

The ex-wife vanishes and other tales from PDC

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LOS ANGELES--It's photo-editing software Joseph Stalin would have loved.

Microsoft researchers have come up with technology that can remove an image, [say a person](#), from the foreground and then replicate the background that the no-longer-visible person was blocking. The technology, developed by Microsoft's China research lab, was on display at the expo hall at the [Professional Developers Conference](#) here.



In one example provided by Microsoft, a cute kid stands in front of a curb. Want to erase the kid and have only the lovely curb? No problem.

The technology appears to work as advertised, but Microsoft's choice of samples seems to indicate a challenge finding practical applications.

Of course, as one newsroom colleague pointed out, it might be handy for deleting an "ex" from an otherwise nice photo. Also, though a vacation to Hawaii without the kids might not be in the cards, vacation photos without the kids are emerging as a possibility.

A second photo technique, known as "Visual Simulation of Weathering By Gamma-ton Tracing" was also on display at the PDC. The weathering simulator can, for example, add things like moss to an image of a fire hydrant. And you never know when you'll need that capability.

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Developers gather in L.A. to hear the latest on Windows Vista, Office 12 and more.

Both technologies were also demonstrated by Microsoft at this summer's [Siggraph](#) computer graphics trade show. The efforts, while limited to the labs today, show the promise down the road for being able to make just the picture one wants.

Vista and Media Center

The Vista code handed out to attendees clearly shows where Microsoft is headed as far as its Tablet PC operating system goes.

The [Community Technology Preview](#), or CTP, version also marks the first incarnation of Vista made available outside Redmond that contains Media Center code. Microsoft executives were somewhat reluctant to talk about Media Center plans, particularly since a minor update to the OS is still due this fall.

A Microsoft representative noted that the code included with the Vista test version "is not representative of what customers will actually experience in the final product."

"The September Windows Vista CTP does show some preliminary updates and enhancements, including initial steps toward helping customers more quickly and easily browse large amounts of music and video content on their local machine or home network," the representative said in an e-mail.

There are [reports](#) that both Tablet and Media Center features are set for broader use as part of Vista Home Premium and Vista Ultimate editions. Microsoft says final decisions have not been made. When it announced a [series of licensing program changes](#) on Thursday, the company did confirm there would be an enterprise edition of Vista made available to Software Assurance customers.

As for the more upcoming Media Center update, Microsoft has said there will be an release this fall that will add support for, among other things, the Media Center extender abilities of the Xbox 360. Microsoft also said it will start selling Media Center



Edition in 20 new markets, including Mexico, Turkey, India and many other countries. According to a recent Web chat, Microsoft plans to label the new version, which has been code-named Emerald, with the rather modest "Update Rollup 2" moniker.

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Enthusiast site Neowin has some screenshots of the Media Center look in Vista as well as more info on Emerald.

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