

In a flash

Type of memory storage has advantages, disadvantages

Flash memory is the type of memory storage we now use in our digital cameras, Palm Pilots and mp3 players. This memory comes in a number of different formats with names like Compact Flash, Secure Digital, Memory Stick or XD card. Unfortunately there isn't one standard, but that is another discussion.

Flash memory is similar in concept to the memory in your computer. The big difference is what happens when the power is turned off. With conventional computer memory, the data is deleted, while with flash memory it is stored.

With the prices going down, and the capacities going up, the use of flash memory is now being expanded into laptop computer usage. And it makes perfect sense. Computers can be smaller, lighter and without that spinning hard drive; the laptop can run cooler and use less power. There are now laptops selling for less than \$400 that run on flash memory, but their primary purpose is for being able to connect to the Internet for surfing and email, not be a full blow desktop computer replacement.

Currently, flash memory tops out at 64 GB, while hard drives are exceeding 1 TB, but we know from experience, that will change. By the way, if those numbers don't mean anything to you, that's 64 billion bytes of storage compared to 1 trillion. This sounds like a phenomenal amount of storage, but it was only a few years I was told that I would never fill my 330MB hard drive. How wrong that suggestion was as even flash memory is not sold in increments that small anymore.

I envisioned, with the falling prices and ever-increasing size of memory cards, that we might just reach a point where it might be more cost effective to per-



PHOTO PROVIDED

Although size is not necessarily an indication of storage capacity, the tiny Micro Secure Digital Card on the right has 8 times the storage capacity of the Compact Flash on the left.



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manently keep your images on the cards instead of copying them to your computer for storage. I have started to rethink that idea.

I have learned over the years is that all forms of storage media fail. And flash memory storage is no exception. One of the services I offer in my business is flash card recovery. All too often I have heard tales of woe when a card has suddenly stopped working and images were lost. And unfortunately we are seeing an increase in car failure. Usually the data can be retrieved, but not always. And along with the increased card sizes, more data is lost.

I have learned of another

weakness in our storage of digital data and that is with the projected life span of flash memory. Flash memory cards are rated to last over 50 years, and supposedly can be written to 100,000 times, but ironically they may only hold their charge — your data — for 10-20 years. I guess one way to work around this would be to copy the data to your hard drive and then transfer it back to the card to renew the charge, but if you go to that effort you might as well transfer the data on to something that has a longer projected life.

So again, here are a few reminders:

Avoid using the camera for

transferring you images to your computer. Many of the reasons I have had to do data recovery is because the camera's power quit during transfer and the card became corrupted. This power interruption may have flashed the memory and may be one of the reasons data could not be recovered. Card readers are cheap and are powered by the computer so data loss through data transfer should not be an issue.

Be redundant with the storing of your images and data. Back it up and store it in different locations as well as on different media. You can use the card for short-term storage, but I recommend you use a hard drive with a copy on CD/DVD for back up.



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In this photo provided by the U.S. Air Force, a truck carrying a rocket booster for an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile is shown overturned on Thursday near Makoti, N.D. The Air Force says there was no threat to the public. Earlier this month, three ballistic missile crew members from the Minot base fell asleep while holding classified launch code devices.

North Dakota towns unfazed by rocket booster along road

By JAMES MacPHERSON
Associated Press Writer

BISMARCK, N.D. — There's plenty to talk about at the weekly women's coffee klatch in the small town of Parshall, and no one bothered to mention the unarmed booster rocket for an intercontinental ballistic missile lying in a ditch where an Air Force truck overturned.

"We talked about the oil boom, weddings — everything under the sun," Arlene Zacher said Saturday. "But nobody ever mentioned that missile. I guess that shows that people aren't worried about it — I'm certainly not."

The Air Force said a truck carrying the booster for a Minuteman III overturned Thursday a few miles east of Parshall in northwest North Dakota, but there was no danger to the public.

The truck and booster rocket, which is 66 feet long and weighs 75,000 pounds, were still sitting along the road Saturday, under armed guard.

"The scene is still in the assessment phase," said Maj. Laurie A. Arellano, an Air Force spokeswoman. "It's still on its side in the ditch."

Arellano said the wreck would stay there for at least a few more days.

"It has to be 100 percent stable for movement. It's not a quick process — we have to make sure everything is stable first," Arellano said.

The truck was traveling from Minot Air Force Base to a launch facility in northwestern North Dakota when it crashed on the gravel road Thursday morning between Parshall and Makoti, about 70 miles from the air base. Two airmen in the vehicle were not seriously injured, the Air Force said.

Zacher said residents of Parshall, a town of about 1,000 people, are used to missiles being transported in the area, and they trust the Air Force.

"If there is a problem, they will take care of it," she said. "They do a very good job."

In Makoti, a farming community of about 145 people, Darwin Quandt said he wasn't worried.

"They're moving them things around all the time, so we're used to it," Quandt said.

"As long as it ain't going off, we're OK," he said. "And if it did, it wouldn't matter anyway."

An un-American feel aids Internet firms expanding into global markets

By ANICK JESDANUN
AP Internet Writer

NEW YORK — AOL splashes images of Bollywood celebrities on its new home page for India. MySpace accepts sign-ups from mobile phones in Japan. Google departs from its customarily spartan home page and peppers its Korean site with colorful, animated icons.

As major U.S. Internet companies stake their ground abroad in anticipation of the next billion people coming online — and the advertising revenue they might generate — the flags they are planting aren't the Stars and Stripes.

Companies are trying to expand globally without seeming to, designing market-specific services with customized features that reflect differences in connection speeds, payment options and attitudes toward sex or violence.

The stakes are high as the United States faces a weakening economy and a slowing of online ad growth.

And the opportunities are large. People in two populous countries, India and China, are just getting online. The research firm IDC projects worldwide Internet ad spending at nearly \$107 billion in 2011, compared with \$65 billion this year.

But getting it right will be tough. American companies that merely translate their U.S.-focused sites into other languages risk losing to homegrown businesses that

can better respond to cultural nuances.

Google Inc. discovered that in South Korea and China, where it initially held its minimalist approach, only to see local rivals thrive by acknowledging their users' preference for sites rich with entertainment and visual complexity.

"A lot of times, the U.S. companies, because they were successful in the U.S., they tend to repeat their current business models," said Tian X. Hou, a Pali Research analyst who follows China. "Most of the time, that doesn't work."

Cho Ko-un, 29, a graduate student sitting in a cybercafe in Seoul, South Korea, finds Google good for English and academic research, but local portals like Naver and Daum better for Korean-language information. Naver, for instance, has forums for users to answer one another's questions, which proved helpful when Koreans couldn't find a site in their native tongue.

"I feel amazed and surprised when the exact question I am trying to ask ... the proper answer on that is already uploaded," said Kim Seung-ho, a 32-year-old government employee.

Tom Anderson, co-founder of MySpace, said dominance in one market means nothing as the company expands to nearly 30 other countries and regions. He said local incumbents have a key advantage because "it's difficult to get people to change their behavior."

MySpace is nonetheless

trying.

In South Korea, MySpace offers an exclusive "mimilog" feature for youths to jot down everyday thoughts and feelings. In mobile-heavy Japan, people can sign up for an account directly from a phone; elsewhere, you need a desktop computer. MySpace tweaked its Chinese site to generate new windows with every click, in deference to local user preferences.

The News Corp.-owned company also is exploring low-bandwidth versions — perhaps with fewer graphics or less audio — for India and Latin America, where connection speeds tend to be slower.

AOL, meanwhile, has launched about two dozen international sites over the past 18 months. As the one-time Internet access powerhouse transforms itself into an advertising business, executives decided to push into several emerging markets that they knew wouldn't pay off for another few years.

"Our goal is to plant the flag, to be present, said Maneesh Dhir, AOL's India-based international chief. "Then you work to grow that business."

In each market, AOL partners with local content providers.

The Indian portal, for instance, is heavy on Bollywood films, covering their stars as fiercely as American sites follow Lindsay Lohan. Instead of baseball, the Indian portal covers cricket, with schedules, team profiles and

an online fantasy game.

AOL, a unit of Time Warner Inc., also customized its popular AIM instant-messaging service for India and other markets with heavy usage of text messaging on cell phones. Messages sent over AIM are automatically converted into phone texts, and vice versa.

And AOL's channel for men is far edgier in Australia than in Asia or the United States, at one point featuring a photo gallery of a New Zealand rugby game with full frontal nudity.

Microsoft Corp. has more than 80 people worldwide tasked with making sure its products and services do not stereotype, offend local sensibilities or prove irrelevant in a particular culture. Microsoft's instant-messaging product, for example, varies icons and emoticons to reflect flowers, animals and characters popular in each market.

Google has had a different challenge.

With a dearth of Arabic Web sites, Google had to find a way to persuade Arabic speakers that the Web is worth exploring. So it developed a system for automatically translating an Arabic user's search terms into English, checking its English index for matches and translating relevant Web sites back into Arabic for Mideast markets.

To take on China and Korea, where it trails rivals, the normally sparse Google site for those countries now

displays icons that jump as users move the mouse. In China, Google also took the much-criticized step of filtering its results to avoid revealing search results blocked by the government.

But Baidu is still the Chinese search leader, thanks to its willingness to add music video and other entertainment features.

"I do think local companies have an edge over international companies because local companies start with Chinese services, whereas international companies have to follow their overarching goal and can't easily adapt to Chinese needs," said Zhu Shuang, 27, who works at a Shanghai wireless technology company, mInfo Ltd.

Like other U.S. companies, Google is finding it cannot afford to ignore emerging markets. This year, Google started getting more than half its revenue abroad.

Analyst Greg Sterling of Sterling Market Intelligence said many companies have stepped up international ambitions "to insulate themselves as much as possible" from the weakening U.S. economy.

E-retailer Amazon.com Inc. and auctioneer eBay Inc. were among the pioneers in expanding abroad, gaining dominance elsewhere over the past decade by buying local companies that knew the markets already, said Anette Schaefer, a Europe-based director at the Yankee Group.

Pali's Hou said Microsoft's MSN also has made inroads in China, thanks to its highly local staff in touch with Chinese affinity for entertainment news.

But expansion hasn't always been smooth. Though strong elsewhere, eBay failed to gain traction in Japan and pulled out in 2002. Among its missteps: It insisted on credit cards in a largely cash-based society. eBay is now re-entering Japan by teaming up with auction leader Yahoo Japan Corp., which itself is Yahoo Inc.'s joint venture with a leading Japanese company, Softbank Corp.

Other companies simply translated their sites, and one site that no longer exists displayed products available only in the United States, making the site feel foreign to locals, said Matthias Caesar, German-based board member for the Globalization and Localization Association, whose members provide language and other consulting services.

U.S. companies do have key advantages. They have technical know-how, financial muscle and global reach. MySpace and Facebook, for example, let friends communicate worldwide, even if each logs on from a locally customized home page.

And oddly, a few U.S. companies have found their social networks more popular abroad, including Google's Orkut in Brazil, AOL's Bebo in Britain and Friendster in the Philippines.