



Computing's dirty little secrets

By Jay Cross, guest editor

Imagine yourself on the Starship Enterprise. Computers guide the ship through space, instantly deliver any meal you request, and fulfill your fantasies on the holodeck. Even when rattling along at warp nine, computers pull the Enterprise through without a hitch. Everything works smoothly. There are no bugs.

Some technology enthusiasts foresee a utopian world where we'll all be able to coast through life, aided by our computer assistants. Just like on the Enterprise. These people are delusional.

Let me fill you in on a few secrets you won't find in *Computing for Dummies*, *Windows for Idiots*, or *Wired* magazine.

1 Moore's Law = Computing power doubles every 18 months.

Murphy's Law = Everything that can go wrong will go wrong.

Moorphy's Law = In computing, everything goes wrong faster and faster. Within 18 months, your computer will fall apart.

2 Don't waste your breath arguing about which is cooler, the Mac or the PC.

This is a religious issue, not a matter for rational debate.

3 Everything is increasing exponentially -- computer power, bandwidth, the rate of change, the Web, cell phones, stress, junk mail, tattoos, Starbucks, trashy t.v. shows, tongue studs, and Beanie Babies.

4 Web sites are always under construction.

5 Parkinson's Disk Law. No matter how large your disk, programs and data will expand to fill it to capacity, and you'll pine for the next larger size.

6 Bandwidth is something you will never have enough of. The same rule applies to memory.

7 A month after you buy a new computer, you will see a faster, more powerful model on sale for less.

8 The true life of a battery. To calculate how long your laptop will run on battery power, divide the battery life claimed by the manufacturer by three.

9 Email abbreviations of the *digerati*: IMHO=In My Humble Opinion, TMOT=Trust Me on This, ROFL=Rolling on the Floor Laughing, RTFM = Read the Manual , WTFIGO = What is going on?

10 On Internet time, you can never do everything you would like to. Hence, life is in beta.

Jay Cross is director of the Omega Institute, the online training division of Omega Performance, developers of interactive multimedia training.