

# Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large

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## Bibs & Blather

### Silver Anniversaries (Plus or Minus One)

Numerology makes just as much sense in the real world as astrology or trying to time the stock market. With that disclaimer, here's the set of numbers that collapse into this special edition:

- Anyone notice that I started listing the "whole issue" in the "Details" box in July? This is the 25<sup>th</sup> issue of *Cites & Insights*—including the 24-page preview issue but not including end-of-year indexes.
- **Plus one:** It's been 26 years since my first library-related publication: "Building a Serials Key Word Index," *Journal of Library Automation* 9, no. 1 (March 1976).
- **Minus one:** In mid-July I began my 24<sup>th</sup> year at RLG. I'm not sure what to say about that.
- **Back to 25:** As the year turns, my wife and I will celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- **Minus one, almost:** I finally bought a new computer, and *almost* went with a 2.4GHz Pentium 4. That's "24" in some sense, isn't it? Ah well; since my old PC was a Celeron-400, I decided that a "mere" 2.26GHz Pentium 4 would be good enough at a considerable savings. (In the only real timed test I could do—the time it takes to run Adobe Acrobat on an 18-page issue, producing the PDF file via Distiller, the new PC is almost precisely five times as fast as the old one, if you're wondering: less than 11 seconds as compared to 55 seconds.)
- Jumping from 25 to 40 (for no good reason), this issue will appear just about 40 days before I speak at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville), at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for their library school.

With all those numbers, how could I resist?  
("Easily," you say.)

True. A better reason for this special issue is that the last few issues have been a little shy on original essays and long-term perspectives. I've been trying to catch up—and, astonishingly enough, I was "caught up" when the August issue came out. Everything slows down a little in the summer (and I'm getting more selective), so I'm not *quite* as far behind as usual at this point.

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The August issue came out very early for the same reason that I was more than a month ahead on column deadlines by the end of June. I wanted to see whether I could complete the first draft of a book (after trying and failing for two years). That break, combined with the lack of new TV shows as distractions and certain other factors, made it possible to finish the draft and submit a realistic proposal. I won't mention the book's title or topic because it may not go anywhere.

This issue is almost entirely perspectives and long-term considerations, including a couple of perspectives that I've used in several speeches. I plan to do the same at the 50<sup>th</sup> issue (if there is one) and at future 25-issue intervals. Of course, plans are for changing, as *Cites & Insights* and my writing path in general have made abundantly clear.

Will there be a 50<sup>th</sup> issue? When I began *Cites & Insights*, I more-or-less committed to 41: the number of issues needed to make an even hundred, when taken along with the 29 editions of "Trailing Edge Notes" and 30 editions of "Crawford's Corner" in *Library Hi Tech News*. Barring disaster or major life changes, that commitment stands—but that milestone will come sometime late next summer or early next fall. I make no promises, but this continues to be too much fun to quit.

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## Facts about Fearlessness

Why is it that we can love compliments and simultaneously be unnerved by them? I get uneasy when I'm referred to as an authority (fortunately, that rarely happens) or a scholar (ditto). "Expert" is OK, as we all know that an expert is someone who knows two more facts about something than you do.

A couple of people have suggested that I'm bold enough to speak my mind about anything, with no apparent fear of retribution. (Fortunately, those suggestions don't seem to carry the subtext that I'm an idiot to be so fearless.) It's a wonderful thing to read—but it's not quite true.

You want fearlessness? Find someone who's retired or independently wealthy and carries really good libel insurance. In my case, a combination of naïveté, foolishness and an upbringing that favors honesty all lead to a tendency to say what I believe. But there are limits, beyond those of good taste and kindness. (Not that I've ever been accused of either, but I try.)

One of those limits opened me to accusations of creating straw men. To wit, I'm not likely to come down hard, by name, on a director of an ARL library (or international equivalent) or someone who's likely to become one—not only for my sake but because it wouldn't be fair for RLG if an employee was bad-mouthing heads of member institutions and potential board members. So, in two books and some related articles and speeches, I used indirect references to statements about the inevitable death of print and other technological nonsense rather than using direct quotations—and was accused of making them up. That's a small price to pay.

I do work for RLG (and, as noted above, have for an absurdly long time—given that I'm nearly a decade away from retirement). Would it surprise you to hear that I'm not likely to write essays undermining RLG initiatives? I may be foolhardy, but I'm not a complete idiot. As it happens, I believe in almost everything RLG does, so that's not a serious issue.

A side note: Nobody at RLG has ever asked to see what I'm writing for publication or planning to say in a speech beforehand. I don't know whether anyone at RLG reads *Cites & Insights*; I do know that the organization practices library principles when it comes to freedom of speech.

There's the flip side: You may note that I don't run essays sharply critical of OCLC either, here or in my other venues. While OCLC and RLG only compete in a few areas, such essays would nonetheless reek of sour grapes and special pleading; it just isn't worth the trouble.

Avoiding institutional conflicts isn't much of an issue in *Cites & Insights* because my focus isn't primarily libraries and library automation; it's the network of technologies and issues that surround and support libraries. I don't have to worry about offending my friends at Innovative Interfaces or my growing number of acquaintances at other library vendors because I don't track the field closely enough to comment intelligently on vendor-specific issues. That set of conflicts may matter more for "The Crawford Files," but even there, David Dorman's the library automation specialist—and if I have comments to make, they don't need to refer to individual cases.

If you really believe I'm fearless, thanks for the compliment—but it's one I don't deserve.

## Sources

An earlier "Bibs & Blather" suggested that I would list my key Web sources for material covered here. That turns out to be somewhat hopeless, as does providing specific credit. Where I learned about something depends too much on the order in which I check Weblogs and other resources, because so many items are cited by more than one source.

Currently, Charles W. Bailey, Jr.'s "Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog" is my single most valuable Weblog source for items I need to cite—followed closely (in no particular order) by Steven M. Cohen's "Library Stuff," Peter Scott's "Library News," LISNews, LLRX.com Newstand, NewPages, Peter Suber's FOS News, and Gary Price's VAS&ND. I also glean items from librarian.net, Library Juice, NewBreed Librarian, Bibliolatry, L.A.C.K., Library Planet, and a couple of others, somewhat less frequently. I also check Wired News every day or two, a couple of key sources for ebook material and the major electronic library-related journals at appropriate intervals. As usual, YMMV. I won't characterize each Weblog and other source because you should experiment with them and find the ones that best suit your needs and preferences.

## CICAL History

# From PCs to Literacy in 24 Easy Issues

"The best definition of what will appear here may be: Stuff I think is worth writing about that doesn't appear suitable for a 'disContent' column in *EContent*, a 'PC Monitor' column in *Online*, or a freelance submission to *American Libraries*... Will a coherent editorial philosophy emerge over the next year?

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'Anything's possible' is false, but this is a case where it's possible, but unlikely."

That's what I said near the end of the first item in the first *Cites & Insights*. I also noted my alternative working title for the zine: *Crawford at Large: Libraries, Media, Technology & Stuff*.

The fundamentals haven't changed, if you look at them with the right slant. After all, there's *nothing* in the last 24 issues that isn't about libraries, media, technology, or stuff. "Stuff" might now be defined as "societal issues affecting libraries and librarians, and other stuff," but it's all stuff. (Or, using the *real* title of this zine, it's all blather.) There's another exclusion in that initial list, one that's reduced certain kinds of "Perspectives": to wit, the addition of "The Crawford Files" in *American Libraries*.

There is a coherent editorial philosophy; it's just not one that allows you or me to predict the editorial balance all that well. What I think is worth writing about changes, and I do pay some attention to the apparent audience. The best example of that attention: So far, I've regarded cruising (that is, cruise ships and voyages) as a little too far removed from library issues to cover here, much as I'd like to.

## Changing Coverage

It's clear that the balance of coverage has changed since *Cites & Insights* began. One way to look at that change is bibliometrics for dummies—crude measures of how space has been used over time. I took four-issue groups as a convenient way to balance out single-issue irregularities. I clustered items as follows:

- **PC:** PC Values, Review Watch, essays that specifically deal with PCs.
- **Technology:** Product Watch and essays that specifically deal with technology issues.
- **Citations:** The Good Stuff/Press Watch I, Cheap Shots & Commentary/Press Watch II. After some thought, I included the Text-e coverage in Citations.
- **Themes:** Articles and perspectives on the Big Themes—ebooks, filtering, copyright, literacy, access.
- **Perspectives:** Essays that don't fall into other categories as well as feedback.
- **Miscellany:** Trends & Quick Takes, Bibs & Blather, follow-up.

Here's how the six four-issue groups come out:

**Pre & 1:1-3:** PC: 30%. Technology: 27%. Citations: 22%. Themes: 5%. Perspectives: 6%. Miscellany: 13%.

**1:4-7:** PC: 9%. Technology: 9%. Citations: 23%. Themes: 22%. Perspectives: 15%. Miscellany: 21%.

**1:8-11:** PC: 15%. Technology: 6%. Citations: 23%. Themes: 19%. Perspectives: 16%. Miscellany: 21%.

**1:12-13, 2:1-2:** PC: 13%. Technology: 7%. Citations: 30%. Themes: 32%. Perspectives: 3%. Miscellany: 15%.

**2: 3-6:** PC: 12%. Technology: 6%. Citations: 34%. Themes: 28%. Perspectives: 6%. Miscellany: 16%.

**2: 7-10:** PC: 14%. Technology: 7%. Citations: 14%. Themes: 36%. Perspectives: 14%. Miscellany: 16%.

## Reading the Changes

Thematic coverage has become more important over time—and the "themes" percentage undercounts actual coverage, since a significant portion of citations and Trends & Quick Takes could logically have fallen into one of the themes, particularly before I started treating copy protection as a copyright issue.

The most obvious drop is in PC coverage. There are fewer PC magazines, the ones that remain are thinner, and they're primarily covering big-office issues. While PCs have never been better, the field has become somewhat boring. I dropped "PC Values" from the zine altogether—and still maintain it as a separate .PDF document—partly for space but mostly because *Cites & Insights* has such an irregular date pattern.

I'm not sure that "technology" coverage has dropped all that much, but more of it shows up in "Trends & Quick Takes," where it's intermingled with all sorts of other things. That section is a cop-out for a disorganized mind, to be sure...just as "Bibs & Blather" combines actual Editor's Notes with comments too brief for full-scale Perspectives.

I would note that, except for the last few issues, citations have stayed fairly constant at roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the space.

Looking at these six summaries and the detailed sheets that back them up, I'd call the editorial shifts in *Cites & Insights* evolutionary rather than revolutionary. What else would you expect?

Here's a kicker: the breakdown of a comparable number of pages near the end of "Crawford's Corner." The four-issue groups summarized above include 68 to 74 pages (mostly 72); thus, seven issues of "Crawford's Corner" make an equivalent amount of text. Leaving out the final edition, I come up with the following for the April through November 2000 editions:

PC: 33%. Technology: 14%. Citations: 20%. Themes: 2%. Perspectives: 22%. CD-ROM reviews (remember those?): 12%.

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Make of that what you will.

### From Here to Gold?

Your guess is as good as mine. I believe there will be more thematic coverage of access issues (access to scholarship, that is) and copyright, less filtering and ebooks, very little on adult literacy, and probably new themes I haven't thought of. I intend to do some "CD-ROMs revisited" pieces if time and space permit, in part seeing how older CD-ROMs—mostly tested on a Pentium-166 with 1x CD-ROM—work on a new Pentium 4-2.26GHz PC with 40x CD-ROM. I wouldn't be surprised if PC coverage declined a little more.

I'd like to see 20%-25% citations, 25%-30% major themes, and at least 25% "small stuff" to make it interesting. Beyond that, we shall see.

### Perspective

## Credo: My Current Library Beliefs

When I began speaking about the future of libraries and print, back in 1992, I gradually evolved a credo of sorts, one that became part of several speeches. A version of that credo formed the basis for part of the first chapter of *Future Libraries: Dreams, Madness and Reality*.

Since then, little by little, a new credo has taken shape, this one having nine elements. I've used it for the last year or so, but not in print. Here it is:

- Good public and academic libraries are both physical institutions and sets of services. They serve a variety of purposes within real communities and colleges, and some of those purposes can only be served effectively through physical libraries.
- We will continue to see revolutionary predictions based on oversimplification, bad economics, infatuation with technology and failure to appreciate people. Librarians who fall prey to such predictions will suffer, as will their users. Librarians and library supporters must be ready to challenge unlikely projections, analyze faulty economics and assert the need for choice and the importance of history and the present.
- Technology and media will continue to interact in unexpected ways, but ways that will lead to more rather than fewer media. Different media serve different kinds of stories well, and new media should enable new kinds of stories—but the kinds of stories that books serve continue to be critically important for libraries.

- Print books will survive, and will continue to be at the core of all good public libraries and the humanities and social science portions of good academic libraries.
- All libraries and librarians need to deal with increasing complexity, not as "transitional" issues but as the reality of today and tomorrow.
- Libraries must serve users—all users, not just today's primary users. There's a difference between being user-oriented and pandering, and it's a difference librarians should understand.
- Libraries matter and librarians should build from strength. There are many fine public libraries and many more that do remarkable work with inadequate resources. The goal should be to improve and diversify from what libraries do well, not to abandon existing services and collections in search of some monolithic futures, whether all-digital or otherwise.
- Libraries will change, just as they have been changing for decades. Good libraries will maintain live mission statements—and the missions won't change rapidly.
- Effective libraries build communities, and the need and desire for real communities will continue to grow. Libraries that work with their communities should prosper; those that ignore their communities will shrivel.

These are certainly not my only core beliefs that influence what appears here and in my other writing. These are the Big Deals, the statements that make sense as part of a speech.

### Perspective

## Thinking about the Major Themes

Set aside functional literacy, if you will. That's an argument about statistical inference, plausibility, and crisis mongering. I'll probably check in a year or so and see whether Web sites for literacy organizations reflect assumptions that are more realistic. But since I've never suggested that public libraries should abandon adult literacy programs and ESL programs (and never will), this isn't a particularly interesting ongoing theme.

My thoughts about the other three ongoing themes over the past issues are obvious, unless you're naïve enough to believe that my comments on cited items have been neutral. But you need to read a *lot* of thematic coverage to get a sense of where I really stand—and you may never get there,

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because I'm becoming less certain of my opinions as I get older.

Here, then, some brief comments on my current stance regarding the three ongoing themes. Why did I choose these themes? I've been writing about ebooks and etext for a decade. Filtering and copyright chose me: that is, items that I wanted to cite and comment on were clustering in these two areas. All three represent intersections of technology, content and library interests.

## Filtering: Why it Matters

First a confession. If I was a public library director—a terrifying possibility on the face of it—I would be loathe to have unfiltered Internet computers in the children's room. (Of course there would be a children's area!) Ideally, the computers in that room—which should be less prominent than the physical playthings and the physical collection—would be limited to a substantial set of Web sites selected by librarians and other trusted agencies. And when I say children, I mean sub-teenagers, those in elementary school. Because I'm a coward by nature, I might go along with a “parental permission” scheme for terminals outside the children's room and for all underage patrons, but I'd hate it. That scheme uses borrower-ID flags to turn on or off filtering—but, of course, *any* filtering scheme blocks thousands of legitimate sites and fails to block thousands of sites that parents don't want their kids to see.

Fortunately, I'm not a library director, so I can be more consistent. Filters don't work, and don't work in ways that fundamentally violate not only the First Amendment but also library principles. I think that's fairly well documented. Since the government's witnesses in the CIPA case essentially agreed that filters both over-censor and under-filter, it's hard to make a counterargument other than the absurd “Some day we'll get it right, just trust us.” I believe that filters *can't* work, given the nature of the English language and the sheer improbability of successful image filtering—and even if they could, it's remarkably foolish to buy a non-functioning product (or worse, mandate its use) because some later generation of the product might work. If you believe otherwise, I have a spaceship I'd like to sell you: It doesn't quite work yet, but one of these days...

I've gone over all this in “The Filtering Follies” and elsewhere. My October “Crawford Files” summarizes the real arguments against CIPA (which have nothing to do with child pornography, which is illegal anyway, or with librarians forcing kids to view nasty pictures) and issues a specific challenge: Watch for it.

I am not an expert on the specific flaws of current filters. I have read repeatable studies by those who are experts, and cited several of them. I've also offered negative comments on anti-filtering pieces that seem to me to go overboard, such as Nancy Willard's attempt to link filtering companies to conservative religious groups. I make no apologies for being critical of an article on “my side” of the filtering controversy, and will be just as happy to praise a pro-filtering piece if I see one that is logically consistent and truthful.

Government-mandated filtering in libraries matters because it undermines libraries and the Constitution. If government-mandated filtering stayed off the table for a while, it would still make sense to keep an eye on library use of filters simply because filters don't work very well.

I don't expect to say much about filters between now and the time that the Supreme Court takes up CIPA—but it may not be that simple. The U.S. Congress shows a remarkable tendency to keep passing new “protect the children” laws that don't protect the children and do assault the Constitution, and I see no reason to believe that “three strikes and you're out” works in this case.

## Copyright: Coping with the Imbalance

I'm a little thicker some times than others. Otherwise, I would have made the connections much earlier than I did—among copy protection on DVDs and VHS, crazed developments such as DivX, the same old discredited arguments from Jack Valenti and his peers at the RIAA and elsewhere, extreme reactions not only to Napster but to any form of MP3, and so on. But I was caught by my belief that creators deserve compensation for their work. It took a while for my aging brain to get it: Things have gotten way out of balance.

I'm trying to make up for that delay, here and elsewhere. Two “disContent” columns are already in the works, and there will be more “Crawford Files” pieces in addition to the one earlier this year.

It isn't simple. At times, I think there are more villains than heroes in this drama, but it's really more of a three-ring circus with clowns transforming into hyenas transforming into jugglers...

On one side:

- When people say copyright is dead because digital technology makes copying so easy, I say they're not only wrong, they're playing into the hands of the Big Media warlords. If technology excuses unethical behavior, then why shouldn't

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technology be used to constrain such behavior—as in CBDTPA and other fun stuff?

- When I'm told that copyright should last for two years, or five years, or ten years, I question the logic. In fact, some creations take a while to reward their creators; a classic example is Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy. I don't believe the 14-year renewable copyright term was unreasonably long.
- Other extremes on one axis also don't work for me. Property is not theft. It's absurd to argue that artists owe it to society to create for free or that everything worthwhile will be created even without copyright. Yes, some musicians make their living through live concerts and ancillary enterprises; if they choose to make their recordings freely available, they should be honored for that *individual* choice. Purely socialist states haven't worked in the past, and my own sense of human nature says they won't in the future either.

On the other side, powerful intermediaries have succeeded in undoing the *limited* nature of copyright—and in compromising the first-sale and fair-use rights that protect user interests. That's the heart of the problem, and I believe the problems primarily come from intermediaries.

I wish Lawrence Lessig and his team luck with the *Eldred v Ashcroft* case. Congress has established immortal copyright on the installment plan, and that's bad for everybody—including, in the end, Big Media itself. I see no plausible way that established copyright will ever return to a realistic 28-year limit, but it may be possible to stop everlasting copyright.

That's only one aspect of the copyright theme. Much more threatening to library interests, I believe, are the current and proposed laws relating to technology and copyright. DMCA is bad law. The payment of royalties with every blank music CD-R should *preclude* legal sale of copy-protected audio CDs, but so far Big Media gets to have it both ways. The next step, whether through CBDTPA or an equally atrocious "voluntary" agreement between Big Tech and Big Media, could be much worse: Absolute control by intermediaries of all your use of copyright material.

That isn't alarmist; it's the clear goal of the MPAA and RIAA—and the AAP does an interesting job of being buddies with libraries where First Amendment rights are involved, but undercutting libraries where user rights are involved.

I'll obviously keep following various aspects of copyright and intellectual property, whether under the "Copyright Currents" heading or narrower titles. I'm so far away from being an expert in this area

that I couldn't begin to guess what's likely to happen—so I won't.

## Ebooks and Etext

Dedicated digital appliances didn't make sense as general replacements for print books a decade ago. They still don't, and I don't expect them to in my lifetime. The issues aren't just technological, although it's astonishing just how little has been accomplished in that area. It's convenient to blame Henry Yuen and Gemstar for the apparent death of consumer ebook appliances, but that's too easy. Those appliances were bad solutions for a nonexistent problem—and that may be the fundamental problem with mass-market ebooks in general. They solve a problem that doesn't exist, and do it badly.

None of which says that digital distribution of text doesn't matter, or that ebooks won't succeed—depending on your definition of ebook. I outlined this issue two years ago in *American Libraries*, and that outline still works pretty well. Unfortunately, ebook aficionados deliberately muddied the marketplace, a trend that I don't see changing. After all, if you're a dedicated follower of ebook appliances and you know they're tanking, it makes good sense to lump Print-on-Demand, downloadable text for multipurpose portable devices, and various digital libraries into the "ebook" market—because there are some success stories within that conglomeration.

In this case, I am willing to make a few predictions for the next two or three years, noting that I'm just as likely to be wrong as anyone else:

- **Ebook appliances:** Dead, dead—in the general marketplace. Will there be a workable textbook appliance, either for K12 or universities? I'm guessing less than a 50% chance for K12 over the next two or three years, and I suspect an even lower chance for universities. If there's an ebook appliance for higher education, it's likely to be a tablet PC or a notebook/ebook hybrid—a multifunction device in either case.
- **Print on demand:** Growing steadily and the clearest success story for "ebooks." Maybe authors and publishers will work out contractual issues over the next two or three years (that is, when do rights revert when a title is never really out of print?). Will we see true displacement of standard publishing by PoD? I think it's a little early for that, but what do I know? Fortunately, the end result of PoD is a real book with regular book first-sale and fair-use rights—and PoD opens the publishing field to inexpensive reprints, true niche-market pub-

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lishing, and a variety of other ways to expand the field.

- **Downloadable commercial books for multi-purpose readers:** Who knows? I wouldn't have believed that Palm OS users would be willing to read lengthy texts on that tiny 160x160 pixel screen, but dedicated readers will put up with almost anything. 180,000 texts ("books" may be an exaggeration) is only about one-tenth of one percent of the U.S. book market, but it's still surprising. It's still tough to get any honest numbers about the size of the general downloadable marketplace—books to be read on notebook or desktop computers—but there's clearly some market. I'd expect that market to grow slowly but steadily, at least in real numbers, although percentage growth may be impressive. When advocates start quoting real numbers (other than the 180,000 Palm "books"), you'll know things are going well. (I called them "open e-books" in the September 2000 article. I'll stick with that for now.)
- **Public domain ebooks:** The biggest problem here, other than Michael Hart's massive ego, is copyright. Nothing's entering the public domain, and it's not clear whether thousands of books have departed that sphere. You'll see millions of downloads over the next few years, if only because it's so easy to download a "free-book" to look up a sentence or two. I'd love to see ebook advocates separate out public domain downloads from actual ebook sales—but I won't hold my breath.
- **Pseudobooks and other e-library models:** NetLibrary's still around, thanks to OCLC. I haven't heard much from anyone else, although ebrary's still pushing an unusual model. I don't believe we'll see new competitors in this field. I could be wrong.
- **Extended books:** You don't hear much about the kinds of e-books that can't be replicated in print form because of hyperlinks and other features. Maybe you'll hear more over the next two years—but I think it unlikely. "This stuff is hard" may not be helpful, but it's the truth.

I'll keep reading and watching—and providing an informal chronology when it seems appropriate. In this case, unlike filtering and copyright, I find most of the dedicated Web sites so one-sided that I'm compelled to provide a more balanced approach.

## What's Next?

Scholarly access: probably. I've touched on it in "The Good Stuff" and elsewhere. I'm playing with a book proposal, for either myself or someone else. There's a big, complex problem and unless you believe in one of today's Grand Solutions, it isn't going away anytime soon.

Like adult literacy—and like copyright, for that matter—I'd almost bet that a theme will emerge within the next two years that I would never have predicted. I hope that the next theme or themes will be a little more constructive.

### Feedback

## Who's Out There?

Back in June 2001 I prepared a profile of the core readership for *Cites & Insights*—the only readers I can identify. Those are the ones who signed up for CICAL Alert, the Topica mailing list used to announce each new issue a day or two before notices appear on Publib, Web4lib, and PACS-L (assuming all three continue to post them!). Then, there were 243 people on that list; now there are some 375.

Of those, roughly 75 email addresses are ISPs, hotmail, or yahoo mail addresses, leaving around 300 I could track down. Here's what I find:

- **International readership:** More Canadians than Californians are on the mailing list (although California has considerably more people): 27 compared to California's 22. I find 11 people in the United Kingdom (and one specifically in Wales), ten in Australia, four in the Netherlands, three in Switzerland, two each in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, and South Africa—and individuals in El Salvador, Indonesia, Israel, Korea, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay: 22 nations in all. That's six more nations than in June 2001.
- **States:** In June 2001, I could count readers in 33 states and the District of Columbia. That's up to 40—with no geographically identifiable CICAL Alert subscribers in Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Utah, or West Virginia. (Hmm. I've spoken in Arizona, Colorado, and Nevada. I'll assume there's no connection.) Working from the biggest contingents down, in addition to California's 22, I find 18 in New York, 15 Texas, 12 Massachusetts, 11 Florida, 10 Wisconsin, and nine each in DC, Indiana, and Michigan. I find a few smaller clusters interest-

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ing—namely those in states I’ve never (to date) had the pleasure of visiting or speaking in. That includes eight in Kansas, five each in New Hampshire and Oklahoma, and four in South Carolina. I would mention the five in Alaska, but I’ve been there twice (on vacation) and will be speaking at the 2003 state conference.

- **Domains:** 140 .edu or non-US .ac addresses; 64 geographic; 41 .org, 38 .com and .co, and 13 .gov.
- **Libraries and educational institutions:** I believe there are 141 different universities, colleges, schools and institutes (although subdomains may inflate that count), 39 public libraries, 11 library networks, half a dozen state libraries, and a few library companies.
- **Others:** If anything might make me nervous, it’s the eight law firms represented on CICAL Alert (in addition to a legal publisher and a lawyer referral service). Maybe I should run a disclaimer in each issue: Nothing I say about copyright, filtering, or anything else should be construed as legal advice.

Back in June 2001 I thought I that 1,000 to 1,400 copies of each issue were downloaded. The homepage counter still suggests a number in that range. I’m not sure whether that means that readership has reached its natural level, whether people get bored with *Cites & Insights* as new people start reading it, or whether a growing readership uses the direct issue links posted on some Weblogs to reach each issue (bypassing the counter). If 1,000 people are getting something out of *Cites & Insights*, I’m thrilled, so this isn’t an issue.

## Historical Perspective

# DVD: Seven Years and Counting

Overnight successes usually take a while. DVD is no exception. While preparing a brief speech about DVD for an ACRL group two years ago, I looked back at discussions of DVD in *Crawford’s Corner* and, before that, in *Trailing Edge Notes*. To my surprise, such discussions appeared in 19 issues between June 1996 and January 2000.

From the beginning, I thought that DVD could be significant for libraries, so I was trying to track developments and suggest when librarians might start paying attention. That’s a two-part issue: not going overboard prematurely and finding the right time to invest time and money in the medium.

This is, then, a second-level abstraction of DVD’s early years: a recounting of my own thoughts over those years, most of those thoughts based on articles in a range of periodicals. When dates are mentioned, they are not the printed dates for *Library Hi Tech News* where the comments appeared. I’ve backed those dates up two months since my copy was always due to *Library Hi Tech News* at least two months before the cover date.

## 1995: Before the Beginning

While my first mention of DVD by name was in the June 1996 *Library Hi Tech News*, two essays foreshadowed that mention. In July 1995 I wrote a two-page perspective, “Video by the Numbers,” discussing the promises being made for “video CD” formats. The goals were already known:

“[A] new digital video medium using 12cm discs offering much higher capacity than today’s CD-ROM [is] a near certainty. The economics of pressing and distributing CDs of all sorts make the format desirable for publishers and distributors: it’s cheap, durable, lightweight, and doesn’t lose quality as it’s used. The goal is to have a disc that will hold 135 minutes of ‘acceptable’ video, enough for all but the very longest feature film.”

Two discs were being proposed: Sony/Philips’ two-layer single-sided CD holding 8GB, and Toshiba’s two-sided CD holding 9GB. At the time, it was shaping up to be a huge battle with most Hollywood studios and Matsushita on Toshiba’s side. Even then, expectations of overwhelming success were extravagant: “Pundits assert that video CDs will totally dominate the marketplace within a year or two of their introduction.” I didn’t think it would happen that rapidly, partly because of the format battle but more because the installed base of VHS is so enormous. As I noted, “the move from analog to digital audio [LP to CD] wasn’t nearly as rapid as some people now remember.” I also didn’t expect a fast shift because people use VCRs to record.

The heart of the essay was numbers: the amount of data required for high-quality television and the compression that would be required to fit that much data into the disc capacities promised. “Raw storage requirements for 135 minutes of video come to 225 gigabytes. The highest proposed video CD storage capacity is nine gigabytes. Something’s got to give.” At the time, even 12:1 compression yielded VHS-quality output; 23:1 compression wouldn’t be acceptable.

For arcane reasons, I overestimated the data requirements somewhat—but not the need for high compression ratios. Commercial DVD compression



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runs roughly 36:1; fortunately, compression techniques did improve considerably.

Later that year I wrote a brief perspective dismissing Video CD (that is, video on a standard CD) as having real prospects in the U.S. An article in *CD-ROM Professional* (now *eMedia*) asserted, "Video CD will replace the audio CD player" and "ignite an explosion of CD-ROM which will make nonsense of all existing CD-ROM sales forecasts." The article, by a British writer, concluded that "I reckon you 'Yanks' have really blown it this time" by not jumping on the Video CD bandwagon.

Video CD (which did have some popularity in other parts of the world) requires 150:1 compression, yielding picture quality significantly below that of regular VHS. It was a non-starter in America, then and forever. In that perspective, I briefly mentioned. "It does now appear that Sony and Philips, Toshiba, *et al.* will finally agree on a single format." They did—largely because IBM, Compaq, Microsoft, and other computer firms pressured them to do so.

### 1996: For Real...But Not Yet

Come April 1996, the two high-density CD proposals merged and DVD was announced by an impressive array of consumer-electronics leaders. Originally, DVD stood for Digital Video Disc; then (briefly), it meant Digital Versatile Disc. Finally—although some magazines don't accept this—the consortium settled on DVD. Not as an abbreviation, but as a name.

That April, the sense was that DVD's backers expected it to *replace* VHS within a few years. I didn't think that would happen but did think that libraries should be ready to acquire DVDs "by 1998 or 1999, and possibly as early as mid-1997." It was clear there would be computer DVDs, "DVD-ROMs, if you like," probably in 1997. "The migration to DVD will be slow, but it will happen: I expect to have a DVD drive in my computer before the end of the century." In another case of guessing the obvious, I commented that there might be a "new 'super audio CD' format for those who find today's CDs insufficiently high-fidelity"—and Sony's high-density audio format is actually called SACD, Super Audio CD. My final line was the most useful: "Don't rush in, but this one looks like a winner."

A month later, I commented on a John Dvorak column questioning DVD and raised some of my own cautions. Dvorak was wrong on his history and his expectations. I noted that it didn't make sense to accept the claim "as good as laserdisc" until you actually saw a DVD.

The vaunted introduction of DVD players in late 1996 didn't happen, at least not in any serious

way. There was little to say about the fledgling medium during the second half of the year or during early 1997.

### 1997: "Now It Gets Interesting"

That was the headline on a perspective I wrote in March 1997 (prefaced by "DVD"). DVD drives were in the stores, although not many of them. I repeated the reasons that libraries should *like* DVD as a circulating medium, as well as the absurd claims of pundits and enthusiasts.

DVD-ROM was out—sort of. There wasn't a firm software standard for DVD-ROM in March. *MacUser* claimed there would be DVD-R and DVD-RAM drives by "late 1997 or early 1998"—but DVD-R and DVD-RAM didn't show up until 1999.

One pair of industry forecasts was interesting. Toshiba thought there would be 120 million DVD drives (including DVD-ROM) by the end of 2000, a figure that was at least 60 million too high. Philips estimated 25 million drives at that point (too low, but closer)—and thought CD-ROM drives would still outsell DVD-ROM in 2000. I would have guessed otherwise, but Philips was right.

In April, I prepared a "looking forward" column knowing that readers would not see it until late August or early September. DVD players reached stores in April (for \$500 to \$700), with 30 DVD titles available. At that point, I offered a series of marketplace tests readers could use to see whether 1997 would be the "year of the DVD." That set of tests was better crafted than I realized.

I noted that September is the gating point for holiday sales (stuff has to be in the stores in September) and suggested the following criteria, summarized here:

- If local video/electronics superstores are advertising at least half a dozen models from at least three brands, *one of them Sony*, with prices as low as \$350, then 1997 may be the first significant year. If Sony's not there, only one or two units are advertised, the cheapest one is \$500, and models are mostly from Toshiba, Pioneer, and RCA, then "the medium is in trouble."
- If DVD players are available at two or more of Sears, Radio Shack, Target, and K-Mart, then the medium is in good shape; if none of those chains have it, the medium isn't really in the market.
- If there are at least 200 DVDs available at the local Tower, Warehouse or Sam Goody's (including at least 24 you'd like to own) and if local video stores are renting DVDs, then the

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medium may be serious in 1998. But if half the stores that sell videocassettes don't stock DVD at all, or if all the DVDs come from Time Warner affiliates, then it's too early.

I asked how many of the top PC brands (Dell, Gateway, Micron, HP, IBM, Apple and Compaq) offered DVD-ROM drives as options and how many included them as "standard in more than one model. I looked for "at least 100 DVD-ROMs by 1 September" with a handful selling for \$20 or less, and discs from at least two of five key publishers: Learning Company, Microsoft Dorling Kindersley, Corel, and Cambrix.

Come July, I was discussing the overload of DVD articles, including those that said that 12cm DVDs are actually 5.25" in diameter (because DVD-ROM drives use the same PC bays that 5.25" diskette drives used). An excellent *EMedia Professional* article suggested that early DVD-ROM drives might not support DVD video—a legal nightmare that did not, fortunately, come to pass.

At the end of August, I did the reality check that I'd recommended. As you know, that check was discouraging. None of the four chains had DVD players; the local electronics superstore had two \$500 DVD players; there were *no* DVD-ROM discs for sale; and only Gateway and Micron had DVD-ROM drives "standard" on any models.

That was a preview of the September perspective: "DVD: Well, Maybe Next Year." Things hadn't improved. Bargain DVDs had not yet appeared, typical large stores had nowhere near 200 DVDs, most rental stores had never heard of DVD. There were no DVD-ROM discs—and even the Compaq/RCA PC Theatre did not include a DVD-ROM player, although Gateway's competitor did. It was clear that 1997 would *not* be the "year of DVD"—it would have no significant consumer impact. That should not have been surprising; in the consumer electronics market (as opposed to the PC-related market), these things take time.

Come October, things were slow enough that I could make fun of a typically absurd *ComputerLife* article in which the writer praised a \$600 DVD-ROM upgrade kit and told people to "get with the program," noting that the kit included a "mouth-watering bundle of titles that should give even naysayers a reason to upgrade." The discs were *Wing Commander IV*, *Silent Steel*, *Spycraft*, *Encyclopedia Electronica*, and a disc of WB movie trailers. Notably, the drive delivered "good but not great" video quality, "as good as on a VCR" at three-quarters screen but "noticeably grainy" at full screen. Fortunately, sensible people chose not to "get with the program" until there was something to get. Finally,

in November, I recounted a skeptical *PC Magazine* review that suggested waiting for the next generation of DVD-ROM and noted the introduction of a "monthly DVD-ROM magazine" beginning January 1998, from a publisher that expected to "release seven different monthly DVD journals by the end of 1998." It's fair to say that those plans were curtailed for lack of interest.

## 1998: The First Serious Year

It's not that DVD didn't make it to market in 1997—but you couldn't treat it seriously that year. The next year was different. While DVD didn't approach mass media numbers in 1998, it moved from curiosity to mainstream.

In February, *PC World* reviewed an \$800 DVD-RAM drive: A drive that could write and rewrite 2.6GB discs. In April, the first DVD-ROM drive for the Macintosh appeared, a year after Windows DVD drives.

By May, it was time for another "DVD Watch": "Tracking the Maybe Medium." Drive sales in 1997 (as opposed to shipments to dealers) totaled roughly five percent of projections. But the projection had been on the order of three million drives; 150,000 wasn't a landslide, but it compares favorably with, say, ebook appliance sales for the first *three years* they were on the market (fewer than 50,000, as far as anyone can tell). The projections for 1998 suddenly went from 22 million to 3 to 5 million—still too high for set-top drives, as it turned out. The rewriters of history now called DVD the most successful new consumer medium by doing funny numbers.

Microsoft's DVD evangelists now hoped for 20 DVD-ROMs on the market by Christmas 1998; their hopes were once again shattered. Forrester turned too negative on the consumer side (expecting an installed total of 3 to 5 million DVD Video drives by 2002) while still being upbeat for PCs (53 million DVD-ROM drives by 2002). Forrester was definitely wrong on DVD Video drives, since some 15 million players are already in use in the U.S.—but may yet turn out to be about right for DVD-ROM.

One columnist claimed that 15 million DVD-ROM drives would be sold in 1998, another 50 million in 1999, and that it would be difficult to buy a PC without DVD-ROM in 2000. To sum up this pundit's accuracy: wrong, wrong, wrong.

By June, I was convinced that DVD was where it should have been the previous September. Sony DVD Video players were on the market. Good stores had four models or more with some down to \$350; Sears (at least) had DVD drives; and both discount DVDs and hundreds of good titles were around. The

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new target for 1998 sales was down to one million players. Meanwhile, DVD-ROM drives were flourishing but DVD-ROM discs were still dead in the water. That may be partly because licensing fees, at that point, totaled almost \$50,000 before a company could *begin* work on a DVD-ROM, not including equipment, intellectual property, and all that. And, unfortunately, Divx appeared in June: the worst idea associated with DVD, at least so far.

November 1998 saw an oddly backward article in *Macworld*, basically saying that DVD-ROM wasn't ready yet. The article made the (incorrect) claim that it took a long time for DVD to show up on the PC, coupled with the (correct) note that "progress on the Macintosh side is lethargic at best."

### 1999: Becoming a Mass Medium

In early 1999, it seemed that DVD-ROM was becoming "almost standard in home-oriented PCs," a trend that reversed later that year. I noted that public libraries might pay more attention to the installed base of DVD-ROM drives than to the installed base of DVD players when deciding when to add DVDs to their collections. The paradox then—and now—is that DVD-ROMs have not shown up. A January 1999 *EMedia Professional* article claimed that three of four DVDs replicated in 2002 would be DVD-ROMs—but that's only likely to be true if all CD-ROMs are treated as DVD-ROMs (which won't happen).

Forecasters no longer spoke of VHS being swept away by DVD. The writable DVD scene was so confusing that the best writers tried to explain it without picking winners. Another format war was on the horizon: audio-only DVD, either via Sony's SACD or Matsushita's DVD Audio. *PC World* reviewed DVD-ROM kits costing \$229 to \$349 (or as low as \$149 with software MPEG decoding), including reasons you might want to postpone such a purchase.

Come March, I reviewed the scene again, noting that the news for DVD Video was almost entirely good. Every major studio was releasing DVD (as opposed to Divx) discs, mostly on the same day as VHS. There were already more than 3,000 different DVDs on the market. Discounters had arrived (as low as \$8 for a DVD). Rental prices were surprisingly reasonable. Already, DVD had better market visibility than laserdisc ever achieved—but then, DVD didn't have RCA pushing an incompatible, inferior format. I even found half a dozen DVD-ROM discs at CompUSA—but later found that the publisher wouldn't acknowledge that two of those discs had ever been issued! Player prices were down to \$250; DVD-ROM had become *less* standard; and

I'd finally purchased a computer with DVD-ROM drive and tried it out with a DVD movie. It was spectacular. At that point, I said it was time to think about starting a DVD collection—and I continue to believe that March 1999 or June 1999 (when this article appeared) was the right time to start.

DVD-RAM drives for the Mac started to appear in April 1999, for example LaCie's \$799 external drive. Divx succeeded in distracting DVD buyers but not as a medium. Divx died on June 16, 1999, to general applause. I received some DVD-ROMs for review in early 1999—but none since then!

Finally, toward the end of summer 1999, I noted the sure sign that DVD is becoming a mass medium: Columbia House began a DVD club.

### Postscript

I prepared this piece more than two years ago. Since then, DVD has become firmly established as a mass medium and a preferred rental medium. You can buy set-top DVD players for less than \$100 and name-brand units for less than \$150. More than 10,000 DVDs are available, with whole seasons of classic (and some not-so-classic) TV series coming out as compact DVD collections. Some 25% of American households had DVD players by the end of last September; by year's end, that number may be closer to 35%—in the fourth year of widespread availability!

Writable DVD still costs a lot but is becoming more reasonable, and my expectation that DVD-RAM had won the format war was premature. Competitors have made a strong comeback. SACD and DVD-A are both out there but neither one can claim big numbers. Universal DVD/SACD/DVD-A players have arrived, with the first one coming from China. What about DVD-ROM? The drives are once again becoming fairly common—but the discs are few and far between.

### Perspective

## Finding the Ways that Work

Here's another theme I've been using in speeches over the past year. I thought the first set of bullets would become a "Crawford Files" some time this year, together with as much commentary as I can cram into 750 words (a little shorter than this piece). I may still address this topic in "Crawford Files" (alert *Cites & Insights* readers may find the roots of several future columns here!)—but along the way, Joe Janes happened. That is, he published an excellent article in *Library Journal* covering some of

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the same territory quite well. I cited Janes' article shortly after it appeared and I've been quoting a piece of it in speeches since then—see below. Note that “Finding the Ways that Work” is a slogan of Environmental Defense, as I state in my speeches.

The example of DVD makes a good companion to the piece on DVD's history elsewhere in this issue. Here's how the segment of two or three speeches goes:

### DVDs: One of the Ways that Work

DVDs work, and if your library doesn't already collect and circulate them (but does circulate other video), you should work on that soon. By now, any sensible observer can say that DVDs will not only survive but become the dominant physical video medium within a few years. The players already have more than 35% household penetration in the U.S., player prices are down to levels that encourage impulse buying, disc prices have reached impulse-buy levels, almost every movie comes out on DVD and VHS on the same day—but almost always with extra material on the DVD—and DVDs work better for rental and circulation than VHS. At this point, DVD player sales exceed VCR sales (at least in dollar volume) and, astonishingly, DVD *disc* sales exceed pre-recorded videocassette sales in dollar volume.

Is that just hindsight? Not really. It wasn't hard to project the success of DVD, although the timing of that success was (and still is) less predictable. I can't project just when DVD will become the dominant medium—that is, when you'll see DVD versions of movies appear *before* VHS, or possibly movies that don't appear on VHS at all. I'd guess that will happen within ten years, but quite possibly not for at least five years.

DVD looked like a winner for several key reasons. First, it does things that no other medium does as well. Second, it's an incremental change, so familiarity favors it—the discs are like CDs and the idea is like VHS, but better. Third, it began *without* a format war and *with* advance participation of every major consumer electronics firm and every major movie studio—the kind of primary inertia that also assured the success of CDs themselves. Fourth, it was *predictably* headed for appropriate pricing: both players and discs were only incrementally more complex than CD players and discs, reusing most of the same elements.

That's a fairly clear case: really a matter of when and how conclusively, not whether. But, as always, some market analysts overstated not only the speed of DVD's success but the extent, with claims that it would wipe out VHS within a couple of years. That

was and is unlikely, for two reasons that should be obvious to any observer—and librarians need to be thoughtful observers. One, VHS does things DVD doesn't yet do all that well, namely record on a standard and inexpensive medium—but I'll get back to that. Two, and equally important, the installed base of VHS recorders is simply too large to be replaced or made obsolete rapidly. VHS is technologically obsolescent—but then, that's been true ever since Super VHS came out more than a decade ago. It's not obsolete, and unlikely to be so for at least five more years.

### Factors for Probable Success

It's rare that you can project both usefulness and survivability so clearly. I'd like to give you a list of likely winners, and in my newsletter I sometimes offer opinions on innovations that I *hope* will succeed. But I'm not a prophet. Here are some key factors that I think are worth considering.

- Innovations should do something better than existing devices and media, or do something that existing systems just don't do.
- Innovations should resonate with popular need and desire, or at least with needs and desires within the targeted audience.
- Innovations should either be incremental—with enough familiarity to help us understand how and why we'd use them—or so substantially desirable that we're willing to deal with the unfamiliarity.
- Innovations supported by many agencies tend to do better than those exclusively provided by a single agency. MiniDisc may be finding its niche in the U.S., the second time around, at least in part because half a dozen other manufacturers have joined Sony in building the recorders and players. Personal computers would never have proliferated as rapidly if IBM had locked down the design, and Apple's one-vendor proprietary model helps to keep the Mac at a 5% market share.
- Library-specific innovations work better if they piggyback on broader innovations, since libraries are a relatively small marketplace—but shoehorning an inappropriate technology in a library application where it doesn't fit is, ultimately, a recipe for failure.

### Joe Janes' Six Questions

Joe Janes wrote “How to think about technology” in the February 1, 2002 *Library Journal*. He offers his own set of “questions to consider” when evaluating a new technology. For now, before I integrate some of

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these into my own set as what Lobachevsky would call “research,” at least according to Tom Lehrer, here are the questions as Janes states them:

- Is there a benefit to the user?
- Is it accessible, affordable, and worth the cost?
- Does it help uphold the values of the profession?
- Does it play to our strengths?
- Is it likely to endure?
- Does it feel right?

## CICAL History

# Hits and Misses

My plan was to include two separate commentaries—one, “Oops!,” pointing out some of my more dramatic goofs during the first year of *Cites & Insights*, while the second, “Lucky Guesses,” pointed out a few cases where I was on the money. After going through part of that process, I conclude that it’s too early to talk about comments made later than August 2001—and that, excluding annotated citations and PC group reviews, there really aren’t enough notes for two good commentaries.

Here they are in one combined piece: a few cases where I made the right guesses (most of them pretty obvious), and a few others where I...well, “screwed up” seems harsh, but...

## Even a Stopped Clock is Right Twice a Day

- **Free ISPs:** As suggested in December 2000, free ISPs have pretty much bitten the dust. Remember when pundits were saying that we could expect free PCs, free televisions, maybe even free cars, with ads paying for everything? “There’s a little trap in that thinking. If everything’s free, who pays for the advertising?” If you’ve forgotten the extent to which the Internet bubble clouded people’s minds, think about that one.
- **The smell of failure:** In that same issue, I derided DigiScents’ “smell peripheral”—a speaker-size USB peripheral that would emit custom scents based on Website and program instructions—as a really dumb idea. “How much are you planning to pay me to [smell stuff on the Web]?” Not enough, apparently. (In May 2001, I made similar fun of Trisenx which, going beyond the MultiSenx scent device, promised a peripheral in early 2002 that would dispense potato-based wafers with custom tastes.)

- **Hold up that page:** Remember Digimarc’s brilliant alternative to :CueCat? “Hidden watermarks” on printed ad pages with a little Digimarc logo in the corner. You hold the watermarked page up to a Webcam on your PC and off you go to a specific Web page. “Consumers save time because the Digimarc ad takes them directly to the product they want.” I summarized the process—you have a camera on your PC, you’re connected to the Internet, and you’re reading magazines sitting at the PC—and wondered “in what universe” this was easier than typing in a URL. (Then there’s :CueCat itself, but that was *too* easy.)
- What about ComSense’s breakthrough method of authenticating a user’s identity? Since we all have microphones attached to our PCs (at work and at home), you get a smart card with a transmitter that sends an ultrasonic signal when you squeeze a dot. Unless that dot’s also reading your thumbprint, this is like an ATM card with no PIN: Not a great breakthrough in added security.
- **Web appliances:** Remember 3Com’s Audrey, Netpliance’s iOpener, EPods’ ePodsOne, CMi’s Icebox, Compaq’s iPAQ Home Internet Appliance, Intel’s Dot.Station, Virgin’s WebPlayer, or Gateway’s promised Web appliance and Dell’s WebPC? How about “legacy-free” PCs without those silly parallel and serial ports? One respected market analyst estimated that 42 million Internet appliances would ship in 1992. I’m going to guess that number is off by at least 41 million, if you’re generous enough to count WebTV and Cidco’s little MailStation as Internet appliances.
- **Gemstar and ebooks:** In February 2001, I argued that Gemstar’s moves since buying the only two serious ebook appliances on the market had all the ingredients of a recipe for doom, although I may not have used those words. Given that normally-sensible people such as Mick O’Leary were still touting the imminent massive success of ebooks at that point, I’ll take credit for swimming against the tide.
- **Hot trends for 2001:** I was a little doubtful about Amazon.com and all other “Internet businesses” (eBay?) going under or being merged, everybody springing for PVRs embedded in TV sets, and universal adoption of Internet telephony—all expectations for last year.
- **[Inside] Magazine:** When I received a freebie to this print version of a journalism-oriented Web site, I wasn’t impressed. My subscription

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supposedly ran until November 26, 2003—but the magazine didn't even last a year.

## Oops: A Sampling of Errors

- **Pocket desktop:** In the December 2000 issues, I was intrigued by the Pocket Espresso PC, an \$1,128 one-pound computer with “the form factor of a thick paperback.” It had a 533MHz Celeron, 128MB RAM, and 6GB hard disk, using external diskette and CD-ROM. It didn't have a screen or keyboard; essentially, you were carrying the core of a desktop computer with you. I noted that you were paying a lot for portability but still thought it made sense. Nobody else did, and I now wonder whether the device was ever actually produced or whether *Computer Shopper* was praising a prototype. And, of course, I didn't and wouldn't buy one.
- **Nasdaq 4000:** In February 2001, I expressed *hope* that Charles Cooper was right in his projection that the Nasdaq composite index would recover to 4000 points by the end of 2001. Right now, 2000 would look awfully good...
- **CD copies and compression rates:** I expressed considerable doubt in March 2001 that a copy of a CD could sound better than the original—and I've always expressed disbelief that you can retain the sound quality of an original with 10:1 compression (e.g., 128K MP3). I may be wrong on both counts, although the jury's still out on high-compression sound quality.
- **Industry Standard and Suck:** I had no idea that both of these fine operations would go under. In one case, the culprit was expansion and signing too many expensive San Francisco leases. In the other, a Website merger gone bad apparently took down what had been a modestly-profitable enterprise.
- **Sony's Slimtop:** The VAIO Slimtop Pen Tablet PCV-LX900 had an atrocious name but seemed like a winning concept to me—a \$3,000 PC with a 15" pressure-sensitive LCD serving as both display and input device, in addition to a regular keyboard. It got great ratings. It tanked in the marketplace.
- **Visual knowledge representation:** I questioned *PC Magazine's* favorable May 8, 2001 review of Thinkmap, system for building visual “maps” of databases. “Well suited for navigation of online catalogs, knowledge management sites, online exhibitions, and so on...” I still don't get it—none of the ones I've tried have made the slightest bit of sense to me—but dif-

ferent people think differently. As long as a datamap isn't the *only* way to get at the stuff you want, I'm probably wrong here. (In an August 2001 note on a Web4Lib flurry related to such mappings, I started to back down: “I'm willing to be convinced that I'm wrong. Maybe some day.”)

- In July 2001, I characterized M.J. Rose's and Kendra Mayfield's ebook coverage for *Wired News* as follows: “While the tone tends to be closer to *Wired's* ‘If it's feasible, it's inevitable’ attitude than the informed skepticism of, say, *The Industry Standard*, it's good coverage and not entirely gee-whizzy.” I don't see much of Mayfield's work these days, but I did M.J. Rose an injustice. Her weekly column continues—but there's so little interesting to say about ebooks that much of it is about publishing in general. I find her a valuable source and, these days at least, not at all a hypester.
- That same month, the first “Where I Stand” essay appeared and I seemed to promise more. “In the long run, I hope that these essays will be thoughtful summaries of what I believe about a certain issue and why.” What happened? *American Libraries* happened. “The Crawford Files” gets most of what might have appeared in “Where I Stand,” and—unlike *Cites & Insights*—you can get it in HTML!
- In August, I noted several articles from *Future of Print Media Journal*, an e-journal that emerged from a Kent State Web site on the future of print media. “I think it's worth looking at *Future of Print Media* as it progresses.” The extent of that progress was two “quarterly” issues before a formal shutdown.

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## The Details

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