

How To
Prevent
Identity
Theft

**2004 AUTOMOTIVE
BEST BUY RATINGS**



Consumers Digest

December 2003

Best Buys

2004 CARS

**Trucks, Vans
& SUVs**



PLUS

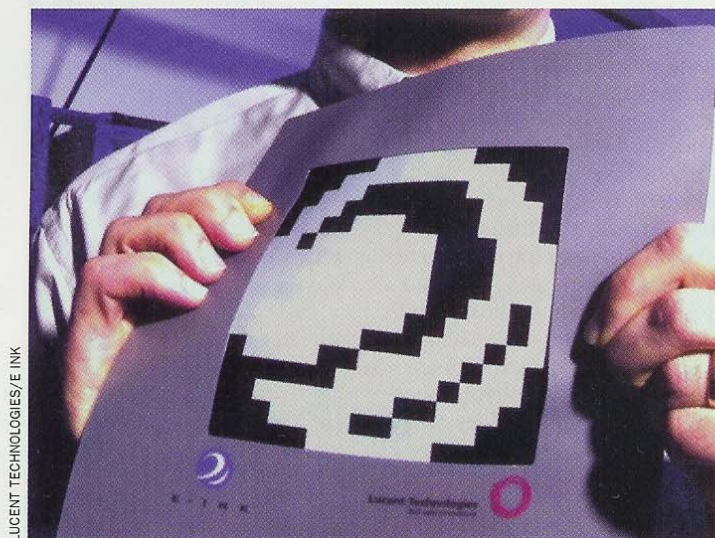
- **Cutting-Edge Power Tools**
- **This Season's Hottest Toys & Games**
- **Specialty Kitchen Appliances**

**BEST BUYS IN SNOWTHROWERS • SEWING MACHINES • POWER SAWS, DRILLS & SANDERS
BREADMAKERS • CONTACT GRILLS • ROTISSERIES • SHAVERS • BLOW DRYERS AND MORE**



What's New

Products ■ Services ■ Technology



All the news that's continually fit to print

Walking past a newsstand, you glean a just-off-the-presses headline about the stock market. Instead of plopping down some pocket change to buy it, you pull out a 1-in.-diameter cylinder from your briefcase.

From that cylinder, you remove and unroll a 3-ft.-long plastic newspaper from the tube, and you begin to read the exact same story, which, like magic, is already there in an easy-to-read font size—all to the chagrin of the newspaper vendor.

How did the text get there? Believe it or not, it's not by wizardry.

It's a new environmental-friendly technology (no newspapers to pile up) called "electronic paper" that uses plastic electronics to allow people to, among other things, read an updated newspaper all day long. And the technology could be here in 3 years.

John Rogers, a professor of materials science and engineering at the University

of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has been working with companies such as DuPont USA and E Ink Corp. to create material that could eventually lead to soft, flexible, paperlike computer monitors or a laptop screen made of lightweight plastic rather than silicon that you could roll up when finished reading.

The technology has the potential for significantly more applications, Rogers tells Consumers Digest. For example, instead of having the simple cutouts that have graced the back of cereal boxes for years, how cool would it be for kids to see Tony the Tiger reading real-time sports scores via the wireless Web?

Trying to get the technology's cost down to "pennies" so that it won't affect consumers' pocketbooks is the goal, and it's an achievable one, according to Rogers.

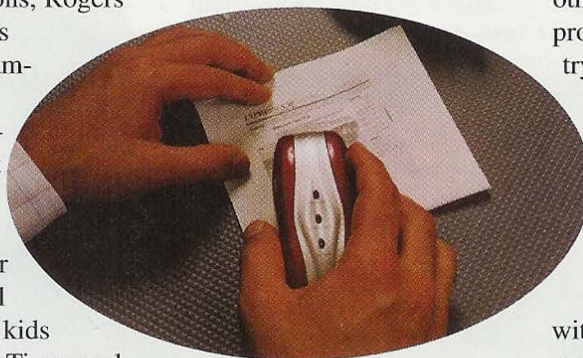
By the second or third generation of this technology, color graphics, animation and video will be possible, Graciela Blanchet, a research fellow at DuPont informs Consumers Digest. The first-generation technology will probably be black-and-white only and won't have animation capabilities, because the refresh time will be too slow, she says. It will, however, be possible to have rotating messages or images on mediums like wall posters.

—J. Tehrani

Printing power in the palm of your hand

For people who go everywhere with their laptops, a Swedish company called PrintDreams has invented a portable printer that uses Bluetooth wireless technology that prints on any size paper.

Not so impressed? What if we told you the printer is



the length of a ballpoint pen and has the width and weight of a cell phone? Patrick Grimlund, the company's chairman, tells Consumers Digest the PrintBrush will print up to 100 black-and-white pages

per print cartridge from a personal data assistant, cell phone or laptop computer. A version that prints in color won't be available for a few years.

The printer is equipped with Random Movement Printing Technology (RMPT). By sweeping it across just about any medium, a printout will appear. RMPT accommodates for hand movement, rotation and sudden accelerations.

Due out in 2005, the printer will cost \$199. No price has been set for replacement cartridges.

For more information, log on to www.printdreams.com.

The dawning of midlevel Net service

Although BellSouth's coverage area is limited to nine southern states, its new FastAccess DSL Lite service could deliver new customers for Baby Bells and other Internet service providers across the country. As a midpriced product, the Internet service is faster than a dial-up connection but slower than a traditional digital subscriber line (DSL).

In an attempt to keep up with cable companies that control 65 percent of the fast-Net-access market, cost-saving DSL Lite allows users to download at 256 kilobytes (KB) per second and upload at 128 KB, which is five times faster than a dial-up connection using a 56k modem. In