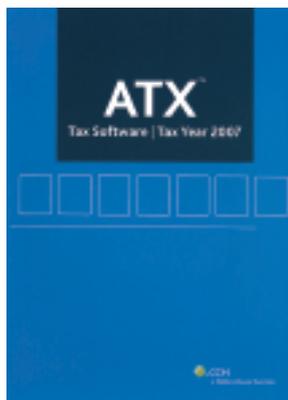


tools of the trade

There are five versions of the **ATX Tax Preparation Software** from CCH designed for professionals in small-sized firms and those with solo practices. All are based on the same powerful, easy-to-use program. The basic 1040 program includes all federal individual forms and schedules and forms for up to three states. 1040 Office adds all states and free electronic filing for 100 clients. MAX® includes those and all federal business and specialty forms, all state business and specialty forms, free electronic filing, 10,000 calculating forms, Kleinrock™ 1040, and CCH® 1040 Express Answers. The Total Tax Office™ and Total Tax & Accounting Office have all of those features plus ATX Trial Balance in Total Tax and Fixed Asset Manager and Client Write-Up with Payroll in the Accounting suite. Both top-level programs have the ATX Document Manager that lets



you scan W-2s, 1099s, 1098s, and other forms to store in the client's folder. Total Tax and the Accounting Office come with a six-volume tax research library of guides and bulletins. Visit www.atxinc.com for complete information on all the packages as well as demos and information about hands-on training.

Laptops are great to carry from client to client during tax season, but unless you have a decent numerical keypad, the top row of numbers is a nuisance. Logitech has a very useful keypad that you can throw into your bag, and it requires no wires to con-

nect to your laptop. The **Cordless Number Keypad** has a 2.4GHz micro-receiver that plugs into any USB connection. After you use it, it is stored within the body of the keypad so it doesn't get misplaced. There's no software needed to install the keypad, and it runs on two AAA batteries. Batteries last up to six months, and there's an indicator light to let you know when they are running low. Three quick keys give you one-touch access to Excel, the calculator, and the Web, and there are shortcut keys for use in Excel. Soft side grips make the keypad easy to hold, and the unit comes with a protective carrying case.



Logitech Cordless Number Keypad

Go to www.logitech.com and look under Notebook Products.

TurboTax Premier is one of five federal and state tax preparation programs from **Intuit, Inc.** Premier is designed specifically for taxpayers who own stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or rental properties. It offers step-by-step guidance in preparing returns that include investment and property income, including 401(k)s and IRAs. The basic features of the program include an improved EasyStep interview and error check; the ability to import W-2 and 1099 information from more than 100,000 companies as well as TurboTax,

Quicken, and QuickBooks Import; E-file with an e-mail confirmation; live answers online from TurboTax experts; ItsDeductible for charitable donations; Deduction Maximizer Center with

Web 2.0 (Part Two) ◆ Michael Castelluccio, Editor

■ LAST MONTH, WE LOOKED AT wikis, one of the hallmark technologies for Web 2.0. These community-managed databases fit the definition of Web 2.0 sites because, unlike the kind of push publishing that built Web 1.0, these demand interactive users and succeed because of collective intelligence. This month we'll take a closer look at two other 2.0 institutions—the blogosphere and mashups.

Early website managers were content with passive readers who could be counted in visits and hits. Newer sites want you to do more than just sit there tapping the up or down arrow keys—they want your reaction. In some cases, they want you to become a serious content provider. Wikipedia, for instance, wants writers, editors, proofers, and photographers. SourceForge wants programmers who donate their skills writing free software (<http://sourceforge.net>).

Blogs

Remember the teacher who would arrange the desks in a circle, and then you and the rest of the gang would spend 40 minutes pooling your ignorance on whatever topic he hadn't bothered to prepare that day? Well, you might think blogs would suffer from the same flawed assumption that made those classes interminable. After all, a blog (Web log) in its simplest definition is a personal journal published regularly online. Since very few people keep journals the way Samuel Pepys did, you might imagine a cataract of inane prose flooding online channels. Now that Google will help you set up a pretty presentable blog page with maybe a half-dozen keystrokes, it shouldn't surprise anyone that there are about 112.8 million blogs to choose from today.

But there are a few differences *continued on next page*



350 deductions; and a new Audit Risk Meter. For investments (Schedule D), there's an improved Basis-Pro™ cost basis calculator, help with mutual fund sales showing capital gains and losses, and guidance for reporting Nonqualified Stock Options (NQSOs), Incentive Stock Options (ISOs), and Employee Stock Purchase Plans (ESPPs). For rental properties (Schedule E),

there's a rental property conversion expert for setting up new rental properties, a depreciation expert, and a short interview process for multiple rental property entries. More information about Premier and the other Turbo packages can be found at www.turbotax.com.

Fujitsu's ScanSnap S510 and S510M is a color image scanner that comes in two versions for Mac and PC users. The low-profile scanner will scan 18 double-sided pages per minute, scanning both sides of each sheet in a single pass. The auto document feeder holds 50 sheets at a time. Four automatic features simplify digitizing any document. Auto color

detection distinguishes color documents from black and white and seamlessly converts both into PDFs. Auto paper size detection can detect paper sizes such as A4, B5, A5, B6, A6, business card, legal, and letter. Auto de-skew straightens images and shows them in their proper orientation. And auto blank page detection saves memory space by automatically deleting blank pages. The ScanSnap is small—a little over six inches tall with a footprint of 6.2" × 11.2" inches. The scanner comes bundled with ABBYY FineReader 3.0 optical character recognition software, which lets you convert documents into editable and searchable



Fujitsu ScanSnap Scanner

PDFs by pressing a single button. Adobe Acrobat 8 Professional is also included along with Readiris Pro 11 for exporting documents into Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and HTML. The resolution of the scans can be up to 600 dpi. www.us.fujitsu.com

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between blogs and those collaborative educational opportunities from the past. First, the room is bigger, much bigger (planet-wide), and you're not going to get Saturday detention when you just get up and leave. The simple journals kept by people living in exotic faraway places can be as interesting as those kept by celebrities and experts. But if the content is weak, click the home button. There will be no quiz about it later on.

As they have evolved, blogs have become more difficult to define. Salon was entered into the Webbie Awards competition as a blog, but, if you spend a little time navigating the site (www.salon.com), you'll discover a content-rich e-zine with a number of bylined articles, regular columns, ads, reviews, and even a section called Community "where Salon's readers gather to debate the news of the day and share the real issues of their lives." The complexity of the daily coverage would have overwhelmed Mr. Pepys, even though he also was covering big events like the Great Fire of London and the Plague.

Somewhere between blogs like Slate and Salon and those written by kids in your neighborhood, there's an interesting class of blogs produced by individuals who happen to be subject experts in their fields. One of my favorites is Lawrence Lessig's blog (www.lessig.org/blog). Lessig is a world-class attorney specializing in copyright and cyberspace law. He teaches law at Stanford Law School and has published several seminal texts on copyright, the Internet, and *The Future of Ideas*. Four of his books, incidentally, are available as free PDF downloads on his blog. Professor Lessig arranged with his publishers to make them available through Creative Commons licensing.

There's commentary on the site, a backlog of articles, and even a wiki managed by Lessig.

Lessig is only one of thousands of experts who publish blogs, but sometimes the problem is finding them among the 112 million. To help with that, there's a search engine just for blogs. It's called Technorati, and it's at <http://technorati.com>. Because the home page features "what's Percolating in the blogs now," if you're looking for a simplified index, a better place to start might be <http://technorati.com/pop/blogs>. There you'll find two tabbed lists, each with 100 sites. One tab shows "the biggest blogs in the blogosphere, as measured by unique links in the last six months," and the second tab lists the top 100 blogs that have been put on people's favorite lists. By the way, Technorati lists Boing Boing (www.boingboing.net) as the most popular blog in the world, according to its rankings. You might also want to check out the winners of the Weblog Awards, the Bloggies, at <http://2007.bloggies.com>. There's a simple list that includes all the categories and links to the finalists and the winners for 2007.

Mashups

In 2005, people began creating new applications by combining different resources online. The new combination, called a mashup, used publicly available APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) from sites like Google Maps and Amazon and combined them in new programs. For example, HousingMaps (<http://www.housingmaps.com>) combines information from Google Maps and Craigslist to provide a new website that lets you search locations for available rentals. Click on a city, and choose among four categories: For

Rent, For Sale, Rooms, and Sublets. The great thing is that, as you drill down through price ranges and types, you get the street maps as well.

Mashups are a natural for the Internet, with its amazing diversity of information just begging to be rearranged by this new collage-style programming. And you don't have to be a seasoned programmer to do it.

For a clear explanation of the technology—at least the basics—you can dial up a YouTube video made by David Berlind, an executive editor at ZDNet, called "What is a Mashup?" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRcP2CZ8DS8).

In his presentation, Berlind shows how developers can come up with a new combination, select the available APIs from sites like Amazon, Google, eBay, and Technorati, and then mash up two or more functions into a new application. Curiously, his first example suggests that you combine an API from a site that tells you where crimes took place with Google Maps. Maybe not the greatest app for the already paranoid, but he does go on to describe a few other more benign mashups using the mapping function.

Berlind describes mashups as "the fastest growing application ecosystem in the world today," producing around 10 mashups a day. And the growth will continue as the process becomes easier. Wikipedia lists three basic kinds of mashups: consumer, data, and business mashups, but the categories will, no doubt, branch out as the art form develops.

Although some think the Web 2.0 concept is just hype, when you look at the dynamics of wikis, blogs, and mashups, they certainly don't resemble the content published in the first years of the Internet. ■