Cites & Insights:
Crawford at Large

Bibs & Blather

Seventeen Thousand Conferences

There's not one ALA Annual Conference. Despite the "track" efforts (well-intentioned but, in my humble opinion, more annoying than useful), there surely aren't seven or 27 different ALA conferences. The heading says it: If there are 17,000 library people in Atlanta in June, there will be 17,000 different conferences.

That's a weakness of ALA if you're an organization or control freak. To me, it's one of the association's greatest strengths. For many years, my ALA was just a wrapper around the Library and Information Technology Association's programs and discussions. If you believe in focused education as the heart of a conference, the tracks may help: they can guide you to seven major themes or 27 specific themes. For thousands of vendors, Atlanta is a trade show, the "big show" for the library marketplace.

I find Midwinter a better place to catch up with people and sample new interest groups (LITA) and discussion groups (everybody else). But Annual is the big deal—the only place for programs (other than the ALA President's Program at Midwinter), the biggest range of exhibitors, and the widest range of extracurricular activities.

Drop by booth 955 in the exhibits. Not to see me—I'm not part of RLG's exhibit staff—but to catch up on interesting things we've been doing. As I've told too many people (including a few hundred in Atlanta in early May, at the SOLINET Annual Meeting), I've been having more fun at RLG lately than I've had for years, all in a great cause. That cause: OpenURL support in Eureka, RLG's end-user search system (which also has a newly refreshed design to minimize user steps, reduce overhead, eliminate most library jargon, and be as "intuitive" as possible). I wrote the specification for Eureka's OpenURL support and got the first chance to see it

work. Going directly from Eureka's sixteen million citations and hundred million bibliographic records to a library's local print and full-text holdings—it's like magic, and it works. I started reading up on OpenURL just before Midwinter; wrote the design in February; and began testing at the end of that month. We put it into production in mid-April after (literally) thousands of tests. By the end of April, the University of Chicago and OhioLINK both had OpenURL operating in their Eureka accounts. Others are testing now. We expect to see more adoptions, particularly after June 3, when the new Eureka becomes the default version for all users. RLG will be showing the new Eureka and OpenURL at ALA.

Inside This Issue

Booth 955 will also feature RLG Cultural Materials, now a production subscription service with 46 collections from 22 institutions—photographs, artifacts, works of art, rare publications, video, audio, letters, music and more from preeminent libraries, archives and museums. (I'm borrowing liberally from RLG's May 2002 press release, "ALA 2002: What to look for from RLG.") There's also RLG Archival Resources, with access to almost 29,000 full-text finding aids and more than 693,000 records for archival collections, and RLG's presentation of The AMICO Library, more than 78,000 digital representations of works from leading museums. RLG's version of The AMICO Library is the original. I'm biased, of course, but I also believe it's the best.

Want more? RLG's Ariel is the standard for library document transmission while RLG's ILL Manager offers the best in peer-to-peer, ISO protocol, standards-based interlibrary loan management. (OK, my wife is the analyst/designer for RLG's ILL Manager, but I don't admit to bias in this case. RLG ILL Manager is a great and remarkably well-priced sys-

tem—and offers fully-tested interoperability with the OCLC and RLIN legacy ILL systems, the British Library's ARTISO, the Canadian National Resource Council's CISTI, NLM's DOCLINE and the National Library of Canada's NAVIS.

RLG holds several open meetings during ALA in addition to a set of member-only meetings. If you're concerned about digital preservation, RLG's Open Forum might be particularly interesting—9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., June 16, Omni Hotel, CNN Meeting Room 6. The title is "Converging, Emerging Standards for Digital Preservation" and the program will feature Rebecca Guenther (Library of Congress), Janet Gertz (Columbia University), Michael Seadle (Michigan State University), Stephen Abrams (Harvard), Morgan Cundiff (LC), and Robin Dale and Merrilee Proffitt of RLG. You'll hear about preservation metadata, the work of the OCLC-RLG working group, metadata for particular media types, METS, and implementations of the Open Archival Information Systems model.

Full disclosure: Nobody at RLG instructed me to include these comments—or even suggested it as a possibility. I doubt that more than one or two RLG people will be aware of the inclusion: *Cites & Insights* is not well read at RLG, as far as I know. I write *Cites & Insights* on my own time, the same as my articles, columns and speeches. But I also believe in RLG and what we're doing. It's been an interesting year and the booth should show that.

You might run into me at the booth (although that's unlikely). I might see you at the Sunday afternoon LITA Top Technology Trends program, or (for one or two of you) at the *ITAL* Editorial Board meeting. Those are nearly my only predictable activities. Otherwise—maybe I'll run into you in the exhibits, at a program, at a reception or just sitting in on a discussion. If, that is, your unique conference happens to overlap with my unique conference.

Facts and Truth

The facts aren't always the truth. If that's a tough concept, have a glass of wine (or your favorite legal relaxant, including meditation), think about it and consider the following trivial example.

One or two eagle-eyed readers may have noted the absence of "drop caps" in *Cites & Insights* 2:7. (The big letters at the beginning of each article that drop down to take up three lines of text in all.) If there's an obsessive reader with a long enough memory, that reader may remember that *Cites & Insights* 1:1 (January 2001) also lacked drop caps and assume that I just forgot them again, as I did that time. That's not the case.

Here are two factual reasons to omit drop caps:
➢ Text space is always at a premium, and a three-line drop cap takes up as much space as six or more regular letters.
➢ When Google does PDF-to-HTML conversion, drop caps mess it up, and they probably mess up programs that convert PDF files for Palm PDAs and other special uses. Why should I make the conversion more difficult just for a little extra elegance?

Both of those reasons are factual. Neither of them is the truth.

The truth is that Word 2000, which had always handled drop caps beautifully, suddenly started misanchoring them—putting the top of the drop cap one or two lines below the beginning of the story. Maybe it's trying to tell me to upgrade to Word XP. Probably I could figure out what's going on if I did some investigation. I didn't feel like taking the time.

That's a trivial case. There are other much less trivial cases. Think about it.

Feedback: Your Insights

Going back a ways—and crossing between publications—Jim Robertson (New Jersey Institute of Technology) offers a thought regarding my November 2001 *American Libraries* article "Library lists: building on e-mail":

> Towards the end, you indicate many lists seem less active today than in the past and give some possible reasons. Here is another: many of these lists have searchable archives, and many questions that would have been posted and answered years ago are simply searched-for and found in the archives. Thus, the growing body of knowledge collected in these lists archives is an ancillary benefit to subscribers and non-subscribers alike.

> Obviously, new issues pop up all the time, but I, myself, have many times found the answer I've been looking for without having to post at all.

Absolutely right, and I wish I'd thought of that.

Ebook Appliances: Adding Other Content

Going back farther, Jeffrey Kraus-yao encountered the June 2001 installment of "Ebook Watch" (*Cites & Insights* 1:6, pp. 5-10) and took exception to this comment: "But [the REB1200] won't handle RocketWriter software or interface with a PC at all—the *only* way to get text onto the REB1200 is directly from Gemstar, according to this review."

> Locking the REB1200 to only books purchased through Gemstar would be a major negative feature

if it were true. But loading of personal content is possible with the REB1200. It is possible to convert and load documents using either a compact flash card or a server using the Ethernet connection. More information is available at http://krausyaoj.tripod.com/reb1200.htm

After I responded with a slightly puzzled acknowledgement, Jeffrey clarified as follows:

The information you received was accurate to a point. The REB1100 and REB1200 do not come with the tools needed to create and load personal content nor are those tools supported by Gemstar. But the tools are available for both readers.

While my statement, including "according to this review," was accurate, this is more interesting: You can download REB1200 Publisher from the Web site noted above and use it to load your own ebook text onto REB1200 appliances.

The Short Century

A brief "Trends & Quick Takes" item in the Early Spring issue (*Cites & Insights* 2:6, p. 7) noted a problem with the *recent* Domesday Project in Britain: Unlike the 1086 inventory (which is still readable), the 1985 inventory is essentially unreadable after 17 years, thanks to technological obsolescence. Peter Graham (Syracuse University) writes:

…You rightly note the Domesday Project data loss. However, you didn't have the context that caused the issue to come to your attention in the 3/3/02 *Observer:* a major PR event by the Digital Preservation Coalition in the UK that pointed exactly to this problem as a reason why digital preservation needs to be worked on.

I've been on the advisory board to the Cedars project (http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cedars/) for the past three years and one of the things they've done as a model project is the "digital archæology" necessary to raise the Domesday Book project from the dead as a demonstration. It was described at the House of Commons publicity event on Feb. 28 intentionally to get press; and it did, including in *Cites & Insights*!

You can find *lots* more information about Cedars at the Website. I didn't make the connection to digital preservation in my note, and should have. While I'm not part of RLG's substantial efforts in this area, I'm aware of them and of how important the area is. Digital preservation doesn't "just happen," no matter how sanguine some people may be about the self-perpetuating effects of digital technology. If the Domesday Book fiasco was a staged wake-up call, good. People need to wake up!

Validity and Relevance

Mark Stover at SDSU sent a thoughtful note relating to my act of shameless self-promotion in *Cites & Insights* 2:7, p. 18 (citing my *Online* column in "The Good Stuff" because it was based on a *Cites & Insights* reader survey):

…You made the following comment about a little survey that you had taken: "Ninety of you responded, not enough for statistical validity…"

Don't quote me on this, since I'm not exactly a statistics maven, but I think that this is not quite accurate. Statistical significance (not "validity," that is something else) does not depend on sheer numbers or even on the percentage of respondents. It depends on a number of other factors, such as what you want to do with the survey results, whether or not it was a truly random sample, etc. In statistics, (sample) size does matter, but it is not the only factor. There are various tests that can be run to determine the probability of statistical significance. Many surveys with ninety responses could turn out to be statistically significant.

At any rate, my two cents.

Thanks for all your hard work on *Cites and Insights*. Your is one of the few publications that I read cover to cover.

Yes, I did get Mark's permission before quoting the "Don't quote me" section—I've stopped using feedback unless you specifically mark it as "To the editor" or I ask! Here's my response, before I got his permission to run his letter:

You're right—sort of. I think I did mean "validity," which means not only passing the known significance tests but also being reasonably projectable to a larger population, where "reasonably" is not (in my opinion, with a certain amount of statistical experience) entirely subject to significance tests.

A lot has to do with heterogeneity and effective randomness.

It was somewhat sloppy writing both in C&I and in the article derived from it (and, frankly, I wasn't willing to take the time to run the actual significance numbers or attempt to explain them within a 1,200-word *Online* column). I'm thinking about this based on a "Cheap Shots" piece (which may or may not show up in the June issue) about a *First Monday* article on the "second-level digital divide," where part of my displeasure comes from having loads of assertions based on a 54-person sample where there are very high standard deviations in most measures and where the population from which the sample was taken is clearly skewed. Sigh…

I probably need to go read *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Statistics* (if such a title exists). It's been a while

since I fully understood all the chi-square, standard deviation, and other stuff associated with statistical significance.

COWLZ

At the end of last issue's lead item, I said, "Based on responses by May 15, there *will* be a follow-up in the next *Cites & Insights*." In my foolishness, I half-expected that a few people would say "what a dumb idea this is!" while one or two would express mild interest and everyone else would ignore it altogether. That would yield a compact follow-up: "Very little energy and less than two pages of *Cites & Insights* were wasted on this dumb idea." A somewhat less likely outcome would be an outpouring of focused enthusiasm leading to some real progress by this point. I'd report on responses and where things might go from here.

The truth is stranger and more complex than expectations. First, a couple of interesting responses not directly related to the issue of long-term access to library zines.

Fred Lerner (National Center for PTSD) pointed me to www.fanac.org, a site "devoted to the preservation and distribution of information about science fiction and science fiction fandom," which "has been tackling the same issues with regard to fanzines as you discuss."

> Library zines aren't entirely a creature of the Web. I seem to remember a mimeographed zine called *Off Center* published about thirty years ago by a librarian somewhere in Maine. I subscribed to it for the Library Science Collection at the Vermont Department of Libraries, to the disgust of my boss, who asked, "Why should I pay for this guy's ego trip?" And of course there was Sandy Berman's *Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin*, which as I recall wasn't entirely devoted to cataloging…

I'm aware that the science fiction community has a long, robust history of [fan]zines. It's that community's use of "zine" that encourages me to use it as a term for Web creations that may not be countercultural or punkish—but also aren't professional magazines or journals. The long history of SF zines leads to another letter from Peter Graham:

> [Regarding the first paragraph of my article]: In matters like this I often think about what we would do in the print environment and what it is about technology that makes us do something in the digital environment. There is often a tendency to say, at bottom, "because we can, we should." I'm not sure that's what should guide us.

> As a producer of dozens of mimeographed zines for many years (since the age of 13, with my heyday over by 23), I'm in a position to have some thoughts

about this from the producer end. And with the exception of certain special collections (e.g., UC Riverside), it's not my understanding that any zines from earlier periods were collected by any library, ever. More recently, there is an explosion of zines in the print world as well as digital, and their collection is mostly a matter of selective special collections (e.g., the Fales collection at NYU acquiring literary and New York City publications, or Bowling Green more broadly collecting popular culture). I also expect that there will be Pepys, Tanners, and Cottons around to scoop these up and pass them on in later years. Maybe that's what your doing with COWLZ…

> So in answering the question "WWPD?" (What Would Print Do?) I'm tempted to say for digital: look at your collections policies and collect as you would similar material in print. Of course there are preservation issues raised, and acquisition of ephemeral publications; but they exist in print too. If you want to have a different policy about a digital zine Because It's There, be prepared to justify why it's different.

Absolutely. I see no reason that Web-based publications should be treated *more* seriously than "minor" print publications—but maybe some of them should be treated *as* seriously. *Cites & Insights* reaches more readers than many print library journals; *Library Juice* reaches a *lot* more people than I do. Do they deserve long-term retention? Damned if I know.

Steven Bell sent a long, thoughtful comment noting the potential benefit of archiving some Web-based zines and newsletter—and noting some pitfalls, for example the uselessness of most links in link-heavy resources such as LISNews and Library Stuff. "Ultimately, I imagine it could be frustrating to find a brief LISNews synopsis of a story, but being unable to access the actual story…" He also wonders about the selection process. "Frankly, many are not worth the effort that would be involved. Do you make it a voluntary process (i.e., the editors volunteer to archive their works), or does the library community determine what it would like to see archived. Why bother putting the resources into archiving something no one thought was of value in the first place?"

The link issue is one reason I informally excluded LISNews, Library Stuff, and other Weblogs from my "call for action." But I'm not clear about these issues—and it's not my decision to make.

What's happened? Most editors I contacted responded positively. A few others also responded positively—offering appropriate disk space (at a university, backed up regularly, with high-speed Internet connections), leadership with experience in the North American Serials Interest Group, leading experience in handling electronic journals, and other

ideas. I won't name names for the same reason I won't describe next steps: I'm not in charge (and don't wish to be), and the group seems to believe—appropriately—that it should define a future somewhat before issuing progress reports.

Progress seems likely and it's a little hard to predict the shape of the eventual project. Participants represent deep expertise and awareness, but these are also busy people. Nothing will happen overnight. I'm encouraged; stay tuned.

Perspective

Tracking the Next Big Thing?

Tim O'Reilly (of O'Reilly & Associates) offers "Inventing the future" at oreillynet.com, beginning with William Gibson's InstaCliché, "The future is here. It's just not evenly distributed yet." Here's his list of what "the world will be writing about (and the venture capitalists and entrepreneurs chasing) in the years to come":

- ➢ Wireless, and specifically "community 802.11b networks" and "ubiquitous wireless connectivity." He brings in wearable computing.
- ➢ Next generation search engines, "basing searches on the implicit webs of trust and interest reflected not only by link counts (a la Google) but by who specifically links to whom." We need these "when our personal data storage exceeds that which the entire Web required only a few years ago." (One of those unfalsifiable claims: if you define "a few" loosely enough, my pathetic old home PC has more storage.)
- ➢ Weblogs, "the new medium of communication for the technical elite." Here's a generalization: Weblogs "aren't just *the* next generation of personal home pages, representing a return to text over design" (emphasis added). Which implies that they are *the* next generation, not one of many avenues for self-expression. Add "*the* new medium" and "technically elite," and this is a truly impressive overstatement.
- ➢ Instant messaging between programs as well as people.
- ➢ File sharing, asserting that centralized storage isn't needed "when everyone is connected" (and we all presumably have unlimited free bandwidth).
- ➢ Grid computing. "The success of SETI@home and other similar projects…" How do you define success?

- ➢ Web spidering, with hackers building "unauthorized interfaces" to the "huge Web-facing databases behind large sites."

He goes on to say that all of this will "without question" be integrated into "a standardized platform that enables a next generation of applications." ("Without question" is a synonym for "inevitable." You may know what I think of "inevitable." In this case, it's a big red flag that says, "If you're not a technosheep, question this long and hard.")

In a cheap shot elsewhere, I use the honorable cliché "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." That's what comes to mind later in this article when he talks about spidering Amazon in new ways and the possibility of opening up whole new markets: "Amazon-powered library catalogs anyone?" Here's a great line: "One of the beauties of the Internet is that it has an architecture that promotes unintended consequences." I always thought that unintended consequences were not always good things, in which case "beauties" may not be the right word.

About the same time I picked up O'Reilly's list, I downloaded the Midwinter 2002 report from the LITA Top Tech Trends group. (www.lita.org/committee/toptech /mw2002.htm) It's an odd report, one I have some trouble reconciling with the discussion itself, but never mind: maybe Marshall Breeding, Karen Coyle, Clifford Lynch, Tom Peters, Joan Frye Williams and Tom Wilson (the other trendspotters at the session) remember it differently. Here are the five "trends to watch" as reported (with loads of links for further reading):

- ➢ Security (viruses and other software vulnerabilities)
- ➢ Self-publishing (with the subtitle "amateur fiction," but I'd say that Weblogs and other nonfiction are a much more important part of this trend)
- ➢ Storage and organization of mass data
- ➢ New search interfaces
- ➢ Broadband

Add that to previous trends (see my summary in *Cites & Insights* 2:2, and the real reports are all available at www.lita.org) and you have an overwhelming set of trends to follow. (By the way, I'm pleased to see that my straight-line projections didn't quite come to pass: the number of participants increased slightly from last year and the number of trends stayed level.)

Which brings me to *Ex Libris* 137, "Stop the world, I want to catch up." Marylaine Block wonders how "my librarian readers" keep up with the changes in library-related technology and expresses some frustration at her attempts to keep up. It's a good brief commentary with some of her techniques

and asks others for theirs. I'm not a librarian, but I've commented on this question in a couple of speeches.

To wit: You don't. It's effectively impossible for any person to keep up with every technology and trend that could affect libraries and still maintain either a job or relative sanity.

You filter like crazy. You select areas to ignore and if you're lucky you have a network of people tracking those areas. (For example, I pay almost no attention to telecommunication issues—not because they don't matter but because others of my acquaintance can do a better job, and I can't keep up with everything any more than anyone else.) You establish a set of "common filters," online sources and offline media that you pay attention to, and you hope for the best. That's life.

Trends and Quick Takes
Farewell, *MCJournal*

I wasn't too surprised when *The Future of Print Media Journal* disappeared: it never really amounted to much as a journal. I won't be too surprised if *Transforming Traditional Libraries* fades away, after one robust issue and a second "quarterly" issue with a single paper, some six months later. But *MCJournal* began in 1993 and published two issues a year for five years and another two issues in 2000 (with one issue each in 1998 and 1999). The current issue, Winter 2002, completes Volume 8 (which began with Summer 2001)—and also completes the publication. The review database continues as a separate electronic publication, *Educational Media Reviews Online*. While it was never a core journal for me, I remember some interesting articles. All things considered, eight volumes isn't a bad track record.

Spam and the Free Speech of Corporations

I'm an American, close to an absolutist on the First Amendment, and a stock-owning capitalist. Yet I couldn't help but be bemused by a March 28, 2002 *Wired News* story, "Spammers slam anti-spam proposals." You won't be surprised that the Direct Marketing Association lobbies against laws that would *in any way* restrict spam, calling it a valid method of advertising. DMA offers their usual "opt-out" copout: Send them the right kind of email and you may be removed from some of the spam lists run by DMA members.

EPIC, the Electronic Privacy Information Center, takes a middle ground. No, there should not be restrictions on what's said in email—but it's plausible to require labels on bulk mail such as "ADV:" at the beginning of the subject entry. The Electronic Frontier Foundation and ACLU (once more refuting claims of a leftish bias) don't support even that modest effort; the ACLU opposes *any* mandatory labeling, including commercial speech.

Consider the measures being proposed in Congress. Two would require accurate identifiers—it would be illegal for spammers to forge headers. A third act would ban wireless messaging for unsolicited commercial messages.

The first two basically say that *corporations* can't lie about who they are—essentially, that advertisements have to be signed. The third seems reasonable given that the *recipient* of wireless messages is paying for them. That's a "time, place and method" regulation; it in no way prohibits "speech."

One mark of an ethical magazine, newspaper, radio or TV station is that advertisements are always obvious as such—and, unlike spam, print and broadcast ads directly support the user's activities, directly or indirectly. Bulk mail is easy to spot as bulk mail—and it's paid for by the sender, not the recipient. (For that matter, bulk mail helps to keep first-class mail prices low, according to most accounts.)

Here's a proposal: You can send all the bulk email you want—but each piece of commercial bulk email must credit to the recipient's account the difference between the incremental cost of sending and the average cost of a bulk-mailed ad. Or let's just say $0.25 per email, to simplify matters (although that's almost certainly too low). For a quarter a shot, I'll glance at the spam; 80 a month and my ISP bill is paid. Otherwise—why do emailers get a free ride no other advertisers receive?

Divx Redux?

That's the headline on a brief item in *Sound & Vision* 67:3, and it's not a bad description of another Night of the Living Brain-Dead idea: SpectraDisc. The company has received a U.S. patent for a DVD coating that "makes a disc self-destruct after a predetermined length of time once its package is opened." The company, of course, sees this as "a compelling alternative to video rental." (Can you say "Netflix"? I thought you could.) Writers (Brian C. Fenton in this case) are getting smarter: "It doesn't seem very friendly to the environment to toss a disc in the trash after one or two plays instead of returning it for someone else to rent."

He loses me in the next item, "Better than a floppy," pushing a tiny flash-memory "drive" that plugs into a USB port and costs $40 for 16 mega-

bytes up to $900 for one gigabyte. ($900 for one gigabyte? The Apple iPod starts to look *awfully* good at that point.) He begins with this:

> When I stumbled over several boxes of 3½-inch floppy disks in my home office recently, I realized that they're every bit as obsolete as the few dozen 8-inch floppy diskettes I still have in a box in my basement.

He goes on to say that "many" new computers don't have floppy drives, "so we rely on Zip disks and e-mail to move files between non-networked machines. But not all computers have Zip drives…" Earth to Fenton: a *lot* higher percentage of new computers have floppy drives than have Zip drives, and the installed percentages aren't even in the same ballpark. It's still rare for a Windows desktop PC to ship without a microdiskette (3.5") drive and uncommon for a notebook to lack an external diskette drive. Most new computers *do* read and write microdiskettes. To call them "every bit as obsolete" as 8" diskettes is just plain stupid.

Ads, Ads and More Ads

PC World's article (by Gregg Keizer) carries the title "It's an ad, ad, ad, ad world." (20:5, May 2002, pp. 109-12). The article discusses some ways and reasons ads are getting more intrusive on the Web—and rates methods to beat back the overflow. AdSubtract Pro ($30) seems to do the best job; its use seems to speed up Web access to ad-plagued sites. Some ad blockers also block legitimate use of extra windows, although it may be possible to block unexpected popups without blocking legitimate cases.

A lovely sidebar offers this opinion from the head of the Internet Advertising Bureau: "Users must accept the quid pro quo of advertising. They're getting something for free or at a reduced cost. And yes, blocking ads violates that implied contract." Ed English of AdSubtract responds, "Are you obligated to read every single ad that's in a print magazine or a newspaper? Of course not." Most of us fall somewhere in the middle: I don't mind ads, but I detest some of the tactics being used these days.

Blather about Blogging

I have here four essays concerning Weblogs and their greater significance. One is from a "magazine" that appears devoted to Weblogs as a form of "amateur journalism"—one of what may be a growing number of second-order Weblogs. (That is, Weblogs mostly or entirely about the practice of blogging.) I'll spare you that essay, particularly since the printed view of the article that interested me was nicely obscured by a table of contents overlaying a substantial portion of text. (After all, Weblogs *are* designed to be read online.)

Howard Kurtz of the Washington *Post* discusses the "blogosphere," a "rapidly expanding universe where legions of ordinary folks are launching Weblogs…that feature lots of reader feedback." It's not another version of an earlier sneering commentary in the Boston *Globe*, but it does quote one writer who questions claims that blogging is a threat to conventional media. Some of Kurtz' examples are less ordinary than you and me, including Andrew Sullivan, whose Weblog "draws 75,000 unique visitors a week." He calls Weblogs "sort of the fast food of political opinion magazines," and I must admit my one visit to AndrewSullivan.com left me feeling a little greasy and wanting to wash my hands.

Tech Central Station (www.techcentralstation. com) offers two April 10 essays on blogging. Glenn Harlan Reynolds of InstaPundit.com thinks that "amateur journalism" could pose a legitimate threat to "the Old Media guys," particularly with some sort of framework for reputation-rating (he uses Amazon and slashdot as examples). James D. Miller, an economics professor who runs a Weblog at www.ConservativeEconomist.com, thinks it's all about money, and that means doom for Weblogs. He mixes some likely statements (most Americans will stick with media brand names) with an apparent belief that money is the only measure that matters. More than that, "surfers will undoubtedly prefer the bells and tassels of sexy high tech sites to static text-based blogging pages." I suppose this is standard economics: If it's not profitable, it doesn't matter.

Then there's John Dvorak. I'd already written his April 23, 2002 *PC Magazine* column up for "Cheap Shots and Commentary," but "Deconstructing the blog" belongs here. The piece is a classic case of overthinking. He believes there are two kinds of Weblogs: "faux blogs" set up by authors promoting books or newsletters and "true blogs"—which he defines as "a legitimate journal of day-to-day life." After "deconstructing" more than a hundred "true blogs" he offers Eight Rules for the Perfect Blog, which combine to make up a full-page sneer.

Except, of course, that many useful and interesting Weblogs follow no more than one of his rules, "Specialize," and not the way he means it. There's a whole class of journalist Weblogs that make up an odd new semi-professional medium; the library-related blogs that I follow rarely reflect more than two of his silly "rules" and definitely constitute services to the profession.

I'm less sanguine about the "blogging revolution" than some committed bloggers and Weblog community-builders. I've given up on a couple of

Weblogs because the flow of material was so heavy and so lacking in context that I wasn't willing to read it and I've seen some Weblogs grow infrequent, stale, or simply silent. But some of them work well and are far more than exercises in egomania. "Not that there's anything wrong with a little egomania," sez the editor and sole writer of *Cites & Insights*!

The Good Stuff

Glass, Brett, "Are you being watched?" *PC Magazine* 21:8 (April 23, 2002), pp. 54-6.

"How private is your PC data?" This tight three-page article discusses some of the tools for snooping on computing activities and possible countermeasures if you think you're being spied on. Fascinating, well worth the short read.

Machrone, Bill, "Still scary after all these years," *PC Magazine* 21:9 (May 5, 2002), p. 57.

This ExtremeTech column is a natural followup to Brett Glass's article. Machrone mentions the first time he saw WinWhatWhere Investigator (W3I), a computer-monitoring program. "I was appalled. I thought it was terrible, invasive, and insulting." He said as much to the program's creator, "who in a slightly embarrassed, affable way, agreed with me." But there are reasons to use snoopware such as W3I—which was available a full decade ago! As Machrone noted, he blasted the program in his column for its alarmingly intrusive nature, "and it was the best thing I could have done for its commercial success." The new version is far superior to the original—and, of course, Machrone is "appalled all over again and similarly squeamish about giving the program free publicity." He goes on to note cases where W3I might make sense—maybe.

The program renames itself from time to time, moves around on your hard drive, uses old dates and odd names for its data files, can be set to uninstall itself at some point, doesn't show up on antivirus programs. Can you identify every task if you bring up Task Manager (using a *single* Ctrl-Alt-Del)? I know I can't. Should such software exist and be easy to purchase? As Machrone notes, it's a dilemma.

Suber, Peter, "When is government data good enough to use and disseminate?" "Thoughts on first and second-order scholarly judgments," and "More on the problem of excessive accessibility," *Free Online Scholarship (FOS) Newsletter* April 1, 8, and 15, 2002.

Suber's *FOS Newsletter* continues to offer a rich mix of citations and brief comments on a surprising variety of topics surrounding the title. Many issues begin with moderately long commentaries (typically one or two single-spaced pages) offering Suber's take on a particular subject.

The April 1 essay discusses the Data Quality Act, a new federal statute that provides for an odd new form of open evaluation of "scientific information or data disseminated by any federal agency and used in its rulemaking." I haven't read the background papers linked in the item, but it doesn't appear to be a joke and could be a way to improve the quality of science used in governmental activities or a new special-interest boondoggle—possibly both.

The "first and second-order" discussion is particularly interesting. To paraphrase badly, first-order judgments are scholarly papers and findings; second-order judgments are "judgments about which first-order judgments you ought to read." Suber says "search engines, web filters, current awareness services, and peer review give us second-order judgments" and goes on to name others. There's more to it than that. It's one of the longer *FOS Newsletter* essays and deserves more space than I give here, whether you find Suber's arguments wholly convincing or not.

Excessive accessibility? Suber uses that label for the case "when somebody thinks certain information should be hard to find, even if by law or policy it has to be made public or available to those who need it." He uses as current examples the Authors Guild complaint that Amazon makes used book buying too easy and an argument from an Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers official that the Open Archives Initiative could harm society journals. Another interesting discussion, particularly if (like me) you're less than 100% certain that FOS is The Solution and that economic harm to reasonably priced society-published journals is irrelevant. (Which is not to suggest that all society-published journals are reasonably priced; that's nonsense. I'm just conflicted here, and that's not unusual.)

Richardson, John V., Jr., "Reference is better than we thought," *Library Journal* April 15, 2002. (Downloaded April 12.)

Remember the 55% rule? That's the dispirited summary by Peter Hernon and Charles McClure of various studies of reference service. To wit, when a group of "typical" questions are asked and judged by a group of "experts," reference librarians usually turn out to be just over half right. Like many of us who don't believe in eternal crises, Richardson found it

difficult to believe that reference service is so bad—and he's done an initial study saying it just isn't so.

Why? "It turns out that so-called typical, 'fact-type' queries used in all of the previous accuracy studies were only representative of half of all real queries received at reference desks." In this new study of real-world reference, coauthored by Matthew Saxton and done in a dozen Southern California public libraries, the finding is much more positive. "In 90 percent of the cases…a panel of reference experts determined that librarians recommended an accurate source or an accurate strategy in response to a user's query."

It's a much larger sample than usual (9,274 inquiries) and it's a real-world study. I haven't looked at the statistics, but the results make a lot more intuitive sense than the half-empty world of previous studies.

Much as it will sadden crisis mongers, it's hard to argue with Richardson's comment: "Reference librarians should stop berating themselves. We are doing reference work much better than we thought we were." If you weren't, wouldn't users have revolted long before now?

"FAQ," *RLG DigiNews* 6:2 (April 15, 2002). www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews/

Here's the premise for this fifth-anniversary FAQ: "We often read about new projects and programs in RLG DigiNews, but what about past efforts? What results have been produced in the five years since RLG DigiNews began publishing?"

The first section revisits NAL's USDA Digital Publications Preservation Program, the result of an effort noted in that original April 1997 issue. After four years, publication guidelines and a metadata template have been prepared for the benefit of USDA agencies preparing digital publications; the work goes on. That's not the reason for this note.

That reason is the second section. "In August 1997, *RLG DigiNews* announced a new publication called *Digital Library News (DLN)*, sponsored by the IEEE Computer Society Task Force on Digital Libraries and the Advances in Digital Libraries conference." *DLN* published a June/July 1997 issue and January and July issues in 1998. "Then it fell silent." The Web site's still there with the three archived issues—along with information on how to subscribe to email distribution for an e-journal that hasn't appeared in more than three years. An inquiry found that IEEE only provided expenses to the editor; she couldn't afford the time, and nobody was willing to take over. So far, so bad: an unusually short version of the Arc of Enthusiasm, particularly odd for a sponsored publication.

The editors looked for perspective, doing their own study along the lines of my own modest study (which appeared here in May 2001 and also appears in *Learned Publishing* for April 2002). They used the 1997 ARL directory of e-journals and the like, narrowing the thousands of listings to 65 that *began* in 1997 and were identified as journals rather than zines or newsletters. They didn't try to determine whether journals were refereed (a sensible choice).

The results? Forty of the 65 published issues in 2001, or just under 62%; through early April, only 22 of that 40 had published any issues in 2002. Compare that to my results—which included journals that began *by* 1995, not only those beginning *in* 1995: 57% were still publishing six years later. That's very close, as I think the comparison is between 57% and 62%, and is particularly interesting given correspondents who suggested that my study was worthless because it was too hard to publish e-journals up to 1995 or 1996. A rational response may be that the real difficulty in keeping a journal going is the same now as it was pre-Web: getting the papers and doing the editorial work.

The FAQ includes fascinating comments on and from some dead and moribund journals, and notes questions about digital preservation. "Does it matter if the output of these short-lived electronic publications disappears? Should Web publications be given more attention than print publications of similar stature?" Cornell continues to study the longevity of e-journals and other digital publishing.

The second question could be phrased differently: Should Web publications be allowed to disappear *more* easily than print publications? If a dozen libraries collect a small print journal, it's likely to be available fifty years after it ceases publication. If a dozen libraries include a small e-journal in their e-journal list but nobody commits to archiving that e-journal, it's likely to vanish entirely within a year or two of cessation.

Digital archiving isn't one big problem subject to one big solution. An informal group, formed in response to my "call to action" in *Cites & Insights* 2:7 and Marylaine Block's *Ex Libris* piece, is working on one little piece—not journals, but Web-based library zines. More later, as work progresses.

Special issue: open source software, *Information Technology and Libraries* 21:1 (March 2002), pp. 2-36. (Most articles available at www.lita.org/ital/)

The six articles and guest editorial in this special section offer a fascinating set of perspectives on open source software, particularly as it applies (or doesn't apply) to library needs. David Bretthauer's

brief history is well done and heavily documented. Eric Lease Morgan offers a thoughtful set of possibilities for library open source projects and notes some existing projects. Marshall Breeding offers a cautionary view regarding integrated library systems. Breeding, an expert on ILS, makes an excellent case that a full-scale open source ILS is improbable (and might not be a good use of volunteer energy). Karen Coyle relates open source to open standards—that is, true, publicly available standards. Two other articles describe specific open source library projects. Well worth reading.

For an odd take on open source software, see Andy Ihnatko's "Open-source showdown" on the last two pages of the May 2002 *Macworld*. After touting the wonders of Unix-based Mac OS X as an "open home for open software," he concludes, "Open-source software will probably never have a direct effect on the masses." You have to read this with a bushel of salt, however, as Ihnatko spreads the phony rumor that Windows XP "turns Microsoft's operating system and applications into subscription services requiring online renewal every now and then." There are subscription versions of Office XP for sale overseas, but—as Microsoft made clear—the U.S. versions never require renewal. But then, for Andy Ihnatko to exaggerate Microsoft's failings is neither new nor surprising.

Simone, Louisa, "Boost your scanning skills," *PC Magazine* 21:9 (May 7, 2002), pp. 66-71.

Another of the fine, focused discussions that pop up in the "Solutions" section of *PC Magazine*. This worthwhile article considers when you should try to clean up a scan at the point of capture instead of fixing it up with a graphics editor and includes useful tips about capture resolution (always think about intended uses before you scan) and why it makes sense to crop on the scanner in some cases. Well written and likely to be useful to any new scanner user and many experienced users.

The Filtering Follies

What's the decision? For COPA, remanded to a lower court with one challenge thrown out. For CPPA, pretty much struck down—at least the parts that criminalized cases where no children were actually involved in supposed child "pornography." For CIPA…well, we don't know as of this writing and it will be bounced to the Supremes anyway. COPA, CPPA, CIPA—what the heck? ALA has a good piece

describing each of the three; go to www.ala.org/oif and look for the appropriate heading.

The CIPA Chronicles

The District Court hearing on CIPA took place in late March, with extensive coverage from online and traditional news sources. A few of the highlights, in chronological order as posted on the Web, mostly deriving from Declan McCullagh's *Wired News* coverage and ALA's posts, with additional material from Reuters:

➤ N2H2—the Bess people—asked that Geoff Nunberg's March 25 testimony on the impossibility of effective filtering be held in closed court, on the basis that he would expose trade secrets. *Both* sides in the case opposed the motion—but the court went along with the filtering company. After the session, the judges concluded no secrets had been revealed and opened the transcripts.

➤ That same day, things got "raunchy" as the Justice Department pulled out a "thick black binder stuffed with color printouts from sex sites" and asked Candace Morgan (Fort Vancouver, WA) whether she believed people had the right to look at those websites. Morgan said she did, and noted that some of the pictures were similar to items already owned by the library. A public library that has books on sexuality: What is this world coming to?

➤ On March 26, Christopher Hunter (a University of Pennsylvania doctoral candidate) said, "My conclusion after reviewing 40 studies is that filters are systematically flawed"—blocking benign Websites 21% of the time while blocking objectionable material a mere 69% of the time. Emmalyn Rood, a 16-year-old Portland, OR resident, testified that CIPA would keep her from researching issues related to her life.

➤ Thursday's session (March 28) featured David Biek (Tacoma Public Library) stating that filtering software does *not* hinder the free flow of information, David Sudduth's (Greenville County, SC) report that he was "shocked" by pre-filtering incidents related to Internet access, and Chris Lemmon's defendant-tailored filtering study showing that "7 percent or less" of selected unobjectionable sites were filtered—but then, he never used tests including "queer," "butch," or "dyke," and his tests showed 10 blocked sites of 99 tested—an odd version of "7 percent." An ALA attorney noted the concession "from the government's own expert witness that all filters necessarily overblock and

underblock online materials." David Biek's COPA-related testimony from July 2001 is available on the Internet—although the PDF printout bears no trace of the URL, unfortunately—and his paper for the NRC study noted late in this section is also available. Tacoma Public uses its own browser and a modified installation of CyberPatrol that blocks supposedly improper images but always allows the user to see all of the text. That follows CIPA requirements in a gentler manner than any existing standard commercial filter. Whether you agree with Biek's conclusions, Tacoma has studied its situation carefully and his work deserves reading. I suspect Google can get you to both papers readily enough.

➢ Friday: Two more Greenville library people testified, as did Blaise Cronin (University of Indiana). ALA's attorney notes, "Once again, government witnesses conceded key points in the ALA's case."

➢ On Monday, April 1, witnesses included Cory Finnell, formerly employed by N2H2, who tested the filters used at libraries represented in the trial and found significant overblocking in each case. Overblocking is the key: not that filters let through nasty stuff, but that they inherently block legitimate information. Note that Finnell was a *government* witness, testifying in favor of CIPA.

➢ Tuesday, the judges heard from Anne Lipow, Mary Chelton, and filtering researcher Ben Edelman (whose work has been mentioned in previous "Filtering Follies" reports). Anne Lipow said of filtering software, "It smacks of Stalinism." Mary Chelton stated that it's inappropriate for librarians to "[cede] professional authority to anonymous people serving multiple markets with agendas that are not congruent with ours." She commented, "Young adults are interested in many topics that make adults nervous—things like anorexia, sex and divorce, to name a few—but this is normal curiosity and the very reason librarians must provide excellent service for young adults." Edelman submitted his report of 6,777 legitimate Web pages blocked by major filtering programs.

➢ On the last day, David Ewick (Fulton County, VA) supported filtering and, if you believe a McCullagh report, says his pro-filter stance has "made him approximately as welcome at library conventions as…Gary Bauer." He noted "Political correctness is alive and well," and the judges apparently didn't buy that simplification. Judith Krug notes that 22% of public li-

braries use filters "because their local communities believe that that is the appropriate solution to a problem that they believe they have." ALA takes no action whatsoever against those 22%.

➢ ALA's closing argument centers on four points: Filters don't work; filtering "pervasively and necessarily restricts legal information" and is therefore unconstitutional; libraries should not be forced to choose between funding and censorship; and CIPA abolishes local decision-making. Final-day reports suggest that the court seemed likely to rule against CIPA based on commentary from the judges—e.g., "Every witness has testified that the statute can't be applied according to its own terms."

➢ ALA reports continually said that the court was expected to rule by early May so libraries could decide what to do about FY2003 applications. It's now May 19. We're waiting.

A slew of related pieces appeared in print and on the Web. *Holt Uncensored* included a brief and clearly anti-CIPA note in the March 29, 2002 issue. David Coursey at ZDNet's Anchordesk titled his April 1, 2002 editorial "Why the Feds CAN'T protect kids from Internet porn" but, in a short and somewhat simple-minded discussion, concludes, "Filtering is the best tool we have." A Tech Central Station article by Ryan H. Sager, "Filter this article," argues for local control.

P.J. Huffstutter of the Los Angeles *Times* did a solid story on April 1, "Standing up to the law," interviewing Peter Hamon of Wisconsin's South Central Library System. Hamon remembers a chilling situation from the 1950s, when *The FBI No One Knows* came to his local library and John Birch Society members tried to get library records identifying those who had checked out the book. He sees similar mind-control issues in CIPA: "This case reminds me of those times. It wasn't right back then, and it's not right now." Huffstutter asks tough questions about libraries, filters, and the Internet—and Hamon offers answers that aren't black-and-white but deal with the real world. Jeanne Malmgren did a fine local story in the April 16 St. Petersburg *Times,* quoting a number of people but starting out with a Palm Harbor children's librarian who tells stories, plans events, visits elementary schools—and opposes filtering because it eliminates too much good material. Linda Campbell of the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* offered an "admittedly overprotective parent"'s perspective in "Shield kids—and the Constitution." Unlike other commentators, she says that ALA and coplaintiffs "aren't championing a right to view Internet smut at public expense." She concludes that

"CIPA overreaches," dislikes the way unblocking happens (when patrons have a "bona fide" research need—as she says, "since when should librarians have to decide whose research is 'bona fide'?"), and concludes, "The exchange of ideas in an open society can be messy and painful, but a healthy First Amendment leaves us all better in the long run." Hoping that I'm not exceeding fair use, I'd like to quote her antepenultimate paragraph, a statement about the commons that's better than many I've heard from library spokespeople:

> When we agree to use tax dollars to build public libraries, we don't buy ourselves—or the government—the right to police the use that each of us makes of the books, tapes, videos and other materials in the place. We maintain these storehouses of knowledge in the common belief that we are enriched, individually and collectively, if each one of us has access to a broad array of information.

The Puget Sound *Business Journal* managed to turn one witness's "scientific study" into a resounding endorsement of N2H2, saying that it "named…N2H2 Inc. No. 1 among the four major Internet filtering providers in effectively blocking pornography on the Internet. The study says N2H2's filtering products provide a 98 percent 'Correct Blocking Ratio.'"

The joint post-trial brief for the merged ALA and Multnomah cases is available; start at ALA's Website. It's 50 pages long, discusses some issues at length that aren't mentioned in press coverage—such as the difference between filtering and traditional collection development—and makes surprisingly good reading. I won't attempt to summarize.

CMEPA?

Confused by COPA, CPPA and CIPA? Add CMEPA, if Rep. Mark Foley (R-Florida) gets his way. The Child Modeling Exploitation Act claims to outlaw Websites featuring commercial images of nude pre-teen children—but here's the actual wording of the proposed new felony:

> Whoever displays, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, the image of a child who has not attained the age of 17 years, with the intent to make a financial gain thereby, or offers, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, to provide an image of such a child with the intent to make a financial gain thereby, without a purpose of marketing a product or service other than an image of a child model, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both.

Think about posters of the Olsen Twins or Menudo, the 1972 photo of a Vietnamese girl covered by napalm, collections of cute baby pictures, "The Blue Boy," or *any* image of a minor sold *as an image* rather than as promotion for something else. Felonies one and all? (Based on a May 9, 2002 *Wired News* report by Declan McCullagh—and this one seems so far out that you'd think it would never make it out of committee.)

Youth, Pornography, and the Internet

That's a new book from the National Academies, edited by Dick Thornburgh and Herbert S. Lin and based on a study by the Computer Science and Telecommunications Board of the National Research Council. You can download chapters from bob.nap.edu/html/youth_internet/. I haven't read more than the executive summary. If you're deeply interested in these issues, the book's probably worth buying.

COPA

As most of you probably already know, a May 13 8-1 Supreme Court decision technically upheld some provisions of COPA—but in a way that leads many to assume the eventual result will be to overturn COPA. To wit, the Court concluded that COPA's reliance on "community standards" was not in and of itself reason to find the act unconstitutional. But the Court explicitly did not rule on other issues related to COPA, remanded the case back to the appeals court, and left in place the injunction preventing enforcement of COPA.

Sex in the City

The April 2002 *NewBreed Librarian* (it's a Webzine *and* a Weblog) may have established its credentials as "a forum where all ideas—popular and unpopular—and sentiments—prevailing and singular—could be expressed" with this article by Wendy Adamson of the Minneapolis Public Library. She's part of the group that claims that MPL's unfiltered Web access constitutes sexual harassment. I admit that her detailed description of all the filth being proudly displayed, over and over again, at MPL's Web stations shocks me. The volume at this library alone appears higher than what David Burt found nationally in his survey. But, as Adamson would assuredly state, I wasn't there. Read it; draw your own conclusions.

PC Group Reviews

Desktop Computers

Broida, Rick, and others, "Clash of the CPUs," *Computer Shopper* 22:4 (April 2002), pp. 94-102.

Five "hot" systems from two name brands and three smaller outfits, all with either the 2.2GHz Pentium 4 or one of the three fastest AMD Athlon CPUs, costing $1,474 to $2,999, in an odd roundup that doesn't show an Editors' Choice even though there's a clear winner on points. Minimum configuration: 256MB RAM, 40GB disc, 64MB graphics RAM, DVD-ROM and high-speed CD-RW drive, speakers, and either a 15" LCD or 18"-viewable CRT display, along with Windows XP Home.

The writeups are interesting and these are all fast machines, but the clear indication is that Intel's latest CPU is, in fact, faster than AMD's competition. With one exception ("office productivity"), the top-rated and most expensive Gateway 700XL scored best on every objective measure. Of course, it's also the most loaded system: not only 512MB RAM but also a 120GB 7200RPM hard disk, 50% larger than the closest competitor. Runner up on points is the only other name brand and the only other Intel-powered computer: Micronpc's $2,199 Millennia TS Professional. It's cheaper partly because it uses DDR SDRAM rather than the Gateway's SDRAM, but also because it has half the RAM, a smaller hard disk, a regular DVD drive (the Gateway has a DVD-RAM *burner*), and less-expensive speakers.

Broida, Rick, and Bill O'Brien, "Mission: affordable," *Computer Shopper* 22:3 (March 2002), pp. 98-108.

What will $600 to $800 buy in a desktop PC? More than you'd expect, particularly if you don't care about brand names. The bar for this review was set at 128MB SDRAM, a 20GB hard disk, high-speed CD-ROM, and 14"-viewable display, and the slowest CPU is a 900MHz Intel Celeron. Two of five systems come from top suppliers Dell and Gateway—but the Dell SpeedStep isn't built by Dell and turned in the second-lowest rating in the group.

Editors' Choice went to a true no name, the iBuyPower Value XP PC. It outperforms the others, but that's scarcely surprising: its Pentium 4-1600 is almost 50% faster than the second fastest CPU and it costs $100 more than the next most expensive system. You do get a 16"-viewable display and a DVD-ROM drive, as well as an nVidia GeForce2 graphics card, but the display is fuzzy and there's no applications software. If performance is all that matters, it's a great deal for $800. Otherwise, the better of the two name-brand units seems worth considering (but not for gaming): Gateway's $700 300C includes an 80GB 7200rpm hard disk, 256MB RAM, a CD burner, and a 16"-viewable display called "the best tube in the roundup"; it

comes with Microsoft Works Suite (which includes Word) and Boston Acoustics speakers. But it's relatively slow (with a Celeron-1100 CPU) and uses on-board Intel graphics and on-board sound.

Karagiannis, Konstantinos, "Fast PCs: Maxed-out architectures," *PC Magazine* 21:9 (May 7, 2002), pp. 30-2.

Will you notice the difference if you move from a 2.2GHz Pentium 4 to one that runs at 2.4GHz? Probably not—although the measured improvement is significant. Still, Intel's gone to that speed and this review includes two systems using the newest chip, along with two using the hot AMD Athlon XP2100+, which actually runs at 1.733GHz but performs almost as well as the Pentium 4-2400.

Although Dell's $3,159 Dimension 8200 and Micronpc's $2,899 Millennia TS Professional both earn four dots, Editors' Choice goes to the Dell. These are all very well configured systems, as you'd expect for roughly $3,000. All come with at least 512MB RAM, all use the top graphics card on today's market, nVidia's GeForce4 Ti4600 with 128MB RAM, and all but one come with DVD burners and 120GB hard disks.

Roberts-Witt, Sarah L., "Keeping good company," *PC Magazine* 21:7 (April 9, 2002), pp. 104-13.

This roundup isn't just about PCs; it covers "one-stop shopping choices" for small businesses (fewer than 500 employees, a category that covers most libraries). These days, that means consulting on your needs, preparing a coherent solution, providing easy-to-install systems and supporting them with good service. It's an interesting article offering detailed commentary on each of six options, including one company (Everdream) that handles the whole thing as a monthly lease. That one doesn't get the Editors' Choice; instead, the two biggest names in direct-order PCs also turn out to be the two best choices for tailored small business computing: Dell and Gateway. Gateway gets the nod for smaller small businesses (up to 200 or 250 employees), Dell for larger groups. Read the article if this handholding approach suits your needs.

Snell, Jason, "The fast crowd," *Macworld* 19:5 (May 2002), pp. 50-8.

This isn't just desktops; it's a combined review of new Mac models across the board. How do you compare an all-in-one desktop, a dual-processor traditional tower, and notebook computers? Thoughtfully, in this case. Going by the mice, the race is a tie: 4.5 mice each for the $1,799 iMac G4/800 (the high end of the new LCD iMac line)

and the $2,999 Power Mac G4/1GHz DP, the first gigahertz Mac (and there are *two* G4 CPUs in the box). Lowest rating in the roundup, for good reason: 3.5 mice for the $1,799 iBook. Why so low? Because the bigger screen (14.1" as compared to the old iBook's 12.1") leads to a bulkier, heavier, and less appealing unit.

Need you ask which unit runs fastest? The dual-processor Power Mac beats the others fairly convincingly, as you'd expect.

Digital Cameras

Labriola, Don, "Digital camcorders," *PC Magazine* 21:8 (April 23, 2002), pp. 80-91.

Today's digital cameras can be less obtrusive and should yield higher-quality video than yesteryear's bulky camcorders. Perhaps more important, "digital" means a better chance that the users will do serious editing, boiling down endless hours of video to a few tight minutes—say the 15 to 20 minutes you can burn to a single CD in S-VCD format?

This roundup includes midrange and high-end consumer digicams from five major manufacturers, with prices ranging from $800 to $3,000. The smallest cameras are just over an inch thick and roughly three-by-four, weighing just under a pound. Even the monster here isn't huge at 5.8x5.8x13.5" and 3.1 pounds. That's the Sony DCR-VX2000, the most expensive unit and Editors' Choice among the high-end units. It's a "prosumer" camera that looks serious and takes seriously good video, with the best autofocus in the bunch and fine low-light performance—but you need both hands to use it.

If you're on a budget, the "single-CCD" Editors' Choice may suit you: Panasonic's $1,000 PV-DV701. The quality isn't quite as good as the cheaper of the two Sony digicams (but that one costs $1,700), but it's decent and has an excellent Leica lens. It's not one of the teeny-tinies, but it's not huge: 3.6x3.0x7.8", 1.3 pounds. See Jan Ozer's related software review in "Graphics Software."

Keller, Jeff, "Four 4-megapixel digital cameras," *Macworld* 19:5 (May 2002), pp. 40-1, along with independent reviews by Ben Long on pp. 36-37.

The bar continues to rise. The first installment of *Macworld*'s new "Keller on Cameras" column offers a brief but careful comparison of four sub-$900 four-megapixel cameras; Ben Long discusses two five-megapixel cameras, one at $1,099 and one costing $1,999. The highest-rated of the six cameras is Canon's $899 PowerShot G2, a full-featured unit with excellent quality, extensive features, and a good software bundle. Keller likes the Olympus D-40 Zoom among compact cameras; at $699, it's also the cheapest camera discussed here.

The two five-meg units are distinctive. Nikon's first five-meg camera, the $1,099 Coolpix 5000, is a more traditional design than some earlier Coolpix models. It's a fairly small camera with one or two inconveniences. The $1,999 Olympus E20N is somewhat of an oddity: an SLR digital camera but with a nonremovable lens. The optics and resulting image quality are excellent—but it's slow to boot and "excruciatingly slow at saving images," taking 10 to 15 seconds to save an image in super-high-quality mode. If you're not going to use super high quality, why pay for five megapixels?

Graphics Software

Glinert, Susan, and others, "ImageMakers," *Computer Shopper* 22:4 (April 2002), pp. 128-36.

This mini-roundup covers four midrange photo-editing programs, most costing roughly $100 (with Microsoft's Picture It Publishing Platinum 2002 the bargain at $60). The magazine awards *three* Editors' Choice seals—to every program *except* Adobe Photoshop Elements! I've heard of damning with faint praise, and that's what you get in this review. Microsoft's program and Ulead's PhotoImpact 7 tie for the highest point rating; JASC's Paint Shop Pro 7 is a full point behind, but that doesn't seem to matter. Any of these will do most of the image editing you're likely to need if you don't use Photoshop.

Ozer, Jan, "Video-editing software," *PC Magazine* 21:8 (April 23, 2002), pp. 96-108.

If you want to do professional video editing on a PC, you could buy NewTek's Video Toaster 2 for $2,995—and make sure you have a PC with 10,000rpm SCSI drives in a striped RAID array, which isn't a standard feature on any consumer PC. Or you could buy a workstation or a high-end Mac with loads of extra equipment.

Chances are you don't want to spend that much and wouldn't want to deal with Video Toaster. This roundup covers ten inexpensive video editing programs for Windows with a sidebar on two midrange ($500-$550) alternatives. Jan Ozer's reviews are always worth reading; this one's no exception. Editors' Choice goes to Pinnacle Studio version 7, a $99 program that's been a consumer-level leader for some time. "Virtually everything that Pinnacle Studio version 7 does, it does exceptionally well."

Keyboards and Input Devices

Dreier, Troy, "The comfort zone," *PC Magazine* 21:5 (March 12, 2002), pp. 182-3.

Silly, isn't it: your computer keyboard and mouse affect your computing comfort more than anything except the screen (and you can't get RSI from a screen!)—and you're probably using whatever came with the computer. This roundup covers five contemporary input devices (mice and equivalents) and three keyboards. I'm not surprised by the Editors' Choices.

Logitech wins both honors; that's consistent with the history of the company, which has always made first-rate peripherals under their own name and for others. The Editors' Choice input device is Logitech's $70 Cordless Trackman FX, a snazzy trackball with four buttons and radio wireless operation. The other input devices tie for close seconds, with four-dot reviews, including a wired Logitech trackball, Microsoft's wireless mouse, and Cirque's unusual $70 Cruise Cat, a touch pad alternative.

I've been using Microsoft Natural keyboards for years and never considered Logitech's wireless units because they had standard, less comfortable keyboard layouts. But the new $100 Logitech Cordless Freedom Pro has a split layout comparable to the Microsoft Natural; that $100 also gets you the first-rate Logitech Cordless MouseMan Wheel. It gets the other Editors' Choice, and it's awfully tempting.

Notebook Computers

Bruzzese, Stephanie, and others, "Affordable portables," *Computer Shopper* 22:5 (May 2002), pp. 108-13.

What's affordable? Less than $1,300—sort of. The minimum configuration here is a 900MHz CPU, 128MB RAM, 10GB hard drive, 14" LCD, 24x CD-ROM, and XP Home Edition, for a maximum price of $1,999. But the sole Editors' Choice has a 600MHz CPU, a 12.1" LCD, and costs $1,499. Oh, that's right: it's the smaller-screen Apple iBook, and the rules are different for the Mac.

Ignoring that anomaly, we have here five odd systems. While two are from big names (Compaq and Dell), the Dell is a SmartStep. Boy, is it cheap: $949, lowest in the roundup—and it fares well against the more expensive systems, except for short battery life and absurdly short warranty (90 days). It ties for highest rating with the $1,199 Compaq Presario 700US (which includes a DVD drive and 256MB RAM but offers mediocre performance) and the $1,299 Winbook J1, which includes a DVD/CD-

RW drive and 256MB RAM. Most peculiar system? The $1,295 ProStar 8593V—a ten-pound beast that uses a desktop Pentium III CPU and has a 15" display, but offers the only 10GB hard disk in the roundup. All the others—including the iBook—provide 20GB drives.

Bill Howard gives the Dell SmartStep a middling three-dot review in the May 7, 2002 *PC Magazine*; he likes the long battery life and notes that performance beats "just about any desktop or notebook bought a year or more ago." His conclusion: if the fixed configuration "fills the bill, you can buy it with no apologies."

Costa, Dan, "The lighter side," *PC Magazine* 21:6 (March 26, 2002), pp. 94-106.

Notebook computers always involve compromise: price, weight, screen size, keyboard comfort, ergonomics. This group of nine aims for portability, with system weights between 3.0 and 4.1 pounds, travel weights between 4.0 and 5.2 pounds. Prices run from $2,350 to $3,150; CPUs range from 750MHz to 1.2GHz (all Mobile Pentium III); all screens have native resolutions of 1024x768 and diagonal measure between 12.1 and 13.3 inches. Hard disks are all on the slow side (4,200 rpm) and either 20GB or 30GB; all but two of the systems come with CD-RW/DVD combos, but only two of those are internal drives.

If you're in the market for a lightweight notebook, read the article and reviews carefully and consider your needs. The Editors' Choice is Toshiba's $2,579 Portégé 4000, even though it's the slowest and has the highest travel weight. It does have a full-size keyboard and internal CD burner. Lightest and cheapest: Gateway's $2,348 Solo 3450 (3.0 pounds system, 4.0 pounds travel). Fastest? That depends.

We do get Words of Wisdom from Jakob Nielson, who knows what everybody does with notebook computers. "Most people just need to check e-mail, do PowerPoint presentations, and maybe do a little budgeting with a spreadsheet." So much for Word and the Web. Omniscience must be a wonderful thing. (A cynic would say, "most people just need to watch DVDs, play solitaire, and listen to audio CDs." But that would be wrong.)

Howard, Bill, "Ultraportables: how low can they go?" *PC Magazine* 21:7 (April 9, 2002), pp. 28-30.

Think the notebooks in the review above are light? Despite the suggestion in a lead paragraph that this group of three is markedly lighter, you may be right. These three weigh from 2.6 to 2.9 pounds,

with travel weight between 4 and 5 pounds—in other words, at most a couple of ounces lighter than the Gateway Solo 3450, and no lighter in travel weight. Once again, the editors love Toshiba: the $2,199 Portégé 2000 gets the Editors' Choice. Like the 4000, it has a full-size keyboard (uniquely in this trio), but it's also very light (2.6 pounds, 4.0 travel) and reasonably priced.

Thornton, Carla, "Heavy-hitting feather-weights," *PC World* 20:5 (May 2002), pp. 103-7.

Is there a theme here? This review covers five ultraportables weighing 2.6 to 3.5 pounds minimum, 4.4 to 6.5 maximum (different than travel weight). *PC World* isn't as fond of Toshiba's Portégé 2000; it comes in second to the IBM ThinkPad X23, although the latter is $330 more expensive and significantly heavier. It does have the IBM keyboard.

Portable MP3 Players

Brown, Bruce, and Pete Brown, "Move with the music," *PC Magazine* 21:9 (May 7, 2002), pp. 146-8.

If you're willing to deal with a little more weight and size than "standard" MP3 portables, you can carry a lot more music a lot more flexibly. This review includes four CD/MP3 players (units that play CDs, either as audio or encoded with MP3 tracks), one jukebox (with a 20GB hard disk), and three somewhat traditional small portables. Four-dot ratings go to the $400 SonicBlue RioRiot (a 20GB "jukebox") and iRiver's $200 iMP-350 SlimX, a CD/MP3 player that's just slightly bigger than a CD at 5.5x5.25x0.75" (it weighs 8.8oz. and includes an FM receiver; the LCD is on the remote). Oddest unit? Probably the $150 Philips eXp401—it's the smallest and lightest of the CD players, but that's because it only plays 8cm (3") CDs, hard to find and almost certainly more expensive for comparable capacity.

Printers

Blachere, Kristina, and others, "Color coordinated," *Computer Shopper* 22:5 (May 2002), pp. 114-20.

This roundup includes inkjet printers in three different price categories—but with only two budget, three midrange, and one high-end choice, it's hard to do much with the results. Maybe it's news that you can get a decent printer for $100—but as usual, you'll do better in the $150-$180 range.

Carlson, Kyla K., and Sean Timberlake, "The fine print," *Computer Shopper* 22:3 (March 2002), pp. 110-14.

Inkjets may dominate the home market for good reason—but if most of your printing is black and white, today's low-priced lasers will save money in the long run and probably run faster. This roundup includes five lasers that cost less than $300, print at 600dpi or better, and claim at least 10 pages per minute—although those speed claims are almost always exaggerated. Brother's $299 HL-1440 takes the Editors' Choice for speed and print quality.

Scanners

Bojorquez, Tony A., "Midrange flatbed scanners," *Macworld* April 2002, pp. 30-1.

It says a lot about scanning prices that $250 to $380 is the "midrange" instead of entry-level pricing! These four units, one each from four fairly major brands, have true (optical) resolution of at least 1,200 dpi (in every case, at least 2,400 dpi in one direction) and can scan slides and film. Each scanner has either 42-bit or 48-bit color depth. All include USB ports; one adds FireWire support and one has a parallel port—which, as the review notes, is really only useful for PCs. Obviously, all of them run on Macs; not so obviously, they all include Mac-specific documentation. None have native OS X drivers as of publication date. The Canon CanoScan D1230UF is the fastest (using USB) but the Epson Perfection 1650 Photo was not only cheapest ($249) but offered the best overall image quality. It got the highest rating—four mice, half a mouse ahead of the Canon and HP's ScanJet 5470CXI—and gets their recommendation. While each scanner offers backlighting for transparencies, none does a great job.

The Details

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