

Special Report

Seybold Boston: Now that dot-com mania is dead, quo vadis?

by Dan Brill

Was it only a year ago that print was passé, and any company with “.com” in its name and the word “publishing” in its literature automatically grabbed a Seybold Hot Pick?

Now it seems the party's over. The Seybold Boston Conference and Exposition just concluded (April 9-13) was a leaner, more focused affair than its pre-dotcom predecessor. Yes, e-content had its place, but this show—smaller and less populated by attendees—was more about going back to its roots; it was about bringing content creators and technological innovations together, rather than offering up newtechnopaneas and demanding genuflection.

ANYTHING ADOBE CAN DO, QUARK CAN DO BETTER

Familiar vendor names were in abundance: Quark (post-Tim Gill) was back in the limelight as bossman Fred Ebrahimi took to the Hynes Convention Center stage to introduce *Quark Active Publishing Server* (QuarkAPS), his company's new cross-media system for converting *QuarkXPress* content to the Web and back again (due sometime in 2001). *QuarkAPS* fulfills the company's new “media-independent” thrust and represents the natural evolution of *QuarkXPress*—and should have been on the development board at least three years ago (but I guess at that point Quark was too busy killing mTropolis and trying to make us believe in *QuarkImmedia*). *QuarkXPress* 5 was again

talked about but no firm release date announced, beyond the suggestion that it might be ready later this year (possibly the first time a company has managed to elongate a product rollout for over two years based on the fact that its last upgrade release was a total disaster).

Adobe didn't have to work too hard for attention as *Atmosphere*, *InScope*, *Acrobat* 5 and a sneak preview of the next incarnation of *InDesign* provided lots to ponder. *Atmosphere* caters to the 3D crowd, with *Cult3D*-like capabilities to rotate, zoom and interact with objects.

It was also an opportunity to bid adieu to one of the founders of the desktop industry, as Adobe's John Warnock made his retirement farewells in a heartwarming address during the Tuesday keynotes.

FUNNEL YOU SHOULD SAY THAT

What stood out for me at this Seybold was the general wave of what might be labelled “funnel software”—applications, servers and systems for helping content creators and printers collaborate and deliver digital content from and through any medium to any destination. Digital asset management isn't just about building a master filing system; it's about sharing, checking and dispatching those assets in conjunction with a multitude of partners and service providers as well as converting them for a multitude of purposes. *QuarkAPS* will serve to funnel print pages to the Web. *Adobe InScope* (www.adobe.com/products/InScope) uses the Web to connect creatives and organize their collaborative efforts.

In addition, Toronto's Digital Horizons (www.digitalhorizonsonline.com), headed up by old buddy Ron Lokaisingh) unveiled *Relay*, a new digital delivery software package that preflights and performs verifi-

cation procedures on ads going to publishers (at a base price of around CDN\$2000 for a single site). Group Logic debuted *MassTransit* 4.0, a job management server that offers a drag-n-drop browser-based approach to sending an entire job with its Mac subfolder hierarchy untouched and with all resource forks. Publishasap (www.publishasap.com), a new company based in Phoenix, launched a Web-based delivery system for book publishers going to print and/or the Web. *ColorQuick.com* introduced *magSend* (www.magsend.com), another Internet-based checking and preflighting system for ad delivery to magazines (although the company representative I talked to was extremely *unforthcoming* about pricing).

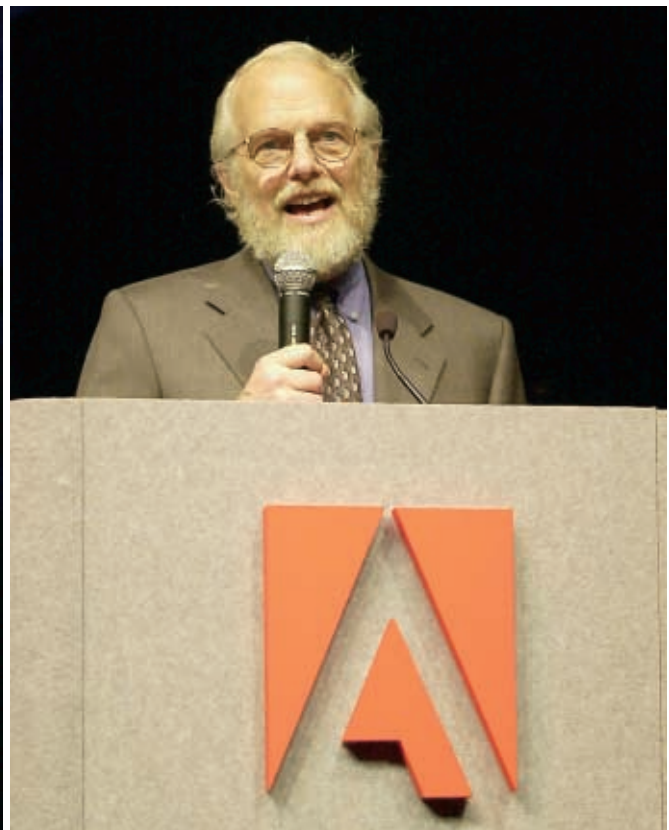
Prolatus (www.prolatus.com, the former *ColorCentric.com*) snared the attention of high end image creators and prepress service providers with its new software (based on Prolatus' proprietary *Catalyst* technology) that allows users to edit large image

As the signs said, Adobe was everywhere at Seybold Boston. Crowdpleasers included Adobe InScope, Adobe Atmosphere and Adobe Acrobat 5—with InDesign 2 still waiting in the wings.





Quark CEO Fred Ebrahimi made his best attempt to reassure his audience that the company was now better than ever, observing that one third of Quark's revenues are spent on research and development.



Retiring Adobe founder and CEO John Warnock delivered a sentimental goodbye to the industry he practically invented.

files and move or apply their revisions across the Internet without resorting to compression schemes, as well as track and audit their trail of changes. This is a product aimed (and priced for) the high end of ad agencies and prepress shops—costs start at US\$5,000 per seat and climb quickly from there for the *Courier Server* and *Expert Server* versions.

Fuji finally broke the wrappers on *myfujifilm.com*, showing off a slickly revamped interface and a tightly woven architecture for sending, proofing, tracking and costing print jobs. *InSite*, the CreoScitex (www.creoscitex.com) Internet print management server setup (at US\$30-50K) which was just substantially revamped for Seybold, provides a powerful means for printers to let creatives use the Web to deliver final jobs for press and communicate with their print providers.

The collaborative tool set that one might have expected to see but which was-

n't shown at all was Agfa's *Delano*. Latest word from product manager John Harrison was that *Delano* has been tied up in "corporate politics" but that it should be seeing the light very soon.

PRINT IS BACK, PDF IS BACKER

Digital content is obviously important to the creative process, but this Seybold also showed that print is still the number one priority for content output.

PDF workflow products were well represented. New entries included Lantana's sparkling *Stratify PDF* software (www.lantanarips.com) which lets designers and publishers create layers in PDF documents that can be manipulated, edited, hidden or deleted (US\$249, Macintosh only); Apago's *PDF/X Checkup* (www.apago.com), an *Acrobat* plug-in that checks and corrects PDF files in compliance with the emerging PDF/X standard for blind file exchange (priced at only US\$149); In-

tellidoc's *PDF-Manager* (www.pdf-manager.com), a suite of PDF utilities originating in Denmark which combines document linking, HTML conversion, document format standardization, and several other handy tools; the latest CreoScitex designer tool, *Synapse*, which gives page creators another way of converting *QuarkXPress* and other Mac application files to PDF (and, of course, makes it even simpler to feed a CreoScitex workflow with guaranteed results); and activePDF (www.activepdf.com), with its *activePDF Server* for Windows NT/2000 that provides a range of tools for PDF management, encryption, and different file format conversions.

The Adobe Partners' Pavilion was full of interesting niche products, but for me the most pleasing news was that StudioN has finally released its *ColorBlade* plug-in for *Photoshop*. *ColorBlade* potentially takes the headaches out of performing RGB to CMYK conversions, using its own



Hey! Where did everybody go? As the show wound down, this was the scene in the E-Content area of the floor. Trouble is, it wasn't much busier than this even at "peak" hours.



What was Mercedes doing at a show for publishers and e-content creators? Maybe they hadn't heard that the dot.com boom was over. But the cars sure looked pretty.

SAME (Stunion Appearance Matching Environment) technology (watch for a full review in our next issue). While we're on the subject, I'm also awaiting the upcoming

release of IXSoftware's *Make It So* software which handles *Photoshop* color transformations. I ran into Bruce Fraser, one of *Make It So*'s creators and a well-known

writer on expert *Photoshop* techniques, on the show floor, and he advised me that they were still working on the finishing touches (including that rather lame product name).

Markzware (www.markzware.com) is busily working on a major upgrade to its preflighting software that should be ready by the fall. *FlightCheck 5* (for Mac only) will add a new module called *FlightCheck Vision* which allows users to set up customizable "Flight Plans" (individual workflows), macros which execute a series of actions on a file (e.g. preflight using a predetermined set of criteria, print a report, then collect the job) or scripts which automatically fix problems. The ever-bubbly Mary Gay Marchese explained that the original *FlightCheck*, now entering version 4, will follow Coca-Cola's lead and become *FlightCheck Classic*.

And the boys at Dynagram (www.dynagram.com) continue to prove that they're not lying down for Preps. The latest version of *DynaStrip*, the imposition software produced by this Quebec-based company, now makes it possible to send different signatures to different output devices at the same time using its new plate setup profile capability. Soon *DynaStrip* will be capable of seamlessly handling layouts for different versions of a document and will add document list automation to complement the versioning feature.

For oldtimers still using *QuarkXPress* with DK&A's *InPosition* for imposing flats, the news is that DK&A (www.dka.com) expects to have a standalone version of its venerable desktop imposition software ready to ship by Q4/2001, and a brand new XTension for *QuarkXPress 5* at the same time (despite no firm date from Quark). *InPosition ID* for *InDesign* is also in development with an expected due date in Q3.

THINGS THAT WEREN'T SOFT

NEC-Mitsubishi was at Seybold with its range of monitors. What caught my eye were two brand new Mitsubishi flat screen CRTs: the Diamond Pro 2060u 22" (20" viewable) and the 19" (18" viewable) Dia-

mond Pro 920. Both models should be appearing on Canadian computer store shelves very soon.

Epson took advantage of the Seybold floor to expose its new Stylus Pro 10000. This is a six-color wide format printer (44") that produces high resolution 1420 x 720 dpi inkjet output at 72 square feet per hour



Gene Gable, Seybold Conference and Publications president, was philosophical about the decline in the show's attendance and promised format changes for the West Coast event.

(or 231 sq. ft. per hour at lower settings). It can be adapted to either Epson Archival Inks for photographic quality posters or standard dyes for proofing, signage and packaging mockups. The Stylus Pro 10000 is due in June at a price of US\$9,995 (Fiery RIP option extra).

And of course Xerox had a substantial presence, following up on its recent announcements (see "Xerox pledges to drive markets to color", page 38).

E-STUFF AND GENE STUFF

Since I didn't spend a lot of time in the e-content section of the show floor, I can only report that XML continues to be the connecting rod that most vendors were talking about when it came to linking digital content on the Web or from print to the Web. I looked at the various e-books on display, and yes, Microsoft's ClearType is genuinely as crisp as described.

But I'm not sure how much use I'd get out of having text linked to a dictionary. It's not that I pretend to understand every word in the English language, but somehow the interruption of stopping to click on a word breaks the mental flow for me. Besides, when I clicked on "Boston", the e-book didn't understand it at all. At upwards of \$150 for e-book reader software, I think I'll stick to my paperbacks.

I had a chance to have a private chat with Seybold Seminars and Publications president Gene Gable. Gene is one of the most human guys in the business and definitely a favorite of mine, both for his astute insights into the publishing market and his casual demeanour.

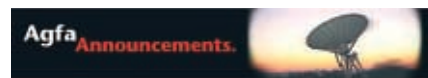
As always, Gable was candid about the show. Yes, both attendance and exhibitor participation were down (about 30% by his reckoning). Yes, the absence of the dot-coms had hurt the show, both in terms of revenues and in breadth of product displays. Yes, it was time to do a major overhaul on a bloated, increasingly marginal conference program. And no, rumours that the show would be moving to New York (again) were premature—although it's a well-known fact that Steve Jobs hates Boston (which is why you'll never see Apple showing at a Seybold in Boston).

Gene promised that Seybold San Francisco would see significant changes in its approach to both the exhibits and the conference.

Yet I have to say that I felt like this Seybold Boston turned a corner of sorts. It was a humbler, more targeted affair, with more in it for publishers like me. I didn't miss the e-hoopla one tiny bit. In fact, I'm actually looking forward to seeing what alterations are in store for Seybold San Francisco in late September.

Just don't make me go to Javits, Gene. ☹️

Agfa releases Digital QuickStrip for Apogee Pilot and PrintDrive



Agfa's *Digital QuickStrip*, a plug-in to the Apogee Pilot and PrintDrive components, is now available as an option to its Apogee PrintDrive, Series 2 Version 2 workflow management system.

Pages are ripped and trapped individually, and assembled into user-defined templates on the fly at output time. Page files remain independent, enabling late-stage changes in the choice of imposition and press configurations. Also, users can perform automatic proofing and/or high-resolution imaging.

Templates within *Digital QuickStrip* can define an imposition scheme for proofer and press size, binding scheme, and more. Two options are offered: a Master Template, stored on Apogee PrintDrive, can be applied repeatedly to like-formatted jobs. A Linked Template, more suitable for specific jobs, is stored in Apogee PrintDrive along with the identified job pages. This workflow also supports the import of single-page DCS Copydot files directly into Apogee PrintDrive, eliminating the need to re-process the files through the entire system.

Contact Agfa Canada at 416-241-1110 (Toronto), 514-426-2112 (Montreal) or 604-270-3838 (Vancouver), or visit www.agfa.ca.

Acquired Knowledge sells EZ-PDF to Enfocus Software

Enfocus Software announced at Seybold Boston that it had acquired the *EZ-PDF* technology for creating PDFs from *QuarkXPress* and *Adobe InDesign* from Acquired Knowledge. *EZ-PDF* also expedites transfers to FTP servers and imports to a PitStop server. Acquired Knowledge ceased operations on January 31, 2001.

Enfocus CEO Peter Camps says that *EZ-PDF* will complement his company's recently introduced product *Certify PDF*.