List of *ComputorEdge* Sponsors

San Diego *ComputorEdge* Sponsors

Colocation and Data Center

[redIT](#)

With approaches like smart security, customized colocation and an extensive range of managed services, redIT helps you intelligently leverage IT.

Computer Store, Full Service

[Chips and Memory](#)

New Systems Starting At $299 Visit Our Website or Call for Hardware, Software, Systems, or Components Laptop*Desktop*Server IT Service * Upgrades * Service Everyday Low Prices

Macintosh Specialists

[Maximizers](#)

Serving San Diego County Since 1988 * Onsite Macintosh Service for Home and Small Office Needs * ACSP: Apple Certified Support Professional ACTC: Apple Certified Technical Coordinator Apple Consultant's Network

Repair General

[Hi-Tech Computers](#)

Notebooks, Monitors, Computers and Printers We Buy Memory, CPU Chips, Monitors and Hard Drives Windows 7 Upgrades Phone (858) 560-8547

Colorado *ComputorEdge* Sponsors

ComputorEdge™ Online — 08/22/14

[Click to Visit *ComputorEdge™* Online on the Web!](#)

The Free VLC Media Player

VLC Media Player is not only free, but works on almost every computer, tablet, and smartphone.

Magazine Summary

List of *ComputorEdge* Sponsors

Digital Dave
by Digital Dave

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Is Comodo Safe?; Mystery Internet Files; Tracking Cookies.

VLC Free Media Player
by Jack Dunning

More Free Software Recommended by ComputorEdge Readers
Jack takes a look at using VLC Media Player for listening to music and watching videos.

Quick Dictionary Lookup from Any Program
by Jack Dunning

One Script Fails, But There Is Always an Alternative
Pulling data from a Web site for an AutoHotkey app can be tricky. Sometimes it's just easier to use the site itself.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
by Wally Wang

Waiting for New Products
Waiting for New Products; Free Microsoft Office Alternatives; Talk like TED; The Future of OS X and iOS

Programming; A Petition for Classic Visual Basic; The Preview Program.

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

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.
"Foxit PDF Reader," "I Don't Do Links," "Flash Drives," "LibreOffice Autocorrect"

Click to Visit *ComputorEdge™* Online on the Web!

Digital Dave

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

Is Comodo Safe?; Mystery Internet Files; Tracking Cookies.

Is Comodo Safe?

Dear Digital Dave,

I would like your opinion of Comodo. I read recently on Kim Komando that it was a far superior firewall to Security Essentials and I downloaded it. After the download, a message came up that said I needed to call a number to configure it. The gentleman on the line convinced me, against my better judgment, to let him take over my computer to complete the download.

The next morning, I had a very slow computer, a pop-up indicating I had problems, and a number to call. The gentleman said I had several things wrong with my computer, and it would cost "this amount" to repair it. I declined and removed Comodo. I would consider that a perfect scam, but it was Kim Komando's recommendation.

Your thoughts, please.
Sally - a long time reader
Albert Lea, MN

Dear Sally,

As time goes on, businesses look for more and more ways to make money. This often leads to decisions that in the long run hurt their reputation. As your letter demonstrates, Comodo has fallen victim to this temptation. Sometimes it takes the form of installer programs that place toolbars in your browser and change home pages. Other times it takes the form of a bait-and-switch—as it appears to be in your case. You are not the only one to become annoyed with Comodo as shown by these articles, "[Paying a price to use free software: the dark side of Comodo products](#)" and "[Comodo Scam Alert](#)."

I have seen where Comodo has received a number of high rankings from well known magazines. That's one of the reasons I don't rank products. How can anyone know what's

going on behind the scenes? While I do often recommend CNET's Download.com for obtaining free software, I caution people that their installer will add toolbars if you don't watch carefully during installation. Even open source software occasionally falls victim to the temptation ("[FileZilla + Sourceforge installer = insecure connections and malware](#)"). You are wise to keep your eyes wide open.

Digital Dave

Mystery Internet Files

Dear Digital Dave,

I surf the Net using Mozilla Firefox. The news sites are a favorite. I notice that tiny files appear to be sent to my computer. CCleaner displaying Firefox Internet Cache indicates that they number in the hundreds, are not cookies and have a total file size of 80+ megabytes. Most cause no problem with the exception of ad.doubleclick.net. *This file fails to load some of the time and causes me to leave the offending site. Can these files harbor malware and what is their purpose?*

Thank you,
Bob
San Diego, CA

Dear Bob,

When you load a Web page via a browser, the page and its bits and pieces (mostly graphic files) are saved in the cache. The purpose of this is to make reloading the page much faster. Rather than downloading everything from the Web on a revisit, the unchanged pieces are loaded from the cache on your hard drive. That's why there are times when you need to Reload or Refresh to make sure a page is up-to-date.

The files are no more dangerous than the Web page itself. Browsers interpret HTML and JavaScript (plus any plug-ins you add). Both are insulated from the rest of the operating system by your browser. You are not likely to have a problem unless you actively click a download link with questionable files on the other end. You can delete these files at any time with the only result being a slightly slower loading speed when you revisit a Web page and the files are saved to the cache again.

Plug-ins can expand the browser beyond the usual HTML and Javascript—Flash and PDF for example. Those have caused problems in the past though they seem fine now as long as you run anti-virus software. Then, there were the old Microsoft ActiveX controls in Internet Explorer which would allow Web pages to do things to your PC, but ActiveX is disabled by default in current versions of Internet Explorer. This was another reason that people moved

away from Internet Explorer.

Digital Dave

Tracking Cookies

Dear Digital Dave,

I have free AVG antivirus and use Spybot immunization. Spybot still detects and deletes the same seven tracking cookies after about three days of Internet. I'm using Windows XP SP3. Is there any antivirus that prevents those tracking cookies such as Zedo and Stat Counter from running on my desktop? Does an iPad have the same problem?
James Taylor
San Diego, CA

Dear James,

Whether you get cookies from tracking sites or not is a function of the Web browser rather than your antivirus software. In fact the cookies maintained by one browser (Google Chrome) cannot be read by another (Firefox, Internet Explorer, and others). That means you can limit the effectiveness of any tracking by merely changing browsers. Also, deleting cookies severely limits tracking, but that can affect the cookies you want to keep—regular sites that maintain your personal settings in cookies.

Notably tracking cookies have a name different from the site that you're visiting. This is done so multiple Web sites can read the same cookie (always in the same browser). Since they don't use the name of the site, they are called third-party cookies. Some browsers allow you to block third-party cookies while others merely tell sites that you don't want to be tracked. (Which approach do you think is more effective?) Both Chrome and Internet Explorer have an option to block third-party cookies while Firefox allows you to make a request not to be tracked.

To block cookies in Internet Explorer see Internet Options => Privacy => Advanced => Third-party Cookies => Block.

To block cookies in Google Chrome see Tools => Settings => Show advanced settings… => Privacy => Content Settings => Block third-party cookies and site data.

In Firefox make your request not to be tracked with Tools => Options => Privacy => Tell sites that I do not want to be tracked.

Of course blocking is more effective since not everyone obeys the rules.

On the iPad in Settings Safari has an Accept Cookie from Visited (only?) feature which I assume means not to accept third-party cookies. Google Chrome on the iPad only offers the request to be left alone.

Digital Dave

VLC Free Media Player

"More Free Software Recommended by ComputorEdge Readers" by Jack Dunning
Jack takes a look at using VLC Media Player for listening to music and watching videos.

One thing I noticed about the lists of free software offered by many *ComputorEdge* readers in response to the "Free Software I Actually Use" article was the inclusion by many of VLC Media Player. I don't usually listen to music or watch videos on my computer, but I was intrigued by how many people make VLC Media Player a standard part of their setup. After all, virtually all computers come with some type of media player. I decided to take a closer look.

VLC Media Player

VLC Media Player is open source which means it's free to anyone who wants it. It's available for Windows, the Mac, Linux computers, plus iOS (iPhone and iPad) and Android for smartphones and tablets. This universality is probably enough of a reason to download the program, but many people tout VLC's simplicity and flexibility. As *ComputorEdge* reader Andy Kliss states, "it will play just about anything you throw at it, plus includes some editing capabilities."

VLC plays music and videos regardless of whether it is files, discs, Webcams, devices or streams—although I did have a little trouble figuring how to get it to stream a YouTube video. The program is mostly intuitive only requiring you to select a file, folder or disc, (see Figure 1).
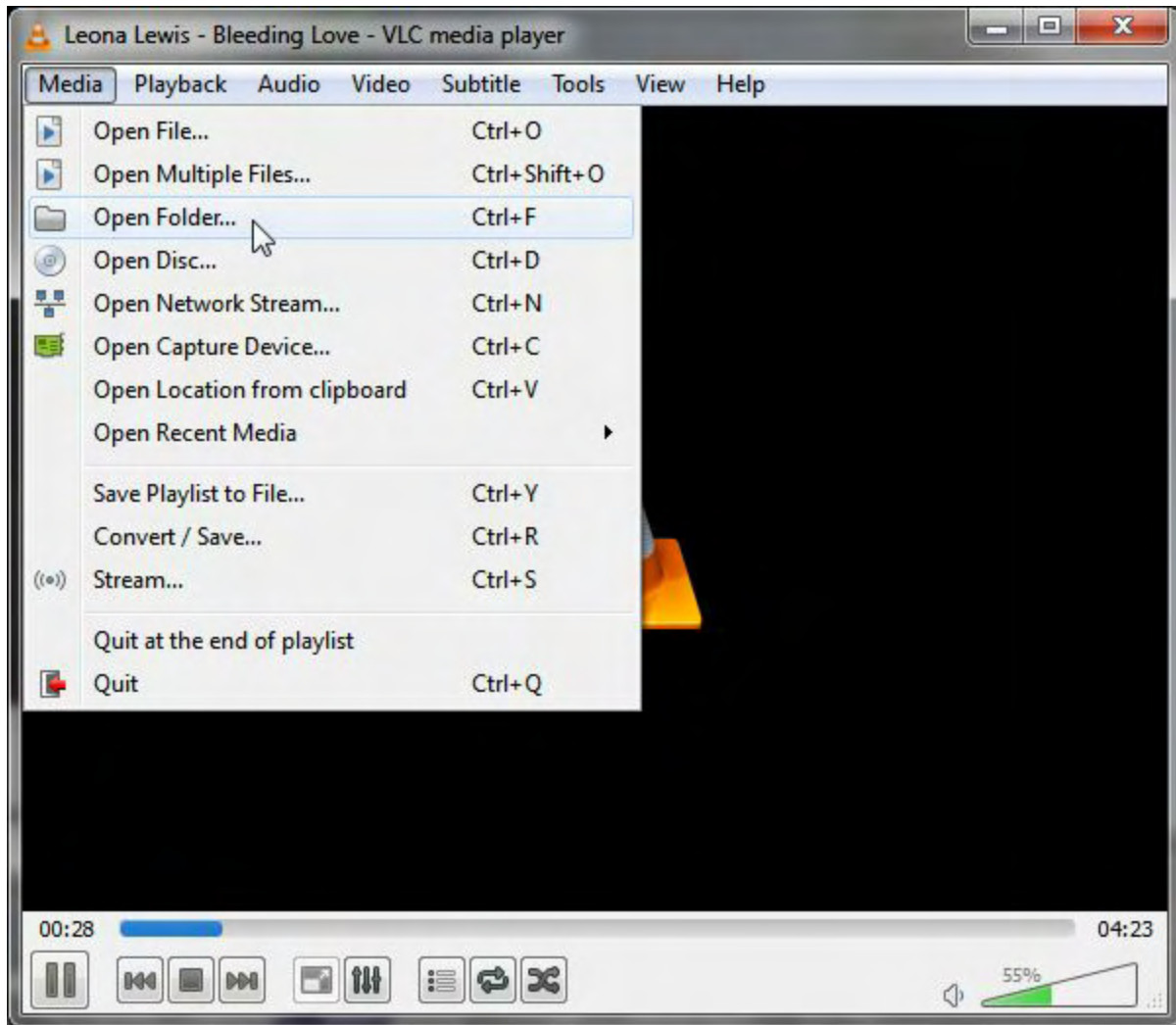
Figure 1. VLC Media Player allows you to pick individual files, entire folders, or a disc.

Admittedly in many areas of the program I did encounter terminology that I didn't quite comprehend (i.e. graphic equalizer, compressor, spatializer, and more). But overall it was easy to select and play audio and video files.

The program already contains almost all the codecs you need to play just about anything without adding more packs (MPEG-2, DivX, H.264, MKV, WebM, WMV, MP3…). I tested it on some old AVI files which have often had problems with on another player (Windows Media Player) and it breezed right through them.

Many of the controls are immediately available in a right-click menu—always one of my favorite ways to navigate an app (see Figure 2).
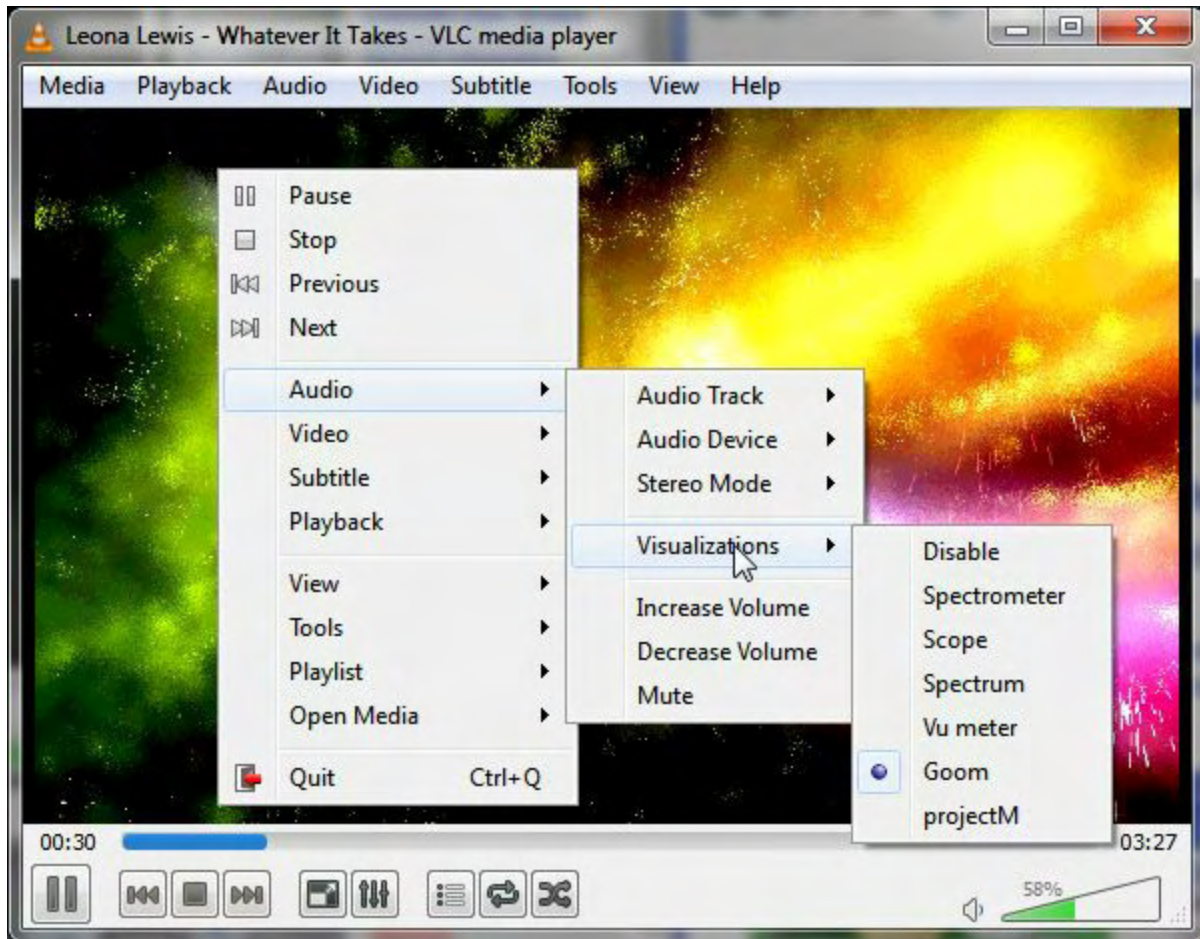
Figure 2. The background mode can be changed with the right-click menu.

Staring at a blank window when listening to music is not for everyone. If you like the exploding colors similar to those shown in Figure 2, then selecting Goom from the Visualizations menu might be for you.

One neat trick was playing a variety of family videos buried in a multitude of folders with thousands of image files. After adding the top level folder, VLC automatically loaded all for the videos into the list. This saved a lot of sifting through the picture files looking for videos (see Figure 3).
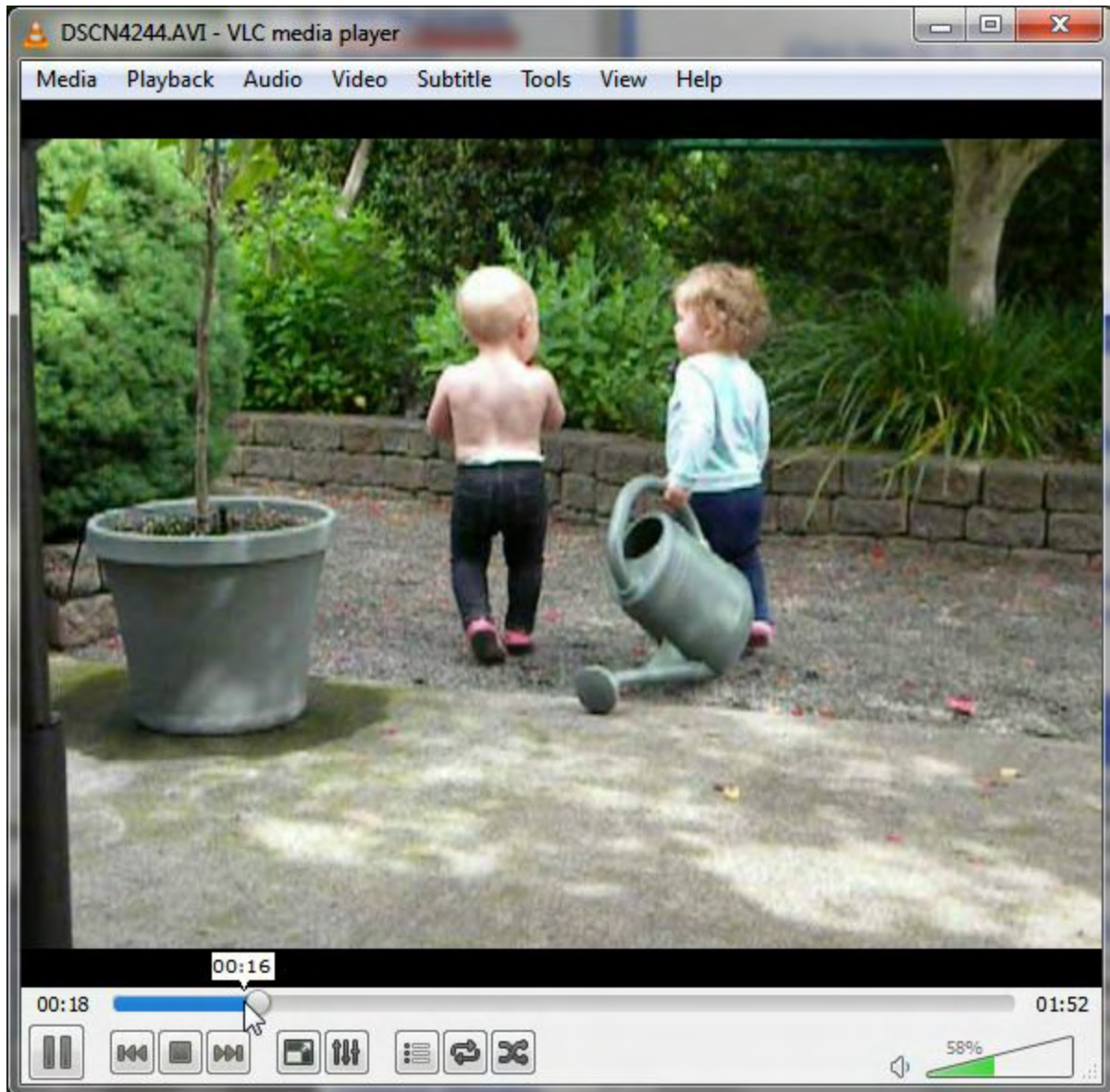
Figure 3. VLC plays most video formats without any problem.

The Playlist

One of the features of any media playing software is the playlist which consists of all the files that have been added to the player. This list can be rearranged to your preferred order or with the click of a button they are played in random order. Best of all the playlist can be saved to a file for later reloading.

After selecting the files you want to play the current selections can be viewed by selecting Playlist from the View menu (see Figure 4).
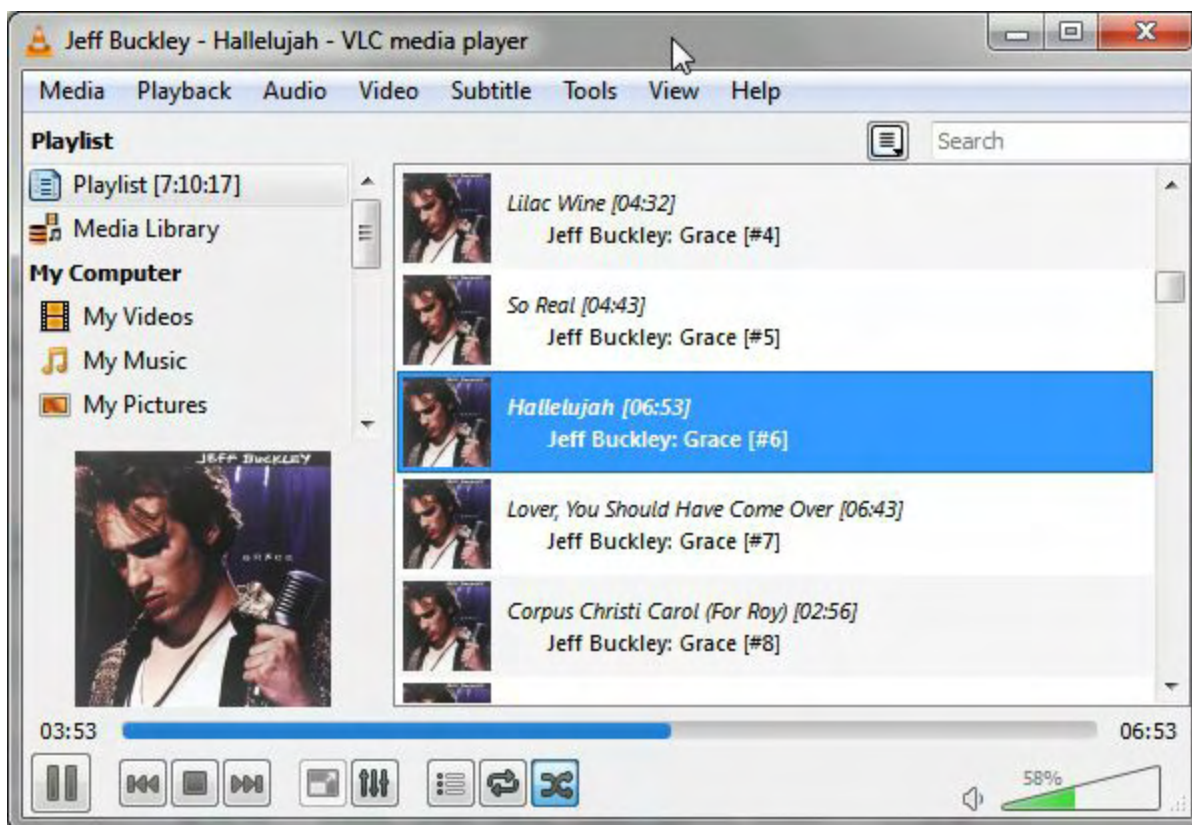
Figure 4. The Playlist view shows all of the items in the current list.

Sometimes you just need music or video in another format. VLC can do media conversion for almost any purpose.

I was under the impression that VLC would burn CDs. After all, Windows Media Player will write to a CD-R disc. I was wrong! (See this video "How to Burn with VLC." I can add that one to my bag of tricks that you *can't* do!) VLC does not burn CDs or DVDs. It's just a media playing program and conversion program and not the software for making your mixed CDs.

Windows Media Player does an excellent job of burning CDs. Just drag the titles you want to add into the burn list on the right side of the window under the Burn tab. Sort them in the order you want them. Put a blank CD-R into the burner drive and click Start Burn. It even keeps track of how many will fit on the disc.

Since I'm brand new to VLC Media Player, I may be missing some of the most important benefits to using it as a standard free add-ons. If you have other reasons for liking VLC please let us know why your prefer it.

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.

13

Currently available:

Recently released is Jack's FREE AutoHotkey book, [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought to Do with Window](#), available exclusively at ComputorEdge E-Books in the EPUB for e-readers and tablets, MOBI for Kindle, and PDF for printing formats.

ComputorEdge E-books offering is his [AutoHotkey Applications](#), an idea-generating intermediate level e-book about using the AutoHotkey Graphical User Interface (GUI) command to write practical pop-up apps for your Windows computer. (It's not as hard as it sounds.)

[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](#)*.

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputorEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *[That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputorEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"](#)*

Special Free Offer at ComputorEdge E-Books! *[Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!](#)*.

[Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (Seventh Edition)](#)!

[Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle](#),
[Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7](#),
[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.

Quick Dictionary Lookup from Any Program

"One Script Fails, But There Is Always an Alternative" by Jack Dunning

Pulling data from a Web site for an AutoHotkey app can be tricky. Sometimes it's just easier to use the site itself.

This week I'm taking a break away from the CalorieCount app, but I'll get back on it with more improvements next week. (I'm even planning to add a graph of weight loss.) This week's column is at a novice level using a standard technique for accessing searches within a Web page. If you're new to AutoHotkey, you may want to review this "[Introduction to AutoHotkey](#)!"

An e-mail from Ron Cerrato:

I just noticed this weekend that the [Dictionary app](#) doesn't work. Then I found your post [on the AutoHotkey forum]:

> *Jack Dunning Last active: Aug 15 2014 08:41 PM*
> *Joined: 08 Apr 2013*
>
>
> *The Dictionary script seems to no longer work. Something probably changed on the* Dictionary.com *page and as far as I know there is no update. That's the problem with scripts that depend upon automatically pulling data from Web pages.*

I'm surprised there is so little info about dictionary apps for Windows. It's so useful, especially since you can highlight a word anywhere, even Notepad. Lately, when I want to check the spelling of a word or look up its meaning, I enter it into a blank Notepad file just so I can use the script.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

It's a little frustrating when a script suddenly stops working. This Dictionary app was one that I used regularly, so I noticed right away when it ceased returning definitions. Most likely [Dictionary.com](#) reformatted the Web page causing the cues that Robert Ryan used to parse

the definitions to be invalid. Fixing the problem would require taking a look at the Web page source code and a little more knowledge of Regular Expressions than I possess. Even then, there is no guarantee that the Web page won't change again in the near future.

I've put together a short alternative AutoHotkey script to do a *Dictionary.com* lookup. It's not as slick as Ryan's, but it works. Plus, if you want to do a quick lookup of a word, you don't need to open Notepad first. (Ryan's script did have a pop-up for quick definitions.) What the script does is save any highlighted word to the Windows Clipboard, then uses it as a search term on *Dictionary.com*:

```
^!d::
    Clipboard =
    Sleep, 100
    Send, ^c
    ClipWait, 1
    Run, chrome.exe  --new-window http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/%clipboard%?:
Return
```

If you don't highlight a word, then the site opens ready to search. This snippet of code can be added to the end of any AutoHotkey script.

How It Works

After loading, the hotkey combination CTRL+ALT+D (*^!d*) activates the search. Of course, you can change this combination to anything that you prefer. If you have not highlighted any text, then Google Chrome will open in a new window, navigate to *Dictionary.com* and display the home page with the search field (see Figure1).

Figure 1. If no search term is highlighted, Dictionary.com opens on its home page with the search field at the top.

It was important to me for Chrome to open in a new window because I always have number of other sites open for monitoring in a main Chrome window. By opening in a new window, I can quickly close it without affecting all my other open sites and be right back where I started.

If a term is highlighted, then it is used to open another new Chrome window which automatically searches for that word (see Figure 2).
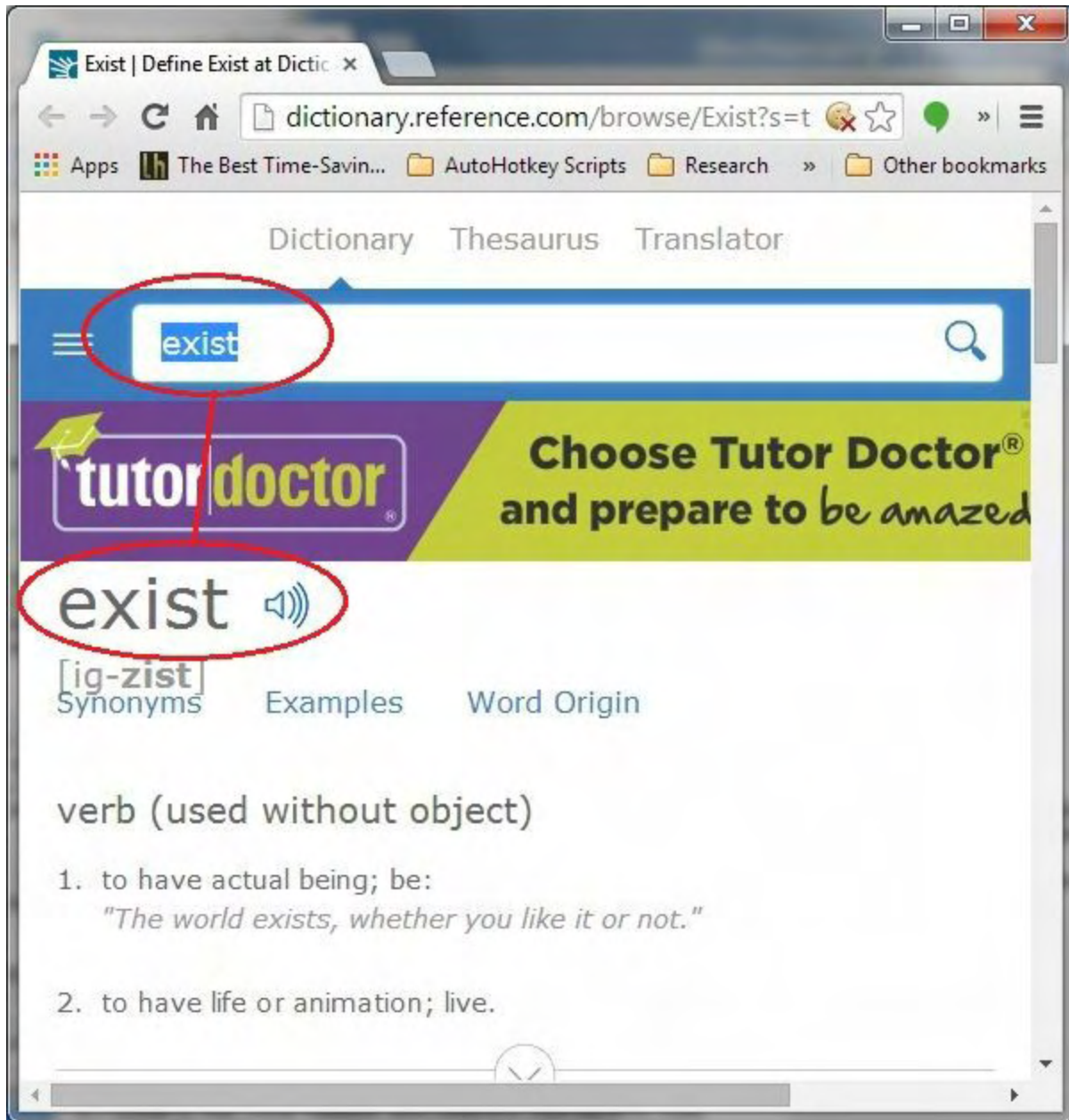
Figure 2. If text is highlighted (in this case the word "exist"), Dictionary.com automatically does a search for the word.

If the word is not found at Dictionary.com, then a list of possibilities is offered (see Figure 3). One advantage to this approach over the original script is that all of the features offered at the site are available including more alternative definitions, synonyms, and many more word suggestions.
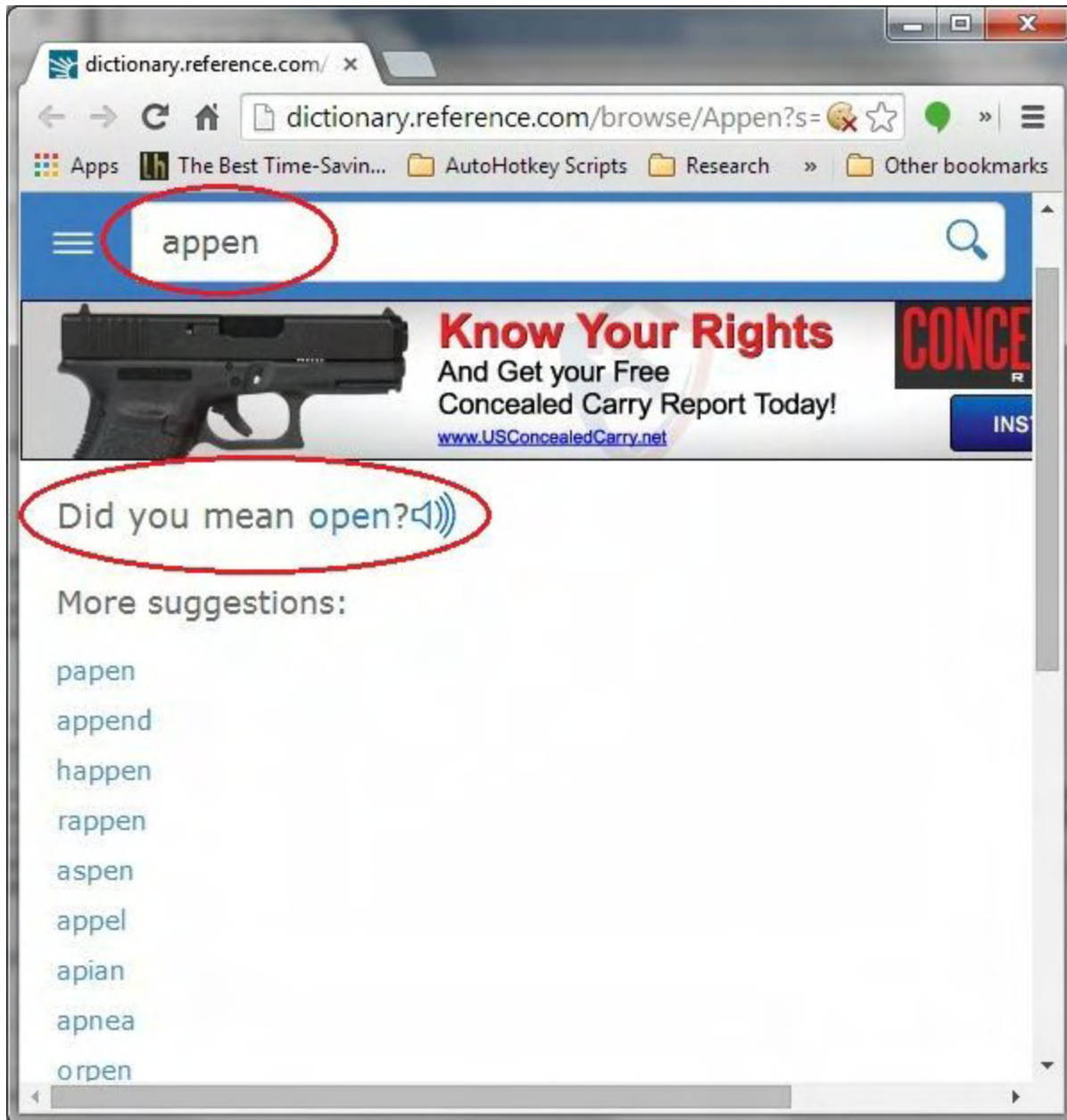
Figure 3. If a word is not found or misspelled, then a list of alternatives is offered.

On the downside, since this script uses a Web browser, there can be a significant delay while loading the page. I found that if the browser is already open on another page, then the new window loads much quicker. This works for me because I always have the browser loaded monitoring a number of pages—mostly *ComputorEdge* admin pages.

As opposed to the original app, you are forced to deal with the ads on the site, but that's a small price to pay for a much simpler script that's not as likely to break if the site changes. Plus you get the advantage of all the extra *Dictionary.com* features.

How the Script Works

First the [Clipboard](#) is cleared with the *Clipboard =* line of code. This is necessary just in case you didn't highlighted a search term. Otherwise, the search would be attempted with whatever happened to be in the Windows Clipboard. It also makes the later *ClipWait* command work properly. The *Sleep, 100* allows time for the Clipboard to clear.

If you have selected text, then *Send, ^c* will copy it to the Clipboard. Rather than using another *Sleep* command, to give the command time to complete, the [ClipWait command](#) causes the script to pause until data is found in the previously blank Clipboard. The *ClipWait* parameter is set to 1 to timeout after one second. Otherwise, whenever there is no selected text, the script would wait indefinitely.

The bulk of the work is done with the *Run, chrome.exe --new-window http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/%clipboard%?s=t* line of code. The [Run command](#) calls Google Chrome. Note that I didn't need the full path to the program, but I can't guarantee this will work on all Windows systems. (If doesn't work for you, right-click on a Google Chrome shortcut and select Properties. The full path will be found in the Target field under the Shortcut tab.)

I added the *--new-window* switch because it forces Chrome to open a new window. I didn't want it to come up as a tab in my primary Chrome window. The remainder of the line is the URL for *Dictionary.com* with the search term added. The search term which is saved in the Clipboard is evaluated with *%clipboard%.*

This snippet only works for Google Chrome. For Firefox you should replace the *Run* command with:

```
Run, firefox.exe -new-window  http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/%clipboard%?s=t
```

Notice that the *-new-window* switch only has one leading hyphen rather than the two for Chrome.

I couldn't find a new window switch for Internet Explorer. It appeared to open a new window in any case, but there could be a setting somewhere in *Tools => Options*. However, I did find that I needed to use the full path to the program. Replace the *Run* command in the snippet with the following line for Internet Explorer:

```
Run, C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe
            http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/%clipboard%?s=t
```

(This line is wrapped into two lines for display purposes only. If you use it in a script, it should be all one line.)

Moving and Resizing the Window

The new window often opens in full screen mode which might cover up your current working window. (I found this to be inconsistent.) If I resized the window and ran another search without closing the last window, the new window usually conformed to the same location and size. (Again, this was inconsistent.) This is not an ideal situation, so I added another hotkey combination to move, resize and make any active window always-on-top:

```
 ^!r::
  WinMove,A,,800,50,600,800
  WinSet, AlwaysOnTop, Toggle, A
Return
```

First, the target window must be selected (active). Using the CTRL+ALT+R (*^!r*) hotkey combination the window is moved to the *x,y* coordinates *800,500* and resized to *600px by 800px* using *WinMove, A,, 800, 50, 600, 800*. This will work on any active window—not just the dictionary site. (You should adjust the numbers to match your monitor size.)

Next, the window is set to always-on-top with *WinSet, AlwaysOnTop, Toggle, A*. I like this because I can move back to the working window without losing sight of the dictionary definition. Plus, I can easily drag text from the definition window without it disappearing behind the original window. Since the *WinSet* is a toggle, if I accidentally resize and set a window to always-on-top, I can undo always-on-top by hitting CTRL+ALT+R again.

This AutoHotkey technique can be used with any Web site with a standard lookup feature. It's very similar to the one used in the CalorieCount script for importing food data. I've already replaced the old Dictionary app with this technique. We'll see how it works out.

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

Just released! *AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought To Do With Windows!* This e-book includes both those tips and the reference material (Table of Contents and indexes) from the other three AutoHotkey books. Pick up a copy free and share it with your friends.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>
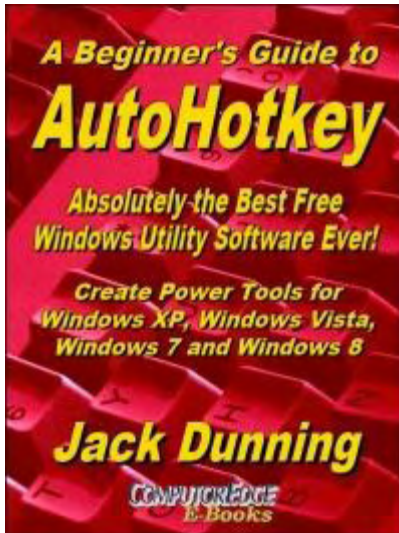
The second edition with more chapters and an index to the AutoHotkey commands found in the book is available in e-book format from Amazon (and other formats—EPUB and PDF— at the ComputorEdgeBooks Web site linked below). Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) offers a gentle approach to learning AutoHotkey. (Also available from Amazon for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)

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 *ComputorEdge*, 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.

For an EPUB (iPad, NOOK, etc.) version of A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey click here!

For a PDF version for printing on letter size paper for inclusion in a standard notebook of A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey click here!

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>
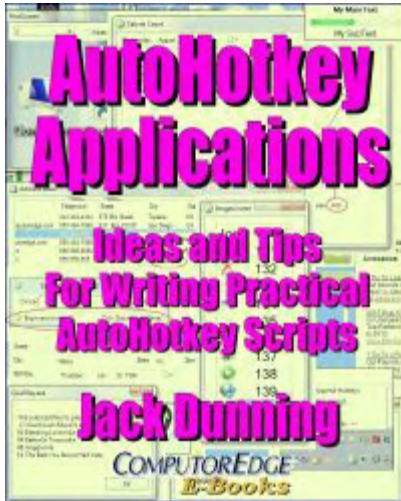
Jack's second AutoHotkey book, *Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey* (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) is comprised of updated, reorganized and indexed columns from *ComputorEdge* is now available. Since the columns were not all written in a linear fashion, the book has been reorganized and broken up into parts by topic. The book is not for the complete beginner since it builds on the information in *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey*. However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the first book. (Also available from Amazon for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)
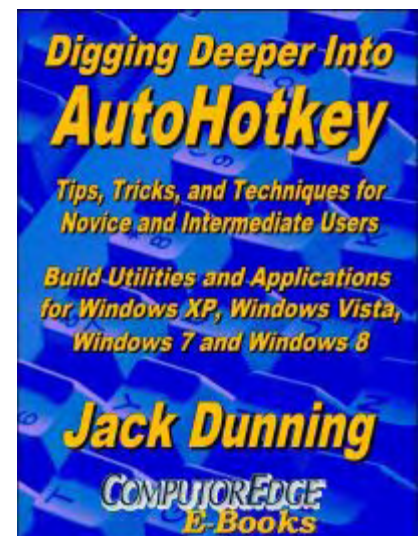
For an EPUB (iPad, NOOK, etc.) version of Digging Deeper into AutoHotkey click here!

For a PDF version for printing on letter size paper for inclusion in a standard notebook of Digging Deeper into AutoHotkey click here!

<center>*   *   *</center>

Jack's third AutoHotkey book *AutoHotkey Applications* (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) is an intermediate level book of ideas and applications based primarily on the AutoHotkey GUI command. The book emphasizes practical applications. The book is not for the complete beginner since it builds on the information in the other two books. However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the other books. There is an extensive index to the ideas and techniques covered in the back of the book. (Also available from Amazon for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)

For an EPUB (iPad, NOOK, etc.) version of AutoHotkey Applications click here!

For a PDF version for printing on letter size paper for inclusion in a standard notebook of AutoHotkey Applications click here!

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:

Recently released is Jack's FREE AutoHotkey book, AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought to Do with Window, available exclusively at ComputorEdge E-Books in the EPUB for e-readers and tablets, MOBI for Kindle, and PDF for printing formats.

ComputorEdge E-books offering is his AutoHotkey Applications, an idea-generating intermediate level e-book about using the AutoHotkey Graphical User Interface (GUI) command to write practical pop-up apps for your Windows computer. (It's not as hard as it sounds.)

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

<center>23</center>

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*.

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputorEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputorEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"*

Special Free Offer at ComputorEdge E-Books! *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!*.

Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (Seventh Edition)!

Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle,
Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7,
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.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

"Waiting for New Products" by Wally Wang

Waiting for New Products; Free Microsoft Office Alternatives; Talk like TED; The Future of OS X and iOS Programming; A Petition for Classic Visual Basic; The Preview Program.

It's pretty easy to predict the future of Apple when the company leaves so many hints in plain sight that often get overlooked by the media. If you have an Apple Developer account, you can already access beta copies of both iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite, so it should be no surprise that Apple will release the new iPhone 6 to coincide with the release of iOS 8.

Right now rumors point to a September 9 announcement for the iPhone 6 followed by actual shipping a week or two afterwards. Nobody should be surprised if Apple releases two sizes for the iPhone 6 so you can choose a larger screen (5.5-inch) or a slightly smaller screen (4.7-inch), although both will still be larger than the current iPhone 5S screen (4-inch).

With the release of iOS 8, you can expect new iPad models too that will likely offer the TouchID fingerprint sensor along with a faster processor and possibly a screen that's more visible in bright sunlight.

Besides access to the betas of iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite, Apple Developer account holders also have access to the latest version of Xcode 6 that offers several hints of the future. First, Xcode 6 allows you to create iOS apps that can adapt to different screen sizes. That alone should tell you that Apple is planning new iOS devices with various screen sizes.

In the early days when there was just the iPhone's 3.5-inch screen, Xcode just focused on making apps that fit within that single screen size. Then Apple introduced the iPad, the larger screen iPhone 5, and finally the iPad mini. Different screen sizes are now the norm, so Xcode 6's ability to let your iOS app adapt to different screen sizes points to more screen size varieties in iOS devices for the future.

The second hint of the future buried in Xcode 6 involves its support for Apple's HealthKit and HomeKit frameworks. HealthKit stores medical data while HomeKit lets you control devices using voice commands with Siri. HealthKit hints at a wearable computer while HomeKit points

to multiple third-party accessories that will likely be revealed at the same time as the iPhone 6 announcement. That way Apple can demonstrate the usefulness of HomeKit to control your home using voice commands through your iPhone 6.

One new feature of OS X Yosemite involves Continuity, which lets you seamless move between an iOS device and a Macintosh running OS X Yosemite. Start an e-mail message on your iPhone and when you walk near your Macintosh, you can finish typing the rest of your e-mail message on your Macintosh.

Of course to make this feature work, Apple has to release iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite at the same time. With the release of OS X Yosemite, you can also expect new Macintosh models such as a new Mac mini and iMac models. If you're thinking about buying a Macintosh, you might as well wait until Apple officially announces OS X Yosemite so you can get a Macintosh model optimized to run OS X Yosemite.

By this fall you can expect the iPhone 6, new iPads, new Macintosh computers, a wearable computer running iOS 8 (iWatch?), and third-party accessories that connect to Apple's HomeKit framework so you can control items around your house using voice commands.

If none of these promised items from Apple sound exciting because you don't like Apple, then you can cheerfully wait for Microsoft to release the public preview of Windows 9 code-named Threshold, which basically fixes the problems of Windows 8 just like Windows 7 fixed the problems of Vista. With Windows 9, you can be finally be productive on your PC as if you were using Windows 7. If that's your idea of innovation, feel free to ignore anything by Apple.

Free Microsoft Office Alternatives

For some odd reason, corporations stick with Microsoft Office because they demand complete file compatibility with their existing Office documents. Of course, this ignores the fact that each version of Microsoft Office introduces incompatibilities with older versions of Microsoft Office. That means each version of Microsoft Office is never 100 percent compatible with the previous version of Microsoft Office, but that fact gets swept aside under the belief that Microsoft Office is crucial because of its perceived 100 percent file compatibility with Office documents (even though it's not true). If that twisted logic makes sense to you, then you're probably the type of person who also believes learning different ways that take more steps to accomplish the same task is also an improvement. Therefore Windows 8 must be an improvement over Windows 7 because 8 is a larger number than 7.

For everyone else actually capable of thinking, you'll quickly realize that a vast majority of people don't need all the features in Microsoft Office. What people really need is the ability to share Microsoft Office compatible files, which you can do with a variety of free alternatives so you never have to spend money paying for Microsoft Office (and learning its Ribbon interface).

Anyone with a Macintosh can now use Apple's free iWork office suite that can open and save files in Microsoft Office file formats. For Windows and Linux users, another popular alternative is LibreOffice and OpenOffice, which are basically the same program with minor differences. However both programs work nearly identically while letting you open and create Microsoft Office files. If you don't think iWork, LibreOffice, or OpenOffice are valid options because they don't offer 100 percent file compatibility with Microsoft Office, then you can also eliminate Microsoft Office from consideration since Microsoft Office isn't fully compatible with older versions of Microsoft Office either. If 100 percent file compatibility is your main criteria, every office suite fails including Microsoft Office.

Since many Windows users claim they prefer Windows over the Macintosh because of the lower cost of a Windows PC, they should apply that same logic in using free office suite alternatives to Microsoft Office. In case you don't like LibreOffice or OpenOffice for some reason, take a look at WPS Office instead, which is also free. (If saving money is your main criteria, then save even more money by using the free Linux operating system and use a free office suite instead of Microsoft Office.)

WPS Office is not only free, but also runs on Windows, Linux, iOS, and Android, which makes it the first true cross-platform office suite that even Microsoft Office can't match. If you want to use Microsoft Office on an iPad, you'll need to pay for a Microsoft Office annual subscription that costs anywhere from $70 to $120 a year. If you use WPS Office on an iPad, it won't cost you anything.

Figure 1. WPS Office lets you open, edit, and create Microsoft Office files.

Is WPS office completely compatible with Microsoft Office 2013? Nope, but neither are older

versions of Microsoft Office. Does WPS Office offer all the features of Microsoft Office 2013? Nope, but neither do earlier versions of Microsoft Office.

If you're still paying for Microsoft Office, ask yourself why. With so many free alternatives available, you might as well try them and see if one can meet your needs. If you're honest with yourself, you'll likely find one free office suite that will work for you. If you want to lie to yourself, just claim that you absolutely need Microsoft Office for file compatibility (even though it's not 100 percent compatible with older versions of Office) and that paying for Microsoft Office is cheaper than using something for free. Then you can also cheerfully embrace the idea that ignorance is strength, which your own actions can demonstrate to everyone around you.

Talk like TED

TED Talks have become famous for presenting interesting information from a variety of topics. By limiting each speaker to 18-minute segments, TED forces speakers to condense their talk, make it informative, and keep it interesting as well. If you've ever sat through a dreadful PowerPoint presentation, you know that not every presentation has anything useful to say in an entertaining manner.

In the book *Talk Like TED,* author Carmine Gallo identifies the three key elements that make TED talks so compelling. First is that you have to make it emotional.

Nobody cares about facts (especially facts that directly contradict your beliefs). To make any presentation interesting, *Talk Like TED* recommends that you first identify the emotional element of your presentation. If it's not emotionally important to you, why would it be interesting to anyone else?

That's why so many TED speakers start off with a personal story because well-crafted stories of any kind let audiences experience your point rather than just have it presented to them as a boring PowerPoint slideshow.

At the TED conference of 2004, author Malcolm Gladwell talked about how Campbell's Soup created a spaghetti sauce to rival Ragu. Campbell's Soup asked people what they wanted in a spaghetti sauce and got all kinds of answers. Then Campbell's Soup noticed that when given a choice of different sauces, one third of Americans liked their sauce plain, one third like their sauce spicy, and another third liked their sauce extra chunky.

That's when Campbell's Soup realized that nobody was selling extra-chunky spaghetti sauce and that none of their consumer surveys revealed this information. Apparently when you ask people what they want, they can only give you answers based on what already exists. Since nobody was selling extra-chunky spaghetti sauce at the time, people didn't think that was an option even though one third of Americans really wanted extra-chunky spaghetti sauce. If you

solely rely on consumer research, your customers will never tell you what they really want because they don't know how to articulate it.

This explains why market research never identified that people wanted an iPhone. In the early days of mobile phones, people simply tolerated what was available, but couldn't tell you what they really wanted. When Apple introduced the iPhone as a portable computer, suddenly people could see the potential and bought the iPhone (and Android copycat phones) because that was what they really wanted. Stories can make any presentation more interesting because they can reveal insights that ordinary bullet points can never do.

Besides making a story emotional, *Talk Like TED* also suggest you make your presentation novel in some way. In 2009, Bill Gates did this with his talk about malaria when he released a handful of mosquitoes into the crowd. That demonstration of how easily it was to get infected with malaria through a mosquito dramatically highlighted the importance of fighting malaria.

Finally, *Talk Like TED* suggests that you make your presentation memorable in some way. The simplest way to do this is to add video and pictures because images are more interesting than words. A stunt like Bill Gates releasing mosquitoes into the audience is also memorable because it's different.

The next time you need to make a presentation, use these three techniques suggested by *Talk Like TED*. Make it emotional, make it novel, and make it memorable. If you add all three elements to your presentation, chances are good you won't bore your audience with another mediocre PowerPoint presentation that says nothing and convinces nobody.

The Future of OS X and iOS Programming

It's not hard to predict the future of writing programs for OS X and iOS. When Apple introduced their new Swift programming language, they basically defined their new programming language of the future. Even though Apple will still support Objective-C for creating OS X and iOS apps, Swift will be Apple's main focus. If you're interested in programming for the Macintosh or iPhone/iPad/iWatch, you should learn Swift.

To help you learn Swift, you can visit Apple's official [Swift programming blog](). By following blog updates from Apple's own programmers, you can get insights into the Swift programming language from programmers with the most experience using Swift.

If you're interested in creating your own OS X or iOS apps, don't waste your time learning the cryptic syntax of Objective-C. Instead, use Swift. Besides being easier to learn, Swift also makes your code shorter and easier to read and write while eliminating common Objective-C mistakes at the same time. Swift programs will generally be more reliable and bug-free than comparable Objective-C programs.

The future of computers is easy to follow. Just embrace mobile operating systems like iOS and

Android. To write Android apps, you'll need to learn Java, which is more complicated than Swift. By making programming easier and less error-prone, Swift can attract new app programmers while improving the reliability of their software. That gives Swift a huge advantage over Java, which creates one more obstacle for Android programmers.

Since iOS and Android are dominating the smartphone and tablet markets, you can't go wrong supporting either operating system. For novice programmers, iOS will be more attractive because iOS users tend to spend more while Swift makes programming easier for beginners to master.

With the introduction of Swift, Apple has made iOS more attractive for both developers and iOS device owners alike. While iPhone and iPad owners won't know (or care) what language their apps are written in, they will care if their apps aren't reliable. More importantly, Swift only runs on Xcode, which means you need to buy a Macintosh to use it. Swift is one more example of how Apple introduces products that gives people one more reason not to switch to a rival product.

A Petition for Classic Visual Basic

If you visit the Classic VB site you can sign a petition asking Microsoft to continue support of Visual Basic 6. In its time, Visual Basic literally changed the way people wrote programs. Suddenly instead of wasting time creating both your program and its user interface, you could focus on just writing your program and draw a perfect and reliable user interface. Visual Basic made Windows programming easy, fast, and reliable.

Then Microsoft got the bright idea of turning the Visual Basic language into a more complicated version of C# but with few benefits. Given the choice between switching to the new Visual Basic.NET or just learning C#, many programmers simply abandoned Visual Basic and switched to C#.

However, many Visual Basic 6 programmers need to maintain programs written in Visual Basic 6. Since it's unlikely that Microsoft will listen to their petition to bring back Visual Basic 6, the simplest solution for Visual Basic programmers is to switch to Xojo.

Not only does Xojo closely mimic the Visual Basic 6 language, but it also lets you create Windows, OS X, and Linux programs. By the end of this year, Xojo should also let you create iOS apps.

If you're waiting for Microsoft to bring back Visual Basic 6, forget about it. Xojo is a far more versatile solution with a future. Visual Basic 6 is dead and Visual Basic.NET only lets you create Windows programs. Given the choice between the limitations of Microsoft or the versatility of Xojo, the answer should be clear.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

If you're using Adobe Reader to view PDF files, you don't have to. The Preview program that comes with every Macintosh is far more versatile and can even store digital signatures. Just open the Preview program, click the Preview menu, and choose Preferences. Now click the Signatures icon to display a Create Signature button.

Figure 2. Choosing Preview -> Preferences lets you capture a digital signature.

Sign your name on a piece of white paper and then click the Create signature button. Hold your signature up to your Macintosh's webcam and click the Accept button to store your digital signature in Preview.
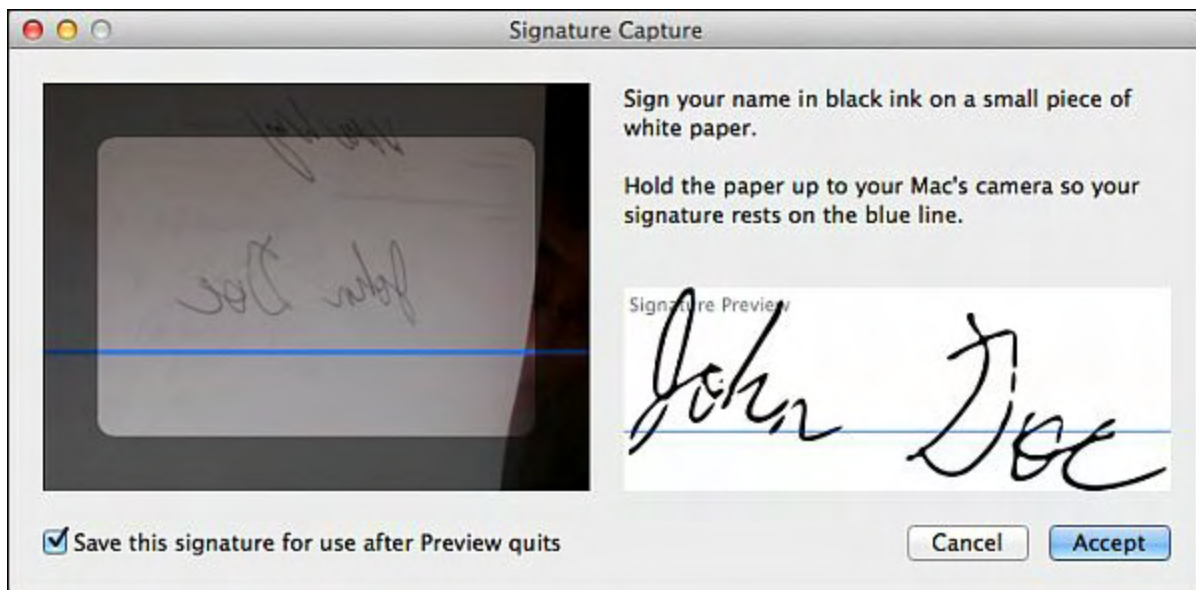
Figure 3. Capturing a signature using the Macintosh's webcam.

Now when you want to add your stored digital signature to a PDF file, open that PDF file in the Preview program, choose View -> Show Edit Toolbar to display the Edit Toolbar, which normally remains tucked out of sight. Then click on the digital signature you want to use. (You can actually capture multiple digital signatures so you can choose the one you want to use.)
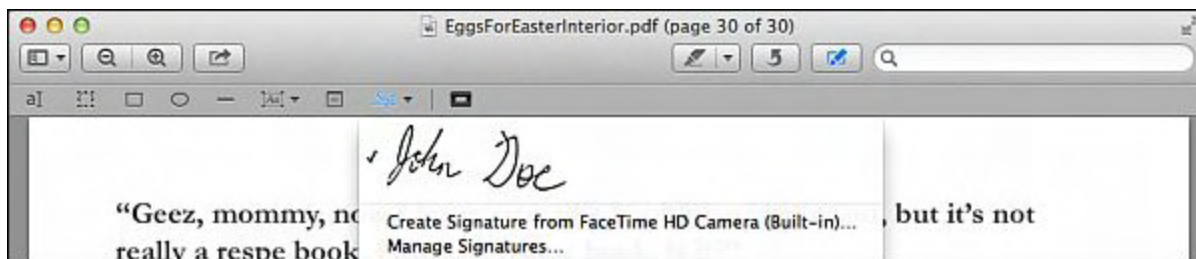

Figure 4. The Edit Toolbar in the Preview program lets you choose a digital signature.

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](#)

[How to Write a Great Script with Final Draft 9](#)

[How to Write a Great Script with Fade In](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Star Wars](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Die Hard](#)

[The Element of a Great Script: Back to the Future](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Rocky](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: It's a Wonderful Life](#)

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," giving advice to authors who want to self-publish e-books at his site "The Electronic Author," 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* or you can follow him on Twitter @wallacewang_com.

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Foxit PDF Reader," "I Don't Do Links," "Flash Drives," "LibreOffice Autocorrect"

Foxit PDF Reader

[Regarding Jack Dunning's August 8 article, "Foxit PDF Reading Software (Free)":]

Jack, I'm surprised you only discovered Foxit recently. I've been using for years and love it.

I apologize for not interacting with *ComputorEdge* for a while. But I recently lost my sight and have been busy learning to be an able blind person. I was told by my NVDA, Non-Visual Desktop Access, instructor I needed a paid PDF reader, I forget the name, in order to have PDFs read to me. I was excited to learn of Foxit's reading mode. I switched mine to list view, instead of the ribbon, and found I can navigate it just fine in the usual keyboard shortcut manner, for the blind, then have it read to me. I'm e-mailing this info to my former instructor.

Thank you, once again, for your usual excellent information!

-Paula E Barefoot, Fresno, CA

Jack, based on reader comments about the free software you actually use column, I switched to Foxit a couple of weeks ago. I found it immediately useful in that it allowed me to assemble separate PDF files and a fax cover page into a single document I could electronically fax from my computer. Previously I would have had to either print and scan a stack of paper or laboriously screen capture and paste into an electronic document.

-Stewart A. Levin, Menlo Park, CA

"I Don't Do Links"

[Regarding the August 8 Digital Dave column:]

Another thing I always tell folks is to look at the status bar at the bottom of your browser when you put your mouse on a link. Read that link carefully, as often the bad folks will use

something that looks legit at first glance, but isn't. Like micrsoft.com, vs. microsoft.com. *Then* if any doubt, don't click and e-mail the sender to corroborate they sent it and it really is legit and OK.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Flash Drives

[Regarding the August 8 Digital Dave column:]

Dave, you've done it again! Thanks for such a prompt and thorough reply. I appreciate it.

-Gabby DeDonato, San Clemente, CA

LibreOffice Autocorrect

In my computer (Windows 7) the only folder within LibreOffice is "4". Everything is in that folder.

-Don Bishop, Golden, Colorado

I would backup or move that folder and see the effect of loading LibreOffice without that folder in the LibreOffice folder. If you don't like the results, you can always restore the "4" folder.

-Dave

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.

Click to Visit *ComputorEdge™ Online* on the Web!

Table of Contents