Cites & Insights:
Crawford at Large

Copyright Currents
Avast, Ye Maties!

Not much about the Bronx-cheer bill this time around ("CBDTPA" sounds that way to me if you use it as an acronym!), and I'm trying to split scholarly-access issues out as a separate section. But the Protectors of Intellectual Property that We Didn't Create—or "Big Media," if you will—are back in Congress with another neato idea, the Berman bill. Let's start with that, move on news stories and analyses on some ongoing copyright issues, and wind up with a few longer papers. There's also a new site worth checking out: "The © Primer" at the University of Maryland University College, "an introduction to issues concerning copyright ownership and use of information." You can find it at www.umuc.edu; a search engine may be faster than giving you the full (lengthy) URL.

If some of these copyright-related issues don't seem to relate to libraries, take a longer view. "First they came for the peer-to-peer people. Then they came for those who watched TV and skipped commercials…." If intermediaries succeed in narrowing fair use and first-sale rights to the point of invisibility, giving immortality to corporate copyright, eliminating the public domain by stages, and making copyright protection more important than technological development or free speech, it will most certainly affect every aspect of libraries.

I'm beginning to believe that it makes sense to quote Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution at the beginning of each "Copyright Currents":

> The Congress shall have power…
> To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive rights to their respective writing and discoveries.

The Berman Bill

First, some of the stories.
➢ Robert Macmillan wrote a Washington *Post* report on June 25, 2002: "Lawmaker tries to foil illegal file-sharing." It starts out with the key provision: "Copyright holders would receive carte blanche to use aggressive tactics to stop the illegal distribution of their works on online services…" Why can't they do that now? "Because some tactics are illegal under state and federal law"—and even RIAA members can't break one set of laws in order to do their own enforcing on others.

Inside This Issue

➢ On July 8, Dan Cornwall (Alaska State Library) forwarded a copy of Berman's June 25 speech to the Computer and Communications Industry Association, along with a commentary by Frank Hayes in *Computerworld*. Berman's speech is bizarre if you know the field, but hardly surprising. He accepts industry estimates of piracy as absolute fact. His response to the suggestion that much Internet trading of music files (which he absolutely equates with mass-production piracy) serves to promote music: "Laughable sophistry." His proof that "The vast majority of illegal downloaders just want free stuff"? "I have both common sense, and a rudimentary grasp of economics…and a teenage daughter." (I'm reminded of the classic Monty Python "No one expects the Inquisition" running gag, and I'll leave the explanation for aficionados.) Well, proof is proof; I'll remember in the future that "common sense" is full and sufficient proof for any statement. He

favors something like CBDTPA, saying that DRM technologies are pro-technology "for the very reason that they represent a new technology industry unto itself." He says he's not a fan of government mandates on technology—but immediately follows that with the Big Stick (in essence, "if you don't cripple yourselves, we'll do it for you"). DRM isn't enough, disastrous as it might be. So "technological self-help" comes into play—we just need to get those nasty fraud and abuse acts and common law doctrines out of the way.

➢ Hayes' commentary begins "There are bad ideas, and then there are really awful ideas." Hayes cites UCITA as a bad idea—and "legalizing malicious hacking," his summary of the Berman bill, as a really awful idea. Hayes has as little use for P2P "piracy" as I do, and (unlike me, as far as I know) he's been the victim of Internet copyright ripoffs. Maybe his real problem with Berman is that he sees corporate networks as being the next target after P2P. "So if some software vendor decides your company might have unlicensed software on its network—whether that's true or not—the vendor could break into your servers and rummage around." He calls it "UCITA on steroids."

➢ Declan McCullagh chimes in from News.com on July 23 with his analysis of the draft Berman bill, pointing out that it sharply limits the ability of anyone with a damaged computer to sue. Jessica Litman calls it "wildly overreaching" and encouraging "vigilante justice," and notes the absurdity of saying that copyright enforcement should take precedence over all related laws. An MPAA spokesman says "law-abiding Internet users should not be concerned," but MPAA's idea of "law-abiding" may not be yours.

➢ Dan Gilmor, the always-interesting San Jose *Mercury News* technology columnist, wrote "Hacking, hijacking our rights" on July 27. "If you or I asked Congress for permission to legally hack other people's computers, we'd be laughed off Capital Hill. Then we'd be investigated by the FBI and every other agency concerned with criminal violations of privacy and security." But we aren't Big Media, "an industry that knows no bounds in its paranoia and greed." Gilmor's summary of the goal of all the recent bills: "To give copyright owners profound control over music, movies and other forms of information." He's discouraged—particularly because some Congresspeople want the FCC to mandate anti-copying chips on its

own. (Yes, Hollings is one.) Gilmor says that CBDTPA "won't pass, but it's a stalking horse for other restrictions that will slow progress and curb your ability to use technology the way you want to use it." There's more in the column at www.siliconvalley.com.

Then there's the bill itself. Yes, it explicitly overrides "any State or Federal statute or other law" to enable hacking. Of course it says the hacking can't do damage—but damage is defined as "economic loss of more than $50.00 per impairment to the property of the affected file trader." I'm not on any P2P networks and don't plan to be, but it should be clear that wiping every legally ripped song off my PC would be protected, since no song or album is worth $50 (and presumably each deletion is a separate impairment). This is clever wording: Not $50 damages to the computer or data, but $50 *per impairment*. That should allow Big Media to wipe anything that even looks like a song, an e-text, or a video file right off your PC—how can you prove any one of them is worth more than $50?

If someone does believe they've been wrongfully damaged, it's up to them to file a claim with the U.S. Attorney General—they can't sue the party directly. The damage has to exceed $250 and requires proof that the copyright owner "has no reasonable basis to believe" that the file represents infringement. Whoops. Even if I had $51 files, as long as they're copyright material, there's an automatic "reasonable basis to believe" that I could have copied them illegally. Attorney General gets 120 days to investigate—and then the injured party has to file suit within 60 days in a Federal court. Definitions of P2P networks and file traders don't limit themselves to copyright materials. If you do any file trading whatsoever, you're open to Big Media hacking under this bill. Which, of course, does nothing to make illegal copying any more illegal; it just overrides consumer protections against hacking, as long as the hacking is done by Big Media.

Mandatory Ads and Copy Protection

How bizarre can protectionism get? Here's one for the vidiots among you. This spring, a U.S. District Court judge ordered SonicBlue to track the viewing habits of ReplayTV users and send the data to networks and studios that are suing SonicBlue for copyright infringement.

SonicBlue said it didn't have those capabilities; the judge said it had until late June to develop and implement them—tracking "every show ReplayTV users watch, every commercial they skip, and every

program they transmit to others via the Internet," according to one of several reports (this one in the July/August 2002 *Sound & Vision*). SonicBlue called the idea "Orwellian"—but until May 2001, it had been collecting viewing data on its own.

SonicBlue's appeal to stop the order was successful. But take notice: At least one District Court judge thinks it's reasonable not only to monitor your viewing habits—but to *force* such monitoring. You did notice the little motion sensor on your new TV? The one that sends sponsors a message if you leave the room during a commercial? After all, watching TV and not watching the commercials is theft…if you believe some people.

A few stories about ReplayTV, related court activities, copy protection, and other fun stuff:

➢ Mike Musgrove wrote "Copyfight renewal" in the June 7 Washington *Post*, noting that the Electronic Frontier Foundation sued entertainment companies on behalf of five ReplayTV owners—a countersuit of sorts to MPAA suits against ReplayTV for stripping ads. The story includes the notorious Jamie Kellner quote that skipping commercials breaks the "implicit contract between network broadcasters and viewers" and notes, "From that point of view, the consumer electronics industry is building a nation of thieves." Posted at www.washingtonpost.com, it's a balanced story, noting Disney's view that it needs a "reasonably secure environment" while SonicBlue's chief technology officer calls CBDTPA "so restrictive and so absurd, it's hard to believe how an electronics industry would exist" if it passed. Bruce Schneier of Counterpane Internet Security regarding efforts to prevent digital copying: "You're trying to make water not wet." A Brad King *Wired News* story on June 10, on the same lawsuit, quotes EFF's Fred von Lohmann: "Listen, making an MP3 of a CD you already own ought to be legal, but there is nothing on the books that says that is legal." This story notes that the entertainment industry "has tossed out doomsday predictions before," ever since player-piano rolls, and Jack Valenti's famous 1982 quote that the VCR would destroy the movie and TV industries. In 1983 Alan Greenspan "predicted home taping would bring about the end of the music industry." But, MPAA and RIAA will tell you, this time the wolf is real!

➢ *USA Today* had a fairly long story on June 24, but at least one graphic is wildly misleading because it's mislabeled. It shows U.S. music sales dropping slightly in 2000 and 2001, while recordable CD sales have risen rapidly—but, because both sets of numbers are labeled with dollar signs, the graphic suggests that CD-R blanks are now a bigger business than commercial CDs. That's nonsense. The numbers represent billions of units, not billions of dollars—and 1.0 billion $18 CDs make a much bigger market than 2.0 billion twentyfive-cent CD-R blanks. (Hmm. I've burned half a dozen CD-Rs already on my new PC. Not one represents a lost CD sale—but I'd bet the RIAA considers me a thief for creating CDs that leave out the cuts I don't like on the CDs I own.) The story includes the "this time is different" claim for why Congress should hear the umpteenth cry of "wolf! wolf!" This story's a little clearer about the likely result of CBDTPA if it ever passed: "A processor chip inside a PC…would check each file for a digital 'watermark' indicating that it wasn't pirated. Files without watermarks wouldn't play." That *automatically* includes the CDs you currently own, any music you record live—in other words, anything not explicitly allowed is automatically forbidden. When Jack Valenti says he "never understood" the argument that "stopping thievery…is stifling innovation," I'm reminded that there are a lot of things Jack Valenti apparently doesn't understand. The story quotes the Jupiter Media Metrix survey showing that 75% of frequent music downloaders say downloading makes them more likely to buy CDs.

➢ A short piece by Henry Jenkins from *Technology Review* discusses the Kellner quote and grumbles, "All forms of consumerism are being criminalized with ever-decreasing degrees of credibility." I like this one: "Name-calling is the last resort of once powerful institutions that are finding themselves losing control in the face of rapid media change." He notes that there are more commercials than there used to be (true) and suggests that viewers should be suing networks for causing obesity…(yes, he's joking).

➢ A June 14 *Wired News* article includes the assertion that "nearly one billion illegal CDs made their way into the black market last year," but that's a global figure (carrying a surprisingly low "$4.3 billion dollar" price tag—I guess CDs are a lot cheaper overseas). The global music industry blames piracy for 2001's 5% decline in sales; boring music, higher-than-ever prices, and global recession couldn't have anything to do with it.

➢ A July 8 story on www.atnewyork.com describes Rick Boucher's planned bill to

strengthen fair use provisions—but the article uses scare quotes around fair use, appearing to echo Disney's argument that there's no such thing. Boucher asserts that copy-protected CDs won't impact true music piracy but will "anger millions of [the industry's] best customers who have become accustomed to making copies for their own use." His bill would codify fair use and modify DMCA.

➢ Andrew Grove of Intel published an opinion piece on CBDTPA in the *Wall Street Journal* on or before July 25. Grove suggests that the entertainment industry should embrace digital technology and "provide legitimate content to their consumers with even greater ease of use than the illegitimate alternatives that they are fighting." He also notes that a likely reaction to overregulation is that sensible people will stop buying new content altogether.

Speaking of DMCA

Several items concern the flaws of DMCA—beginning with a June 20, 2002 *Economist* piece on Edward Felten, the Princeton professor threatened by the RIAA if he gave his paper on the weaknesses in SDMI. As Felten began a speech on copy-protection software at this year's Conference on Computers, Freedom and Privacy, two FBI agents stormed the stage and handcuffed him. It was a joke, one based in hard fact. Felten comes off as a character with character (read that twice if you must). The *Economist* article discusses Felten's argument that "tinkering is a valuable activity" that's threatened by DMCA and similar laws. **Recommended**: www.economist.com

Declan McCullagh posted a July 25, 2002 News.com item on ACLU's new suit against DMCA with Ben Edelman as lead plaintiff (Edelman v. N2H2). Edelman wants to distribute a utility to unencrypt the lists used by filtering companies, an essential first step toward coping with filters—and that directly violates DMCA provisions. Edelman just graduated from Harvard; his comment is, "I don't want to go to jail. I want to go to law school."

More Short Items

A potpourri of brief copyright-related items, some related to topics already introduced:

➢ According to a May 29, 2002 Newsbytes story, the Business Software Alliance says *most* Internet users who download commercial software don't pay for all the copies they install and that 57% "seldom or never" pay anything for downloaded applications. The BSA scans P2P

networks for "unauthorized software" and has sent more than 8,500 infringement notices to ISPs in three months. RIAA uses similar technology—as does MPAA, as noted in a June 19 Washington *Post* article. "Ranger," MPAA's snoop, "decides" whether a movie title found on the Web is infringing—and at least one company is suing because a Ranger-generated letter shut down its ISP access. The *Post* story states as simple fact the assertion that the drop in worldwide CD sales is a direct consequence of Internet downloading.

➢ An interesting session took place on Wednesday, July 17 in Washington, DC. The RIAA's Glazier said the organization was pushing for a "broadcast flag" to prevent consumers from recording music off the air or via streaming distribution—of course you'd need something like CBDTPA to back up the flag. Webcasters hadn't heard about the RIAA initiative. EFF people said that such a flag would make fair use "pretty much go away." That's from one Declan McCullagh News.com story; another, an hour later, notes that "vocal tech activists" challenged some of the speakers. The idea of the public disturbing a government-sponsored roundtable (to restrict public rights) was clearly astonishing to government spokespeople. The second has Jack Valenti denying that he ever "wanted to abolish the VCR." A Home Recording Rights Coalition attorney remembers that the MPAA had suggested a modest royalty fee in the early 1980s—"$25 to $50 per blank videotape." Disney's lobbyist said "the problem" couldn't be solved without "the transparency and discipline of a government solution."

➢ I'm not sure what to make of an August 7, 2002 News.com article by Jim Hu, "Hollywood sets stage for piracy battle with PC industry." It pits Michael Eisner against Steve Jobs and goes into some detail about the problems and proposed solutions, and may be worth reading for those reasons. But this paragraph took me by surprise: "Nevertheless, the technology companies are fully aware that Hollywood has the upper hand in the debate, as they have with all others. Veterans of both the PC and the TV industries note that their products are only as valuable as the shows they can bring to the home." TV, maybe—but how many of you buy personal computers based on "the shows they can bring to the home"?

Longer Pieces

Schroeder, Pat, "High quality information—the on ramp to a bright future," delivered May 22, 2002 at ALIA. www.alia.org.au.

I mention this because it's been cited so often: Pat Schroeder of the AAP praises librarians! Half a world away, to be sure, and to my mind a great example of AAP playing both sides. That's not new. AAP has always treasured librarians when it comes to defending publishers' First Amendment rights—but recently, AAP (or at least Ms. Schroeder) seems to denigrate librarians and libraries as insufficiently devoted to making sure that publishers get every last possible dime from readers. She says, "You are looking at someone who is often introduced as the voice of greedy publishers." Given Schroeder's history of statements, it's not hard to understand why that is. You won't see those statements here; this is a feel-good library-association keynote (even if she does indirectly put down ALA's "Read" posters in favor of AAP's "Get Caught Reading" posters).

Cave, Damien, "File sharing: Innocent until proven guilty," *Salon*, June 13, 2002.

Most of this is an interview with Stan Liebowitz (University of Texas, Dallas), a professor of managerial economics who takes issue with some conventional wisdom—such as the "network effect," the idea that first-mover advantage locks a winner into a specific market. You know: We all use WordStar because it was the first important word processing program... No, we all use WordPerfect because it absolutely dominated the market... And of course, we all use Lotus 1-2-3 as a spreadsheet: what other choice could we possibly have?

Liebowitz argues that recording industry experts have failed to prove that Napster has hurt industry revenues but that eventually digital downloading will threaten those revenues. He's not sure about the latter half: he isn't seeing the harm he was expecting. I'd disagree with his belief that downloading will replace purchase of physical products (he seems to make fun of consumers for liking CDs), but he certainly reads the record industry right: "They'll never accept" the realities "because they never accepted it with any of the other copying technologies."

Liebowitz is tough to deal with, and that may be a strong recommendation. He believes in DRM and dismisses fair use as a problem; "so you pay a little bit of money" is his answer to restriction issues. "Academics have gotten a bit spoiled." On the other hand, "I view the DMCA as draconian." I dunno; go read it yourself. **Recommended**.

Ian, Janis, "The Internet debacle—an alternative view," www.janisian.com. (Downloaded July 8, 2002.)

Yes, this article does appear to be written by Janis Ian—and this first-rate writer and singer disagrees with the RIAA and NARAS (the Grammy people) views on downloading. She notes her own experience with increased CD sales through downloading and Mercedes Lackey's experience with the Baen Free Library and increased book sales. She cites statements from RIAA's Website and analyzes each of them—noting first that "the music industry had *exactly* the same response to the advent of reel-to-reel home tape recorders, cassettes, DATs, minidiscs, VHS... I know because I was there." She suggests that people download music because it's the only way they can try new music—"You can't hear new music on radio these days," even in Nashville. She discusses copy-protected CDs (unfavorably, suggesting that they'll cause sensible people to stop buying CDs altogether) and the general lunacy of the music business. She objects "violently" to the pretense that RIAA and NARAS "are in any way doing this for [artists'] benefit." Read the article and its list of nefarious anti-artist recording-company practices. What the heck, read it because it's well-written and makes a clear set of points from an insider's position. **Recommended.**

Electronic Privacy Information Center, "In the matter of digital entertainment and rights management," July 17, 2002. www.epic.org/privacy/ (and more).

This statement to the Department of Commerce's Technology Administration sets out EPIC's objections to current digital rights management (DRM) technologies and hopes for future systems. The objections seem clear enough; the hoped-for alternatives may be a bit less probable. This is a set of responses to questions that aren't included, but stands on its own quite well. **Recommended**.

[The article not discussed]

In the rough cut for this issue, I had a long and irritable discussion of a *First Monday* article in which two Australian law professors appear to make fun of the idea that, when you argue U.S. copyright law before the Supreme Court, you go back to the Constitution—or maybe they're saying that law professors should not dirty their hands with the rough-and-tumble of courthouse debate. Maybe I just don't read Australian very well. I cut the discussion for reasons of space and general bemusement.

Vaidhyanathan, Siva, "Copyright as cudgel," *Chronicle of Higher Education* August 2, 2002.

Vaidhyanathan recently published *Copyrights and copywrongs* and offers a clear warning to academics regarding current and potential dangers from DMCA and related acts. He says "fair use, while not quite dead, is dying." DMCA has failed in its primary purpose (preventing commercial piracy)—and academics haven't paid attention. This is a strong discussion that rewards reading (and is available on the free *Chronicle.com* site). **Recommended**.

Olson, Theodore R., et al, *Brief for the Respondent* in *Eldred v Ashcroft*. (The Eldred- and copyright-related Web sites should take you there.)

This is the government's response to the briefs from Lessig and others attempting to overthrow the Copyright Term Extension Act, 48 pages of tight legal commentary. I've seen a posting that boils the argument down to three or four sentences; I'm neither that good nor willing to dismiss this so readily. If you've read some of the other briefs, you should probably read this one as well.

Is it convincing at first read? Sure—but you'd expect that. DoJ lawyers aren't fools. The primary appeal here is to precedent and the Supreme Court's reluctance to overrule Congress. The brief argues that Congress' pattern of extending copyright does not violate the Constitution's "limited term" clause, as the term is always limited—no matter that the limit keeps extending. It argues that recent copyright changes *shortened* some copyright spans by eliminating state-law provisions that allowed unpublished works to retain protection indefinitely.

There are two areas where I find the brief less than wholly convincing—understanding that I'm no lawyer, would never offer legal advice, and personally believe *Eldred* is an extreme long shot. First, the DoJ people go through considerable linguistic torture to convince themselves (or, rather, the Supremes) that "To promote the progress of science and useful arts," and "by securing for limited times" aren't related in any significant sense.

More interesting are claims that the Congress, in passing CTEA, considered and rejected any limitation on First Amendment or other rights caused by keeping many items in limbo for another 20 years. How? Jack Valenti assured them that "public domain works do not circulate more widely or cheaply" (tell the University of Virginia's electronic text center!) and the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks said, "There is very little evidence that the consumer really benefits economically from works falling into the public domain." Congress, in its knowledge of film history, concluded that "most ma-

terial which is considered to be of continuing or potential commercial value" is never abandoned and that many abandoned works are "of practically no value to anyone." Apparently, the small film companies who stand ready to preserve and reissue little-known early films but are deterred by CTEA either don't exist or are lying. Naturally, the brief uses scare quotes around fair use.

As I read the sections of the brief that show how Congress concluded that certain works are simply unimportant and can be ignored in the copyright calculation, what I see is Congress determining *which* speech should be protected. I thought the Constitution worked differently—and I'm not willing to abandon the First Amendment to the whims of. This brief worries that Lessig's efforts could "destabilize current copyright law." But if current copyright law grotesquely favors a set of intermediaries, maybe it needs destabilizing. **Recommended if you've read the plaintiff's briefs, if only for balance.**

The Library Stuff

"The Good Stuff" can cover too much ground, mixing technology, law, libraries, media, and miscellaneous nonsense. As sources accumulated this summer, I found a larger-than-usual cluster of library-related items. Thus, "The Library Stuff."

Beagle, Donald, "Visualizing the digital commons," *The Charleston Advisor* 4:1 (July 2002), www.charlestonco.com.

This piece begins by noting a comment from Gene Levy, provost at Rice—that the concept of a browseable stack as the essence of a library is an intellectual fallacy, as the online environment provides better discovery tools and is more effective than serendipity in the stacks. I can almost see LC's Thomas Mann shaking his head (see the Carlson item below)—and Beagle raises questions, noting that faculty at Eastern Michigan are not at all thrilled that most of the collection is now in an automated storage and retrieval system, making browsing impossible. (Again, see the Carlson item for the library director's dismissal of faculty concerns.)

Beagle believes in the kind of thing being done at EMU. He also says it's important to listen to faculty complaints, and recognizes that browsing the stacks can be important. So far so good—but then it gets tricky. The heart of browsing is leafing through a few pages of various books—but his solution appears to be knowledge visualization systems, specifically VisualNet from Antarcti.ca.

Sure, if you're visually oriented, VisualNet provides an odd sort of "context"—but it can't provide more data than is in underlying bibliographic records. He sees this and similar tools as making it possible to "replicate, and perhaps even improve on, the serendipity experience of open stack browsing so valued by faculty" and looks forward to more "new and transformative model[s] for service delivery in academic libraries" that hide those nasty old books. (My wording, not his.) Pardon my skepticism, but I don't see it.

Block, Marylaine, "Part II: Stop the world, I want to catch up," and "What's *not* on the Net," *Ex Libris* #148 and #150 (marylaine.com /exlibris).

"Stop the world" offers some responses to her earlier question on how people keep up with change. It's worth reading. Steven Bell provides his usual sensible advice. Block notes the importance of a variety of filters and ways to go outside library and computing fields. Respondents almost all mentioned lists, and most have the sense to retain traditional methods such as relying on colleagues and reading the core literature.

The second piece offers her guesstimate that about 12% of the "world's accumulated store of information" is available on the Net, with government documents (first), books (second), and periodicals (third) representing larger areas. It's all back-of-the-envelope calculations, and that's probably a good thing in this case. If she's off, it's almost always on the low side for the three biggest areas; that's the way this sort of guesstimate should work. (For example, she suggests about 60 articles for a typical newspaper edition; my own sample counts for the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran about three times that high, but 60 might be about right for a slender second-tier daily paper.)

Carlson, Scott, "Do libraries really need books?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 48:44 (July 12, 2002), chronicle.com.

After the scare headline, we're treated to provosts who are proud that books are being hidden in new libraries—because they *guess* that students read everything online and equate books with "living in yesterday." "Many college administrators and trustees agree…that the book will soon be the information medium of the past, if it isn't already." And of course, nobody on today's campuses gives a damn about knowledge; it's only *information* that counts. You can call a trade school a university, but that doesn't make it one—and it's surprisingly easy to turn a university into a trade school through the proper attitudes and actions.

Carlson phrases one fact oddly: "Meanwhile, some campus libraries continue to expand their book collections…" This almost suggests that sensible campus libraries just aren't buying books anymore, and I don't believe the situation is quite that grim.

You have to wonder. Marquette plans a book-centered library and the CEO of Kimberly-Clark says "We don't want to build something that is yesterday's technology." How does he get information? "We do our information seeking on a net…and let it guide us." Humanities faculty and graduate students aren't thrilled, to be sure: "Despite everyone's best efforts, it will signal to the students that books and journals are old-fashioned." You think?

The article's not as one-sided as the headline and early paragraphs. It quotes Thomas Mann at LC on finding needed information by browsing the stacks, material that wouldn't be available otherwise. He suspects that colleges with real libraries may have a competitive advantage attracting faculty in the future. Richard Meyer at Georgia Tech notes the need for the new, but is fighting to see that print resources stay in the same building as technology.

Santa Clara's new library will use automated retrieval for most of its book collection, with a "virtual browsing" feature in its online catalogs, "which will allow students to see books in a particular subject area." Sort of like subject or call number browsing in an online catalog today? I don't see how this allows users to "see books," and that's what stack browsing is all about. But Silicon Valley trustees "think that electronic resources are the way to go."

Then there's Eastern Michigan, which has had an automated retrieval system since 1998. Morell Boone used $8 million that "would have gone toward bookshelves" to pay for group study, computers, and a TV studio. "Asked how the system affected book circulation, he says 'I have no idea, and I don't care.'" He says you can't judge the library by circulation "because that's not what happens here anymore." Then it gets *really* interesting: "Faculty members go the nearby University of Michigan at Ann Arbor for serious research, and undergraduates do all of their research online now, he says." Note that this is Eastern Michigan *University*, not Eastern Michigan Community College or Eastern Michigan Trade School.

Apparently students at Gustav Adolphus College in Minnesota didn't get the memo. Barbara Fister surveyed the research methods of her students. "I was surprised and encouraged to hear that, contrary to what people say, they don't just go online. They want to use books, and they want to be in the stacks

with them." But "prevailing wisdom" says books are boring and everything should be online—and the article gives a business major at Marquette the last word. "I don't check out many books, anyway."

I recommend this article only as a sad testament to the continuing "prevailing wisdom" of the people with the bucks: If academia *must* have dreary old libraries, at least let's hide the books. So much for history, language, literature, the arts and much of the social sciences. And, of course, the history and development of the hard sciences, but who cares about the past? Oh well, none of those majors guaranteed you a job after your four years anyway. Isn't that what a university education is all about?

Darmoni, Stefan J, and four others, "Reading factor: a new bibliometric criterion for managing digital libraries," *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 90:3 (July 2002), pp. 323-327.

This brief communication proposes an alternative to ISI's "impact factor." The reading factor measures electronic consultation rates for journals available as full text—"the interest in the journal within the limit of a given readership." The pilot study looks at 46 biomedical journals available in full text at Rouen University Hospital in France beginning in 1998—and compares their RF with their IF. It's not surprising that there's no clear correlation, particularly since some "biomedical journals" cover much broader areas, including *Science, Nature, JAMA,* and the *New England Journal of Medicine. The Lancet* emerged as #1 for reading factor (#4 impact factor for 1997); *NEJM,* #1 in IF among the group, was #2 in RF. Given the group, it may not be surprising that *Nature* (#2 IF) was #32 in RF (*Science,* #3 IF, was #25 in RF) or that the third-highest RF was for a specialized journal, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology,* that came in #30 in IF.

The discussion is excellent, pointing out key questions for the proposed reading factor. Despite those questions, it appears to be a fast and practical measure that may be appropriate in deciding which journals to get in full-text form, assuming an institution can make individual choices.

Ghaphery, James, "My Library at Virginia Commonwealth University," *D-Lib Magazine* 8:7/8 (July/August 2002). www.dlib.org

This third-year evaluation offers a clear, honest discussion of activity on VCU's MyLibrary implementation. The lion's share of accesses came from a small number of users—and class MyLibrary pages drove much of the use. I don't see numbers for the total population at VCU (do the 2,586 accounts at the end of 2001 represent 50% of the campus popu-

lation or 10?), but that's a secondary question. Of 2,586 accounts at the end of 2001, 32% had never been used, while 103 accounts represented 61% of total activity—but 54 of those accounts were class accounts, leaving 49 "power users." There are a lot more numbers in the article, and the most interesting part may be "My Library as a teaching tool." Worth reading, particularly if you've read the special issue of *Information Technology and Libraries* (19:4).

Harper, Corey A., "Technical versus public services: Bridging the fictional gap between 'opposing' aspects of librarianship," *NewBreed Librarian* August 2002. www.newbreedlibrarian. org

As the final feature article in the short life of *NewBreed Librarian,* this article offers an odd combination. The "very imagined division" between tech and public services is frequently just that, and while they may be "often seen as being mutually exclusive," it ain't always so. When my wife was cataloging supervisor in a public library, she made a point of asking for reference-desk time; when she later directed a small college library, I believe that *every* librarian spent time in public services.

I could argue with some points in the discussion—for example, while OpenURL (referred to by implication but not by name) may be offered as software by ILS vendors, it is typically offered separately and independently of the online catalogs and does not "attempt to make the OPAC the top level of a library's web presence." It's clear that RLG's continuing offer of free access for library schools isn't doing the intended job: Harper, a fresh graduate, makes much of FirstSearch "now supporting direct export of abstracts and citations to ISI's End-Note software"—but Eureka, RLG's end-user search service, has offered direct export in EndNote or ProCite format ever since 1995. Ah well.

Lewis, Nicholas, "Talking about a revolution? First impressions of Ex Libris's MetaLib," *Ariadne* 32. www.ariadne.ac.uk

While this is a classic "how we do it good" article, it's typical of why such articles matter. The long description of MetaLib installation and operation at the University of East Anglia, and issues involved in making it work, has lessons worth learning by other UK institutions and probably American libraries as well. You may choose to ignore the revolutionary comments; I certainly did, and found the article worthwhile nonetheless.

Feedback: Your Insights

A flurry of messages arrived shortly after Issue 24. One devoted reader wasn't sure what to make of "FOS." It stands for **Free Online Scholarship**, and I should be aware that there are way too many acronyms and initialisms not to spell out those that aren't part of core librarianship.

➢ **Don Hawkins** gently points out an error in my comments about his latest article on ebooks:

Nit-picking quarrel: You say, "He now admits, 'Most people don't like to read from a screen…'" However, I did say in my first *ONLINE* article that the biggest hurdles that e-book producers must surmount are: … "The reluctance of users to switch media and read books from a screen," and I went on to quote the well known studies that most people (including me) are generally willing to read only a few pages from a screen. So it's not like I was dragged kicking and screaming into grudgingly admitting this—I have always recognized that problem.

Don's right, of course. Mea culpa. I'd go back and change "He now admits" to "He recognizes," but I don't even correct typos in issues once they've gone up—it violates my pseudo-librarian principles.

➢ **Steven Bell**, director of Gutman Library at Philadelphia University, offers this thoughtful addition to my comments on ebrary:

You are not the only one who isn't quite sure what to make of ebrary. I've looked at it a few times now. The subscription pricing for libraries is certainly reasonable ($1 per FTE with a cap at around $10,000 for large institutions), and I believe that the subscription version provides additional options and tools that users of the free service would not have access to—so perhaps there is some justification for the additional fee.

Yes, anytime you must require your user population to download and install a helper app (the reader) you are likely to lose a number of folks right then and there, but it's not an insurmountable barrier for most folks.

What I found most questionable—and this is particularly true for a smaller institution with a more narrowly defined set of disciplines and fields in which it collects—is that the library really has no choice in the selection process. If you sign up for ebrary you get whatever they've added to their collection. You have to take the whole thing. Well, what if we have an occupational therapy program and they don't have any plans to have any books on that topic, or what if they have books on religion and we have no major (or courses) on that topic? Of what use are those books to my users? So I feel as though I'm paying for books I don't need. ebrary's approach

might work for a large research library such as Stanford (an early customer) because no matter how broad a collection ebrary develops, a large research institution is fairly likely to have a field of study or discipline to which an ebrary book could apply.

At least with netLibrary, whatever its weaknesses, I can still pick and choose the books I want to add to my collection. However, netLibrary definitely needs to add more up-to-date content.

➢ **Steven M. Cohen**, proprietor of the excellent *Library Stuff* Weblog (www.librarystuff.net), includes this posting after reading *Cites & Insights* 2:11:

1) Walt makes a brief commentary on filtering (see page 6). He mentions that if he were the director of a public library, he would have a "parental permission scheme" for "sub-teenagers," even though he admits that filtering is bad. Good move Walt (he says without sarcasm)! Most of the librarians who take the "filtering is bad" approach do not carry the brunt of the complaints by taxpayers who do not want smut in the library. The next time I read an article that discusses a library board or director that has opted for any filtering "scheme," I shall think twice about casting dispersions on the decision. Library directors make tough decisions every day that they may or may not agree with. That is the nature of their job. Let's give them a break.

2) On page 6, Walt discusses why Ebooks (aka digital appliances) will not make it past the next 2 or 3 years. His reason: Ebooks attempt to solve a problem that doesn't exist! Brilliant! I never thought of it that way. From August of 2000 (when I started LS) until the beginning of this year, every news article that I read about Ebooks touted them as the future of reading. What is wrong with the way we read now? The typesetting is fine, they are relatively easy to carry around, they don't require batteries, there is usually enough light, and who reads 100 books on one vacation anyway?! Since January of 2002, almost all of the articles on Ebooks declare their downfall. Libraries aren't using them and readers aren't using them. Why? Because hardbound and softbound books work. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I could take mild issue with both of these comments, but that would be even more churlish than I choose to be. Just don't think that I believe in filters—or that I have an patience with the idea of government-imposed filtering. And don't think that I regard all "ebooks" as useless…I don't and never have. (As usual, the news coverage pendulum swings too far in both directions.)

➢ **Roy Tennant** sends kind comments on the Silver Edition, including two paragraphs I can quote without getting too big-headed:

I'm not sure if your statement "When people say copyright is dead…" was aimed at me, but even if not I stand guilty of having said that, mostly as you know to get their attention so we could explore aspects of the issue that they might otherwise miss. But I dropped depicting it that way quite a while back, and now talk about the "copyright war." Even if you avoid the term "war" it appears that you would agree were are presently in a struggle to wrest copyright law back where it belongs—in the middle between creators and consumers/other creators. May the righteous win.

I have a minor bone to pick with your ebook section, though. When you ran through your predictions for various categories of ebooks I didn't see one I expected and hoped to see—library and university ebook publishing. You didn't claim to [cover] the entire territory, but since you covered "public domain ebooks" I figured you should have mentioned that category as well. This is a personal crusade of mine…since I've been involved with such projects for a while. By the way, these are not always "public domain." We are currently involved with putting up around 300 publicly available out of print (but not public domain!) UC Press titles, along with another 1200 that will be limited to UC users only.

As I replied to Roy, the phrase in question wasn't aimed at him. While I do try to avoid the term "war" I agree with Roy's description of the struggle.

As for his "minor bone," I overlooked that section of the ebook complex and need to understand it better. One of Roy's "Digital Librarian" columns in *Library Journal* concerns this form of ebook publishing, and it's worth following.

Following Up

DVD+R: Yes, It's Compatible

The August "PC Group Reviews" included a *PC World* review of DVD burners that showed DVD+R discs being far less compatible with regular DVD players than the producers had asserted. A correction in the August 2002 *PC World* says there was a fault in the preshipping version of the DVD burning software. Once that fault was corrected, DVD+R "proved fully compatible with all the players we originally tested."

More on the Canon EOS D60

In July, I noted *PC Magazine*'s perfect rating for this $2,000 digital SLR, one of the first six-megapixel cameras on the market. *Macworld*'s August 2002 is-

sue has a Mac-oriented review, awarding four out of a possible five mice—but the only negative comment is that the camera doesn't have OS X support (but you can always move pictures using removable media). Otherwise, it's a very strong review for people who need the resolution and can afford the price.

Product Watch

Pocket PCs Get Cheaper

$400 may sound pricey compared to Palm OS units but it's cheap for a Pocket PC. The Toshiba Pocket PC e310 weighs five ounces (lighter than most PPCs), has a 65,000-color reflective TFT display, and uses the 206MHz Intel StrongARM processor. It includes a microphone and speaker, with stereo headphone output—but you only get 32MB internal RAM rather than 64, fewer expansion choices, and fewer software utilities. A brief *PC Magazine* review calls it a good buy but only awards three of five dots.

What's That on the Touchpad?

On the same page of the June 30 *PC Magazine* as the Toshiba Pocket PC is an interesting new Toshiba notebook: the $2,499 Satellite 5105-S607. (Love those sexy model names!) It's a powerhouse with a Pentium 4-1700, 512MB DDR SDRAM, 40GB disk, 15" UXGA display (1600x1200), nVidia GeForce4 graphics, DVD/CD-RW combo, external diskette drive, modem and wired Ethernet. Poor battery life, but you do get IEEE 1394 input and digital audio output. What makes the unit interesting is the touchpad: the Synaptics cPad, a 240x160 pixel touch-sensitive monochrome LCD display. It's a programmable display. As delivered, the Satellite offers a calendar, a calculator, and a set of shortcut keys for applications—but applets could add almost any use, including a signature-capture pad. 240x160 pixels may not seem like much, but that's 50% more resolution than a standard Palm OS PDA, and I've heard people claim to read books on their Palms. (Anyone who figures out how to display text on a 240x160 touchpad when there's a 1600x1200 15" display a few inches away is way too much of a geek for my taste, but that's another issue.)

Audiovox Thera

Here's another one that I'd *swear* I made fun of in an earlier issue—but I can't find the mention. According to a mixed review in the August 2002 *PC Magazine*, the $800 Thera PocketPC/digital phone offers CDMA-2000-1x high-speed data service where

available, yielding "up to 144Kbps (theoretically), with typical transmission rates ranging from 40 to 60 Kbps." That's good for cellular wireless. It's big and heavy for a cell phone—5x3x0.8 inches, 7.0 ounces—and it's expensive to use ($0.10 per minute or $100 per month for data service), and don't expect much talk time on a set of batteries—but for some people, this may be a great combo.

Freebird, Man!

Sorry about that, particularly since I haven't been to a live rock concert in decades (a record I hope to prolong along with what's left of my hearing). But a June 30, 2002 *PC Magazine* First Look by Bill Machrone caught me up short, and recalled a *Macworld* review cited in the very first issue of *Cites & Insights*.

That review was of the "B4," a $200 Mac/Windows CD that can apparently recreate the sound of the Hammond B3, that classic electromechanical organ with its rotating Leslie speaker system. B3s go for big bucks these days, since they've been out of production for years and no other organ does the same job for blues, rock and jazz.

That was then. This is now, but for hot guitar licks. The $170 GuitarPort from Line 6 offers software to simulate Fender, Marshall, Roland, and other classic guitar amplifiers and speaker systems, including simulations of the original control panels and a range of essential effects. It comes with a hardware box to accept your guitar input and feed output back to speakers. It works. Machrone, who knows his guitars (and tells just how he tested it), gives it a five-dot review. He also recommends the $8/month GuitarPort Online, which includes lessons and extra tones and effects. Load this bad boy on a notebook (with a high-quality sound card), feed the output to enough amps and speakers to deafen the world, choose your favorite classic amp/speaker combo, and ROCK ON. Somewhere else, please.

Two Vowels Down, Three to Go

I borrowed that from *Macworld* 19:7 (July 2002), offered as a hypothetical quote from Steve Jobs, with the note that this means there won't be a "yMac." The significance is the new eMac—which, unfortunately for many would be buyers, is only available to the education market (*oops: see below*). A discussion in that issue (pp. 14-16) makes this out to be an interesting machine—but, since it negates Steve Jobs' claim that the CRT is dead, it's also an oddity.

The eMac has a 16"-viewable CRT, 40 percent more viewing space than the old CRT-based iMac

and significantly more than the new LCD iMac (*oops again: see below*). It also comes with a 700MHz G4 CPU, 40GB hard disk, nVidia GeForce2 graphics processor, optional CD-RW/DVD drive, and the full set of Mac ports. Plus one other port missing from most recent Macs: an audio input port (standard on almost every PC). Newer tubes make it possible to offer the big screen in a package that isn't too bulky, but it weighs 50 pounds, so Apple eliminated the handle. All in all, for $1,199 ($999 without the CD-RW burner), it's a nice all-in-one system at a reasonable price. Now, about the aMac, oMac, and uMac…

When I wrote the two paragraphs above, the eMac was "only available to the education market," and Apple was quite firm about that. Come mid-July, a MacMall flier arrived. There on page 3, a full-page ad for "eMac—the affordable G4 system that lets you live the digital lifestyle!" Sure enough: the system described above, but a little cheaper ($1,094; add $40 and MacMall throws in another 128MB RAM). No "education-only." Was the announced embargo a joke in the first place?

Wait another month and another fact bites the dust: There's a new $2,000 iMac with a 17" LCD. Snazzy is the word that comes to mind.

Logitech PDA Keyboards

When I first heard about Logitech's KeyCase, I thought it was a great idea for PDA users who want to write more than a line or two: A $100 wrap-around PDA case that, when laid flat, is also a full-size keyboard. According to Michael S. Lasky's review in the July 2002 *PC World*, it's not wonderful—the mushy fabric surface takes getting used to, and of course you need a big flat surface to use it. He gives it a two-star rating (out of five), but finds another product he likes much better (four stars): Logitech's $80 TypeAway, a folding keyboard he calls "touch-type-friendly." It's aluminum-cased, not flexible, and folds to PDA size.

Wireless HiFi

Talk about convergence with a vengeance. The August 2002 *Computer Shopper* introduces the GE Smart Network Speakers--$140 to $250 speakers that "wirelessly pump out streaming music from a PC or digital audio receiver" using 802.11b (Wi-Fi) wireless networking. Look ma, no cables!

The illustration seems to show the back of a speaker that you'd install in a wall. There may be one problem with that, until power gets broadcast along with the signal: "They will draw juice from rechargeable batteries that can last through several

days of ordinary use." Recharging your home speakers: What will they think of next?

High-Density Punched Cards?

Not quite, but close. IBM's Millipede prototype does use punched indentations in a plastic strip—but according to the brief August 2002 *PC Magazine* item, the density of those indentations is such that the strip can "fit the storage equivalent of 25 DVD discs onto an area no bigger than a postage stamp." It's a rewritable technology. Prototype density has reached one trillion bits per square inch. That's a lot of dots! "Two years away" from volume manufacturing, which can mean anything from two years to infinity—but it's intriguing.

Bigger LCD Graphics Tablet

In July, I noted a favorable *PC World* review for the $1,899 Wacom Cintiq 15x, a combined 15" LCD display and pressure-sensitive graphics tablet. I thought it odd that the Wacom Cintiq was considered plausible after Sony's PC using a similar device (but at a much better overall price) was discontinued. The August 2002 *Macworld* gives a near-perfect 4.5-mouse rating to the Cintiq 18x, an 18" version—for a mere $3,499! *Macworld* seems to assume that money is never an object, and for successful graphics professionals it may not be.

The Good Stuff

Ojala, Marydee, "Drowning in a sea of information," *EContent* 25:6 (June 2002), pp. 26-30.

While this article primarily discusses corporate information and enterprise portals, I believe a broad range of librarians will find it worth reading. I'm a bit skeptical of claims for automatic indexing of existing documents, but that's not the heart of the article. Marydee knows her stuff and writes well, with the occasional zinger demanding special attention.

For example, speaking of legacy information that may be difficult to cope with, "(What do you do with documents created on Wang word processors?)" My pathetic answer: scan in a printed version and hope your OCR does a good job. Later, beginning a discussion of digitizing existing documents: "Just because you can digitize content is not a particularly good reason to do so." The discussion that follows is amusing and right on the money.

Brinkley, Joel, "Spectrum analysis," *Stereophile Guide to Home Theater* 8:6 (June/July 2002), p. 22.

Where has all the communications spectrum gone? Why must police, fire, and rescue communications deal with interference, with increasing problems as well for cell phones, wireless networks, and other applications?

This "Defining visions" gives one answer, and it fits the history I know. It boils down to this: Television broadcasters, having been the recipients of the biggest broadcast spectrum giveaway in history, decided to double down, and won the bet.

Public-safety people started lobbying Congress in early 1986 for some of the unused space in the VHF and UHF frequencies, since no city uses more than a handful of the TV allocations. Gracious as always, the broadcasters came up with high-definition television as a National Good. And to move to high-def, each station would need *another* channel—but, of course, they'd give back the old channel when the transition was complete.

May 2002 was a critical month: All commercial television stations had to be offering digital broadcasts by then. That was part of the FCC's plan for an orderly transition. How many made it? Maybe 475 out of 1,300; maybe fewer.

The more you study the rest of this digital-TV plan and the escape hatches provided, the more it looks as though Brinkley's final comment is right. Addressing it to Glen Nash of a public-safety trade group, he notes: "My advice, Mr. Nash: Look elsewhere to solve your problem. That TV spectrum is not going to be freed for a long, long time."

Cell-phone and other wireless operators pay billions of dollars for spectrum licenses. How much did TV stations pay for their second helping? The same as before: $0.

Ozer, Jan, "You can take it with you," *EMedia* 15:5 (May 2002), pp. 24-30.

Jan Ozer's been teaching courses on digital video since 1994. That meant carting around desktop computers—which, with protective packing, "weighed somewhere north of 60 pounds, and were as ungainly as a small refrigerator." Wouldn't it be great if you could edit digital video on a notebook?

Now you can, as this article describes in entertaining and expert detail. Ozer ran a series of tests on an Apple PowerBook G4 Titanium ($3,599) and a Dell M40 Mobile Workstation ($4,027—not your everyday notebook). Neither notebook was as fast as a Dell P4-1.5GHz desktop across the board, but they came close—certainly close enough to make them suitable replacements for field work.

Mac folks might not be thrilled with cross-platform timing comparisons using Adobe Premiere. The Dell M40 was faster for every function except file copying—more than twice as fast for the biggest test, rendering a 20-minute chunk of video.

If you edit video and want to work in the field, read this article.

McLaughlin, Laurianne, "The straight story on search engines," *PC World* 20:7 (July 2002), pp. 115-24.

You may know most of this, but most non-librarians don't: You can't always trust search engines to provide unbiased results. This article offers sensible commentary for the more general audience of PC users, including this startling comment: "Even computer scientists can't prove or disprove whether funny business goes on within relevancy rankings."

Google receives the only "Excellent" grade for clarity of labeling its ads—and Google is the only one of the eight engines compared that doesn't accept fees for more frequent or thorough inclusion. Unfortunately, their advice to avoid metasearch sites is probably sound. MetaCrawler and some of the others drown you in paid listings. Sometimes it's just plain silly, as in a MetaCrawler screen shot where the search "802.11b specifications" yields, at the top of the result screen, "MetaCrawler Suggests: Dating & Romance for over 30s."

Halpin, Jon, "Keys to Office productivity," *Computer Shopper* 22:7 (July 2002), pp. 110-15.

I'm not usually fond of "tips" articles, but this one's surprisingly good. It focuses entirely on Office XP, offering "50 essential tips," some of which strike me as worth noting. Take a look if you're upgrading to Office XP.

De Lancie, Philip, "HD on DVD," *EMedia* 15:6 (June 2002), pp. 24-31.

How long before DVD becomes obsolescent? This article considers routes toward high-definition video on a disc and what those routes might mean for DVD's longevity. HDTV requires about six times the data of regular TV—without compression, 142 megabytes per second as compared to 25 megabytes per second. DVD is already heavily compressed; it's not likely that another 6x compression can be achieved while maintaining quality.

Realistically, HD isn't happening that rapidly. Meanwhile, a number of solutions have been proposed, including even more compression (learn to distrust the word "acceptable"), Blu-ray technology using a different laser bandwidth (blue light rather than the current red) for greater data storage, and so

on. A good story, if you ignore the hype from some of those interviewed.

Bonner, Paul, "The Semantic Web," *PC Magazine* 21:13 (July 2002), pp. IP01-4.

I'm recommending this for an odd reason. I don't believe in the Semantic Web, despite Tim Berners-Lee's advocacy. It doesn't make sense to me. Bonner offers a clear explication of what it's all about, a suggestion of the sheer amount of XML tagging it would take to make it work, and an upbeat view that I believe carries its own problems. He says applications will be able to "distinguish between trustworthy and less trustworthy sources" based on XML tagging. How exactly is that supposed to work? Because fools and knaves can't enter XML that makes them look trustworthy?

Read and make up your own mind. A year after I heard this concept described by its originator, I continue to wonder whether my mind is simply too small to comprehend it.

Cardinal, David, "Beyond point-and-shoot," *PC Magazine* 21:14 (August 2000), pp. 72-5.

Read this guide if you're serious about digital photography. It discusses the real issues in substituting a digital camera for an SLR or any other film unit. It's by no means anti-digital, but you need to understand the drawbacks as well as advantages of the digital medium. As is becoming typical in the "Solutions" essay in *PC Magazine*, this brief article does a fine job.

Howard, Bill, "Service & reliability," *PC Magazine* 21:14 (August 2000), pp. 99-121.

People are unhappy—except with their HP printers and several brands of digital cameras. That's the overall message I get from this multisection roundup of *PC*'s annual service survey. Even Dell couldn't manage an A rating for both desktops and notebooks this time around—notebooks slipped to a B+. Dell continues to be the sole A rating for desktops, with Gateway and locally-built systems close behind at B+. Apple, HP, IBM and Toshiba all achieve A notebook ratings, and Dell, Sun and locally-built servers get that grade.

I continue to wonder how, with nearly three-quarters of all survey responses on printers being for HP printers, those printers can continue to score "significantly better than average" across the board, but they do. I'm not knocking HP printers. I haven't owned anything else in years, and neither has RLG. I just don't see how it's possible for HP not to *be* the average by sheer numbers, unless all the other printers are pure dreck. Since Epson also scores an A (to HP's A+), that can't be the case. It's a good thing

HP does so well with printers; the company's desktops scored a D-, just ahead of Compaq's E grade. Given that merged PC companies historically produce machines that are at least as bad as the worse of the two, this does not bode well for the future.

People love digital cameras. Canon, Fuji, Minolta, Nikon, Olympus, and Sony all scored A grades—which, apart from Sony, suggests a theme of sorts. (Companies that build great film cameras build great digital cameras? What a thought!) Among PDAs—a new category—Handspring gets an A+ and Sony an A. (Palm OS devices in general seem more reliable than Pocket PCs, but Palm's own grade is a B-, tied with HP.)

ISPs have declined as well. AT&T, long on top, is down to a B+ along with EarthLink. Only "local ISPs" get A grades, and there's not a thing you can do with that information. That's for dial-up (your exercise: figure out which very large dial-up ISP gets the sole "E"—it isn't MSN, although MSN doesn't do much better). For Broadband, Optimum Online (who?) gets an A+, Road Runner Boradband an A--- and AT&T's all the way down to a C-. Home networks? Linksys, Netgear, and SMC all get As.

Bortman, Henry, "Bluetooth breaks through," *Macworld* 19:8 (August 2002), pp. 72-7.

If you're a Mac user you may find this worthwhile. It's a thorough examination of where Bluetooth is today in the Mac environment. If you're familiar with both platforms, it's another case of the special Mac worldview: A new technology does not exist until it appears on the Mac. In January 2001, PC journalists were saying that maybe, finally, after two or three years, Bluetooth would begin to matter last year; this article says it's a "new wireless technology." A little later, Bluetooth's potential 1Mbps speed is compared to "12 Mbps for USB; 400 Mbps for FireWire." USB 2.0, which is faster than FireWire and has shipped standard on all but the cheapest Gateway PCs for most of this year? It doesn't exist—not until Apple discovers it in a year or two.

Chagnon, Bevi, "Desktop publishing software," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 8:1 (August 2002). www.press.umich.edu/jep/

If you care about desktop publishing or have a need for such software, read this overview. Ms. Chagnon knows her stuff, as far as I can tell (which is an admission that I've lost touch with the field). She recommends different solutions for different needs, although QuarkXPress and Adobe InDesign do show up in all the categories. Corel Ventura shows up for everything except "general [brief] publications" as does Adobe FrameMaker.

For those who've followed my stuff for several years, I've dropped out of the Corel Ventura user community—albeit reluctantly, and if the reviews for Ventura 10 convince me that it's finally a stable product, I might change my mind. Ventura always did the things I needed to do, particularly for book design, but recent versions were the most crash-prone programs on my PC. Between Windows XP and a redesign that took three years, it's possible that Corel's solved the problems. Meanwhile, Word itself has become so fluent for text-oriented design that I might not need Ventura. The reviews included in this article don't deal with machine stability and similar problems, but it's still a first-rate overview.

Ford, Paul, "August 2009: How Google beat Amazon and Ebay to the Semantic Web." *Ftrain.com*, posted July 26, 2002.

This one's a goof, but an interesting goof that makes good points. Written "seven years ahead," it suggests ways Google could become far more powerful and profitable by combining its current technology with some marketplace add-ons. There may be warnings hidden in this commentary—but it's fun whether you probe the deeper meanings or not.

Short Stuff

Howard, Bill, "Presentations 101," *PC Magazine* 21:12 (June 30, 2002), p. 75.

Howard offers a concise, thoughtful set of rules for avoiding disaster when you're doing a presentation with the ubiquitous PowerPoint. Some of you already know my favorite solution, but that doesn't work if you need illustrations or your audience craves those bulleted points. His comments all make sense. It's hardly surprising that the magazine's layout/editing crew had a little problem with his article: one sentence ends "so it will work in 0-your favor." 0-well, (it's a zero, not a capital O) these things happen. A good article despite the glitch.

Malone, Michael S., "Tyranny of the twit," ABCNews.com, May 14, 2002.

The subtitle is "A few rules to help you survive the Internet era," and this is a grumpy but charming set of "laws" and "rules" for Web behavior. Malone begins with the"Nazi rule"—but he gets it wrong: "Run a chat thread long enough and eventually everyone will start calling each other a Nazi." His explanation—that, given enough participation, "all cyber-events trend towards the rude, the inflammatory, and the mediocre"—is directly refuted by Web4Lib, to name one example. I've heard a different version that might be stated thus: "In any online discussion, the first person to make a reference or

parallel to the Nazis loses"—and the corollary, "Nothing, *nothing*, can be equated to the Holocaust."

But there are charmers here, including the "Law of Limited Ideas" or the "Blog Rule," which states that,during a major event, no matter how much you surf the Net *and traditional media*, you will find only endless variations of four ideas and three stories. The three stories are the view from 30,000 feet, on the ground, and the victims (or policy, war correspondence and bleeding hearts); go read the four ideas for yourself. "Though this might appear to produce only twelve possible positions, it will in fact result in ten million comments."

How about the four-and-a-half-star rule, which he calls the tyranny of the twit: No matter how great the rock album or movie or whatever, if enough people post their ratings, the overall rating will never exceed 4.5 stars out a possible five. Unfortunately, he goes on to say that only paid critics are worth listening to and, in general, that only writing done for money is worth reading. I beg to differ.

Sarett, Carla, "In defense of clutter," *Media Life*, July 11, 2002. www.medialifemagazine.com.

This discussion considers "personalization" and offers some reasons that sensible people really don't want personalized technologies to work all that well.

Ersatz, Ernestine, "Guidelines for submitting a reseach paper," *HotAIR* 8:3. www.improbable. com.

You do know about www.improbable.com, the online arm of the *Annals of Improbable Research*? If not, you should.

Ms. Ersatz was approached by a psychology professor for advice on submitting articles for publication in research journals—specifically, "how closely should she adhere to the journals' official publication guidelines?" Ersatz turned to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (368 pages!). The manual advises that authors become familiar with the criteria and standards for editors and reviewers and lists the most common problems leading to rejection. Ersatz quotes "the most important...the first and last." The first: "piecemeal publication, that is, the separation of a single substantial report into a series of overlapping papers." The last: "the endless production of papers that report trivial changes in previous research."

Her advice on whether to adhere to the official guidelines follows and appears appropriate based on what most of us have seen in professional literature. I recommend that you read it for yourself; while it's five paragraphs each containing a single long sentence, you'll find it easy to read and memorable.

If you're having trouble getting, there, append airchives/paperair/volume8/v8i3/submitting.html to the overall URL above.

Burns, Grant, "Uncle Frank's diary #9: Taking candy from strange Websites: Do not be fooled, boys & girls!" NewPages.com. www.newpages. com/unclefrank/Number09.htm

Let's get the caveat out of the way. "Indifferent student research did not begin with the advent of Web browsers, of course." Like me, Uncle Frank admits to writing student papers "that did not raise beads of earnest, scholarly sweat on his forehead..."

But he thinks there may be a difference between lazy research among print resources and lazy research on the Web. He makes a cogent case (using the kind of writing that makes me feel even more dull and uncreative than usual, but that's my problem). Go read it. **Strongly recommended**.

Levine, Larry, "Why there will always be an an Apple (or something like it)," *EDUCAUSE Review* July/August 2002, pp. 66-7.

This charming essay from Dartmouth's Director of Computing suggests that computing, and academic computing in particular, always needs an alternative. You could get rid of all the Macs in higher education within a year if that was necessary, and Levine agrees that the losss probably wouldn't hurt research or education—but "If our goal...[was] to have full homogeneity...it wouldn't work." He offers rational arguments and not-so-rational arguments (and labels them appropriately).

One interesting aspect of this piece is what it says about personal computing at Dartmouth. When he arrived at 1984, so did the Mac—and the campus was "essentially all Mac" until about 1994, "and arrogant about it." Now roughly half of the PCs at Dartmouth are Macs—and 80% of last year's incoming class had Dell PCs. "At Dartmouth, previously all Mac, Apple will soon reach its once-stated 20 percent national market-share goal for higher education." He also notes a higher education conference at which the most "Apple-like" group was from Microsoft—and the "most typically Microsoft display of behavior" (arrogant, anti-consumer) was from an Apple exec.

This isn't an Apple fan letter. It's a well-stated case for maintaining an alternative. I don't disagree—although my guess is that "something like Apple" could easily be Linux.

Sharing the Sidewalk with Segway?

I've commented on Ginger ("It") previously—the overhyped "secret" that turns out to be a one-person electric scooter with gyroscopes and computing power. The formal name is the Segway Human Transporter. If we ignore Steve Jobs' improbable notion that we'll redesign cities to work around the Segway—which, if done right, would mean cities designed for pedestrians, a *much* more interesting notion—then the scooters have to go somewhere in existing communities.

They're powered devices. That makes them inappropriate for bike lanes. And, as an AP item posted February 21, 2002 at *Wired News* notes, "Backers don't want the Segway regulated as a motor vehicle. They want it to be allowed anywhere people walk."

Huh? It travels at up to 12.5 miles per hour. People who will spend $3,000 for a high-tech electric scooter so they don't have to *walk* anywhere are likely to be the same self-obsessed fools who bump into you because they're on their cell phones or grooving to their MP3 players. Put these clowns on 65-pound 12mph scooters and you've endangered the people who burn calories and improve their health by walking. And yet, lawmakers in 30 states appear willing to allow Segways to be used on sidewalks. Walkers: buy your body armor—the Segways might be coming!

Updating the comments above (written in February, when Minnesota legislators were considering this nonsense), an April 18, 2002 Detroit *News* article notes the introduction of a Michigan bill to legalize the Segway for use on sidewalks. It's an odd story. The headline says "Scooter gets closer to OK for public use." The first paragraph talks about "personal scooters." But Segway's Matthew Dailida says, "We clearly are not a scooter"—because, after all, even the most corrupt legislature wouldn't approve riding 12mph *scooters* down sidewalks. That would be insane. When a metal-and-plastic object *inherently* weighing more than a person and going 12 mph meets a person going three or four mph, the results won't favor the pedestrian.

Oh, but Dalida and "another company official" rode the Segway around, "harmlessly running into onlookers to demonstrate it poses little threat of danger." I'm reassured, and would favor a bill that legalized employees and lobbyists of Segway to ride it on sidewalks whenever they're being paid to show

how safe it is. The Michigan bill would require helmets for Segway riders. If it's so safe that pedestrians need have no fear, why is it so dangerous that riders need crash helmets?

The story keeps getting better. The Atlanta *Constitution-Journal* for May 3 reports that a city police officer (a member of Atlanta's Ambassador Force) "toppled from one of the personal scooters" going up a driveway onto the sidewalk. He injured his knee. The Ambassador Force has ten of the devices ($9,000: the "$3,000" is for a theoretical mass-produced consumer version). Many of us at ALA got a chance to see the Segway in action. I sure don't want that object heading my way at full speed with an inattentive rider.

This turned from a March quick take into something more over time. A July 23, 2002 Los Angeles *Times* story introduces some new factors, as Segway LLC (the company) continues its drive to get the Segway (the scooter) legalized for sidewalk use. In California, the idea is to rewrite "pedestrian" to include people on Segways. "But many pedestrian activists and advocates for the blind don't count themselves among the bill's supporters. They worry that the 65-pound transporter, with a top cruising speed of 12.5 mph, will endanger senior citizens, children and other pedestrians… 'That could kill somebody,' said Deborah Murphy, founder of L.A. Walks, a pedestrian advocacy group." No kidding. It's almost silent, so blind pedestrians probably won't hear it coming. Segway officials tell us it's perfectly safe—or do they? After the Atlanta incident, they now say that "the rider is ultimately responsible for operating the device safely."

USA Immigration Law Center of Washington, D.C. has already announced that it's preparing to specialize in Segway injury cases. Its Website says "We believe that the Segway HT…is a legal nightmare and will be the basis for many laswuits." How much is Segway spending to con California's legislators? $49,000, chump change for the possible profits. The *Times* article comes back to the best reason to think the Segway should not be given special treatment. "Given the problems America has with obesity and diabetes, [critics] ask why more people don't use old-fashioned foot power to get around."

PocketPC Meets the Silly Season

Even if you believe Microsoft is the Evil Empire, you gotta love this April 24 AP report. Entrepreneur Ken Belanger lost a small claims court battle with Microsoft over the rights to the term "Pocket PC." Belanger isn't giving up. He plans to sue again on

the basis of DMCA and plans to send warning letters to "about 200 online merchants using PocketPC on their Web sites." He says he's identified "1.78 million infringements on his Pocket PC rights."

Ken Belanger is 40 years old. When he was 23—in 1985—he introduced the "Pocket PC," a plastic poker chip with a unique serial number. Seventeen years ago. Remember this stupid gag? I don't—and I've been writing about personal computers since before 1985.

"Convinced he could sell thousands of his Pocket PCs online if Microsoft hadn't latched on to the name, Belanger sued the company in January for copyright and trademark infringement in small claims court, where damages are limited to $5,000 in California." Thanks to publicity over the "case," he sold "nearly all of the 200 remaining Pocket PCs that he had in stock for $9.95 apiece."

But—whoops!—Microsoft sent a paralegal to the trial. He dropped the trademark claim (he hasn't marketed the item consistently and apparently never filed for trademark status) and argued copyright violation. You can't copyright a title, but when you're selling $10 poker chips, so what? Since federal law governs copyright, the small claims commissioner threw the case out.

"Belanger remains determined to either wrest Pocket PC from Microsoft or force the company to pay him millions to compensate him for the 100,000 to 200,000 gag gifts that he maintains he could sell if the software wasn't trespassing on his trademark." My guess: If Microsoft will bother to send a representative to small claims court over $5,000, chances are it's not ready to give Belanger *any* nuisance payment. I'd also guess the company will be only too happy to claim payment for its legal expenses should he actually go to court and lose. Think of it as a very big poker chip—and, as I read it, Belanger holds a busted flush.

While we're in the silly season, consider a May 19, 2002 report from the New Zealand version of IDG.net: "Company claims patent on 'millions' of e-commerce sites." The company: Pangea. The patents: ones covering the display of text and images on ecommerce sites and automated credit checking for online transactions—the latter patent issued in 2001. The patent holder: Lawrence B Lockwood, who sued American Airlines in 1994 claiming that SABREvision infringed some of his other patents. American defended itself and won, taking away some patent claims in the process. This time, Lockwood's company goes after small fry, asking $30,000 for a permanent license to call off the legal eagles. What does Lockwood do for a living? "I enforce my patents," according to a deposition in the AA case.

Maybe Pangea can team up with British Telecom and assert complete control over the Internet.

Predictions for the Record

Save this forecast, from the impressively named Strategy Analytics Broadband Entertainment Strategies service. In 2008, U.S. residents will spend $8.2 billion on TV-based, cable-delivered video on demand. That's up from $40 million last year and a projected $300 million this year. I get this from *EContent*'s Metrics page for June 2002.

Why am I noting this? I'm trying to report some projected numbers, for the record, so you and I can look back in a few years. If you're looking for closer data points: $1.0 billion in 2003, $2.1 billion for 2004, an additional $1.4 billion each of the following two years, then a jump to $6.6 billion in 2007.

Here's another, this time from the July 2002 *Computer Shopper*: InfoTrends says that, by the end of this year, 60 percent of Internet-connected households will have digital cameras—up from 33% at the end of 2001. Probably untestable, but an interesting projection. The survey forming the basis for that projection shows different sales leaders than actual manufacturing—for example, 12% market share for Polaroid, with HP and Canon not among the top four, even though HP ranks third in most sales figures (after Sony and Olympus) and Canon's one of the preferred brands for future buyers.

Headline and Copy

I like *EMedia*, but once in a while I have to poke fun. Take page 12 of the May 2002 issue, in the "facts, figures, & findings" section. Headline: "Internet users show willingness to pay for streaming."

Here's what the Arbitron/Edison Media study actually showed (setting aside issues of how questions were phrased and so on): "Approximately 80 million Americans over the age of 12 have at least tried streaming video or audio, and one in seven people who listen to streaming audio are willing to pay a small fee to listen to online content."

Assuming that 80 million (a leap-of-faith projection from a small survey) is 30% of Americans over age 12, you could rewrite that headline:

"Four percent of Americans might pay a nominal fee for streaming audio."

The Devolution of SatireWire

Here's the headline on a SatireWire posting: "SatireWire devolves, releases 'book' printed on 'paper'" The first paragraph notes that the humor site "has taken an embarrassing technological step backward and written a 'book,' made of 'paper,' that can be

read offline without a computer." Andrew Marlatt, founder of the site, notes "I'm pretty happy with the end result, except none of the hyperlinks work." He recalls his conversation with Broadway Books: "At first we were like, 'A book? Gee, why don't we just go all the way and paint on some cave walls or something." The publisher's rejoinder, "They told me, 'Well then, you just go ahead and keep publishing on the Internet, for free, like an idiot.'"

Marlatt notes the publisher's "nagging insistence that the author's use of html tags was unnecessary and 'kind of annoying.'" So it goes.

VHS: The First of Many Shoes

According to a June 21, 2002 AP story, Circuit City and Borders have stopped stocking VHS movies, using the space for DVD titles. In Borders' case, exercise and sports videocassettes will stick around, and maybe a few copies of blockbuster movies.

The end of VHS? Absolutely not. Circuit City continues to sell blank videocassettes and sells VHS movies on the Web. This—and Blockbuster's conversion of a quarter of their store space to DVD—is the first of many steps. The next will be for studios to release DVD versions before VHS, and eventually to drop VHS altogether. I still suspect that's at least four years away (but I could be wrong), and that VHS as a time-shifting medium will be around for another decade, more or less. And of course we have some library people and others screaming that it's *a conspiracy* to force us all to buy the movies over again, that the DVD picture isn't really any better (if that's true, you desperately need a new TV or better glasses), that it's all a plot… Ah well, here's my quarterly $150K check from DVD Conspiracy, Int'l, so I'll keep telling you this is nonsense.

Near-Near-Near-CD Quality?

Ken Pohlmann writes a disturbing little column in the July/August 2002 *Sound & Vision* that should come as no surprise to anyone who understands perceptual encoding—the theory behind MP3, MPEG-2, and JPEG, that you can throw away data in music (or visual material) that a person can't hear (or see) under the circumstances. It works great for carefully-done MPEG-2, as you see in any good DVD (with something like 60:1 compression). It doesn't work as well in "CD-quality" 128Kbps MP3, but raise the bit rate to 192K, and most people (myself included) apparently don't miss the 80% of the data that's been discarded.

But what happens when a chunk of sound goes through several encoding cycles? "It's not unusual for a signal to pass through eight different codecs [compression/decompression routines]" between original source and what you hear on a broadcast. Errors accumulate. Worse, an error introduced by one codec may be treated as valuable signal by the next one. The result can be a chain of errors that results in mediocre sound or vision. But, of course, it must be perfect: it's digital!

Bluetooth: Not Just Yet

Bluetooth, a short-range wireless-communications spec, has been the Next Big Thing for some years now. One pundit assured us that 2001 was the year BlueTooth would finally matter. Bill Howard may be a believer, but his July 2002 *PC Magazine* column says "it's still too early in the game…for widespread adoption." He looks for it to be important in a year or two. But then, Howard's starting to pay attention to his own track record:

> I want to say Bluetooth has a great long-term future, but I'm also the columnist who urged you to hop into the IrDA, USB, and CEBus (the X10-like protocol) bandwagons early.

And yes, he still believes that "Bluetooth will be a long-term winner." He may be right; I have no idea on this one. (I had no idea that IrDA would be as irrelevant as it's been—remember IrDA? Infrared communications between your notebook and your printer? My HP LaserJet 5P has that dark glass square that suggests it's IrDA-ready…)

802.11what?

A one-page "first look" in the August 2002 *PC Magazine* helps to confuse the wireless networking scene. I try to avoid telecom and networking as much as possible, but I did know the Wi-Fi basics: 802.11b inexpensive, not very fast, lots of accidental free access points; 802.11a much faster, much more expensive, not really out there very much; 802.11g forming some form of bridge between the two.

So TI adds the ACX100 chipset to provide "better range and faster throughput" than 802.11b, within the 802.11b environment. Modems using the chipset perform better when contacting other such modems, but look just like regular 802.11b to everybody else. Tests of early units didn't show them as being twice as fast—about 20% faster for a big file transfer would be more like it—but they're not much pricier than regular 802.11b. The tests did show range to be somewhat greater.

Quicker Takes

➢ **Whatever Happened to AltaVista?** The item is a June 6 Pandia posting that Google now has

a 51% share of the global search engine audience. What I found interesting was AltaVista's share: 3.81%! Yes, you need more than one search engine. But for most of us, most of the time, Google's a good place to start. Yahoo! came in second, but it's not really a search engine—or, rather, the search portion of Yahoo! uses Google's engine, last time I checked.

➢ **Searching for Perfection:** That's the title on a piece in the August 12 *Time* that reviews some of the newest search sites that "offer cool features that Google can't yet match." The point that you need more than Google is worth repeating once in a while. The claim that alltheweb.com indexes more than Google and does it more frequently has never been born out in my searching and I have yet to get teoma to impress me—but that's my problem. This one's also "my" problem but in a way that gives me pause: In doing a vanity search, I find that the first-hit abstracts on both AllTheWeb and Kartoo.com include text that isn't on the page (and as far as I know never has been—after all, it's my own home page!). Where does this text come from?

➢ **Kuro5hin,** discussed in *Cites & Insights* 2:2, has built a community under the leadership of Rusty Foster. On June 17, he posted a fairly long commentary under the heading "We're broke: The economics of a Web community." He enumerated his income and expenses and suggested possible ways to keep the site alive. Within a week, readers contributed $35,000. The largest single contribution was $240. Foster's planning to convert his one-man operation to 501c status, which would save some taxes and provide for trustees from among the community. Caring enough about your online community to kick in some money. Who would have thought?

➢ **Buying a new Sanyo DVD player?** Maybe you'll get one with the new foul language filter from TVGuardian. According to a writeup in the June 2002 *EMedia*, the device checks the closed captioning on the DVD and compares it against a dictionary of "objectionable words and phrases." Then it either mutes the sound or substitutes a more appropriate word. So, for instance, you could get a transsexual talking about a "hugs change" operation. What the [friendly] won't they come up with next?

➢ **Not Just Cows, RIP:** Bill Drew (SUNY Morrisville) posted a slightly sad announcement on June 24: "Effective as of today, I am no longer adding any new resources to Not Just Cows (NJC). I will be taking the pages down effective July 1." He goes on to explain why. NJC was a pioneering effort (begun 15 years ago "as an ASCII text file available via FTP or dial-up on various BBSs"). There are many other better-funded resources these days, and Drew's interests have changed. Maybe "sad" is the wrong term. Times change. Fifteen years is an incredible run for a one-man show.

➢ *NewBreed Librarian*, **RIP**: This announcement is a little sadder. After 18 interesting months, *NewBreed Librarian*'s founders are calling it quits. The site was design-heavy but easy to read; the articles were informal and interesting, even if they didn't print out perfectly. I'll miss NBL—but it's hard to fault people for giving up a non-revenue effort that chews up time.

➢ **Newspaper Websites and readership:** A recent survey suggests that newspaper Web sites don't affect print subscriptions one way or the other, but may increase single-copy print readership. Many of the Web readers don't read the print edition—but they wouldn't anyway. You may look at SFGate.com from your computer in Boston or San Antonio (how else can you read Jon Carroll?); why on earth would you subscribe to the *San Francisco Chronicle*?

➢ **Defining rip?** John Atkinson's editorial in the August 2002 *Stereophile* discusses a variety of legal and technological issues and makes interesting reading—but he gets one thing flatly wrong and has another statement I find curious. He suggests that analog sound recordings ("the only recording medium with true archival properties") "cannot be ripped by a computer." If "ripped" explicitly means "converted from audio CD 1.44MBps to lower-rate MP3" then he's right by definition, or if "ripped" inherently means "converted at high speed" he may be right. But if "ripped" means "copied from a commercial sound recording to computer-based MP3," then he's absolutely wrong. Heck, Easy CD Creator Platinum and competitors even include tools to break up an incoming analog stream when silent passages are found (so that one side of an LP becomes half a dozen songs, not one big file) and to work on the clicks and scratches of the original. The other problem is a misreading of CBDTPA that says Atkinson never actually read the bill: he says it will "outlaw all existing computers and audio/video gear," although—atrocious as the proposal is—it explicitly says that existing gear will be legal.

Cheap Shots & Commentary

Dvorak, John C., "Inside track," *PC Magazine* 21:11 (June 11, 2002), p. 69.

I swore off Dvorak's "Inside track" and his *PC* columns in general as being *way* too easy. And I'm about to poke fun at him for something you might reasonably accuse me of: "If you don't understand something, ridicule it."

His lead item is about the proposed Mira tablet PC, an LCD panel that you carry around and that stays connected to your desktop PC using 802.11b wireless. That's not my problem. Nor, for that matter, is his flat statement that "you can be sure we'll be seeing cheap displays" built on printable organic polymer circuits—ones that you can print with an inkjet. "You can be sure" used for any laboratory technology gives me the willies, but that's OK.

Nope, it's the third and longest segment: "Genuinely interesting hardware dept." He opens by lamenting the old Northgate keyboard and raves over the new Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro. Along the way he says, "**this is not that goofball** *wavy-gravy* keyboard with the odd split-in-half design, which Microsoft called *natural*." (All emphasis in the original.) A little later, "you'll find a reference to the wacky 'natural' keyboard but not the good one."

Geez, John, maybe the Microsoft Natural keyboard doesn't suit your needs. It does suit mine, and I never thought of myself as a goofball or particularly wacky. I'm a fast touch typist. I was getting sore wrists at work and when I wrote more than an hour at home. I tried the Natural. It took me one day to adapt. I use it on both machines. I never have sore wrists any more. *It works for me* and for tens of thousands of other users—mostly touch typists, and it's one of those that you either love or can't use.

It's an odd column in general. Along the way, he seems unable to understand a $44.95 price for the "Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro Win 9x English North America CD" and a later $179 "Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro Win 9x English North America 5 Pack CD." He "studied the site but still could not make sense of it." Strange: When I read the two product descriptions, it took me all of two seconds to say, "You get a fivepack of keyboards, probably with one installation CD, for $179 or one for $45." And, later, he tells us all to run out and buy Adobe Illustrator in no uncertain terms: "If you do nothing more than design one business card, get this product." Sure I will—it's only $390!

OK, John, I'll try to lay off for a while. Just keep writing those wacky columns.

Nadel, Brian, "The next wave of wireless," *Computer Shopper* 22:7 (July 2002), pp. 142-50.

What can you say about an article that has this as its first quote: "If more Americans knew how good cell phones are in Europe and Asia, there would be riots in the street." That's Mike Elgan of *Mike's List*, and he's possibly just a wee bit overenthusiastic. Rioting in the streets? How about, "If Europe and Asia had the consistency, ubiquity, and flat-rate pricing of landline telephony in the U.S., they probably wouldn't use quite as many cell phones." According to less frenetic commentators, that's the reality, and it's why the "wireless revolution" may be a little slow in coming home.

There are "promises" some of us would rather avoid: "an always-on data connection at speeds up to 2Mbps," with cell phones as "the portable data terminals of the 21st century," leading to "an always-connected computer that fits in your pocket."

Want more? "In South Korea, more than 2,400 subscribers exchange video e-mail or watch video from SK Telecom's 50 channels of TV programs, cartoons, and films" on their fancy cell phones. 2,400! Maybe that's why a Forrester Research chart shows that, just within the U.S., data cell-phone users will jump from 3.8 million last year and a projected 11.0 million this year to 122.2 million in 2006. A sidebar on terminology lists "feed a parking meter" as a key use for "M-commerce," using your handset to make small purchases. Bob Dylan would be proud.

Back to SK Telecom: it "pays its employees T&E expenses via their phones." Don't lose that handset; your flight was just reimbursed to it…which should pay for a *lot* of parking meters.

The Details