

## The Old Order Changeth

*Topic:* Rapid changes in the industry: the sudden move to OSX, the sudden decline of Quark, and the introduction of Adobe's Creative Suite.

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*Source of this file:* The author's draft as submitted to the magazine.

*Author's comment:* The explanation of what makes users change en masse rings as true today as it did then. We are stubborn (the column begins by comparing the graphic arts industry to a glacier), but when reasons are there, we move.

In talking about why users left Quark, I wrote, "A major effort is needed for a company to lose a monopoly position...Irritating one's client base enough to make them actually change applications is a colossal achievement." As I write this in May 2013, Adobe has just shown how history repeats itself.

This archive, to be released over several years, collects the columns that Dan Margulis wrote under the *Makeready* title between 1993 and 2006. In some cases the columns appear as written; in others the archive contains revised versions that appeared in later books.

*Makeready* in principle could cover anything related to graphic arts production, but it is best known for its contributions to Photoshop technique, particularly in the field of color correction. In its final years, the column was appearing in six different magazines worldwide (two in the United States).

Dan Margulis teaches small-group master classes in color correction. Information is available at <http://www.ledet.com/margulis>. Many other articles and edited threads from his *appliedcolortheory* group are available there or at <http://www.moderncolorworkflow.com>



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After five years of relative stagnation, the industry has decided what the software of its future is. Here's an overview of a snowball effect involving OSX, Quark, Adobe, Macromedia, product activation, and suite revenge

**G**laciers and the graphic arts industry have much in common. They're massive, majestic, not particularly warm and cuddly, and notoriously slow-moving.

Glaciers, also, do what they like. Once they decide to move, there's no stopping them. Where they have passed, they leave desolation. And they are often surrounded by enough snow pack that a slight noise will set off an avalanche, which is a nasty thing to be in the way of.

Such an event is happening now in our industry. After several years of relative stagnation, the programs we work with are changing in a number of important ways, and rapidly. All the major vendors upgraded their products this fall. This column will visit many topics, but will begin with Macintosh OSX, which is now more than three years old.

Most of us have spent those three years ignoring it. September's Seybold Conference ran sessions focused on problems with the changeover to OSX. Moderators tried to get a feel for how many people were already fully on board.

Less than half the Mac-using audience said they used OSX at all. And you could count on the fingers of one hand the people saying they used OSX exclusively. These figures appeared in line with ones reported earlier in the year by Trendwatch, indicating that the number of professional Macsters who use OSX more than half the time wasn't even as high as 20 percent.

For an OS upgrade of such age, this is a staggering rebuke, a monumental tribute to our inertia. And there hasn't been any serious criticism of what OSX is and does. People simply haven't seen the point in investing a lot of time re-training themselves when they've already got an OS that works. Even when Apple announced that as of January 2003 it would no longer sell new computers that boot

into OS 9, we laughed it off and made them take it back.

Finally, however, the snow has started to slide down the mountain. Those Seybold OSX sessions were standing room only. What Apple could not bludgeon us into itself, it had done by proxy. Under heavy pressure from Apple, Adobe, Quark, and Macromedia no longer develop products that work under previous OS versions. If you're a Mac user, unless you'd like to stick with the software you have until the end of time, you have to give in and make the changeover. You will, however, presumably make it without QuarkXPress.

### For now I see the true old times are dead

The same Seybold saw one of an interminable series of "shootouts" between Quark 6 and Adobe's InDesign, which had not yet released version CS. Each side presented one official spokesman plus one independent user who was supposed to highlight the advantages of his own favored program while explaining what a wretched piece of garbage the other one is.

The Quark user, Jay Nelson of *Design Tools Monthly*, did a good job of highlighting InDesign's shortcomings, but it turns out that for the production of his own magazine he uses not Quark 6, or even Quark 5, but rather Quark 4, which was released in 1997. Certain XTensions which are critical to his operation have never been released for the later Quark versions—nor are they ever likely to be.

Professional graphic artists are a stubborn lot. Give us inferior "modern" alternatives and we'll stick with

**Photoshop CS incorporates a controversial anticounterfeiting algorithm that checks images to see if they contain currency. Old-style bills like these pose no problem, but if they were new-style U.S. currency, Euros, or British pound notes, Photoshop CS wouldn't open the image.**





**Underexposed images used to be quite difficult for non-experts. Photoshop CS's new Shadow/Highlight command offers a powerful, flexible, and quick fix. Opposite: even the default settings make a substantial improvement.**

users that Photoshop does, has managed to achieve it. It has made the few random complaints some of us aim at Adobe and Macromedia look like a child whining that there's no rum raisin ice cream in the refrigerator.

If Quark truly wanted to make sure that its users felt the company was thumbing them in the eye with the specific goal of getting them off their duffs and into the InDesign fold, it needed a sophisticated three-prong strategy.

First, it needed to make life hard for upgraders. That it charges much more for an upgrade than Adobe does is only a start. Quark exceeded the minimum standard here, by preventing Quark 6 from saving in a format that Quark 4 users can read.

Second, it needed to impose a copy-protection system based on "activation", and make sure that there would be ways by which an innocent user could accidentally disable it, making the software useless. That in the event of such accident, being put on hold for three hours waiting for help from customer support (on a toll call, yet) goes without saying, but Quark has done an even better job of riling the innocent user—its error message in the event of such a catastrophe announces that Quark has been "tampered with".

Third, it needed to make the release buggy. And this, it appears to have done well. Furthermore, right at the time people started complaining about it, Quark coincidentally shut down its user forums on its website. Fortunately, in the last few years many different on-line resources have developed where one can get an idea of what users are finding. What they are finding about Quark 6 is not good.

**And God fulfills himself in many ways**

Meanwhile, Adobe has bundled most of its major products into one "Creative Suite" which henceforth will be updated as if it were a single product. In some ways this is as significant a development as the demise of Quark.

We can still upgrade existing copies of Photoshop, Illustrator, GoLive, and InDesign one by one. But Adobe's deal on the whole suite is tempting. If you have a copy of any version of Photoshop, you can upgrade it to Photoshop 8—er, Photoshop CS—for around \$170. But for only \$380 extra, you can add brand-new versions of the other three programs plus a fifth app, Version Cue, that has promise in content management, particularly in conjunction with some powerful new metadata functions in Photoshop.

Considering that buying the other three individually would set you back \$1,600, it's hard to quarrel with the price of the suite, until you learn that for the next release, you'll be

Quark 4, or System 9, or Illustrator 6, for a very long time. But not for an eternity. When I heard that speech I realized that the avalanche was finally underway, even before the training companies I work for started to call me up desperate to find people who could teach InDesign, because of unexpectedly sudden demand on the part of printers, advertising agencies, and the like to make the switchover.

When InDesign 1.0 was released in 1999, Adobe hyped it for months in advance as a "Quark-killer" application. Back then, before seeing the program, I remarked that it was like introducing a fly and calling it a spider-killer. First releases of software are generally of no use. The best that could be hoped, for, I said, was that Version 1 would not be so ghastly that it would wreck the program's reputation forever. That InDesign might have one or two slightly better features is not going to motivate people to spend thousands of dollars worth of time retraining themselves and their staffs. The only potential Quark-killer, I opined, would be Quark itself, and I was right.

A major effort is needed for a company to lose a monopoly position. Photoshop, for example, would have to be massively buggy, screwed up beyond any recognition, not just for one version, but for several years, before people become so disgusted that they turn to a different program. Mildly better alternatives to Photoshop will be ignored. If newer versions of Photoshop don't appeal, people will sit tight with current versions, as so many have done with Quark 4.

Irritating one's client base enough to make them actually change applications is a colossal achievement. Adobe is no more likely to do such a thing with Photoshop than it is to support William Lerach for governor of California.

Such an assignment would daunt a lesser company, but Quark, which had nearly the monopoly among professional

required to upgrade all four products at once—no skipping the GoLive update just because you don't do much web work. But there is also another real risk.

I know what's up with Photoshop CS. I'm no expert on the other three, but I can tell you what users are saying, because one can now read the views of hundreds of users in on-line fora such as [versiontracker.com](http://versiontracker.com).

The jury seems to be quite pleased with InDesign CS, and reasonably pleased with Photoshop, except the activation issue that I'm about to discuss, and for PC users with two gigs of dual-channel RAM, for whom the program has a slowness issue. It is of two minds on Illustrator, but likely that's because the last two updates have been seen as less than satisfactory. It considers GoLive CS to be a dog, although not one that barks and howls as blatantly as Quark 6.

With the exception of GoLive, this order of preference is as you might expect: the younger the application, the better the upgrade will seem. Indesign CS shares the annoying Quark problem of not saving back in a format that past versions can read. But, as might be expected of only the third major release of a program this complex, there are significant changes for the better.

Photoshop has been through many more revisions, except for the complicated and ambitious File Browser function, introduced in version 7. That has gotten much better in Photoshop 8 as the programming team has heard what users had to say. But at this late date, every new version of Photoshop and Illustrator will add mostly features that appeal strongly to certain users and not at all to others. If you do a lot of digital painting in Photoshop, for example, Photoshop 7 was the most significant upgrade since version 3.

Photoshop CS pleases those who are at least semi-serious about image quality. If you have a digicam that can save into a raw format, you'll be delighted with the upgraded Camera-Raw plugin, which is now part of Photoshop, not a separate purchase. There are several intelligent interface changes, such as the Filter Gallery shown here, which is a much better way of previewing what filters or a combination of them will do.

It would have been a lot more valuable had not one of the most eagerly awaited new features, the ability to put filters on Adjustment Layers, been pulled from the shipping version, presumably because it still had bugs. This is the dark side of Adobe's suite approach. Instead of selling the applications as a package but allowing updates to each when they're ready, management has mandated that all four will update together every 18 months—no matter what. Holding a gun in this way to the head of the programming teams is a good way to insure that important features get left out at the last minute. Worse, it almost guarantees that at least one of the four apps will have a seriously buggy release. This time, it appears to have been GoLive. Which will it be next time?



Yet there are several other new commands that make life simpler for the moderately-skilled to expert color manipulator, of which by far the most significant is Image: Adjustments>Shadow/Highlight.

Shadow/Highlight works only in RGB, which is a shame, but the problem it seeks to correct is worse in RGB anyway because of the lack of a black channel. It's a complex and powerful command. The quick, oversimplified easy explanation is that it's an effective way to correct underexposed images such as the one shown above and on the facing page. One can do better with this flexible command, but the version on this page is the default—it's literally a two-second correction. Previously, to do this well with such an image required the services of an expert for five minutes or so.

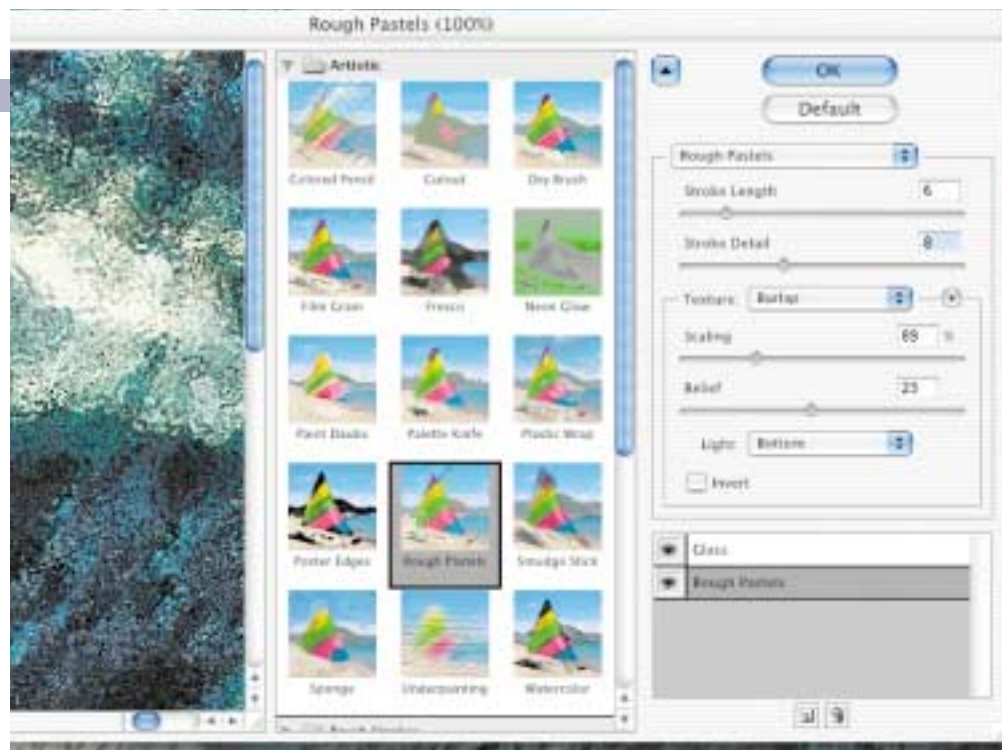
The quick, oversimplified technical explanation is that it loads an inverted luminosity mask, but one that we have considerable control over, and does some intelligent lightening and addition of color, as well as a form of sharpening, that's limited to the shadow areas of the image, so that if we have a model with dark hair, for example, we can add detail very nicely. It theoretically can do similar things in the highlights, but many examples of what people consider "highlight problems" in fact involve both highlights and things that are significantly darker, whereas most "shadow problems" are indeed problems limited to the shadows. So the shadow half of the new command is much more important to us.

Overall, then, this is a good upgrade by Photoshop standards and I have no hesitation in recommending it to Macintosh users. PC users, unfortunately, have to decide whether the new features are worth buying into an activation scheme.

### Wherefore let thy voice rise like a fountain

Activation schemes attempt to lock your software to your own machine, making copying it useless, and, additionally, making it impossible for you to install a fresh copy on any other machine.

In principle this only causes a problem when somebody steals your computer, or when your hard disk dies. In that case, you have to go hat in hand to the software vendor and



**A Filter Gallery feature allows previewing of multiple filter effects.**

to the effect that the updater couldn't find Photoshop. Whereupon every Photoshop-related newsgroup was flooded by queries from users who wanted to know why it couldn't find their pirated copy. Food for thought.

Granted the seriousness of the problem, one has to ask if the cure is worse than the disease. Consider, first, the perfect protection software: no inconvenience to the honest user, and undefeatable even by the most skilled hacker.

Such a scheme makes money for the software vendor to the extent that people who could easily afford the program, but are too cheap when pirated versions are

try to talk them out of a new copy—er, activation code.

In practice, it also becomes an irritant when any event takes place that convinces the software that it is no longer running on the same computer on which it was installed. Things that have caused such misconceptions in the past have been the addition of RAM or a secondary hard drive, mounting a FireWire drive, defragmenting, resetting the PRAM, a system crash while the program is booting, updating the OS, adding different software that overwrites crucial elements, adding plugins, etc., etc.. If any of these things occurs, your software typically ceases to function until you can reactivate it, which the vendor always promises is a snap to do.

Plus, even if it works now, it's very difficult to predict how the activation software will behave when exposed to Microsoft's new Longhorn version of Windows or any other product that doesn't currently exist and therefore can't be tested.

Some vendors have made activation work better than others. New versions of Windows, and Microsoft Office, have it. Complaints have been reasonably few. However, historically any such form of copy protection has been problematic. Several companies, such as Intuit, have had to withdraw it. Even at best, it's inconvenient to the honest user. But suddenly Quark finds it necessary, as does Adobe with Photoshop CS for Windows, and Macromedia with its MX suite of web-oriented products.

Nobody knows how many illegal copies of Photoshop or Quark or Macromedia products there are. We got some idea when Adobe's free Photoshop 7.0.1 updater was made available to correct certain deficiencies of 7.0. It sneakily included a list of serial numbers that Adobe knew had been pirated.

Programmers without a sense of humor would have made the updater either a) issue a stern message about intellectual property rights when it encountered such a serial number or b) install a particularly destructive Trojan horse as a lesson to other malefactors.

Instead a devious, innocent-sounding message was issued

available, would actually open their wallets. It wouldn't work with the millions of pirate users in Russia, China, and Latin America who can't possibly afford to pay full price for the software. Plus, there's an important deduction: all future sales lost because the product isn't as popular as it would be if more people had had experience with the pirated versions. That's the dirty secret of the whole protection racket.

In such a perfect world, Photoshop certainly, and Quark probably, would benefit from requiring activation. For InDesign, successful copy protection would—for the time being—be a financial disaster. The main reason it hasn't supplanted Quark yet is that there aren't enough skilled InDesign users to persuade larger operations to make the changeover. The more pirated copies now, oddly enough, the bigger the bottom line down the road.

Therefore, Adobe wisely chose not to protect InDesign, let alone GoLive. Instead, it requires activation only for the PC version of Photoshop. The official reason for not protecting the Mac version is that there were OSX problems (which Quark and Macromedia apparently did not encounter) and that it couldn't be finished in time for the release. The fact that almost all the commentators who might hate activation enough to recommend against purchasing Photoshop CS are Mac users had, of course, nothing to do with it.

With respect to the Photoshop activation, views range from a feeling that it is a Communist plot to gather data on how we use our computers, to the idea that we should be sorry that the activation isn't even more inconvenient that it is, since it is our collective fault that piracy exists and we deserve to be punished for it.

The conspiracy theorists got a real shot in the arm from another new feature: when we ask it to open a file, Photoshop CS tries to figure out whether it contains an image of currency. If it concludes, rightly or wrongly, that it does, it won't open the file and up will pop the error message shown on the first page of this column.

**Quark 6, Photoshop CS for Windows, and Macromedia's MX web suite now require software activation, which theoretically prevents piracy, but as a practical matter has a history of causing problems for honest users. Inset: the complicated activation routine comes from a third-party developer, not Adobe.**

Unfortunately, perfectly legal images of money often appear in advertising. The first people who tried to use Photoshop CS to work on such ads got a big surprise, because Adobe had not seen fit to tell anyone about it in advance. Many of those people were unhappy, and they called up the news media to complain.

This resulted in, as far as I can remember, the biggest wave of publicity Photoshop has ever experienced, with a lot of users being quoted asking what else the program might be scanning for, at whose behest the changes were made, and whether Photoshop was part of a government cover-up to hide the fact of an invasion by space aliens.

Back in the real world, professional pirates found no difficulty cracking Quark 6 and only slightly more resistance from Photoshop CS. On-line groups were deluged in October with questions from users who complained that their keyboard shortcuts suddenly stopped working. This was a flaw in the first cracked version, which became widely available only three days after the official CS release.

Activation is a useful reminder to us of the magnitude of piracy problem. It's hard not to be sympathetic on the one hand, but it's also hard to buy software that's supposed to make our life easier when it includes something like this that makes our life much more difficult.

Presumably if the activation holds this time it will be on the Mac version the next time. I don't want that to happen, and I certainly don't want other vendors to do the same thing so that every time my system hiccups I have to reactivate 30 pieces of software. In my heart, therefore, I hope you won't purchase the PC version of Photoshop CS. I wouldn't if I were a PC user. However, you may find this a close call. The situation with Quark is different. There, I unhesitatingly recommend that you avoid the product, for three reasons.

First, install Quark 6 in your office, and you can't install it on your laptop without paying extra. Adobe, by contrast, allows two installs. Myself, I have five Macs on my desktop, including two laptops. Not being an octopus, I can only use one of them at a time, so I have no moral qualm about having duplicated software on each. So I don't even like Adobe's two-machine limit. Quark's one-copy view is unacceptable.

Second, we have to look at user reports as to how onerous the reactivation process is. As skeptics feared, the nonsense about how the activation is unlikely to be undone by mundane events has proven to be just that. Both Quark and Win-



dows Photoshop need to be reactivated from time to time. However, reports suggest that Adobe has

lived up to its obligation to make the reactivation process easy—provided you happen to have a web connection. As I write this column, I am in a location where I will have had no web access at all for nine days. This is the fourth time this year that I've been in that position for more than a week.

Without the web, reactivation requires a toll call to customer service. Current reports indicate that a 90-minute wait isn't uncommon, even longer with Quark.

Third, and most important, is the question of trust. We may wish to use this software five years from now. But what if it deactivates then? Will Quark and Adobe even be in business in 2009? If they are, will they be willing to reactivate software that they consider to be obsolete, or will they make me buy the latest version?

Without shooting a dead horse that I've previously stabbed, garrotted, and poisoned, Quark doesn't deserve that kind of trust. I wouldn't buy Photoshop CS with an activation scheme, but I might consider a more compelling upgrade. With Quark, I would not buy a copy-protected product if I could possibly avoid it, period.

I am scarcely an unbiased observer here. I would really like to see Quark succeed, for the unselfish reason that I dislike seeing Adobe become pre-eminent in yet another application and for the selfish one that I have been a Quark user for 15 years and am really not looking forward to retraining myself on InDesign. If Quark would give me even the slightest reason to continue supporting it I would gladly do so.

It hasn't. I can't.

QuarkXPress's enormous market penetration among high-end users is well deserved. It was so far ahead of its time that versions from 10 years ago are perfectly usable today. (By contrast, try wheeling out your copy of Photoshop 2 or Illustrator 3 and see how they stack up to today's versions.)

Eventually, though, even glaciers move. And where they have passed, they leave nothing but wasteland.