DESIGN & PRODUCTION

PC Based Software For Publishers

by Ian Darke

Thousands of free—and not so free—programs are available from the Internet or other sources. Many are limited trial offers, have some key feature disabled, or are simply disappointing. In computing, you usually get what you pay for.

Software can be horrifically expensive, yet there are few alternatives to investing in PageMaker or an up-to-date anti-virus program. But for publishers on a tight budget, here are some helpful PC-based programs that are free, or very inexpensive:

❏ *ClipCache Plus:* When writing or editing, the standard clipboard can be very frustrating, because when you copy a new item, the previous one disappears. ClipCache Plus is a clipboard extender that keeps track of previous clips, which you can easily group for convenience. Also use it for frequently-used text clips, addresses, price lists, standard phrases and even images. The program works seamlessly across Windows and costs U.S.$19.95 from www.xrayz.co.uk.

❏ *Power-Desk Pro:* Publishers receive files in every format imaginable. Power-Desk Pro is a Windows Explorer extender that allows you to see file directories and look inside files in a flash, even when you lack their original program. It makes renaming and searching files a breeze. It works with hundreds of file types, including graphic files, though not with some particularly complex files like PageMaker. It costs U.S.$29.95 and is available from www.v-com.com.

❏ *IrfanView:* Though Power-Desk Pro works with graphic files in many formats, including TIFF and JPG, IrfanView is better for searching through image files. An image viewer utility, similar to ACDsee, it is available free from www.irfanview.com. Look through whole directories of pictures, view thumbnails, or do simple editing. For example, IrfanView lets you send a cropped and compressed version of a TIFF image to a Web site without having to open the file in Photoshop. One warning: take care not to overwrite originals.

❏ *Adobe Acrobat:* One of the most popular formats for downloaded documents from the Web is Adobe Acrobat (PDF). Working across platforms, it preserves the look of the original document, complete with fonts, colors, images and layout. Adobe Acrobat Reader is essential, and available free from www.adobe.com.

❏ *Pdf995 and PdfFactory:* While Adobe Acrobat costs U.S.$249, there are cheaper options for creating PDF files from programs that, unlike PageMaker, do not offer this capability. Pdf995 produces PDF files that anyone can read using Acrobat Reader. It is free from www.pdf995.com, but does include annoying pop-up ads. PdfFactory, from www.fineprint.com, is a good alternative. Unless you pay U.S.$49.95 for the full version, however, it adds a credit line at the foot of each page of the PDF document. If the documents are for internal use, this is not a problem.

❏ *Hacha:* Not everyone has access to broadband Internet or a CD-Rom drive to send or receive files. The humble diskette still has its uses. If the file you want to send on diskette is too big, chop it into diskette-sized chinks with Hacha. Then, use the same program to glue them together again. Hacha is free and only 33Kb in size (so that you can include it on the diskette). What's more, the program is even available in different language versions: Hacha, Axe, Hache, L'ascia, from www.hachaweb.com/freeware. Please note this is a Spanish-language Web site.

❏ *Pegasus Mail:* Many publishers send news and offers to bookstores and distributors via e-mail. To manage e-mail addresses, use Pegasus Mail. It enables you to easily set up, maintain and manage individual records and entire mailing lists: for example, to bookstores, general clients, authors, sales team, and prayer supporters. It is virus-resistant, totally free and available from: www.pmail.com.

Most programs mentioned here, and more, are available from the Download page of the Letra Viva network web site: www.letraviva.com.❖

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