Desktop publishing

Press pack

Whether you want to produce a local newsletter or a national magazine there's a DTP package to suit your needs and your pocket. We compare both high-end and budget software for Windows

O ver the past decade there has been a revolution in publishing technology. With the help of desktop publishing (DTP) software, anyone with a PC can now create professional-looking documents – in black and white or full-colour – ranging from advertising hand-outs to complex illustrated text books.

For a complete DIY solution you can output straight to a black and white or a colour printer, although this isn't economical for more than a few dozen copies. Alternatively, you can take printed output to an instant print shop for longer runs.

For higher-quality work you can take the files to a bureau, where special laser printers create the high-resolution page images (2,400 dots per inch (dpi) or more) from which the printing plates are made. Alternatively, you can avoid putting your work on paper altogether and take advantage of the growing trend towards electronic publishing, both on the World Wide Web and as 'portable' electronic documents.

Program capabilities – and prices – vary greatly. The nine packages reviewed here have recommended retail prices varying from under £30 to over £1,000, including VAT. But bear in mind that it pays to shop around, because typical street prices are often lower.

Whatever your publishing aspirations, be it a school newsletter, a company report, or an international magazine, you should be able to find something to suit your requirements. Apart from the product reviews, there's a brief roundup of the various electronic publishing formats and we also offer some recommendations about the hardware and extra software you need to set up a DTP operation. Finally, desktop publishing has a language all of its own, so if you don't know your kerning from your leading, look it up in our jargon-busting panel.

Adobe PageMaker 6.5

Back in 1985, Aldus's founder, Paul Brainerd, coined the term 'desktop publishing' and pioneered the business with PageMaker. However, in the professional publishing world of the 1990s, it lost ground to Quark Xpress. The latter offered free text rotation, multiple master pages, libraries, third-party add-ons, and an all-purpose formatting palette – features it took PageMaker several upgrades to achieve. Now part of the Adobe empire, PageMaker is fighting back with a new Windows 95 version, which we saw in pre-release state.
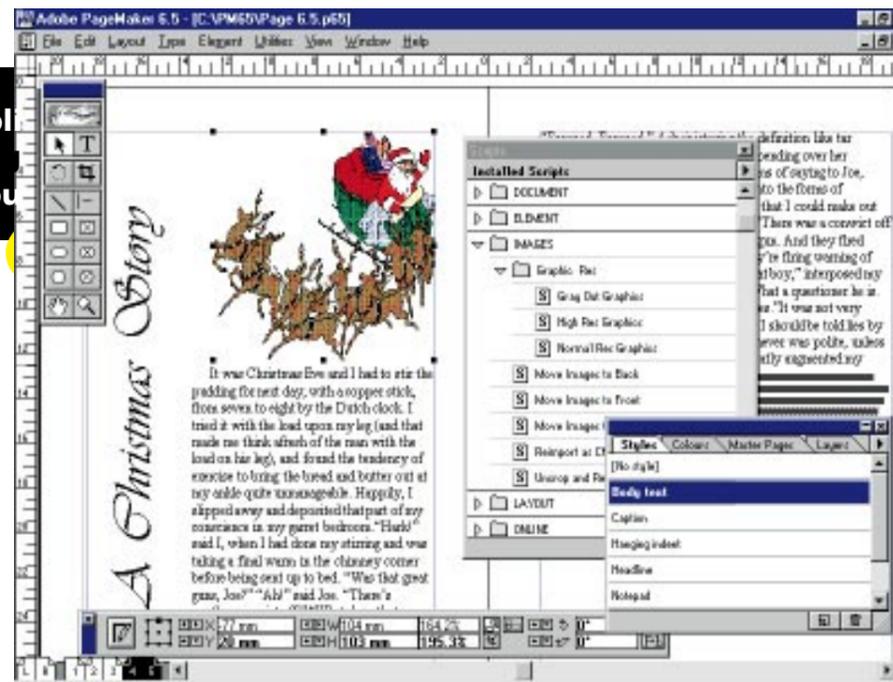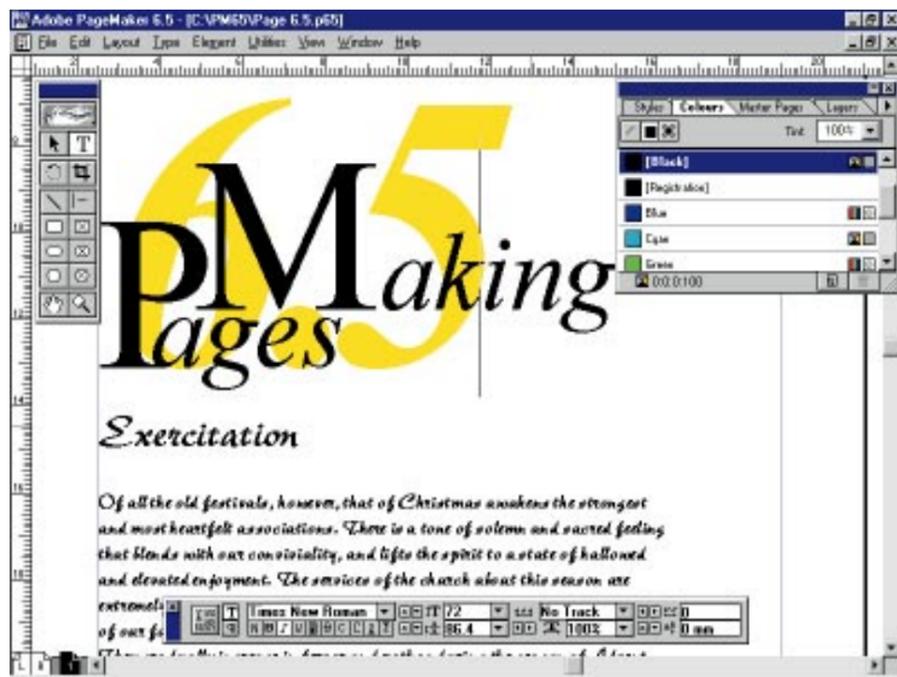
PageMaker has always been a 'pasteboard-based' application – you can place items straight on to the page without having first to create a container. But new additions to the toolbox include three tools for rectangular, elliptical or polygonal frames. These look similar to Quark's, and can contain text as well as graphics – the former will flow in to the shape of the frame, the latter are cropped to it.

Another new feature is 'layers', similar to those found in drawing packages. Assign an object to a layer, and you can turn the entire layer on or off, making this useful for creating multilingual or regional variations of the same document, and for making 'not for publication' annotations. This should prove a comfort to those editors who have been embarrassed by 'placeholder' text – such as 'Put 300 words of **** in here' – being published.

'Smart' reformatting automatically resizes graphics and reflows text if you alter the page or margin size, and there's better integration with other Adobe products, including drag and drop.

Adobe has made a number of improvements to the interface. For example, the ugly Control Palette has been given a facelift, and other palettes, such as those for styles and colours, now follow the Adobe tabbed style, which saves screen space while keeping them close to hand. In addition, the right mouse button at last has a role. Formerly relegated to zooming, it now calls up a context-sensitive menu.

While Xpress has its Xtensions PageMaker has Plug-ins – added features from Adobe and third-party manufacturers. A generous collection is supplied including Photoshop filters for processing images 'in place'.

As with the previous version, there's a Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML) Plug-In with a Hyperlinks palette for creating Web pages, and now you can produce portable electronic documents with the bundled Acrobat Distiller software. A final shot across Quark's bows is the inclusion of a file converter from Xpress to PageMaker format.

At last PageMaker has edged ahead in the feature list – Quark watch out!
○ £TBA
○ Adobe: 0181 606 4000

PageMaker's new look features PhotoShop-style tabbed palettes

PageMaker's scripts add extra features to the core product

PageMaker 6.5

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Performance	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Documentation	N/A
Value for money	N/A
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Corel Ventura 7.0

The package we reviewed was a beta version. The final release will include WordPerfect (word processing), PhotoPaint (image editing), Depth (3D logos), a collection of database publishing and management tools, diverse electronic publishing and Web design tools, a script editor, screen capture and version control utilities, Media Manager, proofing dictionaries in several languages, 1,000 fonts and a vast clip-art library.

Ventura has six button bars on screen and a further seven available, an arrangement that can prove quite baffling. But a closer look reveals an interface that's far less intimidating than in previous versions. The main toolbar contains the usual File Open and Save buttons, multiple Undo/Redo, Spelling Checker, and Search and Help, all of which should be familiar.

Ventura's Navigator keeps tabs on complex documents

Fonts, photos and clip-art

Some packages, such as Corel Ventura, come so lavishly equipped that you'll probably need nothing else. With others, the application is only the beginning of the shopping list. You'll need fonts, but bear in mind that a strong house style and a few, well chosen typefaces are better than a mass of conflicting ones. If you're using photographic images, then image-processing software is essential – professional users go for Adobe PhotoShop, but lesser mortals can manage perfectly well with the sub-£50 Paint Shop Pro. A clip-art library is essential for DIY illustrating, unless you have a drawing package and are gifted in its useœ. Make sure the pictures are in vector, rather than bitmap, format otherwise output will be poor, especially if resized. For the best of both worlds, consider buying a drawing package that comes with its own clip-art library so you can edit the pictures, but make sure your DTP package can import the format.

Then the toolbar becomes more specific, with buttons to import text and graphics, a colour palette button, and ones that allow you to output documents on paper or in a choice of three electronic formats. Another button opens Libraries, which act as a one-stop store for text, graphics and formatting styles, and a further button gives you the Navigator, which provides a tree-like overview of the document.

Below this is the Property Bar, which changes as you work with text or graphics. In text mode you get the usual font and style options, buttons to insert page numbers, dates, tables, equations or HTML links, and a box that shows the word by the cursor. If this is mis-spelt, then clicking in the box calls up a list of suggested corrections; if it isn't, you get a list of alternative words from the thesaurus. Other default toolbars include zooming, line/fill options and the drawing tools.

A nice touch is that you don't have to switch 'modes'; Ventura is able to sense whether you've clicked on a frame, graphic, table or text and provide the necessary editing tools in the Property Bar. The drawing tools are excellent and

the Corel Draw-style gradient and textured fills are unmatched by any other DTP package.

Two long-awaited features are the ability to load multiple documents and drag items between them, and the ability to create multiple master pages, so you can have different page templates in the same publication. You can also combine different versions in the same file by attaching 'conditional' tags to text or graphics.

As well as paper publications, you can publish electronic documents in Envoy format, HTML or Corel Barista. This last option goes beyond the limits of standard HTML to offer columns, multiple fonts, animation and interaction in Web pages, which can be viewed with a Java-enabled browser.

A huge and confusing bundle, but with a much improved core product.
◯ £816.62 (inc VAT)
◯ Corel: 0800 581028

Corel Ventura 7.0

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Performance	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Documentation	N/A
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

FrameMaker 5.0

Another Adobe acquisition, FrameMaker was pioneering electronic document publishing before the competition had even heard of HTML, Acrobat or Envoy and the company refers to it as a 'document' rather than a 'desktop' publisher.

It's available on Macintosh, OS/2 and Unix platforms, as well as on Windows, and is clearly aimed at large companies that need cross-platform publishing. Consequently, it has strong word processing features and is equally suited to producing everything from memos, through financial reports, to lengthy technical tomes.

FrameMaker is a complex application, but it comes with a hefty set of manuals and a comprehensive set of tutorials and on-line hypertext documents, all of which show off its capabilities by being, themselves, FrameMaker files. You get a copy of Adobe Type Manager, a basic set of 13 fonts, a small collection of clip-art, and a utility to convert FrameMaker's documents and hyperlinks to HTML format for Web publishing. You can also produce 'Acrobat ready' output files, but unlike PageMaker you don't get the Distiller software to produce the Acrobat files.

You can have multiple documents open, each of which has its own set of controls for zooming ▶

Serious and complex – FrameMaker's rather idiosyncratic interface.
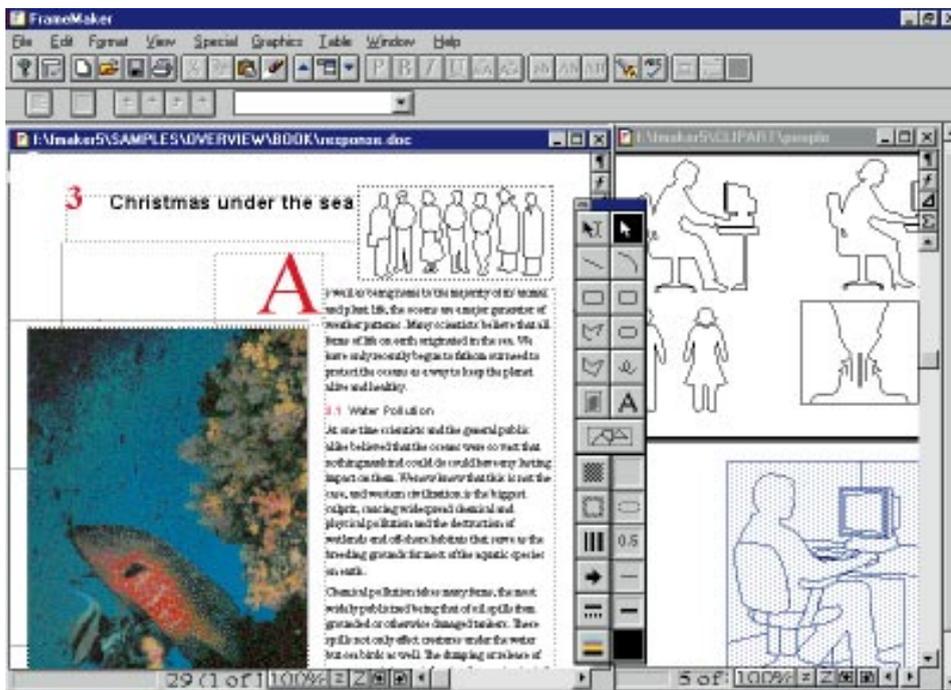
and navigating, as well as buttons for displaying the drawing tools, equation editor and style boxes. The drawing tools are particularly well equipped but the text formatting isn't – you have to go through the menus to change fonts, for example. Once you have set up named styles, however, it becomes much easier, and this confirms the emphasis on consistency over long documents rather than free-form page design.

There are superb facilities for managing and indexing long, complex books. There's also a feature pioneered by FrameMaker called 'conditional' text, which you can use to create different versions of a document. This could be used to produce different language versions or instruction manuals for different models of equipment, and Ventura and PageMaker now have a similar feature.

Although it's been 18 months since the last update, version 5.0 brought much improved colour support, including Pantone libraries and colour separations. Unlike the other high-end packages, however, trapping has to be done manually, which can be a long and laborious process. Despite the lavish documentation, the interface doesn't suffer fools gladly – there are no Tool Tips or status-line hints – and even using the supplied templates can be something of a challenge.

A specialist product that pioneered electronic documents – now upstaged by PageMaker and Ventura.
○ £881.25 (inc VAT) RRP
○ Adobe: 0181 606 4000

FrameMaker 5.0

Ease of use	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	
Performance	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	
Documentation	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	
Overall	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	

Quark Xpress 3.32

Unlike the rest of the high-end packages we looked at, Quark Xpress comes naked and unadorned. There are no fonts, no clip-art, no templates or on-line tutorials, and the only bundled extra is the EFI colour management utility. Despite this, it's the number one choice for magazine production – at least in its Macintosh incarnation.

In spite of its high-level features, the interface is simple and a pleasure to use. The two main controls are the Tools and Measurements palettes. The former lets you draw lines and create rectangular or shaped frames to contain text or graphics. Frames double as objects in their own right, so if you want to
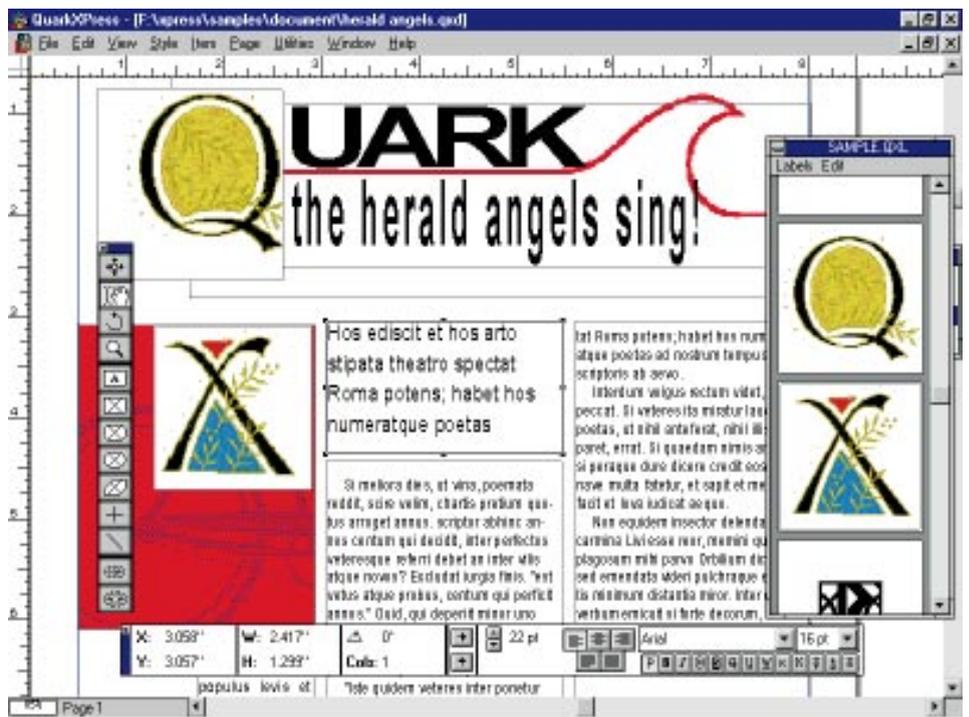
Quark Xpress offers drop caps and multiple documents

draw a polygon or circle, you just create a frame and fill it with a chosen colour or blend.

Having created and filled a frame, the top two tools let you change between editing the frames themselves – changing borders, moving them, setting text wrap properties – and working on the contents – editing text, or moving a picture within its frame.

The Measurements palette is context sensitive and offers a quick way of changing the properties of a selected item. You can size and rotate a frame, or change any font attribute, including style, horizontal and vertical spacing. Other palettes include Styles and Colours, Libraries, where you can drag text and graphics to and from a publication for re-use, and the Layout palette, in which you can reorder pages and impose various 'master page' layouts on each one.

Coupled with these capabilities is precision, with font sizes going up to 720 points in one thousandth of a point increments, and object placement accurate to 0.001mm. Fine control over hyphenation and spacing ensures even text density without flaws. Another factor that has contributed to Xpress's success is Xtensions – third-party additions that add specialist features and now copied by PageMaker's Plug-Ins and Ventura's Extensions.

Colour support includes eight Pantone and other libraries, spot and process separations, and automatic trapping.

It has been a long time since a new version. The latest minor upgrade supports Windows 95 conventions such as long file names, but the product is basically the same

as the first Windows release dating from late 1992, and now both Ventura and PageMaker are looking far better featured. Web and electronic document production isn't catered for in the core product – you'll have to buy an Xtension.

Despite its reputation, Xpress is starting to look rather dated. Nevertheless, it's still a superb tool for conventional paper publishing.
○ £1,051.62 (inc VAT)
○ Quark Systems: 01483 454397

Quark Xpress 3.32

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	
Performance	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	
Documentation	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	

GSP Pressworks 2.5

The copy supplied for review, although not a beta version, was so hot off the press that no documentation was included. The CD contained both the new Windows 95 version – reviewed here – and the previous Windows 3.1 version 2.03.

Also on the disc were a font management utility with 35 fonts, 104 clip-art images with a browser, a separate PhotoCD browser, a KeyPad utility for inserting accented characters and symbols, and a screen capture utility. Also included were 30-day trial versions of Designworks, PhotoEdit and Border Creator.

Despite the modest collection of fonts and clip-art, there is a wealth of templates and PagePilots – the equivalent of Wizards in other ▶

packages – that automate the process of creating a new publication, ranging from a book to a business card. When you start up you find a toolbar on the left of the screen with page navigation and zoom tools beneath. Below these is a colour palette, to which you can add colours either from a Pantone library or by mixing your own.

Clicking on the tool buttons takes you from frame creation, through text editing to paragraph formatting and drawing. There are Getting Started help panels explaining what's what (you can turn these off when you've got the hang of things) and offering Tool Tips and status-line descriptions of each button's function. Below these are buttons for accessing the clip-art browser, a rather fine PowerText feature that lets you distort text and add fancy effects such as 'dropped' shadows, and launchers for other GSP products.

As you switch between modes the top button bar changes to offer text formatting, drawing tools and so on. Everything must be 'contained', which means you must first create a frame to hold the drawing. The text tool, however, automatically creates its own frames.

The Contents box is a useful feature. It shows all the text and graphics imported as files into your publication, as well as any text you've typed in and 'named'. You can import files straight into the box and then place them at your leisure, which is handy if you use several instances of the same graphic, such as a logo, in the same publication. Colour support is good, you can print spot and process colour separations, and preview each colour

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What about the hardware?

Assuming your PC is adequate for the chosen software, then the greatest asset for dedicated DTP is a high-resolution monitor. With a 21in 1,280x1,024 display, you can view a life-size double A4 spread – essential for professional publishing. At professional level, you'll also encounter very large files, so plenty of RAM and lots of hard disk space are needed, as well as a means of transporting files to the bureau – a removable hard disk or high-capacity storage media such as Iomega Zip or Jaz drives.

At any level you'll need a printer – even if you're sending the output to a bureau, you'll need to proof pages for your own use. Colour inkjets get better and cheaper all the time, but bear in mind that consumables, especially coated paper for high-quality output, can be very expensive.

For picture input, hand-held scanners which you roll over an image are cheap but awkward, especially if you have to 'stitch' together multiple passes on a large photo. Flatbed scanners are dearer, starting at around £350, and take an entire A4 sheet flat like a photocopier. An alternative is to have photos scanned at a bureau: many publishers use low-resolution 'placeholders' in-house which are replaced by ultra-high-quality scans at the bureau. A third option is to have photographs converted to Photo-CD images which can then be placed like any other graphic file.

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first. It will 'knock out' darker colours where lighter ones are overprinted, but there's no trapping.

A likeable and easy to use product at a low price, but rather parsimonious on fonts and clip-art.
⭕ £39.95 (inc VAT)
⭕ GSP: 01480 496666

GSP Pressworks 2.5

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Performance	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Documentation	N/A
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Publisher 97 gives you plenty of instant help to make it easy to create a family newsletter

Microsoft Publisher 97

Publisher 97 comes with Applets for creating drawings, WordArt fancy text effects and a stack of Wizards – interactive templates for creating everything from newslet-

ters to origami birds. The new version has greatly increased resources – 150 fonts and over 5,000 clip-art images and other graphics. Further media, including sound and video, can be downloaded from the Microsoft Web Gallery, and a copy of Internet Explorer is included.

The screen layout is almost identical to the previous version. At the top are the File and Clipboard buttons plus Spelling Check, Undo, Rotate and Stack. To the side are the tools for creating frames to hold text, graphics, tables or OLE objects, some simple drawing tools and 'smart' shapes, and the PageWizards which add sub-documents such as adverts to a publication. Below this is the Design Gallery button giving access to more prefabricated items such as fancy picture frames and page ornaments.

There's one new menu, for creating mail merges, but the most important addition is the Web page design feature. Select a Web Page Wizard and you get three new buttons – two for inserting text or picture hyperlinks and one for previewing the results in Internet Explorer. It's very easy to use – simply select a piece of text, create a link, and it will automatically appear suitably formatted.

When you click on 'Publish as', the Web page, text and layout are automatically converted into HTML format and graphics to .GIF. You're also warned if anything on your page, such as overlapping text and pictures or rotated text, will be converted to a picture and hence download far more slowly.

Together with this facility are lots of buttons, backgrounds and other Web page 'furniture' in the Design Gallery. Although limited – you won't find Java or ActiveX support, or even JPEG graphics – it's simple, robust, and the results look good in a Web browser.

There are good introductory ▶
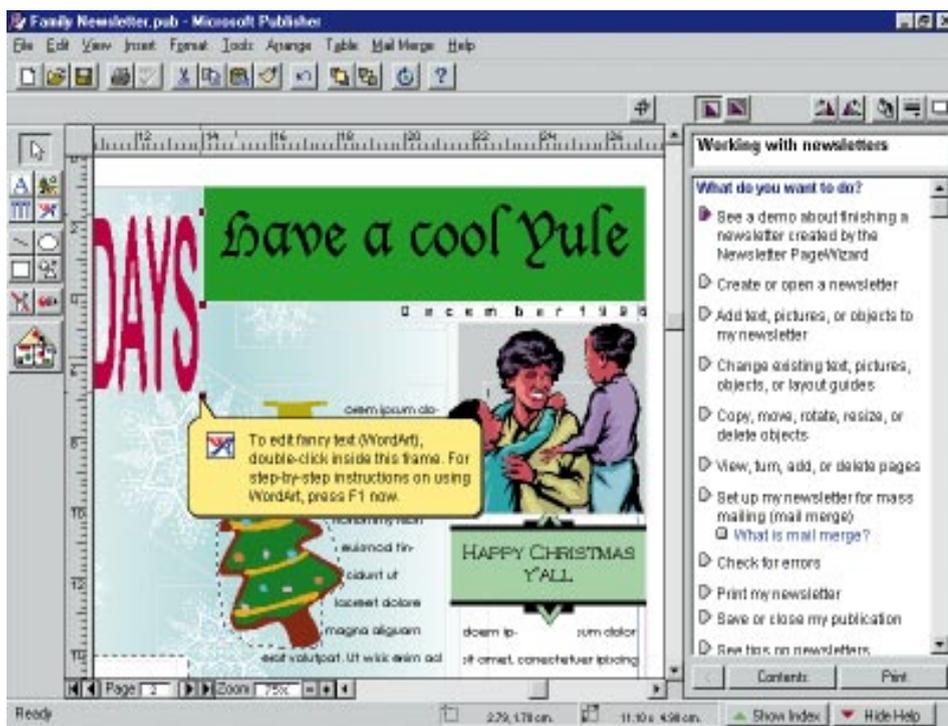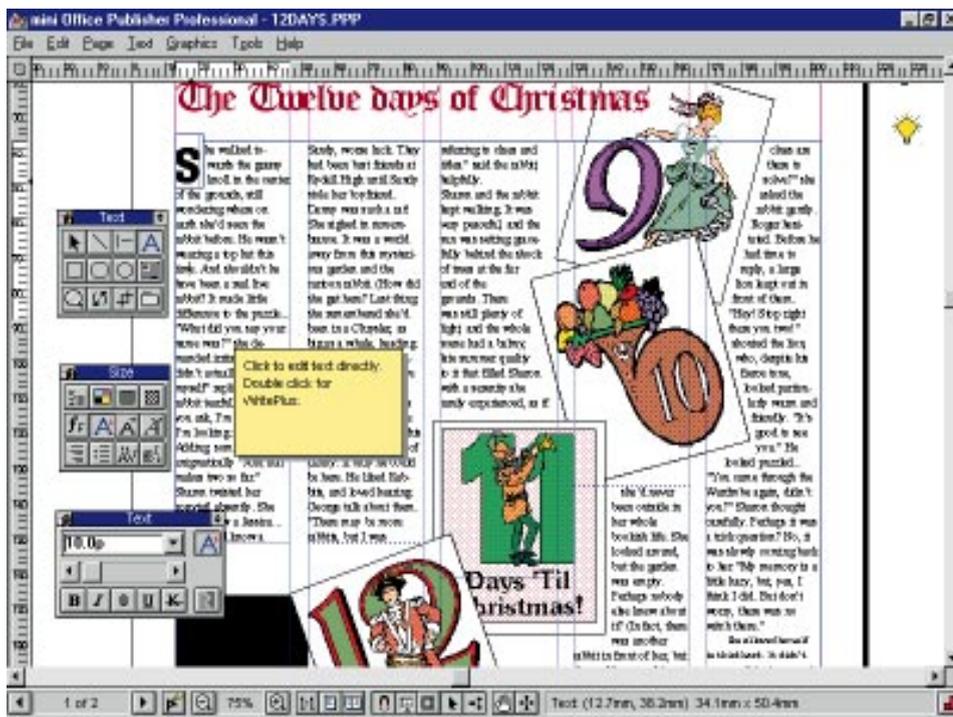
tutorials and demos, and the help index and topics can be neatly tiled in the workspace. There are pop-up bubbles that offer instant on-the-spot advice and warnings. The printed manual contains advice on page layout, a catalogue of the clip-art and samples of the fonts, plus brief but invaluable advice on how and when to use each typeface. **An easy introduction to DTP and the only budget package with full Web design, but it doesn't match PagePlus or Pressworks for conventional publishing features.**
◯ £99.99 (inc VAT)
◯ Microsoft: 0345 002000

Microsoft Publisher 97

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Features	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Performance	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Documentation	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

The erstwhile PagePlus 3.0 – in the guise of Mini Office Publisher – gets a new lease of life from Europress

Mini Office Publisher

If you think this bears an uncanny resemblance to Serif PagePlus, you'd be right. This is, in effect, a rebadged version of the highly successful PagePlus 3.0. As such it offers great value for money. You get 200 fonts, 2,200 clip-art and photographic images and a browser in which to view them all.

Despite being a budget package, this offers an impressive list of features, including spot and process colour separation, trapping – but no colour libraries – and precision to within one tenth of a point for text, and 0.01mm and 0.01 degrees for graphic objects. It's more suited to short publications than books because there's no indexing or table of contents generation, but you do get master pages and a built-in word processor.

The interface is commendably free from clutter. A row of buttons at the bottom of the screen provides navigation and zooming con-trols and turns various options, such as showing rulers and snapping to guidelines, on and off.

The main features are contained in two-and-a-bit floating palettes. The first is a conventional tool palette offering simple drawing tools, framed or free-range text, and controls for sizing, cropping and rotating objects. The second is the Change Bar, which changes with the object selected or being created. If you're typing a headline, for example, the change bar will show both a list and a slider for font size, buttons for type style, and a button for setting the 'wrap' properties for flowing around graphics.

When you click on the small button in the top right of the palette the 'and-a-bit' appears – 12 more buttons that switch the Change Bar to show font names, colours, width, alignment and other controls.

There's an impressive set of business and home templates which comes with appropriate Page Hints and two interface levels. Intro keeps it simple for beginners, while Publisher restores the full arsenal of buttons and menu choices. Other aids include a Tip of the Day and a Hint Line that can be parked on the status bar or moved around the screen like a sticky yellow Post-It note.

As well as the standard help file there's further on-line documentation in Acrobat format – you may want to print this out because there aren't any paper manuals. **Although it's last year's model Mini Office Publisher is amazing value, especially for Windows 3.1 users.**
◯ £29.99 (inc VAT)
◯ Europress: 01625 859333

Mini Office Publisher

Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Features	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Performance	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Documentation	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Documents on-line

There are two types of electronic document. HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) is the format used on the Internet World Wide Web for reading on-line. The other type, such as Adobe Acrobat and Corel Envoy, offers greater typographic possibilities but produces much larger files.

Although these, like any file, can be transmitted over the Internet, they are designed for reading from your hard disk or local network rather than directly over a modem link. In the case of Acrobat, as long as the viewing software is installed, the files themselves are 'platform independent', which means they can be read on a variety of computers. Because they are self-contained, they can use fonts that aren't installed on the reader's machine.

Envoy goes one better, in that the reader itself can be incorporated with the data to form a program that can be run to view the contents without any additional software.

Both forms support 'hyperlinks' – like a Windows help file, you can click on a piece of text or graphic object and be whisked off elsewhere in the same document, to a different document, or in the case of the Web, a document at a different site.

New technology, such as Sun's Java and Microsoft's ActiveX, mean that you can do much more – applets can be embedded in a document to play multimedia or get feedback from the user through electronic forms. This means that you can, for example, listen to tracks from a music Web site, then order an album.

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PFS Publisher 1.1

|	
Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Features	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
Performance	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Documentation	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
Overall	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Serif PagePlus 4.0

PagePlus 4.0 is the new Windows 95 version of Serif's DTP package. There are now 400 fonts, more than 17,500 clip-art and photo files complete with both a browser and a printed catalogue, and a 30-day trial version of DecideRight, a decision-making application.

The interface has had a major redesign. The floating tool palette has gone, and instead all tools are in labelled groups around the work area. On the left are pointers for moving, rotating and cropping objects; the text tools; buttons for placing pictures and logos; and the drawing tools.

Along the top of the screen are several context-sensitive sets – as you select or create different objects these change to offer text format-ting, object stacking and so on. On the right is the colour palette, which is split in two, with 10 tints of the selected colour shown below. At the bottom are the navigation controls and hint panel.

The Change Bar, a context-sensitive panel that offers more detailed formatting, has changed. It now sports two tabbed pages so you can choose between using a

PFS Publisher 1.1

Tiny (a full installation takes up less than 8Mb of hard disk space) and undemanding (a minimum of a 286 with 2Mb of RAM), PFS Publisher is also old: it hasn't been updated since August 1993. It comes with a small clip-art selection and 12 TrueType fonts, which you have to install manually. Although you don't get contemporary comforts such as Wizards or Tool Tips, there's a good selection of templates and a comprehensive printed manual.

PFS Publisher is very simple to use, whether you start with a tem-plate or a blank page. The keys to everything are two buttons on the left of the toolbar. When you select the arrow button, you have a range of tools for creating frames, pic-tures and simple drawing objects. When you select the I-beam, you go into text editing mode and the rest of the bar changes to show text formatting tools. The right mouse button toggles between modes and there's also a configurable floating button palette.

There's little in the way of colour support – objects created in PFS are limited to eight shades of grey. Although the clip-art library consists mostly of monochrome bitmaps that don't scale well, you can import coloured images in a variety of formats. You can also insert OLE (Object Linking and Embedding) objects from other applications, such as a table or a graphic, and these, too, can be coloured.

Despite its limitations, there are some respectable page design features, such as 'drop' capital let-ters at the start of a paragraph, manual kerning, text flow around graphics and master pages.

In other areas, particularly for longer publications, it's not so impressive. Although you get a spelling checker and a thesaurus, there's no word counter, and text has to be manually 'flowed' through linked frames. On the plus side, you do get a table of contents and an index generator.

Given Softkey's track record, it's unlikely we'll see further devel-opment, so this is an upgrade dead end. But for someone struggling to produce newsletters or pamphlets on a shoestring budget using an ancient PC, it could be just the job. **Despite the low price, there's better value available, but it's eminently**

PFS Publisher is still going strong after three and a half years – look at that text wrap

PagePlus's new look – simpler but bulkier button bars

DTP software compared

Product	PageMaker 6.5	Ventura 7.0	FrameMaker 5.0	Quark Xpress 3.32	Pressworks 2.5	Publisher 97	Mini Office Publisher	PFS Publisher 1.1	PagePlus 4.0
Contact	Adobe	Corel	Adobe	Quark Systems	GSP	Microsoft	Europress	Softkey	Serif
Windows version	95	95	3.1	3.1/95	95	95	3.1	3.1	95
Min/recommended RAM	8/24Mb	8/16Mb	8/12Mb	4Mb	4/8Mb	6/8Mb	4Mb	2/4Mb	8Mb
Min/full disk space	26/67Mb	70/269Mb	10/30Mb	9Mb	7/22Mb	9.5/116Mb	5/40Mb	3.5/6.5Mb	25/65Mb
Styles	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tags	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
Master pages	Multiple	Multiple	Multiple	Multiple	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Multiple documents	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○
Table creator	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○
Indexing	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○
Table of contents	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○
Kerning	Auto/manual	Auto/manual	Auto	Auto/manual	Manual	Auto/manual	Manual	Manual	Auto/manual
Process colour separations	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	●
Spot colour seps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Shaped text wrap	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Text rotation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Hyperlinks	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	●
HTML output	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○
Other electronic output	Acrobat	Envoy, Barista	FrameMaker	○	○	○	○	○	○
Add-on support	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Fonts included	220	1,000	13	0	35	150	200	12	400
Clipart included	0	TBA	750	0	104	5,000	2,200	112	17,500

● = Yes ○ = No

slider, or picking values from a conventional drop-down list. It's also been joined by a Status Bar for precise positioning and sizing.

The built-in word processor, WritePlus, now boasts not only a spelling checker and a thesaurus, but also a style checker and an Auto-Correct feature for common typing mistakes. Colour facilities are excellent, with Pantone libraries, spot and process separations and automatic trapping. The ability to set type in one-tenth of a point steps

and place objects to within one-tenth of a millimetre or degree should satisfy most designers.

Despite its high-powered features PagePlus is very easy to use, with dozens of Page Wizards to help you create home and business documents. Further Wizards help you place frames and import text or picture files and there are plenty of hints and tips, all of which can be turned off by experienced users.

A clever balance of power, ease of use and sheer fun

make this **excellent value and a pleasure to use.**
○ £99.95 (inc VAT)
○ Serif: 0800 924925

Serif PagePlus 4.0

Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★☆
Performance	★★★★☆
Documentation	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

At the top level, we have the elegant but austere Quark Xpress – no bundled extras, few new features but the established professional's choice. In contrast, Ventura comes with loads of extras and bristles with new features. But it seems to lack focus – if Ventura is the claimed one-stop solution for paper and Web publishing, why bundle Corel Web Designer as well? So our high-end best buy is PageMaker 6.5, which combines a Quark-beating feature list with a focused and unobtrusive interface. Of the budget software, Serif PagePlus 4.0 is the clear winner. It's rich in features and extras, and the interface has been greatly improved to make its power easily accessible.

Tim Nott

Jargon buster

○ **Drop cap:** a large initial letter to a paragraph, 'dropped' over several lines.
○ **Kerning:** adjusting the space between certain letter pairs (for example, AV) to improve appearance.
○ **Knockout:** see 'trapping'.
○ **Leading:** spacing between lines (rhymes with 'heading').
○ **Master pages:** left- and right-page templates which contain common features, such as column guides and page number blocks. Most magazines use a variety of layouts and so need multiple master pages.
○ **Pantone:** an industry standard colour-matching system in which the designer's colour samples correspond to specified ink and paper combinations.
○ **Point:** a typographical measurement (approximately one 72nd of an inch).
○ **Process colour:** colour produced by mixing dots of different coloured inks (usually cyan, yellow, magenta

and black), each from a separate printing plate.
○ **Spot colour:** colour produced by one solid colour from a separate printing plate.
○ **Tags:** non-printing formatting codes which can be imported from any text file.
○ **Text wrap:** shaping text margins around the contours of a graphic.
○ **Tracking: the** overall spacing between letters.
○ **Trapping:** in spot colour printing, if you place a yellow circle on top of a black square, for example, the black printing plate must have the circle 'knocked out' or the resulting colour will be a muddy brown. Because successive plates may be slightly mis-aligned, there needs to be a slight overlap. Usually the lighter object is 'spread' (if inside) or 'choked' (if outside) over the darker, a process known as trapping.