## TECHSIGHTING
### SOFTWARE

# All's Well That Ends Well

Probably the most common cross-discipline software used in science is for reference management, and with good reason—formatting bibliographic references is no fun. Bookends Plus (version 6.0) is a Macintosh-only software program that simplifies the task immensely. The program combines two major features: it compiles and formats references for bibliographies and footnotes and it archives large amounts of information from published material for retrieval through author or keyword searches. As in other reference management software products, Bookends Plus users can insert temporary citations in the text and later replace them with publication-ready, custom-formatted references for the journal of choice. The program comes equipped with add-ins designed for Microsoft Word 6 or Word 98 and for Nisus Writer versions 5 or later. The user can choose from a large selection of journal formats, or create individual formats in minutes.

| Bookends Plus |
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| Sonny Software |
| Bethesda, MD |
| $99; $69 (student) |
| www.sonnysoftware.com |

One of the best time-saving features is the reference import capability. In addition to importing data from one Bookends file to another or from files generated in other reference software programs, such as Endnote, Bookends Plus can download references directly from the Web. The software contains browser bookmarks for commonly used databases, such as CARL UnCover, Medline's PubMed, or the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). With Bookends Plus, users can access their favorite database with Netscape Communicator or Microsoft Explorer and import the desired references in seconds. Author names, titles, and even complete abstracts available through Medline's PubMed search engine may be downloaded. Any keyword in the abstract or title can later be used for searches in the Bookends Plus database, making it an ideal tool for personal reference management. Although importing online references is fast and easy, it relies on specific formatting cues that Bookends Plus receives from the external database. This can cause errors during data import when Internet sites change their formats or add new features. Two features keep this

process working smoothly: first, new import templates can be downloaded from Sonny Software's Web page and dropped into a folder provided by the software. Although this is the easier way of updating Bookends Plus, it relies on continuous postings from Sonny Software. The second way to change existing formats or add new database import formats is to configure the software's user-defined import template. This can prove to be somewhat tricky for the novice. However, Sonny Software provides superb online technical support to help with the process.

Once the user's database is complete, bibliographies can be tailored to use all references, or to include only a subset ("hit list") of references needed for a particular publication. The program sorts, formats, and displays the sub-bibliography, which can then be printed, saved, or exported into a word processing document without losing the formatting.

Bookends Plus comes with a user-friendly, step-by-step online tutorial, but the manual is somewhat lengthy and repetitious. The internal help function, however, is useful and takes a confused user through the necessary steps to remedy the problem in question.

—ANDREAS MADLUNG

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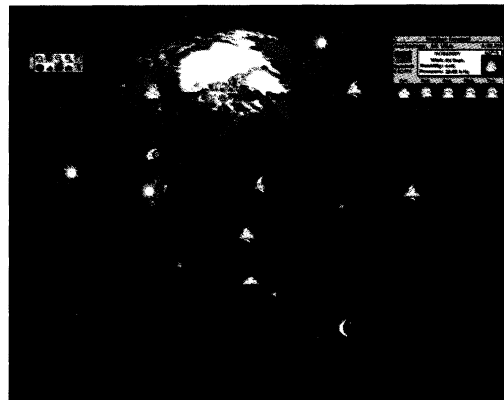
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# World Wide World

The Earth Browser is a unique software product that makes viewing world environmental information as easy as browsing the Web. Although it provides some of the same information as weather tracking programs (1), Earth Browser goes considerably beyond simple weather data by providing up-to-the-minute information about worldwide earthquakes, active volcanoes, time zones, weather conditions/forecasts, and even a few live camera shots from around the world.

| Earth Browser |
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| Lunar Software |
| Portland, OR |
| $19.95; |
| $29.95 (CD-ROM) |
| 503-771-6761 |
| www.lunarsoft.com |

Not confined to either a standard browser format or terse, text-based output, Earth Browser provides a rotating view of Earth in its program window. Users can select over 450 cities worldwide and obtain their current environmental conditions. The program can access live Web camera locations or pinpoint sites of recent earthquakes and volcanoes, and it can give the latitude and longitude of the pointer's location anywhere on the world map.

A magnifying glass feature permits users to enlarge and reduce the globe's onscreen size. User-controlled specification windows for each city contain an adjustable slide bar that sets the magnification level at which the city's weather information is shown. By adjusting the slide bar for each city, weather information for that location is provided when the user views the world at the specified magnification. Weather information includes temperature, wind, humidity, barometric pressure, a 5-day forecast, local time, and time of the last weather update. Another interesting feature of the program is a cloud cover map of the entire globe that is updated four times daily with satellite data from a Web site in Wisconsin. If a user seeks information about volcano and earthquake sites, that additional data can be easily obtained by clicking on the appropriate icon. This brings up a link to the U.S. Geological Service (USGS) Web site



**Worldview.** Image of Earth from Earth Browser.

with additional information about the quake. Earthquake information is color-coded to indicate how old it is. The program lists the 21 most recent earthquakes (over magnitude 3.0) in the world. Yet another useful aspect of the program is that when a user clicks on the flag emblem of a country, a browser link to the CIA's fact book about that country is provided.

Users can customize the program to their own tastes quite well with numerous settings in the preferences. Earth Browser can also be used as a screen saver, though, like the main program, its use requires an Internet link.

Earth Browser has a few minor shortcomings. The list of cities is not as extensive as that of competing weather tracking programs. Users can add cities to the program list, but they cannot make Earth Browser get weather information for those locations, even if such data is readily available on the Web. These are minor complaints, however, about a very well-designed program. Earth Browser operates on both Macintosh and