tools of the trade

**Lexar
Jump Drive
with MP3**

Copernic Summarizer

Reading, Writing, and Photography Tricks

With the flood of print information online and e-mail, news, white papers, business plans—there's hardly enough time to get through what you have to read, much less what you would like to read each day. The **Copernic Summarizer** offers a solution by creating concise summaries, on the fly, of a variety of materials—PDFs, e-mails, Word documents, Web pages, and others. The summaries can be read, saved, printed, or e-mailed to others. In the main window there's a display of the key

concepts, key sentences, and system tasks. When browsing online, you can see LiveSummarizer displayed as a pane at the bottom of the page, and appearing in that pane are continuous, real-time summaries. The technology at work, WebEssence, is a content-filtering function that removes irrelevant text, ads, and navigation items as it summarizes the essential text elements on the page. When browsing through file directories, you can keep Summarizer's floating bar on the page, and when you come across a file you want to see in summary form, you just drag and drop it into the box line in the bar and a summary opens. There's a demo and trial download offer on the Copernic page at www.copernic. com. You also might want to look at the company's free Copernic Desktop Search program featured in the Tech Forum section on the next page.

The two **Lexar** memory products on the page (**Jump Drive** above and **Photo Player** below) double as memory management devices and something else. The Photo Player has an RCA cable hookup for your television, and it functions as a combination card reader and slide projector. It accepts smart and flash media cards, and there are four controls on top of the reader to power on, start an automatic slide show, go forward, and go backward one image at a time. There's also a remote control to operate

the player from a distance, say, in an armchair across the living room.

The other Lexar device, pictured at the top right, is a Jump Drive that combines data storage with an MP3 music player. Using the faster USB 2.0 transfer rate, the drive comes in two capacities—128mb and 256mb. It will store any type of file, and it will play MP3 and WMA music files. You connect it to your computer at any open USB port, even those supporting the older USB 1.0 speeds. A neck strap lets you wear it as a miniature MP3 player that

Lexar Photo Play 2.0

A Pebble in a Mudslide ◆ Michael Castelluccio, Editor

■ THE LAST TIME YOU WENT rooting around the file directories on your computer, looking for a lost file, did you get the feeling that there's a subterranean level somewhere in there into which work disappears—a dark place with small piles of moldering files and maybe even some lost socks? Then, as you checked off a list of possible names you might have given the document, did your blood pressure start to track the bouncing CPU meter on the toolbar?

The problem with finding stuff on your desktop is only compounded by the ever-increasing storage capacity of your hard disk and network drives whose letters reach the middle of the alphabet. The primary cause, though, has more to do with human nature. Consider all the psychological forces at work that create the phenomenon called the junk drawer (found in most American kitchens). The same

thing happens with your computer. Think about what you toss in that drawer:

1. It's always something you might need, someday. Maybe.

2. You're sure you'll find it there because…well, because that's where you throw everything. Tools, string, replacement flashlight bulbs, and that thing you found on the floor that looks like it's part of something else—it's probably important, and you're sure you'll find out later what it's for. Save it.

3. And we do this just to create that false sense of security that you can find anything if you just look in the junk drawer.

The junk drawer is a half-measure. It's our response to the uneasiness that accompanies *continued on next page*

plays through the earbud headphones that are included. This is one of two MP3 player/storage device models offered by Lexar. www.lexar.com

Expect to see more combinations like these two as thumb drives replace floppies and CDs as the most convenient read/write storage for computers. There already are flashlight, pen, knife, MP3, and even digital camera combinations for storage that become less boring every day. The hybrid makers promise to include even more entertainment and practical functions in the future.
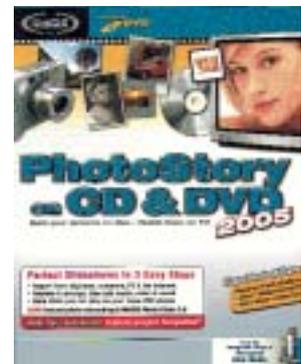
Multimedia Slideshows

The morphing of the computer and the televi-

sion continues abetted by the DVD player, which offers a bridge for digital content—photos, music, and sound. For anyone looking for an easy way to create multimedia content for marketing, product demos, training materials, or just video photo albums, times have never been better. A recent offering of this kind of production software that's very reasonable and easy to use is **PhotoStory on CD & DVD** from **Magix**. With simple drag-and-drop and button commands, the program lets you build an onscreen storyboard that tracks all the elements of the timeline—visuals, sound, transitions, and timing. There are three stages of

the process: First, you import your images from digicams, scanners, your PC, or the Internet; you then repair and arrange your pictures and add a sound track, music, voice, and effects; finally, you burn the presentation to a CD or DVD. The PhotoClinic area will help you create panoramas; remove scratches, spots, and redeye; add effects, create collages, and convert photos to drawings or paintings; and much more. There's a full-TV-picture-size option that ensures the image size is adapted to fit a television screen, and a title generator helps you create your own titles and title templates. When you edit in the Timeline Mode you can see four tracks: the

photos or videos are on the first; the second has the sound tracks for videos or the frames provided; the third shows the titles created with the text button in the Storyboard Mode; and the fourth track is for additional sound material—your own narrative from the MediaPool. Go to www.magix.com for more information and a downloadable demo. ■

Magix's PhotoStory

tossing something away when we're not really sure if we should keep it. We should know better—after all, we're smart enough to call it what it really is, just a *junk* drawer, but we're not smart enough to make the decision needed to put the thing where it belongs or to get rid of it.

Sadly, we do the same with our computers. By the time we're clicking on the magnifying glass icon to find something, we've already lost. The C drive has screens full of folders, and e-mail is page after page of cryptic headings and spam. There are just way too many junk drawers for anybody to deal with.

Start Backwards

So, what about doing your search *before* your files become a monumental, cascading pile? Impossible, you say? Well, not if you index every file in a searchable matrix as it's added to your hard drive. Sort of like jamming a miniaturized agent into that crowded junk drawer—an agent that will organize and catalog the whole mess.

One such agent that does the sorting for you is called the Copernic Desktop Search program (CDS™) or the "Search Engine for Your PC"™. Released in late August by Copernic Technologies, Inc., the three most amazing things about CDS are:

1. Its very small size—a couple of megabytes (2.3).
2. The fact that it's free (go to www. copernic.com for your copy).
3. What it does (it's like Google for your desktop).

The Copernic system indexes your hard drive—files, e-mails, images, videos, audios, contacts, and even favorites. You can open the program into a screen-size window (see above) or use the handy search deskbar on the taskbar no matter what program is running.

On the top of the CDS window there are buttons to open files, or all of your pictures, music files, and

so on. The results of the search appear in the top right frame arranged by date, folder, or file type—you decide which. In the frame below that there's a Quick Preview of the highlighted file. For image indexes, the Preview offers thumbnails (see other screen view). If you don't remember the name you gave the file, but you know you wrote it last Wednesday, you can search by date in the Refine Search frame. It has the following headings: Today, Yesterday, This Week, This Month. Or you can call up a calendar and browse that way.

Along with the hard-drive search, Copernic will search the Web for you within the same window. Or you can use the slot on the taskbar. There's a frame for entering a search term, and then you click the category you want to look in (The Web, News, Images, Shopping, or the categories on Your Computer—E-mails, Files, Music, Contacts, and so on). The taskbar box remains open even when you close the main program window, and it can be accessed while running any other program.

All in all, Copernic Desktop Search is a great way to find your direction in the mess that each of us makes of our computer's hard disk. Add to that that it's free and very easy to use, and you have an unbeatable offer. There's even a brief print manual you can download at the company's site, www.copernic.com.

Eric Lundquist, an editorial writer for *eWeek* magazine, recently commented on the cost of losing information on your computer. "The amount of time companies lose to employees searching for old e-mail, memos, and financial data probably even surpasses the amount of time companies lose to their Fantasy Baseball and Football enthusiasts." ■