Cites & Insights:
Crawford at Large

Perspective
Saying Farewell to
The Industry Standard

Well shoot. That's the polite form of my reaction to a front-page story in the August 17 *San Francisco Chronicle:* "Industry Standard joins list of dot-gones." It's a story that saddens me, one that I hoped not to read, even though it was rumored the day before.

The *Industry Standard* began in the spring of 1998, founded by International Data Group (IDG), one of the biggest publishers of technology-related magazines (*PC World* and many of the other "Worlds") and, until recently, the "for Dummies" books. While *TIS* was one of too many new-economy magazines, it was different in three ways:

➢ As a weekly, it offered faster commentary without adopting a straight "newsweekly" approach.

➢ The writing, reporting, and commentary in *TIS* had depth and quality that belied its weekly status and seemed fresher and better than most competitors.

➢ Uniquely, in my experience, *TIS* covered the dot-com boom without becoming a cheerleader for the "Internet revolution" or buying into the constant stream of hype. Indeed, *TIS* had a strong record for exposing hype and fraud.

At its peak, the magazine had 200,000 circulation—and it was profitable after less than two years. Last year, it set a record for the publishing industry with 7,558 advertising pages, resulting in revenue of $140 million. *TIS* ran conferences; it published a monthly supplement *Grok* (but not for long); and one weekly issue reached 300 pages. Expanding rapidly, *TIS* leased enough office space in San Francisco for the 400 to 600 people the company expected to need.

A cynic could suggest that the company heads failed to read their own coverage closely enough. When this year's slump set in, ad pages—which had grown 133% last year over 1999—dropped 75%; ad revenue dropped to $40 million (estimated). Meanwhile, $60 million in signed leases had to be paid. Under those conditions, the company's efforts to get a short-term loan (while seeking a buyer) yielded unacceptable terms. The August 23 issue I received a few days ago is the last issue—unless a buyer does come along, and it's tough to find buyers for magazines that aren't publishing.

If you've been reading *Cites & Insights*, you'll know that I cited a fair number of articles from *TIS*. As I noted in last month's "Bibs & Blather," I actually cited a lot fewer articles than I marked for possible inclusion. I'll take my time with the final issue, so the last *TIS* citations may appear next month.

Immediate Coverage

I picked up several articles from the Internet on August 17. The range of comments was interesting. In the *Chronicle* article, Paul Grabowicz of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism said he admired *TIS*' quality of journalism and innovative use of the media it covered—but also noted "They rode the wave of the explosion of the Internet; when it imploded, it hurt them."

Inside This Issue

A Reuters story (posted at 10 p.m. on August 16) pointed out that almost half of *TIS*' circulation was non-paid; that included my copy. The story compares that to the 315,634 *paid* circulation of *Red Herring*—but calling the latter "a competing magazine" reflects some misunderstanding of the editorial focus of each. It's a bit like calling *American Libraries* and *Searcher* "competing magazines"—after all, both deal with library-related issues.

The *Los Angeles Times* Web site offered a good piece by David Streitfeld (see "Ebook Watch" in this

issue) that included unfortunate quotes from "competitors." Gary Rivlin (a writer for *TIS*) noted, "We are the people we write about… We had the hubris. We looked down on the established media. Then when it all turned, we were slow to trim back our sails, despite articles in our own magazine making fun of others for not trimming their sails."

Media Life noted that most New Economy magazines are in trouble—*Red Herring* is up for sale, as (reportedly) is *Upside*, and *Business 2.0* was purchased for almost nothing by Time Inc. This brief story noted that "many had thought of [*The Industry Standard*] as among the most likely to survive."

Two pieces appeared at www.thestandard.com—which, for now at least, continues to operate. (If you've been confused by Weblog references to articles in "The Standard" and my citations to *The Industry Standard*: one's the Web site, one's the magazine. I always spell out the magazine's name to avoid confusion with the far-right *Weekly Standard*.) The first, probably the earliest factual story on the shutdown, was posted at 5:45 p.m. PDT on August 16, written by Cory Johnson. It's probably still available at the Web site and offers a brief, crisp summary of the situation. Oddly, *The Industry Standard*'s ad count still ranked 19th among all magazines (in number of pages) for the first half of 2001—but it was first in *loss* of ad pages and revenues.

"Goodbye," by Jimmy Guterman, appeared at 7:43 a.m. on August 17. The tease: "After 3 years of poking holes in the hype surrounding the Internet Economy, Media Grok [a *TIS* feature] gets the sharp end of the stick." The story is as skeptical as *TIS'* regular coverage: Discussing a press release in which Standard Media International "remain[s] hopeful that our assets will be sold," Guterman notes "you have to worry about a press release in which the word 'hopeful' appears so prominently"

In more than one story, editor-in-chief Jonathan Weber said something like this: "I think we had a great magazine and had great people here and I'm very sorry we won't be able to keep doing it. I'm very proud of what we accomplished here. I have no regrets."

Weber has much to be proud of. *The Industry Standard* had three great years. I'll miss it. So, I believe, will others trying to cope with relentless "Internet revolution" hype without ignoring what's actually going on.

A Weekend Passes

I wrote this essay on Sunday, August 19, as a combination eulogy and commentary. The topic wasn't done yet. By Tuesday, August 21—as I write this—

several more pieces on the death of *The Industry Standard* had appeared. Supposedly, a book is on the way. I'd rather have *TIS* back.

An August 18 article in the *San Jose Mercury News* (www0.mercurycenter.com) discussed the extent to which the shutdown "sent new shudders through the world of New Economy magazines," as "the most high-profile [failure] since the technology downturn began to suffocate publications." *Red Herring*'s publisher called *TIS* "the poster child of the Internet bubble"—but *Red Herring*'s own ads have declined 50% from last year. As the article notes, *TIS* "produced award-winning coverage."

Elizabeth Farnsworth interviewed founder John Battelle on the August 20 *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* (www.pbs.org/newshour/). He discussed the Web site's strong continuing online presence (a million unique visitors a month), the extraordinarily rapid rate of advertising decline and other aspects of the magazine's situation. In 1999, they were turning away advertisers because the magazine was getting too big—and, producing up to 120 pages of editorial copy every week (and another 50 Web stories), they *needed* to add writers to maintain editorial quality. Unlike most companies *TIS* covered, the magazine itself was profitable. The managers saw that some deflation of the Internet bubble was likely, and had planned for deflation—but they hadn't planned for the *speed* with which things fell apart.

Rob Walker of *Slate* (slate.msn.com) devoted his August 20 "Moneybox" to commentary on the demise of *TIS* and some numbers for its quasi-competitors. A year earlier, he'd written a column about the "big fat new economy magazines," noting that one copy each of the seven magazines in that category totaled 2,714 pages in May 2000. He picked up the six that are left in August 2001. *Red Herring* declined from 628 pages to 100; *Fast Company* from 418 to 148; *Wired* from 400 to 180; *Forbes ASAP* from 224 to 64; *Business 2.0* and *eCompany Now*—now merged into a single magazine—from 772 combined pages to 214; and *The Industry Standard* from 272 pages to 88. The stack went from 2,714 pages to 794: a reduction of more than 70%. He's sad to see *TIS* go (as is, I believe, every observer who knows his or her stuff). There are likely to be more casualties.

Finally (I hope), the business section of today's *San Francisco Chronicle* includes two follow-up stories (probably available at sfgate.com). Benjamin Pimentel offers a profile of John Battelle, including anonymous statements that he lacked management experience and glowing comments from editor John Weber, who is particularly critical of IDG for failing to back up the magazine. Dan Fost's weekly "Media

Bytes" column considers some of the reasons that *TIS* failed and some inside comments on the nature of that failure. Both articles focus on the business issues. Neither has much to say about the remarkable editorial work that made *The Industry Standard* special. That's sad (if predictable).

PC Values: September 2001

September's standard configuration includes 128MB SDRAM, 16x or faster CD-ROM, AGP graphics adapter with 32MB RAM, V.90 fax/modem or 10/100 Ethernet adapter, wavetable sound card, speakers, and a 15.6-16" (viewable measure) display. "Pluses" and "Minuses" are shown where applicable, along with hard disk size and software. Top systems taken from company Web sites on 8/22/2001.

Observant readers may have noted that the minimum price for "power" systems has migrated downward. That's due to increasing competition and price pressures within the industry. The new range for "midrange" is $1,450 to $1,899, while the "power" range is $1,900 to $2,500.

None of the "other" companies that advertise in *PC World* or *PC* offered computers that matched top-vendor values.

- **Top, Budget:** Gateway Essential 1100: Pentium III-1100, 20GB HD. *Minuses:* No dedicated graphics RAM. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, Epson Stylus printer. $899, VR 3.51 (+17% since 6/2001, +32% since 3/2001).

- **Top, Midrange:** Gateway Performance 1600: Pentium 4-1600, 40GB 7200rpm HD. *Pluses:* 64MB graphics RAM, CD/RW drive. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, Boston Acoustics speakers with subwoofer, Ethernet card. $1,499, VR 2.69 (+6% since 6/2001, +27% since 3/2001).

- **Top, Power:** Gateway Performance 1800: Pentium 4-1800, 80GB 7200rpm HD. Similar to Midrange, but with 18"-viewable display. $1,999, VR 2.32 (+19% since 6/2001, +25% since 3/2001).

- **One Good Configuration:** Gateway Performance 1600 with upgrades: Pentium 4-1600, 80GB 7200rpm HD. Same as Top, Midrange system but with larger hard disk, added DVD drive (in addition to CD/RW drive), 18"-

viewable Diamondtron display. $1,929, VR 2.38 (+9% since 6/2001).

Press Watch I: Articles Worth Reading

Walker, Rob, "The price of anticipation," *Industry Standard* 4:28 (July 23, 2001), p. 16.

Nokia and Palm have both run into trouble—in part, at least, because they've oversold new mobile phones and PDAs that aren't on the market yet. That leads to consumers waiting—which leads to lower sales.

The brief story is good but lacks historical perspective. Many observers believe that Osborne Computers went out of business for precisely this reason: promises of the forthcoming version caused sales of the current version to dry up. Then the forthcoming version took a little longer…and Osborne was no more. I don't know that Rob Walker has ever heard of Osborne—after all, that company made computers when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Helft, Miguel, "The end of the road," *Industry Standard* 4:28 (July 23, 2001), pp. 26-9.

Think of this as an expert followup to my "Webvan lessons?" essay from last issue. The thorough story offers more detail as to why and how Webvan failed. Louis Borders apparently did believe that technology could "overturn the retail establishment." Webvan adopted a lavish, overstaffed model—which became apparent when it merged with HomeGrocer, where one manager did the job of five Webvan counterparts. The final paragraph is revealing:

> Borders always knew his plan was a gamble. Early on he was asked by investors whether he thought it would be a billion-dollar business, according to Randall Stross' book *eBoys.* "Naw," Borders answered, "it's going to be $10 billion. Or zero." He was right.

Frank, Thomas, "Corporate embrace," *Industry Standard* 4:28 (July 23, 2001), pp. 60-2.

This chilling brief piece discusses Enron's image strategies and some of the truth behind them. If you're not a Californian (or a close student of the current U.S. administration), Enron may not be a familiar name—but it's a company that encourages the belief that it's doing something revolutionary. More to the point, it's what I think of as a Gilderian company: one that views anything but pure capitalism as evil and business as the only solution to the

world's problems. (George Gilder has finally come clean, admitting that this is essentially religion, not just business theory.) And, of course, Enron's officials claim, "In every business we've been in, we're the good guys."

Right. Amnesty International has a special report on Enron: Unusual for a mere corporation. A British columnist recently called Enron the "world's worst corporation." Of the many villains and fools in California's winter energy screwup, Enron looms large by any measure. And, unfortunately for balance, if George W. isn't actually an Enron puppet, he might as well be. Read this. If you have the stomach for it, read Gilder's latest screeds. Try not to shudder or have too many nightmares.

Honan, Mathew, "GPS showdown," *Macworld* August 2001, p. 21.

It's less than a page, but what a charmer. *Macworld* took three GPS modules for PDAs or Macs and a local printed map, then asked four people to set out from the same point to find a specified coordinate or street address (all in San Francisco). It took the map user eight minutes. Two GPS users got there in 15 and 27 minutes respectively; one never could get a satellite fix. "In a race against time on city streets, never bet against the person with a map."

Dvorak, John, "What's wrong with auctions," *Computer Shopper* 21:8 (August 2001), p. 56.

Here's Dvorak at his grumpy best, asserting that "auctions are like a game in which the goal is to screw your opponent, and the best cheater wins." He believes that—at least for societies in which haggling isn't a favored activity—auctions will eventually be niches in the online world just as they are in the real world. You may or may not agree with his logic, but it's an invigorating read. (I admit to being bemused by the rise of eBay, but then I don't shop at garage sales either. My bad, I suppose.)

Bell, Steven J., "The new digital divide," *D-Lib* 7:7/8, July/August 2001. www.dlib.org.

Bell discusses new situations in which full-text journal content is *exclusively* available through one aggregator—a potentially troublesome future for libraries trying to assemble affordable, coherent full-text services. It's an interesting brief piece, and Bell's a good writer; if you deal with full-text issues, it's definitely worth reading. Consider this startling comment, particularly given the number of libraries that *do* wish to cancel print journal holdings:

Countless libraries that early on decided to mass cancel titles when full text became available in databases quickly realized the folly of their actions when aggregators showed no loyalty to their offerings. Titles have been routinely dropped and added, making it difficult, if not impossible, for libraries to base future access to a journal title on doing business with any particular aggregator (other than the publisher's own e-journal collection perhaps).

Lasica, J.D., "Search engines and editorial integrity," *Online Journalism Review* 7/23/2001. ojr.usc.edu.

I began "Trends and Quick Takes" in the Midsummer 2001 issue with a grumpy commentary on what's happening with search engines, an article in *Interactive Week* and some surprising (and disappointing) comments from Danny Sullivan. The short of it: most free Web search engines accept payment for results placement and don't make paid placement obvious—and Google is an exception.

J.D. Lasica offers a combination of reporting and commentary on this issue, one that—as with most of *Online Journalism Review*—makes good sense as well as good reading. The news: Commercial Alert filed a formal complaint with the FTC regarding eight major search engines. They are "inserting advertisements in search engine results without clear and conspicuous disclosure that the ads are ads." The list of offending sites did not include Google, Yahoo (which uses Google's engine for Web searches as opposed to directory entries), and Excite.

The reporting includes waffling from Danny Sullivan, who comes out in favor of *paid interaction* when you do searches and touts the wonders of targeted advertising. Quotes from some of the search-engine executives are charming. LookSmart's CEO says "We can't afford to have ideological debates anymore." An MSN.com manager asserts that surveys show "consumers already assume that all search results are for sale." A Lycos VP says "it doesn't matter if we are paid for a link, so long as the results are what the user wants" and that being clear about paid listings "hurts the user" because we've been trained to avoid commercialism.

I may be misstating that. Go read the article and think about that particular viewpoint. It's *beneficial* for us to get paid results first, so the fact that they're essentially ads *must* be concealed for our own good.

Google is a profitable business through a combination of services (wouldn't you want the Google engine for a big Intranet?) and paid links that appear off to one side and are forthrightly called "Sponsored Links." Ethics almost certainly costs them some potential short-term profit, but I know where I go first when searching the open Web.

Bonamici, Katherine, "Are libraries the next Napster?" *Time.com* 8/2/2001.

Aw, geez. The Association of American Publishers continues to confound me (and the library profession, I'd guess) with its doubletalk and mixed messages. In this little article, AAP's Allen Adler describes libraries as one of "the most important markets and strongest allies" for publishers, especially when it comes to the First Amendment. Great.

But "we are looking at the technology [of digital distribution] and at the ways that libraries serve their patrons, and we're concerned that if you logically apply this new technology to the service of patrons, then you could have a situation where libraries are violating *what we think* is fair use." [Emphasis added.] Meanwhile, libraries are "concerned that we will use [these advances] to maximize that profit by restricting the ability of the public to use works the way they have."

Give Bonamici full credit. She called Miriam Nesbit, counsel for ALA. "From our standpoint, librarians are the most conscientious people in the world about copyright and adhering to it and making sure their patrons know what they can and cannot do… We're certainly not trying to give people access they shouldn't have."

When does AAP get to decide what constitutes fair use? When DMCA puts that one-ton weight on the publisher's side of copyright equity. Are librarians perhaps justified in fearing that publishers will work to restrict fair use? Only if librarians can read and pay attention.

Adler gets cute: "Neither side has been able to figure out how to take advantage of the new technological capabilities without alarming the people they work with." It's easy to read that as "we're not quite sure how to gut fair use quietly." It *would* be easy to read it as "librarians aren't sure how to undermine intellectual property rights without alarming us," but given that no library has acted in such a manner (as far as I know), that's an unlikely interpretation.

AAP wants the ALA and the nation's librarians to make sure they're free to publish whatever they want. Isn't it reasonable for librarians to expect reciprocity—that AAP and the nation's publishers will explicitly work toward balanced fair use rights and explicitly recognize the importance of library access? That's not the message we're getting.

Dupré, Deirdre, "The perception of image and status in the library profession," *NewBreed Librarian* 1:4. www.newbreedlibrarian.org.

"Librarians are very insecure about their profession—so insecure that it has become a pervasive anxiety throughout the field of librarianship." This article discusses the record of that insecurity and proposes ways of getting past it. That's an awful

summary for a first-rate article. Despite the unfortunate sans serif text (fully-justified sans, no less), it's an easy read and well worth your time, although the separation into multiple HTML segments makes printing a challenge.

Welch, Matt, "Media criticism gone horribly wrong," *Online Journalism Review* August 8, 2001. ojr.usc.edu.

This lengthy piece discusses the Chandra Levy story—or, rather, media denunciations of media coverage of the Levy story. In other words, it's media-cubed: media about media about media! (Hmm. My "DisContent" column for this month's *EContent* is a joking proposal for just such "media cubed. It sure is hard to write satire these days.)

It's a compelling and disturbing piece that deserves careful reading if you're one of those who believes that "lowbrow" media went overboard covering Ms. Levy's disappearance. Of course some outlets overplayed the story—but there's a lot of evidence that some criticism has been even more ill-founded than some of the stories. The piece also points up some things I've been aware of: when you cover a subject, you tend to become too close to it. Technology writers tend to believe everybody wants the toys they use. Media writers think MSNBC and Fox News matter because they reach huge audiences, despite their abysmal ratings. So it goes.

Feemster, Ron, "Ready or not, here come the digital libraries," *University Business* July/August 2001. www.universitybusiness.com/magazine.

I'm not entirely sure what to make of this one—but, overall, it's a good summary of current services such as NetLibrary, Questia, and ebrary from a "university business" perspective (whatever that means). I believe the writer underplays the extent to which such services need to *complement* libraries to succeed rather than competing with them, but he does say "None intend to replace the library, of course…"

The closing: "But even if these young companies fail, many of the ideas, tools, and even the content they have created will certainly prevail." I'm not sure what that means. Most of these companies don't create content (although they may digitize it). Other than marketing and digital rights management, I'm not sure what new ideas or tools come from this group. Still, it's a useful summary (which could just as easily go in "Ebook Watch").

Sunstein, Cass R., "The daily we," *Boston Review* Summer 2001. bostonreview.mit.edu.

"When you read a city newspaper or a national magazine, your eyes will come across a number of

articles that you might not have selected in advance, and if you are like most people, you will read some of those articles." That's an argument I made for years in my speeches about the future of print and hot new technology—and it's a tiny piece of this lengthy, important article. Sunstein questions the relationship of personal filtering and democracy, noting the growth of abilities to filter out everything that isn't in your *current* list of concerns.

Sunstein—a law professor at the University of Chicago—covers a lot of ground. I would argue with some of his assertions; so will you. The natural human tendency toward having and using more choices—the tendency *away* from truly mass media, if you will—is not inherently a bad thing. Does it lead to a growth in extremism? Probably, and (unfortunately) the Web has been a wonderful thing for crazies of all stripes, including racialists.

I appreciate Sunstein's call for common experiences. I suspect that he overstates the extent to which we have *ever* had truly common experiences, at least in the last few decades. The Super Bowl? I've never seen one, and neither have tens of millions of other Americans: it just doesn't interest us. A popular movie? Certainly seen by, at most, a minority of Americans during its theatrical runs. A presidential debate? You can't force people to watch them. I think Sunstein realizes that.

Read the article. I'm saving it for reference in my next few speeches.

Howard, Bill, "14th annual reader survey: service & reliability," *PC Magazine* 20:14 (August 2001), pp. 114-26.

Every year this survey offers less background, every year the list of "A" vendors gets shorter—and every so often the criteria for grading change without much advance notice. It's still probably the most statistically valid survey of this type, other than those included in *Consumer Reports* articles.

Dell owns the desktop category, and is the only vendor with "A" grades across the board. The same goes for notebooks and servers. Looking at overall desktop scores and excluding the catch-all "locally-built" category, four vendors score above average in the "buy again" category: Dell, Gateway, Hewlett-Packard, and Micron. For notebooks, that's down to a pathetic two: Dell and IBM. (For your amusement, Compaq ties with Acer and eMachines for the worst scores—but only Compaq has *consistently* bad desktop scores, and Compaq rates the only bottom grade for notebooks.)

Printers? Astonishingly from a statistical viewpoint, Hewlett-Packard continues to get solidly above-average scores (although tech support satisfaction slipped to average) even though HP accounts for more than half of all responses. Epson earns the other A grade; there are no rock-bottom grades. Software grades may not mean much (there are too few competitors in most areas), but the ISP picture is fairly consistent with past reports. To wit, AOL scores below average on every single measure; AT&T Worldnet is the only ISP with a strong overall score and no below-average details. (Excite@Home and RoadRunner both score well overall, but both suffer for their high rates as broadband services.) MSN comes in poorly, but at least that service—although below average in most respects—bumps up to average for technical support and email, giving it two edges over AOL.

Pack, Thomas, "Automatic Media shuts down content sites," *EContent* 24:6 (August 2001), pp. 7-8.

A qualified recommendation: If you have ready access to *EContent*, read this news coverage thoughtfully. Otherwise, don't bother—it's not worth looking it up just for this item. The headline tells the key story, but much of the article is a testament to confusion on the part of analysts and journalists.

The bad news is that *Suck*, "the Web's longest running daily column, which offered 'unpopular opinions on popular culture,'" is "gone fishin'," perhaps permanently—as is *Feed*, Automatic Media's other professionally written site. Plastic, the oddball discussion site that emerged from Automatic Media's takeover of the other sites, is still around but run by volunteers. The babies are gone; the bathwater remains.

"Several publications reported that Plastic.com, launched earlier this year, had drained Automatic's cash." I believe that, and can only wince. If there's one thing the Web desperately needs more of, it's more sites for pseudonymous jerks to rant at one another. *Suck* varied in quality but at its best offered cogent, thoughtful commentary on a range of topics. I never quite understood *Feed*, so I won't comment—except to note that *Feed* could have been a prime target for *Suck*.

What makes this item noteworthy is outside commentary. A *New York Times* reporter concludes from this shutdown that "the notion that independent publications could challenge established media concerns because it costs very little to publish online has fallen on hard times along with the rest of the Web's early illusions." Coming from the most established of all print media, that's an interesting and (in my opinion) both premature and absurd conclusion.

It gets better. A "Web Practices Adviser" at Giga claims that the problems were deeper than a lack of

cash. "She noted that the Suck.com home page did not clearly define the purpose of the site, and it was oriented around cute and clever links, images, and titles. 'What does this do for the user whose goal is to find relevant content? It leaves them guessing what link names mean and where they will take the user.... Content cannot support itself if visitors can't find the content.'" To my surprise, Thomas Pack buys this assertion: "a lack of focus on basic customer needs sent them reeling."

Suck lasted five years or more. People who bookmarked it dropped by every day for a dose of commentary. We knew what we were getting—and there's no evidence that *Suck* was not self-supporting. Anyone who went to *Suck* in search of specific "content" was in the wrong place, just as subscribing to the *New Yorker* for vital coverage of developments in personal computing is probably a serious blunder.

As far as I can tell, *Suck* died because of corporate vampires. That's one serious threat to independent publications in general: being taken over and destroyed by bigger operations. In this case, the bigger operation self-destructed. A shame, and one that has absolutely nothing to do with the feasibility of independent voices on the Internet. If *Suck* is gone for good, it deserves a better obituary.

Martin, James A.,"Free at last," *FamilyPC* 8:9 (September 2001), pp. 82-7.

This is a surprisingly good article, recounting Martin's experiment in using e-mail and other Internet services through five different wireless devices: a Palm PDA, a Pocket PC handheld computer, a Web-enabled cell phone, a two-way pager, and a wireless modem connected to a notebook. Martin doesn't pull many punches, and a table shows some of the pros and cons of each wireless category—and the generally-high prices you'll pay for wireless Internet use.

There's a problem, one caused by editorial time lags (and not really preventable in this case). The winner in almost every case was the Merlin modem (a PC Card modem) and Ricochet wireless Internet service. It's faster than the alternatives, works with any notebook, but was only available in 13 areas. Unfortunately, *was* is the key word: Metricom shut down the Ricochet service for lack of funding before this issue appeared.

Entlich, Richard, "FAQ—Monitor Resolution: Debunking Misconceptions," *RLG DigiNews* 5:4. www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews.

If you're at all interested in digital reproduction and preservation, you should be tracking *RLG DigiNews*—and I don't say that because I work for RLG. Produced by Cornell University Library's Department of Preservation and Conservation, this newsletter combines fairly deep feature articles with other first-rate material.

Even if you don't care about these issues in general, you might check this particular FAQ. Entlich disposes of some long-standing myths about computer display resolution and how material should be scanned for display on the Web. The FAQ is short, clear, and helpful. Read it.

I would add two minor clarifications, neither directly related to the FAQ itself. First, every CRT has a *maximum* resolvable horizontal dot-per-inch measure, based on the physical characteristics of the tube itself. For a Trinitron or Diamondtron tube, you can calculate that factor by dividing 25.4 (mm per inch) by the stripe pitch. So, for example, an 0.22mm-pitch tube can physically resolve 115 dots per inch (but you'll typically use it at something like 96 dots per inch). For LCD displays, the maximum dpi is also commonly the *only* resolution at which the display will offer its clearest picture.

Bibs & Blather

Stephen Davis of Columbia University Libraries, a respected colleague, wrote to comment on his difficulties in citing an article from the last issue. One problem is that there's no way to deep link to a portion of an issue: that's not going to change. The other problem is that I don't assign a stable filename to an issue until the *next* issue is published.

I responded with an explanation of my motive. I want current-issue readers to come in "through the front door"—through cical.home.att.net—because that's the only counter I have. At least in the first few months, I wanted to get some indication of readership as one of several measures influencing continued publication. I felt so strongly about this that, one month, I put a dummy page in place of the usual current-issue location and stored the current issue elsewhere.

The day after Davis' email arrived, Charles W. Bailey, Jr. cited the August 2001 *Cites & Insights* in his new Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog—and included a link to the issue itself, not to the home page. After a slight wince, I realized that my pleasure at being included in Bailey's Weblog far exceeded my annoyance at losing count. And the "payment" results I've been getting include a fair number of people who print out each issue and pass

it along to colleagues—which is behavior I encourage and appreciate.

In long (it's way too late for "in short"), I think Davis makes a good point. Henceforth—beginning with this issue—*Cites & Insights* issues will be stored with stable URLs (barring change in AT&T Worldnet Web hosting policies or other unforeseen real-world situations). I'll list each issue's URL in the "Details" box. "cicurr.pdf" will be replaced with a placeholder pointing people back to the home page.

You're still better off checking the home page (or even signing up for the CICAL Alert mailing list) for at least three reasons:

➢ The overall URL pattern will change periodically as specific disk allocations fill.

➢ If you assume that new numbered issues will show up around the first of each month, you may miss things—such as the Midsummer 2001 issue or the end-of-volume index that I hope to do this December. (And if you use predictive URL numbering, you'll be reading the August issue at this point!)

➢ If the counter on the *Cites & Insights* home page slows too much, I might start to wonder whether my assumed readership (700 to 1,400 readers, give or take 50%) is dwindling—and, in turn, whether this is worth doing. But that's not a major issue.

As to single-column or HTML versions: My stance on those continues to be that they'll appear when as I get an offer to underwrite the entire zine, at levels acceptable to me, on the condition that I provide such an alternative version. Until then, this continues to be a print zine distributed via the Web.

Giving Up on URLs

I've tried to provide complete URLs for articles cited here. It doesn't work very well. In any case, this is a print publication: the URLs aren't active. So I'm giving up. With few exceptions, I'll cite the domain name and try to give you enough information to find the specific piece. If that's inadequate, my apologies. Always ignore the period at the end of a URL—but you know that!

PC Values

The marathon feedback section in *Cites & Insights* 1:8 *(*Midsummer 2001) included a letter from Rory Litwin asserting that shop-built PCs generally offered better value than name-brand PCs. I disagreed, based largely on my own bad experiences with "no-name" PCs but also on some unstated thoughts about the parts discounts that large manufacturers can negotiate and the better likelihood that Dell,

Gateway, and Micronpc could live up to their technical support warranties.

This year's *PC Magazine* reliability and technical satisfaction survey gives me pause: shop-built PCs, as a class, come in just behind Dell. At the same time, competition in the field is so horrendous that parts makers are probably offering good deals to everyone—and Gateway, while successful in defending its low-price claim, may be pricing too low for the long-term good of the company.

Given all this, here's a partial retraction. Personally, I've been stung by no-names too often to consider them for my own use—but it's clear that thousands of other people have done better for their own needs by working with a local outfit to build the computer they need. As you make your own decisions, consider reputable local builders as an option—cautiously.

The Limits of Sour Grapes

One decision early in the life of *Cites & Insights* made good sense at the time. I don't cite material from *Library Hi Tech News*, either positively or negatively, because such citations would be tainted by my departure from that newsletter. At the time, I included *Library Hi Tech* in that category.

That makes little sense. I resigned from *Library Hi Tech*'s editorial board at the end of 2000, but that resignation had (almost) nothing to do with the situation regarding *Library Hi Tech News*. I'd been on the editorial board for more than 15 years and simply thought enough was enough. And I haven't published in *Library Hi Tech* since 1998, when my fiftieth and final article appeared.

So let's say the limit is two years. That means that I'll refrain from citing *Library Hi Tech News* this year and next—and maybe by then, MCB University Press will have stopped sending copies. Meanwhile, you'll see an article in *Library Hi Tech* mentioned in this issue (in "Ebook Watch"). It's a positive mention—it's a good article.

Rochester, Here I Come
…and Later, Kentucky

Finally, for those around Rochester, New York, I'm looking forward to Friday, September 7, when I'll speak on the future of libraries—finding the ways that work, for the Rochester Library Resources Council. If you're involved with that group, you've heard about this by now. See a few of you there?

If you're a Kentucky librarian, maybe I'll see you October 17-19, when I'll be at the Kentucky Library Association annual conference. I'm giving a speech, and as usual I'll go to as much of the conference as

possible. I've learned something and met wonderful people at each state library association conference I've attended; I'm sure that record will continue.

Perspective

Tasini, Times, and Tantrums

By now, you should have heard of "Tasini"—shorthand for *New York Times Co., Inc. v. Tasini*, the case in which the Supreme Court concluded that, barring explicit contracts, when a freelance writer sells an article to a newspaper or magazine that newspaper or magazine does *not* have the automatic right to sell that article as part of electronic full-text databases.

It's an important case, one that's elicited extreme opinions and caused extreme actions. I'd like to offer my clear "where I stand" on this issue, but it's not that simple—although, by and large, I stand closer to Jonathan Tasini, president of the National Writers Union than to the *New York Times*. This one's complex, a case with more villains than heroes.

Sources

To understand Tasini and some of the issues, you should read a few articles and draw your own conclusions. Note that the Tasini case began more than three years ago; this isn't a sudden phenomenon.

First, go to *Online Journalism Review* (ojr.usc.edu), where Michael Overing's July 17 article offers a good review of the case.

Next, visit the National Writers Union Website (www.nwu.org) and read some of the press releases and other material related to the case—including the description of the Publication Rights Clearinghouse.

Optionally, check Barbara Quint's July 16 piece at www.infotoday.com/newsbreaks. I could quibble with details of her suggestions, but it's an interesting viewpoint.

Finally, find the August 15 edition of *LLRX*, the Law Library Resource eXchange (www.llrx.com). Wendy Leibowitz and Richard Wiggins offer sharply contrasting commentaries on the meaning of Tasini.

I asked Wiggins for clarification on some of his points. Some of that clarification appears below.

Notes and Comments

True freelance writers—people who attempt to making a living this way—survive by *renting* their words: selling the same or similar articles to more than one outlet, reusing research and good writing many times. Most freelance writers look at contracts care-

fully, since a bad contract can undermine this reuse process—but most freelancers also work at a disadvantage when contracting with huge media conglomerates. The case in hand prevented the *New York Times* from *retroactively* gaining rights not included in pre-1993 contracts.

The National Writers Union was prepared to negotiate a settlement and had already established a clearinghouse to deal with appropriate retroactive payments and future payments for reuse of material. Wiggins asserts that Tasini (president of the NWU) isn't really interested in negotiation, that he only wants more lawsuits—but the record shows that the *New York Times* failed to call his bluff (if it was one). Given the publisher's rejection of offers to negotiate, I'm inclined to accept NWU's claims. That's particularly true given evidence that publishers are lobbying congress to change copyright law retroactively so that freelancers lose the rights that the Supreme Court affirmed they had.

The *New York Times* threw a tantrum or acted like a bully, whichever your preferred image. Immediately after the Supreme Court ruled, the newspaper told freelancers that they had two choices: they could sign instant waivers granting the *Times* the rights that the court explicitly said the *Times* didn't own—or the *Times* would strip the articles right out of online databases, making the freelancers look like the Bad Guys.

Library associations have been on both sides of this issue. ALA and ARL filed briefs on Tasini's behalf; the Special Library Association filed on behalf of the publisher.

Wiggins notes, "A historian trying to write about Watergate is going to feel a lot less confident if he is told that Nexis has 92% of the articles on the subject, not 100%." But if he's told the latter, Tasini or no Tasini, he's being lied to. Neither Nexis nor any other full-text service has 100% of the articles on *any* subject; I'll state that with a considerable degree of assurance. And, of course, no freelancer asked that her articles be removed—or has the right to ask that *citations* for his articles be removed.

Wiggins also accuses ARL's Prudence Adler of "ignorance…and lack of realism" for noting that the historical record will continue to be available in microfiche and microfilm. "*The future of research* is the digital library, whose goal is to democratize access and improve the quality of everyone's research." [Emphasis added.] I don't buy that reasoning—and I don't buy the idea that the convenience of researchers automatically overrides the rights of creators, as Wiggins explicitly states here: "As a writer and as a researcher, for me the loss of the complete archives

completely outweighs 100,000 freelancers not getting their $0.50 royalty checks every year."

Wiggins says "Tasini claims that the publishers may owe hundreds of billions of dollars to freelancers." If true, I agree with Wiggins: "That's absurd." But the *Times*' only counter-offer was $0: sign away all rights now, or we rip out the articles. Let's say that the *Times* has received $50 million so far in licensing rights for its full-text archives and that three percent of the articles came from freelancers not covered by post-1995 contracts. (I pulled the $50 million out of thin air but the three percent is based on publisher claims.) Typical contracts provide that subsidiary rights fees are split evenly between publisher and writer. So the *New York Times* could plausibly have offered 1.5 percent of $50 million—that is, $750,000—as a negotiated settlement. That would probably cover the publisher's legal fees. If the NWU turned down the offer, there would be little question as to who was acting in good faith. But if any such offer was made, I'm not aware of it.

In personal email, Wiggins noted his interest in my "insights as to the responsibilities of libraries and library organizations here. If this is a big moral issue, should libraries be including it in their negotiations with aggregators? In any event, shouldn't libraries demand lower fees next year for now-devalued archives?"

I'm not sure I see it as a moral issue. I see it as a legal and ethical issue. Publishers have been quick to assert every scintilla of copyright protection available to them. With DMCA and UCITA they're pressing the point at the expense of libraries and users. I believe that the *creators* of intellectual property should have legal recourse as well. I believe that ALA and ARL acted properly in supporting the rights of creators. And yes, I think that libraries and consortia should raise the issue.

Read the sources. Make up your own mind. This may be a case where no one's entirely right.

Ebook Watch
Keeping Up with the Ebook Saga

Sure, I'm caught up. There's a stack of perhaps 300 pages of media-related stories I need to review—but the summer madness did catch up with direct ebook stories. I note the quarter-page black-and-white *TV Guide* ad that fulfills Gemstar's grandiose promise to RCA. I note that RCA's REB readers *do* turn up in ads—maybe once a month, in the smallest possible placement, in one of the electronics chains.

Meanwhile, there's a certain bizarre charm to citing ebook stories in chronological order, just as I do in some other *Cites & Insights* sections. Don't read too much into the sequence. With few exceptions, it really is an annotated diary of sorts.

We begin this installment with an item from the *Bradenton Herald* (Florida, I believe), as posted at braden.infi.net/content on July 14. It seems that the Manatee County library system used a state grant to offer "20,000 books on the Internet"—NetLibrary, based on the description. The first three months ended with *52* checkouts; Manatee County doesn't plan "to spend a dime to continue making books available on computers." That story may catch the overall spirit of today's ebooks as well as any.

Recommended: Lucia Snowhill writes "E-books and their future in academic libraries: an overview" in the July/August 2001 *D-Lib* (www.dlib.org). She's a librarian at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and was part of California Digital Library's EBook Task Force. The group concluded "all the elements that would make the e-book market viable are not quite in place." She lists those elements—*which don't include readability* (although detailed discussions do mention readability)—and explains what's missing in CDL's view. In addition to that explication, she offers notes from the task force's investigation of academic experiences with ebooks. Every institution said that ebook acquisition had little or no impact on print purchases. Most institutions did not have formal user feedback mechanisms. Few had purchased ebook appliances. A good article, worth reading.

Recommended: This one surprised me a bit: "Verso" by Peter Zelchenko, posted July 16 on eBookWeb (www.ebookweb.org). While I could question a few of the points that Zelchenko makes, it's a thoughtful piece about the uses, environmental impact, and faulty promise of ebooks.. Like me, Zelchenko does see useful niches for ebooks—and even more uses for PoD—but he recognizes the faults of the ebook hype.

M.J. Rose's July 17 column for *Wired News* focuses on Print on Demand—specifically the MTI PerfectBook-080, able to produce a perfect-bound paperback in 12 minutes after receipt of an Internet order. I've mentioned this or similar machines previously; in this case, the price should be "under $100,000" within a year.

Gary Frost reports on SHARP's "Futurist Visions of the Book" held July 20, 2001, in a fascinating if difficult report at www.futureofthebook.com. I don't remember the name for which SHARP is an acro-

nym, but I know it's a group I've always thought would be interesting had I but money enough and time. Good, challenging reading.

M.J. Rose most often appears at *Wired News,* but she contributes a July 30 piece to *Salon.* "E-book outcast" is an odd combination of fevered defense of ebooks—"In the past six months alone, more than 5 million e-books have been downloaded off the Web. And read"—and awareness that, although some of her books are now in traditional form, she's stuck as an ebook evangelist. It's messed up her career as a novelist. I'd love to know more about that "five million" claim—but, given the consistently high quality of M.J. Rose's writing, I really should check out one of her novels! In traditional print form, to be sure.

I would have sworn I discussed Geoff Shandler's plaintive essay decrying BookScan as a likely road to the ruination of good books. (He wrote about it in *The Industry Standard.)* Maybe I did, maybe I didn't—but in any case, Eliza Truitt offers a rejoinder in a July 30 piece on *Slate* entitled "Apocalypse soon." She asserts that BookScan won't be the death of literary darlings—because we already have a non-judgmental bestseller list. *USA Today* combines all kinds of books into a 150-item list, reflecting actual sales at 3,000 bookstores. Yes, *USA Today*'s list tends toward a "general cloud of crap" if you're a highbrow—and it's been around for years. "But the *NYT* best-seller list will still be the one that publishers love to hate."

David Streitfeld writes a downbeat story about ebook "success" in the August 6 *Los Angeles Times* (latimes.com) entitled "E-book saga is full of woe—and a bit of intrigue." Streitfeld gets some great quotes from people in the industry. Publishing consultant Lorraine Shanley: "There's only one place e-books are popular: the courtroom." Richard DeGrandpre, author of *Digitopia*, published as a Random House ebook: "My book is just dead." A consultant who founded Random House's ebook operation, regarding the Sklyarov case: "Arresting Sklyarov was insane…" DeGrandpre is so discouraged that he's telling people *not* to buy the print version of his book: "If it's going to be a failure, it might as well be a huge failure." Not surprisingly (but sadly), although Adobe backed off the Sklyarov arrest, the AAP wants him prosecuted—bizarrely enough, believing that the encryption-cracking software "makes it less likely that e-books will soon become a popular reading format." Yep: readers don't give a damn about readability, but we won't put up with a format that offers fair use! The piece closes with a comment from Kurt Vonnegut—who is one of the authors in the RosettaBooks lawsuit but who hasn't looked at his books on the computer: "The e-

book is a ridiculous idea. The printed book is so satisfactory, so responsive to our fingertips. So much of this new stuff is utterly unneeded."

If you've seen "E-books solving a problem consumers don't have" in the August 9 *Chicago Tribune*, also by David Streitfeld—it's the same story, give or take a few subheads and one or two sentences. The *Trib* owns the *Times* and called their later story "special to the Tribune."

Recommended: Karen Coyle offers a good brief piece at ALA TechSource (www.techsource.ala.org) in "Today's technology: E-book as superbook?" (posted August 8). She notes that ebooks are just plain harder to read (although I think she understates the difficulty) and concentrates on the added services that ebooks can provide. She's right, at least in some cases. Once again, it's a case of finding appropriate niches—starting with the admission that, for the larger market, ebooks don't make the grade.

Recommended: Dennis Dillon is Assistant Director for Collections and Information Resources at the University of Texas at Austin. He writes about UT Austin's experience with NetLibrary and other ebooks in "E-books: the University of Texas experience, part 1," *Library Hi Tech* 19:2 (spring 2001), pp. 113-124. It's a detailed look at the reality of ebook use within a major university, including the sensible guidelines that Austin adopted and some future ebook plans. Dillon concludes that ebooks are to printed books as television is to radio and movies: another format with its own strengths and weaknesses. This is the best real-world discussion of ebooks within academic libraries that I've seen to date.

M. J. Rose's August 14 column on *Wired News* (www.wired.com) considers increased prices for print-on-demand (PoD) books from Xlibris and 1stbooks and RosettaBooks' silly experiment in making Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* available for $1—as long as you read it in 10 hours. While that's more than enough time to read any of Christie's books in paper form, it's an invitation to frustration for ebook users. But you can spend another $4.99 and get permanent access to the ebook. Or you could borrow it from the library or buy a cheap mass-market paperback. As to the increased PoD prices, we shouldn't be surprised. Booksellers want bigger profits and demand hefty discounts on books. PoD books have been short-discount items. Xlibris has made the situation interesting: the same book may cost $22 at Amazon and return $2.20 to the author—or $18.65 at Xlibris.com and return $5 to the author.

Press Watch II: Commentary

"The good life: 100 products you'll love," *FamilyPC* 8:7 (July 2001), pp. 61-76.

I'm not sure why this *sixteen-page* article (no intervening ads) got to me so much. Sure, it's almost a third of the "editorial" content in the issue (if you leave out the dreadful "here's a bunch of links about a mildly interesting topic" no-brainers). Sure, it's consumerism run amok. But I usually skip "best of year" and other gonzo product retrospectives (including those astonishing "best products of 2001" features in July, prepared in March).

What got to me here is that there's no plausible reason for these products to be in *FamilyPC*—with this bizarre exception: you can buy (or learn about) them all on the Web. Think I'm kidding? You tell me—what do the Care-Free Humidifier Plus 333350 from Hunter Fan, Salton's Breadman Ultimate Breadmaker Professional, EdgeCraft's Chef'sChoice Diamond Home Multi-Stage Knife Sharpener, and Braun's Multiquick Deluxe Handblender and Chopper have to do with personal computing?

The first paragraph calls this nonsense "this year's list of top 100 products." I'm surprised there are no kitchen sinks here; they've thrown in everything else. Always with thought to efficiency and cost-effectiveness—as when they say that the $1,044 Samsung SyncMaster 150Mp TFT "won't bust your budget." It can also function as a TV receiver! Of course, another Samsung 15" LCD display getting very good reviews costs $600—but paying a mere $440 extra to watch TV on a 15" screen won't "bust your budget" in *FamilyPC*'s world.

Dvorak, John C., "Fixing the Internet," *PC Magazine* 20:13 (July 2001), p. 79.

It's Dvorak the Librarian! With professional skills equaling those of Nicholson Baker, he tells us that "all informational Web sites should be self-cataloging" so that you could "browse by subject the same way you can browse a library bookshelf." He would allow *one tag per site:* "You decide what your site is about and code it appropriately for cataloging. Man! The Library of Congress clearly employs rank amateurs: consider how frequently they assign two, three, or even four subject headings to a book.

That's one silly item in Dvorak's set of "solutions to my top pet peeves—along with my plea for Microsoft to cut back on browser features, please!"

(I'm sure it's the features that *other* people use that Dvorak wants eliminated; it works that way for all of us.) It's good to know that Dvorak has a Solution to every Problem and that, as he grows older, he grows no less certain of his infallibility. He believes that we should "shut down the Internet for five years, scrap TCP/IP, and develop a secure transport protocol…" and assures us that he's not kidding.

Just a few gems from a one-page column that's an unintentional laugh a minute. He wants URLs limited to 60 characters and thinks violators "should be punished." He thinks there should be separate Internets for separate purposes—one for e-mail, one for the Web, and so on. And, of course, anything that Dvorak finds personally annoying should be *banned*, presumably by some legal authority. (Remember: *PC Magazine* gets Mr. Hyde; *Computer Shopper* sees Dvorak's Dr. Jekyll at times.)

It isn't worth a separate item, but I can't help noting a wonderful bit within the User-to-User section of the same issue, on p. 92. A correspondent refers to a previous *PC Magazine* article, and the editors kindly include the URL. Here's the parenthetical clause; you can draw your own conclusions: "("Enter URLs with Fewer Keystrokes," *www.pcmag.com/stories/solutions/0,8224,2690501,00.html*)" Italics in the original.

Furger, Roberta, "A call to action," *FamilyPC* 8:8 (August 2001), pp. 58-9, and Cohen, Alan, "Is the price right?", same issue, pp. 85-8.

Does the savvy consumer know what the review editors are writing? Apparently not at *FamilyPC*—and while editorial diversity is a wonderful thing, this combination looks strange. Furger's column is about using the Net to become a better consumer—finding product news and views and voicing your grievances. In the first category, she offers the highest recommendation to *Consumer Reports* online. It's not free, but it's a trusted source. She goes on, "For decidedly less unbiased, but still useful feedback from 'real' people, check out Epinions.com, where consumers weigh in with their opinions on hundreds of popular items." I'm not sure why she put quotes around "real," but I'd do so because there's every reason to believe that manufacturer's shills and other biased reviewers play a significant role in Epinions.com and most other "consumer-based" opinion sources. That doesn't make it worthless, but requires a different level of intellectual filtering than reasonably-objective reviews from a magazine that doesn't accept advertising.

Cohen's section is a group of fee-based Web servces: "we tell you which ones are worth it." ConsumerReports.com gets one of the lowest ratings in

the roundup. Why? "The site is merely an archived collection of the magazine… A better bet: Go to Epinions.com and read detailed user reviews on many of the same products. You can also surf a bit and find countless niche sites offering a wealth of information on stuff like bikes, digital cameras, and DVD players." Apparently, for Cohen and the family reviewers, independent editorial integrity count for zilch. Epinions offers opinions and lots of them—doesn't quantity automatically equal quality?

"50 ways to beat the times," *FamilyPC* 8:8 (August 2001), pp. 60-6.

With *Suck* on possibly-permanent "vacation," someone else needs to shoot fish in a barrel; that's my only excuse for noting yet another travesty from our friends at *FamilyPC*. This cover feature has all of *FamilyPC*'s hallmarks: it's a list, it's all Web sites, and it's almost all about commerce.

Consider a few of these wonderful tips for getting by in troubled economic times—and remember that these are tips for families with young children. #4 suggests that you go to NCFurnitureOnline to *buy your furniture*—just the thing we've all wanted to do on the Web. #7 shows you where to get $275 handbags for $249 and $580 Prada backpacks for $365; surely your children can't go back to school with anything less than Prada! Tendollars.com sells everything for $10—including a pound of coffee (here I've been squandering $5.95 on Kauai Coffee from Trader Joe's), bubble baths, sports mugs, or Tweety and Sylvester staplers. Such bargains!

#25, "Bank on your savings," reveals financial sophistication befitting a captain of industry. "Rates on short-term certificates of deposit vary by as much as 2 percent. Put $10,000 in the CD with the higher rate and you'll have an extra $200 in three months." Right. Try $50, that is, 2% *annual* yield divided by four. (If anyone can point me to an insured CD that *pays* 2% interest in three months, much less 2% more than any other CD, I'd be grateful.

#28 says to move somewhere else. Why, Money.com says "if you make $100,000 in Berkeley, Calif., you can move to Eugene, Ore., and live just as well there on a salary of $51,000." If you believe that formulation, there are *four* bridges in the Bay Area I'd be happy to lease to you…

Not to run this into the ground, but let's close with #38, "consider a career change." One of the two sites recommended? "Find out what your sun sign says about your work habits and which jobs are right for you at Career.Astrology.com." Sounds sensible to me. And a sure way to raise kids who don't fall for antiscientific claptrap!

Slater, Michael, "The fall and rise of home video," *Computer Shopper* 21:8 (August 2001), p. 60.

"Video, like all media, is on an *inexorable* path from analog to digital." There's the opening sentence of another predictable piece from one of technology's ongoing True Believers. What's lovely here is the logical path Slater uses to arrive at a conclusion that we're all going to have PCs in our living rooms. Oh, and digital videocams are doomed, according to Slater: what we really want (and we'll all have, because *this stuff is inevitable whether you want it or not*) are digital still cameras that can store brief, mediocre-quality video clips.

I won't attempt to recreate Slater's logic. I'd say it's just as inexorable as the path of all media from analog to digital. That's particularly true for all of you who now have slide projectors or 35mm projectors in your living rooms. Read in the right frame of mind, Slater's article is howlingly funny. I'm guessing he doesn't see that.

Machrone, Bill, "Missing the boat on broadband," *PC Magazine* 20:14 (August 2001), p. 67.

Moan, groan, why aren't us good little clones running out and installing DSL or cable modem? Big Bill just can't stand it. Here's how the lead paragraph starts:

> *Are you nuts?* That's the question I'd like to pose to all those people who can get DSL or cable modem service but who have opted not to sign up for it…

Maybe some of us have lives, lives in which the Internet plays a very small part (at least at home). But Machrone knows the *real* reasons why we aren't buying. Consider these:

➢ "**Lack of intellectual curiosity.** Maybe people who watch a lot of 'Charmed,' 'Fear Factor, and 'WWF Smackdown' are sufficiently passive that they have no desire to explore the world beyond their remotes." But Bill knows: the Web is "a portal into a world of sites that no home reference shelf can match." I can't swear that Bill Machrone has never been in a good public library, but I do note that books never seem to play a part in his writing. If you're not on the Web, you must be a stupid Vidiot. Thanks, Bill.

➢ "**Past experience.** The Web at dial-up speeds is a completely different experience from the broadband Web… Once you [experience a broadband connection], there's no going back." But I get broadband Web at the office every day, and I'm free to use it for leisure sites on

my lunch hour—and, for the part of the Web I care about, V.90 works just fine.

- ➤ "**Broken promises.**" These include the multitude of incompatible video, encryption, messaging, and music "standards." "Some of us sigh and install another helper app in the browser, but lots of people throw their hands up in despair and decide that it's all too complicated." This is the first point revised: we're just *too dumb* for broadband. Or maybe we have better things to do.
- ➤ "**Impossible dreams.** Online retail was supposed to blow away brick-and-mortar selling…" This section, which goes on to say that advertisers have taken away the dollars "needed to build out the broadband network and to create all of that great content" and that the wireless Web is "in much worse shape," is just plain confusing.

"How do we break the deadlock and get things moving again? Grow the target audience. If you or your friends and neighbors can get broadband and haven't done it yet, go get it. You won't regret the decision."

Why? You've told me that "great content" (which I can get on DVD, on broadcast TV, or in books, CDs and magazines) isn't there and probably won't be for free; you've called me a couch potato and too dumb to live; and you admit that broadband Web media represent a chaotic mix of so-called standards.

I don't have broadband because I don't see any need for it at home, for me, right now. That could change. Heaven knows AT&T wants to bring me @Home. I don't happen to believe that I'm nuts—and Bill's rant mostly makes me think a little less of the esteemed VP of technology for Ziff-Davis Media.

Belle, Jeff, "The long road to broadband," *EContent* 24:6 (August 2001), pp. 38-43.

I'm being a little unfair putting this piece in "Press Watch II." As it stands, it's a decent overview of "last mile" issues and how various technologies might solve it. There's one crucial lack, however. In discussing the "slower-than-anticipated deployment of broadband," particularly in homes, the article completely omits a key factor: Need and desire.

Instead, Belle hypes the most optimistic forecasts. Read this sentence: "Still, while only about 18% of households in the U.S. subscribe to any form of broadband service today, that number is expected to nearly double by year-end." In other words, *in the last four months of 2001, as many people will sign up for broadband as have done so since its inception.* If you find that assertion believable, you may have a career as a market analyst. Note that, in the week after I read

that sentence, Covad went bankrupt and Excite@Home is on the verge of bankruptcy.

Review Watch

Typically, "Review Watch" now appears in every *other* issue, partly because that improves the chances that there will be clusters of comparative reviews that provide more overall information about the field—for example, reviews of LCD displays, notebook computers and utility suites in this edition.

Digital Cameras

Tynan, Daniel, "Shutter delight," *FamilyPC* 8:8 (August 2001): 90-3.

This roundup includes nine models costing $500 or less, with resolutions ranging from 1280x960 to 2048x1536. High score goes to Canon's $399 PowerShot A20, a 1600x1200 camera that's easy to use and takes great pictures. Barely behind is HP's $299 PhotoSmart 315, with the same resolution and some nice features, but average picture quality. These ratings are for family use and lack both detailed objective quality measures and sample photos, but it's still another data point.

Displays and Projectors

Bojorquez, Tony A., and James Galbraith, "15-inch flat-panel displays," *Macworld* September 2001, pp. 28-30.

Note the other LCD display reviews below: this is an interesting time to buy the slightly-obsolescent 15" analog LCDs (even though digital displays should offer slightly better pictures). While this article doesn't provide enough detail on each of the dozen displays reviewed, it does include reasonable background. The population reviewed here overlaps only slightly with the smaller groups in *PC Magazine* (and, indirectly, *PC World)*. Here, the Editors' Choice goes to Envision's $449 EN-5100e, which offers good performance for its price, good brightness, and the best combination of color quality and viewing angle in the roundup. Two other displays also earn four-mouse ratings: Acer's $549 FP 563 and Samsung's $799 SyncMaster 150MP (pricey, but it includes a TV tuner). Note that the Acer rated highly in *PC World*'s uninformative "Top 10" page, right behind a much cheaper Samsung model.

Jantz, Richard, "Have projector, will travel," *PC World* 19:7 (July 2001), pp. 137-9.

This mini-roundup includes three true light-weight portables (under five pounds—although one of them has a traveling weight of 9.1 pounds) and "regular" portables (six to eight pounds, or as high as 12.5 travel weight). All of them include speakers and native 1024x768 resolution; since *PC World* didn't run objective brightness, contrast, or uniformity tests, it's hard to make careful comparisons. (They judged units based on subjective comparisons of image quality.) Best Buys go to Compaq's $4,999 MP2800 in the lightweight category (3.4 pounds, 6.5 traveling) and InFocus' $5,399 Proxima DP6150 in the portable group (7.9 pounds, 12.5 travel weight).

Poor, Alfred, and M. David Stone, "Half a G for an LCD," *PC Magazine* 20:14 (August 2001), pp. 32-3.

This appears to be the time to buy an LCD display for your PC, with prices lower than they've ever been—and also, if you believe the warnings, lower than they're *likely* to be this fall and next year. This roundup includes five 15" (viewable) displays, all with analog interfaces, 1024x768 native resolution, and—refreshingly—no pixel defects or ghosting. KDS' $400 Radius Rad-5 gets the Editors' Choice for its price and fine image quality, but IBM's $540 T540 TFT Flat Panel and ViewSonic's $480 View-Panel VE150m earn the same four-dot rating. The ViewSonic includes tiny built-in speakers.

PC World's "Top 10 monitors" page for September 2001 features 15" LCDs. As usual, *PC World* lacks enough information to make comparisons between the two roundups—but the IBM T540 shows up in ninth place here, while neither the ViewSonic or KDS appears at all. For what it's worth, Samsung's $499 SyncMaster 570vTFT comes in first while Acer's $549 FP563 is second. Neither was included in *PC Magazine*'s roundup.

Networking Products

Waring, Becky, "Wireless comes home," *PC World* 19:7 (July 2001), pp. 119-28.

If you need a home network, wireless may be the way to go. This roundup covers eleven products that use 802.11b or Wi-Fi, a wireless standard offering 11mbps maximum throughput and, theoretically, up 100 foot range. Phone-line networking is considerably cheaper and somewhat faster, but no real help if you want your notebook to be connected while you're out in the back yard.

It's a good article, worth reading if home networking makes sense to you. The single Best Buy is Linksys' BEFW11SR EtherFast Wireless AP, $289 for the base station plus $49 for each PCI card adapter (for desktops), $129 for PC Card (notebooks), or $149 for USB (if you don't want to open a desktop's case or don't have a slot). The base unit includes a programmable firewall and offers easy installation and strong features.

Notebook Computers

Gore, Andrew, "iBooks," *Macworld* August 2001, pp. 24-5.

If Andrew Gore doesn't actually don a pleated microskirt and tight top and hold pompons while he writes "reviews," they sure do come out that way. There's no more fanatical cheerleader for Apple than Gore, probably including Steve Jobs himself. So, woo-woo, Apple's finally made it possible to carry around a *light* notebook: a mere 4.9 pounds! (Sony makes some great three-pound notebooks—but, as he notes most forcefully, they don't include internal CD-ROM drives. Gateway and Dell do make notebooks with such drives that cost less than $2,000 and weigh 5.2 pounds. Never mind.)

Get past the cheerleading and this is a useful brief roundup of the three new iBook models—the cheapest of which won't run Mac OS X, an odd marketing decision at this point. Naturally, the two more powerful models get 4.5 mouse ratings. Of course, Gore derides all Windows notebooks as, at best, "boxy but good," while this wonder is—well, boxy, and comes in the following array of exciting colors: "elegant white."

(The August 2001 *Computer Shopper* includes a full-page review of the midrange $1,499 iBook. Without the cheerleading of *Macworld*, it's a highly positive review, yielding a Best Buy seal. While graphics aren't quite strong enough for hardcore gaming, the reviewer considers it a solid value in most other respects.)

Graven, Angela, "Dude, where's my desktop?" *PC Magazine* 20:14 (August 2001), pp. 148-62.

It's an old familiar song: notebooks are so good that your desktop PC is obsolete. You still pay a huge percentage premium for portability, but with lower prices overall that may not be a killer. Desktops still have the edge in large displays and offering a comfortable distance between keyboard and display. Meanwhile, this roundup includes nine notebooks in the midrange category: five or six pounds, 14" screens (or larger), costing roughly $3,000 with 128MB SDRAM, an optical drive, and (typically)

20GB hard disk. You can configure an incredible desktop PC for $3,000, but that's beside the point.

Two units appear to strike the best balances between power (big screens and long battery life) and portability, winning Editors' Choices. Dell's $2,925 Latitude C600 offers an unusually high-resolution screen (1400x1050, 124 pixels per inch on the 14.1" display) and surprisingly long battery life; with a Pentium III-1000 and CD-RW drive, it's generally well equipped. IBM's $3,150 ThinkPad T22 has the same high-resolution screen and a capacious 32GB hard disk but substitutes a DVD-ROM drive for Dell's CD-RW. The IBM also had very good battery life—and you can't beat ThinkPad keyboards.

One other unit earned the same four-dot rating as the two Editors' Choices: Apple's $3,499 PowerBook G4 Titanium. It's lighter than previous PowerBooks, includes a wide-screen 15.2" display, and performed well, with an average battery life.

A sidebar offers summary reviews of half a dozen economy notebooks: heavier, a little slower, typically with smaller screens, but decent units for around $1,200. Three of the six earned four-dot ratings: Apple's $1,299 iBook, Dell's $1,199 Inspiron 2500, and Toshiba's $1,200 Satellite 1755.

Somers, Asa, "Hitting the books," *Computer Shopper* 21:8 (August 2001), pp. 100-08.

The title refers to the sensible notion that most college students will fare better with notebook computers than with desktops—assuming the notebooks don't get stolen. The four systems reviewed here, all from big-name vendors, cost less than $2,000 and have at least 600MHz CPUs, 128MB RAM, 10GB hard disk, modem and Ethernet ports, and Windows 98 or Windows ME. Three of the four include DVD-ROM drives; one substitutes a CD-ROM drive. Weights run 5.1 to 7.6 pounds, or 6.7 to 8.5 pounds including floppy, battery, and AC adapter; all screens are active matrix with 1024x768 resolution, either 14.1 or 15" diagonal.

It's a fairly detailed, thoughtful roundup with no single "Best Buy" and no runaway winner. While the $1,472 Compaq Presario 1700 receives the highest point rating (it's cheap, light and fast, but the two-spindle design means that the diskette and optical drive don't both fit inside the case simultaneously), the others all did well. IBM's $1,934 ThinkPad A21e gets the lowest rating, surprisingly—while it has a big screen, long battery life, and great keyboard, it's expensive and offered mediocre performance.

A sidebar offers a separate review of Gateway's $1,899 Solo 3350CS, a subnotebook that weighs considerably less than the others at the expense of screen size and internal drives (everything but the hard disk runs externally).

Printers

Fraser, Bruce, "Macworld's ultimate buyers guide: Printers," *Macworld* August 2001, pp. 46-62.

This lengthy roundup is worth reading if you're a Mac owner thinking about a new printer. Some of the details are just wrong—such as the implication that a typical laser printer will cost you five cents a page for text pages—but there's a lot of good information here. The roundup includes brief summaries of several market segments. Brother's HL-1670N ($749) is the Editors' Choice as a monochrome laser; HP's DeskJet 935c ($199) gets the nod as an inexpensive inkjet; Epson's Stylus Photo 780 ($149) is their choice as a photo-quality inkjet.

Scanners

Poor, Alfred, and M. David Stone, "Mind your scanners," *Computer Shopper* 21:8 (August 2001), pp. 126-32.

While you can buy flatbed scanners for $100 or so, you're likely to be happier if you spend a little more. The five units in this roundup cost $129 to $180 and come from Canon, Epson, HP, Microtek, and Visioneer. Microtek's $130 ScanMaker V6UPL runs away with the review, scoring significantly higher than the others and earning a Best Buy seal. It's fast, does great scans up to legal size, has interfaces to suit novices and experts, and includes document management. Just don't plan on scanning negatives for quality results: although it comes with a limited slide adapter, optical resolution is only 600x1200 dpi, on the low side for this kind of work. A sidebar offers brief reviews of "next-level scans," six scanners costing $250 to $500; most of these offer higher resolution and more features.

Sound and Music

McDonald, Glenn, "Make it funky," *FamilyPC* 8:8 (August 2001), pp. 94-5.

These programs, like those in the *PC Magazine* roundup below, let you "create" music by combining and modifying supplied samples (or your own samples). To me, this is like combining other people's paragraphs to "write" articles, but I'm sure many people will find these programs amusing. Highest rated here are a group of $15 to $40 "eJay" programs from Voyetra Turtle Beach, one of the best names in PC audio hardware. Interestingly, Magix

Music Video Maker rates lowest for this group, but still garners a Recommended seal.

Menaschè, Emile, "Compose yourself," *PC Magazine* 20:13 (July 2001), pp. 216-18.

These six programs offer ways to "create" music or at least mix your creations. I use quotes only because some programs exist mostly to let you combine existing audio files into new arrangements, which is a somewhat degraded form of creation. That includes the Editors' Choice, Magix' $60 Music Video Maker Generation 6.

Schwartz, Steve, *et al*, "Most valuable players," *Computer Shopper* 21:5 (May 2001), pp. 104-110.

Mandatory caveat: As with most such reviews, this roundup of MP3 portables says that they offer "CD-quality sound," which just isn't so—although well-converted MP3 is probably more than good enough for portable players. None of these are cheap players, particularly as compared to CD portables or even today's CD+MP3 players—but they're light (1.7 to 5.2 ounces), tiny (the two Best Buys are, respectively, 3.7x2.2x0.8" and 3.5x2x1"), and completely resistant to jogging since they're playing from RAM.

Two units earn Best Buy ratings, one of them a surprise. Intel is in the end-user business with the $300 Pocket Concert Audio Player. Its biggest feature is 128MB RAM, twice as much as other players—but there's no removable-memory slot, so you're stuck with that amount. It includes an FM tuner and good headphones. SonicBlue may seem like a new name, but Rio's one of the first names in MP3 portables. The $280 Rio 800 has well-designed controls, a good screen, voice recording, and 64MB onboard with proprietary add-on memory. It also offers "excellent audio quality." Worst of the bunch is Philips' $200 Rush SA101, with a slow connection and a mere 32MB RAM—but it's relatively cheap.

As a side-note, the May 2001 *Sound & Vision* noted some of the new CD portables with MP3 support. One of them drops below the $100 mark, but two things struck me a bit odd. First, the company's name may not inspire confidence: Cheaptroniks. Second, the model is the MP-2000 Discman—and I'm a bit astonished that (if) Sony hasn't trademarked "Discman."

Seff, Jonathan, "CD-burning software," *Macworld* July 2001, pp. 32-3.

You can burn a lot more than music on CDs, but that's still one major use. This review covers two programs for the Mac. I'm not sure I understand the claim in the first sentence that "Not long ago, CD-

RW drives were too costly for all but mammoth corporations…and the planet's wealthiest residents," but that hyperbole isn't relevant to the review.

Macs with built-in CD-RW drives can use iTunes and DiscBurner from Apple for free, but both commercial applications reviewed here are more powerful. Discribe, bundled with Sony drives, is easy to use and performs basic tasks well; it also shows you the total size of files you plan to burn before you commit. Toast 5 Titanium doesn't do that, but it offers a wide variety of capabilities—including the ability to create Video CDs (low-quality MPEG-1 video on a CD). Some version of Toast comes bundled with most Mac CD-RW drives (except Sony's); the strong 4.5-mouse review says that it's worth the price if you don't already have it.

Starrett, Robert, "Disc inferno," *PC Magazine* 20:13 (July 2001), pp. 176-88.

The estimable Robert Starrett comes over from *EMedia* to prepare this roundup of CD-RW and DVD-R drives, with some worthwhile notes about the various flavors of writable DVD that make the field confusing. Editors' Choice among CD-RW drives is Yamaha's $250 CRW2200, a 20x drive with SafeBurn technology to prevent buffer underruns (the mostly-solved problem that ruins CD-Rs). It's remarkably fast, if a little expensive. Among writable DVD variants, the Editors' Choice is Pioneer's $995 DVR-A03, a DVD-RW drive that also writes DVD-Rs, CD-Rs, CD-RWs, and can read DVD+RW discs (when those drives arrive).

Utilities

Spector, Lincon, "Smooth-sailing utilities," *PC World* 19:8 (August 2001), pp. 103-15.

This article has a narrow focus: four utility suites (although one of the four is so incomplete that it doesn't belong in the roundup). Read in comparison with the *PC Magazine* roundup (below), it shows something about testing routines and criteria. For example, *PC World* does not appear to test for performance impact—the load that a suite places on the rest of the system. Given that this load can easily rob close to a quarter of available power (what's left over after Windows chews up its portion), that's a surprising omission.

Best Buy in this roundup is Ontrack's System-Suite 3 for its comprehensiveness and attractive price—but they're comparing the price to Norton SystemWorks 2001 *Professional Edition*, which costs more than the standard edition and adds features most of us just don't need. Further, this roundup calls the crash prevention utilities in McAfee and

Ontrack suites positive features—while, in my experience (and the experience of many others), every "crash-prevention" utility on the market causes more trouble than it corrects. (That's why Symantec removed crash protection from SystemWorks.) Oddly, there's no text discussion of the crash-prevention utilities.

This writeup also asserts that uninstallers such as CleanSweep "don't work," which overstates the situation considerably. (Given today's bizarre installation routines, many programs won't be fully monitored—but a good uninstaller can still do a better job of removing excess files than Windows' Add/Remove, particularly for the many programs that don't provide their own uninstallers.)

I wholeheartedly agree with one big plus for Ontrack's suite: PowerDesk Pro, "the file manager to beat all file managers," is sensational. That's why I paid for it as a separate $20 utility when I dropped SystemSuite's predecessor. Otherwise, the results here surprise me. Maybe it's just a difference of opinion and scoring methodology.

"Utilities," *PC Magazine* 20:12 (June 26, 2001), pp. 118-42.

This annual feature evaluates key PC utilities in several categories—this year, suites, antivirus, disk tools, and "the best of the rest." Despite improvements in Windows itself, you still benefit from a good suite of utilities—and you *must* use antivirus software. While this year's article lacks some of the rich background found in earlier years, it's still worth reading.

For suites, there's no surprise in the Editors' Choice: Norton SystemWorks 2001, Standard Edition ($60). While Norton continues to be a group of applications rather than a fully-integrated whole, it has some of the best tools—and it's avoided the worst pitfalls of the other suites. To wit, Norton no longer includes "crash protection" (which, in my experience and that of others, typically *caused* more crashes than it prevented), and Norton's typical full-time tools don't drain system performance significantly. That's a change for the better. Additionally, Norton AntiVirus, CleanSweep (uninstaller), and SpeedDisk defragmenter are all superior products. Admission: after trying others—notably including the suite currently called OnTrack SystemSuite—I've come back to SystemWorks and see no reason to change. The most surprising suite results are McAfee Office's poor showing (it's unstable and inconsistent) and SystemSuite's drain on performance.

If you buy SystemWorks—which I strongly recommend—then you can skip the antivirus section: you already own the Editors' Choice, Norton Anti-Virus 2001. By itself, NAV costs $40, so the suite is a much better bargain. The antivirus programs tested all earn ICSA Labs' Anti-Virus Product Cleaning Certification, so they all identify known viruses—but Norton offers the best real-time scanning (for email, Internet applications, and downloads) with the least impact on performance.

Two backup utilities earn Editors' Choices: Backup Exec Desktop 4.5 from Veritas ($79) for "traditional" file and disk backup to a range of devices and Backup NOW! Desktop Edition 2.2 from NewTech ($80) if you're backing up to CD-R or CD-RW drives. If you plan to backup to the Internet, plan to pay; an Editors' Choice goes to Connected TLM, $14.95 per month for 4GB of storage. It's slow for initial backups but uses incremental backups to speed normal operations.

Need to partition your hard disk? You can probably guess the Editors' Choice from the small set of choices: PowerQuest's $70 PartitionMagic 6.0. And if you need to create drive images—to clone machine configurations or other reasons—Norton Ghost 2001 ($70) is your best choice. The "best of the rest" offers quickie comments on quite a few miscellaneous utilities and system enhancements but does not offer standardized ratings. I rely on one of these tools: PowerDesk, formerly part of SystemSuite, now available as a free download. Combine its superior version of Windows Explorer with QuickView Plus ($49 from JASC Software, $59 if you buy the box) and you have a great way to manage and inspect files—including builtin Zip/Unzip facilities (PowerDesk treats Zip archives as subdirectories, extracting files automatically when you need them).

The Details

URL: cites.boisestate.edu/civ1i10.pdf