

# The Motherboard Connection

## A. The Need

Since the [third-to-last issue](#), researching, obtaining and mastering a new computer system has preoccupied me. I didn't intend to keep my previous computer for eight years, but after the [shakeout period](#) it functioned satisfactorily, so why replace it?

Of course, gradually the reasons to do so accumulated. For example, at [my last contract](#), the client provided the newest version of Microsoft Office, and the sheer number of changes to the features, interfaces, and keyboard commands between Office 2010 and my copy of Office 2003 obliterated my mastery of the application suite and slowed my performance.<sup>1</sup> That really bugged me. As a *giovane d'honore*, an independent contractor,<sup>2</sup> I have to keep my skills current.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, I thought it time to buy a new computer. Last time I researched the purchase my expert friends began asking if was ever going to buy one.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, I calculate that mastering the computer took about a year from June 2004, until I'd read every pertinent book on Windows and Office from the local libraries, tested the book information against the computer and synthesized it in a survival guide I've used since.<sup>5</sup> Mind you, I was distracted by work and also had to wait for some of those books to return to the branch shelves.<sup>6</sup>

## B. The Research

With experience and hindsight, I thought I could improve on the speed and thoroughness of the whole process this time, and minimize incompatibility, glitches and delays before purchase and set up, even though, with experience, I had to consider more facets: what I wanted and needed in a computer, what type of computer, the necessary technical specs, the specs and compatibility of the printer and surge protector/uninterruptible power supply (UPS), and six software applications, some with competing versions (e.g., Windows 7 vs. Windows 8).<sup>7</sup> Oh, and whether to get a basic printer, or an all-in-one model with fax and scanner capabilities.<sup>8</sup> If cars were like this, you'd have to worry about buying the tires separately and attaching them to the chassis at the dealership.<sup>9</sup>

To get these answers, I had to figure out the questions to ask. I consulted several Web sites, especially the local libraries' online catalogs. I compiled a list of books and took notes from tomes on the basics.<sup>10</sup> Only

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<sup>1</sup> Shoup, Kate. *Office 2010 Simplified*. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2010: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Carlo, Philip. *The Ice Man: Confessions of a Mafia Contract Killer*. New York City: St. Martin's Press, 2006: 67.

<sup>3</sup> Browne, Harry. *Fail-Safe Investing: Lifelong Financial Security in 30 Minutes*. 1999. Rpt. New York City: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001: 7-11.

<sup>4</sup> Eisler, Dan. "Re: Gaming: PC vs. Specialized Gear." E-mail to Bola Ijagbemi, 12 May 2004; Eisler. "The Specs." E-mail to KT Hernandez, 8 Jan. 2004; Loyd, Chris. "Re: Austin Dispatches No. 64." E-mail to Eisler, 3 May 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Eisler. Letter to Mary Ruth Kiser, 6 Aug. 2012; Eisler. "Re: Austin Dispatches No. 68." E-mail to Loyd, 22 Jun. 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Eisler. "Re: Happy Canada Day." E-mail to Don McCaig, 2 Jul. 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Eisler. "7 vs. 8." E-mail to Loyd et al., 4 Jun. 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Eisler. Letter to Kiser, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> "Cringely, Robert X." [Mark Stephens]. *Accidental Empires: How the Boys of Silicon Valley Make Their Millions, Battle Foreign Competition, and Still Can't Get a Date*, rev. ed. New York City: HarperBusiness, 1996: 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Gookin, Dan. *PCs for Dummies, Windows 7 Edition*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley Publishing, 2010; Kraynak, Joe. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to PC Basics: Windows 7 Edition*. Indianapolis: Alpha, 2011; Marmel, Elaine. *PCs*

then did I e-mail questions to fill in my understanding. I also called my Internet service provider (ISP) and the manufacturer of my surge protector and managed to stump the help desks a couple of times each, asking questions apparently no one ever asked before.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless, everybody's input greatly helped me on the hardware decisions. After consideration, I opted to buy a desktop computer over a laptop, to buy a basic printer over a multifunction unit, and to keep the same surge protector. I'm willing to buy a laptop in addition to a desktop, but not as a replacement. I've been dissatisfied with the performance and features of every laptop I've ever used, and almost everybody else has at least one story of theirs malfunctioning.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, a friend in Dallas e-mailed that he hadn't encountered a multifunction printer "that wasn't extremely annoying."<sup>13</sup> Exactly the kind of information I needed. The surge protector maker's help desk told me the model I've had, for eight years without trouble, was still good with a Windows 7 operating system and I didn't even need to install the surge protector software on the new computer. That also saved me at least \$150.<sup>14</sup>

Everything I've described so far might seem it took a long time, but it was actually faster than in 2004.

### C. The Order

Next, I ordered a Sony Vaio desktop, customized with the maximum amount of memory and processors. My satisfaction with my previous model was a big factor in my choice. Buying from Dell would've been too much like giving money back to a client.<sup>15</sup>

I opted for a Canon Pixma iX6520 color inkjet printer, which the persnickety pinkos at Consumer Reports rated highly.<sup>16</sup> The ratings for Epson models slipped, which probably reflects the California casual attitude I encountered from that company on support issues.<sup>17</sup> I've observed enough failed Lexmark and Hewlett-Packard printers at work, dating back to my [college reporting days](#), to disregard them as contenders. Also, HP failed to respond when I applied for a job years ago.

### D. The Setup Plan vs. Reality

While awaiting the hardware, I reviewed my notes and created a flow chart and checklist to optimize setup, installation and activation.<sup>18</sup> The precise sequence wasn't quite as I anticipated, sometimes because the steps were easier, or nonexistent, as I'll detail below.

1. Replug phone into kitchen bar jack.
2. Unplug old printer.
3. Pack old printer.

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Simplified. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2011; Miller, Michael. Absolute Beginner's Guide to Computer Basics, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. Indianapolis: Que Publishing, 2010; Mueller, Scott. Upgrading and Repairing PCs, 19<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. Indianapolis: Que Publishing, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Eisler, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Eisler. E-mail to Don McCaig, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ijagbemi. "Re: Printer." E-mail to Eisler, 22 Jun. 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Eisler. Letter to Kiser, op. cit.

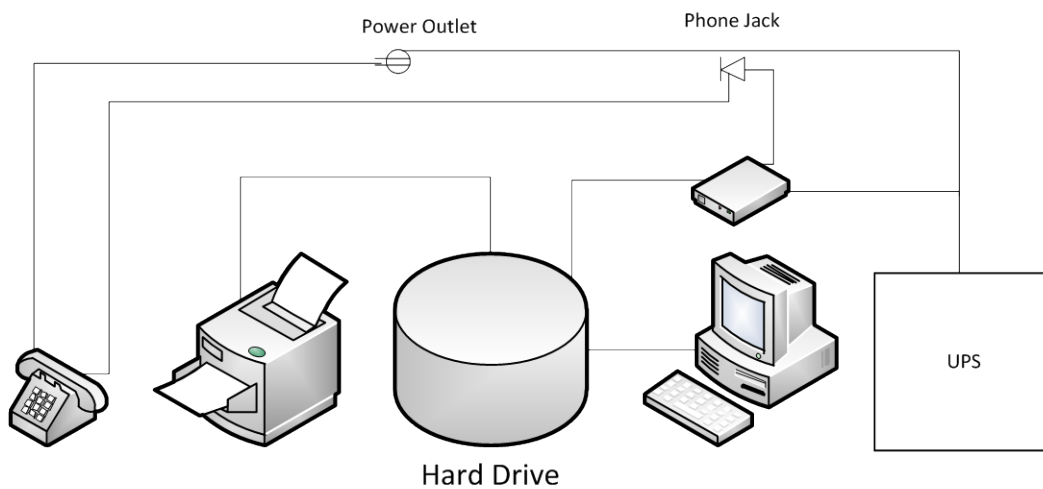
<sup>15</sup> AD No. 17n5 (June 10, 2000); [AD No. 21 \(Oct. 1, 2000\)](#); [AD No. 43 \(Nov. 23, 2002\)](#); [AD No. 102 \(Nov. 12, 2007\)](#); [AD No. 105 \(Feb. 27, 2008\)](#); [AD No. 123 \(Apr. 22, 2009\)](#).

<sup>16</sup> Bowen, Nancy. Ralph Nader: Man With a Mission. Brookfield, Conn.: Twenty-First Century Books, 2002: 63; Consumers Union of United States. Consumer Reports Buying Guide 2012. Yonkers, N.Y.: Consumers Union, 2011: 94-96.

<sup>17</sup> Nias, Simon. "Epson Accused of Hidden Over Low-Cost Remote Proofer." PrintWeek 29 Oct. 2010: 12.

<sup>18</sup> Eisler. E-mail to McCaig, op. cit.

4. Turn off ISP modem.
5. Turn off UPS.
6. Unplug old computer, peripherals from UPS.
7. Unplug UPS.
8. Pack speakers.
9. Move table.
10. Dust table and UPS.
11. Vacuum.
12. Unpack new computer.
13. Let computer sit for 2-3 hours to adjust to room temperature and humidity.<sup>19</sup>
14. Connect monitor to hard drive (HD) and UPS.
15. Connect speakers to HD.
16. Connect other peripherals to HD and UPS.
17. Plug HD into UPS.<sup>20</sup>



**Fig. 1**

The new computer's hard drive, monitor and speakers are in one slim unit, so slim I thought the assembly plant made a mistake until I removed the antistatic wrapping and read the Quick Start Guide. Technologically and esthetically, my new system is a long way from my first, a 1989 Macintosh Plus.<sup>21</sup>

18. Allow UPS to charge for eight hours, just in case.<sup>22</sup>
19. Check UPS charge.<sup>23</sup>
20. Turn on UPS.

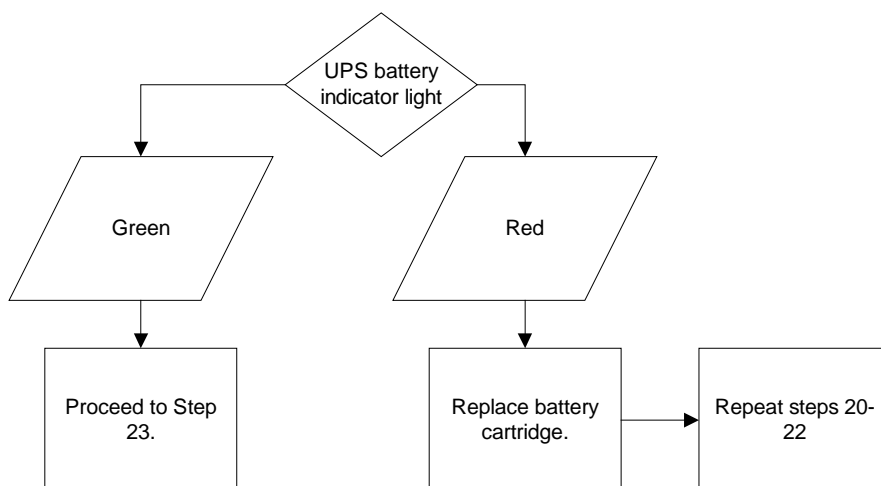
<sup>19</sup> Kraynak, op. cit., 22.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, op. cit., 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Eisler. Journal entry, 7 Sep. 1989; Eisler. Re: "...the recent past—the 00s, the 90s, even a lot of the 80s—looks almost identical to the present." E-mail to Loyd, 20 Jul. 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Back-UPS RS/XS 1000/1500 User's Manual. West Kingston, R.I.: American Power Conversion, 2002: 2.

<sup>23</sup> Marmel, op. cit., 46-49.



**Fig. 2**

21. Turn on peripherals.

Before Step 21, I had to load the batteries into the wireless keyboard and mouse.

22. Turn on monitor.
23. Turn on hard drive.<sup>24</sup>
24. Connect modem to HD and UPS.<sup>25</sup>
25. Turn on ISP modem. Wait for indicator lights.<sup>26</sup>
26. On monitor display, click **Start**. The Start menu appears.

Before the **Start** menu appeared, celestial music played.<sup>27</sup>

27. Right-click **Computer**.
28. Click **Properties**. The System window appears.
29. Click the **Activate Windows Now** link.<sup>28</sup> The **Windows Activation** dialog box appears.<sup>29</sup>
30. Click **Activate Windows** online now. A confirmation dialog box appears.
31. Click **Close**.<sup>30</sup>

Steps 27 through 31 were unnecessary.

<sup>24</sup> Gookin, op. cit., 46; Marmel, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> APC, op. cit., 1-2; Miller, op. cit., 33-34.

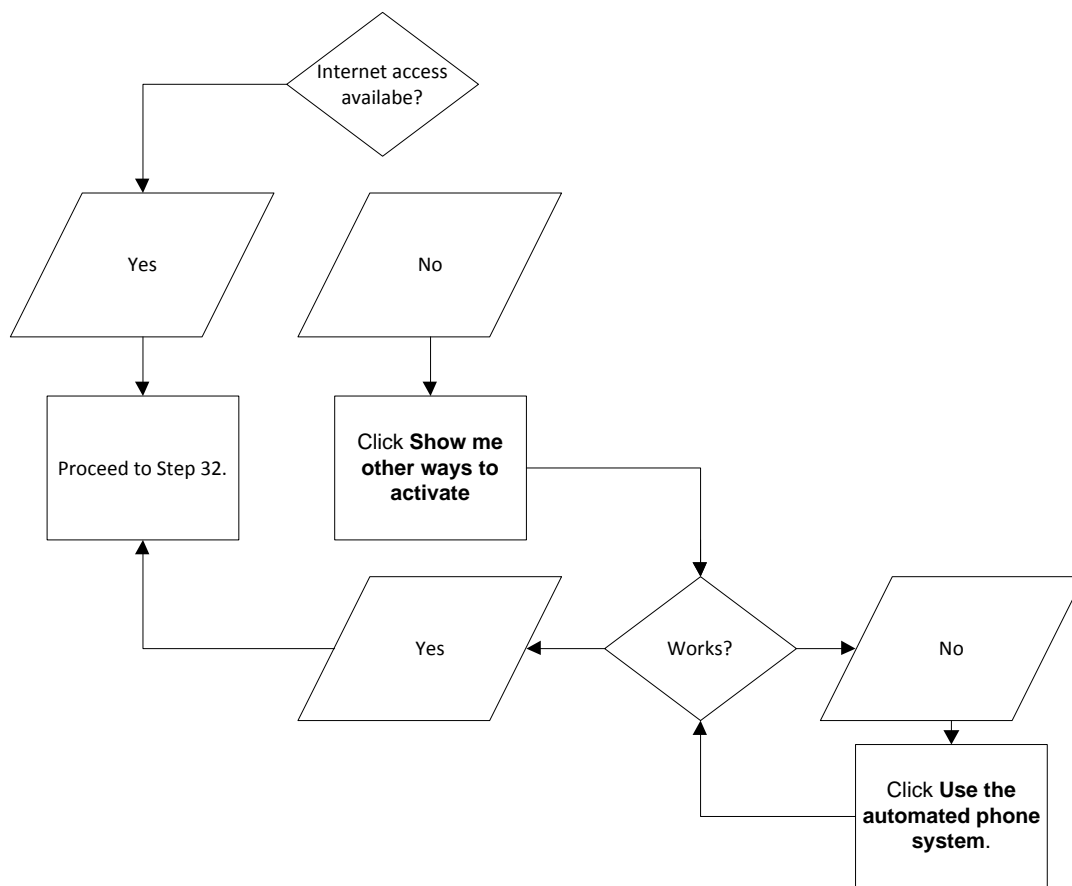
<sup>26</sup> Kraynak, op. cit., 26.

<sup>27</sup> Karp, David A. Windows 7 Annoyances. Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly, 2010: 588.

<sup>28</sup> Kraynak, op. cit.; Miller, op. cit., 36.

<sup>29</sup> McFedries, Paul. Teach Yourself Visually Windows 7. Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2009: 13; Preppernau, Joan, and Joyce Cox. Windows 7 Step by Step Deluxe Edition. Redmond, Wash.: Microsoft Press, 2010: xx-xxi.

<sup>30</sup> McFedries, op. cit.



**Fig. 3**

32. Activate preinstalled antivirus software.

I removed the original antivirus software when I learned I'd have to give a credit card number to a Russian company. I wasn't about to risk fraud and identity theft from a Red Mafiya front, so I opted for a competitor my ISP offers for free.<sup>31</sup>

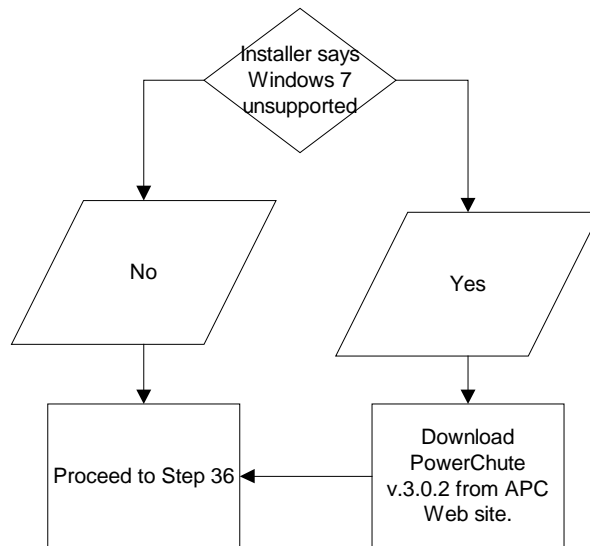
33. Configure firewall.<sup>32</sup>  
 34. Install PowerChute disk.

As described above, Step 34 was unnecessary. Instead, I activated Adobe Reader X.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Friedman, Robert I. Red Mafiya: How the Russian Mob Has Invaded America. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2000; Hoffman, Sandra K., and Tracy G. McGinley. Identity Theft: A Reference Handbook. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2010:109-111.

<sup>32</sup> Gookin, op. cit., 320; Johnson, Steve. Microsoft Windows 7: Illustrated Introductory. Boston: Couse Technology/Cengage Learning, 2010: 124-125; Marmel, op. cit., 319-320.

<sup>33</sup> Adobe Acrobat X: Classroom in a Book: The Official Training Workbook From Adobe Systems. San Jose, Calif.: Adobe Press, 2011: 13.



**Fig. 4**

35. Configure Internet access.<sup>34</sup>

Step 35 was unnecessary.

- 36. Activate preinstalled Office 2010 suite.
- 37. Install the old files to the desktop.<sup>35</sup>
- 38. Erase files from old computer.<sup>36</sup>
- 39. Pack old computer.
- 40. Unpack Canon printer.
- 41. Connect new printer to HD and UPS.<sup>37</sup>

The printer didn't come with a cable, nor did its instructions specifically indicate the right type of cable. Rather than guess, I had to call the help desk and stump them for about 10 minutes until I got an answer. Then I dashed over to [Fry's](#) to get this task done with, and spent another 10 minutes looking for the aisle where such small household items reside. But at least I got the right cable.

- 42. Install printer software.<sup>38</sup>
- 43. Configure printer software.
- 44. Activate printer.
- 45. Replug phone into UPS and wall phone jack.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 146-147; McFedries, op. cit., 188-189, 191-193; 196; Preppernau and Cox, op. cit., 202-204.

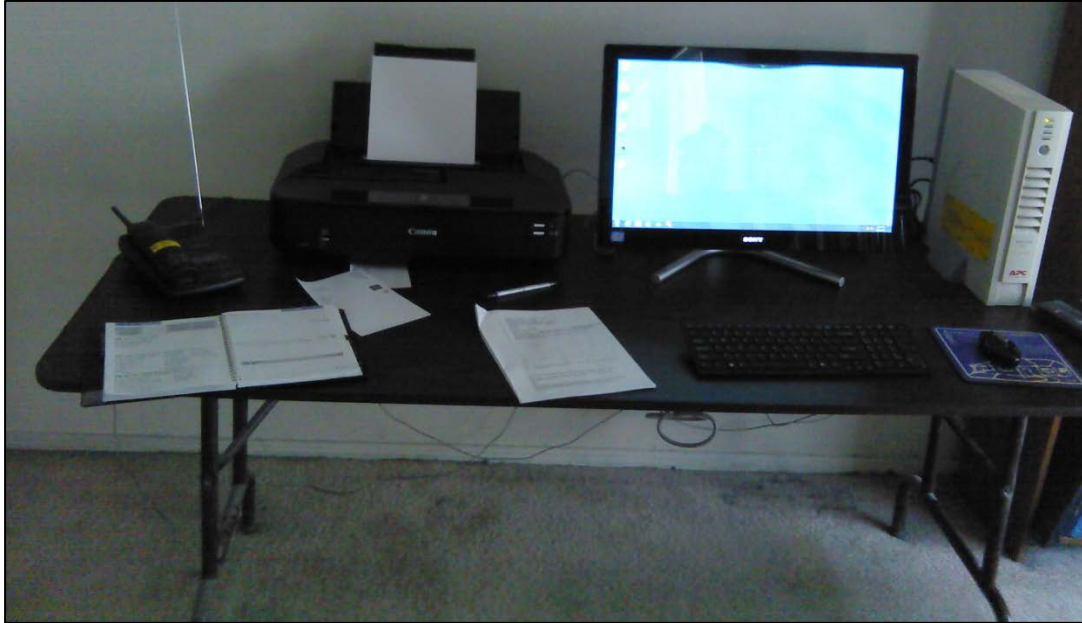
<sup>35</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 62-63.

<sup>36</sup> Mendell, Ronald L. Document Security: Protecting Physical and Electronic Content. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, op. cit., 33-34.

<sup>38</sup> Preppernau and Cox, op. cit., 401.

<sup>39</sup> APC, op. cit., 1.



**Fig. 5**

46. Customize desktop background.<sup>40</sup>
47. Customize desktop screen saver.<sup>41</sup>
48. Set up Windows automatic updates.<sup>42</sup>
49. Upgrade Internet Explorer browser from v. 8 to v. 9.<sup>43</sup>
50. Set Internet home page.<sup>44</sup>
51. Create system restore point.<sup>45</sup>

In reality, I completed steps 45 through 51 before steps 38 through 44.

52. Compare prices online for Visio,<sup>46</sup> Acrobat,<sup>47</sup> Microsoft Expression Web 4,<sup>48</sup> and FrameMaker software.
53. Buy software.

This was easy. I reviewed some three dozen bookmarked Web sites for everything besides the computer and browsed at the chain outlets. The retailers with brick-and-mortar presence didn't have what I was looking for, and when they did, the prices were considerably higher than I paid online. The Statesman reports these retailers now have a derogatory term for what I did: "showrooming." In the story, one complained about being at an 8 to 10 percent disadvantage. Well, I found legitimate online vendors who sold factory-sealed software for about 25 percent of the original manufacturers' price. Also, Amazon now

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<sup>40</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 98-99, 104-105; McFedries, op. cit., 282-283; Miller, op. cit., 36; Preppernau and Cox, op. cit., 297-299.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 100-101; McFedries, op. cit., 286-287; Preppernau and Cox, op. cit., 311-314.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 126-127; Preppernau and Cox, op. cit., 28-35.

<sup>43</sup> Marmel, op. cit., 199.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 152-153.

<sup>45</sup> McFedries, op. cit., 314-315.

<sup>46</sup> Helmer, Scott. Microsoft Visio 2010 Step by Step. Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly Media, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Padova, Ted. Adobe Acrobat X PDF Bible. Indianapolis: John Wiley & Sons, 2011: 35.

<sup>48</sup> Woods, KT Hernandez. "Re: Printer." E-mail to Eisler, 11 Jul. 2012.

collects sales tax for Texas, but I found bargains on sites that don't collect.<sup>49</sup> If these places can't give me what I want at the best price possible, we can't do business.

FrameMaker's the exception. I was prepared to buy version 10 until I discovered nobody beat Adobe's price of \$1,000. Then I was prepared to buy version 10 – eventually. Then on July 25, Adobe released version 11, also for \$1,000.<sup>50</sup> That application will have to wait until I can use a client's copy on site, or until I can find a vendor who'll sell it for less. Moreover, Adobe's Web site encourages using FrameMaker with FrameMaker Publishing Server 11, and no wonder – Adobe sells the latter for a mere \$15,000. I recovered from the sticker shock after I learned Publishing Server is for producing multiple copies of slick, retail-ready publications. But I had to learn this from some blog.<sup>51</sup>

54. Buy FrameMaker book(s).

Adobe's products generally have less outside documentation than Microsoft's, and FrameMaker's had less than that. When I was still thinking of version 10, Amazon sells one outside book on the subject.<sup>52</sup> Version 11 has no published guides, yet. You need such guides because FrameMaker, good as it is, is also counterintuitive, and software manufacturers generally don't provide as much comprehensive information as someone who masters the applications and writes about it for McGraw-Hill, Peachpit Press, Wiley Publishing, O'Reilly Media, Que Publishing, or Sams.

- 55. Compare prices online for wired keyboard and mouse.
- 56. Buy wired keyboard and mouse.
- 57. Connect keyboard and mouse.
- 58. Configure keyboard and mouse.<sup>53</sup>

I haven't done these steps yet.

- 59. Donate old computer and printer to charity.<sup>54</sup>
- 60. Read instructional books on software to master software features and functions, just like last time.

One good result of testing the new computer: I used the built-in microphone and was pleased during playback to learn my recorded voice sounds close to how it sounds to me when I speak.<sup>55</sup> I had doubts, at least [during impersonations](#).

61. Synthesize and compile information from books into survival guide 2.0.

Again, this step is proceeding quicker than before. For example, one of the books I consulted, the 961-page "Windows 7: The Definitive Guide" – Windows 7 is the topic of at least 20 books I've consulted, and probably more that I haven't, but this is "The Definitive Guide" – the useful information for me didn't start until around page 240. However, consulting these books has crimped my general reading.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Price, Asher. "Taking a Local Stand Against 'Showrooming.'" AAS 3 Aug. 2012: A1+.

<sup>50</sup> [FrameMaker 11 and FrameMaker Publishing Server 11 Reviewer's Guide](#). San Jose, Calif.: Adobe Press, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Sullivan, Matt. "FrameMaker 11 – Publishing Everything, Everywhere!" 26 Jul. 2012 [Using FrameMaker](#) <<http://ht.ly/cwXIK>>.

<sup>52</sup> Underwood, Janet S. [Mastering the Basics \(and More\) of Adobe FrameMaker 10](#). Belton, Mo.: WordWorx Publishing, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, op. cit., 14-15.

<sup>54</sup> United States. Department of the Treasury. Internal Revenue Service. [Tax Guide 2011 for Individuals](#) (Pub. 17). Washington, D.C.: Internal Revenue Service, 2011: 162-170.

<sup>55</sup> Stanek, William R. [Windows 7: The Definitive Guide: The Essential Resource for Professionals and Power Users](#). Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly Media, 2009: 515-520; [Vaio Quick Start Guide](#). Tokyo: Sony Corp., 2012: 4.

<sup>56</sup> Eisler. Letter to Kiser, op. cit.