TOOLS of the TRADE

Canon P-150 Personal Scanner

Canon's new imageFORMULA P-150 is the fastest USB-powered duplex scanner available, and it's portable. Weighing a little more than two pounds, the color scanner is only 11" long by 3.7" wide and 1.6" tall. Powered by the USB port of any computer or a standard power source, the P-150 provides a "scan-anywhere" solution. The one-pass duplex scanning will process 15 pages per minute, both sides, in color and black and white. The feed slot will hold batches of up to 20 documents. Built-in software provides a "plug-and-scan" capability with any desktop or laptop PC and includes Canon's CaptureOnTouch Lite and CaptureOnTouch Lite software, along with Nuance PaperPort (for document management) and NewSoft Presto BizCard (for scanning business cards). Features include auto color detection, auto page-size detection, deskew (image straightening), pre-scan, prevent bleed-through/remove background, and color enhancement. The scanner includes ISIS and TWAIN standard drivers for integration with any desktop applications. Document sizes that the P-150 can handle include widths from 2" to 8.5" and lengths from 2.7" to 14". On the road, the high-speed scanner will provide quality images of purchase orders, commission claims, contracts, monthly accounts, receipts, photographs, or written notes—whatever needs to be documented and sent back from remote locations.
www.canon.com

Verbatim InSight™ Portable Hard Drive

The Verbatim InSight Portable Hard Drive features sleek styling, a generous 500GB storage capacity, and a display that is always on, even after you unplug your drive from the computer. In the display panel, you can read the name you have given it and the current amount of storage still left on the drive. You can name the device by owner, type of content, department—whatever is most useful. The space left is updated as you plug in or shut down your drive, and you can rename the drive from the PC or Mac you're connected to. The display is a liquid crystal cholesteric, "always-on" display with 32×126 pixels. A little larger than a 3×5 card, the InSight is a pocket-size drive. Actual dimensions are $5.9" \times 3.37" \times 0.63"$, and it weighs less than six ounces. The curved end accents the display, and the finish is glossy piano-black. The interface is one USB mini-B port, and, although the InSight can be used with a PC or MAC, the software included, a copy of Nero BackItUp, is compatible only with Windows operating systems. The drive has a speed of 5,400 RPM, and the data transfers top out at 480 Mb/s with a USB 2.0 high-speed connection (12 Mb/s maximum with a USB 1.1 connection). There's a five-year warranty, and the InSight is compatible with Windows 2000, XP, Vista, Windows 7, and Mac OS X 10.1 or higher.
http://verbatim.com/index.cfm

TaxACT Business Tax Software

The TaxACT Business Tax Software offerings include six federal and three state programs. The three business offerings (Federal Partnerships, S Corporations, C Corporations) are available at $39.95 each, the home and business combination programs for the same three business designations are $54.95, and there are three categories of state products for businesses at $14.95. The TaxACT 2009 Business 1065 program will prepare one 1065 partnership return using a question-and-answer, step-by-step process that automatically calculates the required figures. All Schedule K-1 forms are automatically allocated and updated, and depreciable assets are kept track of for this year and next. All the forms you need are included, and you

TECH FORUM

Anno Liber

By Michael Castelluccio, Editor

The first year of the book, 1439, was probably not recognized at the time for what it was—a civilization turning a corner. The goldsmith, Gutenberg, had devised a system for using movable type, but how important would that be?

The evolution of a much more movable (digital) type has been surprisingly slow during times as accelerated as ours are supposed to be. There's still the massive inertia of all those who insist they don't like reading on a screen. Maybe not in this first month of the year, but a serious acceleration of adoption of the new book should finally arrive during this year.

Despite the denials, almost everyone spends a fair amount of time every day reading on glass or plastic screens, texting on the small screens of their phones, being pitched at by advertisers on television, and trying to read the news crawl at the bottom of the screen after checking the daily weather in another section of the glass. Their GPS, the ATM, their PDAs—really, how much paper do people pick up in a day? Yet they'll continue to tell everyone they just don't like reading on screens.

Forrester Research, Inc., describes the e-Reader market as "nascent" but formidable, with sales of all units conservatively expected to double this year. Sales at the end of 2010, they say, should total 10 million dedicated e-Readers. Add the iPhones and PCs and netbooks with e-book software, and you're well beyond the "early adopter" stage.

Most think of Kindles and James Paterson when they hear the word "e-reader." They probably haven't heard of CourseSmart, Llc, a creation of the five largest textbook publishers and of the almost 8,000 college texts the company offers for iPhones and PCs. Beyond the textbooks, Al Greco of Fordham's Graduate School of Business has a recent survey that shows professional and scholarly e-books account for more than three times the rest of the U.S. e-book market combined. Book publishing (print and electronic) is a $35 billion industry with e-books accounting for 5% of the revenues ($1.76 billion). Of

continued on next page

can add the state tax return with TaxACT Business States. When you reach the printing stage, you can print separate forms and multiple copies of the return with one set of commands. Your return is password protected. TaxACT products for individuals include Ultimate, Deluxe, and the Free Edition. The Free Edition includes free IRS E-filing, has a loan and savings calculator, a worksheet to complete an FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid), support for questions e-mailed to TaxACT's TaxPayerSupport™, alerts for errors in your return, and a "Tax Refund" or "Amount Owed" window. www.taxact.com

J.K. Lasser's Tax Guide

The latest edition of *J.K. Lasser's Your Income Tax 2010* by the J.K. Lasser Institute incorporates the changes in tax law that will affect returns this year and next. There's also coverage of the stimulus bills with their impact on tax filing and a full review of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. A three-page review of "What's New for 2009" leads off the book with news related to first-time home-

buyer credit, the required minimum distributions that were waived in 2009, residential energy credits, unemployment compensation, IRA and Roth IRA contributions, and more. A "Chart of Key Tax Numbers for 2009" immediately follows, providing cash numbers, ranges, and limits on deductions, contributions, and dividends. The 800-page guide uses a coded format to alert you to tips, reminders, cautions, law alerts, and IRS alerts, and it will take you from the basics of filing in Chapter 1 to amended returns in Chapter 47. Other volumes available in the Lasser Tax library for 2010 include: *1001 Deductions and Tax Breaks, Real Estate Tax Edge, Small Business Taxes 2010,* and *New Rules for Estate and Tax Planning.* Visit www.jklasser.com for more information.
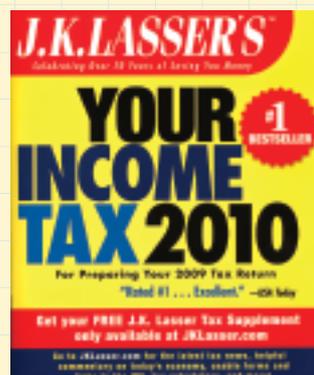
that total, "professional and scholarly publishing titles represent 75.9% of the U.S. e-book market ($1.33 billion)," according to Greco. Much of the e-book glacier is hidden beneath the top layer on which Amazon, Sony, and Barnes & Noble have planted their flags.

TIPPING POINTS

There's a single thing that will cause an accelerating eruption of this market. The slow-moving glacier will thaw into a roaring cataract with the arrival of the right device at the right price.

The print technology is already in place even though few know its proper name. The electrophoretic display (IPD) is common to the most popular e-Readers like the Kindle, Sony Reader, and Nook. It isn't a backlit screen, but, like paper, it's a reflective medium with very high resolution that can be read in sunlight. The problem is, as with the early CD players, these readers are still too expensive. The break point needed to crack the glacier is assumed to be any price south of $100.

Right now you can get dedicated e-Readers for $200 to $400. The Kindle, Sony Reader, Nook, Cool-er, Alex Reader, and the Readius and PlasticLogic devices will find the market even more crowded as the number of new devices slated to arrive in 2010 grows.

There's another possible tipping point—the anxiously awaited, frequently discussed, and possibly mythical, Apple tablet. An almost page-size, very thin (iPhone-like) design that has a color, Web-enabled touch-screen has been the subject of constant blog gossip in recent months. Its format would be perfect for magazine and newspaper subscriptions—all downloaded while you sleep.

The problem with the Apple tablet as tipping point is that the price is expected to be beyond mass distribution, somewhere between $400 and $1,100. The best guess for the emergence of the tablet is now spring 2010.

One other dark horse that deserves mention is a low-cost touch-screen e-Reader from ASUS. This device is expected to be two screens hinged together, with one side having an e-ink display and the other a color screen for Web browsing. It might not be wise to totally discount the ASUS reader for a few reasons. The device is expected to retail at $150, and it will be about the size of a book and will be handled like one. Oh, and one other thing—ASUS was the company that created the first successful netbook. Expect an announcement about this reader at the Consumer Electronic Show in January.

But the majority of analysts still believe the giant ice pick will be in the form of an electrophoretic Reader selling for under $100. At that price, it will probably be a dedicated e-Reader, not a combination device.

END OF THE WORLD

There was a time when people predicted that cinema would kill the theater. And then they were sure television would be the end of cinema. And now we worry the Internet will kill television. Well, at a recent meeting of independent booksellers in New York, literary agent Jessica Sinsheimer of the Sara Jane Literary Agency said of the e-book, "It may be the end of book publishing as we know it, but not the end of book publishing." She's probably closer to the ultimate truth than a co-owner of St. Mark's Bookshop who said, as he whistled past the cemetery, "There's always going to be a market for books. The novelty of Kindle and Sony Readers is just that—it's a novelty that will wear off."

You might remember Bill Gates claiming the Internet was a fad that wouldn't last. He might have shared some of the same false hopes as the bookshop owner who sees e-publishing as something temporary.

At the beginning of December 2009, the well-known book agent Nat Sobel even spoke of a way to hold back the melting ice. "I suggest," he wrote in a public letter, "that the electronic versions [of new books] not be made available for six months after initial publication. . . The future of hardcover publishing is at stake. You don't have a lot of time left to save it." This advice is already being adopted by several large publishers.

A question for the agent might be, "Is it the book or the format that's important and needs to be saved?" But what is a book? The format changed with Gutenberg—for the better. In fact, you can now own a copy of one of the Gutenberg masterpieces, one of his Bibles that currently rests in a British museum. You can download it on a thumb drive and read it on your netbook. Or you can load it in a storage area in the Internet cloud and access it from anywhere with a variety of computers or hand-held devices.

Perhaps the ultimate example of the publishers' resistance to change came from Socrates. The Greek philosopher complained of another medium that, "It destroys memory and weakens the mind, relieving it of work that makes it strong. It is an inhuman thing." What he was talking about was writing. Yes, writing. If you want to check the primary source, just download a copy of Plato's *Phaedrus*. You can get it free from Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org)—put it on your Sony Reader or PC. Thankfully, Plato, who was Socrates's student, was more open to change—he kept notes. **SF**