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Today has not gone well from the outset. Basically, the reason I'm in a stropy, Victor Meldrew sort of mood is due to cumulative irritating encounters of the PC kind.

Take the word processor I've been reviewing; it has a quirk that seems to shout: 'THIS PROGRAM HASN'T BEEN THOROUGHLY TESTED.'

I opened a new document and the program named it 'Untitled'. I typed a heading and a few lines, and then tried to save the document under a new name - 'Mywork' - specifying text rather than the proprietary format. The word processor dutifully asked if I was prepared to lose the formatting, so I said 'OK' and it saved the file correctly with a .TXT extension. It then, exasperatingly, left Untitled displayed, not Mywork. I tried to close Untitled, only to get a message asking whether I wanted to 'Save changes to unsaved Untitled?' This was the document I'd saved only moments earlier. The only way to proceed was to say 'No', as otherwise it went round the loop again. Only then did I succeed in opening Mywork. How's that for smart?

This particular package probably struck a chord because I'd noticed that, with my Psion 3a palmtop, I can choose whether to 'use new file' when saving a file under a new name (regardless of its format). Simple, obvious, and a practical feature that should be widely copied.

Later, I was trying to read a PC magazine selectively, looking up specific contents by page number rather than ploughing through the whole lot serially. Not for the first time, I fruitlessly scabbled around, aghast at the breathtaking gap between the possible and the actual. Some 27 years after man first landed on the moon, I have yet to find a PC magazine that can number all its pages.

Why adverts should prove immune to page numbering I simply don't know. Out of a total of 27 entries in the contents of one randomly chosen magazine, it proved hard work getting to 12 of them because it was so difficult to find the page; 148 of the 256 pages were not numbered. I almost gave up seeking one particular review before eventually finding it in a small oasis, embedded in a desert of over 80 unnumbered pages. Maybe by the time man first reaches a star?...

Terry Pinnell

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Digital Money



Daniel C Lynch and Leslie Lundquist. John Wiley. 285 pages. £17.99. ISBN: 0-471-14178X

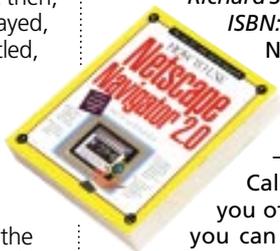
Forecasts suggest that over the next ten years the expansion of Internet business ventures will overtake the growth of traditional commerce.

Digital money promises to be the vehicle for this financial revolution.

The authors explain the technical issues involved in exchanging digital money and goods; look at practical ways of setting up secure digital transactions; discuss the business opportunities available in the emerging market; and analyse the technologies and resources required to make a success of on-line ventures.

This guide should be priority reading for anyone who plans to buy, sell or invest in Internet commerce.

How to use Netscape Navigator 2.0



Richard Schwerin. 209 pages. Ziff Davis. £22.99. ISBN: 1-56276-385-7

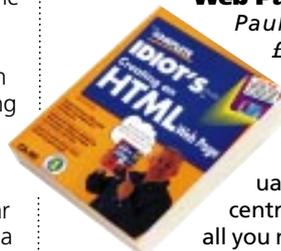
Netscape Navigator, probably the most common piece of software used to browse the World Wide Web, suffers from one major defect - its lack of decent help screens. Calling up Navigator's help simply sends you off on costly trips to Web sites where you can read the usual fragmentary titbits that always stop just short of telling what you really need to know.

Richard Schwerin's book fills more than 200 colourful pages with excellent illustrations and examples to guide you through everything from installation of the software, to the creation of your own Web pages with Navigator Gold. It's printed on high-quality paper that looks and feels good, and has step-by-step examples and hands-on sections scattered throughout.

Apart from the basics of using Navigator, subjects covered include searching and advanced searching of the Web, using e-mail, participating in Internet relay chat, downloading free files, using Netscape's helper applications and much more. Towards the end of the book, there's even a look at more complicated activities, such as interacting with Java applets, Adobe Acrobat and Envoy files.

This excellent book is bang up to date and very good value for money given the quality of presentation.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Creating an HTML Web Page



Paul McFedries. 312 pages. QUE. £23.49. ISBN: 0-7897-0722-5

This book claims to offer 'idiot-proof steps' to help beginners design their own Web pages.

McFedries' user-friendly manual avoids technical jargon and concentrates on basic principles. It explains all you need to know to be able to create a simple and effective Web page, including how to add text, images and sound. A free disk is also included to get you started.

This first-class book is guaranteed to give a confident kick-start to anyone who aspires to publish on the Web but doesn't know where to begin.

next month



Presentation software

Presentation software is no longer simply a business application for large companies, with today's sophisticated packages handling tasks as diverse as multimedia school projects or interactive training.

Luxury notebooks

£5,000 might sound pricey for a notebook, but it can be money well spent if you require no-compromise computing on the move. We test-drive the Rolls Royces of portable PCs.

Image-editing software

More and more people are using PCs to process graphics for DTP or publishing on the Web. We review the latest budget and professional packages.

Cheap desktop modems

Whether you want to surf the Web or send faxes, a fast modem will save time and money. We select the best 28,800bps and 14,400bps modems for under £200.

Setting up a home office, part 2

In the concluding part of our class we show you how to get your computerised office connected to the outside world.

Danger on the Web

Is it safe to let your child use the Web? How real are the threats posed by pornography and subversive material?

On sale 8th August

(contents subject to change)