

E-Mail from John Arthur

Thanks for your letter about October meeting. Unfortunately I have mobility problems these days, I am 81 But please remember me to my old friends. Those Swindon meetings were special. I looked forward to them.

Interesting competition though. I have got exactly the device you are after, made by Alpha Products in the US (now defunct). It does all you ask, but only for a Tandy model 4. I could have bought a little converter board so that it would work with an IBM PC, but I didn't . . . story of my life I suppose. The programming was a doddle. Send the port, value and all systems go. Must be worth something to somebody? The conversion from Tandy to PC should be dead easy for all those clever clogs in NATGUG.

If anybody is interested I will dig it out and let you have the spec.

Best wishes for the weekend. So sorry I won't be able to make it.

John Arthur

E-Mail from John Christie re E-Mail sent to him from Don Bannister
Bob,

Thought you might like Don's comment.

My comment is that the hotel contact details were not on the last newsletter and the Roger sent a recent letter of invite to lapsed members but not to current members!!!!!!!

Regards, John Christie

-----Original Message-----

From: Don Bannister [mailto:donb@cix.co.uk]
Sent: 08 October 2001 00:01
To: John Christie
Subject: Re: NATGUG Weekend - 26 - 28 October 2001

John,

Thanks for your timely reminder. Not sure whether I'll be able to make it, but I'll try. I don't recall having seen one of the mags recently - I wonder has it become too much of a bother to do. That said, I felt that an awful lot of it was old(ish) reprints. In some ways just a few pages of relevant stuff (eg Group info, meetings pix etc) would be better, and certainly less bother/cost to publish.

Best wishes, Don

DeLorme Street Atlas USA 7.0

by Carol Schubert* - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

If you are the kind of person who likes to travel, but does not like to ask directions from anyone, this program could be for you. Street Atlas USA 7.0 is a boon to travellers and offers other useful information. The program comes with two CDs, the one is for the installation and the other for program data, including any data that the user adds. The program data disk must be used when running the program. User has the option of installing Points of Interest, but this feature takes a lot of disk space.

The opening welcome screen has four choices, the first is Did you Know which is similar to a Tip of The Day sort of thing. There is a button that you can press for the next tip. The next choice is Show me How To, followed by Test Drive, and lastly, Over View. The Overview is well worth reading and should be read before going on to the other tutorials or help screen. Of the two remaining choices on the opening screen, I found Test Drive to be far more helpful in learning the program than Show Me How To.

The tutorials can also be reached from the Help menu. In my case, this program is not the kind that I could just start using without reading the tutorials. I would have simply missed too much and made an easy task difficult.

Street Atlas USA 7.0 will allow you to pick a route that actually takes you from one address to another any where in the country, the program also can be set for directions from one city to another. There are four choices as how to set the route, the Quickest which will save time, the Shortest which will save gas or you may pick the Scenic route for enjoyment. In addition, there is a Preferred route, which is geared to the users personal preferences or habits. There can be a great deal of difference in mileage between the shortest and scenic routes.

After a beginning point and destination are chosen, the route can be calculated in the routing manner that you wish. A table comes up which shows the travel in legs, the distance of each leg, the time involved for each leg, the total distance, and the direction of travel and the exits, which are to be taken. The map may be customised with text, which can show favourite restaurants, parks etc. or geometric symbols.

If there is an area that you do not want to drive though, this can be avoided. I planned a trip from my home in Sarasota to St Petersburg by the quickest route, which was over the Sunshine Bridge. I then asked that the trip be calculated with avoidance of the bridge and the program did the route through Tampa.

Once the trip is calculated, a single map can be printed or the route directions can be printed in table form or an entire package that includes a route summary, directions and map can be printed. You can also print detailed maps of the destination area as well as of the beginning. There is also an option, Find, which allows areas to be located by placename, zip code, area code and exchange, latitude and longitude or zip code. Often times I have a phone number and would like to know the general area where it would be located. The program does this and comes up with a map that encompasses the area.

If zip codes are to be listed on the map, demographic information for an individual zip code can be pulled up. Besides population, information will also be given on median home value, median rent, median household income, average age and other data.

Street Atlas USA 7.0 is compatible with GPS (Global Positioning System) which allows you to display a "bread crumb trail" of your travel as you go. And if you have a hand held computer the routing and maps can be transferred to it

Street Atlas USA 7.0 is offered by the well-known mapping company, DeLorme, in Yarmount, Maine. There is a demo that can be seen on their Website, www.delorme.com. The phone number for Delorme is 207-846-7000. The Delorme estimated street price is \$45.00 and can be ordered from their site for that price. However, it can be purchased locally for \$39.99.

*Carol Schubert operates the only Canine Semen Bank in Sarasota and travels nationally in her work. :

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Book Review:

Digital Photography for Dummies

by Charles D Mason - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

This third edition of Digital Photography for Dummies is aimed at the person who is thinking about buying a digital camera and is lost in the jungle megapixels, jpg, resolution, compression, CCD, downloads and LCDs. The book is also very useful for the current owner of a digital camera who would like to explore the full potential of his or her new electronic toy.

The format is much like other books in the "For Dummies" series, a little humour slipped into the technical stuff. Most of the chapters are self supporting and it is not necessary to start at the beginning and proceed forward, just pick a topic of interest and have at it.

In the early chapters the book takes you by the hand and leads you through how digital cameras are similar and how they differ from film cameras. There is a treatise on pixels and resolution and RGB and CYMK colour that leaves you with an understanding of what to expect from the different settings most digital cameras and printers offer. You will learn how to apply this knowledge to making photographs and putting pictures on the web. One chapter is a condensed course on photography techniques which applies to any type of camera.

The next area of Digital Photography for Dummies gives a very complete description of the media used in different digital cameras and the pros and cons of each type; the various methods of downloading images from the camera to your hard drive; how to live with the high power consumption of digital cameras; and how to overcome the limitations of digital camera technology as it now exists.

In the last chapters of the book, the author describes how to take the digital images now stored on your hard drive and enhance them using Adobe Photo Shop or Photo Deluxe a light version of Photo Shop. The lessons here, although slanted for Adobe products, apply equally to any number of other picture editing programs like Picture Publisher or Print Artist. The instruction is very detailed and you will learn how to crop, change the brightness, contrast and gamma, sharpen the focus, change the colour balance, remove annoying backgrounds, fix blemishes and many other features that a good editing program contains. There are 16 high quality colour pages tucked away in the center of the book which illustrate the effects of the editing features which are referred to in the text.

The closing chapters tell you ten ways to improve your digital pictures. Don't over compress the pictures, light the picture well and use good paper for your prints. For those people who want photo quality prints, a good picture printer like the Epson Stylus Photo 750 or the Cannon BJC 6000 is an absolute necessity. The second last chapter lists 10 ways to use your digital images. Some uses are enhancing your Website, attaching pictures to e-mail messages and putting images on T-shirts and mugs. The very last chapter lists resources for further study. These include company sites like Kodak plus the location of the digital camera Newsgroups where there is a wealth of information posted by people who own digital cameras. These folks have examined digital cameras in every conceivable way and their experiences will educate beyond belief. If you have a vexing problem with your camera, or just want help choosing a new one, this is an excellent place to post the question and wait for someone to help. It works just about every time.

The CD which comes attached to the inside back cover contains a number of useful programs. Most are evaluation copies and include MGI PhotoSuite III, Paint Shop Pro, Adobe Photo Shop and PIE (Picture Information Extractor) which I use and recommend. It transfers pictures from the memory card to your hard disk drive including all the parameters used to take the picture like "F" stop, shutter speed and zoom level. One of the choices for a file name for the transferred image is the date code attached to the image when the picture was taken, for example 20000125-143245, the entire code from the year to the second. I find this useful for locating pictures later on from my almost 20,000 images. Kodak has contributed two modules from its Internet DLC (Digital

Learning Center). One module contains an in-depth discussion of colour basics and the other module takes you inside a digital camera just as if you took yours apart with a screwdriver (not recommended of course).

Digital Photography for Dummies, third edition, 336 pages, by Julie Adair King is published by IDG Books Worldwide Inc. at 919 E. Hillside Blvd. Suite 400 Foster City CA 94404. Customer Service can be reached at 800-762-2974. The list price is \$24.99 and amazon.com has it for \$19.99. If Sams has it in stock, the price would be even better. Digital camera technology is moving forward at warp speed as 3.3 megapixel cameras are now coming on the market. In spite of this, Digital Photography for Dummies presents basic concepts that won't soon be obsolete. I have owned three digital cameras with increasing resolution and versatility and what I have read here squares well with my experience. I can heartily recommend this book with no reservations.

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Book Review:

Special Edition Using Microsoft Windows 98, Second Edition

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

If you bought a new computer recently, it undoubtedly came with Windows 98, Second Edition installed. It's the latest in Microsoft's venerable Windows line of operating systems. Although Microsoft is due to come out later this year or early next with Millennium, the forthcoming replacement for Windows 98, for the time being you may be chugging right along with Second Edition for some time to come.

Regardless, when you opened your Microsoft package, one of the first things that may have struck you is the absence of any really meaningful documentation. If the OS came already installed on your new machine, you didn't get any documentation at all. As problems arise, you may wish you had a good reference manual. Everybody needs one! QUE, a division of Macmillan USA, the nation's leading computer book publisher has just the thing you need, "Special Edition Using Microsoft Windows 98 Second Edition. Even if you are not using Second Edition of Win98, this book covers "first edition" as well. If you don't have a really good Win98 manual, get it! You will keep it near your computer and find yourself using it time and again. In some 947 pages, 6 sections, 38 chapters, and two very useful appendixes, the book will teach you and tell you everything you need to know about Win98 and a whole lot more. No less than 19 authors have contributed to this works, including the well-known Ed Bott, former editor of both PC World and PC Computing magazines. His regular columns are omnipresent. Not only have its many contributors made this book extremely authoritative, it is written in a clear, easy to understand and digest fashion.

Although primarily a reference manual, it is also a tutorial that takes you step-by-step through the voluminous number of procedures that it thoroughly explains. Screen captures, tables and charts adorn almost every page to visually illustrate the text subject matter. The major sections of the book include:

1. Getting started
 2. Working with files and folders
 3. Working with applications
 4. Configuring and customising Windows
 5. Windows Internet services
 6. Windows network services
- Appendix A: Using Windows Messaging and Microsoft Fax
Appendix B: Installing and updating Windows 98

Each of these sections contains numerous subchapters that are just chock full of information that you will find yourself looking at time and again. Not only will you use it for reference, but it is a book that you can casually read and thumb through, finding all kinds of information on many things that you often wondered about, and are now getting real information for the first time. Tucked inside the back cover of the book, you will find a very useful CD that contains trial versions of some of the most popular Win98-related software, including Norton Utilities 2000, Norton Antivirus 2000, WinZip 7.0, Internet Explorer 5.0, Netscape Communicator 4.7, and many others.

Although written for Intermediate to Advanced users, it has merit for novices as well. Remember too, nobody remains a novice forever. We highly recommend this excellent manual for all users of Windows 98, and especially Second Edition. The book lists for 39.99, but discounts are widely available. www.quecorp.com, ISBN 0-7897-2203-8. Published Dec. 99.

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Software Review:
PhotoImpact 5

by James L Herrington* - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

What a terrific program! With a wide variety of intuitive features and tools, PhotoImpact 5 gives both the novice and professional user the ability to do all sorts of image manipulation. It also allows you to create presentations, documents, and Web designs. The program's accompanying user manual is very detailed and easy to read. Having had trouble understanding many technical manuals in the past, I found its straightforward approach, in itself, quite refreshing.

The manual begins with an introduction that asks, "What would you like to do ?" and then offers a number of suggestions related to your ability and directs you to the type of activity that you desire. I found that you didn't have to read the entire manual before finding out what is available and how to do it. Program installation was quick and easy. The first thing that I did was follow the guides found in Chapter 2 of the user manual relating to various file modification implications and set up my unique PhotoImpact preferences. Choosing specific preferences allowed me to customise the way the program would work. It allowed me to control the manner in which I moved around the workspace with relative ease, even though I am a new user.

Once my preferences were set up, I began my exploration of the program by carefully working my way through the section of the manual relating to "Working with image files". I have found from past experience that almost every program I have worked with has its own unique way of doing things and it is best to proceed cautiously till you learn the basics of a new program. There are several different ways to open and use images within PhotoImpact. You may use the standard toolbar, Windows Explorer, Thumbnails, or recently used files. You can create your own images from scratch or you can import them from any source that is a TWAIN compliant device. You can acquire images from your own photographs, magazines, newspapers, clipart, or any number of other sources. Once the images have been loaded, you are then able to modify them using a wide array of editing and enhancement tools. I found it exceedingly easy to "clean up" a scanned image using the program's Post-processing Wizard. This wizard examines and applies necessary modifications to images to correct most of the common problems that are encountered during the scanning process. The wizard is a feature that you can set to run automatically from the Post-processing tab in the "Acquire Image" dialogue box. I had no difficulty at all enhancing my images. The images are saved in PhotoImpact in a special "Ulead File for Objects" format (*.UFO) which is exclusive to PhotoImpact.

If you are going to be saving and sending images over the Web, PhotoImpact allows you to select

"Smart Sending", which allows an automatic file conversion suitable for e-mail purposes.

PhotoImpact keeps track of every action and command that you use while you are editing an image. It offers a maximum of 99 levels of undo and redo to help you recover from any mistakes that you might make or changes that you decide upon. For those of us who are unsure of what you want or who are continually changing your minds, this is a truly a great feature.

In the past few years, Web publishing has rapidly become one of the primary media used by many small businesses to approach customers. The quality and content of a Web page can make or break a company on the net. The ability to create a clear, concise, and snappy Website is directly dependent on having the software necessary to produce it. Recognising this need, the Ulead people have devoted a significant portion of their user manual to Web imaging. The manual discusses how images are displayed on the Web, and it describes how gamma affects imaging, the effects of bit depths, and how changing them can affect the result. The manual also gives great instructions on how to design and create tileable backgrounds and navigational buttons for the Web.

I was captivated with the discussion of its GIF Animator and had a great time working with this area of the program. Although Web site development is an area in which I have very little expertise, I was able to follow the manual with ease, and I am confident that, if given the assignment of creating a site, I could manage to do a creditable job.

PhotoImpact has a feature called "Album" that is an ideal image management tool. It allows you to easily manage your files, create thumbnail albums, or catalogues, and generate HTML-based slide shows. These Albums can be edited, sent over the Internet, or shared with others using the same Album application. The manual gives detailed instructions for the creation of Albums and how to work with them.

In the time that I have spent with this program, I have only been able to touch upon the basics. I had no difficulty in using this program, however, it will take me a considerable amount of time to hone my abilities and thought processes to allow me to take full advantage of this program's wide range of features. There is so much available in this program that it is mind boggling to the first time user. Images may be modified in literally thousands of different ways. I spent an entire evening playing with a few photographs of friends using the special effects section of the user manual. I created some really wild and interesting photographs of my favorite people, however, I am not sure they would appreciate my efforts. I had a lot of fun with this program as I explored many of the things that it is capable of doing. At the same time I also can see that it can be a valuable design tool for the professional.

The manufacturer's listed requirements for this program are as follows: Microsoft Windows 95/98/NT 4.0 (or later), CD-ROM Drive, Intel Pentium compatible system, Windows compatible pointing device, 32 MB of RAM, True Color or HiColor, display adapter and monitor, 180MB available hard drive space, WinTab compatible graphics tablet (recommended).

I found a copy of this program at Best Buy for \$79.99. I also found it could be purchased from Ulead direct on the net for \$79.95 (www.Ulead.com). Over the net, it comes with a bonus package consisting of an interactive Tour, 800 Web components, 1000 Photos, 1000 Pieces of Clip Art, 450 GIF Animations, 300 Textures, and 30 Fonts. There also is a slightly less expensive version that can be downloaded for \$74.95.

*Jim is a retired Community College Instructor who, along with his wife, operates "Keyboard Kids" in the Venice/Englewood area, teaching the computer to pre-school children. :

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Software Review: Photo Suite III Vs Suite II

by Jim Meckler - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75,

PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

In the January Monitor, we reviewed MGI PhotoSuite II. Having had the opportunity to try out PhotoSuite III, this review highlights the differences between this current and the former version. For a more informative view of PhotoSuite, refer to the January issue.

Again, MGI continues its pattern of excellent software that is simple to learn, easy and fun to use and is Internet friendly. It allows users of any experience to easily learn and use the program. Starting with the navigational bar, you have a logical flow of deciding where to start. The program allows you to effortlessly get a picture, prepare that picture, compose it, organise it and then share and or print your photo. The whole software program has been fine tuned with more power, more projects and more special effects have been added when compared to PhotoSuite II.

There are over 30 special effects that can be created; the picture library now has over 30,000 images; there are over 1,200 templates and 400 props available for your use. The customised albums and multimedia slide shows are now complete with sound effects, voice and music, which now can be added. New from the Prepare section in PhotoSuite III is a straightening command. If your scanned photo was not perfectly aligned during the scanning process or your photo from the camera was misaligned, then this photo can be easily "straighten" or realigned. All that you have to do is to click your cursor once over the photo and again click the cursor to where you want to straighten the picture. Then just click on the Straighten Button and the photo will realign to the line that you just drew.

Also added to the Prepare section is a process which MGI calls Stitching. If you're interested in making panoramic photos, this is definitely the tool you need. Stitching is a process where several photos (up to five) can be formed (stitched) together to produce one continuous photo. Now you can create that really wide panoramic photo as well as create that super wide-angle photo shot.

Another new feature in the Prepare section of PhotoSuite III is called Photo Tapestry. With this program, the original photograph is completely analysed by the computer and then hundreds of small tiles replace different sections of the photo. There are 1,500 tiled images, which are all automatically, matched by shape, colour, texture and content. The new picture is faithful to the original photo, but has that tapestry look. Experimenting with this feature allows you to create many varied and interesting results.

Do you want perfect pictures every time ? With this program your bad photos no longer exists; you can create a flawless photo every time and have fun while making that "perfect" photo. MGI Software, (888) MGI-SOFT, www.mgisoft.com :

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Software Review: Video Wave II*

by Mort Page

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

Lights! Camera! Action!

Have you ever wanted to produce and direct a (digital) movie ? Video Wave by MGI Software may enable you to do just that. This software provides the user with capability to create professional movies made up of individual video and/or audio clips, still pictures and animated text. To realise the full potential of VideoWave, however, one must have video import and export capability, i.e. a video capture card or hardware such as Snappy, Zipshot, etc.

This application can be employed for two disparate purposes, namely, commercial and personal usage.

Commercial functions include animated Web page advertisements, and slide show type presentations spruced up with motion and sound. For the "at home" user, VideoWave can produce clever .avi or MPEG files to show or E-mail to family and friends.

VideoWave comes on two CDs -- an installation disc and a content disc that contains a variety of .avi (video+audio) files, .wav (audio) files and still pictures. These are useful initially as learning tools and later as background animations and sound effects to augment your own captured video clips.

In developing a professional looking movie, VideoWave walks you through five (5) basic steps: (1) Capture (of clips from your cadcam or TV); (2) Setup (Selection of options concerning numerous characteristics); (3) Development of a Story Line (the theme and content -- i.e. scenes -- of your movie); (4) Production (Editing of clips and insertion of transitions, text, and sound effects). (5) Export to your VCR, the WEB, a CD, CD-RW or E-mail. The following paragraphs elaborate on some of the many features in each of the above steps.

Capture: VideoWave is limited only by the capability of the user's capture card/device. Files are imported into the Library after specifying such options as frame rate and size, stereo or monaural format, video compression, etc. After capture, files can be dragged and dropped into the Story Line. The software handles virtually all formats of still pictures and clip art.

Setup: The user specifies production goals and chooses from many options that relate to his equipment for example, the format of VCR output (NTSC, PAL, PALN, etc.)

Production: This is where your talents as a producer/director come in to play. You drag and drop video clips from the Library into the Story Line. You then select professional looking transitions that link each scene or clip. Typical transitions are "dissolve", "wipe", "fade out-fade in", etc. Complete capability exists to add animated text overlays that appear, pause for reading and then move off screen. VideoWave offers a number of special effects to apply to video or still pictures. Examples are "swirl" whereby your picture morphs into a swirl of colours, 3D effects, and Oil Painting that transforms the video into brush stroke appearance. You may then add background music and embed sound effects.

Next, you fine tune each scene by dragging its clip from the Story Line to a large View Screen configured to simplify preview and editing. Here you may select portions of a clip by specifying desired frames. You establish entry and exit points for text and graphic overlays, and duration of scene segments and animated text pauses. You may specify start and stop times within the overall time line for animated text and video clips. Throughout this process, VideoWave provides simple preview and re-edit capability. When one is satisfied with each scene, it is returned to the Story Line. At this point, you play the entire movie and make last minute adjustments. Finally, you direct that the movie be put "in the can" by saving it as an .avi or MPEG file

Export: The user specifies the export medium such as Internet, CD, or tape. Then one makes final selections of frame size and rate and video compression. Digital movies require large amounts of memory. VideoWave determines and displays file sizes resulting from your choices of these variables so that you can balance output quality and storage demands.

Looking at overall performance, VideoWave functioned almost perfectly for me. Most actions can be initiated both by single clicking icons or through drop down menus. I was not able, however, to activate some of the optional right click actions noted in the manual. My video capture device, Zipshot, can read in both motion and sound from my cadcam but cannot export sound to my VCR. Therefore, I was unable to evaluate sound quality of movies exported to tape. When played on my computer operating under Windows 98, quality of both video and audio reproduction was excellent.

I have not had the opportunity to use competitive products. We believe, however, whether you are a novice or experienced user, you will have no difficulty in producing appealing movies with this software. We could not find a price for this Win 95 version. MGI now offers an update, VideoWave II for Windows 98. Its street price is about \$80. www.mgisoft.com, (888) mgi-soft.

*Review SYDTRUG Editor's Note: This software has recently been updated to VideoWave III and will soon be reviewed in an upcoming issue. :

Software Review:
Photoshop 5.5

by Gary Schweinshaupt - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 March issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

As I have said in all previous reviews of Photoshop, it is still the digital imaging application of choice for almost all professional graphic designers, photographers and multimedia authors for the creation of high-quality print, multimedia and Web graphics -- it is the standard! Nothing has changed there. However, now the product comes bundled with Adobe ImageReady 2.0 and Photoshop has taken on some new Web features (it's interesting that ImageReady is no longer available separately). In previous reviews of Photo-shop 4.0 and ImageReady 1.0 (both are on the SPCUG Website), I wondered why they would be separate products. Well, they are still separate products, but you can now hot-switch between the two to edit the image you are working on at the time.

I'm not really sure if the upgrade is worth it for everyone, I will list what's new, to help you decide.

The first major change, of course, is the addition of ImageReady. You can toggle between the two by clicking a button in either program. Jump to ImageReady from Photoshop, for example, and the image you're currently editing in Photoshop is opened in ImageReady, where you can create sliced images, JavaScript rollovers, animation, and image maps and optimise images for Web use. When done, you can pass the image back to Photoshop and save the changes or selectively undo them using Photoshop's History palette.

ImageReady now has History, Layer Effects, Type, and Actions palettes, and the tabbed palettes look just like Photoshop's (a welcome change from version 1.0). You can use ImageReady's Guides to slice an image, and you can apply ready-made JavaScript actions to individual slices. You can also add your own JavaScripts to the HTML file ImageReady generates for the image. Using ImageReady's animation palette, you can insert frames between existing frames in your animation and tweak layers in individual frames as you go along.

Photoshop 5.5 has also added some Web-oriented features of its own. Use the new Save for Web command to preview your graphic under various compression levels (up to four) or check how a graphic will appear on both the Mac and a Windows PC, which avoids saving separate versions for each.

The Web colour palette now includes the 216-colour standard Web palette, as well as the familiar Adaptive palette, made up of the image's most common colours; a Perceptual palette, which selects colours to which the human eye is most sensitive; a Selective palette, which leans toward standard Web colours and preserves large masses of colour in an image; and a customisable palette.

Photoshop 5.5 supports GIF, JPEG, PNG-8, and PNG-24, the common Web image formats. Also new to version 5.5 is support for the PDF1.3 format, making the program now fully compatible with Adobe Acrobat 4.

Some improvements specifically to Photoshop include an Art History brush, it lets you apply painterly effects to your work. Instead of using filters and the lasso, you select an effect, a brush size, and make strokes with your "brush" only in the areas you want. The Eraser has been made smarter, letting you choose to erase all pixels or only those similar to the one you select. You can specify tolerance levels for the Eraser, which are helpful in masking a background, for example. An Extract Image tool similarly erases only colours within a specified range. To use it, you draw a thick band around the approximate edge of the object and the tool then detects its full edge remarkably intelligently and lets you remove the object easily from the background, while minimising the "haloing" that sometimes makes compositing obvious.

To accomplish this in version 4.0 and 5.0, I used Extensis Mask Pro, I suspect I will no longer need Mask Pro, I'll have to practice more with it to see.

Some of the elements of ImageReady have been incorporated into Photoshop, the most noticeable being the ability to preview up to four compressed versions of an image live and choose the right balance of file size and image quality. This feature, called LiveView, is a real bonus. Adobe has also thrown in a new compressed file format it calls 'lossy GIF' that compresses a GIF file format between 10 and 50% in size while losing minimal image quality. I always had difficulty using and remembering to use Web-safe colours. Now there is a button on the colour picker dialogue that only displays and lets you pick Web-safe colours. This will certainly help make basic design, colour layer manipulation, transparencies and backgrounds a snap to use for Web purposes.

A new feature of Colour Picker is it removes the hassle of figuring out the hexadecimal code for a colour with Photoshop. In previous versions you could get the RGB value, but you'd need some other program to convert that to hex (or you could, of course, do it in your head). Well, those days are over, unless you're trying to impress your friends with the fact that you know "Red 147 Green 23 Blue 89" is #931759. When you select a colour by double-clicking on it in the Tool Window, it automatically shows you what the hex equivalent is, down where it displays the RGB value. For some designers this will be a real timesaver.

"Save for Web" one of the nicer integrations of Photoshop and ImageReady. In the past, we have had to use separate programs to optimise images for the Web; now that functionality is all within Photoshop itself. By selecting Save for Web from under the File menu, you can preview your image and its K size, then Optimise it for the Web. This will display your image as it will look with reduced colours -- you can even have four different versions up at the same time to do a quick comparison between image quality, file size, and approximate download time. You can choose to convert the image to a GIF, JPEG, or PNG; set the options for each (including Web Palette for GIFs); and even preview the picture in the browser of your choice. It's very slick!

If you are doing Web image design, an upgrade to Photoshop 5.5 is called for. If you have version 4.0 or 5.0, and do little or nothing with Web development, maybe you want to review the new features in some detail before deciding. If you've never bought it before, is it worth the fairly hefty \$600 (if you do a lot of image editing - yes!), and if you've got 4.0 and \$169 the upgrade will be worth it for just the History tool or 5.0 and \$99 lying around, the upgrade may worth it, if for nothing other than the Background Eraser. For more information on what version 5.0 will do, please go the SPCUG review section mentioned earlier.

On the History tool, my reaction to it was similar to when layers first came along in 3.0. At first, layers seemed weird and unnecessary, but after about a week, I couldn't figure out how I'd used Photoshop without them.

History is just as great, you can go back and undo something you did several actions ago.

Photoshop also remembers all of your actions, so even if you back step eight actions, you can still change your mind and jump forward three or four steps. The ultimate undo feature.

I'm still learning the new version, but I think the greatest thing about Photoshop 5.5 is that it's finally an all-in-one Web graphics tool. After years of having to use some other program to optimise GIFs and JPEGs or get hex colours or reduce colour palettes or create GIF animations, it's nice to have it all here in one place. Now if they'd only put in a spelling checker....

Installing version 5.5 was uneventful, but it does not replace your previous version (later you must uninstall the old version, if you no longer want it). Different from the upgrade to 5.0, they did not import all of the installed third-party plug-ins automatically. In addition, they indicate that Extensis Phototools will no longer work in 5.5, you must buy an update. There is a two-part manual, one is the version 5.0 User Guide (390 pages), the other is a 5.5 User Guide Supplement (162 pages and it includes ImageReady) -- does that tell you how much has changed in the Photoshop itself ?

I found Photoshop 5.5 for \$599.95+SH on the Web, the upgrade was \$169.95+SH (includes coupon for \$70 mail-in rebate for previous owners of Photoshop 5.0 or ImageReady 1.0. Rebate must be

postmarked no later than 5/15/2000 to qualify). It requires a Pentium or faster processor; Microsoft Windows 95/98/NT 4.0, or later operating system; the combined installation of Photoshop and ImageReady: 64MB of RAM, 125MB hard-disk (Photoshop only takes 80MB hard-disk space; 256-colour (8-bit) display adapter required (24-bit, high-resolution display recommended); sound card recommended for viewing interactive tutorial files; CD-ROM drive; 96 MB of RAM recommended for best performance when using Photoshop and ImageReady concurrently.

Adobe Systems Inc., San Jose, CA; 800-492-3623, 408-536-6000; Web: www.adobe.com :

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Book Review:

Corel Draw 9 Bible

by Frederick McCarthy * - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

Like a religious bible this book is very comprehensive. While it's possible to read or study it from beginning to end, it isn't necessary, and neither you nor I are likely to do so. At 3 pounds 12 oz., this 942 page mammoth isn't for dummies (which, by the way is the title of another book series by the same publisher).

This book is as complete and as detailed as a book can be, kind of the flip side of its sister series. If you have a question about the program, it's highly likely that you will be able to find an answer between the covers of this work.

The Corel Draw 9 Bible (CD9B) is exceptionally well written and illustrated. It has a nice flow and feel as you progress through the informative chapters and work exercises. The accompanying CD contains working examples of tasks described in the text along with some clip art samples and utilities. While studying from the text, you import a document from the CD and then follow along as the author leads you through an activity. The illustrations are great and are a credit to Deborah Miller's artistic and teaching ability. The informative exercises are very well detailed and conceptualised.

Make no mistake about it, CD9B is not a lightweight, either physically or intellectually. Like any other sophisticated program, you're going to have to pay your dues if you want to become proficient with Corel Draw 9. This is an exceptionally comprehensive software program, probably one of the most so on the consumer market. Making it intelligible is a real challenge. The author of this book indicates that she strives to make graphics software understandable. In particular she believes that users need not be "techie wizards" to create computer graphics. While I feel that she has accomplished her objective, this is not to say that it's without considerable work on our part as readers/learners.

This book is organised into four parts. The first section, "Essentially CorelDraw9", consists of five chapters and an introductory "quick start". You begin (assuming you're a DRAW neophyte) with a non-intimidating tutorial on making an image map for use on the Web. Chapters in this section get you started with using the product and its basic features. Tutorials are included on importing art, transforming objects, editing and manipulating objects, and formatting text.

The book's second section, "Draw in the WORKS", includes chapters on managing documents, orchestrating objects and layers, importing and exporting elements and a detailed description of manipulating bitmaps. I found the tutorial on moving objects to other layers particularly informative and well illustrated. Draw supports over five dozen file formats. If you're

artistically impaired, what about scanning a swab of toothpaste for a different background ? This and some other neat scanner-to-art ideas are offered.

"Tricks and Tweats", part three of this text, covers what I consider some of DRAW's fine points. This includes adding effects to bitmaps, creating word art (this is initially presented earlier), designing with frills and lines, imagining possibilities with special effects and ways to customising DRAW.

The fourth and final part of CD9B is titled "Making it Public with Draw".

Here, Ms. Miller covers suggestions for using DRAW in an office environment, steps for successful printing and output and publishing on the Web. She includes 14 CD templates/illustrations as examples for help in designing office forms and later discusses special printing considerations, including the creation of colour separations. The closing chapter on publishing to the Web is very well thought out and I found the inclusion of some 11 templates on CD to be very helpful in working through the exercise. Since DRAW has a unique HTML approach even experienced Web publishers will want to spend time reviewing this information.

The appendixes to this book are very inclusive. Question. How many shortcuts are there in DRAW ? Answer. By my count, 125 in some 18 different categories. You'll find them in appendix A. While the body of this textbook style work is done in black and white it includes a very innovative 16-page full colour signature insert. This insert is a wonderful example of what talented artists can do with DRAW.

The insert discusses how these images were constructed and the original artwork is included on the accompanying CD so you can try it yourself.

Summary: COREL DRAW 9 BIBLE is an outstanding book. It is an absolute must for upgraders like myself as the upgrade lacks adequate documentation -- this also applies to the Academic Edition. While the full edition of DRAW 9 includes good and healthy manuals, many will prefer the approach and presentation of this book. If you're going to spend hundreds of dollars on a sophisticated program like DRAW 9, don't shortchange yourself by failing to put up the \$40 to add this book to your library. Believe me, it's going to get dog-eared!

IDG Books Worldwide, 1999. ISBN-0-7645-3315-0. www.idgbooks.com; Retail List Price: \$39.99

*Disclaimer. Dr.McCarthy, like the guy who bought the razor company because he liked the shave, owns stock in Corel Corporation. The company is listed with the Toronto Stock exchange and is traded in the States with NASDAQ under the symbol CORL. :

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Book Review:

WordPerfect Office 2000 Bible

by Anita Plutchik - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

Anyone who ever said that "more is less" hasn't looked over Wordperfect Office 2000 Bible. Yes, quality is more important than quantity, but when it comes to information, the more the better. This is one of the most comprehensive manuals I have ever seen. To be exact, it has 1170 pages which provides ample space to cover every part of WordPerfect Office 2000. This books covers not only WordPerfect, Quattro, Presentations, CorelCentral, and the Paradox database (which many guides ignore) it even covers the non-Corel add-ons like Dragon Naturally Speaking (the speech

recognition program included with the suite) and the Trellix Web Publisher.

Strange as this might sound, one of the unique things about this guide is its Table of Contents. There are two pages called Contents at a Glance which summarise the various parts of the book. However, this is followed by 36 pages called Contents, which is very much a listing of things you might want to do by tasks. I found it interesting to go through this because there were tasks that could be done better by another part of the suite, (For example, Presentations) that I would normally have done in WordPerfect. The way the contents are provided is task oriented and I found this helpful.

Although the back cover mentions that the book is for beginners to advanced user, I think someone without any experience with WordPerfect would have some problems following this unless he or she were very advanced with other similar programs. However, to fit the needs of the intermediate and advanced user who already has familiarity with a version WordPerfect Suite, this is a comprehensive reference focusing on the core applications in the suite that users apply most often. I have no question that using this manual and following its suggestions, you could get really great looking documents, charts, graphics, and the like for use on the Web or anywhere else.

The general tone of the book is very user friendly, even a little humour in some of the headings, and you are guided along very thoroughly to complete extremely difficult tasks. The book is printed on good quality paper with simple clear print. It is filled with lots of diagrams and they are clear and easy to read.

Scattered throughout the book, and something I especially liked are the small icons labelled TIP, NOTE, CAUTION, or CROSS- REFERENCE! These are easily recognisable, and they are listed generously throughout the text.

They go beyond the basic explanations of the feature being discussed and give the user some advanced techniques. They not only stand out on the page but are very helpful, as well as simple and easy to understand.

There is a section called Getting Help which is also an unusual addition. You are referred to help sources not only within the book and the programs but also to many that are available to you on the Internet.

If there is one weakness, I would say it is the Index. I found a few things that I was looking for not listed although I eventually found what I wanted was included when I skimmed through the Table of Contents or just looked in related areas. All in all, I would strongly recommend this book as a thorough reference tool. I did not find any topic that was omitted or even abbreviated. Author: Stephen E. Harris with Erwin Zijleman; Date: July, 1999. Publisher: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc., 919 E Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404; www.idgbooks.com; ISBN: 0-7645-3241-3; Retail Price: \$39.99.

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Book Review:

The Photoshop 5/5.5 WOW! Book

by Gary Schweinshaupt - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

This updated edition of the award-winning Photoshop 5/5.5 WOW! Book begins with a look at What's New! in the 5.5 version and a review of the basics, introducing the tools and functions of the

program and giving real-world applications for those features. Next they go into short tips for making your work quicker and easier, then they go on to demonstrate sophisticated design techniques and effects using high-quality commercial and fine art projects as examples. These examples come from dozens of professional artists and are accompanied by step-by-step instructions that teach you how to recreate the effects shown. The book provides illustrated lists of all kinds of resources Photoshop users need to know about, such as stock photos, images and plug-in filters and the WOW! CD-ROM is filled with tutorial image files and Actions and all kinds of goodies specifically collected or created just for this book. Like most CDs it provides ready-to-use programs, but, of course, they are only demo versions, to really use them, you will need to register (and pay) before they can be fully used.

The first thing I noticed when I started flipping through the pages, was I thought pages were sticking together--actually the pages are very thick, they use heavier paper than you see in most books of this type. The paper is also very high grade, so the abundance of full colour images really looks great.

New in this 5.5 version is ImageReady 2, and the Wow! Book covers how to create rollovers, animated GIFs and sliced images for speedy, high-quality Web graphics. You'll also learn how to apply Layer Effects and get the most from "live" type. The book thoroughly explains the History palette and how to use it to perform multiple undos, new painting techniques with the Impressionist History and Art History brushes, and fast and flexible image-editing. The CD-ROM contains "before and after" tutorial files for the techniques in the book, with all layers and channels intact, as well as copy-and-paste Wow! Layer Effects, custom Actions, filters and demos.

At the beginning of each chapter you will find a Basics Section. But, for sure The Wow! Book was not designed to be a substitute for the Adobe Photoshop User Guide, which has always been an excellent reference manual (I emphasise 'reference'). The Wow! Book provides the kind of inspirational examples and practical "nuts-and-bolts" info that will really help you maximise the program's performance and your own creativity and productivity with it, you don't find this in the Adobe manuals. Most of the chapter introductions are short, with the meat of each chapter in the techniques sections that follow. The exceptions are Chapters 1 and 2. Since these two chapters cover the fundamentals of using Photoshop 5 and 5.5, it's probably a good idea to read all of these two sections, as well as the introduction for the chapter you're working in, before you start in on that chapter's techniques.

Whether or not you start by reading Chapters 1 and 2, at some point you're going to come up against the need for some "Photoshop fundamentals". When you do, here's where I think you should look: To maximise your efficiency, from stocking your system with RAM and disk storage space, to constructing your files to give yourself as many options for change as possible, to recovering from mistakes, read the "Working Smart" section of Chapter 1, starting on page 14. It's well worth the time it takes to read these pages! To learn how to scan a photo or artwork so you get enough information to make a good print, read "Resolution, Colour Depth, and File Size" on page 50 and then follow the procedure in "Setting Up a Scan" on page 53. To get the colour you expect when you print, read "Getting Consistent Colour" on page 40.

Wow! uses Photoshop Actions throughout as an aid to illustrating the steps to complete complex processes. Actions have been a part of Photoshop since version 4.0 and I never really paid much attention to them. Guess that's why they call this the Wow! Book. Actions are definitely a Wow!

The Wow! Actions are in the Wow! Goodies folder on the CD-ROM. With the Wow! Actions and Actions that come with version 5.5 there are some 60 "one-click" macros for painterly and photographic effects, as well as graphics special effects for bevels, carving, chrome, crystal, brushed steel, drop and cast shadows, framing, buttoning and so on. And with the comping photos provided by PhotoDisc, you can run each Action on the appropriate photo, compare the result to the poster of examples that's bound into the back of the book, and then dissect the finished file.

They leave the files with layers, Adjustment layers, masks, and channels intact, so you can see how the effect is accomplished. The Actions can be applied to your own files -- singly or in batches. "Stop" steps in the Actions guide you in making entries in dialogue boxes for the Action steps.

The key factor with this book is it 'shows' you exactly how to accomplish a task, with plenty of illustrations. Most user guides tell you what happens when you push what button, not how to

manipulate the process to create something. The Wow! Book is a true paper-bound tutorial that actually takes you by the hand through the creation process. A true example of, "a picture is worth a thousand words!" The Adobe Photoshop 5.5 manual does not have even one colour illustration and the Photoshop 5.0 version manual has less than a dozen. The Wow! Book has 2-6 high-quality colour illustrations on almost 'every page'!

Everyone from beginner to advanced users can glean plenty from this book. There's much more to this book than just a step-by-step manual on how to create graphic eye-candy. Careful readers of "Photoshop 5/5.5 Wow!" Book will learn how to work quicker, smarter and more effectively using this powerful Adobe digital imaging tool.

The publisher is Peachpit Press; ISBN: 0-201-35371-7; list price: \$49.99 (Amazon.com had it for \$39.95); it has 360 pages and comes with 1 CD-ROM (for Windows and Macintosh). :

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Hardware Review:

Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

by Herb Goldstein - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

With unending credits and accomplishments to his name. Bill Gates has yet another of debatable distinction. He will be known for all times as the man who castrated the mouse. Yes, he has taken the most ubiquitous device attached to computers and has unceremoniously removed its ball.

As most computerists are aware, [almost] every mouse (present company excepted) has a ball rolling around its base. The movement of that ball as you move your mouse, in turn moves small rollers inside the mouse that transmits signals to your cursor. Unfortunately, the ball and rollers eventually pick up dust and dirt that impede their movement and require cleaning from time to time.

The think tank at Microsoft came up with a solution to the problem by creating a ball-less mouse that works on a radically different principle, a photo-optical sensor. The result is the IntelliEye mouse.

The new rodent uses an optical sensor enclosed under a transparent lens in its base that records changes in the position of the mouse as you glide it along any surface. No mouse pad needed. The resulting device has no movable parts or entry for dust and dirt. Furthermore, it is extremely accurate and can be adjusted via its software to do a wide variety of useful, handy jobs with its five programmable buttons and the famous wheel for scrolling and zooming. The device is nicely shaped and comfortable to the hand. As with most mice, it unfortunately has a cord which anyone who uses a cordless mouse will immediately dislike.

On the whole, the new mouse deserves considerable praise. It is very accurate, and without moving parts it remains so. Its performance does not degrade with time. It is a very pleasant and utilitarian device and sports a USB connector so you can plug it right into your computer while you are up and running. Also supplied is a standard PS2 adapter for those of you that do not have USB.

My test unfortunately revealed a downside, unrelated to the mouse itself, but surprisingly to the

supplied software. My computer failed to recognise the mouse in the USB connection port. I spent a few hours trying numerous tricks, to no avail. I finally had to connect the supplied USB-PS2 adapter and plug it in to my standard PS2 mouse port to get it to work. Not a good thing! The problem may have been unique to my computer, but I have my doubts since I have been able to use other USB peripherals with no problem.

The really sticky problem arose when I disconnected the mouse to place it in last month's special drawing. I replaced it with my own mouse, back into its PS2 port. The result was that my computer refused to boot up into Windows, not even in safe mode. Installing the new mouse made a number of changes in my Windows configuration files. Not even re-connecting the IntelliEye mouse solved the problem. It took several hours of vigorous emergency treatment to get my computer going again, uninstalling the IntelliEye software, and reinstalling my old mouse software which I originally had to uninstall to accommodate the new mouse. It was decidedly not a job for a novice.

Guidance by way of documentation from Microsoft was nil. Supplied with the mouse is a CD containing the mouse software, and a single page small insert that advises you to just follow the instructions on your screen to install the mouse, and I had no trouble in so doing. However, although I am a fairly well seasoned and experienced user, getting the mouse to work and then uninstalled was an unmitigated disaster. I wonder what would have happened to a novice? Perhaps I am fortunate, but I have never had a previous problem installing and uninstalling either software or hardware.

Microsoft may need to go back to the drawing board on the software end of this new device. A pity for such cleverly conceived and designed hardware! In spite of these shortcomings, I would still recommend this new mouse for all its new and superior features. If you have a problem with installation, you can always return it. I would also urge you to make a complete backup of your hard drive first. You can find this mouse at a street price of about \$55. www.microsoft.com :

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Software Review:
OmniPage Pro V 10

by Brian K Lewis - SPCUG

[Reprinted from the 2001 April issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 April issue of "Sarasota PC Monitor", newsletter of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc. PO Box 15889 Sarasota FL 34277-1889, U S of A]

One advantage of having a scanner is the ability to convert text and pictures into digital images that can be stored on a computer. Anything you scan is read into your computer as a series of white, black or coloured dots (pixels). This is a picture and, as you probably realise, word processors can't easily edit pictures. So you need to convert this picture to letters and numbers. That's where OCR (optical character recognition) software is needed. Another problem with scanning text is that the page you are scanning may contain either colour or b/w pictures. If these need to be included in your final document, then the scanning software has to recognise them as pictures, not as blank areas. That is something that OmniPage Pro does very well.

Most scanners are sold with a "light" version of OCR software. Although these applications can convert your scanned document to text, they generally have a limited capability. For example, they cannot usually convert pages with both graphics and text. They may also have some problems with the accuracy of the conversion. Caere's Omni-Page Pro 10 is an upgraded version of the software bundled with some scanners. This version is a very powerful conversion package and a real improvement over version 9 that was reviewed last year. In addition, the upgrade is available to anyone who has any other OCR software from any manufacturer.

This new version of OmniPage is much easier to use. It offers three different user interfaces. The simplest is the OCR Wizard that walks you completely through the process. It also serves as a tutorial for those unfamiliar with the OCR process. This is certainly the best place for a new user to start.

The other two interfaces are the Auto OCR (one button processing) and the manual OCR. The manual OCR provides the maximum amount of user control over the entire process. I found that this was best used on mixed pages that had graphics mixed in with the text. One of my sample documents had grey scale graphics included with the text. Using the manual interface and gray scale settings, I could identify the graphics zones so the software would not try to convert them as text. This worked very well.

The Auto OCR really impressed me when it scanned a magazine page with a colour photograph included on it. I used the colour settings, mixed page and saved the scanned document in Microsoft Word format. After the text had been recognised, the document was opened in Word. The picture was reproduced perfectly and formatted in the upper left corner of the page. The text was in three columns with one starting on the right side of the photo. There were a few errors in the recognition process. These were corrected before the file was transferred to Word. However, I also found some simple errors in the final text, such as "tire" instead of "the" or "stock" instead of "stuck". These errors could be found only by reading the text. However, it would have taken me considerably more time to have typed in the text and then add the scanned picture. It should be noted that when I saved the document in Word Perfect format there was a problem. The picture and text were placed on separate pages. I had a very difficult time getting the Word Perfect formatting corrected.

After a document is scanned, the software automatically goes through the OCR conversion process. When the conversion is complete, the word checking process begins. Any questionable characters or words are flagged in a window and can be corrected or ignored. Occasionally the word was correct, but was not in the dictionary used by OmniPage. You can add new words to the dictionary from this corrections window.

OmniPage Pro also can scan tables or spreadsheets and convert these to editable documents. I scanned a printed calendar page, converted it and opened it in Microsoft Word. Again, the formatting was very close to perfect. Tables can be converted to Excel or Lotus format. These formats can also be opened in Quattro Pro. This particular spreadsheet choice isn't available in OmniPage.

The biggest problem in OCR is the quality of the original document. I scanned several printed pages that used 12 point type and no graphics. These pages were recognised with absolutely no errors. However, when I started testing copies with pictures, columns, gray scale graphics and 6-9 point type, the results were mixed. If the documents were originals, then there were fewer errors.

Scanning copies usually resulted in a higher number of errors. I always tried to use the Auto OCR interface first. With complex documents, I found it necessary to use the manual interface to make adjustments to the zone selections before doing the final recognition process. That generally reduced the number of errors.

As a test I also had OmniPage read back one page to me instead of opening it in Word. That's right! OmniPage can read the recognised text aloud to you if you have a sound card installed in your computer. This isn't something I would use regularly, but I can see situations where it might be a valuable option.

This is the easiest OCR software I have used and it does provide excellent results. If you have any need to scan text into your computer, you should consider this software. It certainly is a valuable addition to my software library.

Omni-Page Pro is published by the Caere Corporation, 100 Cooper Court, Los Gatos, CA 95032 (www.caere.com). The street price for the upgrade to version 10.0 is \$99.00. The full version is priced at \$499.00. Anyone who owns any OCR software is eligible for the upgrade price. Caere also offers a 30-day money-back guarantee.:

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Adobe GoLive

by James Price - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2001 May issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 June issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937-1236, U S of A]

With the number of websites growing at a record pace, so has the need for high quality web design programs. Adobe GoLive 4.0 is one of the latest in affordable and user friendly html design and management programs. Adobe recommends a minimum processor speed of 200 MHz but this program performed well on my four year old 133 with 128 megabytes of RAM.

Installation was a snap with pushbutton menus. In addition to Golive, the CD is loaded with extras, which include Acrobat Reader, Quick Time 3.0, and Microsoft Updater. You will need to install Quick Time to edit and view Quick Time movies. Upon installing GoLive you can customise some of the settings to shorten the time it takes to launch. With the simplicity of most of my work I did not need the Web Objects module. By disabling that feature and some of the other modules, I was able to speed up the launch time. Also with my 133 it made the program run more smoothly.

Adobe GoLive has a different look than other web design programs in that there are more ways to edit and modify your page. When you start GoLive you will see several tabs, which allow you to switch from source to preview or to layout. One tab that I found to be useful was the outline. This allowed me to see the source in an outline form that is much shorter and easier to view than the source page. Using the outline view you can generate, edit and clean up the page without typing any code and drag and drop works here too.

Working in the layout I started my new page. I created an index page and selected a folder to save it in. I like to start my pages by setting all the colours first. It is a preference that I think most people like as that allows you to see exactly how the page will look while editing it. I did run into some problems when I started to select the various colours. I found that I was not able to use the drag and drop feature with the colour palette. I looked in the help index and followed the instructions with no luck. When I looked in the book I found the instruction to be exactly the same as the on-line help with the only addition being a picture. I was able to use another method, which I happened to stumble upon, and edited all the colours. Even though this was an inconvenience, I did work around it. Adobe created a Palette that contains many of the tools you will need to create and update your page. The Palette is where you will find grids, text blocks, buttons, web objects, forms and many other tools. I started with inserting a grid box. The grid allows you to line up objects, texts and pictures to the exact pixel. Floating boxes can add a nice attraction to your page. Floating boxes allow you to manipulate page content to create dynamic effects and multilayered displays. The box can be opaque or transparent so that you can stack it on top of another box. Once you have added your text and graphics you can view the page by clicking the preview tab.

For the most creative user, Adobe GoLive allows you to JavaScript, Java Applets, and Plug-ins. Using multimedia plug-ins with Adobe GoLive is a cinch. You go back to the easy to use palette and drag the plug-in icon to the your web page. Then in the palette you select browse and select the object you want to use. It is as simple as that.

If you are the type who likes to add animation to your page then this is the program to have. Adobe GoLive Dynamic HTML [includes] features that are second to none. When you insert a dynamic object, Adobe GoLive automatically inserts the appropriate JavaScript code to ensure that your animation displays properly in all 4.0 Web browsers. There are several small niceties that you can add to your web page to make is user friendly. The one I liked the most is "Stop Complete". This allows you to add a Stop Animation button to any animated page you create. This is a

courtesy to people with a slow connection. (We have all been there!)

With Adobe GoLive you can work with HTML fragments. In other words, you can use pieces of ready-made HTML code that are not embedded in the default page. This feature is useful when several people are working on the same page and eliminates the need to strip off redundant HTML when merging code from various sources.

Adobe GoLive allows you to create forms for viewing on your web site. Forms allow the user to send information to the server. In order to use forms, your server must have a CGI application installed to manage the flow of information. Adobe GoLive provides a complete inventory of forms elements and are all supported by HTML 4.0.

Adobe GoLive has very advanced tools for Using Cascading Style Sheets. Cascading Style Sheets are the future of web design. Many of the web browsers out there do not recognise cascading style sheets so I will not touch on it. It is obvious that Adobe GoLive is a very advanced html program and many of its capabilities use the latest technology in html design. Unlike Front Page, which is primarily designed to work with Internet Explorer, Adobe GoLive has the best of both worlds as far as designing pages, which will work with several browsers.

GoLive monitors the integrity of your site and alerts you to broken links, lost resources, or other errors that may be caused. Tracking URLs and e-mail addresses is as simple as using the link inspector. The inspector is a great tool for locating errors on your site. When an error is found Adobe GoLive has several trouble tools to assist you in troubleshooting and correcting the problem. This allows you to correct the problem before you upload the site.

Adobe GoLive has a build in FTP tool that gives you several options for accessing FTP servers and lets you preview pages before uploading them to your server. You can upload or download one page at a time or run the whole site. You can tell the program to update changed pages only.

Adobe GoLive is a sophisticated but user-friendly program that has more editing options and capabilities than any other program of its type that I have seen. I will say that it does take some time to learn many of the advanced options such as JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets. I would recommend anyone who [is] looking at purchasing an HTML program to take a serious look at Adobe GoLive. I am still impressed with some of the features that I am discovering on a daily basis.

Version 5 of GoLive is expected to ship in mid June 2000. People who buy now can upgrade for the price of shipping.

Adobe Systems Inc.
345 Park Ave
San Jose CA 95110-2704
<http://www.adobe.com>

Adobe MSRP \$285
lowest internet price \$267

Drive Image 3.02

by Benard Hirsh - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2001 May issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 September issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937-1236, U S of A]

Background: I've been a "computer nut" for about 25 years and have built or modified every computer I've ever owned. Most, except the very earliest ones have resided in a large tower

server case. The case features a removable and configurable motherboard tray, a large power supply at the bottom of the case with two 5" blowers, space on the front panel for 10 full height drives and hinged and removable front and side panels. The motherboard tray is mounted in such a way that the connectors on all the plug in cards are accessible at the top of the case. This allows me to easily see and modify anything in the case. No, I'm not bragging, just describing my system so that you can understand some of the things that I'll refer to later in this review.

When I received my review copy of Drive Image 3.0, I wondered what I should write about it since I had already reviewed version 2 in the September 1998 issue of Throughput. Before I could even install version 3, my computer made the decision for me.

While browsing the Internet, my monitor suddenly displayed a message stating that it was unable to write to drive L:. Yes, as I've stated before, I'm a firm believer in multiple partitions so that I can categorise things and make them easier to find. Anyway, since drive L: is on my second hard drive, the system continued to operate. I shut down the system and rebooted. The two SCSI hard drives in my system are 14.2 Gigabytes and 4.28 Gigabytes respectively. Normally, each drive is displayed on the screen during boot up, but this time, the first drive was displayed and the system just kept waiting for the second drive. Listening closely, I could hear the second drive continuously speeding up and slowing down.

As I stated earlier, my tower case has room for 10 drives. There is an empty space between each drive in which I have cooling fans. By opening this space below the second hard drive I was able to observe it during boot, and while looking at it, I saw a flash of light and a puff of smoke. At the same time, the drive motor spun down and stopped. So much for that! The computer wouldn't start with the drive in place, so I had to remove it and reboot. Fortunately the computer booted up on the remaining hard drive. I knew that the local computer stores had SCSI controllers, but none of them seem to carry SCSI hard drives, so I got onto the internet and ordered a replacement drive to be shipped second day air.

This was done on a Friday night and I didn't realise that second day air meant two "business" days. It was four days before I got the new hard drive, and this gave me time to install Drive image 3.0 and play with it a bit.

My version 2 of Drive Image had been installed on the 4.28 Gigabyte drive that was no longer in the system, so there was no way to uninstall it even though it still appeared in the program list and in the uninstall list in the control panel. I installed the new version 3 on my C: drive and would worry about uninstalling version 2 after I got the new drive installed. Also, I had ordered a 14.2 Gigabyte drive to replace the bad 4.28 Gigabyte drive.

When the new drive arrived, I installed it but didn't Fdisk it or format it. Instead, I decided to do an initial checkout of Drive Image 3 by copying my entire SCSI drive over to the new drive and let Drive image do the formatting, partitioning, error checking, and verifying. The original 14.2 Gigabyte drive was about 70% full, and the entire procedure took 55 minutes with no intervention from me. I was very pleased with the results.

Next, I set up the second drive with Fdisk and format to create four empty partitions, each a little over 4 gigabytes. Then I restored most of the missing files from a CD backup I had made some weeks prior to the failure. This, of course, left a LOT of empty space on this drive.

I then took advantage of some of the extra space by creating an image of the entire Drive C: (1,761.3 Megabytes of actual files) and placing it on the second drive. I specified High Compression with file system error checks and write verify. The entire process took just under 26 minutes, but would have been faster without the error checking and write verifying.

The Size of the image file was 668 Meg, just a bit too large to fit on a 650 Meg CD-R or CD-RW disk. However, there is a provision in Drive Image 3 to limit the size of the image file, thus creating multiple image files, each of which is equal to or less than the limit set. This allows copying to multiple CDs. Then the original image files can be deleted from the hard drive and later (if necessary) restored from the CDs. A large drive image can also be split into several smaller images by the image file editor, which is included in the package.

If you want to restore individual files from an image file, the image file editor will allow you to create an index of the files in the image. Then you can select and restore them individually.

When I registered the software on the PowerQuest Internet site, it gave me the option of downloading a free copy of their DataKeeper 3.0 Automatic Data Backup software. This software normally sells for \$49.95.

Drive Image 3 requires:

Windows 3.x, 95, 98, NT 4.0 Workstation, 2000 Professional, DOS or OS/2.
Intel/386 SX compatible or higher

16 MB RAM (32 MB for FAT32 or NTFS)

CD-ROM drive

3.5 inch diskette drive

VGA or higher video support

5 MB free hard-drive space

Retail price is \$69.95 or \$29.95 for the upgrade version.

Book Review:

The Complete Idiot's Guide to XML

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2001 May issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 July issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937-1236, U S of A]

One of the things that has bothered me about the "Complete Idiot's Guide" series is the connotation. I mean, would an idiot really be reading books on this level? Isn't the name an oxymoron?!? But I guess if you construe it to mean that the level of understandability is so easy that even an idiot can comprehend, then the sobriquet makes sense.

On May 18, 2000 Que released The Complete Idiot's Guide to XML, authored by David Gulbransen - a recognised industry expert. The text covers some 330+ pages and includes a CD containing Mr Gulbransen's XML Pro editor.

The author begins by doing an excellent job of defining just what XML is (eXtensible Markup Language) and how it fits into the family of markup languages. If you were under the impression that it might be the "latest and greatest" version of HTML (HyperText Markup Language) for creating web pages, you are quickly corrected. While both XML and HTML have their genesis in SGML (Standard Generalised Markup Language), HTML is designed to control the display of web pages while XML is aimed at information and data formatting in a universal format. All the markup languages have in common that they contain only pure text (so-called "ASCII") and no binary characters. They may be created and edited with the simplest of editors.

After getting us off on the right foot, Mr Gulbransen introduces the reader to the structure of XML files and walks through the creation of several example files, using either a text editor or the author's XML Pro application. (One soon learns that it is a LOT easier to use XML Pro!)

After mastering the basics, the reader then can progress through a series of chapters of increasing complexity; Moving into XML Concepts, The Total XML Package: Validation, Advanced XML, and Resources. Each of the book's parts lead the reader to becoming more and more competent in

the application of XML. It is certainly not a one-night "page-turner". Rather, it is a well laid out and easy to understand pathway toward competency in application of XML.

My only misgiving with the text is the front-page banner proclaiming "CD Included with the full version of XML Pro!" More accurately it might proclaim "fully functioning evaluation version of XML Pro!" The difference? The evaluation version will run for 30 days, the full version of XML Pro retails for \$149.95. But since XML can be created with a simple editor, that difference should not deter anyone from acquiring this excellent guide.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to XML by David Gulbransen
Que Books (a division of Macmillan Publishing)
ISBN 0-7897-2311-5, MSRP \$24.99

System Mechanic 3.5

Its Usefulness Keeps Growing

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2001 May issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2000 July issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937-1236, U S of A]

On May 30, 2000, iolo Technologies announced the release of version 3.5 of its System Mechanic super utility. This is the package that I demonstrated several months ago and one that many of you have already added to your software arsenal. If you are a member of that astute group, you have now been rewarded with two great sets of tool additions at no additional cost. If you haven't given this product a good look, now is the time. Version 3.5 adds three news tools and enhances five tools that were already a part of the collection.

Added tools are System Customizer, Maintenance Wizard, and Web Update.

If you are familiar with packages calling themselves user interface tweaks, you'll have a pretty good idea of what the System Customizer module is all about. Windows 95/98/NT/2000 is a powerful operating system, but configuring the defaults to match your desires or causing the automation of some functions can be no easy task.

Nearly 100 hidden settings can be "tweaked" with this tool. One can even customise the bootup and shutdown "splash" screens - either disabling them or alternatively using a BMP image file of your own choosing.

The Maintenance Wizard is designed to optimise the ease of use of System Mechanic's essential maintenance tools from a single interface. The user can now automate the deletion of junk and obsolete files, invalid registry information and references, and all those caches, cookies and hard-drive eating Internet leftovers. Running this wizard periodically will keep your system humming by reducing leftover file bloat.

The third added tool, WebUpdate, is a predictable enhancement. Just as you can obtain updates to your virus definition files via the Internet and a click of your mouse, you can now update your copy of System Mechanic on-line directly from iolo.

Enhanced tools include the StartUp Manager, Registry Cleaner, Eraser, NetBooster, and Duplicate File Finder.

If you would like an easy way to switch between the actions executed at system start, StartUp Manager will now handle that task for you. The enhanced version allows the user to create, save,

and load startup profiles. It also now supports autoexec.bat, config.sys and WinNT/Win2000's "all users" startup group.

Registry Cleaner now processes four additional areas of the Windows registry including: invalid virtual device drivers, font entries, invalid ClassIDs, and bad file associations. As it has from day one, the cleaner will backup your registry before any changes are made.

The Eraser tool can now erase the recently used documents history log for Office 95/97/2000. And for you cookie haters, the user now has been given the ability to selectively lock cookies from being erased. Yes, you can now retain the "good" cookie files that remember things like your login name while getting rid of the rest of the clutter.

NetBooster has [been] "tweaked" by iolo to help the user further speed up both Internet and LAN connections. Included are several new items specific to Windows 2000. While I neglected to mention it earlier, all modules of this version of System Mechanic accommodate all versions of Windows starting with 95.

Finally, the Duplicate File Finder tool has been reworked to protect the user from himself. It alerts the user as to which duplicates may be dangerous to remove and indicates those files that should be OK to eliminate.

If you are a registered System Mechanic 3.x user, surf on over to <http://www.iolo.com/sm/index.htm> and update your copy to this latest iteration. If you're not currently using System Mechanic, download of a fully functioning evaluation copy is available at the same URL. You will have 30 days from when you install the package to get as hooked on the product as I am.

System Mechanic 3.5

MSRP: \$59.95,

Updates from Version 3.x: Free
iolo Technologies
<http://www.iolo.com>

Software review:

Adobe Illustrator 9.0

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

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Adobe System's Illustrator has long reigned as the product of choice for graphics professionals. The vector graphics creation and editing package, along with Adobe's Photoshop package for raster graphics, are virtually without peers for power and expert capabilities. When Adobe announced the release of version 9.0 of Illustrator in April of this year, the question was not whether it is a great product -- but rather what significant advances and enhancements are incorporated into the package.

In the era of Web-centric products, it should come as no surprise that the most notable new feature in Illustrator creates new and improved types of Internet graphics. In the past, Web graphics have been limited to essentially three bit-mapped formats, .GIF, .JPG, and .PNG. Bit-mapped (raster) graphics, as you undoubtedly know, have two principal inherent faults. First, scaling of raster graphics is often a visual catastrophe -- approximated straight lines become zigzagged "jaggies". Second, the larger the image, the larger the file and that equates to longer download times for the "World Wide Wait".

Enter the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and a team of key industry players including Adobe Systems, IBM, Netscape, Sun, Corel, Hewlett-Packard and others. They have developed an emerging, completely open standard dubbed Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG). SVG holds the promise of providing Web-compatible graphics that are both smaller in size than raster files and which maintain excellent visual fidelity when manipulated. Having said that, Illustrator 9 can save art files in both SVG format and a related proprietary Flash (SWF) format. The potential is enormous and Adobe has a jump on the market by incorporating the capability into its new release. Before you race out to recreate all your artwork in SVG format, I should point out that your "vanilla" browser probably cannot accommodate SVG. As was the case with Java and JavaScript, this capability will be phased in. Adobe provides an SVG add-in viewer with the Illustrator 9 package and the viewer is also available for download on their Web site. I also noted when I installed Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5.5 recently that the package included an SVG viewer.

The graphics artist has always been able to create in Illustrator and then export their work in Web-compatible raster formats. When exported and viewed outside the authoring application, though, the results have sometimes been less than desired.

To overcome this obstacle, Illustrator 9 now provides the capability to work in a Pixel Preview mode to draw or edit one's work. This guarantees that objects will snap to the nearest pixel edge and minimise anti-aliasing. As a further aid to the user, pixels can be specified as the global measurement for sizing, editing, and laying out artwork.

A stylise command is now provided which allows the application of appearances such as glows and drop-shadows to both type and graphics objects. The objects remain as fully editable vector objects -- change the object and the effect is changed with it. And speaking of layers, Illustrator 9 adds a Release to Layers Command that will instantly take all objects on a single layer and distribute them across multiple layers -- one object per layer. The capability is an excellent aid to the creation of animated film sequences, as the separate layers can be used as individual cells for the creation of animations in Photoshop or other animation packages. If the shift key is pressed while invoking the Release to Layers command, objects can be distributed to separate layers in a cumulative sequence -- i.e., first object on the first layer; first and second objects on the second layer; first, second, and third objects on the third layer, etc.

Illustrator 9 offers unlimited transparency capabilities. Any object, type character or bitmap image in a word can have the transparency varied so that underlying objects are either fully or partially revealed. One can even use different transparency settings for individual letters, words, or paragraphs in a text block.

The features that I have listed are far from a complete listing. Adobe has, as usual, delivered a complete parcel with additions or improvements in effects, graphics styles, native support for PDF files, opacity and layers masks, extended file format type support, and much, much more. If you are interested in reading a definitive overview of Illustrator 9 is all about, surf on over to <http://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator/main.html>. There you'll find everything you wanted to know about a great product -- to include animated descriptions of most of the features of the application.

There's even an Illustrator 9 tryout version available for download! If you are an owner of Photoshop (full version only), InDesign, PageMaker, CorelDraw, or Macromedia FreeHand there is an upgrade offer available (offer does not apply to Photoshop Limited Edition).

With the increase in capabilities comes an increase in hardware requirements ("There ain't no free lunch"). But in the light of machines being sold today or in the recent past, the hardware requirements are hardly unreasonable.

Illustrator 9.0 Adobe Systems, Inc.
MSRP: \$399, Version upgrade \$149, Competitive Upgrade \$ 249
Street Price: \$375, Version upgrade \$133.

by Jim Gaffney - SWIPCC

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If you have dabbled in the creation of web pages, you have undoubtedly encountered references to Cascading Style Sheets or CSS for short. Exactly what are CSS ? Well if you've worked in any major word processor, you are familiar with styles. Styles are a set of selected attributes (size, colour, font, etc.) that can be selectively applied to blocks of text. Similarly, CSS may be defined and then applied to selected sections of a web page. Why cascading ? CSS styles may be changed dynamically, i.e., the most recent definition in a document will replace (or cascade from) an earlier definition. If you want to change the appearance of a document, you need only change one definition rather than re-editing multiple occurrences throughout a document. (Very handy if a supervisor decides that he prefers a different font or colour than the one you chose!)

They sound nifty, but have you ever tried to find more information about them ? The on-screen help in Microsoft's FrontPage 2000 provides some useful information, but it is far from being an exhaustive reference. You can, of course, go to the web pages of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to access the complete specification for CSS, but you'll find little or no information on compatibility of current browser versions there. O'Reilly and Associates to the rescue! Published in May 2000, Eric A Meyer's Cascading Style Sheets, The Definitive Guide is just that -- definitive! The author begins by explaining the origins of CSS (they are a subset of SGML, which is the "granddaddy" of Internet markup languages) and the need for its implementation. He then points out that the standard is emerging and that not all browsers are "created equal". (Aha! That's why a "mouse over" style worked for me in Internet Explorer, but didn't work in Netscape!) Yes, there is a CSS1 whose implementation is relatively complete in most popular browsers, and a CSS2 whose implementation is spotty. The 450+ pages of the guide are chock-full of clear and useful examples. There are appendices containing useful tips and tricks, CSS properties, a version support chart and more. The book is amply illustrated and well organised. Both a table of contents and an index are provided, making the research of a given CSS feature/implementation quite easy. While it is not of the same genre as a page-turner thriller, the author's style is easy to read and very comprehensible. Mr Meyer is certainly authoritative, he is a member of the W3C CSS Working Group and a recognised expert on HTML and SGML.

If you want to learn more about Cascading Style Sheets and be on the "cutting edge", this is the text for you. Even if you don't intend implementing CSS, the explanations of its origins and implementation go a long way toward making the reader more Internet literate.

Cascading Style Sheets: The Definitive Guide ISBN: 1-56592-622-6, MSRP \$34.95 O'Reilly & Associates, Sebastopol, CA <http://www.oreilly.com>

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