2012 Q3 link clearance: Microsoft research edition

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My Q1 and Q3 link clearances are traditionally for links to other Microsoft bloggers, but this time I'm going to link to a few Microsoft research papers I found interesting.

Why do Nigerian scammers say they're from Nigeria?

Short answer: Because it ensures that the replies come only from the most gullible people on earth.

Bonus chatter: I received a scam email purportedly from Sir Humphrey Appleby, secretary to the Prime Minister. I could tell it was a fake because the message was comprehensible.

Sketch2Cartoon: Composing Cartoon Images by Sketching

Okay, I admit I haven't read the paper. But the video is fun to watch.

Debugging in the (Very) Large: Ten Years of Implementation and Experience

This is the paper on Windows Error Reporting that everybody cites. To me, it gets interesting starting in Section 6.

An Empirical Analysis of Hardware Failures on a Million Consumer PCs

I had the good fortune of seeing an early version of this paper. The thing that jumped out at me was the hard drive failure information:

- The probability of a failure in the first 5 days of uptime is 1 in 470.
- Once you've had one failure, the probability of a second failure is 1 in 3.4.
- Once you've had two failures, the probability of a third failure is 1 in 1.9.

Translation: That hard drive failure you experienced? It was no fluke. Once you experience your first hard drive failure, the odds of a second one increase by a factor of *over 100*.

What's more, that second failure is highly likely (86%) to occur within the next ten days, and almost certainly (99%) within the next thirty.

Conclusion: When you get a hard drive failure, *replace the drive immediately*.

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