

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large

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Leading Off, Keeping On

We all cope in different ways and on different schedules. After writing three point-less versions of an essay, I conclude that the best use of *Cites & Insights* space on this occasion is to keep going. First, it's time to clarify the issue of donations for *Cites & Insights*. I've made the key decisions based partly on another circumstance reported below.

Free. Period.

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large is free to the reader. Period. I no longer suggest donations and will not accept donations from individuals.

By the time you see this, I've already sent notes to most of those who had volunteered donations (if I saved their email), thanking them and suggesting that they donate elsewhere. There are too many possible "elsewheres" to name, both those that come most immediately to mind at the moment—and those that will be short of donations because your attention is turned in one direction. (When I was suggesting a donation, I noted that 50% of annual totals in excess of \$4,000 would go directly to the Nature Conservancy. That's one outfit that falls in the second category along with the World Wildlife Fund and others. Beyond the American Red Cross and Second Harvest Food Banks, there must be many others in the first category as well.)

The *Cites & Insights* FAQ includes notes on supporting the publication, modified to reflect this decision. I'm still interested in a few good speaking invitations (understanding that they almost always involve flying). Reprint arrangements or corporate sponsorship are still possible. Good feedback and ideas for articles and columns elsewhere also help.

If you find *Cites & Insights* worthwhile, that's reward enough.

The Crawford Files

I'll start off with the first four paragraphs from an ALA press release, quoted verbatim:

Beginning with the January 2002 issue, *American Libraries* will introduce "The Crawford Files," a one-page monthly column that will address a broad range of issues affecting library services, especially new technologies. "The Crawford Files" will be written by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at the Research Libraries Group, Inc. (RLG) in Mountain View, California, and a frequent contributor of feature articles to the magazine.

Some of the topics Crawford will cover include "A post-millennial reality check on the death of print" and "Unexpected consequences of changing media."

"The E-Files," a three-part series of feature articles by Crawford on electronic formats, is currently appearing in the magazine. The October 2001 issue contains "You Must Read This: Library Weblogs," while articles on library lists and e-zines are scheduled for November and December.

Crawford has been a full-time professional in library automation since 1968 and has worked at RLG since 1979. He is currently lead designer for Eureka, RLG's end-user search service. An award-winning writer and speaker, Crawford has written 13 books and more than 240 articles and columns on libraries, technology, media, publishing, and personal computing. He began *Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large*, a Web-distributed print newsletter available at cical.home.att.net/index.html, in December 2000. His most recent book is *Being Analog: Creating Tomorrow's Libraries* (ALA Editions, 1999).

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As you might guess, I'm delighted. You might also wonder about the implications of "The Crawford Files" for *Cites & Insights*. Here's what I can suggest at this point:


- A few pieces that might have been Perspectives in *Cites & Insights* will appear in "The Crawford


Files” instead, improved by professional editing and reaching a much wider audience.


- Material in *Cites & Insights* will serve as the basis for some “Crawford Files” essays and amplify others—but consider that “The Crawford Files” will be 700 word essays, while an 18-page *Cites & Insights* is 15,000 words.
- I’m *more* likely to keep doing *Cites & Insights*—and, with luck, it will also reach a somewhat wider audience.
- Just as the summer *Cites & Insights* poll on PC lifespans resulted in a “PC Monitor” column for *Online*, future feedback and reader queries may lead to “Crawford Files.” I do try to give credit where credit is due.

PC Values: September 2001

October’s standard configuration includes 128MB SDRAM, 24x or faster CD-ROM, AGP (128-bit) accelerator with 32MB SGRAM, V.90 modem or Ethernet adapter, a 15.9-16" viewable display (usually called 17"), and wave-table sound with stereo speakers. Top-vendor prices taken from Web sites on 9/20/2001. “Other” systems had substantially lower values than top systems.

 **Top, Budget:** Gateway Performance 1500cl: Pentium 4-1500, 20GB HD. *Pluses:* 64MB display RAM. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, Boston Acoustics speakers with subwoofer, CD-RW drive, Ethernet adapter. \$1,139, VR 3.36 (+12% since 7/01, +15% since 4/01).

 **Top, Midrange:** Gateway Performance 1800cl: Pentium 4-1800, 80GB 7200rpm HD. *Pluses:* 256MB RAM, 64MB graphics RAM, DVD-ROM drive. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, Boston Acoustics speakers with subwoofer, CD-RW drive, Ethernet adapter. \$1,499, VR 3.23 (+31% since 7/01, +41% since 4/01).

 **Top, Power:** Gateway Performance 2000cx: Pentium 4-2000, 80GB 7200rpm HD. *Pluses:* 256MB RAM, 18" display with 64GB graphics RAM, DVD-ROM drive. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, CD-RW drive, Boston Acoustics speakers, Ethernet adapter. \$1,999, VR 2.62 (+26% since 7/01, +71% since 4/01).

 **One Good System:** Dell Dimension 8200: Pentium 4-1700, 60GB HD. *Pluses:* 256MB

RDRAM, 18" Trinitron display, DVD-ROM. *Extras:* MS Works Suite 2001, Harmon Kardon surround speaker system, CD-RW drive. (Upgraded display, hard disk, CD to DVD, added CD-RW). \$1,916, VR 2.52 (+13% since 7/01).

The Filtering Follies

A few recent items on the ongoing CIPA and filtering fights seem worth noting. The *News & Observer* (I have no idea what city, but the Web site is www.newsobserver.com) had a pair of commentaries on August 12. Paul Jones states the anti-filtering stance plain and simple: “Internet filters on library computers don’t protect your children. Worse, they restrict the legitimate right to access by you, your kids and others.” He goes on to provide details and consider ALA’s position. The headline for the commentary: “Choice taken from parents.” Kip Frey provides a counterpoint under the headline “Filter foes misguided.” He flatly denies that filtering creates free-speech issues and *misstates* the argument in this area. He trivializes loss of legitimate access: so you only get 98% of the material. So what? As with most pro-filtering people, he belittles those on the other side and wonders how we can be so misguided. He notes that his mom would drop him off at the library to be on his own—because “it was safe there.” Amazing. His boyhood library had no books with bad words, no false histories, *nothing* that could damage his tender psyche. What ever happened to that mythical America?

The *Seattle Times* for August 16 reports a sensible solution by the King County Library System. All public Internet computers will have filters. If parents tell the library that their children should have filtered access, the filters will be active when those children are using them. But the filters will be off for adults and for children whose parents have *not* asked for such restrictions.

Is the ACLU up in arms? Not at all. A spokesman said the new rules “would put decisions about kids’ Internet access in the hands of parents rather than librarians.” Has ALA drummed King County out of its ranks? I sure haven’t heard about it (it’s fundamentally impossible)—nor have I heard a negative word from ALA headquarters.

Ten days later, that same paper ran an insightful column by Jerry Large (seattletimes.nwsources.com, look for Jerry Large on August 26). The title is “Internet porn and kids: weaving through tangled web of interests.” He sees serious cases for both sides. He “would be disappointed if [the ALA and

ACLU] didn't challenge [CIPA]." He understands the need for compromise. While he chooses to favor a slightly more restrictive option than Kings County (similar, but the parent must explicitly *allow* a child's unfiltered access), he understands the need for compromise—and he recognizes that libraries should not act as substitute parents.

"Censorship Watch" in the September 2001 *American Libraries* deserves careful reading. As usual, those insisting on filters say "We've got to protect the children" no matter what damage is done in the process. A report on the situation in Washington state (see above) is fascinating. Why is a pro-filtering group specifically working on "disassociating our tax dollars from the American Library Association"? (Unless those libraries pay staff dues, it's unlikely that any tax dollars go to ALA, but scapegoats are always convenient.) Out of 18,000 signatures needed for an anti-pornography initiative, *none* were turned in by the deadline. Naturally, the censorship buffs will keep trying.

The Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* offered an August 25, 2001 story by Anne Davis and the JS staff: "Libraries behind on Internet filtering." As more newspaper writers are doing these days, she went to the experts such as Lisa Strand, executive director of the Wisconsin Library Association. "I think a lot of adult library users should be concerned [about CIPA's filtering requirements]. Nobody wants children to be exposed to inappropriate material, but I think there are other ways libraries can do this." And "few libraries report major problems with users accessing pornography." The thrust of the story is that 79% of Wisconsin public libraries don't yet use filters (On Wisconsin!) and that some libraries will choose to drop E-rate funds rather than imposing filters. The Eastern Shores system calculates that it would cost \$100,000 to install filters in its 13 libraries—and it gets E-rate funding of \$5,200.

PC Magazine (September 25, 2001) has a two-part group review article entitled "Clean it up" on content filtering for home or school (one part) and for work (the other part). I marked it for inclusion in "Review Watch," but I don't think it deserves that status. It does deserve a quick mention here. As you might expect, *PC Magazine's* testing *completely* ignores the issue of filters blocking important sites that should be allowed. Apparently, it doesn't matter how much excess filtering you do as long as you get the "nasty stuff." As a result, naturally enough, CyberSitter gets the Editors' Choice as a home product: it's the most aggressive. The articles struck me as odd. One teacher became alarmed when an eighth grader "innocently searching for information about her favorite actress" ran into an unseemly site.

Without commenting on the "innocence" of the average eighth grader, let me just note who this favorite actress was: Pamela Anderson. And the poor kid got a nasty site? Who woulda guessed? Later, in discussing workplace filtering, we get a sentence that seems to say that any use of portals, search engines, news sites or finance sites is *inappropriate* for any workplace. When search engines are considered inappropriate use, I wonder why businesses have open Internet access at all. What *is* appropriate? (If you care, St. Bernard iPrism is the Editors' Choice for the workplace. It lets managers keep workers from such vicious wastes of time as health-care and cultural information as well as news, travel and finance—and, of course, sends email to managers if a worker steps out of bounds.)

Jonathan Wallace (www.spectacle.org/cs) and Seth Finkelstein (sethf.com/anticensorware) have written fascinating articles on BESS, N2H2's filtering software that seems less ideological than CyberSitter and its ilk. Two Wallace articles discuss N2H2's finances, some early questionable practices, and the quality of its so-called Artificial Intelligence technology. (Our old friend David Burt works for N2H2—and, as you should know by now, David Burt meets Tom Lehrer's definition: "When correctly viewed, everything is lewd.") Finkelstein's articles discuss the ways that BESS degrades Google operation and provides a disturbing piece of the filter puzzle—"BESS's secret loophole (censorware vs. privacy and anonymity)." Both sites are worth your time. While there's no question that the writers are anti-filter, they provide evidence for their claims.

Just for fun, I've added PeaceFire.org's filtered site of the day to my favorites list. Amazing stuff, and PeaceFire has its own set of commentaries on the artificial stupidity apparent in the work of filters.

Trends and Quick Takes

Micropayments?

EContent's cover article for July 2001 is "Small change" by Robert McGarvey, a discussion of current developments in the micropayments field. If you're wondering, micropayment systems are ways of supporting financial transactions (typically Web-based) that involve less than \$10 and, as a result, don't make sense using credit cards.

If you're in the "content" business, micropayments sound like a great idea. Want to sell individual articles? People might spring for \$1 or \$2, but \$10 is a tough sell. Sure enough, one of the many "research" firms—this time Ovuum, which I've never heard of—projects \$200 billion in micropayments by

2005. What's today's take? Too small to calculate, as far as I can tell. But it can't miss: as one person says, "Once a micropayments infrastructure is in place, content providers will offer more to buy and consumers will buy it." Don't we always?

The article assures us that "it seems certain that technical barriers to offering micro-priced content are about to be erased." McGarvey profiles five different micropayment schemes. Some aggregate small purchases across sites, then charge your credit card with one bigger charge once a month. That means that the micropayment company knows exactly what content you've bought everywhere—but I'm sure confidentiality won't be a problem, since companies are always on the consumer's side. Others, such as WebCredit, use stored-value accounts (which could involve the same "data mining" problems). WebCredit's taking off: 2,100 users have signed up to buy from 100 (or so) merchants. Just think: 2,100 users out of the tiny Internet community!

I had a strong sense of déjà vu reading this article: been there, done that. Sure-fire micropayment schemes have been around ever since the Internet opened to commercial transactions—but I don't remember any of these names being involved at the time. The ones that we worked with and read about don't seem to be around any more, possibly because nobody seems to care.

Sooner or later, *some* form of micropayment scheme needs to take hold. That need doesn't assure that any given company will succeed, however—and providing more things to buy surely doesn't assure that more people will buy them. For that matter, one plausible future for micropayments is for Visa and MasterCard to offer lower-overhead, cost-effective payment and processing routines, leaving no room for new entrants.

Copy-Protected Audio CDs

Two August 7 stories suggest that the nasty idea of copy-protecting audio CDs won't die (see the July and Midsummer issues for earlier comments). Reuters filed an Adam Pasick story noting that record labels may already be running "quiet field tests of CDs that cannot be copied, or 'ripped,' to a personal computer." Apparently Macrovision has decided to enter this field, following its success in preventing you from copying movie DVDs to VHS (or movie VHS to VHS, for that matter).

When we had a fairly old TV set, I cursed Macrovision's name every time we watched a prerecorded movie, as the top inch or two of the screen wavered back and forth as a result of Macrovision encoding. This is worse: every "copy protection"

scheme appears to have the *intentional* side effect of making CDs unplayable on CD-ROM drives. Right now, I'm listening to the *South Pacific* soundtrack on my PC as I write. In my view, any CD that won't play on my computer is defective. Jupiter analyst Aram Sinnreich suggests that "consumers are going to run screaming from these kinds of solutions... This could be much more of a PR hazard for [record labels] than Napster ever was."

Macrovision and another company both swear that their systems pass "golden ears" tests "in which trained audiophiles attempt to discern an audible difference between protected and unprotected CDs." That depends heavily on how the tests were conducted—but it's also beside the point. The other company (Midbar) says that they achieve "near-100 percent playability." Would you like to drive a car with "near-100 percent steerability"? Macrovision's COO believes that they can get to 99.6 or 99.7% playability. Of course, if you're one of the 0.3% or 0.4%—roughly one million people in America—it means that you can't play these CDs. Tough luck. (I say "roughly one million people" since it's likely that playability problems will be reasonably consistent for a given player.)

At least one lawyer suggests that this kind of coding could constitute denial of fair use rights and open record companies to a lawsuit. Interesting—and see below for a different sort of legal challenge already under way.

The other story, written by John Borland and posted on ZDNet, discusses direct consumer reaction to Macrovision-encoded CDs. For a while, the first consumer review on Amazon's page for the "O Brother, Where Art Thou" soundtrack was a warning that the CD contained this "music distortion scheme." According to the story, however, tests of the CD couldn't find copy-protection technology and it was easy to rip the CD into MP3 format.

On one hand, Macrovision claims that it is already slipping copy-protected audio CDs past unsuspecting buyers. On the other, nobody has yet been able to verify an example. Meanwhile, hackers claim they can defeat the scheme—and a variety of analysts agree that the likely pain for record labels exceeds any gain.

The story itself is questionable. It claims that "ordinary players have error correction technology" to render the induced errors at the heart of such copy protection inaudible, but "these distortions would show up as annoying pops and clicks in a song that had been digitally copied to a PC hard drive." This makes no sense. The error-detection and -correction algorithms are part of audio CD encoding itself. While error-handling circuitry has become

more sophisticated over time, there's no reason to believe that CD-ROM players being used for audio CDs wouldn't have the same circuits. When you're ripping audio CD to MP3, the software *knows* that it's working with an audio CD. Why wouldn't it use standard audio error-correction techniques?

It's a complicated situation and may involve a fair amount of vapor. It's also unlike commercial DVDs and videocassettes. Most of these use Macrovision copy-prevention techniques—and many of them say so, either on the label or in a brief video clip. Macrovision and its competitors don't want to label protected CDs as such, because the record companies know that sensible consumers would boycott such CDs. Apparently, the only way of detecting the presence of CD copy-prevention encoding is for the CD to fail to play or copy on a CD-ROM while playing properly on an audio CD drive.

If—as I suspect—typical CD-ROM drives and support software have the same error-handling circuitry as typical audio CD drives, then the whole issue may be moot. You won't be able to prove that a disc was Macrovision-encoded—and it won't matter.

Perhaps some knowledgeable reader can correct me here. If so, then I'm back to my original position. If an audio CD doesn't play on my CD-ROM drive (or, for that matter, on \$5,000 audiophile CD players with direct digital output), then the audio CD is just as defective as if it had pops and clicks on a \$20 CD portable. A deliberate defect is still a defect, but it's also an offensive act by the publisher.

September 6 brings a related story dealing with another copy protection methodology for audio CDs (which I've mentioned before indirectly). A Californian filed suit against Music City Records and Suncomm for violating privacy rights (which are part of California's constitution) in the release of Charley Pride's *A Tribute to Jim Reeves* in unlabeled copy-protected form. The reasoning? As released, the CD won't play on a computer. If you want that ability, you have to register with the record company—and that, the suit alleges, compromises consumer privacy. If the CD was labeled appropriately, there would be no case—but there would also be fewer sales.

Borrower Confidentiality

Not to get too close to the core of librarianship, but I do have a history on this issue. In the late 1960s/early 1970s, the University of California, Berkeley's main (Doe) library used an automated circulation system that I designed—it was my first piece of systems analysis and design. It used punch card equipment: keypunches, the highest-speed card sorter IBM ever made, and a collator with (as I re-

member) 128 bytes of core memory. (Those of you born after dinosaurs left the earth may not know about core memory: visible electromagnetic rings that formed the earliest RAM in computers. The space occupied by one bit of core most likely now supports a million or more bytes of RAM.)

So what? So we were visited at one point by the FBI. They wanted to know who had checked out certain books. We (not me, but those in charge) told them that they'd have to come back—and that we'd consult counsel. Meanwhile, I made sure that we finished doing what we'd always planned to do: destroy the records for returned books so that the information was simply not available. A few weeks later, we learned the bad news and the good news from UC's counsel. The bad news: under California law at the time (which has since changed), those records could be considered public information. The good news: we were under no legal obligation to retain records of previous circulations. We didn't. The FBI went away to harass other librarians. None of this is paranoia: *it actually happened*.

Sure, California law now protects the confidentiality of borrower records, as in many other states. I've seen how courts deal with shield and confidentiality statutes that bother them—they ignore the statutes.

This leads up to a summary on PUBLIB from a survey on retention of automated circulation records. A Maine librarian notes that most systems lose the link between patron and item once the item is checked out by someone else—but this library's system allows them to identify everything that a person has checked out in the last four years. "We've had the discussion about confidentiality but we haven't made a decision yet." In New Hampshire, we learn that one system "keeps patrons' records back indefinitely." An Illinois library can check three circulations back. A California respondent says that their system loses the link as soon as the item is returned on time. Quebec: you can tell who borrowed it most recently. Georgia: Dynix loses the link immediately. Ditto DRA Classic in Missouri and Innovative in New Mexico, Ohio and elsewhere. But a Michigan librarian says, "We currently keep them indefinitely." Spectrum lets you decide how many circulations to retain.

From my perspective: Innovative, DRA, Dynix, and others do the right thing. Once material has been returned on time, the system should *instantly* sever any link—so that no Nosy Parker can find out who's been taking out what book. There are real Nosy Parkers, whether FBI, local police, or others. There were in the early 1970s. There will be again (I wrote this before September 11). The "convenience"

of keeping those records means that your library doesn't assure user confidentiality. That's an awfully big price. If I knew that a local library maintained such records—well, there are bookstores and I could fight against tax allocations for such a library.

Wearable Computers

A tiny piece in the August 2001 *PC Magazine* notes "it's not just for LARA Croft anymore." For a mere \$3,995, you can strap the one-pound Xybernaut Mobile Assistant V to your belt buckle. It features a Celeron-500 and TI digital signal processor. The picture shows a worker with this device on his belt and one of those Borg-like side-of-the-eye displays. Important niche markets clearly exist for devices like this—airplane mechanics, for example. A Gartner analyst thinks that niches are where these belong. But Dewayne Adams of Xybernaut "believes wearable computers will eventually be everywhere because of the convenience factor."

Great. Now, along with the black plastic hand-held earflaps that allow urban idiots to ignore us halfway, they'll have headmounted monitors and beltmounted CPUs so they can ignore the real world completely. I can just see Castro Street at lunch hour (Mountain View's Castro Street—restaurant central—not the more famous SF one!).

FamilyPC

You won't see citations from *FamilyPC* beyond September 2001. According to the editor's note in that issue, the name is changing to *Family Internet Life*. (According to one other source, Ziff Davis is shutting down the magazine. I guess I'll find out in a week or two.)

Unfortunately, the change makes sense. *FamilyPC* began as a joint Disney-Ziff venture to bring a family perspective to personal computing issues. For a few years, it did that quite well. More recently, it's devolved into an odd mix of pointless Internet lists (choose a topic, find half a dozen sites, write a paragraph about each one: presto! instant article!), technophilic editorial attitudes, and—once in a while—well-done commentary. I commented on the decline of *FamilyPC* in the final "Crawford's Corner" (*Library Hi Tech News* 17:10, p. 27).

"Our focus has shifted from the PC to family life in the Digital Age." There will be a new column called "Raising Digital Kids." If there's a key to the approach, it's in the sentence that follows: "Now you can rely on *Family Internet Life* to help you cope with—and embrace—life in the Internet Age." "*And embrace*" is the key here: *FamilyPC* consistently seems to favor the Web over real life, going so far as to rec-

ommend in its final issues that parents shop for their kids' back-to-school clothes on the Web. I'm not a parent, but somehow that seems odd.

I've never subscribed to ZD's existing Internet-oriented magazine, *Yahoo! Internet Life*, because the whole concept of magazines to tout Internet sites seems strange. My subscription to *FamilyPC* has two years to run. We shall see.

Wireless Connectivity

Let the free market loose and, in a year or two, we'll have high-speed wireless connectivity everywhere, so cheap you won't even think about using it. Ubiquitous Web: Proper Pundits assure us it's on its way.

There has only been one service that offered wireless Internet access at speeds that could even charitably be called high: Ricochet from Metricom. It's been written up so glowingly so often that one could only assume it's used by millions of people.

A news note in the final issue of *The Industry Standard* provides a reality check. "A month after filing for bankruptcy, Metricom shut down Ricochet, its wireless Internet-access network, and laid off 282 employees. The company, which had little more than 50,000 subscribers in 17 markets, is placing its assets on the auction block."

If you subtracted technology writers and pundits from that 50,000, how many "real" subscribers would be left? (It's the same question I have about RCA/Gemstar ebook appliances, even though total sales are still so pitiful they won't release numbers: take away all the bandwagon-jumping libraries and librarians, take away writers, and how many "real people" have purchased one?)

Thinking About "The Daily Me"

It's not a new concept and it's one I've attacked in years past: *The Daily Me*, a "newspaper" that contains only those items you know you're interested in. Various pundits have pushed the idea for years. You won't be surprised to hear that MIT's Media Lab students had a version called fishWrap in 1992.

I disliked the idea because it was pushed as *the* daily newspaper for today's busy individuals—and I think that, in that role, *The Daily Me* is a solipsistic nightmare. As an addition to a broader daily newspaper, individualized news sources have more positive potential—but they're not easy to do and not without problems. If you've set up a MyExcite or other "personalized" Web page, you may be aware how unsatisfactory they generally are.

J.D. Lasica, senior columnist at the *Online Journalism Review*, did a three-part piece on *The Daily Me* on August 2 (ojr.usc.edu, in J.D.'s Web Watch). He sees mostly potential, little danger. I sense that he doesn't regard the contextual properties of a newspaper as very significant, but that could be misreading. His vision of *The Daily Me* involves professional writers and editors in an odd "conversation" with readers. And, unsurprisingly, he sees no particular boundaries between journalism and sales: Along with your "news" you'll get lots of opportunities to buy the stuff being written about. I see a conflict there; Lasica doesn't seem to.

Lasica's trio offers some interesting perspectives and a sampling of what's currently happening. The vision that Lasica finds most interesting is one that still bothers me, both for societal and personal reasons. But this may be another case where you should read the articles and make up your own mind.

Rick Stengel offers a snide commentary on the "old media" (or "Mandarin Media") and their fear of the Daily Me in an August 31 column at www.time.com. Astonishingly, he believes that Web surfing "offers genuine serendipity" rather than the "contrived serendipity" that you get from the editorial judgment involved in packaging a daily paper. But the Daily Me isn't about surfing: it's about saying "*this is all I care about*, don't bother me with anything else." Readers *can't* "evaluate for themselves what was important that day" from among all the raw material, not unless we spend 48 hours out of every 24 winnowing through possible sources. (That's an understatement. Any good newspaper certainly spends more than 48 person-hours a day putting together the desired set of news and commentary.) In ridiculing the packaging role of newspapers and other publications, Stengel overlooks reality in favor of the snappy tone that represents *Time* at its worst.

Broadband Gets Narrower

Whoops, there goes another broadband SP. Covad's gone, Excite@Home is in trouble, but the Industry Analysts still seem to believe we're all on our way to broadband. Along that route, a *MediaLife* report from August 27 offers a curious data point. Nielsen/NetRatings, your classic disinterested party, surveyed users who had moved from dial-up Internet access to DSL or cable access some time between January 2001 and July. The headline and pull quote both stress how much more time people spend on the Net with broadband: "The folks that jumped from low speed to high speed are spending more

time online, going to more sites, and consuming more content."

My first reaction is that any other finding would be bizarre. If you spend more than twice as much each month on Internet access and put up with the hassles of getting connected, you must really love to spend time on the Web. Why would you spend more money to make *less* use of the Internet?

But look at the actual numbers (if we assume that the survey is broad enough to be meaningful) and it gets strange. These users averaged 12 hours and 22 minutes online during January (with dial-up)—and 15 hours 14 minutes during July. That's half an hour a day. They went from 22 sessions to 27.5 sessions. Yes, they used the Internet more—but not that much more.

A Nielsen person says that further growth needs better content: "The content killer ap, the I-want-my-MTV-style killer ap, has not surfaced." His candidates? Napster successors, interactive television and gaming. My views on the "killer ap" quality of interactive TV are no particular secret. I will refrain from further comment.

Another August 27 report, this time from the *Washington Post's* Washtech.com, notes that the broadband market is cooling off. "If broadband service keeps growing at its current pace, it may take another seven years before it reaches half of all U.S. households with Internet service—four years later than had been predicted by industry officials." That's a lot less than half of *all* U.S. households, to be sure—and assumes that the rate of growth won't continue to slow.

AT&T Broadband added 250,000 cable Internet customers in the last quarter of 2000 but only 131,000 in the second quarter of 2001. Verizon went from 190,000 to 120,000. Industry people offer various excuses, of course—and one observer notes that raising monthly fees from \$40 to \$50 isn't necessarily an ideal way to expand a market. That, as *Computer Shopper* for September 2001 notes, is just what EarthLink and SBC have done for their DSL service. That same report offers another Wonderful World of Analysts commentary, this one from IDC's Brad Baldwin. "We don't see a \$10 increase as having an effect on the rollout of DSL. For many subscribers, DSL still represents a great value." Sure enough, IDC "expects the number of worldwide DSL subscribers to jump from 4.5 million in 2000 to 66.4 million by the end of 2004."

See also Following Up, where I cite Bill Ma-chrone's admission that he might have been partly wrong in his assault on those who avoid broadband.

Knowing the Source

“Study: Broadband could add \$500 billion to economy.” That’s the headline on a Reuters article posted July 17. If half of us had broadband, “consumers would benefit from home shopping, entertainment, traditional telephone and health care services, as well as reduced commuting,” to the tune of \$200 billion added to the economy—\$400 billion if we all have broadband. More ways to buy stuff faster: the American dream. And, of course, higher consumer demand means that computer, software, and entertainment producers will add another \$50 to \$100 billion per year.

It’s “transformative,” don’cha know—and Billy Tauzin wants to help it along by freeing local telephone carriers from that mean requirement to allow local competition before they can offer long distance. Competition? That’s un-American!

Full credit to Reuters for editing the story appropriately, however. The lead sentence cites the ambitious claim for huge additions to the economy—and notes that the study was “funded by Verizon Communications.” Which, incidentally, is one of those poor little telcos with wonderful customer service that really want to bring us all this broadband, if only they didn’t have to open networks to rivals. Knowing the source surely helps to evaluate the study in this case.

:CueCat: RIP (and Good Riddance)

It’s been a while since I wrote about :CueCat, a quintessential Stupid Digital Gadget—a solution for which there was no problem. Digital Convergence has never failed to tout the inevitability of this pointless device. Says Peter A. Eschbach, VP for corporate communications: “I’m confident—ultimately, down the road—you’ll still see cues in newspapers. I think the convergence between online media and traditional print is inevitable. It’s going to happen.” (As a reminder: :CueCat is a rodent-shaped device that you plug into a computer and use to scan a bar code in a newspaper or magazine—while you’re sitting at your computer connected to the Internet. It reads the bar code and connects you to a site that offers...well, whatever the advertiser wants to offer. In other words, :CueCat offers a fast way to get more advertising if you happen to read your magazines at the computer.)

Two September 2001 newspaper stories suggest that :CueCat is dying or entirely dead. A September 6 story on www.dallasnews.com notes that Belo has abandoned the use of CueCat codes (that newspaper

and most other sources long-since abandoned the cutesy colon). Belo invested close to \$40 million in Digital Convergence—and owns the *Dallas Morning News* and two other major dailies. It has dropped the codes from all three and the equivalent TV technology from Belo’s Dallas TV station.

“Belo declined to say how many people were using the technology...but the number of users did not meet internal benchmarks.” Belo also wrote off its entire investment in Digital Convergence. Amazingly enough, the newspaper found, “readers...preferred to go to the newspapers’...Web sites and search for what they wanted.” What a shocker.

The second piece is harder to pin down, as it comes from web.star-telegram.com with no indication of where the *Star-Telegram* appears. Internal evidence strongly suggests Dallas and one of those rare big-city newspaper competitions. The piece, “Belo’s Internet venture was costly lesson,” notes the facts of the situation and continues to discuss some ethical issues.

Belo’s newspapers ran a *lot* of news coverage on :CueCat, all of it favorable. Critical comments apparently didn’t appear. The Dallas TV station ran a “news” report on the device *every night for a week*, with anchors urging viewers to give it a try. The *Morning News* ran three long stories, one at the top of a Sunday front page. “One tip-off about the *Morning News* reports [on :CueCat]. Two of the stories carried no byline, meaning the writer didn’t want his name on it.” As a Pulitzer-prize winning former journalist noted, “That says volumes.”

Say Goodbye to eMarker

Sony’s idea wasn’t as grotesque as :CueCat. The eMarker was a \$20 “cigarette lighter-sized gizmo that fits on a key ring” (according to a brief note at Media Life dated September 10). What follows may or may not be correct: “and allows users to press a button and record snippets of unidentified songs on the radio.” The note goes on to say that the eMarker adds a time/date stamp; later, you put it in a computer-attached dock and the eMarker Web site tells you what the song was. I didn’t think any actual audio recording took place—just enough information to identify frequency (somehow) and date/time.

Sony sold 40,000 eMarkers. The revenue model was online advertising on the Web site and commissions from the CDs people purchased. It didn’t work out. Sony pulled the plug.

In some ways, eMarker made sense. Don’t you occasionally hear songs that sound good and don’t recognize the artist or the title? (It was *years* before I realized that one haunting radio single was “Night

Shift” by the Commodores, for example.) But the whole contraption was probably too geeky in a society that isn’t really in love with gadgets.

Press Watch I: Articles Worth Reading

Helft, Miguel, “The ugly end of the space bubble,” *The Industry Standard* 4:31 (August 20, 2001), pp. 39-46.

I suppose this is a fringe story for *Cites & Insights*, but it’s worth including as the last “Press Watch I” citation from *The Industry Standard*—barring new ownership and revived publication, that is. The story is about the madness in San Francisco’s office space rental market last year—and the dismal results of that madness when the bubble burst. It’s well written (as you’d expect). It includes the following parenthetical note:

(Standard Int’l Media, parent of *The Standard*, was among the companies that rented considerably more space than it ultimately needed.)

Sadly for the magazine, that space wasn’t rented on a short-term basis; it was leased, with \$60 million in obligations—probably the factor that assured the ensuing bankruptcy.

Zobel, Cheryl, “Zines in public libraries: considerations & suggestions,” most recently updated 2/17/99, slisweb.lis.wisc.edu/~czobel/

This must have been linked from a library Weblog. It’s a little rough here and there, but it offers a good brief summary of zines and argues that most libraries should collect some of them. Worth reading and considering—and it reminds me of youthful days as a science fiction fan. While I never attended a convention (oddly enough), I certainly learned a little about fanzines—and this paper suggests that zines grew out of fanzines, which were (and still are) a mainstay of science fiction fandom.

After reading Zobel’s paper, I wonder whether it’s reasonable to call *Cites & Insights* a zine. It’s too personal to be a “newsletter”—but then, so are hundreds of other newsletters. I’m not exactly a radical element or disenfranchised; I’m about as mainstream as they come. Hmm. Suggestions? (This has nothing to do with the paper itself—except to indicate that I read it and thought about it.)

Spector, Lincoln, “The PC at 20,” *PC World* 19:8 (August 2001), pp. 133-7.

This commentary on the road from the first IBM PC (1981) to today is well written if far too short to do the subject justice. It’s worth reading for what it does include. If you’re a “newcomer” to the field (e.g., anyone who never saw a CP/M box or can’t imagine a PC with no hard disk) you may find some surprises.

Tynan, Daniel, “A cyberchondriac’s story,” *FamilyPC* 8:9 (September 2001), p. 30.

It’s not worth seeking out the magazine for this one page, but you might enjoy it. Tynan discusses his brief foray into medical-advice Web sites and how his “feeling a little tired and run down” turned into any number of possible diseases.

More to the point, when his four-year-old had a mysterious rash on his knee with raised red lesions and an itch, he went to all the right places—but maybe not for laymen. MedlinePlus showed him 1,589 hits; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offered 1,339 online federal reports; Intellihealth suggested some possibilities. He decided to try the Mayo Clinic. “After a brief, disorienting detour at www.mayo.com, home of Hellmann’s Mayonnaise, I found MayoClinic.com.” It suggested three top possibilities: athlete’s foot, jock itch and ringworm.

Meanwhile, his wife grabbed a medical encyclopedia—a book—and checked with the family’s pediatrician. Ringworm. Time elapsed: fifteen minutes.

“I did figure out why I felt so tired. My cyberchondria was compounded by a case of sophomorititis—a syndrome common to second-year medical students who become ill after reading too much about diseases. I felt better already.”

The article’s teaser offers a lesson that *FamilyPC* should consider more often: “When this dad uses online medical sites to diagnose his family’s ailments, the only cure is to turn off the computer.” Sacrilege, but there it is.

A *Salon* Quartet

“Interview with Salon.com’s David Talbot,” JournalismJobs.com, June 2001.

This interview may be more revealing for people in the Bay Area than elsewhere. For example, the interviewer suggests—and Talbot (editor-in-chief) agrees—that *Salon* is “in some ways an extension of *Image*, the magazine you revived while at the San Francisco *Examiner*.” That may explain part of my problem with *Salon*. I thought *Image* was as dreadful as most Sunday newspaper magazines—and I’ve always felt that much of *Salon* seemed to be material that wasn’t good enough for the *Examiner*. If you

know how I felt about the *Examiner*, you'd know that's a damning statement.

Talbot engages in the expected undermining of *Slate*: "When you're kept by a patron...you don't have to duke it out... In some ways that's a blessing... In other ways I think it actually takes some of the lights out of your publication because you don't have to be as enterprising and as scrappy." He agrees that *Salon* is more tabloidish than *Slate*—but he calls it a "smart tabloid."

Naturally, Talbot asserts that *Salon* is enormously successful and on the verge of profitability. He also claims that it's a pioneering magazine. Of course, the stock (at \$0.24 a share in June) is "a steal." Throughout the interview, I get nervous when Talbot says he "has enormous respect" for someone—I sense that, as with *Slate*, there's a shiv in that gloved hand.

If you read Andrew Sullivan's stuff, you may not be surprised that Talbot cites Sullivan as one he likes. "I disagree politically with 90 percent of what Andrew writes, but I like his spunkiness and fortitude." By that standard, Matt Drudge should be winning annual Pulitzers.

I find this interview self-serving and a little pathetic—but most assuredly revealing.

Gardner, Eriq, "Online journalism's canary in the coal mine," *Online Journalism Review* (ojr.usc.edu), August 15, 2001.

This commentary discusses the state of *Salon*'s finances and the odd press coverage that the company receives. Some investors pumped \$2.5 million into *Salon.com*. Commentators jumped all over the story, some positively, some negatively. But, well...

Keep in mind here that we're not just talking about a company's prospects. No, by the nature of the discussion...it's clear we're discussing the entire future of online media.

Unfortunately, I think Gardner is right. "Salon has come to be perceived as signifying something much more than itself."

Layne, Ken, "The problem with *Salon* isn't money," *Online Journalism Review*, August 17, 2001.

I have to agree with the subhead of this story: "If *Salon* is so great, why isn't it good?" He notes the financial situation: somehow, *Salon* managed to go through \$70 million. He notes that Talbot has been predicting near-term profitability for some time now. He notes that most coverage really doesn't bear down on *Salon*'s peculiar finances.

But that's not Layne's theme. His theme is the one I would tend to raise. "Dig up any old piece on

Salon and you'll see the same tired adjectives: 'respected,' 'provocative,' 'elegant,' 'high quality,' 'innovative' and 'literary.' My complaint is that *Salon* is none of those things. The site routinely praised for its 'great writing' has very little writing you could even call 'good.'"

There's the rub. Most of *Salon* is mediocre writing. Much of it is simple rehash of other journalism. "On its best days, *Salon* offers something comparable to the alternative weeklies you pick up at the liquor store, for free, if your hands aren't full." *Salon* has a few decent writers—but the amount and quality of writing seem to decline by the week.

"Finally, *Salon*'s insistence that it's *the* voice of independent Web journalism is just bogus. The closing of *Salon.com* will mean nothing more than the closing of *Salon.com*." There's more here, and it's a valuable balance to the absurdly generous press that *Salon* typically receives.

Talbot, David, "What *Salon* did last summer," *Salon*, downloaded September 10, 2001.

The heading on this cluster was "A *Salon* trio"—but Ken Layne's Weblog pointed me to this remarkable editorial. It belongs in Press Watch II by any reasonable reckoning. Read it after you consider the three pieces above, and you see just how self-righteous David Talbot really is. Take the following paragraph, quoted in its entirety:

Salon is the last of the Web independents... There is nothing else like *Salon*, a fearless and uncompromised news crusader reaching a mass audience on a daily basis. There are no other media outlets willing and able to cover the Bush administration, the Media Borg, the drug war and countless other subjects with the same passionate honesty.

Can I hear "Amen?" The editorial is, primarily, a pitch for *Salon Premium*, the subscription version. This comes while *Salon*'s busy shedding the last of its name writers. Garrison Keillor: gone. Camille Paglia: gone (and good riddance). Still there: the grotesque David Horowitz and the almost equally grotesque (if on the left) Joe Conason.

See Ken Layne's comments above—but with the savor of Talbot's absurd claims.

Sloan, Bernie, "Ready for reference: academic libraries offer live Web-based reference: evaluating system use." July 11, 2001. www.lis.uiuc.edu/~b-sloan/r4r.final.htm

Eight academic libraries in Illinois ran a pilot 24-hour live reference service in the first half of 2001. This report notes a variety of statistics on the reference sessions, includes the actual questions asked during the two busiest weeks of the pilot project,

and offers “general findings” that raise some interesting questions.

Pilot projects may not get the level of use you’d expect in real use; certainly a total of 613 user-initiated over five months on eight campuses doesn’t seem like much. (There’s no report of cost per transaction. That may be just as well.) The recorded questions are somewhat appalling and certainly argue for librarian-aided reference. If students and scholars spell this badly, they *need* a forgiving human at the other end of the line.

Initial findings suggest (as you might expect) that 20-hour reference service would be good enough: there’s no real traffic between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.. Saturday and Sunday register much lighter than other days—but those may be the days that email reference is most valuable, and 14% of the sessions were on those two days.

Bernie Sloan doesn’t pull any punches in his evaluation. Worth reading.

Steers, Kirk, “Do-it-yourself dream machines,” and Miastkowski, Stan, “Build your own PC,” *PC World* 19:9 (September 2001), pp. 74-92.

Does upgrading make sense in a world of underpriced PCs (and a world where most applications run just fine on CPUs *one-fifth* the speed of today’s top units)? Maybe, maybe not. These articles consider when upgrades are plausible, offer tips on doing specific upgrades, and discuss rolling your own. I still wouldn’t touch that final option, but I may be too cautious. If you’re interested in upgrades or DIY computers, both articles are well done.

Gowan, Michael, and Scott Spanbauer, “Find everything faster,” *PC World* 19:9 (September 2001), pp. 109-16.

It’s sometimes useful to see Web searching from a non-library perspective, and this article—largely a comparative review of a dozen “big-name” sites—offers a fairly good example. The single five-star rating and Best Buy is just as it should be: Google. The only other “excellent” relevance score goes to Yahoo!—which, as they point out, uses Google for searching. (The article *does* mention that Yahoo! searching doesn’t get *all* of Google, but the summary table glosses over that fact.) Yahoo! earns four stars. Trailing Google more closely with 4.5 stars are Fast (www.alltheweb.com) and Northern Light, while Lycos ties Yahoo. Lowest-rated are Ask Jeeves, LookSmart, and MetaCrawler.

Nathan, Stephen F., “Roxio Toast 5 Titanium,” and Starrett, Bob, “Roxio Easy CD Creator 5

Platinum Edition,” *EMedia* 14:8 (August 2001), pp. 42-7.

This pair of articles could appear in “Review Watch” but these products are both from one company and don’t compete in any real sense. “Toast” is for Macs, “Easy CD Creator” is for Windows: that’s the story, and Roxio is sticking to it. Macophile Nathans and Windows-user Starrett provide detailed discussions and reviews of these products. Both reviews offer more insight than you’re likely to find in most product reviews. The most obvious difference between the two is that Toast now includes significant DVD support, still lacking in Easy CD Creator. Otherwise, whichever your platform, the \$99 Roxio product may be a logical upgrade from the software (also typically Roxio’s) that came with your drive.

Mann, Charles C., “Taming the Web,” *Technology Review* (September 2001).

While I recommend this article as a useful balance to some nonsensical myths about the Internet, I do so with reservations. On one hand, Mann does a good job of undermining three key myths: The Net is too international to control; the Net is too interconnected to control; and the Net is too full of hackers to control. His arguments deserve reading and thinking about, even if you finally disagree.

My reservations come from statements that are probably natural enough, given that this is MIT’s *Technology Review*. Early on, we get a sweeping assertion that Mann pretty clearly believes: “Soon, it is widely believed, the Internet will become a universal library/ movie theater/ voting booth/ shopping mall/ newspaper/ museum/ concert hall—a 21st-century version of the ancient Greek agora, the commons where all the commercial, political and cultural functions of a democratic society took place.”

A sentence near the end echoes this assertion and makes it clear that Mann buys into it: “We are in the beginning stages of the transfer of most of society’s functions—working, socializing, shopping, acting politically—from what Internet denizens jokingly call ‘meatspace’ into the virtual domain.”

I suppose consistency is a virtue. Mann and others of his ilk will, apparently, always adhere to that simplistic Negropontian future. Being digital: it’s the future, whether you like it or not. Why? Because—well, because we say so. Any evidence to the contrary may safely be ignored.

Wilson, Kathy, “Sex and the open stacks,” *Salon* 8/29/2001 (www.salon.com).

We must protect the children, no matter the consequences. So where were “we” in 1982, when 13-year-old Kathy Wilson was browsing the fiction

shelves of her suburban public library and spotted Anaïñ Nin's *Delta of Venus*?

Not the Internet, to be sure; not child pornography (although the book involves "cheeky school-girls"), but still "beautiful smut." She checked the book out, along with another Nin doozy, and went to the beach next day, "where I and my friends—both male and female—sat on the sand and read passages aloud to each other." The effect, as she describes it, was to make them "feel less like sex-starved teenagers and more like the inheritors of a literary legacy."

She doesn't describe ensuing orgies, a lifelong addiction to pornography, or any other long-term damage from this shocking fiction. She does note that Nin finally "made me care about art, literature and history."

It's a fine, strong story. Today's "it's all for the children" protectors would presumably make sure that no innocent 13 year old was degraded by that nasty old woman—or maybe, since it's only words, it would pass under the censors' radar.

Doctorow, Cory, "Metacrap: putting the torch to seven straw-men of the meta-utopia," www.well.com/~doctorow/metacrap.htm

I've noted before that I consider Tim Berners-Lee's notion of a Semantic Web—one where meta-data allows the entire Web to function as one huge database—not only improbable but also somewhat dystopian. Cory Doctorow, a science fiction writer and technophile (among other things), takes a brief but pointed jab at the "improbable" part in this paper. He notes and briefly annotates "seven insurmountable obstacles between the world as we know it and meta-utopia": People lie, people are lazy, people are stupid, "mission: impossible—know thyself," schemas aren't neutral, metrics influence results (the quantum phenomenon writ large), and there's more than one way to describe anything.

If you think the Semantic Web makes sense, take a quick look. If not, it's still a fast and charming read (and less cynical than you might expect). There's even some consumer advice, in the "people are stupid" section (noting that people don't bother to check spelling even when there's money on the line): "You can almost always get a bargain on a Plam Pilot at eBay." That spelling is intentional. He notes that, last time he checked, there were *nine* listings for "Plam Pilots" for sale—and, of course, they don't get the bids of people smart enough to spell P.a.l.m. in that order.

A Copyright Cluster

The copyright situation has become much more difficult in the past few years, particularly since the passage of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Everything here could be in "Press Watch I," but this diverse group deserves separate consideration. Other pieces of the puzzle appear in "Ebook Watch" (in some issues) and elsewhere.

Background and Purpose

Loren, Lydia Pallas, "The purpose of copyright," *Open Spaces Quarterly* 2:1 (2001). (www.openspaces.com/article-v2n1-loren.php)

Lydia Pallas Loren is an Associate Professor of Law at Lewis & Clark College's Northwestern School of Law. This nine-page article discusses the historic purpose of U.S. copyright and the imbalance of current protection and use.

I believe in intellectual property. I also believe that current U.S. law and practice substantially overbalances the rights of corporations and publishers over freedom of speech, the rights of users and even the rights of actual creators. I find this article compelling because it's *not* an argument to abandon copyright; instead, it's a nuanced discussion of the need for balance. Well worth reading, preferably in the print quarterly (which I intend to look for!). Consider the closing phrases of the final sentence:

We should not let a fundamental misconception of the primary purpose of copyright law in this country shape our rules to the detriment of the true constitutional aim of the limited statutory monopoly of the copyright: to promote the progress of knowledge and learning.

Templeton, Brad, "10 big myths about copyright explained," downloaded 9/4/2001 from www.templetons.com/brad/copymyths.html

Don't expect in-depth legal advice, but Brad Templeton offers a brief, charming, pointed discussion undermining typical misconceptions regarding current U.S. copyright—particularly as it relates to Internet postings and email. Beginning with "If it doesn't have a copyright notice, it's not copyrighted" and ending with "They e-mailed me a copy, so I can post it," he offers plainspoken comments that should help the average Internet user. I would hope that most *Cites & Insights* readers would know most of what's in Templeton's article, but that might be too optimistic.

Technically, the quote above isn't the end of it. He goes on to Myth #11: "So I can't ever reproduce

anything?”—a discussion of the realities of copyright in action that properly advises people to read up on fair use before claiming that exemption.

If you find this to be as good an informal introduction to online copywrongs as I do, you might link to it. His only real requirement is that you *not* send email asking permission to link. I suspect Templeton receives more email than he can cope with.

Scott, Brendan, “Copyright in a frictionless world: toward a rhetoric of responsibility,” *First Monday* 6:9 (September 2001), 46 p. (www.firstmonday.org)

Yes, it’s 46 single-spaced pages—but that’s with fairly large type, and the last 14 pages are acknowledgments and notes. Scott is a lawyer in Sydney. This paper “reviews the history and application of copyright and concludes that, although promoted as being in the interests of authors, it is designed in such a way as to be primarily a right which benefits distributors and publishers.” He goes on to discuss the implications of the so-called “frictionless world” and to suggest that new copyright-related laws damage copyright: they don’t really add much to the illegality of infringement, but they do increase consumer cynicism about intellectual property. He goes on to suggest three possible principles of responsibility: no hoarding; copyright is not censorship; no charge without value.

While I may be less gung-ho than Scott about the “frictionless world,” this article offers a readable historic discussion and bears down on a set of issues that need further consideration. Much as I believe in intellectual property, it’s hard *not* to conclude that recent laws (particularly DMCA and related acts) benefit *only* the publishers and distributors.

You can’t skim this one in five minutes (at least I couldn’t), but it’s worth your time.

DMCA and Beyond

American Libraries 32:8 (September 2001) has an interesting “News Fronts” piece on the Dmitry Sklyarov arrest, Rick Boucher’s proposed amendment to “restore the classic balance [of fair-use rights],” and reactions. I was taken with Pat Schroeder’s hardnosed comments and Orrin Hatch’s celebration of the Sklyarov arrest as indicating that the DMCA “is starting to bear fruit.” I’m not sure just when the Association of American Publishers joined the MPAA and RIAA in assuming that their customers are all thieves and must be treated as such, but that seems to be what’s happening.

Guha, Amita, “Fingered by the movie cops,” *Salon* (www.salon.com), August 23, 2001.

This article recounts a personal experience, beginning when the author and her boyfriend get back from a long weekend—and find that their Internet service doesn’t work. Why? Because the MPAA had accused them of distributing copyrighted material and, under DMCA provisions, the ISP had little choice but to disable the account.

The accusation was false—but under DMCA, you’re guilty until proven innocent. If the ISP hadn’t cut them off immediately, it could be considered jointly liable. How did the MPAA find out that a movie had been uploaded? Using software that scans the net in various ways to look for “unauthorized” uploads. You could call it spying.

The MPAA people said that, with the boyfriend’s IP address, they could find out exactly what had happened in this particular case (but in general, their methods are proprietary). And, of course, one MPAA person had the classic comment when Guha said she’d need her boyfriend’s permission before revealing his IP address: “If my friend were truly innocent, he wouldn’t have anything to hide.” Where have we heard that line before?

What does the MPAA think is the moral to this story? “Piracy is illegal and no one should trade movies without permission.” Snooping, guilty-until-proven-innocent, penalty without any explanation or right of recourse: that’s just business. Or, in the case of DMCA, the natural consequences of bad law.

Shankland, Stephen, “Lawyer Lessig raps new copyright laws,” *Cnet news* (news.cnet.com), posted 8/29/2001.

This brief report emanates from LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, where “Stanford Law School professor and technology pundit” Lawrence Lessig keynoted. “The desire of entrenched commercial interests to control information is crushing the spirit of innovation that allowed the Internet to blossom.” He was addressing open-source advocates but it’s a message that goes further (and one Lessig raised in columns in *The Industry Standard*).

“The Digital Millennium Copyright Act has joined patent and copyright law as a tool to hobble the lively development environment that was behind the success of the Internet and Silicon Valley.” He calls for “a middle ground that balances copyright and intellectual property interests with freedom.” And, strikingly, he assaults programmers for wishing to leave politics to the politicians and believing that they can ignore what goes on in Washington.

Cave, Damien, “Copywrong?” *Salon*, 8/31/2001.

The U.S. Copyright Office recently released a study on the effects of the DMCA. I haven’t read it,

and at 200 pages I probably won't (there are limits!). This is one of several evaluations worth noting. Cave notes that the Copyright Office doesn't call for overhaul of DMCA but does ask for some legislative clarification on temporary copies and the legality of archival copies. "But the report also rejects the argument that offline copyright law should apply to the digital world, calling the analogy 'flawed and unconvincing.'" Apparently, that's the response to whether first-sale doctrine should hold online as it does in the real world and whether backup copies should inherently be legitimate.

This is troubling but not surprising, and suggests that the Copyright Office—while it may be part of the Library of Congress—is viewing issues from a publisher's perspective without the balance needed for good copyright. Astonishingly, the report doesn't see a problem in the anti-circumvention clause that caused the arrest of a Russian programmer and temporarily stifled a university researcher from presenting his findings: "The actual impact on consumers appears to be minimal." The impact on intellectual freedom? That's not our department.

Most of the article is feedback from seven experts. Siva Vaidhyanathan, author of *Copyrights and Copywrongs*, testified at the hearings leading up to the reports and hoped that the Copyright Office "would act more as an agent for the Library of Congress" and wished that it "had taken more seriously the concerns of librarians, archivists and researchers." "It's no secret that some big publishers have been waging commercial and legislative war on libraries for some years now..."

Eben Moglen, counsel to the Free Software Foundation, notes the report "carefully summarizes the public debate it solicited, while equally carefully failing to respond to any of the real questions that debate raised." He notes, "the report constitutes a smack in the face to all the professional librarians' associations in the United States." Moglen burdens the Library of Congress with the findings of the Copyright Office: "This report now positions the 'Library of Congress' not as a library like other libraries, but as a shill for the 'campaign contributors' whose bribery of legislators brought about the disgraceful statute with which this 'Library,' alone among libraries, cannot find anything wrong."

Cary Sherman, counsel for RIAA, thinks it's wonderful: "The conclusions of the Copyright Office appear consistent with the general views we've expressed repeatedly over the years." So does Rich Taylor of the MPAA: "It looks to us like the copyright office has come to a proper conclusion." In other words, "we're free to stomp out first-sale just as fast as we can. Whoopee!"

Fred Weingarten of ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy isn't quite as happy. "They rejected the points we were trying to make. They expressed sympathy for our cause, but they still don't really get what technology is doing. They mention that we—and others—wanted an expansion of the first sale doctrine, but that's precisely not what we want. We wanted to preserve the doctrine for digital works, not expand it." He goes on in a brief, eloquent statement.

Finally, Fred von Lohmann of the Electronic Frontier Foundation was disappointed. "The copyright industries have armies of lobbyists to defend their side of the copyright balance in Washington; the Copyright Office, as an arm of Congress, should be defending the public's side of the balance." He goes on to catalog the extremes caused by the DMCA: silencing a magazine publisher, threatening computer science professors, jailing programmers—and, on the horizon, using digital rights management technologies to undermine first sale rights. "How much worse does it have to get before the Copyright Office recognizes that the DMCA has fundamentally, and unwisely, unbalanced the Copyright Act?"

What's my considered opinion on all this? You've been getting bits and pieces all along. For a full-blown essay...wait a few months and, probably, look to *American Libraries*. But then, I'm no lawyer—and I believe that fair use represents one strong reason (among many) to keep dealing with physical media such as CDs and print books.

Bergstein, Brian, "eBay cleared in copyright infringement case," *Nando Times* September 6, 2001.

As reported in this AP story, the first chunk may have been taken out of DMCA's hide. Robert Hendrickson sued eBay because users had offered DVDs and videotapes of his 1972 documentary "Manson." Hendrickson claimed the items were pirated. When eBay asked for a sworn written statement to that effect, he refused, saying his general complaints should have been good enough. He then sued eBay for damages under DMCA provisions.

The judge dismissed his request for damages, noting that this was the first case to test whether a Web site has a 'safe harbor' protection if people use that site to sell items that infringe on copyrights. He concluded that eBay is like a "provider of the stalls at a flea market"—unlike some traditional auctioneers, it neither vouches for the items on sale nor has any way to do so. Since eBay does not have the right and ability to control the *offline* copyright violations

that might have taken place, DMCA can't be used to punish eBay.

A small step but a good one.

McCullagh, Declan, "New copyright bill heading to DC" and "Hollywood loves Hollings' bill," *Wired News* September 7 and 11, 2001. (www.wired.com/news)

Both brief stories discuss the Security Systems Standards and Certification Act—SSSCA—which *really* overbalances copyright protection on behalf of publishers. This is a nasty little proposal that would, if passed, make it a civil offense to create or sell "any interactive digital device that does not include and utilize certified security technologies" approved by the U.S. Commerce Department. What's an "interactive digital device"? Any hardware or software capable of "storing, retrieving, processing, performing, transmitting, receiving or copying information in digital form."

If you're looking for sunshine here, there's not much: The act would not be retroactive (they can't come grab the computer that's already on your desk), this is still only a proposed law, and it would take at least a year after passage before the copy-protection requirements would be in place. Otherwise, this is about as bad as it gets.

That's not all. If you distribute copyrighted material that has its security measures disabled or you own a network-attached computer that disables copy protection, you're open to *felony* charges: five years in prison and fines up to \$500,000.

If SSSCA passes, the government is in the position of mandating the *circuitry* of most electronic devices. That's bizarre and more than a little scary. Jessica Litman (a law professor at Wayne State) notes that, beyond being bad copyright policy and bad information policy, "it's terrible science policy."

That's all in the first article. A few days later the Big Boys had their say. Preston Padden of the Walt Disney Company says, "This is an exceedingly moderate and reasonable approach." It might jumpstart the broadband revolution "because entertainment content will create consumer demand. If you're a computer company or if you make hubs and routers or if you're trying to build a broadband network, you want this bill." *Sure* you do.

The poor struggling News Company (20th Century Fox, Fox News, Fox Sports, and a bunch of other Rupert Murdoch outlets) cries that they need help to "stymie what we consider illegal distribution of our product across the Net." We must certainly do all we can to make sure Murdoch and Disney can stay in business—even if it means saddling future PCs and entertainment devices with intrusive cir-

cuitry that will only deter honest people while making them more cynical about intellectual property and the U.S. Government. Mustn't we?

I should note that the Digital Media Association's executive director isn't thrilled. "It's about as egregiously an anti-technology bill, in its draft form, as anything I've ever seen." But Disney's Padden thinks all those companies can get along—particularly since the bill allows them to negotiate behind closed doors, with antitrust exemptions. Lots of hands washing one another.

In general, I'm a skeptic, not a cynic. Sometimes it's hard. When it comes to DMCA and SSSCA, it's nigh on impossible.

Following Up

Corrections, amplifications, apologies, sequels and other direct additions to essays and other topics from the last two issues. (Feedback now appears as a separate section and some "following up" sections expand into separate essays, e.g. "Filtering Follies.")

Dot-com Survivors

That was the title of a lengthy story in *The Industry Standard* for July 9, 2001, noted in the August 2001 "Press Watch I." I thought the piece, which described some apparent successes in Internet retailing, had useful lessons. One of the firms profiled (and mentioned in my notes) was Etera, a company with a patented method for growing small plants that, when transplanted, grow faster than usual. Etera seemed to have a sensible approach to building its business by building Web sites for local nurseries.

Unfortunately (ironically?), the final *Industry Standard* notes that Etera filed for bankruptcy in August and canned its CEO. Sales were up, the business might make sense—but it wasn't yet profitable and investors failed to provide interim funding. As they did at *The Industry Standard*.

...Speaking of *The Industry Standard*

For a few weeks, the www.inside.com Web site yielded a print magazine, [*Inside*], which was produced in association with *The Industry Standard*. Unfortunately, as I noted in a thumbs-down discussion of the magazine (*Cites & Insights* 1:3, pp. 7-8), *TIS* was involved on the production side, not the editorial side. They gave me a free subscription through November 26, 2003; the print magazine lasted for less than half a year. Technically, it was "merged"

with *Brill's Content*, which itself dropped to quarterly publication; my freebie didn't survive that merger.

Inside.com ran a fairly long story on *TIS* dated August 28, 2001. The story suggests that the collapse of the magazine may be due to ongoing disagreements between John Battelle (founder of *The Industry Standard*) and Pat McGovern (chair of International Data Group, IDG, majority owner of *TIS*' parent Standard Media International).

According to the story, J.P. Morgan H & Q was ready to loan Standard Media \$15 million, enough to keep publishing the magazine while looking for a buyer. Supposedly, McGovern wouldn't accept the deal because it undervalued the company and reduced IDG's ownership share. After more discussions and negotiations, IDG's replacement loan offer fell apart, reducing the company's value even more: "not the \$100 million figure in McGovern's mind but something approximating zero."

The rest of the story is more interesting than these numbers suggest. Supposedly, IDG believed it had a magazine in mind and hired Battelle to run it—while Battelle believed he had entered into a venture with IDG based on his own ideas. IDG publishes in 85 countries, with most publications running fairly independently; it does \$3.1 billion in business between all of the "Worlds" (*PC World*, *InfoWorld*, etc.) and other magazines and conferences. Battelle and IDG had ongoing culture clashes.

It's an interesting story (even if some details might be unproven). And if that's why *TIS* is no longer with us, it's even more of a crying shame than simply running out of money.

A later sad note: on September 6, Inside.com's "The Glossies" column begins with a remarkably dismissive and mean-spirited commentary about *The Industry Standard*. It begins "This is really sort of awful to admit, but I don't miss *The Industry Standard*" and goes on to grump about being expected to actually read it. "It got to be a burden. And now the burden has been lifted." Simon Dumenco, the sneering prosemeister offering his opinion, informs us that he doesn't care that he knows less about the information economy because, well, "What good did it do me?" He notes that most magazines waste your time (apparently he knows what constitutes a *good* use of your time) but you know what you're expecting—where "The Standard promised *substance*." He goes on from there in a peculiar ramble. My quick thought:

The Industry Standard delivered a whole hell of a lot more substance than Inside.com ever will. For a "weekly column of magazine industry comment and criticism," Dumenco's work sure does come off as sophomoric idiocy.

Clarifying Geocentricity

A Canadian reader sent a note suggesting a correction for a July 2001 citation from *PC Magazine*. Sloppy as I can be, I checked. The citation was correct—in the *PC Magazine* that I'd received. Was that the same *PC Magazine* a Canadian would receive? Apparently not. The cover date cited wasn't a publication date for *PC Magazine* in the U.S. Of course, you also get different *regional* editions of some magazines, as reference librarians know all too well.

Along slightly similar lines, a reader currently in Peru gently chided me for assuming that "summer" comes in July and August. I've been in Australia and New Zealand in the summertime—January and February—and I'm well aware that seasons reflect location. (Winter vacations can be wonderful as well—and what better time to cross hemispheres?)

I delight in *Cites & Insights*' international readership—but this publication comes from Mountain View, California. Citations are based on issues I receive. Perspectives are limited by my monophone shortcomings and native-Californian viewpoint.

Maybe I should put an explicit "Mountain View, California" label in "The Details" each issue, so that the geocentricity is clear. Incidentally, I agree with Ted Turner: "international" makes a whole lot more sense than "foreign."

Looking SHARP!

Last month, I noted Gary Frost's report on this year's SHARP conference (and failed to provide the deserved **Recommended:** tag). At the time, the meaning of "SHARP" had slipped my aging mind. More than one reader has reminded me that SHARP is the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing. The Website is www.sharpweb.org.

Tasini Redux

There's a fascinating report on the National Writers Union website (www.nwu.org): "Report on pay rates for freelance journalists." The key finding: in real dollars, freelance rates have declined by more than 50 percent since the 1960s. And publishers are now getting more rights for their fewer dollars.

An example of declining rates? *Cosmopolitan* offered \$0.60 a word in 1966 and \$1 a word in 1998—but that means a two-thirds decline in real dollars, given inflation between 1966 and 1998. The study also concludes that staff writers are effectively paid around \$2 a word, factoring in benefits—although, at specific magazines surveyed, the number was closer to \$4. (Staff writers typically turn out fewer words per year than freelancers.)

The study also compared publication *income* on a per-word basis: for example, based on the study's figures, *Discover* magazine brings in \$125 per word (and pays writers \$1 a word). NWU asserts that publications "can afford to pay 15% to 30% of their total revenue to their writers," and that they *do* pay no more than 1% to 2% (possibly excluding publications with fewer than 25,000 readers). In extreme cases, *Good Housekeeping* may bring in as much as \$500 per word—and pays \$1. "If they paid the writers 15% of revenues, freelancers would be getting \$75 a word at these publications." The *New York Times*? They estimate revenue at \$38 a word; normal freelance rates at the paper are \$0.30.

The report asserts that \$1 a word should be a minimum rate for publications—and notes that, even at this rate, most full-time freelance writers would earn no more than \$36,000 to \$48,000 a year, with no fringe benefits.

Partial disclosure: I've never been paid anywhere *close* to \$1 a word. But I'm not a full-time freelance writer and most of the publications I write for have much smaller circulations and much lower revenue.

One controversial aspect of Tasini, for some library commentators, was that ALA and ARL filed court briefs in the case on behalf of the freelance writers, while SLA filed a brief on behalf of the publishers. I believe that ALA and ARL took the right course and made difficult, sophisticated decisions.

How sophisticated? Another case currently under appeal offers one clue. In this case, a court has ruled that the National Geographic Society violated photographers' copyrights through creating *The Complete National Geographic* CD-ROM/DVD-ROM set. Both ALA and ARL have filed briefs as part of the appeal—on behalf of the National Geographic Society, not the photographers. Does this mean that librarians only care about words, not pictures? Not really. The CD-ROM set is *precisely* equivalent to a microfilmed copy of a newspaper or magazine. It's the same articles and pictures, in the same context (including pagination, advertising, issue covers—everything), in a different medium. The set doesn't separate out individual articles (if there are ad pages within an article in the original magazine, the same ad pages are within the same article in the CD-ROM). The set doesn't combine individual articles with related articles from other publications, as is the case in the aggregated full-text databases at issue in Tasini. And, frankly, if the photographers looked at the quality of photographic reproduction, they should realize that the CD-ROM set couldn't jeopardize their ability to resell rights to transparencies. The photos are striking but certainly nowhere near print quality. The CD-ROM set is a seriously flawed

reproduction of the magazine archive, and that's about it. (If you haven't used the set, don't assume that full-text searching adds value. The set consists of heavily-compressed scanned images. There's no full-text index and you can't find a word within an article. The overall index does support Boolean operators, but so would a comparable index to the print magazine, and nobody's ever suggested that building an index constitutes copyright infringement. For that matter, the index *is* also an index to the print magazine, since results appear as issue dates and pages.)

Could ALA and ARL be right in both cases? With full awareness that it's even more important that a freelance photographer be able to license the same image repeatedly, I believe they are.

Bill Machrone's Broadband Pitch

Last month, I laid into Bill Machrone for his column "Missing the boat on broadband" (*PC Magazine* 20:14), which took some of us to task for not getting broadband as soon as it's available. Apparently I wasn't the only one who found his arguments unconvincing. His September 25, 2001 column is titled "Wrong about broadband?" and discusses some of the feedback. More than a hundred readers "were quick to disabuse me of my erroneous assumptions, with lengthy, well-considered letters."

Has Machrone changed his mind? Partly: notice the question mark at the end of the column title. He backs down—a little—on issues of cost and provider quality, but offers a half-hearted comment on content. "We all have different definitions of Life's Burning Questions; some of us find answers online, some don't." But then there's the fourth point: people don't need broadband at home because they have it at work. Ah, but remember that *PC Magazine* these days is the *Businessman's Friend*—the same issue has a review of filtering software so that managers can keep those grubby employees from getting at news or health information when they should be developing RSI. "I won't claim that I've never made a personal call or bought a book online while at work, but people who abuse the privilege are just going to screw it up for the rest of us." Funny—he offers no indication that the letter-writers were "abusing the privilege." It takes me the equivalent of one coffee break a day to check the Web sites I need to check (I never take coffee breaks away from my desk and I don't smoke, the most common reason for frequent work breaks since the building's entirely non-smoking). Seems to me that *PC Magazine*, like most other ZD outlets, has been quick to tout the wonders of MP3 players and file-sharing software—

but I guess “stealing bandwidth” from an employer during a coffee break is much worse than “borrowing” intellectual property.

Machrone does get one point right: until prices for broadband drop (they’re *rising* right now), service improves, and content becomes more compelling for more people, most people who can get broadband won’t bother.

Feedback: Your Insights

Webvan and Web bugs

My Webvan essay two months ago elicited comments from more than one reader. Sue Kamm, “your friendly CyberGoddess and ALA Council-at-Large,” writes (in part):

I, too, was a loyal HomeGrocer/Webvan customer. I generally ordered from them twice a month or so, and my orders were large enough (\$75 and over) to get free delivery.

What I liked about them:

- (1) They carried most of the products I buy regularly...
- (2) Through their partnership with PetSmart, I was able to buy large sizes of cat food and cat litter. (I could probably get the same quantities at a brick-and-mortar store, but then I’d have to schlep the packages into my apartment. Which brings me to)
- (3) Not only home delivery, but their drivers brought the merchandise into my apartment and put it in my kitchen.
- (4) My local grocer doesn’t carry the wonderful cut-up vegetables Webvan had.
- (5) They delivered either during the time window they specified or earlier.

Sure, there were some items my supermarket carries that Webvan didn’t... I’d usually have to make a shopping run when I ran out of things between deliveries.

I’m neither homebound nor the parent of a small child—but I am a working librarian and baseball fan, and frequently don’t have time to go to the store during long homestands...

Sue goes on to note a local delivery company (not really online) that she might try. I hope it works out—but I imagine she’ll need to pay extra for delivery. That’s the way it should work. Some observers suggest that the natural limit to retail online is roughly 10% to 20% of the overall marketplace—

because that’s the penetration of catalog/mail order/phone shopping, and online primarily competes with those “non-store” options.

Harry M. Kriz of Virginia Tech writes with some cogent expansions on my essay. In part, he writes:

You mention the analyst who said just because there are problems with the offline experience everybody thought people would flock to online. This reminds me of one of the slides I use labeled “The Principle of the Imperfect Alternative.” ... This describes the belief that if something is imperfect we should switch to something else without the slightest thought as to whether that something else is less than perfect. (Pretty sure I read that in a Thomas Sowell essay.)...

[Kriz notes cases in which librarians would switch between dictionary and divided card catalogs as professionals discovered the drawbacks of one or the other.]

Anyway, Thomas Sowell writes frequently about so-called ‘problems’ for which there are no solutions, meaning, of course, that they are not problems at all because problems do have solutions. Most things in life don’t have solutions and are not problems. Instead they are conditions we’d like to change. Such changes involve making choices among alternatives, each of which has drawbacks. Everything involves tradeoffs rather than solutions.

I haven’t read Sowell, but those last few sentences state the core belief underlying much of my writing and speaking. I’ve said it differently. In short: Every solution causes new problems. The trick is choosing solutions that cause fewer problems than they solve.

Kriz also notes something I hadn’t realized—and it does bother me a bit:

I recently downloaded Bugnosis (www.bugnosis.org), a product of the Privacy Foundation. I was surprised to find that the online version of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has concealed Web bugs on most of their articles. The Web bugs report your reading habits back to DoubleClick. Do you think the *Chronicle* is ashamed of this practice? If not, why use invisible graphics from DoubleClick, and why hide them in the right margins of the articles?

Good questions. Perhaps some *Cites & Insights* reader at the *Chronicle* will enlighten us.

Product Watch

Photoshop Elements

Need most of Adobe Photoshop’s capabilities but unwilling to pay \$600? According to an August 2001 *Macworld* review, Photoshop Elements may be the answer. They give it 4.5 mice. For \$99, the module “combines an astonishing

amount of Photoshop 6.0's power with helpful, non-intrusive guidance." You don't get CMYK color, recordable actions, editable vector shapes, or masking. You do get "roughly five-sixths of Photoshop's power for less than one-sixth the price."

Home Theater on the "Cheap"

PC World for August 2001 offers an interesting suggestion: Use a low-priced 800x600 data projector as your projection TV. "In minutes, a data projector can transform a living room into a private screening room." The four models discussed cost \$1,935 to \$2,148 (plus another \$500 every 2000 hours for replacement lamps); each can project reasonably well onto a 200"-diagonal screen or white wall—if you can get them far enough away (figure 25').

It's an interesting idea. These are last-generation data projectors (today's \$5000 portables offer 1024x768 resolution) but they're reasonably light (six pounds or less), compact, and bright enough for big images in dark living rooms. All of them accept S-Video connectors as well as data connections; most accept component video as well. None of them include TV tuners, of course, but your VCR provides that and it doesn't matter for DVD viewing.

Recommended units are Canon's \$1,935 LV-5100 and Panasonic's \$2,148 PT-LC500U—and the lamp for the Canon costs \$70 more than for the Panasonic, so over a few years of heavy viewing the price difference evens out. The Canon offers the most accurate color and runs quietly; the Panasonic offers the most saturated color. Note that these may also be good units for low-end projection in a library conference or meeting room.

...and Speaking of Cheap

\$199 for a laser printer? With 600dpi output? Printing seven pages of text a minute? As reviewed in the September 2001 *PC World* (p. 72), Samsung's ML-1210 seems to be a remarkable bargain. If you have a home office or similar setup and have the space, prices like this make it plausible to run two printers: a good ink jet when you need color, a cheap laser to churn out the text. The four-dot rating seems well deserved. It's small, runs with either a parallel or USB connection, and even offers optional straight-line printing for stiff media and labels.

Double-Density CDs?

Two surprising CD-RW drives appear on pages 66-7 of the August 2001 *PC World*. Yamaha's \$250 CRW2200EZ writes CD-Rs at 20x (if you have the right media) and offers both a huge buffer and underrun protection to assure that you won't wind up

with coasters. In tests, the unit wrote a 650MB image file (or a set of files totaling that much space) in less than five minutes: that's not really 20x (that is, one-twentieth of 74 minutes), but it's pretty fast.

The other one's a little stranger. Sony's \$250 Double Density CD-RW CRX200E works as a standard 12x/10x/32x CD-RW drive most of the time—but it can write 1.3GB of data onto special DD-Recordable and DD-Rewritable discs. Of course, you can't play those discs on other drives and they cost much more than twice as much as standard CD-R and CD-RW discs. Still, the Sony isn't all that expensive and offers much higher-capacity backup and storage for special purposes.

Dick Tracy: You Have Mail!

I thought the wristwatch/camera combination was a joke, with its absurdly low resolution and short battery life. I have mixed feelings about Timex' \$99 Internet Messenger, reviewed in the August 2001 *PC World*. It's big for a watch, to be sure—but it will receive and display brief messages (up to 100 characters). "E-mail now arriving on your wrist" may be an exaggerated title, as a 100-character limit rules out most real email, but it's an interesting device if you're intent on being in touch at all times. The display shows 12 characters, so even reading 100 characters involves a *lot* of scrolling. And you can't send messages—there's no teeny-tiny keyboard or writing pad on the screen.

USB 2.0:

It's Here and It's Fast

It's astonishing how slowly USB has gained importance. Almost every PC produced in the last two or three years has included the adapters; most recent Macs and some Windows systems abandon serial and parallel ports to rely on USB; and the technology appears to make sense. One problem with USB has been speed: at 12mbps for an entire chain of USB peripherals, it's not fast enough for hard disks or high-speed optical drives, and it's not even in the ballpark for video.

That was USB 1.0. USB 2.0 jumps to 480mbps—forty times as fast. *PC Magazine* for September 4, 2000 reviews two add-in cards to bring USB 2.0 to existing PCs. They're inexpensive (\$70 for a PCI board, \$110 for a PC Card unit), easy to install, and they work.

Will USB 2.0 peripherals show up in quantity and at good prices? Will USB finally become the most important route for PC peripherals on both platforms? That's anybody's guess. I would certainly

never have expected that most printers and scanners sold today would *still* want the parallel port!

Portable Hard Disks

Some issues back, I mentioned Iomega's new Peerless mass storage system, an external removable hard drive cartridge system. I thought it was much too expensive to be a plausible option for most people. A brief review in the September 2001 *PC World* (p. 66) covers the Peerless and Maxtor's external FireWire-connected Personal Storage 3000DV. The Maxtor earns four stars; the Peerless, 3.5.

The Maxtor offers rugged portability and excellent performance—but it costs \$380 for 60GB, more than twice as much as internal IDE drives. The Peerless is far more expensive on a byte-for-byte basis, but it offers removable cartridges. The base unit costs \$360 and includes one 10GB cartridges; replacement cartridges cost \$160 for 10GB, \$200 for 20GB. In other words, storage equivalent to the Maxtor would run \$960 (and have 10GB left over). As tested, with a USB interface, Peerless performance was mediocre.

The question is how often you need very high capacity portable storage. For backup purposes, the reviewer offers an opinion I would share: "Most users backup needs will be better served by cheaper technologies like CD-RW."

Another Ginger!

Remember Ginger, the wonder-scooter that will remake the modern world? Now there's a *real* Ginger with ambitions. It's from Ginger Interactive and it's an "interactive voice- and touch-screen-activated 'personal kiosk,'" according to a report in the September 2001 *Computer Shopper*. Better yet, it's for us geezers who find PCs "bulky and intimidating."

What is Ginger? It's a 4"-thick 12x12" screen casing on a small stand; most of the casing is a touch screen (presumably LCD?). You can use a mouse and keyboard or just the touch screen—and, of course, it requires "virtually no training." Internally, there's an Intel Celeron-500, 128MB RAM, 10GB hard disk, and 40x CD-ROM drive. It weighs 7 pounds and costs \$1,295.

If you're not a geezer you can spend \$1,099 (in that same issue's ads) for a Dell Dimension 4100 with Pentium III-1000, 128MB SDRAM, 20GB 7200RPM hard disk, 16"-viewable display with 16MB display RAM, a CD-RW drive and a good set of speakers—or \$1,199 for a Gateway Performance 1300CS: similar RAM, display, and CD-RW, but a Pentium 4-1300 CPU, 32MB display RAM, and

speakers that probably aren't as good. But those are so bulky and intimidating for us elderly types!

LCD, 21", \$3,890

That's the heart of a *PC Magazine* "first look" on Samsung's SyncMaster 210T. You get more than twice the display area of a 15" unit and it's almost certainly the lightest and most compact 21"-viewable display (1600x1200 native resolution), although the review doesn't mention weight and size. As you might expect, the unit also functions as a high-resolution TV with picture-in-picture capabilities. Of course, there is that near-\$4,000 price, but...

On the same page, Alfred Poor discusses two 18.1" LCD units from top makers, each earning four-dot ratings (the Samsung gets three dots of a possible five). NEC's \$2,000 MultiSync LCD1850X has an unusually thin bezel and did relatively well on moving images; Sony's \$1,700 SDM-N80 is sleeker than you'd expect and offers fine performance.

Sony eVilla

Nobody gets it right every time. Sony's new eVilla is a \$499 Internet appliance with a 15" portrait-mode Trinitron screen, keyboard, and mouse. You can connect certain printers and it offers crisp 800x1024 Web display using a customized Opera browser (Opera 4.0) and the Be OS—but a slow CPU and modest RAM yield slow performance with limited media capabilities. You're stuck with a \$22/month EarthLink account. The eVilla won't handle Shockwave or Windows Media, and it only supports dial-up. *PC Magazine* gives it one dot out of five.

The Details

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