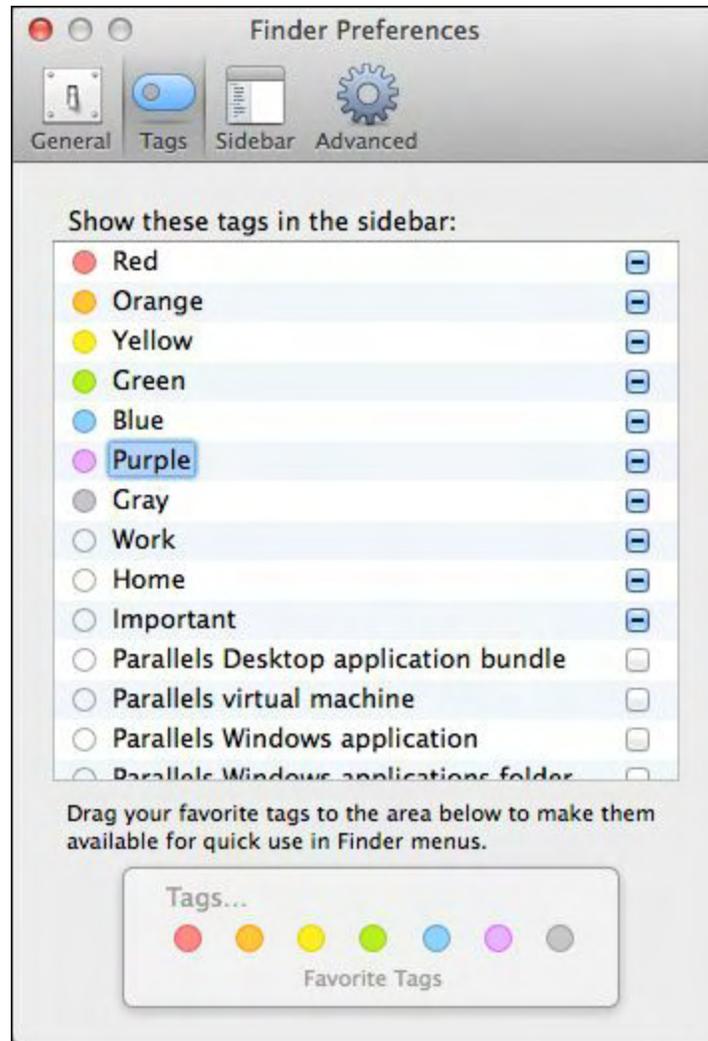
Figure 7. You can customize tag labels within the Finder.

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:

Microsoft Office 2013 For Dummies

Beginning Programming for Dummies

Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies

Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison

Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher

How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To)

The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders

Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners

Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us)

The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou

The 15-Minute Movie Method

Erotophobia (A novel)

Math for the Zombie Apocalypse

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method," finding interesting news stories about cats at his site "Cat Daily News," and providing the type of advice he wishes someone would have told him when he was much younger at his personal Web site. Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Netflix and YouTube: Internet Piggies; See the Xbox in Its Natural Habitat; Six Tips to Keep IP Camera Hackers from Accessing Home Videos; Deadfall Adventures for PC; Contrast for PC.

Netflix and YouTube: Internet Piggies

According to a report by the network policy control solutions company, Sandvine:

"For the first time ever, peer-to-peer filesharing has fallen below 10% of total traffic in North America, which is a stark difference from the 60% share it consumed 11 years ago," said Dave Caputo, CEO, Sandvine. "Since 2009 on-demand entertainment has consumed more bandwidth than "experience later" applications like peer-to-peer filesharing and we had projected it would inevitably dip below 10% of total traffic by 2015. It's happened much faster. This phenomena, combined with the related rise in video applications like Netflix and YouTube, underscores a big reason why Sandvine's business has grown beyond traffic management to new service creation."

Sandvine's Global Internet Phenomena Report 2H2013 includes findings from fixed and mobile networks around the world.

Average monthly mobile usage in Asia-Pacific now exceeds 1 gigabyte, driven by video, which accounts for 50% of peak downstream traffic. This is more than double the 443 megabyte monthly average in North America.
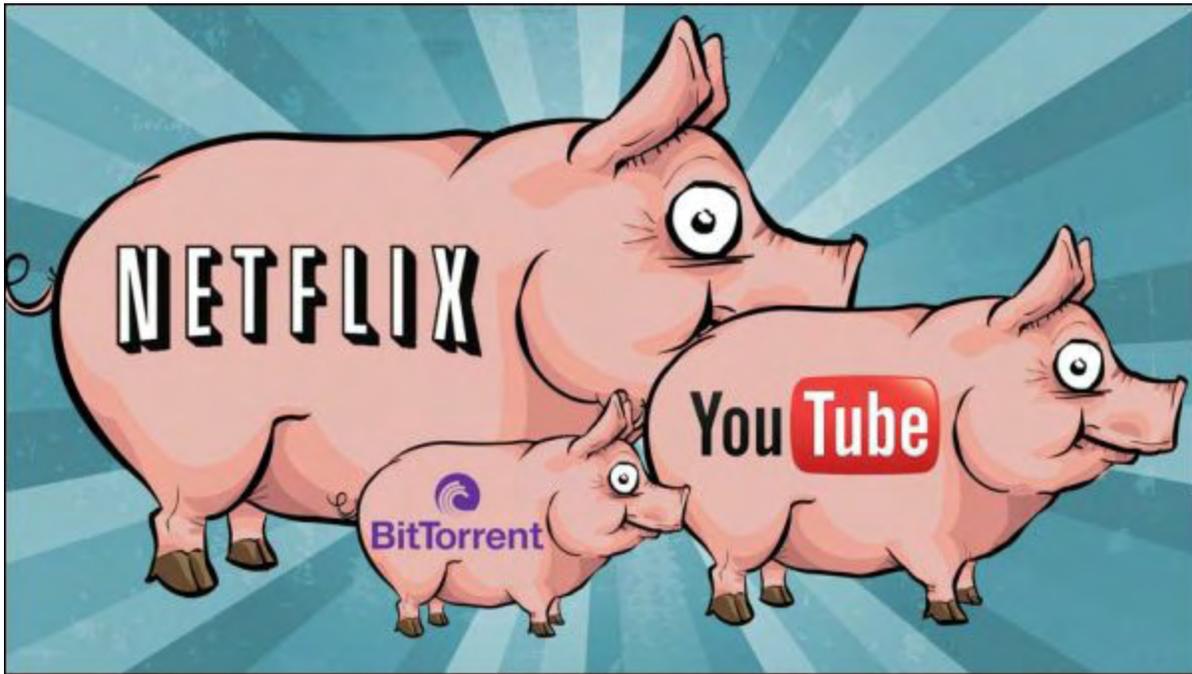
In Europe, Netflix, less than two years since launch, now accounts for over 20% of downstream traffic on certain fixed networks in the British Isles. It took almost four years for Netflix to achieve 20% of data traffic in the United States.

Instagram and Dropbox are now top-ranked applications in many regions across the globe. In mobile networks in Latin America, Instagram, due to the recent addition of video, is now the 7th top ranked downstream application, making it a prime candidate for inclusion in tiered data plans which are popular in the region.
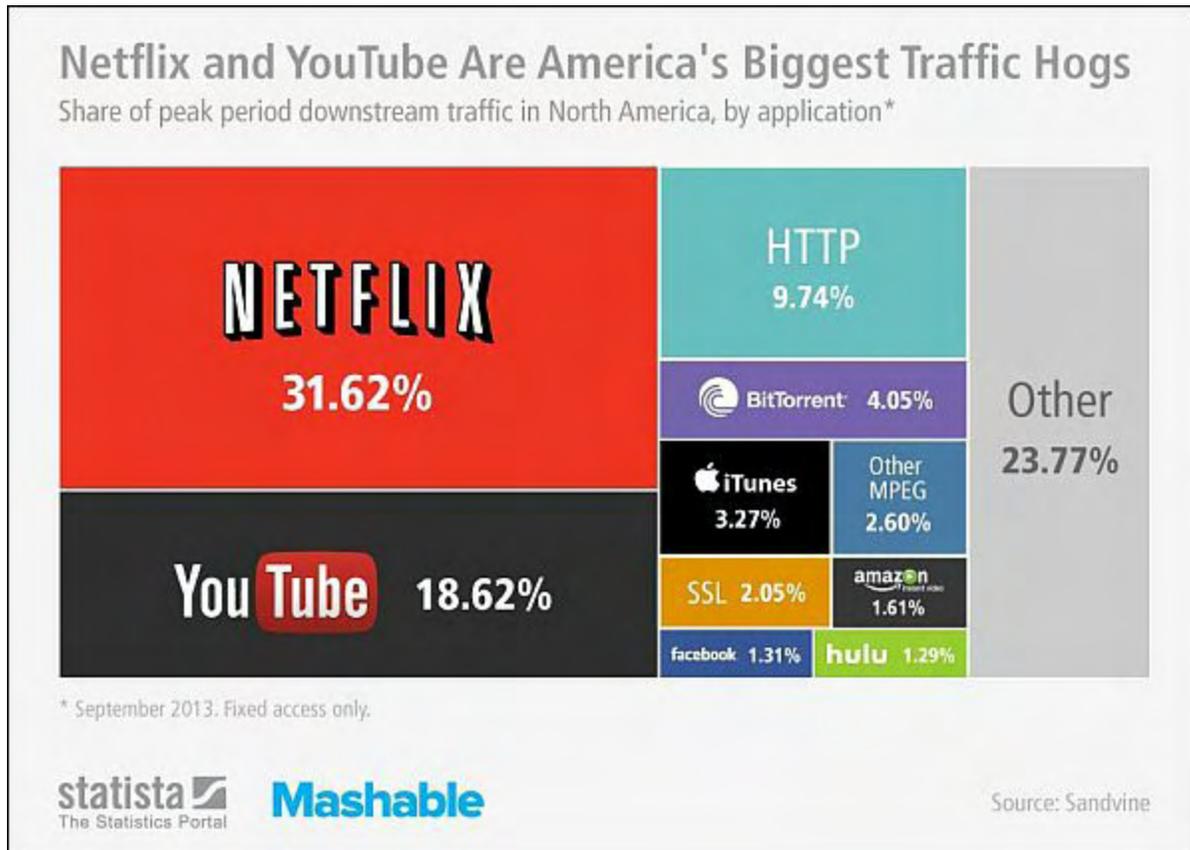
Netflix (31.6%) holds its ground as the leading downstream application in North America and together with YouTube (18.6%) accounts for over 50% of downstream traffic on fixed networks.

P2P Filesharing now accounts for less than 10% of total daily traffic in North America. Five years ago it accounted for over 31%.

Video accounts for less than 6% of traffic in mobile networks in Africa, but is expected to grow faster than in any other region before it. Blackberry use in Africa? Blackberry e-mail and BBM messaging accounts for over 13% of traffic across the continent.

Images courtesy Mashable.com.

See the Xbox in Its Natural Habitat

Microsoft wants us to know about its newest progeny:

Microsoft retail stores are now offering a chance to experience live gameplay on the new Xbox One before it is available for purchase on Nov. 22. Right now people can stop by any of the more than 75 Microsoft retail store locations in the U.S. and Canada to be among the first to try Xbox One.

Store customers will also get the wide-eyed thrill of racing by playing the ultimate car fantasy and Xbox One exclusive title "Forza Motorsport 5," one of the highest-rated racing franchises, and experience the improvements made to the best controllers in gaming.

Additionally, Forza Motorsport and Xbox One fans will have the chance to win the "Forza Motorsport 5" Living Room Sweepstakes. The winner will get a great "Forza Motorsport 5" Living Room package with a Forza Motorsport branded playseat, Polk Audio N1 Gaming SurroundBar, Thrustmaster TX Racing Wheel Ferrari 458 Italia Edition, and $2,000 gift card to use towards completing the living room with a big screen TV.

More information on the Microsoft store events and activities around the Xbox One launch can be on the [Xbox Wire blog](#).

Six Tips to Keep IP Camera Hackers from Accessing Home Videos

In a recent episode of the TV show *The Good Wife*, the daughter of the show's primary character is spied upon and the images broadcast across the Web using the camera built into her own laptop. Lisa Inouye, representing [Scambook](#), writes in this week with tips to avoid unwittingly becoming the star of your own television show:

IP cameras have been enabling consumers to gain live Internet video streams of their home, office, pets, and even children. Although these video feeds are meant to be private, Scambook is issuing a warning that hackers may be able to gain access to these cameras to spy on consumers and their families. Scambook recommends the following six tips to make sure IP

cameras are secure from hackers:

1) Before Buying, Read the Box: It's important to purchase a camera that encrypts its video data so that only authorized users can view the video feed.

2) Use a Secure Internet Connection: Secure Internet connections need to be used when transmitting video feeds. A camera should support current wireless security protocols as well, such as WPA 2 (Wi-Fi Protected Access 2)

3) Secure Web sites to View the Feed: Just as with other URLs, it's important to make sure the Web site broadcasting the video feed starts with "https," instead of "http," when you log in.

4) Pick a Secure, Unique Password: Even if cameras allow you to turn the password requirement off, never choose this option. This would enable a live public broadcast of anything cameras see. Passwords should be 10 or more characters, capital and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols, and not be the same as that used for another Web site or service.

5) Don't Get Careless with the Mobile App: Mobile apps may not have the same security standards as IP camera Web sites. Although convenience is key with these apps, users must stay protected logging in through secure password protected networks. A great alternative is to use a phone's built-in browser to access the same page as if on a computer.

6) Keep Your Software Up-To-Date: Updates include new protocols to protect against those

newly-discovered viruses and privacy threats. This should be done both for camera software as well as any software associated with the mobile app.

Deadfall Adventures for PC

Title: Deadfall Adventures
Developer: The Farm 51
Publisher: Nordic Games
Web site: www.deadfall-game.com
Price: $39.95 (Steam price)
Also available on: Xbox 360
Rating: M for Mature

Deadfall Adventures is a first person shooter that puts you in shoes of the Indiana Jones-style adventurer James Lee Quatermain, grandson of noted explorer Allan Quatermain (King Solomon's Mines), and his lovely female sidekick/employer.

The game starts out looking like little more than a blast-the-bad-guys shooter ala Serious Sam but soon gets better with gorgeous environments (jungles, the arctic, ancient ruins, etc) and plenty of puzzles. Unfortunately, the game is severely crippled in much of its implementation.

First off, the puzzles. They're all pretty much of the type: hey, there's a locked door and four buttons. Start pushing. In about 30 seconds the door opens. Only a couple of times did I come across a puzzle that was a real head scratcher and gave me a sense of satisfaction upon solving it (one tricky elevator in an ancient ruin comes to mind).

Next, the gameplay. The AI bites. They just keep coming at you and no one really ever puts their heads together to come up with a plan. One nice touch: you have to sort of burn the mummies that attack you with your flashlight before you can finish them off by shooting or meleeing them. Adds at least *some* bit of strategy to dealing with the descending hordes.

Finally, the story: Pretty thin. But then, we expect that from these kinds of games, right?

It's really too bad. This game could have been *so* good! They've definitely got the locations down. Some better enemy AI and smarter puzzles could have made this game a classic. Don't expect all that to get done, though. Probably better wait until the price comes down before playing this one.

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Review contributed by Jennifer Geithbart

Contrast for PC

Title: Contrast
Developer: Compulsion Games
Publisher: Focus Home Interactive
Web site: www.contrastgame.com
Price: $14.99 (Steam price)
Also available on: Xbox 360, PS3 and PS4
Rating: T for Teen

Contrast gets an extra globe or so just for trying something refreshingly different: mixing 3D with 2D in a seamless and engaging manner while weaving an enchanting tale of a little girl trying to bring her mother and father back together.

The game is set in the stylized Paris of roughly the 1920s. The little girl, named Didi, and her friend-with-special-powers, Dawn, advance the story as they explore elegant movie palaces, luxurious hotels, gothic museums, quaint cabarets, a circus, and plenty more. Just walking around and looking at everything is almost worth the price of admission.

Puzzles ensue when Didi runs into challenges like getting up to untie a hot air balloon, unmooring a pirate ship, getting into various locked rooms, etc. That's where Dawn comes in, literally. Dawn has the ability to switch into a 2D silhouette climb and jump across shadows cast on walls, then switch back to 3D, which can be quite tricky. For example, at one point in the game the (2D) shadows of wooden horses on a moving carousel have to be carefully

negotiated to work your way to the roof. It's not easy because the horses' shadows are moving up, down, and sideways across the walls of adjacent buildings, all with their own shadowy challenges.

And here, in the general mechanical implementation of the game, is where I ran into problems. As I played Contrast, I increasingly got the sense that there was sizable talent gap between the folks who created the sumptuous world and those whose job it was to transform that vision into a cohesive, workable system.

Continuing to use the carousel puzzle as an example, you climb across and up from moving horse to moving horse but, if you fall, you'll have to go back further than you would like for subsequent tries. That breaks cardinal rule #1 of puzzle games: Don't make getting back into position part of the puzzle.

On another occasion, my character got physically stuck in the game. Had to go *way* back to the beginning of a chapter.

In yet another situation, my character could not progress because there were no Luminaries (the game's currency) remaining. That meant I couldn't operate a critical machine. Had to go way, *way* back for that one.

Which leads to cardinal rule #2: If you're not going to allow players to save at any time, don't be stingy with the automatic checkpoints—particularly if your programming ability is not strong enough that players won't have to rely on them to get out of jams that are of *your* making, not theirs.

In each of these cases it was the power of the artists' vision that won out over the frustrating gameplay mechanics and lured me back into finally finishing the game. And I'm glad I did.

The problems certainly can't be pinned on the graphics engine. The game uses the ubiquitous and venerable Unreal engine.

Another point of contention: Some have complained that Contrast is too short, but it seemed about right to me. I got 8-10 hours; somewhere in there.

In summation, for a mere $14.95—soon (sadly) even "mere-er" due to the fact that reviews have not been overly enthusiastic—it's hard to go wrong with Contrast. Just try not to get stuck. In fact, you might want to wait until you've read that new patches have been released.

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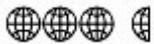
In addition to being an editor and columnist for ComputorEdge and ComputerScene Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, 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

"Reinstall Windows 8 Programs?" "Windows 8 Search," "CMOS Battery," "Windows Backup Restore," "Wally Wang's Conspiracy Theory"

Reinstall Windows 8 Programs?

[Regarding Jack Dunning's November 1 article, "Making Windows 8.1 Act More Like Windows":]

Loved your Windows 8.1 article. I still have confusion on whether you can retain your programs if you are updating Windows 8 (not the 8.1 Preview). Do I still have to reinstall all of my programs after the upgrade? It might be a good thing as I probably have 100 or more programs and only use 10 or so consistently.

-Buck-O

If you're upgrading directly to Windows 8.1 from Windows 8, then you shouldn't have to reinstall any programs.

-Jack

Windows 8 Search

[Regarding Jack Dunning's November 1 article, "Making Windows 8.1 Act More Like Windows":]

I'm sure lots of people will chime in here, but putting search everywhere *back* into W8.1 (it was in W7), including Web (which, I know, can be disabled), but not as convenient as in W7 where it just pops up right in *same* screen/window as the start button, isn't enough.

Many programs, free and low cost ($3 for 2 licenses?) like classicshell, start8, and startisback will do what 8.1 does and far better and more intuitive than the 8.1 upgrade. Frankly, and without going into details, I don't like many of the other changes 8.1 brings, so will not be upgrading, nor recommending to others.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

CMOS Battery

[Regarding the November 8 Digital Dave column:]

I would recommend looking up CMOS battery for that model of computer. There may not be one! I have a laptop that is close to 10 years old that I stopped using on a regular basis that started requiring that I reset all of the normal CMOS settings when I tried to use it occasionally.

Turns out there is a "super capacitor battery" instead of the old CMOS battery and this capacitor only gets charged when the charger is connected. If the laptop is left without power for a time (a month or so) the cap discharges and the settings are lost. Time frame is longer than there is a clock problem (days) so I would not think the battery/capacitor is involved as other settings would have to be made.

-George Shaiffer, Colorado Springs, CO

Windows Backup Restore

[Regarding the November 1 Digital Dave column:]

The trouble with Windows backup restore is it only backup the "system drive" C:\. I have two drives C, E. All of my creations are on E:. So I have external drive "EZ-Dock" and use the PC Clone that came with the EZ-Dock to do the backup-restore. The advantage is I can I can reinstall Windows 7 on C: "system drive" without wiping out my creations! In fact I had to do this once because the USB ports were corrupted USB Wi-Fi—even Geek Squad couldn't fix it!

-Walter, San Diego, CA

Wally Wang's Conspiracy Theory

[Regarding the November 1 Wally Wang's Apple Farm column:]

I'm a little surprised that you jump right to the conclusion that Bill Gates was lying (a somewhat dangerous thing to do in print in our society) when talking about not being able to type on an iPad.

I believe that he was probably doing exactly what you were—taking his own experience and assuming the same was true for everyone else. You see, there *are* some people that find typing

on the iPad unnatural and not really a practical option. There are many people who type at 50-100 words per minute on the keyboard, but suddenly become hunt-and-peck keyboarders on the iPad. The spacing of the keys just seems completely off and they need to completely retrain themselves to use the iPad effectively. I am one of them.

Therefore, the ability to use it for documents is hindered as well. If it takes you five times as long to create a document on the iPad vs. a physical keyboard, there may be a justification to say that they can't type or create documents for it.

For you to unilaterally state that it is preposterous that he could be honestly stating an opinion reveals your own ignorance. While I have not always been a fan of his statements in the past, in this instance he *was* speaking for me (and I work in the IT industry and have been typing and using computers for over 30 years). Granted, the statement was somewhat self-serving, but there was some truth behind it.

I would just hope you would be a little more objective in your commentary in the future.

-Brad, Denver, CO

There's a huge difference between saying it's difficult to type on an iPad and saying that you can't type on an iPad. As your own experience shows, you can type on an iPad, but not at the same speed and comfort you may be able to do on a regular keyboard.

If Bill Gates said that it's difficult to type on an iPad, that would be completely accurate, but for him to say you can't type on an iPad and you can't create documents either reveals supreme ignorance on the iPad's capabilities or just outright lying. Can someone as tech-savvy as Bill Gates be that ignorant on the iPad's capabilities? I doubt it, but it could be true. If he's not that completely ignorant on technology, then what is the other choice if he chooses to make a completely inaccurate statement that can be easily proven false?

-Wally Wang

ComputorEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputorEdge.com. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.If you want to submit a short "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputorEdge E-Books.

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Table of Contents

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers   49