

INDUSTRY NEWS

by Jerry O'Neill

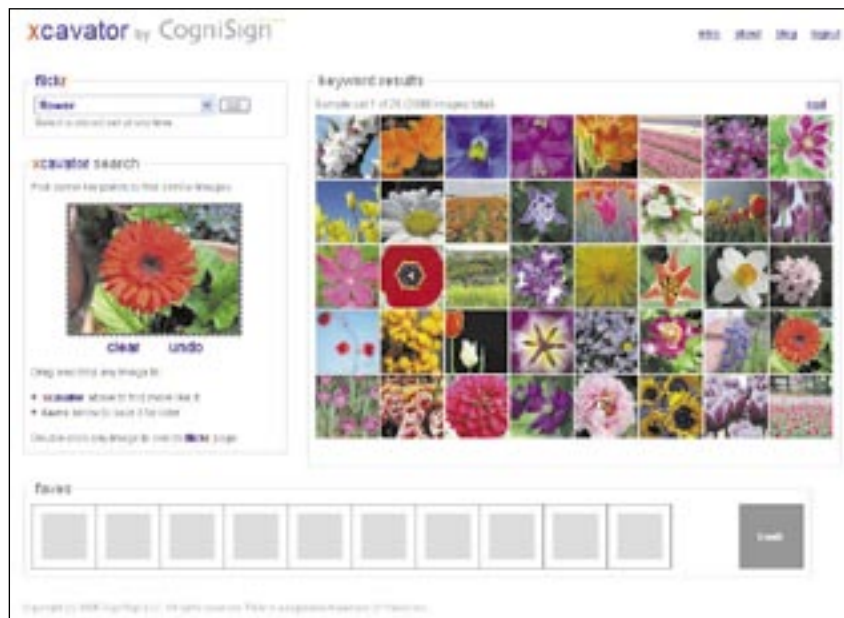
CogniSign

CogniSign's xcavator software finds photos based on colors and shapes

Professional photographers are generally scrupulous about attaching relevant keywords to their digital images, since being able to find the pictures their client wants is how they make their living. But consumers aren't as conscientious, and as they accumulate more and more digital photographs, it becomes increasingly important for them to have a variety of ways to search for specific images.

Digital photos are time-and-date-stamped, of course, so chronological searches are fairly easy. But what if your cousin asks for a copy of the picture you took of a handsome red flower in her garden? You vaguely remember it was taken between 1999 and 2004 or so, but for an enthusiastic photographer that could mean thousands of pictures to search through.

That's where content-based photo search engines come in, and one of the newest is the "xcavator" program from CogniSign, a San Francisco software firm that says it has developed "the first high-performance interactive image



The search begins by using flickr's keyword search to find pictures of flowers, then selecting a red flower by putting it in the xcavator search box at left.

recognition technology." Xcavator can search photo collections on a PC or on a "photo album" website such as flickr.

The program begins by showing you a "light table" of images. You select an image that has something in common with the image you're searching for, such as a red object surrounded by green – which is roughly what that red flower picture looks like. Xcavator will go through all the photos, and show you a new light table that contains only pictures with a red central area surrounded by green. If it didn't find the photo you want the first time around, click on the photo that looks most like the picture you're searching for. Before long, xcavator will come up with the photo you want.

There's an interactive demo of xcavator interfaced with flickr at www.xcavator.net, and also an informative video, data sheet, etc.

Kodak

Kodak teams up with Martha Stewart

Martha Stewart is famous for do-it-yourself craft projects, and now her \$200 million company, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia (MSLO) is developing a line of do-it-yourself photo products for Kodak as part of a new, multi-year

partnership. The Kodak-Martha Stewart partnership will let consumers "make the best Christmas cards, the best invitations, the best baby albums, the best memory-making products," Stewart told the Rochester newspaper.

The photo items will include cards, stationery, invitations, photo books, calendars, stickers, and hang tags, based on templates designed by MSLO under Stewart's supervision and guidance. Consumers will be able to personalize the templates with their own photos and text through the websites of



Kodak Chairman/CEO Antonio M. Perez and Martha Stewart, announcing the two companies will partner on a line of photo products to be sold online.

both companies (www.KodakGallery.com and www.MarthaStewart.com). The finished photo items will carry the Martha Stewart name and will be delivered to the consumer by mail.

Starting in late September, consumers will be able to make Martha Stewart holiday items such as greeting cards, with additional products to be introduced later this year and in early 2007.

Reports say MSLO "considered several companies" for its digital photography venture but decided on Kodak "based at least in part on Stewart's own personal visits to Rochester to meet with senior executives and Kodak researchers."

The two companies will share the profits, but terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

Kodak brand name drops to no. 70 in ranking of top 100

In the 2006 ranking of best global brands put together by BusinessWeek magazine and the Interbrand brand consulting firm, Kodak dropped to 70th place, from number 62 in 2005 and 53 in 2004. Similarly, its "brand value" computed by Interbrand dropped a troubling 12 percent, making it one of the "Top Decliners" in the survey. (And in 2005 its value had dropped 5 percent from the 2004 figure.)

Interbrand commented, "Down -12 percent this year, Kodak has made valiant strides to catch up with the digital world, however the reality is that competition is fierce and profitability is thin compared to Kodak's film business and thus the brand's value continues to decline."

The top gainer in the survey, with a brand value increase of a whopping 46 percent, was Google, ranked at number 24.

As a sidelight, in the 2006 survey Kodak was categorized as a "Consumer Electronics" company.

Kodak EasyShare One camera gets criticism, praise

Just to remind us there's always more than one point of view, note that cnet.com, a leading technology site, recently called Kodak's 6 megapixel EasyShare One camera one of the second quarter's "Ten worst technologies." The CNET editors wrote, "The good news is that the Kodak EasyShare One/6MP does Wi-Fi extremely well, so you can e-mail, print and share photos directly from the camera. The bad news is that the camera's image quality, boot-up time, and controls will make you want to stop taking photos altogether. Bad menu navigation, murky backgrounds, purple/pink halos..."

Yes, but meanwhile the IDEA 2006 awards (Industrial Design Excellence Awards) awarded the same camera a Silver award in the Consumer Products category, saying, "More than just another digital camera, the EasyShare-one was envisioned from the start as a device that would change how consumers connect with friends and family to share life's moments. Therefore, the camera

is also a Wi-Fi Internet-connected photo viewer that allows users to easily share, print and e-mail pictures. Its big 3-inch touch-screen LCD flips and twists on a hinge for reviewing photos or capturing a wide range of compositions, from self-portraits to timer shots or ad hoc moments. Among the many awards and reviews it has received, the EasyShare One earned a 2006 Best of Innovations award at the Consumer Electronics Show...

Kodak offers 300-year Preservation Gold CDs

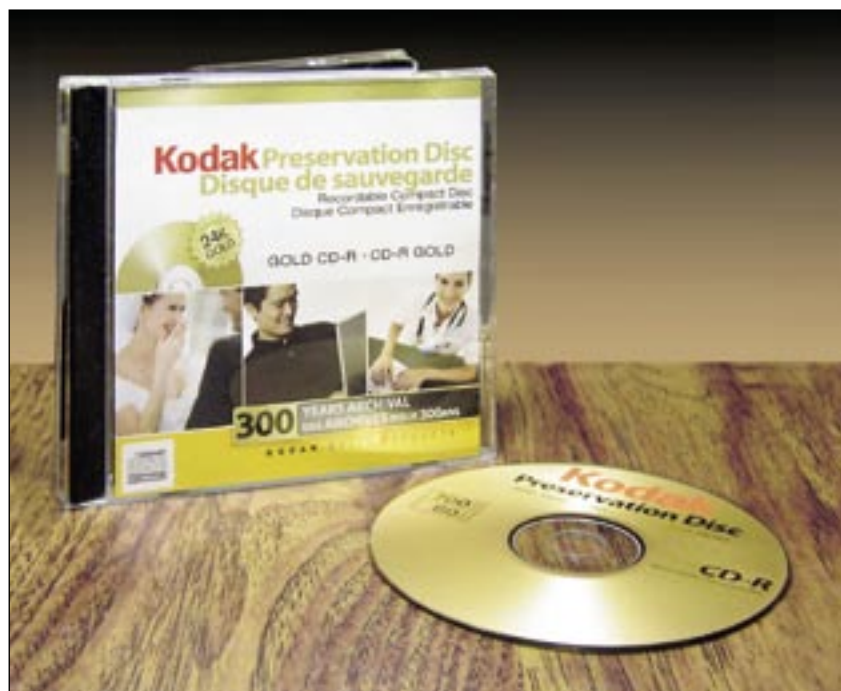
Storing digital photos for long periods continues to be a knotty problem – some archivists say it's a disaster waiting to happen. For many photographers, archiving photographs onto writable CDs or DVDs has become standard – even though they may worry about the fragility of those disks.

The catch is, regular CDs and DVDs can easily be damaged by sunlight, heat, and moisture, as well as by physical pressure and stress. To meet this challenge, Kodak is back in the "gold CD" business with writable CDs and DVDs, called Kodak Preservation CDs and DVDs. They're distributed by KMP Media LLC – just across the street from Kodak headquarters in Rochester, New York, but KMP is a separate distribution company.

The lifespan of a typical "silver" CD-R may be as short as 5 to 15 years, according to some reports. Compare that with Kodak's Preservation CD-R, with "a useful storage life of 300 years due to its 24 karat gold reflective layer, highest quality Phthalocyanine dye, and triple protective layers."

"Kodak Preservation CDs have been tested under light and accelerated aging to preserve data, photos and documents up to 300 years with proper handling. Kodak Preservation DVDs have been tested to preserve data, photos and documents 80–100 years with proper handling."

According to KMP president Steve Mizelle, today's Kodak gold CDs are even better than Kodak's gold Ultima 80 writable CDs were, back in the '90s. "Gold will not tarnish, so the tarnishing problem of the silver CD goes away. And by using really good dye, Phthalocyanine, you get away from the problems of the dye fading and being ravaged by our environment, like the problems silver CDs that use inexpensive dyes have – cyanine and azo dyes, which are much less permanent than Phthalocyanine."



Kodak Preservation Gold CD

Photo by Jerry O'Neill

As for the problems of scratching and physical damage, with Preservation CDs and DVDs, "On top of the dye layer and the 100 percent 24 karat gold reflective layer, we also have three layers of protection that we put into that disk. And if you use a diamond stylus pressure test, the gold CD will take up to 275 grams of pressure, so you're less likely to get something like this happening" – and with that he made a large scratch! across the surface of a silver CD, making it unreadable.

Single gold Preservation CD-Rs will cost something like \$3 and single gold Preservation DVD (with a choice of either + or - flavor, R or RW type)

Wide-format printing at its best

IMETTO TERA 32



- DPSS laser engine
- daylight operation
- RA4 processing (paper + display film)
- print formats up to 30" x 150"
- top value for money

Distributors wanted!

Imetto Digital Imaging Technology Co. Ltd.
Tel.: xx8620 32052450 • Fax: xx8620 32052451
holden@imetto.com • www.imetto.com

See us at photokina 2006
Hall 10-1; booth no. E030/F039

will be around \$4. The price per disk will be considerably less in the 25-disk spindle packs.

Kurzweil

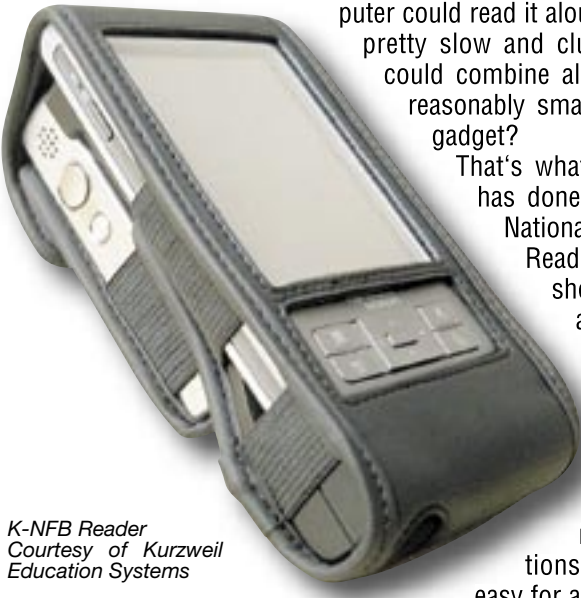
"Talking camera" reads to the blind

If I had a blind neighbor who wanted to know the contents of an encyclopedia page, I'd read it to him. But I could photograph the page with a digital camera, run it through an OCR program to convert the image to a text file, then run the text through a text-to-speech program so the computer could read it aloud to him. That would be pretty slow and clumsy, but suppose you could combine all those functions into a reasonably small, lightweight, handheld gadget?

That's what inventor Ray Kurzweil has done to create the Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Reader, or K-NFB Reader for short. It's about the size of a paperback book, basically comprised of a 5 megapixel digicam plus a powerful PDA (personal data assistant) plus a lot of ingenious programming that ties the functions together and makes it easy for a blind person to operate.

In use, first the K-NFB gives its user a description of what it sees; if it's what he wants, he presses a button, and after a few seconds' delay for image processing, the K-NFB reads the page aloud. The reader can decipher most printed documents, address labels, and instruction sheets, and can also handle bills and receipts, medication instructions, even emergency evacuation notices in hotels. And it "remembers" what it reads on memory cards that allow transferring the files to computers and Braille notetakers.

*K-NFB Reader
Courtesy of Kurzweil
Education Systems*



PhotoSite

Secure online photo storage

PhotoSite, an online photo-sharing service, has introduced a new product called PhotoSafe, designed to let people "conveniently and securely store their digital photos online".

There will be two levels of PhotoSafe membership: store 1,000 photos a month for \$1.99 per month, or store unlimited photos for \$2.99 per month. And unlike other digital photo storage services, PhotoSafe does not require members to purchase prints or other merchandise to maintain their membership. Photos are stored as long as the member maintains their account. When an account is terminated and closed, members can reopen the account within 60 days and retrieve their photos.

PhotoSafe will be available both as a standalone product and as a premium add-on feature of PhotoSite's photo sharing services. You can learn more at <http://www.myphotosafe.com/>.

On a similar note, the Photo Marketing Association International announced a new program called Long Term Photo Care (LTPC) for photo retailers. Long Term Photo Care, a term coined and promoted by author and industry journalist Laura Oles, includes "providing education, products and services for consumers who have hard drives filling up with digital pictures and aren't sure what to do next." Oles will head the Long Term Photo Care project for PMA.

Red digital cinema

Digital cine camera begin to replace miles and miles of movie film

Film was the photo industry's cash cow, especially in the x-ray and graphic arts areas where film was used by the square foot, and in Hollywood-style cinema-

tography where film was, and still is, used by the mile. But now, digital movie cameras are beginning to cut into those miles, and there's hot competition among the camera manufacturers.

There are established companies like California-based Panavision and Germany's ARRI Group; manufacturers with their roots in making television equipment, like Sony and Thomson Grass Valley; and start-ups (not to say upstarts) like Red Digital Cinema.

Yet so far, at least, Hollywood's changeover to digital is going much more slowly than happened in still photography.

First, the total number of Hollywood-class digital movie cameras is never going to be very large, so there won't be mass production with its economies of scale. Second, many movie-makers feel film still beats digital esthetically, for instance in capturing the nuances of bright daylight scenes. (Well-known directors including Steven Spielberg and M. Night Shyamalan say they intend to continue using film.) And third, as the president of a Hollywood company that rents digital cameras told *The New York Times*, "People involved with big-budget features are usually risk-averse. Delays are very costly when you've got stars on the set, and that means no trailblazing."

No question, though, that digital cinema already has its nose in Hollywood's tent. "Flyboys," a soon-to-be-released \$60 million film about World War I, used Panavision's Genesis digital camera even though it rents for about \$3,000 a day, nearly twice as much as a film camera. Why? Dean Devlin, the "Flyboys" producer, told the Times that when photographing from aircraft, the Genesis has a huge advantage over film cameras: continuous shooting for nearly an hour during airborne dogfight sequences, using the Genesis connected to a digital tape deck, mounted on a replica biplane or in a helicopter. A film camera would have been limited to takes perhaps five minutes long before needing to be reloaded, estimated Tony Bill, the movie's director.

And there can be other esthetic advantages. Dion Beebe, the cinematographer for "Miami Vice," told the Times it was shot with Thomson Grass Valley's Viper FilmStream camera to create a particular look for the movie. "We made use of the Viper's amazing depth of field," he said. "You're seeing clearly from two inches to infinity."

Other shot-with-digital-movie-cameras films you might see this summer include "Superman Returns" and "Click." One you may already have seen was George Lucas's "Star Wars: Episode II," released in 2002, shot with a prototype digital movie camera adapted from a Sony TV news camera.

As for the cameras themselves, companies like ARRI emphasize a familiar look and feel – their Arriflex D-20 digital camera is clearly derived from their 35 mm cine models and they even call it "A film-style digital camera". But newcomer Red Digital Cinema is taking the opposite approach; their camera looks like it might have been part of a UFO.

More important than its looks, the Red Digital cine camera will sell for only \$17,500. The company says, "For the cost of a few days' rental of their products, you can own ours."

Xerox

Xerox's profits drop but company beats estimates

Xerox Corporation announced its total revenue for the second quarter grew 1 percent to \$3.98 billion, compared to \$3.92 billion in the previous year's second quarter. The company's second-quarter net income dropped substantially, down 39 percent from the Q2 2005 figure of \$423 million. The Q2 2006 net income was \$260 million/26 cents a share – but Xerox still beat Wall Street estimates for the quarter by 3 cents a share.

Revenue from post-sale activities (the sale of services and supplies that help keep Xerox equipment running) and from financing, representing about 75 percent of the company's total revenue, increased 2 percent, largely driven by 4 percent post-sale growth from digital systems. Currency exchange rates had a negligible impact on total and post-sale revenue.

There was a 16 percent increase in color post-sale revenue and 5 percent post-sale growth from global services, Xerox reported. Contracts for document management services were up more than 15 percent in the quarter.

The company said it expects full-year net income to be at the high end of the \$1 to \$1.07 range it had previously predicted.

"Color" was an area for special optimism. Revenue from Xerox's color products and services grew 14 percent in the quarter, and now represents 34 percent of the company's total revenue, and installations of the company's high-end production color machines grew 96 percent, Xerox said. But Mulcahy pointed out that color still represents only 9 percent of pages printed on Xerox equipment, leaving "plenty of room for additional growth."