



Bits of Blue



May in Tampa

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 14 No. 5

May 2001

Meeting

Web Application Development Tools

May 9, 2001
6:30 PM
Museum of Science
and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.

Meeting Preview: Sebastian Frey from 4D will speak on web application development tools. As usual, Mary Sheridan will conduct a computing and Windows discussion for the first 30 minutes of the meeting.

President's Message

By Mary Sheridan, President, Tampa PC Users Group
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May 2001 will be our last meeting at MOSI. I'll miss the place. It's been so convenient to my home, but things change. I'd like to thank the museum for allowing us to meet in their computer lab all these many months. We're moving to the Jan Platt Library (details located elsewhere in the newsletter). I'm hoping the move will serve as a new beginning for our group. Thanks to William LaMartin for doing the legwork on the new location.

I thought the Morgan Stanley Online presentation at our last meeting was very interesting. I'm amazed at how savvy our people are on so many topics. Lots of those present seemed to have investing down pat. The questions were probing, and it was fun to listen to the discussions.

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Beginning with the May meeting, the meeting time is changed to 6:30. Beginning in June, we will meet at the Jan Kaminis Platt Regional Library, 3910 S Manhattan Avenue, Tampa.

June 13: To be announced

July 12 (a Thursday): Pens that scan and upload text to your computer

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Minutes of the April Meeting

By Bruce Register, Program Coordinator,
 Tampa PC Users Group
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President Mary Sheridan called the meeting to order at 6 PM. President Sheridan announced the **MAY Meeting is our LAST MEETING AT MOSI**. The June meeting will be held at the Jan Kaminis Platt Library at the corner of South Manhattan and Euclid Avenues. She also announced that the May meeting at MOSI will begin the change to meeting at 6:30 PM rather than 6:00 PM.

A general discussion was held about various topics of interest to the group. It was announced that ITEC will be at the Convention Center. TPCUG was given several free tickets for the event on May 2 and 3. There will be many exhibitors who will make the visit very worthwhile. Those who have attended previous ITECs stated that the exposition features top-notch exhibitors and educational sessions. The full list of Special Features and Functions is available at <http://itec.asmc.com/c4/tam/>. President Sheridan has free tickets (\$20 value). Her phone number and email address are on the left side of this. Also, Adobe had a free all day presentation on April 26. Microsoft will present Microsoft TechNet Briefing on May 8 at the Tampa Airport Marriott. Register at <http://msevents.microsoft.com>. Another free meeting is the Microsoft Office XP at the Hyatt Westshore on June 2, 2001 beginning at 1 PM and ending at 3 PM. This is a live event with the Microsoft showcase and announcements.

Bruce Register, Program Coordinator, introduced Ray Hall with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. Mr. Hall is a financial advisor who spoke on the use of electronics in trading. His company provides several services of an innovative nature. His company provides much free information and also provides financial service and advice on a fee basis for those who desire to use them. Etraders are advised to utilize a professional service that supplies good research analysis. His company provides several programs and services that include online and phone information. They have an Analyst Research Report for their customers and have a program called Mutual Fund Center. They serve risk investors and income investors and all in between. Ray Hall of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter can be reached at ray.hall@msdw.com. With the Palm Pilot and other machines, one may now trade from any location at any time. Mr. Hall emphasized that a new marketing day is upon us in which competition is very fierce. He feels strongly that his company has molded to serve the needs of the customers with exemplary courtesy and latest techniques. With the current bear market, Mr. Hall recommends that each investor have a managed account portfolio so that the investor may quickly move as desired in a fluctuating market. This report touches on only some of the "tips of the iceberg" services that MSDW provides. Our group energetically partici-

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Adobe Photoshop Elements

By Larry Anders, *ELibrarian*,
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I think most people will agree that Adobe Photoshop is right close to, if not at, the top of the list of digital imaging editing programs. And I think those same people will also agree that it is at the top of the list for difficulty in learning to use. Photoshop is by far a professional editing tool, designed for professionals, and it's quite expensive too (street price about \$600). Adobe wisely realized that amateur digital image editors needed a tool also that would be easy-to-use, powerful like Photoshop and competitively priced. Voilà, along comes *Adobe Photoshop Elements*.

For \$99 full price, or \$69 for a competitive upgrade for registered owners of Adobe PhotoDeluxe, Photoshop Limited Edition, Arcsoft PhotoStudio, Corel PHOTO-PAINT, Jasc Paint Shop Pro, Microsoft PhotoDraw and PictureIt!, MGI PhotoSuite, Ulead PhotoImpact and PhotoExpress, you can get a state-of-the-art digital imaging program designed to improve your color printouts and web applications. *Elements'* editing tools are based on Photoshop software, with a lot of the features included that are built into Photoshop, but *Elements* also comes with a whole host of new tools designed specifically for *Elements* and not found in Photoshop.

Upon launching *Elements* you can be off and running by utilizing the *Quick Start* screen that provides easy and centralized access to the primary file creation and acquisition features. You can start from scratch or load an existing image, copy something from the clipboard, acquire an image from a scanner or digital camera, or click on the tutorial button and get detailed instructions and tips. There is a *Hints Palette* that provides easy-to-understand illustrations of each tool in *Elements*, not just the name of the button, but also a brief description and usage tips relating to that tool so you can learn what each tool does in a hurry.

A new item called the *Recipes Palette* is a handy feature that interactively teaches you how to perform a particular task but still gives you full control, if you want it. You can get instructions on such things as adding a gradient effect to a graphic, creating a transparent text panel, removing noise (dust and scratches), removing a color cast, or touching up a photo. There is also a "do-it-for-me" button if you're in a real hurry. The program comes loaded with recipes and you can download additional recipes from Adobe's web site.

There is a *File Browser* that displays graphic files as thumbnail images. This allows you to search visually for a file while you are still inside the program. There are several color correction and retouching tools, such as *Color Adjustment Varia-*

Adobe Photoshop Elements



tions which automatically generates and displays multiple versions of the same image so you can easily identify the color adjustment you want. There is a *Red Eye Brush Tool* to let you remove camera flash with pinpoint accuracy instead of applying a red-eye reduction command to the entire file. There are also *Level Adjustment Controls* that let you precisely adjust colors, brightness, contrast, and black and white levels of an image using numeric value slider bars, and the results are previewed instantly before being applied.

We all take or scan not-so-great photos. *Elements* lets you crop and straighten these less than perfect images with one command. There is also an *Adjust Backlighting* command that lets you darken images because of too much flash, or a *Fill Flash* command that instantly lightens images from not enough flash or light. Also, there are darkroom techniques called *Dodge*, which lightens a specific area, or *Burn*, which darkens a specific area of an image.

How many times have you taken a series of photos in a row to create a panorama effect by pasting the photos together? *Adobe Photomerge* is included that will automatically resize, skew, and blend portions of multiple images into a seamless panorama. All you have to do is copy two or more photos into a separate folder and *Elements* does everything automatically for you. I have a couple of panorama programs now that I have been using, but I guarantee they are definitely not this easy, nor are the results as good.

One of the carryovers from Photoshop is *Elements'* ability to create and edit composite images containing multiple layers. Each layer is editable independently of any other layer, thereby allowing you to create some dramatic effects, such as realistic 3D text, that may otherwise take much more time to create. There is also a rather large library of *Layer Styles*, such as glow, bevel and drop shadow, that you can apply to a chosen layer with a simple click of the mouse.

Included also are drawing tools, such as the *Custom Shape* tool which will let you add graphic elements to your images by choosing from a library of shapes and symbols. There is a wide variety of brushes and something called the *Impressionist Tool* that will allow you to make believe you are Monet or Renoir and apply effects to the entire image or just certain

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parts or layers.

The *Text* tool allows you to add text freely to an image with total control of the fonts and type sizes. There is a *Warp Text* command to transform text such as fisheye, flag, wave and arch. You can type horizontally or vertically and bend and distort any which way you choose.

There is a *Filters Browser* that displays thumbnail images of some 95-plus special effects so you can see how the filter will affect your image. When you find the one you want, just drag and drop a filter's thumbnail onto your image and the filter will be applied automatically.

You can experiment with your image and not worry about the changes you've made because there are multiple levels of undo in the *History Palette*. There is also a built-in *Background Eraser* that will let you create professional, seamless composite images. By simply dragging the tool across the portion of the image you want to keep, you can then erase the background without affecting the foreground object. Then just copy and paste the foreground object into another image and create a new composite image. You could make yourself or your friends show up in some strange places. No wonder photos are not used as evidence in a court of law any longer.

One fun tool is the *Liquify* filter that lets you quickly distort an image by interactively pulling and twisting the image as if it were made of putty. Your changes don't have to be real dramatic either. Say you have a picture of your mother-in-law who always frowns when she's around you. Take a picture of her and put a smile on her face subtly. (If you're like me you'll be tempted to put clown lips on her, but this time just ever so lightly make her smile.) Then show her the difference. If she doesn't like the picture, then go back and put the clown lips on her.

If you're into publishing your photos on a web page, like I am, *Elements* will make your life easier and your web pages load faster and look better. Using the *Save for Web* command lets you precisely and interactively optimize graphics for posting on the web by fine-tuning your output. I have a web site that mainly houses photos of family and friends. What used to take me hours to prepare for posting to the web now takes minutes, and the quality is much better. By using *Web Photo Gallery* I can now automatically produce photographic web pages without the coding hassles I've had in the past. Just a couple of mouse clicks and a couple of choices and I'm ready to upload. Wow! What a difference.

Elements follows through with Photoshop's ability to produce great printed results. Another added feature is the ability to create a *Picture Package* that automatically generates copies of a photo on a single page to maximize the use of expensive

photo-quality paper by printing multiple layout options such as: two 5 x 7 images; four 4 x 5; one 5 x 7 and four 2.5 x 3.5; two 4 x 5, two 2.5 x 3.5 and four 2 x 2.5, and many more picture package templates (20 in all). You can change the resolution and color mode of each print job as well. A thumbnail contact sheet of all the images in a particular folder can also be printed with full control of resolution, color mode, layout, number of columns and rows, etc.

Adobe's excellent ability to manage color has also been built into *Elements*, letting you choose full color management for the best print output, limited management for the best web output, or no color management if you think your images don't need any help. One feature that will come in very handy if your camera doesn't produce one of the major graphic file formats is *Batch Convert*. You can automatically convert multiple image files from one format to another. Simply choose the source file format, size and resolution and those settings will be applied to all files in a designated folder. You can also batch rename files from your digital camera to file names that make more sense.

I don't think I've covered all the features yet but I have at least hit the high points. I'm still playing with and testing *Adobe Photoshop Elements*, but, suffice it to say, I think Adobe's got one hot commodity on their hands. Adobe thinks so too because they are giving you thirty days to try it out for free. Just go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopel/demoreg.html>, fill out a short form and download the free file. The file size is 53.4 megabytes. If you don't have cable or DSL, Adobe has provided a small VBOX Guaranteed Download Container, which will manage the download process and allow you to resume interrupted download sessions, should they occur. Save this program to your desktop. Once the download is complete, double-click on the VBOX icon to download the tryout to your system.

Adobe Photoshop Elements is really hard to beat. It takes the place of several other programs that I am currently using and appears to do a better job. The price is reasonable and best of all it can be tried for **FREE**. System requirements are a Pentium class processor, any version of Windows 98 or better (or Mac 8.6 or better), 64 MB of RAM, 150 MB of hard disk space, at least a 256 (8 bit) color monitor with 800 x 600 or better resolution and a CD-ROM drive.

What have you got to lose? Give it a try. **You won't be sorry!** ◆

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On May 2-3, 2001, TPCUG had a presence at ITEC. Because of the publication time for the newsletter, I'll be writing more about ITEC in the next issue of Bits of Blue.

Our July meeting will not only be at the new location, but it also will be on Thursday, July 12th instead of Wednesday the 11th. The library wasn't available on Wednesday and luckily Bruce Register was able to change his scheduled presentation to the 12th. I hope this doesn't present a hardship for anyone. It was the only reasonable way to work out the problem.

Don't forget, we will be changing our meeting time starting in May. The Windows SIG will begin at 6:30 and the presentation will begin at 7 PM.

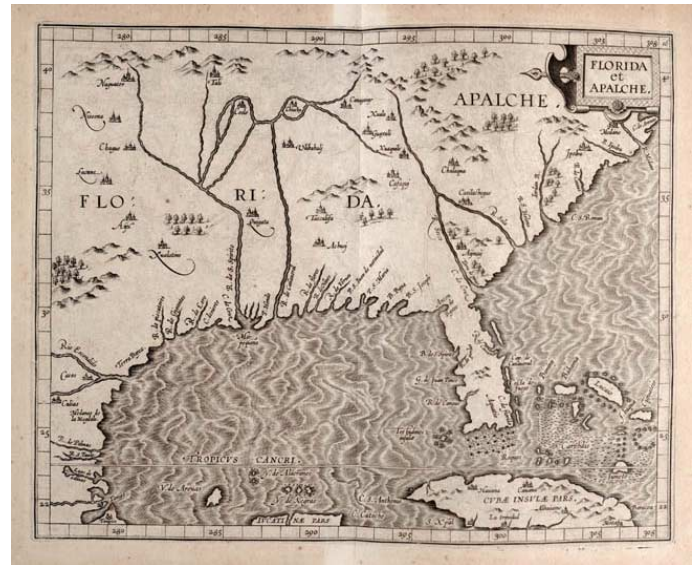
Happy computing! ♦

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parted in a very interesting Q and A session. He responded to very specific market questions. The Tampa PC Users Group is very appreciative for the presentation. He gave us several door prizes that were given away.

Some asked for contact information for JRInkjet, last month's presentation. It is <http://www.tubecomputers.com> and email: sales@tubecomputers.com. ♦

Internet picture of the month



European Map Maker's View in 1597 of Today's Southeastern US

One of many historic documents available online from Paul Mellon's Personal Library at the University of Virginia.
<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/mellon/>.

The inscription under the map reads: Wytfliet, Cornelius. Descriptionis Ptolemaicae avgmentvm. Louvain: Tijpis Iohannis Bogardi, 1597.

May's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)
 ISB Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants
 Internal Revenue Code (26 USC)
 Florida Stock Photography - New Leaf Graphics
 National PLANTS Database
 Copyright Basics
 The JavaScript Gate - JavaScript Tutorials
 TAMPA FLORIDA municipal government - official site
 Along the Chisholm Trail

<http://www.tpcug.org/>
<http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu/>
<http://www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/www/contents.html>
<http://www.newleafgraphics.com/stock.html>
http://plants.usda.gov/plants/home_page.html
http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/smbuss/cpyright/circ1.html
<http://www.javascriptgate.com/>
<http://www.ci.tampa.fl.us/>
<http://www.texhoma.net/~glencbr/>



Some of these links will join the many already on the Links page at our web site, where you need only click on the name.

A Few Meandering Thoughts

By Tim Condon

Tampa PC Users Group

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MEANDERING THOUGHT #1: VIRUSES, WORMS, AND OTHER BAD STUFF

If you're connected to the Internet---and who among us is not?---it's getting increasingly important to start thinking about security and protection from these things (don't ask me what the differences are among them; look it all up on the Internet, where all knowledge in the universe now resides). The reason I mention this area is because I've been hit lately, repeatedly, with several viruses, one of which is named the "Bymer Worm" and another known by its name of "ttfload.vbs" or "ttfloads.vbs" (the latter is what's called a "visual basic script," which is why it has the .vbs ending on the file that gets snuck into your computer).

Those two viruses aren't as destructive as some other payloads; over time they'll slow your computer down, interfere with the operation of your network, cause various anomalies to occur that make you think you've got a hardware or software problem, etc. But there are others out there that will try to destroy your computer system, erasing all or part of your hard drive in the process. Those little babies are another story. Right now, your story is this:

A. You need to have a real-time anti-virus program installed on your machine, running at all times, particularly when you're logging onto the Internet. And you need to have a regular schedule when you run your anti-virus program and scan every file on every hard drive in your system (I do mine monthly; others prefer a more frequent schedule). The most popular anti-virus programs appear to be Norton Anti-Virus, Trend Micro's PC-cillin, and McAfee's anti-virus program. Do some investigating on the Internet, where all knowledge in the universe now resides, to find out more for yourself. (I use the McAfee ActiveShield and Virus Scan Online products, and they work well.)

B. You also need to have a relatively new type of program that's been invented just in the last year or two. The general moniker of such programs is "personal firewall." There are plenty of them out there, including some pretty good ones which are free. Because of the repeated attacks on my system, I've found, downloaded, and now use a free one called "Tiny Personal Firewall." Its technology is said to be based upon U. S. Navy encryption and firewall technology, and many people speak very well of it. It certainly has been working for me. Do a search on the Internet (where all the knowledge in the universe now resides), and you'll find tons of info about Tiny Personal Firewall, as well as other popular programs that do

the same thing. Particularly at risk in this area are cable and DSL connections (which are "always on" in the background, and thus subject to being attacked at any time by hackers).

To find out just how exposed you and your computer may be when you're logged onto the Internet, go to the following location, where Gibson Research has set up a free service that checks your computer's vulnerability as you watch: Go to <http://grc.com>, and then click on the Shields Up! icon. You'll be able to download a small free program called "Shields Up Test," and then be stunned to find out just how "open" your computer is to adolescent hackers.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #2: ONLINE BACKUP SERVICES

We all know that backing up our computer systems and data is absolutely essential. Especially in the case of businesses. Our entire businesses now "live" on computers, and (a) theft of our computers or (b) hardware breakdown or (c) a fire in your building or (d) other natural disaster could very well shut your business down. Up until recently the solution was one of a variety of back-up technologies, including zip drives, tape drives, CDR (rewritable CD-ROM's) drives, and even good old fashioned disks. Now there's another technology surging as an answer to this ancient (say, 10-year-old) problem: Online backup services.

With an online backup service, basically what you have is a company with huge backup capabilities. You connect with them over the Internet and upload your data files, business files, or the contents of your entire computer network, to their storage drives. Then, no matter what happens to your office (earthquake, fire, hurricane, attacks by giant beetles, etc.), your essential files are stored safely way far away, from whence they can be quickly and easily downloaded.

Couple of caveats. First, you really want to be on some kind of a broadband connection such as DSL or cable modem if you're going to use an online service. It takes a lot of time to upload your files to such a service. But who cares, if the uploading is happening overnight? Second, although most of these backup services offer free accounts, those types of accounts are limited in size. If you want to safely back up your entire business with an online service, you'll be paying a not-too-big monthly fee. If you want to try out such a service, the obvious thing to do (as I am) is sign up for a free service with only 25 to 50 megabytes available, and try it out. I'm currently compressing all my data files, and a few others for safety's sake, and uploading them to an online service called Connect.

For more information, do a search for "online storage" providers on the Internet, where all knowledge in the universe now

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resides. Some of the companies that you'll read about include those located at <http://www.myspace.com>, <http://www.xdrive.com>, <http://www.freedrive.com>, <http://www.idrive.com>, and <http://www.driveway.com>. Check'em out.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #3: VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORKS

If you travel much and could use remote access to your home or office computer files, you need to take a close look at <http://www.mangosoft.com>. This company has created an astoundingly easy implementation of a virtual private network ("VPN") which you can try out for free for 30 days (see if it works, after all). The implementation is called "mangomind" and will create an "extra hard drive or drives" on any computers you want when you download the software from mangosoft. The "extra hard drive(s)" will simply appear on your home or office computer, just like extra drives on a local network. And the service sets up so that it or they will be easily accessible to your laptop or other computer from anywhere else through an ubiquitous Internet connection.

Up until now, VPN's have been somewhat expensive and unwieldy, reserved for the big corporations with the money and techies to make it all work. I tried out the "Mangomind drive" (as they call it) VPN and found it to work incredibly easily. It's just like having an unlimited network connection that you can access from anywhere when you're whiling away the time at a deposition in New York, Singapore, Costa Rica, or wherever. Consider what that means (about the Mangomind drive, not the foreign deposition): You can get onto your home or office computer system and pull up any file, any document, any information you need, about any case, from anywhere, just about as easily as you do when you're in the office itself.

I didn't keep the Mangomind drive implementation, which costs something like \$25 per remote user per month, because I don't travel that much, and I don't have a bunch of lawyers in the office who need to share. Perhaps some of the rest of you do. It would pay you to check out the Mangosoft offerings, just in case.

Oh yeah, one other thing. "What's a virtual private network," you want to know? Beats the hell out of me. Look them up on the Internet, where all knowledge in the universe now resides, and learn all about them.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #4: NAPSTER, CYBER-NARC AND E-BOOKS

By now everyone knows the sad, unfolding tale of Napster. The Internet music-sharing service where copyrighted music is downloaded "for free" is in the process of being squashed

by the evil Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), along with some rock bands who have piled on, including Metallica and Dr. Dre. While Napster attempts to fight off the barbarian hordes with help from high-powered legal talent (notably David Boies, last seen representing Al Gore in Florida and before the U.S. Supreme Court), other free services are taking over, multiplying like cockroaches in the walls. Jockeying to take the place of Napster are music sharing/stealing (depending on your outlook) services, including Gnutella, Freeinet, Aimster, Napigator, and lots and lots of others.

But wait! The RIAA and their rock star supporters have birthed a new phenomenon, "Cyber-narc"! This is a private company that cybernetically "sniffs" throughout the Internet, finding computers that are sharing or offering to share copyrighted music. When they find such a computer, they access not the computer-users but the ISP (Internet service provider), telling them that someone they're providing service to is illegally sharing copyrighted music, and **they** (the ISP) will be sued if they don't put a stop to it. So the ISP then goes after the music-sharers, cutting them off if necessary. I ask you, is this a great idea or what?

Perhaps more importantly, however, is the looming battle over electronic books and texts. The Internet is, above all, a supreme tool for information-sharing. And the "digital information" can be in the form of music, or books, or pictures, or speech, or non-music sounds, or anything else that can be rendered into other bitstreams. Who gets hurt when everyone is able to share everything with everyone? You would think the artists and writers and poets and the such. But it's not that, not really. The **real** victims of such an information-sharing revolution will be those who make their money off of being the "middleman" between the creators and the consumers. That is, the distributors. In the case of music, it's the big record labels. In the case of moving pictures (coming to a computer screen near you, soon, just wait), it's the film distributors. In the case of books, it's the publishing/distribution industry. In each case huge amounts of money are skimmed off by those who "reproduce and distribute" the product, whether it be music, moving pictures, or writing. The middlemen.

So, perhaps predictably, about two months ago megapublisher Random House filed a lawsuit against a tiny new "ebook publisher," RosettaBooks LLC, accusing the new company of illegally selling electronic copies of books written by Random House authors. Which in turn started a giant imbroglio over who exactly **owns** the rights to distribute electronic renderings of books. The head of RosettaBooks fired back at Random House, saying that his company had contracts with the Random House authors to distribute their writings electronically. Random House fired back that **they** owned the exclusive rights to distribute the works electronically ("ebooks," as

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they're increasingly being called).

If you go to <http://www.rosettabooks.com>, you'll see a quite interesting selection of ebooks for sale, including some authors who are otherwise published by Random House. Of course the prices are still ridiculously high, "25% off retail price," but that will change. And the industry still awaits a truly handy ebook reading device, which hasn't been invented and marketed yet. But the future is still visible: Less paper, more bitstreams; less ink, more digital rendering; less warehousing and trucks, and more instant downloading.

In the meantime, the lawsuit between Random House and RosettaBooks apparently continues.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #5: PUBLIC RECORDS ONLINE-"YOU CAN'T DO THAT!"

With all the ferment going on throughout the civilized world (not to mention the uncivilized parts, like China) regarding the Internet, it would seem to be a "given" that public records such as you find in courthouses (mortgages, property deeds, judgments, satisfactions, etc.) are going "online," and soon, right?

Well...not really.

But wait! Don't "public records" mean "public records"? Can't anyone go down to the courthouse and pull out any court file or other public records and peruse its contents? That's true. But some people, and apparently some courts, think that public records shouldn't be public if it's "too easy" to access them. For instance, there's a battle going on in Virginia right now over whether to allow the posting of public court case documents on the Internet. Some say that criminals and businesses and other nefarious types can send "crawlers" or Internet robots around to collect personal information from court records if they're posted on the Internet, and then use that information for all sorts of nefarious purposes. Similar battles are going on in Texas, Kansas, New York, Ohio, and all over the place otherwise.

The problem is that traditional public records exist in what experts call "practical obscurity." After all, who takes the trouble to go down to the courthouse to pull those court files and sniff out information about individuals. But when it's right there on the Internet, for everyone to see, including your Aunt Matilda, well, that's seen as far different.

Hold on, says the media-driven Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. Those **reporters** sure do go down to the courthouse and sift through those court records to get what they need, but they don't want it kept off the Internet either. The executive director of the reporters committee, Lucy Dal-

GLISH, says, "This is all kind of nutty, part of what I call technology hysteria....If something is so sensitive that it needs to be sealed, you can do what people do now: Ask a judge to seal it."

One prominent battle in this area was lit off when one of the parties in a libel suit set up a web page and moved to post entire discovery depositions of parties involved. Invasion of privacy? Public records? A First Amendment issue? The judge in that case initially granted an injunction against posting the depositions, finding that irreparable harm could come to one or more parties if the stuff was posted (you can imagine what areas the defendant's lawyer got into when the plaintiff was deposed; it soon degenerated into juicy tidbits about extra-marital affairs, drug usage, and other great stuff).

Which way will this issue break? Who knows? Stay tuned for more on this emerging battle.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #6: DSL FOR EVERYONE COMING

For us big-town people in places like Tampa and Orlando, Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, getting broadband internet connections is no big thing. Many of us even have choices between ADSL ("asynchronous digital subscriber line," or "DSL" for short) and cable. However, for you country people, there's often no broadband offering at all. This is because cable Internet access systems piggyback on cable TV lines, and lots of places still don't have cable television offerings. As for DSL, there are range limitations; it only works within a few thousand feet of a telephone company switching station. As a result, only about 65% of the average telephone company's market is reachable with present technology.

But that's all about to change. At least one company, Symmetricom, as of January 2001 successfully demonstrated a "repeater" for DSL applications. The new technology is said to have demonstrated a 30-fold improvement over conventional DSL installations. Meaning that broadband Internet access through DSL service will soon be available to 95% of the average telephone company's market. Stand by. Broadband access will soon be here for everyone.

MEANDERING THOUGHT #7: FABULOUS, FREE, FILE-FORMATTING TOOL

Finally, there's a new software tool out there which can be obtained for free, for previewing and printing out various types of files. It comes, oddly enough, from Kinko's, the copying, printing, photographing, collating, coloring, and everything else store. The program is called, quite originally, the "Kinko's File Prep Tool" and can be downloaded for free from <http://www.kinkos.com> (or obtained in CD-ROM format at any Kinko's store). What's the big deal about it? Consider

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this:

Everyone has heard of the Adobe Acrobat Reader, the program that reads "PDF" ("portable document format") formatted files. The PDF format is a de facto standard for rendering and reading of pamphlets, books, magazines, pictures, web pages, etc. It can be obtained for free, and virtually everyone who's spent any time on the Internet has downloaded a copy.

Of course, there is another Adobe Acrobat program, the one that is utilized to **create** the standardized Acrobat programs. It's **not** free. Not by about \$250. What's the value of such a program? Standardization. When you create an Adobe PDF file and put it on the Internet for downloading by whomever---as many, many downloadable files are---you want to know that when the file is opened it will look exactly as you have set it up to look and that anyone can read it with the same, standardized reading program. That's hard to do with word processing programs, for instance, since the program on one machine might be (and usually is) set up with different settings from the program on another machine. Not to mention that someone who wants to read your document may not even **have** a copy of the program to read it.

Also, the Adobe program handles all kinds of formats in converting to the PDF format. It doesn't matter if the file you're converting is a word processing file, a web page, or a graphics format file. They all come out so that they're readable on the standard Adobe Acrobat reader program. **But...**while you can obtain a free Acrobat reader program in numerous places on the Internet, you must pay about \$250 to obtain a copy of the Adobe Acrobat program that **creates** files in the standard PDF format.

So...enter the Kinko's File Prep Tool program. You can get it for free, and it does essentially the same thing as the Adobe Acrobat program that creates PDF files. Except when you install the Kinko's program, you obtain the capability of creating "KPF" files from any other program (it works like you're "printing to a KPF printer"); once you do that, anyone with a copy of the Kinko's program can open and read your document, whatever it may be, or have, or contain, or look like. Very handy. And of course the price is right. And one other thing. It's also...ahem...rumored that Kinko's KPF files can also always be read by the free Adobe Acrobat reader program. Interesting, hah?

Well shucks. I trust I haven't meandered too far afield for everybody. Much of what I've written above may be common knowledge to many of us computer-geek-types. But it's all new, at some time or another, to everyone else...all part of the incredible technological advances rushing upon us. This is just a small effort to outline some of those changes.

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Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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Web Bugs and HTML formatted mail in general caught my attention last month. If your email software supports HTML style messages, as most do, then you can send and receive email messages that look just like web pages. Microsoft's Outlook Express makes it easy to put pictures, links and formatted text in such messages, but if you want some of the other things like sound and items created with Java Script you have to be able to do the coding yourself.

To be able to enter the code, you need to be able to work with the source code. If you do not see three tabs in your New Message window saying Edit, Source and Preview, click on the View menu item and make sure Source Edit is checked. You should then have a Source tab. Click on it to see and modify the HTML source code of the message.

So what does this have to do with web bugs? Well, if I insert the following Java Script into the message's source code

```
<SCRIPT language=JavaScript>
document.write("<IMG SRC=http://www.
lamartin.com/images/small/a00100.gif>");
//document.close();
</SCRIPT>
```

every time this message is read, it will go to my web site and download the file a00100.gif. I will then be able to look at my web site server log file and determine when the file was ac-

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May 2-3, 2001
Tampa Convention Center
10:00am - 4:00pm Daily

Tampa Bay Information Technology Exposition & Conference (ITEC). ITEC will feature more than 2000 products and solutions, representing the latest developments in Computers, Telecommunications, Internet/Intranet, Software, Networking, Imaging and Records Management, Multimedia, Video Conferencing, Client Server, Network Security, Disaster Recovery, ATM and much more.

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry (just south of Columbus Drive) at 6:30 PM. For information contact either William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com or Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.

Genealogy SIG

To be included on the TPCUG genealogy mailing list, contact Jenny Lind Olin at 960-5723 or jlolin@tampabay.rr.com.

Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the third Tuesday of the month, at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry at 6:30 PM. For information, contact Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.

Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Mary Sheridan moderates the discussion.

Merle Nicholson

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cessed and by what IP address(es). The person who read the email will, however, not be aware of this since the file is a 1 pixel graphic that is very small and white and, thus, doesn't show up on his white email page.

Norton AntiVirus versus Microsoft Publisher When using Microsoft Publisher, I can simply right click on text in a text box (like the article you are now reading) and bring it up in Microsoft Word for editing. That is I could before I installed the newest version of Norton AntiVirus.

When I attempted to bring up Word, I got a message something like: A Word Story Editing error occurred..... A search at Microsoft for such text revealed that it was a conflict with Norton AntiVirus. They gave a solution which was also repeated at the Norton site. The only problem was that the solution didn't work—as other people had told them in the discussion forum that Norton was hosting on such problems. I added my two cents worth and received the response that it should work.

The supposed solution was to unregister the DLL Officeav.dll using `regsvr32 /u "C:\program Files\Norton\AntiVirus\Officeav.dll"` in the Windows Run text box. After going back

and forth with Norton via email for a day with no improvement, I decided to simply rename the DLL by putting a \$ in front of the name so that it couldn't be found. That solved the problem.

Apparently on some systems simply unregistering the DLL worked, but possibly because I am using Win Me it took more drastic action in my case. Who knows?

Taskbar Stuck I went to help a new client with her computer problems, and the first thing I noticed was that her Windows Taskbar was on the right side of the screen and could not be moved—even though moving and resizing of the Taskbar was enabled in the Taskbar's advanced properties. A search at <http://search.microsoft.com> revealed that the solution was to simply restart Windows in Safe Mode, then shut down and then restart Windows as usual—and they were correct this time.

Show Desktop Icon Missing The next problem was that there was no Show Desktop icon on the Taskbar. You know, the icon you can click on to minimize all open windows so that you have your desktop back. Well, I could find nothing at Microsoft on this, but <http://www.deja.com/usenet> came through with several newsgroup articles with the solution. The solution was: Find the Show Desktop file in C:\windows\system and drag it to the appropriate place on the Taskbar. Nothing to it when you know what to do.

Map A new meeting site—in June—requires a new location map. I have created one, and you can view it at our web site at http://www.tpcug.org/images/library_map.jpg. If you can't type in all that, there is a link to it on the Announcements page.

For the curious, to make the map, I first open a mapping program like Street Atlas USA, view the area I want a map of and copy the screen to the Clipboard. Next I open a "drawing" program, Adobe Illustrator, and paste the map in from the Clip-

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Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

Museum of Science and Industry
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And these software and hardware vendors for their demonstrations and review software and contributions of evaluation software to our group

Adobe Systems	Microsoft
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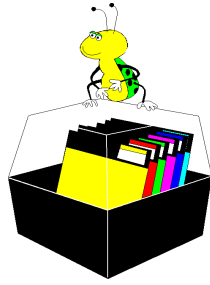
Program	Code	Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Adobe Acrobat	AA	Cheryl Alexander	Mon - Fri 10:00am - 9:00pm	914-0008	HTM,PSP,WP
AOL	AOL	Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
Computer general	CG	Bob LaFave	8:00pm-10:00pm	960-0208	W95/W98, MOS
Delphi	DE	William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95
DOS	DOS	Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, VB
Family Tree Maker	FTM	Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Hardware general	HG	Don Patzsch		689-8662	CG
Hardware Modem	HM	Mary Sheridan	9:30am - 9:00pm	988-6480	AOL, CG, DOS, HG, IG, MW, Q, W95, W98
Hardware Printer	HP				
HTML coding	HTM				
Internet general	IG				
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS				
Microsoft Access	MA				
Microsoft Excel	ME				
Microsoft FrontPage	FP				
Microsoft Office Suite	MOS				
Microsoft Publisher	MP				
Microsoft Visual Basic	VB				
Microsoft Word	MW				
Networking	N				
PAF	PAF				
PaintShop PRO	PSP				
Quicken	Q				
Windows 3.1	W3				
Windows 95/98	W95/98				
Windows NT	WNT				
WordPerfect	WP				

We encourage other members to add their names to the list of those willing to assist fellow members with their computer problems. Contact William LaMartin to add your name to the list.

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So read up, tune in, turn on, freak out, enjoy it all, and be ready. Here comes the Singularity! (Read all about that...you guessed it...on the Internet, where all knowledge in the Universe now resides.) ♦



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board. I make this map a non-editable layer and create a new layer on which to do my drawing, where I then trace all the streets I want over the streets on the non-editable layer. Add a little Clipart and street names and make the original layer invisible, and I am done. ♦

