Cites & Insights:
Crawford at Large

One Quick Question

Would you find an end-of-volume index, covering the December 2000 *Cites & Insights* and the 13 from this year, useful? The index would be a separate print-oriented PDF file, probably issued near the end of the year, consisting of a cover sheet for the extended volume and a two-column index. I'm not sure how much detail the index would have.

If you *would* find such an index useful, drop me a note: wcc@notes.rlg.org. If you wouldn't—you don't save the issues anyway—no need to respond.

Responses by November 23, 2001 will be most helpful. (If I'm going to do an index, I would include a warning in the December 2001 *Cites & Insights* that binding—of whatever sort—should wait until the index appears.)

Tasini Continues

Marydee Ojala offers a worthwhile discussion of "fallout from the Tasini Supreme Court decision" in "So what happens now," *EContent* 24:7 (September 2001), pp. 35-7. In addition to noting the core of the decision and reactions from some database aggregators, she offers some perspective—and, in a few cases, pointed comment.

For example, she raises the question of "the integrity of the paper" in electronic format as opposed to print form. "Are publishers misleading researchers if they state that their newspapers are available full text…if, in fact, it's only a partial paper?" Key here is the next statement: "Purists will note that it's always been partial…" Looking at the magnificent journalism carried out in the days since September 11 by the San Francisco *Chronicle* (and most other major papers, I suspect), I'm even more aware than usual of how important context is—and context always disappears in full-text aggregation (along with most photos and ads).

I'm appalled but hardly surprised by the sneering comment (labeled as such!) by a special librarian: "It must be nice to be able to so leisurely search through paper archives to rapidly locate needed knowledge." Consider the apparent context: nothing prevents databases from retaining citations, abstracts, and index terms. So the database tells you exactly where the article should appear. Yes, going to paper archives or microform sets will take a few minutes longer than getting the full text as part of your search. But then, who needs a special librarian if everything's neatly organized into well-organized full-text databases? (I'm partly kidding, but the amount of whining over Tasini from the special library community is getting tiresome, particularly coupled with the apparent attitude that the rights of the writer don't count.)

Ojala fails to note that the National Writers Union has consistently offered to negotiate settlements and already operates a clearinghouse for rights. Those facts make the actions of the *New York Times* seem even more heavy-handed than this article would suggest.

The same issue ends with Mary Ellen Bates' "End of file" column, entitled "Houston, do you copy?" Bates begins with a sentence that warms my heart (and harks back to my very first "DisContent" column and an earlier *American Libraries* article): "Context, it seems, is crucial after all." She's discussing the real differences between print articles and their electronic full-text versions and Tasini's impact on research.

Inside This Issue

Bates' third paragraph is wonderful, noting her puzzlement at claims that Tasini creates holes in the historical record. It's worth reading the whole thing, but consider these key sentences: "While it is critical

to maintain complete archives of publications, online databases were never the way to do it. They aren't complete, never were, and never will be." Bates does mention NWU's Publication Rights Clearinghouse. Her essay fills in the pieces missing from Ojala's article; the combination deserves reading and makes one of the best combined perspectives I've seen.

Full disclosure: Marydee Ojala edits *Online*, where I write "PC Monitor" three times a year; Mary Ellen Bates used to edit *EContent* and, at the end of an hour-long conversation (in person, in my office at RLG), came up with the idea of "DisContent." I like, respect, and admire them both.

Then there's an item spelled out in the September 26 *Village Voice* and noted elsewhere. Call it Round Two of "Nobody messes with the *New York Times!*" The National Writers Union claims that the *Times* has blacklisted 13 NWU members, including playwrite Barbara Garson and NYU law professor Derek Bell. The *Times* doesn't dispute an email from the director of editorial contracts to editors saying "Our lawyers recommend that the newspaper not engage any of the below named plaintiffs to write for the newspaper."

The lawyers say it's not a blacklist—just good legal sense. Once the case is finally over, editors can go back to using whoever they want—but you don't deal with people while they're suing you. Maybe—except that only eight of the 13 are still part of the Tasini suit. Tasini thinks the memo is a warning to other writers who might dare challenge the mighty *Times*. It may be worth noting that the memo came out September 18; apparently the era of good will in New York only lasts so long.

Finally (for this month!), remember the *Complete National Geographic* case—where ALA and ARL argued that the CD-ROM version was *not* a new use of freelance work? According to Wired News (October 9), the Supreme Court turned down the publisher's appeal. That means a lower court will determine how much National Geographic owes Jerry Greenberg, who had photos in four of the 1,200 issues on the $100 CD-ROM set. Greenberg asserted, and the court apparently accepted, that the addition of music and a little promotional video on the CD-ROM makes it a new product. Hmm. Let's say each photo represents 10% of the value of an issue (that's absurdly high, given that a typical issue would have dozens of pictures). So a non-punitive award might amount to three cents for each CD-ROM set sold (this wasn't a class action suit).

I suspect the net result will be the disappearance of the *Complete National Geographic* set—but then, given the state of the CD-ROM industry, that might

happen anyway. It's too bad. As National Geographic pointed out, the set was an incredible bargain: the same issues on microfilm sell for $37,000. I can't imagine how you'd assemble a complete print run at this point—or where you'd put the 1,200 magazines. Another reminder: this set did not offer new forms of access; it was really nothing more than a convenient repackaging of the print magazines. Parallels to Tasini are a bit stretched.

Following Up

Corrections, amplifications, apologies, sequels and other direct additions to essays and other topics from the last two issues.

USB 2.0

PC World 19:10 (October 2001) offers another early review of USB 2.0's promise. Addonics $389 Pocket CD-RW drive is small, pricey, and compatible with both versions of USB. With USB 1.1, it wrote a full CD-R in just under 20 minutes: essentially 4x speed. With USB 2.0, that time went to just over 10 minutes—nearly the 8x speed claimed for the drive. That's not forty times the throughput but it's a start. Unfortunately, USB 2.0 support isn't built in to Windows 2000 or XP.

Copy-Protected Audio CDs

PC Magazine 20:17 (October 16, 2001) includes a neutral note on the "MediaCloQ" technology from SunnComm used for the *Tribute to Jim Reeves* album ("Trends and Quick Takes," *Cites & Insights* 1:11). The claim is that this technology plays the music on any standard player but won't allow copying or MP3 ripping unless you register the album first. A Forrester analyst says the idea will fall flat and that, if the technology works at all, it will prevent CDs from working on some players. That's old news.

What's amusing here is the commentary of a SunnComm official. The company's only heard of six playability problems (probably true, since Charley Pride isn't a chart-topper these days and most disgruntled buyers will just return the screwed-up CD). "He adds that MediaCloQ wasn't designed to prevent analog copies made from an audio CD player, but the copies don't have the intrinsic value of the original. 'BMG is trying to prevent proliferation of the exact digital original,' he says."

That's a new tack—and has nothing at all to do with MP3 ripping. In the most common data rates used for swapping, MP3 isn't even close to being an exact digital copy. Almost certainly, the loss of sound

quality from 128kbps MP3 encoding is greater than the loss of sound quality implicit in two digital-to-analog and analog-to-digital conversions using decent chips. It's about loss of *convenience:* the d:a/a:d conversion pair eliminates the ability to download album and song information automatically. But if someone wants to make lots of CD-Rs that will be indistinguishable from the original for 99% of users, there's *nothing* in the SunnComm methodology to prevent it.

As usual, this form of copy protection isn't about piracy. It's about the assumption that all your customers are crooks at heart, reducing their enjoyment of your product in the process. Short-sighted corporate stupidity might be another way to put it.

The "Daily Me"

October's "Trends and Quick Takes" includes some notes about the concept of customized daily news, the "Daily Me," and a trio of pieces on the subject by J.D. Lasica. He's still at it, this time in a library-related forum. LLRX.com for October 1 features "The promise of the Daily Me: an in-depth look at the different flavors of personalization." It's a detailed article. You may find it worth reading even if you're no more convinced than I am.

I do wonder that Lasica stays in a field he seems to dislike so much, but his disdain seems reserved for editors rather than journalists. I question that personalization is "intrinsic to new media." I question the assertion that "it's impossible to become closed off from the world at large" even as you abandon newspapers that aren't attuned to your own interests. I question that computer technology will *ever* be able to distinguish between quality journalism and dubious sources (except by domain) and that a bot will *ever* be able to bring you just the "one really good story" about a topic.

This may be a reworking of the *Online Journalism Review* articles; it may be new material. Don't ask me what it has to do with law libraries. Interesting reading, and maybe you'll believe what I don't.

Salon

I'm not sure how I encountered this site: www.scalsi.com/whatever. John Scalzi "specializes in online writing and consulting," has a book out and another on the way, offers a science fiction novel as a shareware ebook—and writes "John Scalzi's Whatever" or, more recently, "Scalzi.com (Daily) Whatever" as part of his increasingly-organized Website.

Someone probably linked me to the October 3 "Whatever," in which Scalzi discusses *Salon*'s move to restrict *all* news and political coverage to paid

subscribers, along with the soft-porn photos and other bizarre stuff there. He thinks it's the right thing to do: "As it happens, for once, I think Salon did something that wasn't financially stupid. I can't imagine the people who read Salon now will stop coming to the site, so long as there is some free content available on a daily basis." I can; I stopped going to *Salon* shortly after David Horowitz's first post-September 11 column and David Talbot's first mid-September editorial. But what do I know? I do love the final paragraph, where Scalzi offers $1,000 "right into Salon's quickly-emptying pocket, if you promise never to write another of your goddamned treacly 'Letters from the Editor' ever again."

That piece links back to four previous *Salon*-related articles; they're much more interesting. On August 29, Scalzi offers his conclusion after four months as a Salon Premium member: "What a friggin' scam." On July 11, he offered a pungent commentary on a remarkably idiotic *Salon* piece, "The day the brands died," in which various people deal with the "soul-crushing reality that they may have to do their own shopping again" now that Webvan and kozmo are kaput. April 26, he notes the beginning of Salon Premium and another of Talbot's grotesque editorials while also noting that Salon burns through money at an absurd rate—including, by the way, Talbot's own $226,000 salary. At that point, he asserts that Salon Premium will "fall on its ass" for some good, clearly articulated reasons. Finally, on April 10, he offered a column that—had I read it then—might have spared me a few hours of puzzlement as I read *Salon* articles and generally failed to appreciate them. His thesis on April 10 is that Salon has a way of making its writers "twee and annoying," like "the guy at a party who decided it's *really* important to impress on you how witty and intelligent and charming they are, but has unfortunately had one drink too many to pull it off." He suggests "smug intellectual overconfidence." Sounds about right. Remember that *Salon*'s founders came from the "other daily newspaper" in San Francisco, the one that only survived thanks to the charity of a joint operating agreement that gave it half of all ad revenue for one-sixth of all circulation—and that, as I read the site early on, this was the stuff that wasn't even good enough for the San Francisco *Examiner*.

FamilyPC: Gone

According to the editor's note in the September 2001 *FamilyPC*, the magazine was changing its name. Another source said that Ziff Davis was shutting it down entirely. The other source was right. A postcard arrived mid-October noting the shutdown

and extending my *PC Magazine* subscription (and offering a refund if I'd prefer).

Ziff always was cut-throat with magazines it purchased or initiated. Twice in recent years, a magazine has first gone bad, then gone under—*PC/Computing* then, *FamilyPC* now. At one point, I believe I subscribed to half a dozen Ziff-Davis magazines. Two of those remain: *PC Magazine* and *Computer Shopper*. As PCs increasingly become nothing more than tools and as people treat the Internet as somewhat less than revolutionary, there may be more ceased magazines in these areas.

Press Watch I: Articles Worth Reading

Tynan, Daniel, "PC deals: you better shop around," *PC World* 19:10 (October 2001), pp. 94-104.

Articles such as this are always interesting and never conclusive. "Undercover" shoppers in California, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Texas each visited eight retail stores that sell PCs (including Gateway Country, which aren't really stores, and an independent retailer in each state); Tynan also browsed six Web sites on which you can buy PCs—*not* all manufacturer sites—and called each one to see how phone sales compare to Web sales. Then they purchased a PC from each chain, online site, and an independent, made sure they worked, and returned them.

The article breaks things down into eight categories to label retail or Web shopping "best" or "worst" and comes with a table evaluating each vendor and one independent on several criteria. The short story is that Gateway Country is the Best Bet for retail PC shoppers and Dell is the best Web and phone option. Looking at star ratings, Best Buy and PCs for Everyone (an independent in Cambridge) tie for second if you're going retail (Circuit City and Office Depot tie for last place); HP comes in second among Web/phone sites with Gateway just behind, and Buy.com scores a distant last place.

I naively assumed that desktop warranties tended to be standard these days and that gouging for returns had gone away. Neither is true. Gateway's warranty for home PCs is longer than most; Polywell's is even longer, but they were slow to deliver and charge an outrageous 15% restocking fee. Since Polywell hits the buyer for shipping both ways, it cost *PC World* $467 to return a midrange

PC, more than a third of a reasonable price. Gateway tried hard to convince them to keep the PC by making it worth their while (ultimately offering to knock one-third off the price), not by making return difficult. Costco, while not a great place to buy a PC, is a fabulous place to return one—their policy is the same for PCs as for other goods: return it *any time* with a receipt for a full refund.

Not surprisingly, you get the usual story about places like Circuit City, where (at one store) the salesman simply added $270 for an extended warranty without asking then whined about removing it. A Best Buy salesman used scare tactics on a woman shopper to try to sell the overpriced extended warranty, including false statements about manufacturer warranties, and others in the store tried to hound her into the warranty every step of the way.

Pack, Thomas, "Slate's Moore has faith in online ads," *EContent* 24:7 (September 2001), pp. 56-7.

Slate is one of the older commercial online-only pseudo-magazines, founded in 1996 and still going fairly strong. This quick profile focuses on publisher Scott Moore rather than the higher-profile editor Michael Kinsley. He provides some interesting commentary on *Slate*'s flirtation with a subscription model and how advertising works for the site. Unlike *Salon*, *Slate* has consistently operated on a reasonably modest budget: the staff now numbers 33 and, according to Moore, revenues now equal expenses. It's a good interview, worth reading if you care about financial models for online journalism.

Randle, Quint, "A historical overview of the effects of new mass media introductions on magazine publishing during the 20th century," *First Monday* 6:9 (September 2001). (firstmonday.org).

The title may be tedious, but the article is anything but—at least if you're one of those who worry about new media sweeping older forms (such as print magazines) away in a massive shift to online. That's not the way it usually works, and there's no reason to believe this time is any different. Randle, on the faculty of the Department of Communications at Brigham Young University, offers a lively and impressively well-documented look at the effects of other media on magazines. I've been saying for some time that life (and media) tends toward complexity, with a specific tendency in most media from mass to specialized. That's specifically true for magazines. Randle says it better and with enough

footnotes and bibliographic references to back his message. Well worth reading.

Rotenberg, Marc, "Privacy and transparency: the paradox of information policy," reduction of a speech given at RLG's annual meeting. www.rlg.org/annmtg/ rotenberg01.html

I wasn't at my employer's annual meeting (only the top people at RLG and those giving presentations attend these meetings, which are primarily for the benefit of RLG members), so I didn't hear Rotenberg's speech. Based on this reduction, it must have been fascinating. It offers good casual commentary on the distinctions between privacy and secrecy with some understanding of the role of libraries. Rotenberg heads up the Electronic Privacy Information Center (www.epic.org).

Flecker, Dale, "Preserving scholarly e-journals," *D-Lib* 7:9 (September 2001). (www.dlib.org).

This relatively brief article begins by recognizing that long-term preservation of digital collections is important—and that "in certain ways, digital materials are incredibly fragile." Flecker goes on to note some planning projects now underway, funded by the Mellon Foundation, working on the specific task of preserving scholarly e-journals. He notes key assumptions behind the planning projects and a few of the issues that have been identified.

This article doesn't provide the answers—no sensible writer could pretend to know the answers (or whether "the answers" is a meaningful formulation). It does provide a concise, readable introduction to the issues at hand and what's happening now. Given that some (mostly outside the library community) have in the past been satisfied with "let the publishers do it" or "you can pay for an archive by selling access" (which implies that anything insufficiently popular isn't worth archiving), it's good to see that the academic library community is serious about finding *workable* solutions.

Lasica, J. D., "A scorecard for Net news ethics," *Online Journalism Review*, posted September 20, 2001. (ojr.usc.edu)

If you're concerned about the ethics of journalism (and you probably should be), this article deserves reading as it stands. In short, despite some ghastly lapses, online journalists generally seem to follow the same ethical standards as print journalists—as they should. When an editor says "The Internet is changing some of the rules, and a lot of the rules haven't been written yet" there's a good chance the editor is trying to cover his or her butt. (See the article for the rest of the quote and the offensive incident that generated it.)

You don't have to agree with all of Lasica's assertions to gain from this discussion. For that matter, if you don't worry much about journalism ethics, you might bring it closer to home. Do the missions, responsibilities, and ethics of librarianship change with increasing use of digital resources? I believe that they should not—any more than they should for journalists—but that it's easy to ignore those issues at times.

Landau, Ted, "Mac OS X first aid," *Macworld* October 2001, pp. 46-54.

If you're a Mac user you must be struggling with big X decision: to Unix or not to Unix? OS X is no more a stepwise upgrade than Windows XP (for Windows 98/95/ME users): it's an overlay to a fundamentally different Unix-based operating system kernel (just as Windows XP is based on the NT kernel). That's great in that the Mac finally gets preemptive multitasking and effective memory handling, which Windows has had since 1995—and, as with NT, it should mean that a frozen application in OS X won't bring down the whole Mac.

But Unix is nobody's warm-and-cuddly environment and quite a few of the old rules and tips don't apply. Rebuilding the desktop is irrelevant; isolating extension conflicts a thing of the past. You need a new set of tools—and you're likely to become familiar with such intuitive terms as "fsck" and "root access." I'm still astounded to see barely-readable screens of pure Unix in *Macworld*, such as the suggestion for emptying the trash if normal methods don't work. What could be easier: open the terminal, type cd .Trash, type ls, type sudo rm –R (name of file to be deleted), give your password…or, in some cases, chflags –R noschg (filename) or chflags –R nouchg (filename) or sudo chmod 777 (name). Powerful, yes. Intuitive?

You'll want to read this article and probably save it if you're acquiring a new Mac (which will ship with OS X) or upgrading. Unless you've already memorized *sudo rm*, *nouchg*, and all those other user-friendly commands.

Dvorak, John C., "Fiber: fantastic or fantasy?" *Computer Shopper* 21:10 (October 2001), p. 51.

Dvorak discusses FTTH, fiber to the home, and suggests that the infrastructure cost of this new service will bankrupt some companies and result in very slow growth. He expects "an early dot-com-like boom and bust with this technology, followed by steady growth." It's an interesting discussion—but I wonder about one key element of that "steady growth." For FTTH to work out financially, consumers need to be willing to pay around $150 per month

for a package of cable TV, telephone, and high-speed Internet connection. That doesn't include premium cables, video on demand, or cell phone—and might not include unlimited long distance.

In the July 2001 *EContent*, I questioned this model ("Dear AT&T Broadband...") and I still wonder how you get to $150—or $1,800 a year, which sounds like a lot of money. If you're not enchanted with high-speed Net access, don't use more than the typical expanded basic cable, and don't make lots of land-line phone calls, chances are the sum of your current telecom costs is about $65-$75 a month. What justifies charging twice that much? While the answer may be "that's the only way AT&T et al can make money on this," that's not a particularly good answer for the rest of us.

Yegulalp, Serdar, "Great Xpectations," *Computer Shopper* 21:10 (October 2001), pp. 126-32.

Just as with Mac owners and OS X, the rest of us may be considering the big change with a mixture of excitement and fear. Is Windows XP worth the hassle? How much hassle will it be? You may want to read several informed articles about the OS, including this one. I'm no happier than anyone else with XP's configuration-sensitive activation requirement (one of Microsoft's worst PR blunders of the last couple years), but otherwise this should be a faster, more stable, and more capable OS than Windows 98 or ME.

Mendelson, Edward, "Microsoft ships its biggest OS upgrade ever—early," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 32-4.

Another commentary on Windows XP, this time from the famed PC Labs. Should you upgrade? "Our answer is a qualified yes. Diehard DOS gamers and businesses that use custom DOS-based applications will want to think twice. And corporations that migrated to Windows 2000 don't need to rush employees over to Windows XP. But for the vast majority of users, the added stability of Windows XP should be a real draw. And the host of features is the icing on the cake." One nicety: XP boots significantly faster than Windows 2000 and slightly faster than the less-stable Windows ME.

English, David, "Flatly affordable," *Computer Shopper* 21:10 (October 2001), pp. 112-16.

You've heard the message by now: If you want an LCD display, this year's the best time to get one. Prices have never been lower and may very well rise in 2002. You'll still pay at least twice as much for an LCD as for a CRT, they're not as good for fast motion, and they don't offer the contrast, viewing angle, or color purity of good CRT displays—but they save space, weight, and power. I'm tired of the idea that a 15" LCD offers as much viewing space as a 17" (16"-viewable) CRT—the CRT offers roughly 14% more space—but since pro-LCD articles *always* make that questionable claim, this one's no worse. LCD may not be the future of flat displays, but sooner or later it's reasonable (albeit not inevitable) to believe that some kind of flat display will edge out CRTs for most applications. It sure is taking longer than expected, though!

Wiggins, Richard W., "The effects of September 11 on the leading search engine," *First Monday* 6:10 (October 2001). (firstmonday.org)

This one surprised me. It's about Google, how it was used on September 11 and beyond, and how it responded. Don't automatically buy all of Wiggins' assertions (I certainly don't), but do read the article and consider what it says—directly and indirectly—about the Negroponte/Gilder utopia of One Big Wire (a single Internet-based medium for all needs) and the way life actually works. Just before checking the October *First Monday*, I'd looked at some *Online Journalism Review* discussions of the Web and September 11, running into a little of the same information. That multisourced information specifically includes Google's best advice (posted on the home page shortly after the attacks): "If you are looking for news, you will find the most current information on TV or radio." That resonated with my own experience and yielded the title for the only essay I plan to write related to September 11, the February 2002 "DisContent" column in *EContent:* "Turn on the radio."

Near the end of that column, I suggest that readers look to Wiggins' article as a worthwhile discussion of the Web and September 11. *Cites & Insights* readers don't need to wait until February; act now and you don't even need to go to the *First Monday* archives.

(The *Online Journalism Review* articles, posted September 11, 12, 14, and 18, should all be available at ojr.usc.edu. The most curious of the group is the September 14 piece, noting the success of slashdot.org as something more than just news for nerds during those first few hours.)

Greenfield, Adam, "Biting the hand that feeds," *NewBreed Librarian* October 2001. (www.newbreedlibrarian.org)

Adam Greenfield is *way* beyond me on any curve of technophilia. He has a "senior" version of the "information architect" job title I recently unloaded; he works in Tokyo; and he's loaded with hot new gadgets. I suspect he's not a lot more than half my age.

And, in a much different way, he's saying what I've been trying to say for some time. "Enough. Enough with the e-books, with the location-based digital services, enough with the .whatever initiatives and the Bluetooth-equipped refrigerators." He needs a break. He needs—we all need—a little more non-virtual reality and a lot less of initiatives to fill every moment of our waking hours with connectivity and gadgetry. He seems a bit nervous that new-breed librarians, in rebranding themselves as 'knowledge agents' or whatever, may lose track of what libraries have always done.

I'm told that the Internet Generation loves all its gadgets—that Kids These Days will prefer ebooks to print books because they're technology, and technology ROOLZ. I'm starting to respond with the hope and suspicion that Kids These Days are beyond treating technology as magic: that they'll gladly ignore technology that doesn't actually serve them well. If Greenfield is part of the Internet Generation, he's an example that at least some of them appreciate the need to slow down once in a while—and that life is about life, not technology. Well done.

Lieb, Thom, "How about a little privacy?" and Harper, Georgia K., "Copyright endurance and change," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 7:1 (August 2001). (www.press.umich.edu/jep)

I've been following *JEP* for two or three years, with reactions that have changed from dismay to respect. Maybe that represents maturity on my part; maybe it represents a change in the journal. Several of the articles in the August 2001 issue bear reading, including these two.

Thom Lieb's's piece discusses reasonable privacy guidelines for Web publishers. It's thoughtful, crisp, and well worth your time.

Georgia Harper's article, reprinted from *EDU-CAUSE Review* 35:6, offers a readable discussion of where copyright has been and some current issues. She recognizes the tendency of DMCA to undermine the classic balance of copyright.

While you're there, check out the other articles. It's unlikely that I'll ever be enthusiastic about all of *JEP*'s messages, but it's an increasingly impressive journal.

Ebook Watch

Definitions, suppositions, marketplace realities and a remarkably extended Web4Lib discussion: it's still tempting to suppose that more words are written about ebooks than are read on ebooks. (Whether that's true may depend on your definition of ebooks.)

Wired News

M.J. Rose continues to provide some of the best brief summaries of ebook news in her almost-weekly columns, with Kendra Mayfield occasionally offering longer perspectives.

➢ August 21, she noted the groundbreaking agreement between netLibrary and the Cal State system to provide unrestricted multiuser borrowing for *half* of the 1,500 ebooks purchased by the system. Libraries pushing businesses to change their business models: what a concept! Rose also notes the *Starbase C3 Technical Manual*, a "3D ebook" including more than 25 3D starship models embedded within a 3.7mb pdf document. Finally, in an item that's hard to interpret, Fictionline.com offers $1,000 in payment for one out of every 500 stories submitted—with a $2.36 "reading fee" for each submission. The site notes that you'd spend about $2.36 in postage to send a 20-page manuscript and self-addressed stamped return envelope to a print journal. All *winning* stories are published online for free reading. Figure that Fictionline clears $180 for each 500 stories, so their claim to be a "nonprofit online literary journal/contest/co-op" appears justified: nobody's getting rich at that rate!

➢ Kendra Mayfield contributes a discussion of e-textbooks on August 23. She begins with a section that brings out my cynical element: the University of Phoenix is pushing the "bookless college" concept. When you don't really have libraries, that makes sense. The rest of the piece considers a number of e-textbook initiatives including the GoBook reader, several publisher agreements, and some of the potential drawbacks. As you would imagine, a Phoenix representative flatly states that digital course materials will *replace* print textbooks, while Tom Prehn of Adobe's eBook U initiative says "We're not about getting rid of print books. But digital books could bring whole new usage patterns and whole new ways of thinking." Forrester's latest take on 2005 sales is $3.2 billion worth of digital textbooks as compared to $674 million in *all* trade ebooks including both downloads for PCs and PDAs and books for appliances. (Two notes: I've consistently said that textbooks might be the biggest plausible market for reading appliances, and it turns out that the GoBook is *not* a reading appliance but

rather a multipurpose portable computing device, substantially improving its chances.)

➤ Rampant piracy? Rose's August 28 column features a claim that as many as 7,500 copyrighted books are available free online. These aren't primarily ebooks with broken encryption; they're scanned print books swapped using the likes of Gnutella. I wonder about the significance of "7,500" given that the list includes more than 1,600 Stephen King books, 700 J.K. Rowling books, and 193 Terry Pratchett titles: we're talking *copies* rather than *titles* (or even editions) here. The column also notes that the president of ElcomSoft (remember Dmitry Sklyarov?) will be doing another presentation on the company's notorious software—but in Amsterdam, which has no equivalent to DMCA.

➤ On September 4, Rose notes a business that tries to improve ebook success by automating conversion of Open eBook files into the various proprietary ebook formats and that PerfectBound, HarperCollins' ebook imprint, is adding extra content to electronic versions of print books. The feature item deals with self-publishing more than ebooks as such: a number of publishing houses have launched African-American imprints, with dozens of titles coming from authors who had self-published successfully. Self-publishing has always been good for diversity; PoD (and possibly other ebook routes) can make self-publishing easier and less financially burdensome.

➤ The September 11 column (posted at 2 a.m. that morning) features a Bowker table that seems to refute the notion that there aren't many ebook titles. The column mentions "over 46,000 full-length e-book titles" but the version I downloaded from Bowker's Web site shows 40,618. That's not the only inconsistency. The column says that the "average listed book costs $10.72" but the table shows an aggregate price total of $1,025,289.18 for the 40,618 ebooks—which on my calculator comes out to a mean of $25.24. (The column's figure seems self-contradictory: 30 percent of the books cost $10 or less, but the average listed price is only $10.72.) There's a bigger problem with the Bowker table: as with most industry numbers, it fails to distinguish (for example) Print-on-Demand from downloadable texts. It's also not clear whether nearly free versions of Project Gutenberg texts appear as part of the cheap 30 percent; for charity's sake I'll assume that they do not. In other items, it becomes

clear that "full length" is a significant term here (whatever "full length" actually means), since Rose also refers to a short story by Janis Ian and Mike Resnick as "an e-book at Fictionwise." In another fascinating use of PoD, the *Weekly Reader* and iUniverse.com are encouraging students and teachers to submit anything from novels to classroom lessons, which are made available as PoD paperbacks. I love Rose's closing comment: "One sure bet is that a lot of grandparents will be getting iUniverse titles for Christmas this year." (And all of those titles will be print books, I would note.)

➤ Come October 9, M.J. Rose had an offhand insight into the Frankfurt eBook Awards. One nonfiction work entered into the competition was nominated for a prize. That work was rejected by print publishers. In ebook form it has sold *eight copies*. The director of judging thinks this is great: "This really does illustrate how carefully and fairly each title was evaluated. And that's part of the beauty of judging e-books—you are just looking at the screen and on that screen is the quality of the writing and nothing else." A skeptic might consider the range and quality of titles submitted, but that would be mean. These awards were announced the next day (October 10). An eBookWeb story on the awards begins "Who says there's no money in eBooks?" and notes that two writers each won $50,000 while two others won $10,000 each. One point about these four big winners: all four are traditionally-published print books *also* available as ebooks. (One piece of "interactive fiction," which presumably would not work as a print book, did receive a special citation—but no cash.)

True Believers: Items from eBookWeb

There's little doubt that the founders of eBookWeb are true believers, dedicated to the idea that ebooks will *replace* print books. Statements to that effect appear on the site (or at least they did when it began). The following items must be viewed in light of that clear faith. Some eBookWeb items don't include posting dates. In those cases, I've used the date on which I encountered the item.

Sam Vaknin seems to have a number of axes to grind. In an August 21 "TrendSiters" piece, he makes grand claims that ebook experimentation constitutes "a novel redefinition of the classical format of the book." How so? Well, one *failed* company allowed users to select pieces of various ebook texts, combine them into new clusters, and either buy the

resulting product as an ebook or PoD. Anyone who's heard of course packets will wonder just how novel this idea really is, but never mind. BookCrossing.com is just plain weird. You join, register books with a "BCID" (BookCrossing ID Number), then give the books away or leave them lying around. "Successive owners of the volume are supposed to report to BookCrossing (by e-mail) about the book's [sic] and their whereabouts, thereby generating moving plots and mapping the territory of literacy and bibliomania." In Vaknin's prodigious imagination, this oddity "subversively undermines legal and moral concepts of 'ownership.' It also expropriates the book from the realm of passive, inert objects and transforms it into a catalyst of human interactions across time and space."

Wow! Give away a book and you're undermining ownership! And all this time I thought that first-sale rights explicitly included my right to give a book to someone else or set it down where someone else may pick it up. I never thought of the paperback exchange shelves in cruise ship libraries or in many offices as undermining ownership. I still don't. Oddly enough, Vaknin gets it right at one point: with appropriate extensions, ebooks are "another medium altogether" than print books. Does that mean that they "redefine the classical format of the book" and are "destined to change the way we think about the old-fashioned book"? That's where being a true believer comes into play.

Linda Gruber posted "an e-Lips roundtable column" on August 19 entitled "Will eBooks replace print books?" This particular roundtable was occasioned by a note that she'd included in an earlier column: "Someday, print publishing may take a back seat to ePublishing. The standards we set for eBooks now will set the tone for the way consumers view reading in the future." The ensuing comments are interesting. Karen Wiesner (a romance novelist and author of an epublishing guide) starts out strong: "Print publishing will never take a back seat to ePublishing any more than it will to audio books or any other off-shoot of a book." She believes ebooks will be enormously successful—but as another book medium, not as a replacement. She also notes that ebooks have been around more than 60 years (according to the ever-authoritative Michael Hart!). Steve Lazarowitz, who writes ebooks but apparently not print books, *does* believe that ebooks will replace print books. "Not now. Not soon, but sooner or later." Why? "Today's child would rather read on a computer screen than a piece of paper. I know it from experience." But then, so would he—he much prefers his rocket eBook or his Palm to paper. Today's kids "will carry their entire libraries with them,

in a watch. In a handbag. In their pocket…It's not that far away. Not even ten years." M.J. Rose—who seems better informed about ebooks than most people and who publishes both electronic and print books—says "Now and in the future, I believe we will be able to read books in hardcover, trade paperback, and eBook form." She believes that mass-market paperbacks may eventually suffer but that print books that aren't throwaways won't go away. "Not in our lifetime. Not in our grandchildren's. And I don't want them to be." Linda Gruber says that "Tomorrow, we won't read on paper pages." She thinks that people will expect *interactivity* in all their books in the future, fun activities in place of that boring ol' narrative.

Each participant who has any print publications flat-out denies that print books will go away—while those who haven't been published traditionally disdain traditional publishing. Not that I'm suggesting a connection. As for Lazarowitz, isn't it too bad that J.K. Rowling used print, dooming her books to failure since today's kids don't like books? That's probably what all those kids and their parents are doing, crowding the children's section of my local library whenever I visit: looking desperately for e-texts and checking out stacks of print books to throw traditionalists off the scent!

A note from Kathy Sanborn on September 23 begins with a statement that makes more sense (to me) if you remove the "e" in "ebooks": "EBooks are about spreading knowledge, providing entertainment, and offering solace to those who needed it. In these rapidly changing times, eBooks can bring comfort to the millions of us who are experiencing sleepless nights and posttraumatic stress syndrome." I fail to see any *special* virtue of ebooks in this regard, but never mind. That's not the point of the note. That point is what she sees as the opportunity for ebook authors today: "The main opportunity I see right now for the successful eBook writer is an open door to a print publishing deal." She goes on to offer examples and expand on this theme. It's an interesting piece (Sanborn is a motivational speaker) that, oddly, acts as a counterpoint to eBookWeb's general stance. If ebooks are replacing print books, why would you take this route?

Two related items on September 24 concern Gemstar and the REB readers. One you may be aware of by now: Gemstar's Henry Yuan claims that *Gemstar* will slash the prices of the REB1100 and 1200—interesting, since those are RCA devices. The 1200 (the color unit) should come down to $350, half its current price, with the 1100 dropping by 60% to $120. This won't happen for six to nine months. Why announce it now? Here's one possibil-

ity: Since announcing this future price cut should cut off *any* sales of the current "overpriced" models, Yuan's got a new excuse for the disastrous failure of REBs in the marketplace. He claims that "approximately" 50,000 readers have been sold—but that includes the original Rocket and SoftBooks, and that covers a three-year period.

The other item, a commentary by Glenn Sanders of eBookWeb, notes that Gemstar's vast marketing plan has "basically sold, in the last year, about as many REB1100s as NuvoMedia had sold of Rocket eBooks with only a small marketing team... Wow." It's an opinionated piece that speaks of "the gross warping of the original Nuvo vision" (NuvoMedia, the company behind the original Rocket) and states flatly that "Gemstar perverted the original Nuvo-Media vision of a publishing system for everyone." Sanders, who still believes in the "eventual mass market eBook industry of the future," grieves for "what might have been if NuvoMedia could have avoided acquisition."

Miscellaneous Brief Items

➢ Tom Fowler considers Questia's new marketing push in an August 18 article from the *Houston Chronicle.* "A slow start after its January launch, the layoff of half of the company's staff and dwindling cash reserves mean attracting and keeping paying subscribers is more important than ever." Marketing supposedly includes TV ads on four cable channels, deals with Britannica and others, and direct mail to seven million households. Naturally, Questia also hopes for freebies, distributing "video news releases" for use by lazy local stations. Notably, Questia now calls itself "The Online Library" on its Web site, "a phrase the company didn't use in the past for fear of alienating the librarian community." Questia's playing the numbers game: the "library" has expanded from 35,000 books to "about 60,000 items, including 20,000 journal articles."

➢ An August 24 short piece at contentbiz.com offers some insight into the "bestseller" rankings for ebooks at Amazon. Time Warner's ipicturebooks aims to sell illustrated ebooks for kids. "Although the company's *Shrek Activity eBook* was the #1 bestselling eBook at Amazon in June, Jim Kirchman, VP Marketing admits that the title only sold 'hundreds of copies.'" Note: that's not "hundred of copies in June" but "hundreds of copies" *period.* But, of course, "the eBook marketplace is still too embryonic to judge success by sales figures." I find this bit

sad: consumers won't buy ipicturebooks, but *librarians and teachers might:* the company's offering bundles of picturebooks to schools. Apparently, this bundle includes universal access: "the cost of an eBook is generally 20% less than a print book; they don't wear out; and every kid who wants a book at any time can have it."

➢ A notorious August 28 article in the *New York Times* was, unusually, available at a site that didn't require registration (which I refuse to do). The headline tells the story: "Forecasts of an e-book era were, it seems, premature." It's useful as yet another reminder when you're told "nobody ever said ebooks would replace print books," an ongoing attempt to rewrite recent history. Laurence Kirshbaum of AOL Time Warner: "We want to see electronic publishing blow the covers off of books." As the article notes, almost nobody buys ebooks. "Only a handful [of ebooks] have generated enough revenue to cover the few hundred dollars it costs to convert their texts to digital formats." There's a litany of excuses for the failure of ebooks—oddly, excuses that all existed a year or two ago but didn't matter then. A fascinating bit on the REB readers says that, of the tiny number sold, two-thirds have been *gifts* rather than direct purchases. The story does note one relative "success story," Hard Shell Word Factory, which offers about 600 titles (mostly romances and other genre titles, mostly novels rejected by publishers) at $3 to $6 each, has a tiny staff, and sells about 6,000 copies a month. To be sure, the big guys still have faith: Kirshbaum "still expected his company's sales of electronic books to reach almost $1 million by the end of the year and exceed $50 million a year within five more years." It could happen. (Oddly, I believe that the Wired News item about 46,000 ebook titles was a partial refutation of this article—but this article doesn't say a word about lack of titles, only lack of *sales*.)

➢ *Holt Uncensored* (www.holtuncensored.com) is a frequently-fascinating, fairly blunt biweekly newsletter from Patricia Holt, former book editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* who's now associated with the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association. The August 31 issue (#261!) begins with an exchange of comments about PoD between Catharine Bramkamp, a self-published author through iUniverse's PoD system, and Bill Petrocelli of Book Passage bookstore. Bramkamp read an article in Book Passage's newsletter that seems to

attack PoD as a concept and notes the services that a traditional publisher provides to publicize traditional books. She comments that PoD authors know they're not going to get those services and claims that nobody gets them "who is new, untested and not currently on the bestseller list" because all the money "was spent on Hillary Clinton's advance." It's up to the author to promote books, whether PoD or otherwise. She agrees with the bookstore that "this first generation of POD is difficult for booksellers to access and gain a decent profit margin to make it worth their while." Then there's an odd combination: she asserts that authors using PoD "love bookstores. But for our own purposes, we have the Internet." We love you—but we'll gladly undermine you. Petrocelli responds that the article wasn't meant to criticize PoD authors but to point out that iUniverse, Xlibris and others don't provide authors with crucially needed services, and that independent bookstores find it hard to deal with books provided "on a very short discount and a non-returnable basis. These are not commercially viable terms." Basically, Petrocelli says, PoD publishers are locking out bookstore access through unreasonable terms. In a response to the response, Bramkamp agrees that PoD terms "are not ideal" but not that she misread the article. She doesn't see *at all* that asserting the Internet as a selling medium, and agreeing to have terms that lock out independent booksellers, is—in theory and in fact—a way of undermining independent booksellers. It doesn't have to be that way, but that's the situation at present.

➢ As a bizarre sidelight, consider a half-page item in the September 2001 *Computer Shopper*. Entitled "Can Scott Adams save e-books," the piece notes that Adams is selling his new book, *God's Debris*, exclusively in electronic form—through his own site for $4.95. Why do I find the item bizarre? First, consider this phrase: "IDC predicts e-book device sales will hit a paltry 153,000 worldwide in 2001"—which may be "paltry" but also seems wildly improbable at this point. Then consider Adams' own expertise: he has never read an e-book, but he has shopped for them online.

➢ Michael Jensen of the National Academy Press offers an intriguing perspective in the September 14 *Chronicle of Higher Education*. This press, which publishes scientific and technical analyses and policy reports, publishes more than 200 book-length works a year, with more than

2,100 available to date. Every work is available online (at www.nap.edu), all 400,000 pages worth—searchable, browseable, "and even printable by the page." The material is in page images, so you can't easily download a whole book—but it's all available. In the first two-thirds of 2001, 3.2 million users looked at 15 million book pages. Meanwhile, the same site has sold more than 40,000 books, 25% of overall book sales—and overall book sales are at record highs. Of course, this publisher isn't offering free full-book downloads—but I believe Jensen's right in asserting that giving away selections of worthwhile work might very well *increase* print sales. It's fair to suggest that Jensen isn't a great believer in ebooks as such, particularly not for true works as opposed to collections of facts.

➢ Just as I was editing this issue, news arrived from Boulder, Colorado that netLibrary is in dire straits. Employees are invited to keep working—at a flat rate of $360 per week, from the president down to entry-level personnel. That's asserted to be roughly unemployment rates. More on this story a little later, I suspect.

A Few Longer Items

Educause Review for July/August 2001 includes "Digitizing education: A primer on ebooks" by Michael A. Looney (Adobe) and Mark Sheehan (Montana State University, Bozeman). It is, I'm afraid, typical of articles by the faithful in that the only advantage yielded to print books is the "aesthetic feel" of a printed book or the "sensual craving for the feel and smell of paper." Give me a break. Apparently, there just aren't any issues of resolution, backlighting, reading speed or comprehension: it's only those who find books erotic who aren't in love with ebooks. Naturally, the restrictive rights management of ebooks is portrayed as a Good Thing—and, to be sure the fact that students sell and buy used textbooks is a Bad Thing, causing higher prices. We're told that ebooks will give students *anywhere in the world* access to "the same content that is available to the student on campus," apparently writing off any additional value of library collections. There's some good material in this article (and I do expect e-textbooks to be significant), but you have to ignore an absurdly one-sided perspective.

Pam Saunders of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library in Victoria, Australia came to the U.S. this May on a Barrett Reid scholarship to "research eBooks and Victorian libraries." Her September report, "Ebooks in Victorian Libraries: Findings from

the USA," is well worth reading, and I don't feel the need to make snarky comments about it. My printed copy lacks the URL, but I suspect you can find it through the Library Board of Victoria (www.slv. vic.gov.au) or her library (www.yprl.vic.gov.au).

Hazel Woodward and Louise Edwards prepared "Shaping a strategy for e-books: an issues paper" for Britain's Joint Information Systems Committee in September 2001. The study, available at www.jisc.ac. uk/dner/ebooks/straegy1.html, offers another set of data points and considerations. It's a bit clunky to read in printed form (heavy sans serif type) and too long to read online (21 pages printed), but it's well done (as is typical of JISC).

Terje Hilleslund has a lengthy article in the October 2001 *First Monday* entitled "Will e-books change the world?" It's a strange paper, one that I find difficult to comment on. Hillesund (who leads a national Norwegian ebook research program) identifies the reasons that ebook appliances don't work well (and probably won't for quite a few years) at the same time he assures us that ebooks *must* become prominent (dominant?) because of the nature of the networked economy. Or something like that.

Ruth Wilson's "Evolution of portable electronic books" (*Ariadne* 29, 10/2/2001) "charts the development of portable electronic book hardware, from the first generation models in the 1980s to the range of handheld devices available today." As with the previous paper, this is primarily about appliances (to my mind the least interesting part of electronic publishing). There's some tricky history—for example, the idea that the Palm Pilot doomed Apple's Newton. She claims "wide circulation in the U.S." for the Rocket and Softbook appliances, although I've never seen claims of more than about 25,000 total sales for the two devices combined. Astonishingly for an October 2001 article, she includes this comment: "The REBs have combined projected 2001 sales of 3 million to 7 million." Thomson/RCA may have made such a projection, but at this point it's clear that the number is at least one order of magnitude off and quite possibly two. Despite my qualms about this article, it's worth reading as an insight into how some UK academics view ebooks.

Press Watch II: Commentary

Zetter, Kim, "Best of the web 2001," *PC World* 19:8 (August 2001), pp. 84-98.

Repeat after me:
> ➢ There is no Web but the commercial Web.
> ➢ If a site doesn't end in ".com" it doesn't exist or it's some flaky nonsense.
> ➢ If (insert supreme beings of your choice here) had meant nonprofits, universities and government organizations to use the Internet, he would have involved them in its founding—say, the Defense Department, to be really silly.

Now, if you believe all that, then you're ready to read yet another "*commerce is everything*" roundup. As usual, "best" means "one or two sites in each category that we elect to review."

Oops. I misspoke. This list is not 100% ".com." Open Directory Project, www.dmoz.org, is runner-up for directories (to Yahoo!) and "megapixel.net" is the winner for digital imaging information (and appears to be a thoroughly commercial site).

That's it. Everything else is all business, all the time. It's a wonderful world.

"20/20: the 20th anniversary of the PC," *PC Magazine* 20:15 (September 4, 2001), pp. 137-93; also Pesce, Mark, "Even better than the real thing," pp. 216-17, and Howard, Bill, "20 years of missed opportunities," p. 75, same issue.

Here it is: the PC bible doing the authoritative view of the PC's 20th anniversary. The cover trumpets the approach: "The 2nd PC revolution, the next 20 years, the future PC, the future car, the future you." It's a "special collectors' issue" with predictions from Bill Gates, Craig Barrett, Scott McNealy, Ray Kurzweil, Andy Grove and more; ten technologies to watch, nine unsung heroes who have changed your life—and more!

If I had the space and organization skills to set this gem aside for 20 years, I'd be tempted—but by then, chances are I won't be writing about this nonsense. You may love this section. It's certainly well written (by a number of hands), but I'm astonished at the level of gee-whiz technophilia for any magazine but *Wired*. Aren't we past this sort of thing?

Bill Howard isn't, but he's a true believer par excellence. He asserts that the government should encourage a broadband-connected nation: "Make it an effort with the same scope that rural electrification and universal phone initiatives had in the early 20th century." His column offers no real suggestion as to what benefits (comparable to electrification, for example) this would buy us—but here's an example: "Pets.com might be alive today if there were 100 million potential, always-connected shoppers." There it is: The government should spend $9 billion or so (using one scenario) *so we'll buy our cat litter online*. Now there's a social benefit.

It's hard to write parody at all these days. It's almost impossible to parody advocates of the "ubiquitous Internet" future: what would be silly enough to be recognizable as exaggeration? I certainly don't have the imagination to make up stuff like the above—or like much of the rest of this issue.

The feature section begins with a lengthy article by John Heilemann, "Second coming," which tells us "tomorrow's computing power will ignite extraordinary revolutions that will transform our world." But then, he also asserts that the PC and the Internet "propelled an economic and social transformation so sweeping that it outshone anything that came before." Not universal availability of electricity (in the United States and other industrialized nations); not universal telephone service; not air transportation or the Interstate highway system; not mass production—no, none of those were as transforming as the PC and Internet.

Can you say "self-important"? I knew you could.

Naturally, never-wrong Stewart Brand (with his belief that the right tools solve all problems) is here. John Doerr has us five to ten years away from "the Evernet—the always-on, high-speed, ubiquitous, multiformat Web." (Notice that it's always *the Web* from now on. Eight years ago, we would have had "the always-on, high-speed, ubiquitous Gophernet." We know that nothing better could *ever* replace URLs, HTTP, browsers, and TCP/IP, those things that make the Web the Web. Don't we?)

Bill Joy knows that, by 2030, we'll be building computers a million times as fast as today's (which may be true). "A million is a very big number." And?

This article isn't just about PCs. It's about all the other technologies that they make possible—such as nanotech and biotech. Brand tells us that the new technologies are self-accelerating—which is why Craig Ventner cracked the human genome "in, like, two weeks."

The article refers several times to "Vernor Vigne, a mathematician and computer scientist at San Diego State University." I know of a Vernor Vinge who's a fine science fiction writer and is in the mathematics department at San Diego State. I'm astonished that a magazine with *PC*'s reputation and editorial budget would let this consistent misspelling get by. Vinge (whose wife also writes science fiction) is obsessed with singularity theory, the idea that accelerating processes can and will accelerate to the point that the slope of change becomes essentially vertical—near-infinite progress in near-zero time. That's a singularity (badly explained). You can call me a skeptic on this one—but it makes for some great fiction.

Do I believe we'll have "brain amplifiers" giving us 300+ IQs? I do not. Will we inject nanoprobes and other self-replicating devices to take care of our bodies—and, by the way, be linked to the Evernet and programmable over the Web? I suspect not. Is it worth noting that the futurist who makes these predictions is one who predicted the "long boom"—the 25-year run of uninterrupted peace and prosperity beginning in the mid-1990s? It is.

There's a quote here, from this same futurist, that should give him and others a bit more pause. "In the next few decades, I do believe people will kill each other in large numbers as a direct result of the advancement of science." And yet, this article and others go on to *assure* us that we'll gladly inject ourselves with remotely programmable self-replicating nanotech devices. After all, *what could go wrong?*

The article also discusses Bill Joy's nervous *Wired* essay on the risks of genetic engineering and nanotech. Naturally, George Gilder jumped all over Joy—and, in Gilder's religion, if you're not 100% capitalist and a true believer, you're anticapitalist and a believer in "statism." In other words, Joy is offering "a tonic for beleaguered socialists, a program and raison d'être for a new New Left." The "Techno-Left" and "Greens" are "the main adversary of freedom and faith." As always, Gilder believes in nuance and complexity as much as I believe in Santa Claus and the likelihood that pure capitalism (or pure socialism) will save the world. Of course, Stewart Brand knows that we'll evolve an appropriate set of frameworks because "there is just so much weird shit going on." That's always worked so far.

After this breathtaking pile of steaming goodness, we have "Accelerated living" by Ray Kurzweil—who, as he assures us, has created *mathematical models* that have allowed him to make "relatively accurate" predictions. Sure. As with all good technophiles, Kurzweil tells us that the rate of acceleration in technical progress just keeps accelerating—and people don't seem to play much of a part. "Serious assessment of history shows that technological change is exponential. In other words, we won't experience 100 years of progress in the twenty-first century, but rather, we'll witness on the order of 20,000 years of progress." It depends on how you define progress.

"By 2010, computation will be everywhere…embedded in everything from our clothing and eyeglasses to our bodies and brains." With all this computation and embedded chips, why would we have eyeglasses? We'll enter virtual realities, aided by the computers and sensors in our shirts and shorts. Kurzweil has the Web-programmable nanobots running through our bloodstream (no fears here!)—and he has them capable of switching us

from reality to virtual reality, *blocking sensory input and actual movement* when they're programmed for virtual reality. Over the Web. Securely.

His answer to naysayers? "If we described the dangers that exist today to people who lived a couple hundred years ago, they would think it mad to take such risks. But how many people living in 2001 would want to go back to the short, brutish, disease-filled, poverty-stricken lives that 99 percent of the human race struggled through?" Kurzweil does admit a bit later that "substantial portions of our species still live in this precarious way"—but, of course, technology provides all the answers.

Let's go on to the nine people who have "changed your life." Every one of them have changed *your* life. That includes Scott Cook of Intuit (even if you don't use Quicken or TurboTax); that includes Jeff Hawkins (*of course* you have at least one Palm OS PDA); that includes Meg Whitman, since we all use eBay. It also includes Seth Warshavsky, former head of the Internet Entertainment Group, and that one has me completely stumped. How exactly does a former porn peddler change my life? "Pushing the limits of adult Web content" may affect some people, but I wasn't aware that all *PC Magazine* readers were dirty old men. Bob Stephens of Adaptec? Steve Jobs? Oops: there's a picture of Steve Jobs, but he's not one of the nine. I'm not quite sure how Esther Dyson has changed my life, but she assuredly has a high opinion of her own importance—"I'm able to say things to the king that no one else is allowed to say." Good for Ms. Dyson.

The "views from the top" interviews with Bill Gates, Scott McNealy, and Intel's Craig Barrett are interesting. As you might expect, Gates isn't quite as revolutionary as some others; Scott McNealy won't quite back off his "the PC is dead" assertion (he refers to the PC as a "technological hairball"); and Craig Barrett understands that the PC market may be saturated in the United States but has barely begun in much of the world.

Ten technologies to watch? A mixed group, some more plausible than others. I'm amused by a few details. We learn that holographic storage "will help libraries preserve large volumes of multiformat data" (which shows an interesting understanding of 'preservation') and, astonishingly, that in ten years we'll have holographic devices that pack a terabyte into a CD-size device. "The Library of Congress' entire archive could fit on a single disk the size of a CD; today, this would take billions of discs." (The mixed spelling is *PC*'s, not mine.) Hmm. One terabyte is 1,000 gigabytes, or *55* times the capacity of a double-sided double-density DVD (a "CD-size disc"). How do we get from 55 to "billions"? Even a

petabyte-capacity holographic device would store the equivalent of 55,000 DVD-18 discs: hardly "billions." (Does *PC* still have copy editors?)

Oh, yes: "Electronic Paper. Our reading habits will radically change within a decade. Electronic paper will instantly display information on various tabletlike surfaces. Imagine a digital newspaper that constantly changes its content as news breaks." I do expect to be writing about this stuff a decade from now, and I don't expect to see "radical change" in our reading habits on any kind of universal basis by 2011. For that matter, the last thing I'd want is a "newspaper" with constantly changing stories, shorn of all perspective and context. And have you used today's "instant news" sources as offered on sites such as MyExcite or others? Noticed how instant and constantly changing that news is?

The future car? Broadband Internet access in all of them. *Not* self-driving cars: suddenly, that long-standing "ten years from now" miracle is 30 to 40 years off. One projection for the cars of 2020 seems more than plausible: "Hybrid powerplants combining a small gasoline engine and an electric motor will top 50 miles per gallon." *PC*, meet the Toyota Prius and Honda Insight: you can drop the "will" from that sentence.

Some of the stuff discussed here will happen. Important things will happen that aren't suggested here. I believe there are strong *theoretical* possibilities for nanotechnology and applied biotechnology—and I believe there are even stronger social reasons that we won't be injecting ourselves with molecule-sized Web-based robots in a couple of decades. But I could be wrong, as always.

Instant followup: A letter to the editor in the October 16, 2001 *PC Magazine* questioned the terabyte-and-billions-of-disks assertion. The editors' response is as confusing as their original error. I quote in full:

> The ability to pack a terabyte on a CD and the capability to pack the Library of Congress' archive on a CD have been forecast as two separate milestones for holographic storage technologies. We didn't intend to suggest that the archive could fit in 1 terabyte or that billions of today's disks would be required to store a terabyte. We regret not making the separate milestones clearer.
>
> We were also imprecise: To convert terabytes to gigabytes (or gigabytes to terabytes), you should actually be multiplying by 1,024. Finally, the estimated 112,000,000 items in the archive would now require millions of discs, not billions.

Clear as mud. I even wonder whether *PC* understands the word "archive" as used in librarianship and the archival community, as opposed to the col-

lection of the Library of Congress, and which they mean—or whether the "editors" understand that a "CD-sized disc" of holographic material is *not* a CD, any more than a 12cm circular piece of paper or a DVD or a microdiskette is a CD.

Henshaw, Robin, "What next for Internet journals? Implications of the trend toward paid placement in search engines," *First Monday* 6:9 (September 2001), www.firstmonday.org.

This article might have appeared in Press Watch I, but not with the following first two sentences:

In September 1991 a new journal was announced. The *Online Journal of Current Clinical Trials* was to be the world's first online peer-reviewed journal.

Wrong. Not even close. Among others, *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* published one complete volume (three issues, sixteen refereed articles and a number of columns, 229 pages in the delayed print edition) in 1990 and a substantial issue in early 1991. That issue was, in fact, a special issue on electronic journals—and the first article noted at least half a dozen *other* existing online peer-reviewed journals. In other words, well before September 1991 there was a sufficiently strong record of online peer-reviewed journals to justify a special issue with eight related articles. (*New Horizons in Adult Education* began in 1987, to give another, even earlier example.)

Is Henshaw defining peer-reviewed journals differently? I hardly see how that's possible, given the focus on *First Monday* as a peer-reviewed online journal.

I can't take seriously an article that begins with such an outrageous—and easily demonstrated—falsehood. That's too bad, as a better-edited (or better-refereed!) version might be worth reading.

Karagiannis, Konstantinos, "No need for library police," *PC Magazine* 20:16 (September 25, 2001), p. 54.

That idiot title alone is reason enough for this mention. The story is a half-page review of ebrarian that starts with this sentence: "You'll never be charged a library fine with this service." You will, of course, be charged 15 to 25 cents per printed page and 25 to 50 cents per copied page—but hey, you get a whole *300 items* to look at!

Why does Karagiannis find it necessary to take a swipe at free library service? You got me.

Martin, Nicole, "Redrawing the line between content & commerce," *EContent* 24:7 (September 2001), pp. 38-42.

Not to bite one of the hands that feed me (I write the "DisContent" column in *EContent)* but this article requires poking, particularly since the author is a college librarian. The first sentence of the third paragraph reads, in its entirety, "The Internet was built largely on the model of television, where commercials are supposed to pay for the 'free' show." That is ahistorical claptrap that denies the fundamental role of government and education in building the Internet and the crucially important role that .gov, .edu, and .org sites still play. It's bad enough when businessfolk equate "the Internet" with ".com"; it's tragic when it comes from a librarian.

"Throwing up ethical firewalls when the company is in the red just doesn't compute." It does in print publishing—and if it doesn't in Web journalism, it certainly should. Once you've sold your soul, profit won't bring it back—and smart users will treat your site appropriately.

"Search engines, formerly the last bastion of objectivity for Internet purists, have succumbed to economic pressures and have started listing or ranking sites based on straight pay or placement 'auction.'" Since when are search sites the "last bastion of objectivity" on the Internet? Or is this once again the equation of Internet with dotcoms?

The article's worth reading if you can cope with these issues, but I found them confounding. It's certainly not just Martin. Consider this breathtaking quote from Dr. Samir Husni, professor of journalism at the University of Mississippi at Oxford:

This strict separation (of editorial and merchandising) has become outmoded. Journalism is a business, like any other. Being able to buy the product is a service to the readers.

If Husni had been in a BusAd school, I could understand that. Maybe there's no difference at his university or in the brave new world of the all-commercial Internet, where everything's for sale? (I believe Samir Husni is the professor who's made a career of tracking new magazine introductions. In many magazines, the line between editorial and merchandising vanished years ago—but for *journalism*, it's still an important line.)

Bibs & Blather

Every good publication does three intellectual chores: filter, package and provide context, commentary or both. When you choose one publication over another—which we almost all do given that inflexible 24-hour limit to each day—you should be (ideally) choosing based on how well a

publication carries out those chores. I won't claim that *Cites & Insights* is a "good publication"—that's your call. I'm sitting here reminded of the importance of filtering—and how that's affected by a mix of print and Web resources.

What does that mean? It means I've spent the last hour or so sitting in front of my PC *reading* rather than writing. I've been reading print versions of articles and papers acquired over the Internet, ones that seemed worthy of comment when I read the first few paragraphs online. As I read them in full, I find they fall into that great middle category: not interesting enough to include in Press Watch I and not bad enough to include in Press Watch II. So, unless the article serves as a springboard for an essay or a cluster of related articles generate a quick take or something similar, I remove the staple and put the pages in the recycling stack.

I just finished reading a 33-page (double-spaced) treatise on the politics of search engines, an 18-page (single-spaced) research report on next-generation searching; and a 22-page (single-spaced) peer-reviewed paper on intellectual integrity. The last came closest to emerging in Press Watch II (I'm particularly enchanted by discussions of how other microprocessor companies struggled to compete with IBM in the mid-1950s, an era when I naively believed that *there were no microprocessors in existence*! Since the first integrated circuit was created in September 1958, those mid-1950 microprocessors must have been something to behold) but, in the end, it wasn't extreme enough to deserve full-fledged comment. (I could comment about the death of copy editing in "peer-reviewed" online journals, but that's a cheap shot.)

But that's my job, as it is of any writer or editor not out there doing original research or interviewing people. I read lots of stuff and select those items worth passing along, drawing source materials from other items much less directly. I mention it here for only one reason: I would never have wasted this much time on these articles if I'd initially encountered them in print form. I might have spent three minutes on each article, reading the first few paragraphs and skimming the rest. It's nearly impossible to skim a long on screen. If the first paragraph or two suggests that an item may be interesting, I'll print it out and read it later—and, once I've done that, my tendency is to read it in full.

Consider this a grump about the perils of online reading. Feel free to ignore it: after all, I'm just complaining about doing what's needed to make *Cites & Insights* varied and interesting. At least the grump is in the right section: blather of the lowest order.

Review Watch

Databases

Ross, Steven S., "Getting to first database," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 156-64.

Wonder why you don't see too many roundups of database software? I can think of two good reasons: most people don't use them (unless you think of Excel as a database) and there aren't many serious competitors. This roundup adds a new category: Web-based databases, where you either hope that a free service sticks around or pay a monthly fee for the software and storage. While they caution that you should frequently download data from a Web-based service, I'm not sure what you do with all that data when the programs have gone away. But never mind…

If you like the Web route, the Editors' Choice is QuickBase from Intuit; although there's a free option, chances are you'll wind up paying at least $15 a month if you're doing serious work. At least Intuit's likely to be around for a while.

If you've followed the PC field at all, you can name the three serious competitors among PC databases: FileMaker, Access, and Paradox. Can you name the Editors' Choice without prompting? Here are some clues: it's fully SQL-compatible (the database engine *is* essentially SQL), it supports referential integrity, and it comes up with a "Yes" on every feature that *PC Magazine* could think of. And if you buy Microsoft Office Professional, you own a copy—unfortunately for the competitors, Access keeps getting better and easier. FileMaker Pro comes in second; it's even easier, cheaper (if purchased alone), you can't beat the cross-platform support—but it has some performance problems and lacks some features. Paradox is showing the usual signs of Corel ownership: little development, various glitches, and a general failure to keep up—but then, you can't buy it except as part of WordPerfect Office Professional.

Desktop Computers

Atkin, Denny, and Lori Grunin, "Built for speed," *Computer Shopper* 21:9 (September 2001), pp. 98-108.

Computer Shopper's occasional group computer reviews don't include many brands and tend to overvalue cheap devices from unknown companies (in my opinion), but they do offer detailed descrip-

tions of each device and break down the rating so that you could theoretically use your own weighting.

This review covers five PCs using the "latest" Pentium 4 CPU (1.7GHz). The minimum configuration is 256MB RDRAM, 60GB hard disk, 18"-viewable display, 12x CD-RW drive, 32MB graphics RAM, Ethernet, and Windows 2000 or Windows Me. Units cost $2,199 to $3,499 and come from three brand-names and two unknowns: Compaq, IBM, Micronpc, ABS, and Alienware.

I still can't figure out how the $3,499 Alienware Area 51 achieved an 8 rating for value and the Best Buy for top overall points. It's definitely a gamer's system with its GeForce3 graphics cared—but on performance tests other than 3D graphics, it's actually third-fastest of the systems. It's also oddly configured for anything *but* gaming: it comes without either MS Works or a full office suite. Consider this review as one set of data points, but unless you're a 3D specialist or gamer, don't take it too seriously.

Karagiannis, Konstantinos, "2 GHz: another milestone," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 36-40.

As far as I know, these four PCs really *do* use the fastest desktop CPU around: the 2GHz Pentium-4. That means a significant premium over the "slower" 1.8GHz units, particularly since Intel dropped the "slower" CPU's price from $560 to $260. If you have that need for speed, look to the Editors' Choice, MicronPC's $2,492 Millennia Max XS. That's a decent price for a unit that scored best on five of the eight speed tests and comes with 256MB RDRAM, a 40GB hard disk, 12x CD-RW drive, Ge-Force3 video with 64MB RAM, and an 18"-viewable CRT. The Altec Lansing ACS 33 speakers aren't top of the line and there's no DVD drive—but those are the only real shortcomings. Second place goes to Dell's $2,979 Dimension 8100; while it's pricey, it includes a remarkable *100GB* hard disk and both a DVD-ROM drive and a 16x CD-RW drive. Neither the Gateway nor the Dell, tied for third, are slouches—but the Gateway's a "professional" series unit lacking hot graphics and the HP Vectra's $2,499 price doesn't include a monitor.

Apple tells us that megahertz don't matter; the company typically uses specially-tuned versions of Photoshop to prove that a 500MHz PowerPC CPU outruns a 1GHz Pentium. But Photoshop's now optimized for SSE (high-end Pentium instructions) as well as the G4's Altivec. So how does the fastest Apple (867MHz G4) compare to the HP Vectra, which uses the same graphics processor (nVidia GeForce2 GTS, a step or two behind the GeForce3)? On one cross-platform test that's heavy on floating-point

processing, the Apple took 18 minutes while the HP took 11 minutes. Encoding to QuickTime, an Apple technology, took 6 minutes 4 seconds on the Apple, 4 minutes 48 seconds on the HP. Photoshop? An Unsharpen Mask filter that took 33 seconds on the Apple took *seven* seconds on the HP. Conclusion? "CPU speed does count for something."

O'Brien, Bill, "PCs for the people," *Computer Shopper* 21:10 (October 2001), pp. 94-102.

Here's an unusual group review: five systems deliberately behind the leading edge. I'd guess that the review bar (900MHz CPU, 128MB RAM, nVidia GeForce 2MX graphics with 32MB RAM, 8x CD-RW drive, 16"-viewable display, stereo speakers, V.90 modem) was designed to yield "midrange" systems—but things move fast these days. Other than the graphics card and CD-RW drives, these are entry-level systems: major vendors don't sell desktops with CPUs slower than 900Mhz.

The most problematic aspect of this group, typical of *Computer Shopper*, is the set of brands. Yes, there's Compaq in its faded glory (with a system that's most expensive, slowest, and has a hard disk any other maker would be embarrassed to use in a desktop PC)—but otherwise, the *biggest* name in the bunch is Polywell. The Best Buy honor goes to Nu-Trend's $899 Duron Power 2, which includes both DVD-ROM and CD-RW drives (and a 30GB 7200rpm hard disk) at that very low price. There's not much expansion space in the small cabinet, but it comes with a three-piece Altec Lansing speaker system and offers great value.

Does the Compaq make sense even if you want a name brand? For $1,385 you get an AMD Duron-900 CPU, 128MB RAM, a 40GB *4500rpm* hard disk, mediocre JBL speakers, and MS Home Suite—but it does include DVD-ROM and CD-RW drives. In that same issue, Dell offered a Dimension 2100 with a 1.5GHz Pentium 4, 40GB 7200rpm hard disk, better sound card and speakers, comparable display and graphics card, and similar software, for $1,199. I'll bet they'd throw in a DVD-ROM drive for less than the $186 price difference, leaving you with a 50% faster CPU and 50% faster hard disk. I know which one I'd choose. (Gateway would probably offer even more power for the money, but let's go with the biggest brand name for this comparison.)

Digital Cameras

Freed, Les, "Shooting in 4 megapixels," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 57-8.

The magic number continues to be six megapixels: that's roughly the resolution you get from a

35mm image. (Getting to six megapixels won't make digital cameras precise equals of 35mm cameras for reasons including different color spaces.) This roundup suggests that owners of three-megapixel cameras should sit this one out and wait for the magic number to be reached, probably by next February. But if you use digital photography and want to make big prints, these may be cameras to consider. There's another caveat: because the sensor size hasn't changed, these cameras aren't as sensitive as their predecessors. You get more detail but also more noise in low-light shots.

The Editors' Choice and single five-dot rating goes to Sony's $800 Cyber-shot DSC-85. It uses a Carl Zeiss 3x zoom lens, has a 1.8" viewing screen, and has some nice features—although it does use Sony's Memory Stick cards, which are more expensive than Compact Flash and SmartMedia cards. Olympus' $1,000 Camedia C-4040Z gets a four-dot rating and also takes excellent pictures, but it's pricey and lacks a rechargeable battery.

Displays

Narayanamurthi, Kalpana, "Screen gems," *PC World* 19:9 (September 2001), pp. 96-106.

They tested 22 new displays ranging from 16" to 20" viewable. Unfortunately (and typically), the review only tells you about the top ten—but you can go to the Web site for the rest. This review also introduces *PC World*'s five-star rating system, similar to everybody else's five-dot, five-star, or five-mouse rating system. Surprisingly (controversially?), the editorial that introduces the new system says they'll give a rating to almost everything, whether they've run it through their test labs or not. I give that decision 1.5 stars.

Back to the displays. The two Best Buys (both with 4.5-star ratings) go to Samsung's $284 Sync-Master 950p, a remarkably inexpensive 18"-viewable display, and Samsung's $279 SyncMaster 700NF, a 16" display with DiamondTron tube. Both scored well on ease of use, but only the smaller display offered excellent text and graphics quality. (I don't understand a ratings system that makes it possible for a display that *lacks* excellent text and graphics display quality to outscore others that *have* such quality—but, as the small print makes clear, display quality only counts for 40% of the score. So a cheap pretty good display is better than a more expensive excellent display: got that?)

Need I mention that "maximum resolution" for both Samsungs is clearly a work of fiction? Both show 1920x1440. The 18" display has 0.26mm dot pitch; the 16", 0.25mm stripe pitch. That means

that the *physical* limit to resolution is 1407x1055 for the larger display, 1292x969 for the smaller (which actually has a 15.9" viewable area). It's not just Samsung: of the ten displays listed, only the 15.9" Sony CDP-G220S (the third-place unit) shows a maximum resolution that's *almost* within the display's physical capabilities.

Graphics and Video

Labriola, Don, "Movie makers," *Computer Shopper* 21:9 (September 2001), pp. 128-31.

Ready to edit digital video? If you're on a budget, you might want one of the four mainstream video editors reviewed here. Each costs less than $150 and captures DV source material (most can also handle analog video). Best Buy is Pinnacle's $89 Studio DV, but it doesn't handle analog video on input or output. That $89 price includes an IEEE 1394 (FireWire) card. Second place goes to Ulead's $130 VideoStudio 5.0 DVD Edition, the clear top choice for analog video. It offers superior I/O flexibility and more power than Studio DV but lacks a real-time preview.

O'Brien, Bill, and Rich Brown, "The power of 3," *Computer Shopper* 21:10 (October 2001), pp. 104-9.

This may count as silly-season material, but if you're a leading-edge gamer this roundup is for you. The five graphics cards reviewed here all use the hottest graphics processor around (probably in both senses of that word), nVidia's GeForce3 with its 57 million transistors and fancy new architecture and special effects. They all come with 64MB DDR SDRAM and cost between $357 and $405. Practically the only differences are the bundled games and software and, in some cases video output options. It's an interesting article if you need this kind of performance. Not surprisingly, there's no Best Buy: the range is too narrow for such judgments. Do you need this kind of power? Probably not.

Ozer, Jan, "Making home movies," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 202-3.

It's only a little two-page "after hours" roundup of four inexpensive video-editing programs, but Ozer brings enormous background and credibility to the task. Editors' Choice among this group is Pinnacle Studio 7, a $100 program with quite a few special features. Second place is a two-way tie: Sonic Foundry's $70-$80 VideoFactory and MGI's $99 VideoWabve 4. As tested here, Ulead's VideoStudio 5.0 comes in dead last—but it still gets a respectable three-dot rating. It's the only one of the four with DVD authoring capabilities, but Ozer says you

should buy a separate DVD authoring program such as SpruceUp if you're serious about DVD.

Optical Drives and Software

Broida, Rick, "The fast burn," *Computer Shopper* 21:9 (September 2001), 110-14.

Five high-speed CD-RW drives priced under $250 with minimum ratings of 12x/8x/32x (which means, essentially, that the drive can theoretically burn a 650MB CD-R in about six minutes or a 650MB CD-RW in about nine minutes—and can read 650MB worth of CD-ROM data in a bit more than two minutes).

Four of the five drives use underrun-prevention technology, which should mean that you don't produce useless CD-Rs unless you do something really stupid. The technology consistently worked (as it has in every report I've seen), even when you insist on doing other work on a PC that's busy burning a CD-R. The drawback? When underrun technology comes into play, writing speed goes down.

All five drives did well. The top rating and Best Buy goes to Pacific Digital's TurboWriter 121032el, a $149 drive that's actually rated 12x/10x/32x. It's the cheapest drive and includes lots of software (although not necessarily the best software). The two most expensive drives (both around $249) tie for second place but may suit some people better. Plextor's PlexWriter 16/10/40A is not only impressively fast (those are the ratings) but performed consistently and has the solid Plextor name, while Yamaha's CRW2200EZ claims an astonishing 20x/10x/40x but for some reason was slow at reading CD-RWs. Still, Broida calls the Yamaha the "clear choice for power users."

Jacobi, Jon L., "CD-RW ASAP," *PC World* 19:10 (October 2001), pp. 110-23.

The roundup is impressive: 30 CD-RW drives! Of course, this being *PC World*, you only hear about the "top 10" using their weighted criteria—but you can go to their Web site for the rest. On the other hand, it's a longer article than usual with quite a bit of good information.

The two Best Buy units, both rated at 24x CD-R speed, could both write 650MB CD-Rs in less than five minutes (four minutes flat for the second-place TDK 24/10/40 VeloCD ReWriter, $230); the remainder of the top 10 don't claim or achieve quite such fast output.

Number one on this roundup is Yamaha's $230 LightSpeed CRW2200EZ (the fastest writer and tied for second in *Computer Shopper*'s smaller roundup, above); it was the fastest drive for CD-RW work and

audio extraction. Plextor's PlexWriter 16/10/40A, also tied for second by *ComputerShopper*, comes in third here but is a relative bargain at $185.

Eight of the top drives include underrun-prevention technology. The two that don't, Sony's quixotic Double Density CRX200E/A1 ($190 and capable of creating 1.3GB CD-Rs) and LG Electronics' $140 CED-8120B, use 8MB buffers that appear to achieve the same results. In all cases, even bogging down the test PC by running multiple tasks while burning CDs, all disc writes worked properly. It's also worth noting that the test machine, while fast by historic standards, is entry level for today: a Pentium III-933 with 128MB RAM and Windows 98 SE. (I have to admit that, for typical home or small office use, I'd be willing to take a quick coffee break for the seven minutes it takes the *slowest* of these drives to burn a full disc—but it's even better if you don't have to do that.)

A sidebar offers test results for eight external drives, all using USB 1.1 and slowed by that interface speed. Best Buy in this case was Micro Solutions' $250 Backpack Triple Play CD-Rewriter. It took nearly 20 minutes to burn a full CD-R—but you'd do better with notebook PCs, as it includes a PC Card interface that should double the speed.

Perenson, Melissa J., "Better burning," *PC World* 19:10 (October 2001), pp. 129-32.

Here's a notion: review the full versions of CD software as a companion piece to a CD-RW drive roundup. Roxio's Easy CD Creator isn't the only program out there—and, in fact, the two Best Buys in the drive roundup (above) both use Ahead Nero Burning ROM. This roundup considers five programs costing $50 to $80 for full versions, using a more limited bundled version of Easy CD Creator for comparison.

I'm not convinced that the Best Buy makes sense for all readers, but there's enough information that you might be able to make your own decision. That Best Buy is Oak Technology's $65 SimpliCD 1.0, even though it's neither the most powerful nor the most full-featured product.

The reviewers didn't like Easy CD Creator's different interfaces for different tasks and found Ahead Nero Burning ROM's interface "poor"—and Ahead's product doesn't include MP3 encoding without an add-on. Easy CD Creator offers the widest range of features and includes SpinDoctor to help clean up transfers from LP and cassette—but the install uses 220MB disk space and, oddly enough, Easy CD Creator won't copy audio tracks to hard disk to make building compilation CD-Rs easy. (I must admit that, in 2001, "whopping 220MB of hard disk

space" strikes me as odd for a full-featured application. Isn't that less than a buck's worth of storage?)

Scanners

Fraser, Bruce, "Film scanners," *Macworld* October 2001, pp. 26-7.

These specialized scanners handle nothing but 35mm film (strips of negatives or slides), scanning at much higher resolutions than typical desktop page scanners. Surprisingly, you can now buy film scanners for as little as $400 (Minolta's Dimage Scan Dual II), but that scanner and two other sub-$900 units scan at less than 3,000 dpi. The four higher-priced scanners in this roundup try to get the most out of a 35mm shot, scanning at 4,000 dpi and costing $999 to $1,795.

I've mentioned ICE and Digital ICE[3] previously, Nikon technologies to remove surface defects and (for the latter) restore color for damaged film. The technologies work (at the expense of some image softness) but require multiple scans that slow scanning time. Still, if your library wants to convert old film images to digital form, the Nikon Super Coolscan 4000ED may be the scanner of choice. For this report, it comes in second to Polaroid's $1,295 SprintScan 4000, which wins for speed, excellent results from slides and decent results from negatives, excellent software, and a good price for a 4,000 dpi scanner. Note that the Nikon uses a FireWire connection and the Polaroid has a SCSI interface.

Uninterruptible Power Supplies

Behr, Mary E., "Current conditions," *PC Magazine* 20:16 (September 25, 2001), pp. 126-37.

The seven units reviewed here differ from the $100-$150 UPS boxes that your PC should be plugged into in three ways: They're bigger, designed to provide 15 to 20 minutes operation for small groups of PCs or servers; they offer power conditioning as well as battery backup; and most of them come with software that issues email or pager alerts if the power goes out.

Editors' Choice is the $1,100 Tripp Lite Smart Online RT 2200. That's a low price for this class of UPS (other units ran as high as $2,150, although one comes in at $690) and the unit provides reasonable power (2.2 kVA) along with great software. It offers consistent voltage through its six outlets. Runner-up, for those who don't need full-time power conditioning, is the APC Smart-UPS 2200 RM XL; it offers 50% more backup capacity at a slightly higher price.

Utility Software

Captain, Seán, "Stealth fighters," *PC World* 19:9 (September 2001), pp. 129-33.

This roundup covers antivirus software by itself, not as part of utility suites. That offers a wider range of choices—there are seven programs here—but it's not the way most of us will buy antivirus software.

The single Best Buy goes to the $60 Panda Antivirus Platinum 6.23, which had the best score on their unusually extended performance test. The two best-known antivirus programs tied for second with four stars each: McAfee VirusScan 5.13 (which scans relatively slowly and lacks auto-update features) and Norton AntiVirus 2001 (which is the fastest for scanning but missed a virus—as did McAfee).

Web Authoring Programs

Mendelson, Edward, "Web wizardry," *PC Magazine* 20:17 (October 16, 2001), pp. 169-80.

What's there to say? Dreamweaver for advanced users, MS FrontPage 2002 for easy Web development—and this article says that FrontPage's HTML is a lot cleaner now.

There's much more to say, of course, and this article offers good background and detailed discussions of four major competitors with a sidebar on code-based HTML editors. But the Editors' Choices are as predictable as they are reasonable.

The Details

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