

# The Cheifet Letter

A Monthly Newsletter Highlighting Developments and Trends in Personal Computing  
as Seen on the PBS Television Series COMPUTER CHRONICLES

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## Highlights of June Issue:

### \* INSIDE THE INTERNET

Can you think off anything which has taken off faster than the Internet? It has zoomed into the public conscience and redefined communications, social groups, hanging out, and information access. On this program we show you how to get onto the Net and we review several unique features and functions available there.

### \* PORTABLE COMPUTING

It would be hard to find any computing feature that isn't available now in the small form factor of a notebook computer. CD-ROM, stereo sound, network cards, communications, speed, storage...they're all there now. A review of the neatest new mobile computing devices including notebooks, PDAs, and mobile peripherals.

### \* VIRTUAL MEETINGS (Update)

Once you get full motion video and audio onto a computer, you can do lots of new things, especially if you have a modem, and even more so if you have access to a broad bandwidth pipe like ISDN. One of the things you can do is create virtual meetings with two or more people and save lots of time and money and travel headaches. On this show we look at several new hardware and software packages that turn your PC into a meeting room.

### \* COMPUTER BOWL VII — THE VIRTUAL BOWL

Some of you hate it, some of you love it...but it's back. It's the Computer Bowl—the TV quiz show about computer trivia. This year's battle between Silicon Valley and Route 128 features Nick Negrofonte as the questioner. He is the author of the book *Being Digital*, he's a regular columnist for *Wired*, and he's also the Director of the MIT Media Lab. And this year the Bowl has a new twist—virtual space, with the Westies based in Santa Clara, the Easties based in Boston, and the questioner hiding out somewhere in cyberspace.

### \* GARY KILDALL SPECIAL

When Computer Chronicles first went national in 1983, it was co-hosted by me and Gary Kildall. Gary was one of the true pioneers in the microcomputer industry. He developed CP/M, the first operating system for personal computers. He developed GEM, one of the first graphical user interfaces. And he was an innovator in the field of laser-based media, producing the first ever electronic encyclopedia on a video disk. In this tribute to Gary, we review his unique accomplishments and contributions to today's personal computer technology.

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INSIDE THE INTERNET**Products Demonstrated**

Anarchy	Shareware
Eudora	Shareware
CompuServe Information Service	CompuServe
PeaceNet	Institute for Global Communications
InterACT.net	Institute for Global Communications
HoTMetaL	SoftQuad
The WELL	The WELL
Internet Underground Music Archive	IUMA

What an amazing phenomenon the Internet is. To some it is the beginning of the new world, to others it is a big techno-hoax. Most of the press has turned the Internet into this new social nirvana and anointed it with the ability to change the world. Cliff Stoll, in his book *Silicon Snake Oil*, says it's a big sham on the public, not what it's cracked up to be. No matter, millions of folks have heard of it, want it, and want to figure out how to make money on it.

I first logged on to the information highway about twelve years ago with CompuServe. I remember it being a seminal experience. The only thing I could compare it to was the first time I went snorkeling. There was this whole gigantic world out there that I could now enter and it was beautiful in its immensity and diversity. The Internet has its own immensity and diversity but sometimes it's too immense, too diverse, too complicated to navigate.

On this program we tried to show some of the more interesting aspects of the Net, not only from a user's point of view, but also from the perspective of someone who wants to be an information provider on the Net and use it as a true two-way highway. So we focused a lot on how you set up your own home page on the World Wide Web.

For beginners who are concerned about simple questions like "How do I get onto the Net", we looked at CompuServe's new Web browser, part of the new version 4.1 of WinCim. It's very well done. I just downloaded it and while it's not easy to get it up and running, with a little help from our friends in the Internet forum on CompuServe you can solve any problems and get going on the Net. It includes the robust Spry version of Mosaic plus a convenient integrated image viewer and automatic Internet dialer which sends you directly to the Net. With the CompuServe front-end you can browse the Web, visit Usenet news groups, do e-mail, and telnet both in and out of the service. To access the Internet, you can also use the other commercial on-line services, each of which has a slightly different approach and range of services. Or you can just sign up with a specific Net provider like Netcom. There is no shortage of Internet communications software on the shelves these days and even many Internet how-to books are coming bundled with the necessary software.

We started out with a look at some simple Net tools like Eudora which helps you manage e-mail by creating filters that can automatically file messages for you in categories or automatically toss junk mail into the trash can. And we looked at Anarchie, a useful search tool that lets you track down software anywhere in the world that's been posted on the Net.

Next we focused on how to really use the Internet to get something done. One tremendous value of the Net is its role as virtual community, able to gather people from around the world who share common interests. This is one powerful tool for people who are involved in

community causes of one sort or another. We demonstrated **InterACT.net**, which is software specifically designed for Internet access by non-profit groups. The software was developed by the **Institute for Global Communications**, which is itself a non-profit Internet provider, and it lets you easily explore the Internet to find out what other people are doing who care about the same issues. For example, we showed how you can check out environmental issues before the Congress and even check on your legislator's voting record on them. You can find out what other organizations exist that do similar things to what your group does. You can even find individuals who care about the same issues you do and join them in newsgroup discussions. All in all, a rather fine tool for using the Internet.

There is the other side of the Net, and that is commerce. Every business is trying to figure out how to sell things on the Internet. And one big issue is the security of financial transactions on the Net. We showed one benign example of on-line commerce offered through the **Well**. This is the **Whole Earth Catalog and Review** which are available through their own Web page on the Net. Right now you can only order the catalog but they are working on ways for you to actually purchase items on-line safely. One interesting solution to the financial security issue is the concept of **cyberbucks**. It's really the creation of a new form of credit or currency. In a safe off-line environment you buy cyberbucks, like telephone credits on a calling card. You then maintain this cyberbuck account on-line. And you can then spend those cyberbucks to buy things on-line. If you run out of cyberbucks you go to some safe ATM and buy some more which then get deposited into your on-line account.

The other thing everyone wants to do is to create their own home page on the Web. This is not an easy thing to do if you don't have the right tools. Remember, the Internet is still Unix-based and the syntax for building an interactive page with links and hot buttons and multimedia components is not a simple task. However, there is help for those who want to do this on their own. We visited the **Digital Media Center** in San Francisco, where they actually teach a course in how to design your own Web page.

We also looked at a terrific product called **HoTMetaL**. This is a program from a company called **SoftQuad** that automates the process of writing the needed code to create a live home page. The name comes from using the letters **HTML** which is the acronym for **Hyper Text Markup Language**, the language used for the design of Internet pages. With **HoTMetaL**, you don't have to understand any of this complicated programming language. You just tell the program what you want to do, in simple point and click moves, or in response to dialog boxes, and the program automatically generates the necessary code. **HoTMetaL** sells for under \$200 and you can find out more about it by checking out their Web page at <http://www.sq.com>.

Finally, we showed one of the neatest examples of the new multimedia power of the Internet. **IUMA** is the **Internet Underground Music Archive**. Music groups from around the world are posting their songs on IUMA. It has become a form of music self-publishing allowing any group to distribute their songs electronically. However, the group **Severe Tire Damage** went one step further. They actually "broadcast" a live concert on the Internet, real-time audio and video, as an unofficial opening act for the recent Rolling Stones debut session on the Internet. The audio quality is marginal, the video has a slow frame rate, and you need mega hardware to play this game, but the idea is obviously very cool. As one of the members of the band said—right now there aren't locks on the Internet and so we can do what we want.

#### Guests Featured & Vendor Contacts

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