

Web design software

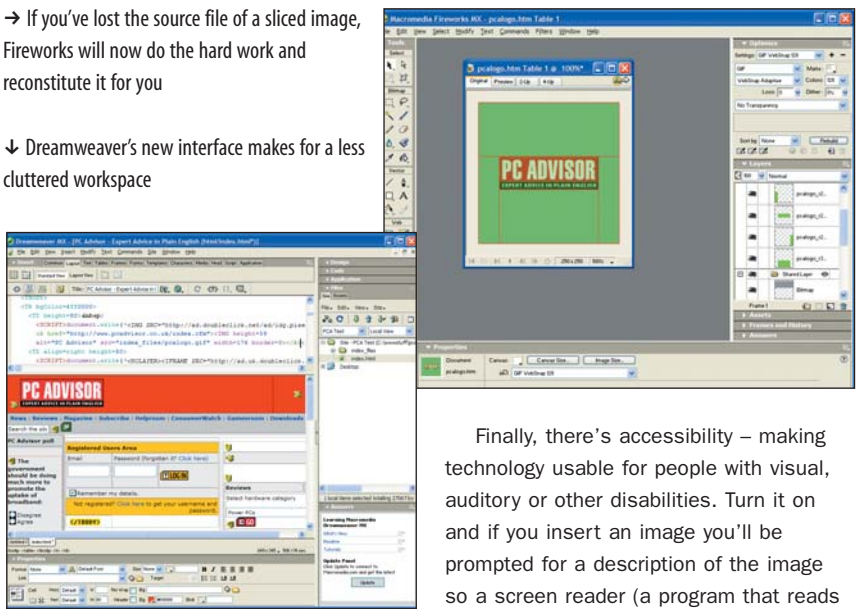
Macromedia Dreamweaver MX, Fireworks MX and ColdFusion MX

Until the release of Flash MX two months ago, things had been rather quiet from the Macromedia stable. Now this month sees not one but three product releases. All boast the new MX tag, which brings design, server and client technologies all under one roof. Dreamweaver is probably the most drastically changed of the three, but Fireworks and ColdFusion also have new features of their own.

Dreamweaver MX

Dreamweaver, Macromedia's web design package, used to be available in two versions – standard and UltraDev. Standard allowed you to create static web pages, while UltraDev was for those wanting to produce dynamic data-driven sites. With Dreamweaver MX, you effectively get both versions rolled into one plus HomeSite, Macromedia's standalone HTML editor. Depending on where you approach web design from – be it from a design or programming background – you're going to want specific features from the application. On first launch Dreamweaver offers three layout options: design, coding or, for the nostalgic user with a big screen, Dreamweaver 4.0. The design interface, with its dockable panels that you can expand and shrink, makes for a more workable design than the original, while the coding view resembles HomeSite's layout. There's a full set of templates you can choose from to get your project off the ground. These range from basic web page layouts, sensibly

- If you've lost the source file of a sliced image, Fireworks will now do the hard work and reconstitute it for you
- ↓ Dreamweaver's new interface makes for a less cluttered workspace



categorised, to CSS (cascading style sheets) to control layout and styles. On the programming side, Dreamweaver now offers support for many development languages, most notably the addition of PHP (a script language used primarily on Linux web servers). Code completion also greatly speeds up development: as soon as you start typing a tag it knows, the program offers possible options and will also add closing tags for you. The object palette has been replaced by a more comprehensive insert panel. The tabbed layout provides easy access to frequently used elements, such as tables and text. It's also file-type-sensitive, so if you're working on an ASP (active server page), for example, options specific to ASP will be available.

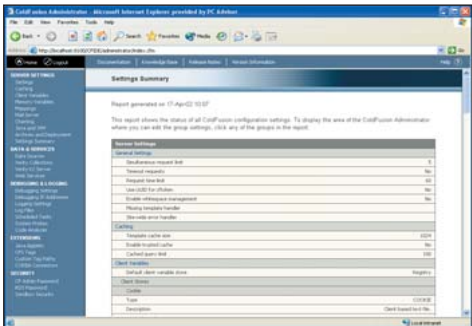
Finally, there's accessibility – making technology usable for people with visual, auditory or other disabilities. Turn it on and if you insert an image you'll be prompted for a description of the image so a screen reader (a program that reads out what is on screen) can tell a user what the picture represents. The application also offers the ability to use large fonts and keyboard shortcuts, and is compatible with screen readers.

Fireworks MX

Fireworks, a web graphics program, has also received an MX interface overhaul. The floating palettes have been replaced with dockable panels and there's now a properties inspector (docked by default at the bottom of the screen), familiar to Dreamweaver users. This adjusts depending on the object you have selected at the time and allows you to quickly edit it.

Although the changes to Fireworks MX aren't as comprehensive as Dreamweaver, there are notable additions. The previous

→ ColdFusion MX is easy to manage and configure



version added pop-up menu support, providing a simple method to create cascading menus without having to delve into messy JavaScript code. This has been enhanced to provide greater control over layout plus horizontal as well as vertical menus. Fireworks, as you would expect, integrates well with Dreamweaver, and support has now been extended to FrontPage, so if you must use Microsoft's application you can still benefit. The slicing tool is useful, allowing you to divide an image up into a number of sections to be reassembled in an HTML table. However, if you lose the original source file, rebuilding it from its parts is time-consuming. The new Reconstitute Table command means Fireworks will do the hard work for you, leaving you more time to be creative.

ColdFusion MX

Last up is ColdFusion MX, a server-based application for generating dynamic web content. One of ColdFusion's major strengths is the ability to rapidly develop web applications. Its tag-based language CFML (ColdFusion markup language) now offers native XML (extensible markup language) and web services support, as well as connectivity to Flash MX. The server is managed through a web browser, with all the settings configured via a simple interface. ColdFusion will happily integrate with Java or Microsoft's .Net platforms, linking to database sources such as Microsoft SQL, Oracle, MySQL and even Access. Flash support means it's simple to add interactivity to a dynamic site; only the content required to build a page is sent from the ColdFusion server. The benefit to the user is faster access to information. For a website publisher this method reduces the load on systems and processing time to build dynamic pages, as well as the bandwidth required. ActionScript (Flash's internal language) is now also supported.

ColdFusion MX comes in two editions – Professional and Enterprise. On the surface offering the same functionality, Professional meets the requirements of advanced sites, while Enterprise is for larger sites that require maximum performance.

Verdict

Dreamweaver stands out the most here – effectively offering three applications for the price of one. ColdFusion MX offers some powerful features, most notably its connectivity to Flash MX. Fireworks also has some extra tweaks, but is only worth the money if you opt for the Studio bundle (priced £589), which includes Dreamweaver MX, Flash MX, Fireworks MX, Freehand 10.0 and ColdFusion MX Developers Edition. ■

Will Head and Oliver Dell

Digital media suite

Extreme Media Digital Studio

For the past year the hardware world has been scrabbling to adopt the digital hub philosophy, and now it looks like the strategy is rubbing off on software companies too. Extreme Media Digital



↑ The cut-down edition of VideoWave is a version behind its full-price counterpart

Studio claims to deliver a full media production centre by combining a clutch of third-party applications into a two-CD bundle, including photo- and video-editing programs, music-management software, and CD-authoring and labelling tools. An innovative idea, maybe, but Studio turns out to offer an uninspiring mix of budget programs. The most impressive of the five on offer is CakeWalk's Pyro 1.5, a digital audio tool that allows you to rip music from CD or analogue sources to WAV, MP3 or WMA files and export them to MP3 players. Print Shop's CD Label Creator is a workman-like way of creating labels for CDs, DVDs and VHS video cassettes, while CD Maker 2000 Plus offers a simple way of burning data, music and mixed-mode CDs, albeit hindered by an ugly interface. Unfortunately, the two programs that should be the core of the suite – the video- and photo-editing applications – are the main disappointments. MGI's PhotoSuite 4.0 SE and VideoWave 4.0 SE are feature-limited versions of the full products. While both offer more than enough features for beginners, they're the sort of applications you may well already own, as they're often bundled free with digital hardware.

Verdict

Oddly, Mindscape has gone to the length of including a headphone and microphone set with the package, but has missed the real

point of a digital suite: that its constituent parts should work together seamlessly. Here the components look and feel totally inconsistent. Digital Studio is a cheap but unsatisfactory leap aboard the digital hub bandwagon. ■

Tom Gorham

Macromedia Dreamweaver MX

System requirements: 300MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/Me/NT 4.0/2000/XP; 96MB RAM; 275MB hard disk space.

Macromedia: 01344 458 600
Website: www.macromedia.co.uk
Price: £299 ex VAT

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use								8		
Features								9		
Value for money								9		
Overall								9		

Macromedia Fireworks MX

System requirements: 300MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/Me/NT 4.0/2000/XP; 64MB RAM, 80MB hard disk space.

Macromedia: 01344 458 600
Website: www.macromedia.co.uk
Price: £219 ex VAT

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use								8		
Features								8		
Value for money								7		
Overall								7		

Macromedia ColdFusion MX

System requirements: Pentium processor; Windows 98/Me/NT 4.0/2000/XP; 256MB RAM; 400MB hard disk space.

Macromedia: 01344 458 600
Website: www.macromedia.co.uk
Price: £589 (Professional), £3,689 (Enterprise)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use								8		
Features								9		
Value for money								8		
Overall								8		

Extreme Media Digital Studio

System requirements: 266MHz Pentium; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 60MB hard disk space.

Mindscape: 0870 741 6821
Website: www.learning.co.uk
Price: £64 ex VAT

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use				4						
Features				4						
Value for money								8		
Overall								6		

Home software bundle Microsoft Works Suite 2002

PC ADVISOR In the shape of Works, Microsoft has a long pedigree of marketing popular family-friendly products at a budget price – a fact not lost on computer manufacturers, who just love preinstalling it on new systems instead of the pricier Office. We're happy to see the tradition of good value continue with Works Suite 2002.

There are six components on offer in this release. At the heart is Works 6.0, a slimline office suite comprising a spreadsheet, database, address book and calendar. It should be stressed that Works is much more suited to the home than the workplace. The spreadsheet, for instance, has no support for multiple worksheets or embedded charts; the database is a strictly non-relational, non-programmable affair; and the address book is no great shakes at contact management.

But while such limitations would drive an office-bound bean counter to distraction, Works remains an attractive and affordable domestic alternative to the bloated behemoth of Office XP.

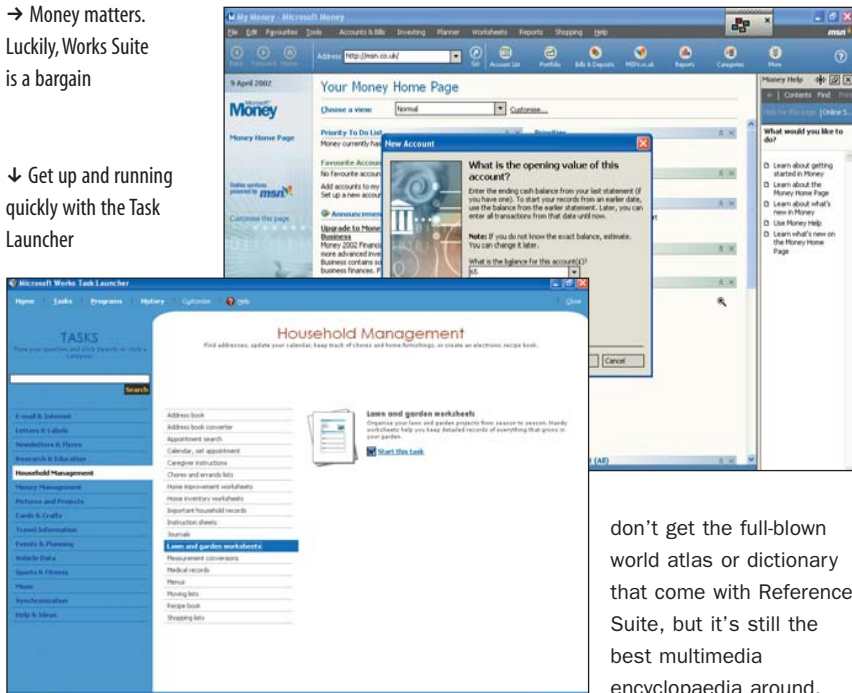
Coaching beginners

Works is also particularly attractive for computing newcomers. The Task Launcher, for instance, offers a fast track to dozens of common tasks and can help you get quick results even if you wouldn't have the first inkling how to proceed unaided.

Just browse through the menus to home in on whatever it is you want to do – track a football team's performance throughout a season, say – and the Task

→ Money matters. Luckily, Works Suite is a bargain

↓ Get up and running quickly with the Task Launcher



don't get the full-blown world atlas or dictionary that come with Reference Suite, but it's still the best multimedia encyclopaedia around.

Launcher fires up a customised template in the appropriate application. It's a good way to get started and learn just what your software can do for you. A little template tweaking is often all it takes to customise a task to a unique project.

The Portfolio is another nice touch. Although little more than a floating clipboard on to which you can drag text, sound files or images as you work, it's a useful, logical and effective way to compile a project.

World-class team

Works itself hasn't changed from the 2001 version, but the other five applications have all been updated. Word 2002, for instance, is the full Office XP version – and, yes, that means that it comes replete with Product Activation security. You can run the word processor 50 times but then you must either register your copy with Microsoft (anonymously, by telephone or online) or cease and desist.

Encarta 2002 Standard is also a welcome inclusion. True, it lacks the depth of the Deluxe release – there are no 3D virtual tours or historical articles culled from *The Times* newspaper – and you

another cracker, offering street-level map detail and step-by-step route planning across the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Elsewhere, we find Money 2002 Standard a useful tool for balancing budgets, tracking investments, monitoring an overdraft and, in the unlikely event that your bank supports it, direct or indirect access to a range of online banking services (check www.microsoft.com/uk/homepc/money2002 for details).

This leaves just Picture It Photo 2002, a disappointing and lacklustre introduction to digital image editing and desktop publishing. It's fine for air-brushing the odd spot of red-eye or making a cheesy greeting card, but that's about it.

Verdict

Works Suite is available on five CD-ROMs or a single DVD-ROM for the same price. There's no denying it: £87 (or just over £100 including VAT) is exceptional value for this bundle, especially when Word 2002 is part of the bargain. Shop around and you'll save at least a further £20. ■

Kyle MacRea

Electronic reference tool iFinger 2.0

It's fair to say that iFinger is one of those tools that you never knew you needed. And once you start using this electronic reference utility, it will become either invaluable or infuriating, depending on the nature of your work. It's a simple premise: download and install a

reference work from the iFinger website, such as a thesaurus or French-English dictionary, and get iFinger as part of the package.

The software allows you to automatically look up words in any of your installed reference works. There are three ways in which you can do this: you can dock the search bar in the toolbar of the application you are using and then search directly for a word from here; you can set the software to automatically pop up definitions when you run your cursor over any word it has an entry for; or you can double-click on words to find a definition.

One thing to note is that by default it comes with the Sleep setting ticked, which means that double-click and automatic pop-up are disabled and iFinger will only discreetly flash when you touch on a word it knows. This is a handy option once you are up and running, but since there is no manual supplied, we found it baffling that nothing worked when we first started using it.

Another thing we found irritating is iFinger's Office XP Smart Tag. Depending on which reference works you have installed, this can mean it highlights every single word you type. The only way we found to stop this is to remove the Smart Tag word by word, or to exit iFinger.

There are around 70 reference works available on the iFinger website, though many are foreign language, reflecting its Norwegian origins. The company will also develop custom reference tools for corporate customers.



↑ Hovering over a word brings up an iFinger pop-up menu of all the definitions found in your installed reference works

iFinger 2.0

System requirements: internet connection to download; other requirements depend on the products you choose.

iFinger: 020 7321 2035
Website: www.ifinger.com

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use									9	
Features					6					
Value for money										N/A
Overall						7				

Verdict

If you regularly have to look up information, then this is an easy way to put it at your fingertips, if not then iFinger probably isn't something you will ever feel the need for. ■

Ursula Seymour

Antivirus software TrendMicro PC-cillin 2002

Virus protection has always been important but it's even more vital now that more of us have permanent connections to the internet. After all, nobody

wants to be caught out by a devious macro virus that spews out infected mail to all your friends or, worse still, business contacts.

TrendMicro's latest attempt to plug the virus gap is PC-cillin 2002. Despite featuring one of the worst puns in any computer product's name, PC-cillin has managed to stay the course over the years and this update offers a heap of new features. As well as the usual Windows virus scanning, the software now also includes a personal firewall and antivirus protection for PDAs (personal digital assistants).

The first major change you'll notice in this version is the new interface, which unfortunately isn't as intuitive as we would have hoped. Whereas you can glance at either Norton AntiVirus or McAfee VirusScan and tell whether the software needs your attention, PC-cillin's interface is not as transparent.

However, the software's default settings are good so you may not even need to look too far into the various menus. If you do want to tinker then you'll find lots of options for creating scheduled scans and automating updates. We also liked the way PC-cillin can scan incoming POP3 mail for viruses and the script-blocking feature that protects you from malicious ActiveX and JavaScript code on the web.

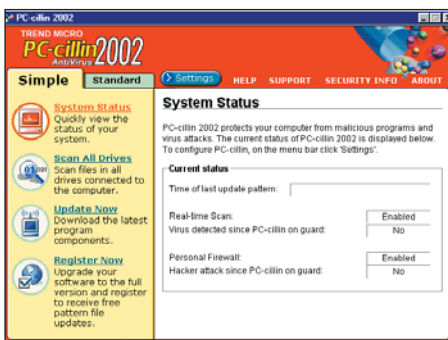
PDA scanning is supported on Epoc, Palm and Pocket PC devices. We tried the Palm version of the PDA software, which took up around 54KB of RAM. It worked well, but with only four

known viruses for the Palm platform you've got to ask whether you need it.

Verdict

PC-cillin 2002 is up there with the best antivirus products, but it's still not as polished or as easy to use as Norton or McAfee. ■

John Smith



↑ PC-cillin has a simplified interface and some new functions for the 2002 version

Microsoft Works Suite 2002

System requirements: 200MHz Pentium; Windows 98/2000/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 975MB hard disk space.

Microsoft: 0870 601 0100
Website: www.microsoft.com/uk/homepc/works2002
Price: £87.44

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use									8	
Features										9
Value for money										10
Overall										9

TrendMicro PC-cillin 2002

System requirements: 133MHz Pentium; Windows 95/98/Me/NT 4.0/2000/XP; 32MB RAM; 25MB hard disk space.

TrendMicro: 01628 400 500
Website: www.trendmicro.co.uk
Price: £29

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use									7	
Features										9
Value for money										8
Overall										7

Organisation-charting utility

OrgPlus 4.0

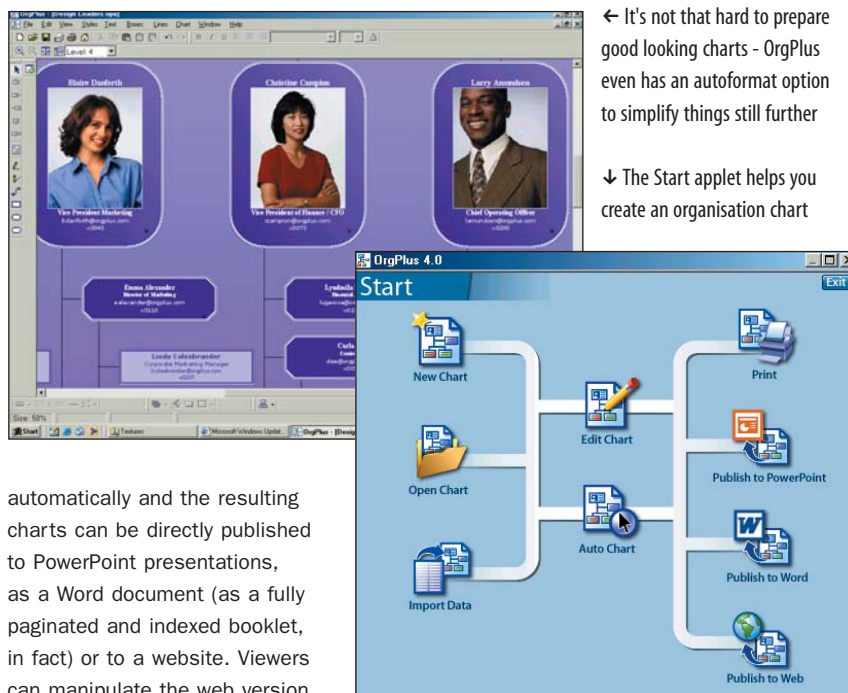
There may not be many software packages devoted to mapping organisational charts, but OrgPlus is pre-eminent in the field – it's been around for long enough to see off most of the competition. Organisational charts are not just for seeing who's above and below you in your company; they're essential for effective communication and are jolly handy during reorganisations.

The secret behind OrgPlus' success is that it's not a mere drawing tool – its data is stored in a database, so it permits managers to query it. You can access information quickly, listing, for example, all employees that have a company car, everyone that earns more than £25,000 or everyone who's been with the company more than five years.

On a more mundane level, it's good for managing telephone directories as well. Crystal Reports is built-in, which makes it easy to extract and present data reports. And because OrgPlus is built on a database, it makes it easy to import staff information directly from existing Human Resources data.

Charting progress

The latest release is available in two versions: Standard and Professional. The former features some minor improvements to the design and layout options, but it's in the considerably dearer Professional version where you'll find the most changes. Data can now be imported from Excel and XML (extensible markup language) sources, can be validated



← It's not that hard to prepare good looking charts - OrgPlus even has an autoformat option to simplify things still further

↓ The Start applet helps you create an organisation chart

automatically and the resulting charts can be directly published to PowerPoint presentations, as a Word document (as a fully paginated and indexed booklet, in fact) or to a website. Viewers can manipulate the web version, and can zoom in and out, print selected branches or even export the chart back to an OrgPlus file.

However, OrgPlus is very much a one-trick pony and has only one wizard, which deals with data importation. This lets you take raw data en masse and flow it in to a chart with a minimum of effort, though the layout of the wizard could be more intuitive. You can also enter data manually into the chart templates provided, using the Start applet, which steps you through the processes needed to create a chart from scratch.

Simple records

OrgPlus comes with more than 20 templates with different backgrounds, colours and layout styles to make your chart look even more professional. You can even split off a portion of your chart and link it to the original chart, making it easy to move between the two.

Mercifully, qualifications in art and technical drawing aren't required to obtain impressive-looking charts – you can select a chart background and style and start typing names and titles into the chart boxes. You can add links to email, web pages and other charts. Click on a box

and you can easily import a picture. Chart backgrounds can also feature pictures. In case your organisational chart is very complex and contains elements like salary or budgets, OrgPlus Pro also offers calculation tools that can handle numerical data.

When the time comes to publish your chart users get the benefit of another wizard. If you're publishing to a website, for example, you select the fields that will appear, edit headers and footers and specify the destination. The chart is then displayed in your browser. The process is similar for a PowerPoint presentation or Word document.

Verdict

Only users that are into organisational charts in a big way will need OrgPlus 4.0. Small businesses will find the basic version of OrgPlus built-in to Microsoft Word adequate. For bigger jobs, the similarly priced Visio 2002 is more than capable and can be put to other uses. OrgPlus really comes into its own for larger firms, where the sheer number of staff render these alternatives unworkable. ■

Roger Gann

OrgPlus 4.0

System requirements: Pentium 3; Windows 98/2000/NT 4.0/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 30MB hard disk space.

Human Concepts: 01752 895 961

Website: www.orgplus.co.uk

Price: Standard £145, Pro from £395 ex VAT

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of use								7			
Features									8		
Value for money						6					
Overall								7			