

## DIGITAL DIRECTIONS

# Xtra Digital Projects



Ulead Photo Express "Body Switches"

As photo labs adapt to the fast-changing photographic world, they must constantly monitor how to maximize equipment usage in the lab. Digital equipment has a shorter life span than traditional lab equipment, so it is especially important to keep equipment working. When lab equipment is not in use, money is lost.

OBVIOUSLY THERE will be times in your imaging lab when equipment is dormant, but why not think up new jobs for those mechanized slackers?

The key is to generate some new directions that will keep both your digital lab equipment and employees busy generating income. Making digital enlargements and image manipulation is great, but you need more.

Relax, we are not suggesting making any new equipment purchases. In fact, the cost of expanding your digital services can be as little as a few hundred dollars, but it will cost you some creative thinking.

The software we are talking about is called "project" software. Two programs that we often use are MGI's PhotoSuite III and Ulead's Photo Express. They each offer a wide selection of projects that are

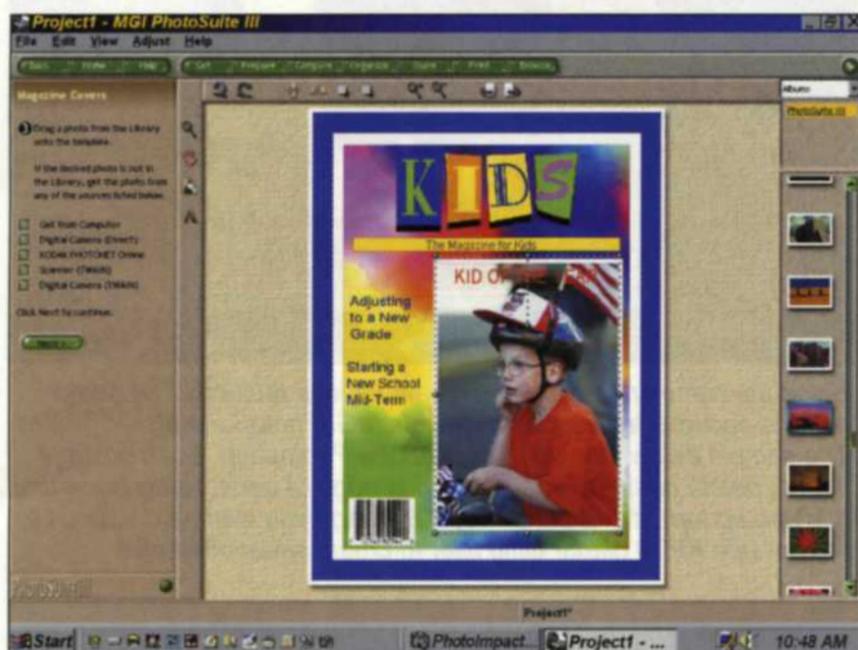
easy to use and help produce professional-looking results. You can even find software that includes projects bundled with flatbed scanners, so be sure to shop around.

Most of these software programs have a photo editor and photo database that are linked so you can easily drag photos into the project section. Within the project section you may find subsections labeled calendars, magazine covers, postcards, greeting cards, certificates, book marks, business cards or letterheads. Each subsection will have a variety of image templates that combine both high resolution graphics, text, and a spot reserved for your photo.

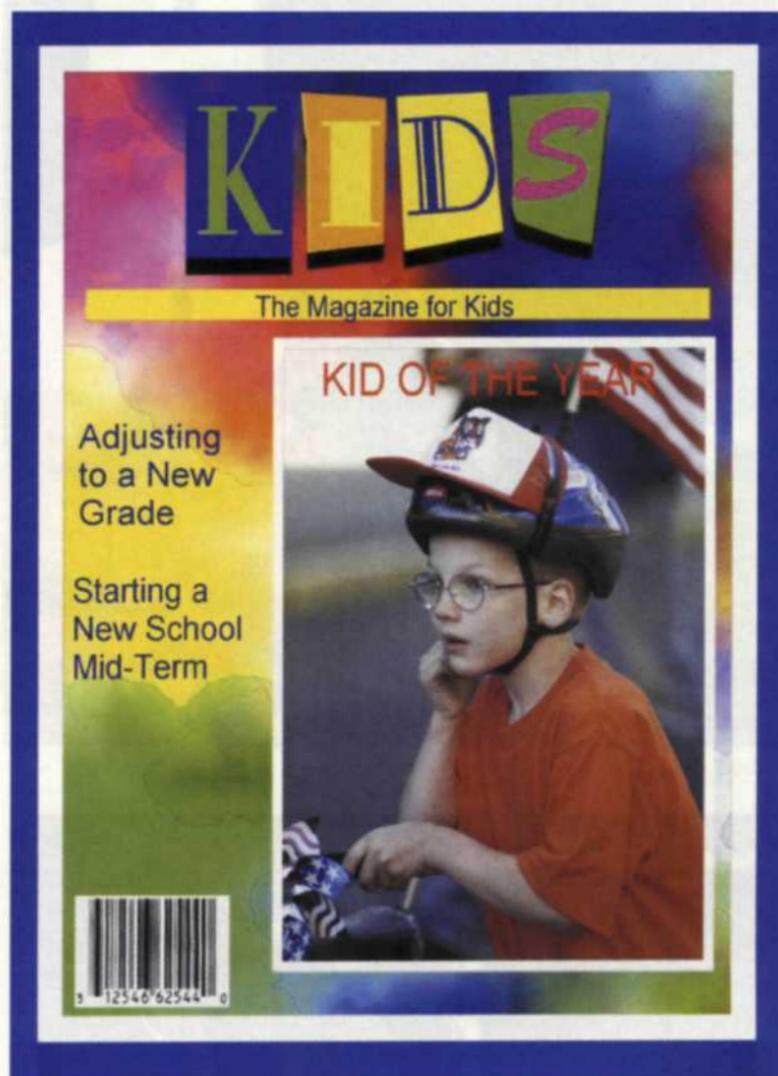
Creating a composite image is as easy as picking a category and then a template: Just drop a photo in place, and it is magically masked and blended with the surrounding graphics. You can then

# for Your Lab

Jack and Sue Drafahl



MGI PhotoSuite III "Magazine Cover"



change the graphic elements and text to fit your customers' needs.

If you don't like the graphic's color, or you want the text in a different font and message, then make it so (Captain Picard would be so proud!). You can save the file and print it to a digital printer, or a traditional printing device that accepts digital files. Either way, it only takes a couple of minutes to prepare the file for printing.

To best see if there is a market for these new ideas, buy one of the software programs and make some samples for display. Make sure these samples include pictures typical of those brought in by your customers, as they can't always relate to samples using professional models. If you have the time, space, and money, try to make examples from each category in the software to show your versatility.

Once you have a good understanding of how these templates work and how easily they can be modified, knuckle down and get to work. Let your creative juices flow, designing unique templates to specifically fit your customer base. Ask both customers and employees for more ideas and you will find there is no limit to the number of creative designs you can develop.

We could give you a few ideas, too, but then they would no longer be unique to your business. Instead, we will show you one idea we designed as a digital gift that everyone seems to love.

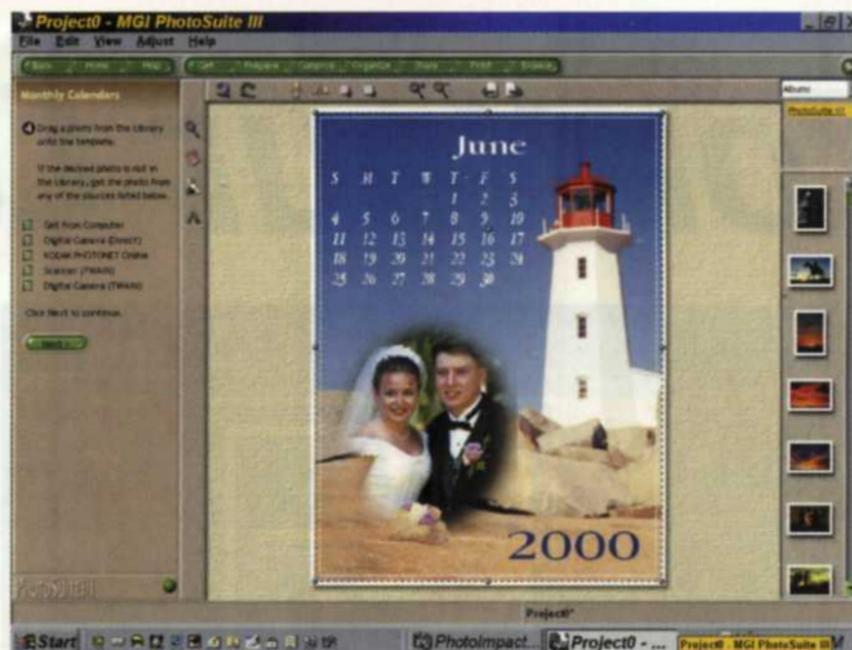
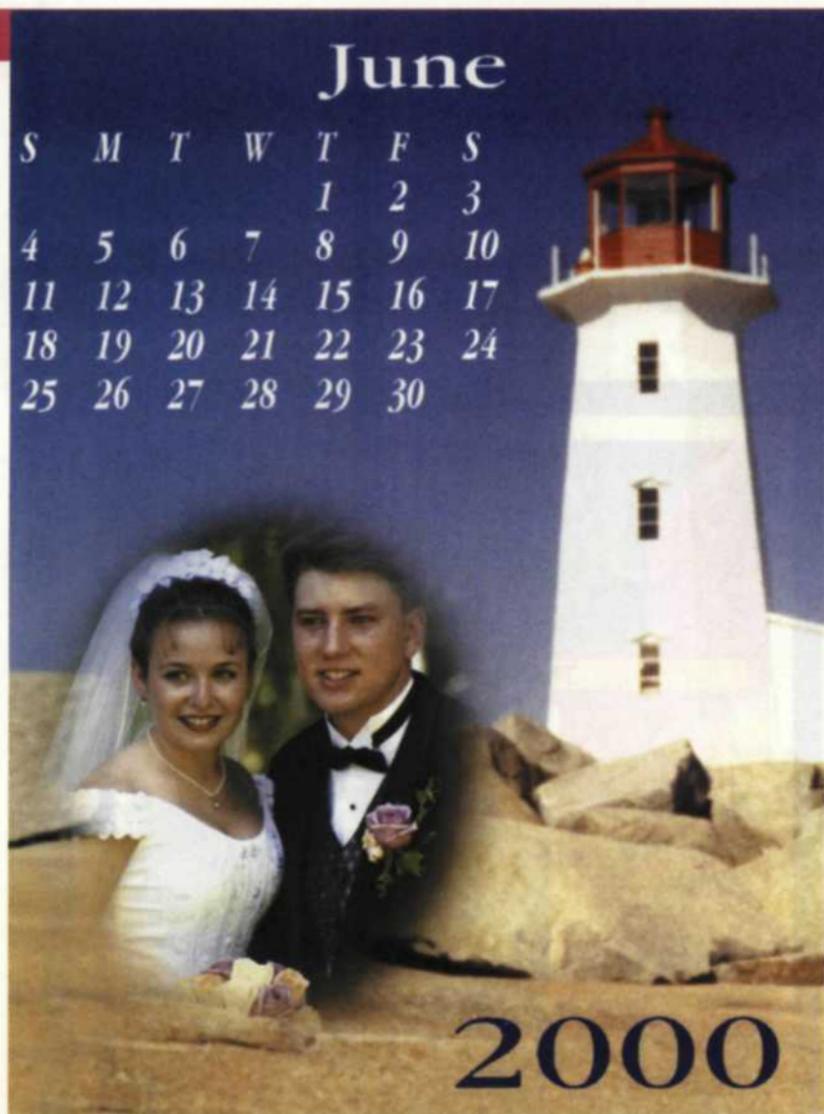
It all started when we needed a unique gift for someone in our family who is a philatelist. We knew she loved stamp collecting, but anything we bought from a stamp store would be a duplicate of what she already owned. So, we decided to

create our own unique stamp template using Adobe Photoshop.

We took a standard stamp, scanned it to a digital file, and dropped out the image in the middle. This left a black rectangle and white perforations on a black background. Next, we cropped the image so that the edges of the image touched the torn perf edges. We used the clone tool to clean up any ratty edges.

The cropping had to be fine-tuned so only half of the perforated holes were showing on all edges. We then selected the rectangle in the middle of the blank stamp, and pasted in a photo, added some funny text and saved the file.

The next step was to use a Photoshop third party KPT 3 filter called planar tiling. This filter takes a single image and tiles it into multiple images. We applied it to our



Using the same image you can create various projects. The sample left and above is a calendar created in MGI PhotoSuite III. The sample below was created in Adobe Photoshop. Scan postage stamp, delete center of image. Crop to edge of perfs, using clone tool to clean up torn stamp perfs. Paste in image you want to create as a stamp. Use KPT3 planar tiling filter to create sheet of stamps.



stamp image and magically we had a full sheet of stamps.

It took a couple of tries to get it just right as we kept getting a black line between the perfs. To solve this problem, we went back and cropped the original stamp until we achieved exactly one half of a perforation. A little effort and we now had a perfect set of stamps. We printed the stamps on inkjet paper and they loved it. We couldn't have found a better gift.

Once you have all the work done on the template, it is easy to make modifications to the text or the image in the center of the stamp. The stamp idea can even be taken a step further if you print them on adhesive paper.

You can create stamps of wedding couples for them to put on the back of their thank you letters. How about a customized stamp to decorate your Christmas cards? Maybe you could design Golden Anniversary invitations with stamps illustrating the loving couple then and now? People love creative stamps and, given the chance, will easily come up with their own stamp ideas.

It is true that your customers can also buy these software programs and make their own projects, but most won't dedicate the time and effort. Other people don't have the technical knowledge or equipment to make it happen. They would much rather that you do all the work and just make them look good.

Every lab will have a different type of client base with varying likes and dislikes. You must design specific projects to match these concerns. Project software programs make it easy to do, and with practice you can expand your creations to use photo editing software, too. Don't let your digital equipment have the day off! Put the X-Projects to work for you and your bottom line. •

For further information contact:

Adobe Photoshop-[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

MGI PhotoSuite III - [www.mgi.com](http://www.mgi.com)

Ulead Photo Express-[www.ulead.com](http://www.ulead.com)

Jack and Sue Drafa are freelance writers and professional photographers based outside Portland, Ore.

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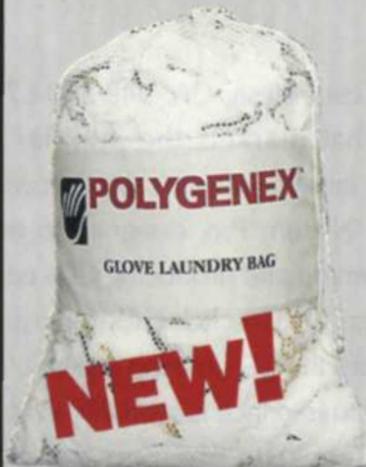


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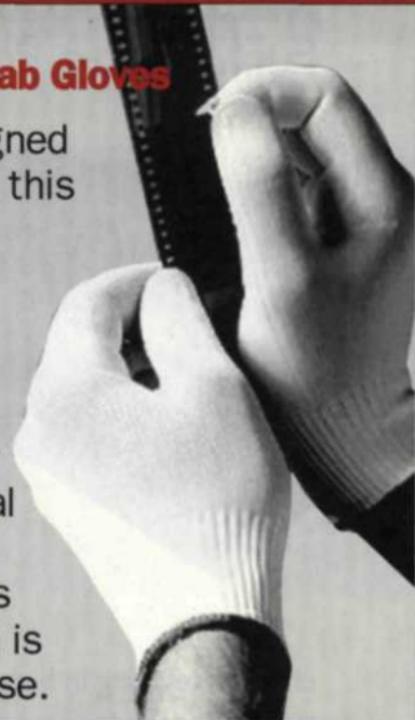
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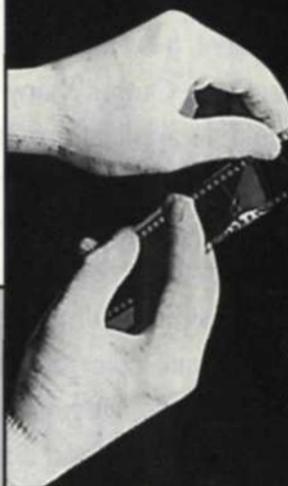
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