

**Ken's Korner**

**'One Size Fits All' Not True  
When Choosing DTP Tools**

**By Ken Fermoye**

As a writer specializing in specific areas—cars and RVs during the '50s, '60s and '70s, to computers since 1984—I've been asked the same thing time and again: "What is the best \_\_\_\_\_? Fill in the blank with *car, van, camper, computer* or whatever.

Since I began writing a desktop publishing (DTP) column for *Computer Currents* back in the mid-1980s, the most common query has been: "What is the best DTP program?"

My stock answer in all cases: "There is no one *best* of anything; one size does not fit all. A single person might be happy with a sporty roadster but a family of five needs a roomy sedan or minivan. By the same token, a publishing professional needs very different tools than the average computer owner."

In fact, in some cases, a full-featured word processing program might serve all of a user's DTP needs. Let's look at typical uses for publishing software, then try to match them with the tools available.

(One note: Things are complicated today by the growth of online publishing, which involves such things as hypertext markup language (HTML) coding and Acrobat portable document format (PDF) files. I will cover this area in a future column. For now, I'll concentrate hardcopy print output.)

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**From The Dealsguy, Bob Click,  
Greater Orlando Computer User  
Group**

I'm having a disagreement with Best Buy and informing you of it to make you aware of things you "aren't" told in a sales pitch. In other words, read what they say they are giving you.

Several months ago I purchased a new laptop computer with an active matrix screen from Best Buy at a sale price. Because of previous bad experiences, I had said I would never buy from them again, but I thought this was a good buy and made the exception only to regret it. I also purchased the insurance after listening to the sales pitch and asking (not enough) questions. The salesman pointed out (among other things) that in the event it could not be repaired it would be replaced with a new one by the insurance.

Several months later it had to be sent in the second time for service and came back as unreparable. When they offered the replacement, they would only give me a store credit up to the amount I originally paid. In order to get a new laptop with an active matrix screen (like the original had), I would have to pay an additional \$400. I disagreed and was told by the store manager that this provision was written into the insurance agreement (which I hadn't previously read). I was not informed of that qualifying factor in the insurance contract by their salesperson and it would seem that they sold me the insurance, and then took it away with the fine print.

I have been to the Better Business Bureau with no further luck because of the contract wording (pointed out by the response from Best Buy's corporate management) and I am in the process of getting an attorney. I told the BBB that I thought Best Buy used deceptive sales practices, but the BBB sent me a list of other offices for further assistance. Friends tell me I won't win this one, but I never accept defeat automatically so I'll certainly go down swinging if I don't win. Obviously I'll write off Best Buy from now on. Don't believe any sales hype. Read it thoroughly to see if you get what you think you're paying for. Now for the deals.  
**Caere Still Takes Care Of User Groups**

I'm sorry to say that this one got buried on me and I couldn't find it until now. I called Caere and it's still good. All user groups should have gotten this letter, but here it is again through me. You all know the products, so I'll just give the listings.

OmniPage Pro 10.0 retail upgrade, Windows, reg. \$99.95, UG price 69.95

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May 1, 2000

Stark Technical College

North Canton, Ohio

6 PM: Installing & Using Scanners by

Murray Davis; 6:45 Q&A

7:30 PM: Installing and Using CD-RW De-

vices by Art McRowe

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# The Deals Guy, Bob Click

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OmniPage Pro 8.0 retail upgrade, Mac, reg. \$99.95, UG price \$49.95

Image AXS Professional, Win/Mac, reg. \$199.95, UG price \$99.95

PageKeeper Pro 3.0, Windows, reg. \$29.95, UG price \$19.95

OmniForm 4.0, Windows, reg. \$29.95, UG price \$79.95

OmniPage Web 1.0, Windows, reg. \$499.95, UG price \$99.95

OmniPage Pro Scanner Suite, Windows, reg. \$99.95, UG price \$74.95

You must use their order form. Someone in your user group should have it, but if not, get it mailed to you by going to:

<http://www.caere.com/survey/usergroups.asp> to apply. The "special offer" code is 225. This offer is still good through April, perhaps longer.

## Keep Out Prying Eyes

If you've switched to the high speed of DSL or cable Internet service and love it, you may not know that your hard drive is wide open to prying eyes (with computers). No protection is built-in for keeping others from entering your computer for various reasons. A friend told me just how easy it is for anybody to take a look at every hard drive on your line. What you need is a firewall to prevent that and here is where you can get it FREE.

Steve Gibson, developer of the famous "Spinrite" software has a Web site offering such, and will even shock you when he tries to enter your computer. Try <http://www.grc.com> and his other sub site at <http://www.grc.com/x/ne.dll?bh0bkyd2> devoted to testing systems for possible security holes. It provides information as to why these exist and offers suggestions for better security implementation.

I read in a Central Pennsylvania PC Association message to members of that author's computer being probed five times within two hours according to a utility that logs such things, not to mention the other times listed in his log. He also offered the following sites for more information on probes; <http://www.robertgraham.com/pubs/firewall-seen.html> or <http://www.robertgraham.com/pubs/index.html>. I don't know the author's name but I thank him for the extra sites etc., although I've been planning to include Steve Gibson's sites for your information for a couple of months now.

## Something Free From Adobe

Sharing photos is as easy as drag and drop with this free download from <http://ActiveShare.com> from Adobe. Their ActiveShare desktop software integrates with that companion Web site to present a complex solution that makes it easy for everyone from kids to grandparents to join in photo fun by offering a central posting site.

So far, it only applies to Windows 95/98/NT 4.0. Look it over on that Web site and see if it isn't a great plan. It allows you to share your new photos with all your relatives or friends (notice I said "or"), even if they live in other states.

On the same topic, I'll include the following information

and comments from Cathy Grammer Margolin who finds and shares things for her user group and includes me in her e-mailings.

## Free Photo-sharing Web Sites

At Comdex, everyone had a photo-sharing web page where you could upload unlimited pictures for free to share with friends and family.

1. [www.zing.com](http://www.zing.com) -- nice site
2. [www.clubphoto.com](http://www.clubphoto.com) -- can edit pics online
3. [www.gatherround.com](http://www.gatherround.com) -- by Intel -- recently improved
4. [www.photopoint.com](http://www.photopoint.com) -- must e-mail pictures

A review of all these sites can be found at:

<http://www.shortcourses.com/specialtopics/sharing/sharing.htm>

Visit <http://www.shortcourses.com/> for a free short course that includes explanations of photo file formats, digital cameras and photo printers.

## From Our Friends At Atlanta PC User Group

Michael Rogers of the Atlanta PC User Group did all the footwork for their group and included my readers. I surely thank Michael and Richard for the help, and their message follows: "Richard Young, President of World Skyline has extended the following offer to User Groups reading the (deals) column. Unlimited online training for a year for just \$99. A savings of about 30% off their regular price of \$129. The training includes computer-related topics such as the MS Office Suite, Oracle, HTML, MCSE and many others. Also offered are personal development courses such as stress management, time management, grammar skills, and other work related coursework. You can check the curriculum and demos, and even enroll at <http://training.atlsky.com>. Please use the code USGRP020604 to get the training deal."

Next are a couple things I found in newsletters that I thought you should know about.

## High Speed Data Connection Information

Are you wondering if it would be possible to get a DSL or cable connection in your area, and how about the cost of these services? Thanks to the Macon User Group newsletter I have the answer for you. Go to <http://www.getspeed.com>, enter your address, and GetSpeed will show you what is available, and the pricing.

## Do Yourself a Favor and Check That Battery

I read this very important tip from Phyllis Evans in the Southeastern Michigan Computer Organization Data Bus. You can download PRAM Battery Checker (freeware) at <http://www.polar-orbit.com>. Installation will place it in your startup folder where it will check your battery each time you start up. If it detects a problem, you'll see a message about replacing the battery. Don't keep track of your battery and you may pay the consequences.

I meant to include more on free ISPs, but I had to take them back out because of a lack of space this month. I also have some interesting feedback from people on all that, and will include some of those URLs if I have room next month. I keep thinking I won't have enough to write about each month, but so far that hasn't happened. I hope everyone gets something out of it. Thanks to all that send me information. One was even from a person picking

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## The Deals Guy, Bob Click

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up one of the Central Florida Computer Society newsletters at a Hamcation where we had a membership table.

This month's column was another rush job, but not without deals. Please tell me how to come up with more hours in a day to get everything done, especially when I'm supposed to be retired. I'm sorry to say that I have not gotten my Bobclick.com Web site up and running yet. I haven't even started my Web Express software in a couple of months. Be patient.

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [[dealsguy@mindspring.com](mailto:dealsguy@mindspring.com)]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns.

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## Ken's Korner DPT Tools, cont.

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First comes what I call "personal publishing." This includes creating greeting cards, holiday season letters, simple 2- or 4-page newsletters, and 1-page bulletins or flyers. Microsoft Home Publishing, any of the Print Shop-type programs or Microsoft Word let you combine formatted text and clipart or digital images, including photos, and flow text from column to column to produce this kind of work.

Mac versions of Word and Print Shop are available. If you want to explore Linux platform possibilities, check out Corel's offerings.

Next step up is production of more complex documents: 8- to 32-page newsletters or journals; long reports that require footnoting or indexing; trifold brochures; and anything that includes imbedded tables. I've long recommended Microsoft Publisher for such midlevel DTP work. It does everything that entry-level programs can, and it offers a lot of the features that high-end programs do.

I began experimenting with Publisher when it first came out. At the time, I was editing and producing newsletters for five clients, ranging from a Maritime Museum and large mobile home park to a retail store, bicycle organization and high-tech firm specializing in printer and fax testing software suites. I was a devoted Ventura Publisher fan in those days, having used it since serving as a beta tester before Version 1.0 was released.

Switching the retail store and bicycle publications to Publisher was easy. I continued to use Ventura for the other newsletters because they demanded special pagination or other features that the first version of Publisher didn't offer. From the mid- to late-1990s, I found myself using Publisher for more and more newsletters as Microsoft added to its capabilities.

I recommend Publisher regularly in my presentations to DTP SIGs and Media Workshops. It is well-suited for User Group (UG) newsletters, and it widely used for that purpose. The major-

ity of the 100-plus UG publications I receive each month from groups that use my Ken's Korner column are produced by editors using MS Publisher.

In fact, if pressed, I would have to admit that Publisher comes closest to the "one size fits all" concept for the usual DTP chores of most SOHO users. And the price is right, about \$100 for Publisher 2000 and \$129 for Publisher Deluxe 2000, with rebates of \$20 in the retail boxed programs for users of earlier Publisher versions.

If your goal is to produce long documents, Microsoft Word may well do the trick. Recent versions include many of the features that made Ventura Publisher the program of choice for books, theses and lengthy reports during the '80s.

Microsoft Publisher is not the tool for professional publishing chores, and it is neither meant nor advertised to be the right choice for such work. When you move up to this level, suitable applications cost much more and are more difficult to master. Prices start at about \$500 and escalate from there. Add plug-ins that facilitate specialized tasks, and cost of a complete publishing package can run \$2,000 and more. Companion software, such as high-end graphics applications (and *their* plug-ins), can more than double that figure.

Programs in this category include Adobe's PageMaker 6.5 Plus, FrameMaker and InDesign; Quark XPress; and Corel's Ventura 8. The Adobe products and Quark XPress come in both Windows and Macintosh versions but Ventura is available for Windows only.

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## Honesty, Accuracy: Keys To Good Product Reviews

**By Ken Fermoye**

After meeting notices and other club news, product reviews make up a major share of the content in most user group publications. Therefore, it's important—even critical—that they be done properly. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case.

In the 2½ years since I started my Ken's Korner column I've read at least 2,000 newsletters, sent to me by groups that use the articles. I don't pretend to read every single one cover to cover, but I do scan them all and I do read most of the interesting material, including reviews. Most are okay, some are very good, and some are terrible! The majority of them would be improved if reviewers followed a few simple rules.

- Honesty is the only policy – Yes, you want to keep vendors happy so they will continue to support your group and the UG community as a whole, but your first obligation is to your fellow members. This means telling it like it is. If you find a flaw in the product, tell your readers about it.

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- Be fair to readers & product – Don't blame the product for your shortcomings or those of your computer, however. If a software program runs slower than you'd like, maybe it's because your machine doesn't have enough RAM. Or perhaps you haven't configured things properly. You need to put things into context so readers can judge whether a flaw you report is inherent in the product or may be pilot error.
- Accuracy is vital - I've read many reviews in which the reviewers criticized a product with which I was familiar. It was obvious to me that the reviewer didn't understand it, had not read the manual or help page carefully, and had not sought help from a more experienced fellow member or the product's Tech Support before writing the review.
- Explain user benefits – Up front, preferably in the first paragraph, tell readers what the product is designed to do for them and how it can make their computing life easier. Be specific enough so they can determine whether or not the product would be useful for the type of computing they do most often.
- Specify system requirements – We all know that requirements listed a box aren't usually realistic. Sure, a graphics program may run with just 32MB or RAM, but it will make a snail's pace look speedy. Spell out exactly how your system is configured so readers can compare it to their own setups. This is part of being fair, Item 2 above.
- Balance subjectivity, objectivity – You're allowed to editorialize, but make it clear when you're giving a subjective opinion. ("This program was somewhat difficult for me to use because the interface is different from the XYZ software that I normally use" is a clearly-labeled subjective statement." "It took exactly 5.4 seconds to save to save a 5.6MB file to this disk" is clearly objective.)
- Check out tech support – Is there an 800 number? How long were you on hold before a real live techie was available? Is a manual furnished in the package? Is the manual helpful? (Hint: Lots of illustrations, including screen shots, and a very complete Index, with abundant cross-indexing are characteristics of a really good manual.) Remember the fairness factor, however, and check to see what experiences others have had with this vendor's tech support.
- Include relevant details – Give readers the suggested price, and user group discount, if one is offered. Add complete vendor contact information: address, phone & fax numbers (both sales & tech support), website URL, e-mail address

Your group may have its own set of product review guidelines. If not, it would be a good project for an editorial committee to undertake. Such guidelines should spell out minimum and maximum lengths, how a review should be delivered to the editor (usually on diskette or via e-mail), what file format should be used (plain ASCII text, Word, Rich Text Format, etc.) and other editorial requirements.

Correct grammar and spelling are certainly important, but don't let lack of writing experience stop you from doing reviews. Honesty, accuracy and fairness are more important than an occasional split infinitive or misspelling. Do a spell check, and you might want to have a third party check your opus for obvious goofs (An ex- or current English teacher would be great).

Those are the basics. Follow them and you will be a real asset to your group when it comes to doing product reviews that are effective, readable and useful for readers.

**Wanted: willing volunteer to fill open Board of Directors position**  
**Qualifications: a willingness to serve**  
**Requirements: attendance at monthly general and Board of Directors meetings**  
**Contact: Frank Ramsey, 330-699-4711, [af Ramsey@yahoo.com](mailto:af Ramsey@yahoo.com) if interested or for more details**

*The following is from an open e-mail to the editors of C/C++ Users Journal sent out on a broadcast mailing to all members of the Akron Digital Group earlier in April, ed.*

Letter to editors of C/C++ Users Journal [www.cuj.com](http://www.cuj.com)

Dear CUJ:

Often it happens that standards are defined but never promoted. The computing industry finally has the vocabulary to speak correctly and unequivocally about large amounts of memory. Let's encourage ourselves to learn, if not to use, the new vocabulary.

Years ago the computing industry borrowed some terminology from SI, the international system of measurement. Namely, the multipliers kilo, mega, giga, etc, each a power of 1000, have in turn been co-opted and equated to respective powers of 1024. Such use is most often applied to memory capacity measured in bytes.

Last year the IEC gave set forth new prefixes to use in place of those that have been borrowed. These binary prefixes correspond to the popular decimal ones, so it's not hard to learn the new words. Here are a few examples, with their names, abbreviations, and values.

kilo = k = 1000 ---> kibi = Ki = 1024

mega = M = k<sup>2</sup> ---> mebi = Mi = Ki<sup>2</sup>

giga = G = k<sup>3</sup> ---> gibi = Gi = Ki<sup>3</sup>

The National Institute of Standards & Technology presents the rest here with some background and supporting information:

[<http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/binary.html>]

As professionals we have to keep up with the technology, and with the terminology. Daft as they may seem at first, it's also up to us to break in the correct terms. Those of us who fancy ourselves computer-literate should at least understand the new terms. It's my own opinion, that the standardization of accurate terminology renders incorrect the continued misuse of the borrowed words.

Problem is, Kibibytes make me hungry.

Bob Neifert

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## Shareware Shelf by Art McRowe, ACPCUG

This shortened issue of Shareware Shelf is titled "Sour Grapes!" It is about one particular shareware program that is singled out only to be an example of trials and tribulations in getting rid of a trial program.

The program in discussion is **SpeedConnect**. This program is downloadable from numerous web (ftp) sites including ZDNet. The purpose of **SpeedConnect** is to speed up your (my) connection to the Internet through your ISP (Internet Service Provider) by carefully analyzing the manifold settings of your computer hookup to the ISP. Many settings are there by default, when the default was designed by Microsoft for computers hooked to the web using a network card sharing a corporate T-1 line. POTS (plain old telephone service) is a long way from that scenario!

It worked OK. It installed with only a few features enabled (unregistered). I did not see any significant speed increase. I did not pay and register my copy. After 30 days, **SpeedConnect** notified me on **EVERY** bootup that I was overdue and that **SpeedConnect** had returned my computer to its original settings. **OK, fair enough!** Except things were slower, and not at their original settings!

1. I couldn't get **SpeedConnect** to not stop being called on startup. But it was not in the startup menu.
2. I went to the Registry and eliminated any string containing **SpeedConnect**.
3. I found that my modem serial port was set for something less than 33K. I had to go into the Control Panel, System, Serial Ports to reset to over 57K! Not fair!
4. I still cannot eliminate the calling of **SpeedConnect** during bootup. By eliminating all the program files, at least **SpeedConnect** isn't there, but I'm certain the system is spending some time hunting for it.

What can I do? I am looking for advise! In the meantime, I am condemning **SpeedConnect** for having no Uninstall and leaving me with no cure.

