TechTips

Technology news, information and interesting stories.
Published monthly for Geeks and non-Geeks.

Android vs. Apple War On The Map!
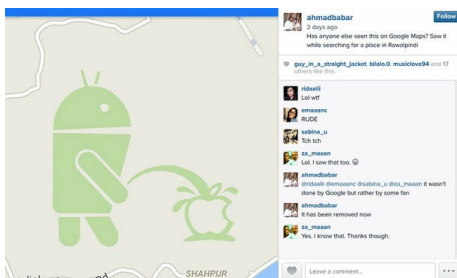
Google Maps, that is.

On Friday April 24, The Independent reported that if you "zoom in on a small patch of terrain to the south of Rawlpindi in Pakistan you'll find what is clearly an Android robot urinating on the Apple logo."

The Independent researched the indicated area for any true Android-resembling fields, and they confirmed "a quick look at the satellite image shows this is definitely not the case."

A Google spokesperson told Independent.co.uk: "We've been made aware of the issue and are working on getting it removed."

Later, another image had been spotted, further to the east in Pakistan.

Both images were apparently added using Google Map Maker, which (according to the 2nd image) isn't moderated very well.
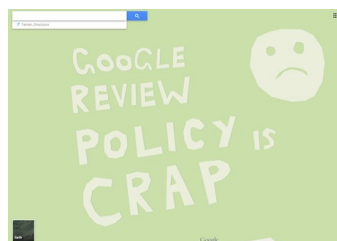
Google Maps is no stranger to having hidden pictures, normally geeky things such as references to the cult-following t.v. show, Doctor Who.

Some elements of Google's mapping data can be edited by users. However, supposedly not the case with the land terrain. This leads one to wonder if this was an inside job.

Good Watches Don't...

Turns out one of the first apps owners of the new $17,000 luxury Apple Watch Edition won't be downloading is one that plays fart sounds.

Fart Watch, an aptly named app vying for the dubious honor of being the very first fart app for the Apple Watch, was rejected by Apple. The reason? It was a fart app.

What sets this fart app apart from the several hundred existing fart apps already found on the iOS App Store? The app turns your iPhone into a modern-day version of a whoopee cushion, meant to be put under your victim's seat. Except, with this app, the Apple Watch servers a wrist-worn button, allowing you to remotely trigger fart sounds to your heart's content.

The rejection went like this:

2.11—Apps that duplicate Apps already in the App Store may be rejected, particularly if there are many of them, such as fart, burp, flashlight, and Kama Sutra Apps.
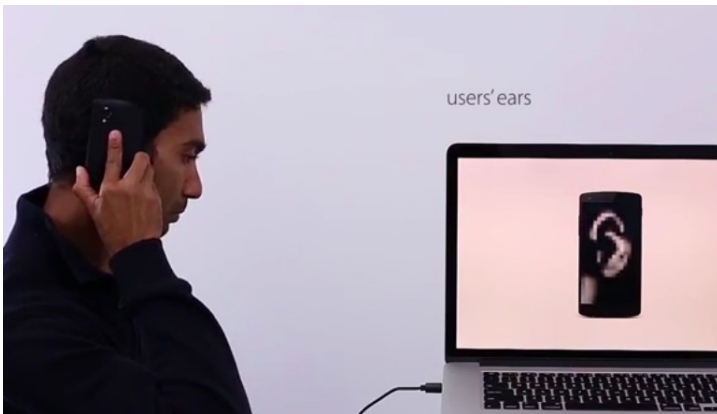
2.11 Details: We noticed that your Apple Watch app is primarily a fart app. We do not accept fart apps on Apple Watch.

8.1—Apps must comply with all terms and conditions explained in the Guidelines for Using Apple Tradmarks and Copyrights and the Apple Trademark List.

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Yahoo Uses 'Ear-print' Technology

Bodyprint allows you to answer an incoming call on your cellphone. Only you. No thumbprint/PIN/swipe gesture required.

Instead of a fingerprint sensor, it uses the touch-screen of your phone to gauge the unique shape of your ear. Or your palm, the knuckles of a fist bump, or your grip around the edge of the screen when tightly grasping your phone.

Built by Chrsitian Holz, Senaka, Buthpitiya, and Marius Knaust of Yahoo's research labs, Bodyprint is designed to utilize a number of different body parts as biometric markers in different cases.

Currently, the sensor resolution on the current cellphone touchscreens isn't high enough to analyze something as small as a fingerprint yet.

The makers of the technology state that Bodyprint is accurate in allowing the correct person into the phone 99.52% of the time. However, it also locks the correct person out of the phone 26.82% of the time, roughly 1 in 4 times.

In 2012, the same team used unique identifying traits, using a Kinect to identity people standing around a Surface touchscreen table based on their shoes.

EXPIRATION NOTICE

AN URGENT SECURITY WARNING FOR BUSINESSES RUNNING MICROSOFT SERVER 2003

If your business is currently running either Microsoft Server 2003 or Exchange 2003 on any servers, you need to know about a dangerous security threat that must be addressed NOW!

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO READ THIS IMPORTANT SECURITY ANNOUNCEMENT

As your local Microsoft Partner, we are reaching out to all local businesses that use Server 2003, to alert you to this serious security risk and inform you about what you need to do NOW to protect your company!

WINDOWS SERVER 2003 AND EXCHANGE 2003 REPLACEMENTS MUST BE MADE BY JULY 14, 2015

MICROSOFT HAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL RETIRE ALL SUPPORT ON THE SERVER 2003 OPERATING SYSTEM ON JULY 14, 2015.

This means any business running this operating system (OS) will be completely exposed to serious hacker attacks aimed at taking control of your network, stealing data, crashing your system, and inflicting a host of other business-crippling problems you do NOT want to have.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security has issued an official warning to all companies running this operating system, because firewalls and antivirus software will NOT protect them!

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Google vs Patent Trolls!

The U.S. patent system is like a dysfunctional family. It's being abused to curb innovation, handicap inventors, and redirect company resources toward pointless and lengthy litigation. Some firms constantly engaged in patent wars, filing suits against each other, seemingly to keep each other in litigation rather than actually making something. Then there are the "trolls". These are usually shell corporations, puppets of larger corporations, that don't actually do anything but seek to enforce their own patents.

Allen Lo, Google's deputy general counsel for patents, stated in a blog post announcing the program, "Unfortunately, the usual patent marketplace can sometimes be challenging, especially for smaller participants who sometimes end up working with patent trolls. Then bad things happen, like lawsuits, lots of wasted effort, and generally bad karma. Rarely does this provide any meaningful benefit to the original patent owner."

Google wants to fix that. On April 27th, the search giant unveiled a program they're calling "Patent Purchase Promotion". A new marketplace where patent holders are invited to tell Google about patents they're willing to sell. At a price that the patent-holders set.

According to Google, the marketplace will be open from May 8 to May 22. Google will inform submitters whether they're interested in their patent by June 26, with most payouts occurring by late August.

Google would not comment on how much it will reveal about the results of this patent experiment, or how open it will be about what they do with the patents they acquire. However, this does put Google in a unique position with both big and small patent holders.

Tiny Robots To Take Over The World!

Well, maybe not quite yet. However, mechanical engineers at Stanford University have made miniature robots that have super-hero strength.

The robots, called µTug or MicroTugs, can pull off some Hulk-like feats. A robot weighing 9grams, can carry up to 100 times its own weight..while climbing up glass. The 12-gram robot can carry 2,000 times its own weight.

Real-world ants and geckos were the natural inspiration behind MicroTugs, as they can both climb as well as lift and drag things much bigger than themselves thanks to adhesives on their feet.

To mimic this, the robots were designed with flexible rubber spikes with a strong grip at the bottom of their feet. They also mimic the movement of an inch worm, with one part of the body exerting effort while the other stays still. Both the robots and inch worms do this to conserve energy.

Not quite ready to take over the world, they are still confined to the lab (and movies this summer). However the engineers are looking for future large-scale applications, like on a building site, or in an emergency situation.

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Man Sentences His Computer to Death by Firing Squad

The Microsoft Windows Blue Screen of Death (BSoD). Everyone's heard of it. Some of us have had the unfortunate luck as to deal with it.

There are many ways to deal with the BSoD: use 'System Restore' to roll back to a previous stat, install updated drivers, boot in safe mode, check for hardware problems, scan for malware, or reinstall Windows. Or, you could buy a gun off Craigslist, take that *$%#@! tower into the back 40, and put it out of your misery.

While very satisfying, this last method could get you arrested. As a Colorado man found out.

As The Smoking Gun reports, police in Colorado Springs responded to a 9-1-1 call reporting that shots were fired. When they arrived, they found Lucas Hinch, 37, had taken his computer tower into a back alley and 'executed' it by "[firing] 8 shots into the computer with a handgun, effectively disabling it."

Hinch told police he was "fed up" after "fighting with his computer for the last several months." Apparently unsympathetic, the police cited Hinch with "discharging a firearm within city limits.

The police blotter entry summary description "Man Kills His Computer."

The late Dell XPS 410 model, seen in the above police evidence photo, is survived by a monitor and a keyboard.

Technology by Design

Microsoft REGISTERED Refurbisher